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Journal of Global History (2021), 16: 1, 4–23
doi:10.1017/S1740022820000194

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

ARTICLE

Why was nationalism European? Political ethnicity in Asia and Europe 1400–1850[†]

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Abstract

This article compares European nationalism and earlier notions of political community in Europe and Asia. Without denying the discursive novelty of post-1750 nationalism, it argues that eighteenth-century social and economic incentives to ethnic integration in individual European countries accelerated much older dynamics. Moreover, in the same period, *c.* 1400–1850, as state-centred ethnicities cohered in Europe, similar processes produced broadly comparable formations around the rimlands of Asia. Together, Europe and the Asian rimlands thus generated an early modern cultural system – distinctive from both nationalism and universal empire, but possessing features of both – that I term 'political ethnicity'. The novelty and idiosyncrasy of this Eurasian-wide formation has yet to be recognized. Why, then, in Europe alone did political ethnicity eventually produce nationalism? Using Myanmar and Britain as case studies, the article argues that in Europe distinctive medieval legacies joined religious ruptures and exceptionally rapid commercial expansion to compress religious authority, to diffuse metropolitan norms with unprecedented rapidity, and to transfer sovereignty from the crown to propertied interests speaking in the name of the 'nation'.

Keywords: England/Britain; ethnic conflict; Eurasian parallels; nationalism; political ethnicity; Southeast Asia

Nationalism: seeking a wider context

How shall we compare pre-modern Europe and Asia? Responding to recent shifts in global power and thus illustrating perhaps the aphorism that all history is contemporary, scholars of late have sought three correctives to the view that deep-seated structural differences rendered European societies inherently more dynamic. Some have decided that European industrialization was a contingent, late elaboration of widespread Eurasian patterns. Others have made similar claims for European military advances. Still others, myself included, have argued that European and Asian states followed similar trajectories of political integration.

My current project grows from this third approach, but considers a question that focuses more narrowly on political culture: between 1400 and 1850 how did societies across Eurasia conceive of political community? I see nationalism – arguably the dominant ideology of the last two centuries – as a peculiar elaboration of a more general phenomenon apparent in parts of both Europe and Asia centuries before the French Revolution. I thus seek to modify a historiography of nationalism whose preoccupation with post-1750 Europe and post-colonial Asia entails, I believe, a degree of myopia.

By definition, scholars who insist on the modernity of nationalism emphasize late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century rupture. Whereas pre-1750 thought vested sovereignty in the person of

[†]The author thanks Prof. John Breuilly, Prof. Anthony Reid, Prof. Michael Charney, and Mr Charles Berman for their comments on an earlier draft of this article.

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https://doi.org/10.1017/S1740022820000194 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the king, nationalism located it in an invisible 'people' who were transformed from subjects into citizens; and, whereas earlier societies were irreducibly hierarchical, nationalism posited legal equality and horizontal community. Premodern states tended to annex territories with scant regard for local language and customs, but the nation was culturally homogeneous, with a single ethnonym, occupying an ancestral homeland. And whereas earlier loyalties were both religiously universal and local, nations carved out a space between the universal and the local. Scholars such as Karl Deutsch, Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, E. J. Hobsbawm, and John Breuilly insist that underlying these transformations were institutional and social innovations peculiar to Europe in the late eighteenth century and more especially the nineteenth: military conscription, national schooling, accelerating mobility, industrial communications, and mass consumerism.[1]

If, distilling the above views, we define the 'nation' as the population of a polity whose members are sovereign, legally equal, and ethnically homogeneous participants in a publicly celebrated secular culture, it seems clear that no such entity existed before the late eighteenth century. Obviously, the same may be said of 'nationalism', which I would define as a doctrine that seeks to promote the cohesion and welfare of people who deem themselves, or are considered by would-be leaders, to be members of the nation.

And yet, if this constellation began to cohere only in the mid or late eighteenth century, certain elements had a longer history. Some Europeanists have not hesitated to use 'nation' and 'nationhood' to describe medieval and early modern concepts of regnal loyalty. To be sure, they often pay inadequate attention to the episodic, conjunctural nature of early patriotism and its habitual subordination to dynastic and religious loyalties.[2] Yet we can accept that, as early as the thirteenth or fourteenth century, the inhabitants of some kingdoms saw themselves in certain contexts as a community of distinct custom, language, descent, and interest. Among learned people, such views were buttressed by classical and biblical ethnography.[3] Scholars have identified in English and Dutch thought by the sixteenth or seventeenth century discursive features which, while not yet secular or truly egalitarian, anticipated yet more clearly nineteenth-century nationalism's insistent yoking of state and local culture. Philip Gorksi, for example, has pointed to Dutch beliefs that the world consisted of distinctive peoples and that there was an organic unity between 'nation', 'people', and 'state'. Invoking definitions proposed by modernist scholars themselves, he argues that, by the early or mid 1600s, these terms had acquired much of their modern meaning.[4]

[1]Karl Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1966); Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1991); E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); John Breuilly, 'Changes in the Political Uses of the Nation', in *Power and the Nation in European History*, ed. Len Scales and Oliver Zimmer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 67–101; John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), chaps. 1–3.

[2]See Breuilly's critiques of anachronistic usages in Breuilly, 'Changes in the Political Uses of the Nation', and Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*. Likewise, Peter Burke, 'Nationalisms and Vernaculars, 1500–1800', in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Nationalism*, ed. John Breuilly (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 21–35, distinguishes between 'permanent or structural' (modern) and 'defensive or conjunctural' (medieval or early modern) political consciousness.

[3]For explorations of medieval notions of political community, see Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion, and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Colette Beaune, *The Birth of an Ideology: Myths and Symbols of Nation in Late-Medieval France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Rainer Babel and Jean-Marie Moeglin, eds., *Identité régionale et conscience nationale en France et en Allemagne du moyen âge a l'époque moderne* (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1997); Susan Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe 900–1300* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Susan Reynolds, 'The Idea of the Nation as a Political Community', in *Power and the Nation*, ed. Scales and Zimmer, 54–66; John Watts, *The Making of Polities: Europe, 1300–1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Andrea Ruddick, *English Identity and Political Culture in the Fourteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[4]Philip Gorski, 'The Mosaic Moment', *American Journal of Sociology* 105, no. 5 (2000): 1428–68. See also Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), chap. 1; Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Claire McEachern, *The Poetics of English Nationhood, 1590–1612* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

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To this discursive inventory I would add a centuries-long tendency, also loosely anticipating nationalist practice, to emphasize specific features as a public badge of political allegiance. Visible as early as the twelfth century in both eastern and western Europe, such traits could be secular and physical, involving language, dress, cuisine, hairstyle, and so forth, or they could invoke a privileged relation to the deity. Far from being incompatible, Christian commitment and claims to ethnic superiority were often mutually reinforcing.[5]

Rather than dwell entirely on post-1750 rupture, should we not see nationalism therefore as an unprecedentedly ambitious, demanding, and systematic version of an older, more diffuse phenomenon that might be termed 'political ethnicity'? I define ethnicity as a set of distinctive cultural traits and symbols shared by a named population. Such traits became 'political' when one or more elements were used to proclaim membership in a state-centred collectivity eager to secure resources for its members.

Continuity looms yet larger if we consider social dynamics. The emphasis on urban industrial mobilization in Deutsch, Gellner, and Hobsbawm explains how recognizably nationalist doctrines, once formulated, spread after 1850, but fails to explain how such ideas arose in the pre-industrial seventeenth or eighteenth century.[6] Nor does Anderson's oft-cited emphasis on print media as a spur to vernacular standardization, hence national consciousness, suffice.[7] The truth is that in many western European realms culture/ethnicity was being standardized and politicized through saints' cults, royal patronage, new market systems, and oral and written channels at least three hundred years before the first printing press. Moreover, while referring *en passant* to 'print-capitalism', Anderson fails to embed printing itself in broader early modern processes of commercial intensification. By increasing the range and speed with which people and ideas circulated, commodification not only enhanced the accessibility of printed materials. With growing force after 1500, it also drove peasants to the market, widened exposure to local information, both oral and printed, and pulled local communities into more extended knowledge networks. Surely European societies in 1500 – with their urban hierarchies, mobile wealth, periodically assertive peasantries, and expanding vernacular cultures – resembled those of 1800 far more closely than societies of, say, 1000.[8] Finally, the combination of rising literacy – itself a function not merely of print, but of market integration – and pre-industrial urbanization helped shift political authority from the crown to educated public opinion, and eventually to the 'nation'. The gradual nature of these changes helps to explain why, although printing itself was in place by the late 1400s, nationalism did not develop for another three centuries.

In the same way that nationalism and pre-1750 political solidarities may be seen as distinct but related sub-categories of political ethnicity, should we not conclude that nineteenth-century industrial communications offered a remarkably powerful version of integrative processes underway since the late medieval era? So far as I know, despite its obvious logic, no scholar has made this claim for centuries-long processual – as opposed to intellectual or terminological – continuity. Karl Deutsch's classic *Nationalism and Social Communication* remains a nineteenth-century orphan.

But if the study of political ethnicity suffers from undue segmentation between historic periods, it suffers more obviously from geographic restriction. Such discussions of nationalist antecedents

[5]John Patrick Montano, *The Roots of English Colonialism in Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Robert Bartlett, *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization, and Cultural Change 950–1350* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 201–3, and chaps. 8–10; R. R. Davies, *The First English Empire: Power and Identities in the British Isles, 1093–1343* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 113–41, 197–8.

[6]Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication*; Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*; Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*.

[7]Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

[8]Len Scales and Oliver Zimmer, 'Introduction', in *Power and the Nation*, ed. Scales and Zimmer, 6; Jan de Vries, *European Urbanization, 1500–1800* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1740022820000194 Published online by Cambridge University Press

as we have focus overwhelmingly on Europe, to the neglect of Asia. In part, this imbalance reflects the priority that historians have given to economic comparisons between Europe and Asia, and in part it reflects the fact that vast imperial size and persistent domination by Inner Asians of nomadic origin rendered India, China, and Southwest Asia – Asia's largest, most populous regions and home to its most celebrated empires – unpromising sites for vertical solidarity. Elsewhere I have discussed the impediments that tiny Inner Asian conquest elites posed to political ethnicity in what I term the 'exposed zone' of Eurasia.[9] There was, however, a second category of Asian polities that had rather more in common with Europe and, along with most of Europe, comprised what I term Eurasia's 'protected zone' – protected, that is, by geography against Inner Asians. Principally this meant Japan, Korea, Sri Lanka, and the kingdoms of mainland Southeast Asia. In these areas, as in western and northern Europe, smaller political units, freedom from Inner Asian occupation, and a correspondingly modest cultural gap between rulers and subjects favoured a stronger sense of inclusion.

The striking point is that, although the protected rimlands, ranged around Eurasia's farthest extremities, had minimal contact with one another, political ethnicities throughout this zone showed considerable similarity in chronology, dynamics, and symbolic function. The areas we now refer to as Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, Japan, France, Britain, Spain, the Netherlands, Russia, and so forth all became increasingly cohesive cultural domains between 1450 and 1800, and with particular force after about 1600. In each case, ethnic, linguistic, and religious usages associated with central elites spread down the social scale and horizontally across the landscape. Especially along the frontiers, such features became emblems of political affiliation.

In these ways, between 1400 and 1850 political ethnicity in the rimlands of Asia and Europe prefigured in varying degrees those claims to cultural unity and that progressive incorporation that became central to nineteenth-century European nationalism. But why should kindred dynamics have operated in regions that had little or no contact with one another? How was religious universalism reconciled with cultural particularism? And why ultimately in western Europe alone did political ethnicity evolve into 'nations' and 'nationalism' as defined above?

The intertwined goals of this article, then, are threefold: first, to identify in Europe continuities and cleavages between early modern and modern (that is, post-1750) ideologies; second, to chart and explain between 1400 and 1850 the politicization of ethnicity in parts of both Europe and Asia; and third, to explain how ultimately, despite comparable long-term chronologies and dynamics, substantive understandings of political community in western Europe and the Asian rimlands diverged markedly. In other words, while compressing the chronological divide in Europe and the political divide in Eurasia, I also emphasize growing western European idiosyncrasy after 1550/1600. To weaken a historiography of European exceptionalism for one period, only to strengthen it for a later period may seem inconsistent. But that is where the evidence leads.

Obviously, there was no 'typical' European or Asian society. Here I focus on two case studies, England/Britain and Myanmar (formerly known as Burma). I choose these examples because at the start of our period both kingdoms controlled similarly sized populations and territories and were of similar regional importance; because their political trajectories were surprisingly similar; and because the juxtaposition of colonizer and colony, societies long regarded as incomparable, offers an ironic comment on Eurasian unity. (Moreover, my knowledge of early Burmese affords

[9]Victor Lieberman, *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, c. 800–1830, Volume 2: Mainland Mirrors* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), chaps. 5 and 6. Nicholas Tackett's *The Origins of the Chinese Nation: Song China and the Forging of an East Asian World Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017) offers at best a partial exception to this pattern because the Northern Song dynasty (960–1127), on which Tackett focuses, the Southern Song (1127–1279), and the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) were all overwhelmed by Inner Asian-led militaries. Note, moreover, that what Tackett describes as 'nationalism' under the Song is more accurately characterized as pre-national political ethnicity.

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access to primary Asian sources.) But this is merely a preliminary schema, an entree to a book-length study that will include four other protected-zone realms and three Inner Asian-led empires. The degree to which Britain and Myanmar represented wider regional patterns therefore remains to be seen.[10]

A final caveat: in so far as they failed to anticipate European-style nationalism, I am not suggesting that Asian societies were guilty of some historic failure – hardly a beguiling thesis as China seems set to inherit the twenty-first century. Western Europe did not embody the only form of political modernity, because the defining feature of the early modern state, I submit, was not popular sovereignty, which *was* uniquely western European, but enhanced coordinating capacity, which was far more general. My argument is less invidious: I seek merely to show how two polities at the opposite ends of Eurasia responded to similar pressures in similar fashion, but in so doing configured and deployed ethnicity quite differently.

The dynamics of ethnic politicization

We begin, then, by considering Myanmar–British resemblances. In both realms political ethnicity between approximately 1400 and 1850 cohered through a synergy of five factors: demographic and economic expansion to the political benefit of emergent cores; accelerating cultural circulation that also privileged central districts; movements of domestic pacification, which strengthened in-group solidarity; rising interstate warfare, which bolstered out-group exclusion; and state efforts to define and police cultural boundaries.

Until the early seventeenth century, populations in Myanmar and in Britain (that is to say, England, Wales, and Scotland) were of comparable size. In 1400, in the midst of climatic downturn and political disorder, Myanmar's population probably hovered around 2 million. By 1600, following an agrarian and commercial revival, it may have exceeded 3 million.[11] At the start of the fifteenth century, Britain, like Myanmar beset by climatic and political upheavals, had only 2.9 million people, but by 1600 it supported just under 5 million. Thereafter, as we shall see, structural changes in capital costs, agriculture, foreign trade, and industry produced a British demographic acceleration without Myanmar parallel.[12] Nonetheless, throughout this entire period Myanmar as well as Britain benefited from Smithian specialization and from at least limited progress at the margins of technology. Both in Europe and Southeast Asia, albeit more

[10]Although I have not previously written about England/Britain, my forthcoming *Embracing the World, Hating Your Neighbors: Ethnicity and Loyalty in Asia and Europe, c. 1200–1850* will include a discussion of that region. There was no British polity until 1707, but before that date I use 'Britain' and 'British' as geographic referents to the island of Great Britain, encompassing England, Wales, and Scotland.

[11]Victor Lieberman, 'Secular Trends in Burmese Economic History, c. 1350–1830, and Their Implications for State Formation', *Modern Asian Studies* 25 (1991): 11–12; Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce*, vol. 1 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 14, table 2. Without explaining their sources or methodology, Colin McEvedy and Richard Jones, *Atlas of World Population History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1980), 191, offer somewhat higher population estimates.

[12]In 1800, the British population was 10.5 million, and by 1850 it was 21 million, while Myanmar's population in 1800 may have been *c.* 4.6 million. See Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce*, on whom I primarily rely, and McEvedy and Jones, *Atlas of World Population History*. Moreover, although fluctuating, Myanmar-controlled territories could be twice those of Britain, so British population densities were always substantially higher. On British demographic and economic trends, see McEvedy and Jones, *Atlas of World Population History*, 43, 47; Gervase Rosser, 'The Quality of Life', in *The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, ed. Ralph Griffiths (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 31–57; J. A. Sharpe, 'Economy and Society', in *The Sixteenth Century*, ed. Patrick Collinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 17–44; J. A. Sharpe, 'The Economic and Social Context', in *The Seventeenth Century*, ed. Jenny Wormald (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 151–81; Martin Daunton, 'The Wealth of the Nation', in *The Eighteenth Century*, ed. Paul Langford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 141–80; E. A. Wrigley, *Poverty, Progress, and Population* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Robert C. Allen, *The British Industrial Revolution in Global Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Mark Overton, *Agricultural Revolution in England: The Transformation of the Agrarian Economy, 1500–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1740022820000194 Published online by Cambridge University Press

dramatically in western Europe, maritime trade spurred commodification by introducing foreign bullion, novel crops, and consumer goods, and by fostering exports and concentrating demand.

Such growth multiplied in cumulative fashion the political authority – and the ethnic/cultural influence – of the most densely populated districts, primarily the fertile fields of south-eastern England and the Irrawaddy basin, over less favoured areas, namely northern and western England, Scotland, Ireland, and a vast upland zone surrounding the Irrawaddy lowlands. Even if the centre and the periphery grew at the same pace, the centre's initial economic superiority ensured a constantly increasing absolute advantage. But in fact, given the concentration of foreign trade, population, and political patronage in each centre, growth rates in the core tended to exceed those in outer zones, with obvious military and political implications. Not only the scale, but the nature of each political economy changed. Both Britain and Myanmar saw sustained movements from subsistence to market production, and from service obligations and land grants to cash taxes and cash remuneration. Over the long term, such changes enhanced revenue extraction and central control. Likewise, in both realms the rising importance of mobile wealth made provincial elites themselves eager to strengthen the crown's ability to safeguard market access, standardize litigation, and redistribute revenues.[13]

Why the chronology of political integration should have been roughly synchronized not only between Britain and Southeast Asia, but across much of Eurasia is a problem I have sought to address at length elsewhere. In essence, correlations reflected the interplay of hemispheric climate with epidemics and global trade. The latter disseminated advanced firearms, which in one area after another aided political centralization. Commerce, as noted, also brought consumables and precious metals to lubricate exchange, while stimulating specialized production and marketing.[14]

Political specificities diverged, of course. On the whole, notwithstanding the loss of England's French holdings and the Wars of the Roses, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries royal institutions and territories remained more stable in England than in Myanmar. And English/British overseas expansion after about 1650 had no Myanmar parallel. In a larger sense, however,

[13]For overviews of English/British socioeconomic and political history, see Griffiths, ed., *Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*; Collinson, ed., *Sixteenth Century*; Wormald, ed., *Seventeenth Century*; Langford, *Eighteenth Century*; Allen, *British Industrial Revolution*; Overton, *Agricultural Revolution in England*; Richard Britnell, *The Commercialisation of English Society 1000–1500*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Michael Braddick, *State Formation in Early Modern England c. 1550–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Steve Hindle, *The State and Social Change in Early Modern England, 1550–1640* (New York: Palgrave, 2002); Robert Bucholz and Newton Key, *Early Modern England 1485–1714* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009); Steve Pincus, *1688: The First Modern Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Alexander Grant and Keith Stringer, eds., *Uniting the Kingdom? The Making of British History* (London: Routledge, 1995); John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688–1783* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988); Mark Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed: Britain, 1603–1714* (London: Penguin, 1996); Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837*, rev. ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); J. C. D. Clark, *English Society 1660–1832: Religion, Ideology and Politics during the Ancien Regime* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). On Myanmar socioeconomic and political change, see Victor Lieberman, *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, c. 800–1830, Volume 1: Integration on the Mainland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), chap. 2; Victor Lieberman, *Burmese Administrative Cycles: Anarchy and Conquest, c. 1580–1760* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); Lieberman, 'Secular Trends in Burmese Economic History'; Michael Aung-Thwin, *The Mists of Ramanna: The Legend that Was Lower Burma* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005); Michael Aung-Thwin, *Myanmar in the Fifteenth Century: A Tale of Two Kingdoms* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2017); Michael Aung-Thwin, *Irrigation in the Heartland of Burma* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University, Center for Southeast Asian Studies, 1990); William Koenig, *The Burmese Polity 1752–1819: Politics, Administration, and Organization in the Early Kon-baung Period* (Ann Arbor: Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, University of Michigan, 1990); Thant Myint-U, *The Making of Modern Burma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), chaps. 1–4.

[14]Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, vol. 2; Victor Lieberman, 'Charter State Collapse in Southeast Asia, c. 1250–1400, as a Problem in Regional and World History', *American Historical Review* 116 (2011): 937–63; Victor Lieberman and Brendan Buckley, 'The Impact of Climate on Southeast Asia, c. 950–1820: New Findings', *Modern Asian Studies* 46 (2012): 1049–96.

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cyclic-cum-secular rhythms coincided, as population trends suggest. The agriculturally beneficent Medieval Climate Anomaly (*c.* 1050–1300) facilitated population growth and political integration in both regions. A new post-1350 climatic regime was associated with a variety of interlaced disorders. But in the sixteenth century plague abatement, foreign trade, and generally improved climate brought renewed expansion and political integration, movements which, despite an ever widening economic gap between Myanmar and Britain, continued in both realms into the nineteenth century.

As commerce swelled central resources, it also accelerated the circulation of cultural artefacts, to the benefit once again of core districts. Here then was a second spur to political and, ultimately, ethnic integration. In frontier areas of Ireland, Wales, and Lower Myanmar, English and Myanmar settlers expelled, marginalized, and assimilated alien populations. Cultural standardization also advanced, albeit less violently, in long-settled districts, where seasonal migrants, peddlers, entertainers, and peasant producers helped diffuse town customs to the countryside. At a higher social level and over longer distances, the royal court, elite schools, and social connections drew to each capital a stream of provincial notables and clerics/monks who, on returning home, introduced central religious practices, fashions, dialects, and ethnic markers. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, moreover, a novel consumerism began to erode vertical social distinctions in Britain and, to a lesser extent, in coastal Southeast Asia.

In both regions rising literacy helped to standardize communal identities and culture more generally. The incentives to literacy were multiple. Governments demanded more local record-keepers. Religious reform bred a hunger for textual authority. Literacy promised social mobility. Economic growth provided the wherewithal for schools and teachers, lent reading greater practical value, and opened paths along which written materials could migrate. The eleventh- and twelfth-century Francophone Norman assault on Anglo-Saxon culture, including its written traditions, had no Myanmar counterpart. But in both realms the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw an expansion of vernacular writing – in early modern English or in Myanmar, at the expense of Latin, French, or Pali – for commercial, religious, and literary purposes. Remarkably, although printing was more efficient than manuscript production, by 1800 widespread monastic education in Myanmar supported male literacy rates comparable to those in England. In both realms, sermons and public readings widened substantially the ranks of illiterates exposed to written information.[15]

[15]On long-term cultural integration, including literacy, in the British Isles, see items detailed in n. 13. See also David Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); David Vincent, *Literacy and Popular Culture: England 1750–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England 1500–1700* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003); John Kerrigan, *Archipelagic English* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), part VI; Albert Baugh and Thomas Cable, *A History of the English Language*, 6th ed. (London: Routledge, 2013); S. J. Connolly, *Divided Kingdom: Ireland 1630–1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), esp. chaps. 7 and 8. On cultural trends in Myanmar, see Michael Charney's path-breaking *Powerful Learning: Buddhist Literati and the Throne in Burma's Last Dynasty, 1752–1885* (Ann Arbor: Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, University of Michigan, 2006); Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, vol. 2, chap. 2; Maung Thu-ta, *Sa-hso-daw-mya ahtok-pati* (*Literary Biographies*) (Rangoon: Zwe-sapei-yeik-myon, 1971); D. Christian Lammerts, *Buddhist Law in Burma: A History of Dhammasattha Texts and Jurisprudence, 1250–1850* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2018); Alexandra Green, *Buddhist Visual Cultures, Rhetoric, and Narrative in Late Burmese Wall Paintings* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2018); Alexey Kirichenko, 'From *Thathanadaw* to Theravada Buddhism', in *Casting Faiths: Imperialism and the Transformation of Religion in East and Southeast Asia*, ed. Thomas DuBois (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 23–45; Alexey Kirichenko, 'Dynamics of Monastic Mobility and Networking in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Upper Burma', in *Buddhist Dynamics in Premodern and Early Modern Southeast Asia*, ed. D. Christian Lammerts (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2015), 333–72; Alexey Kirichenko, 'The Making of the Culprit', *Journal of Burma Studies* 15 (2011): 189–229. Note, however, that Anthony Reid (personal communication, 2019) has suggested that regnal cohesion in Southeast Asia relied less heavily on written texts than in Europe, and more heavily on public demonstrations of religious orthopraxy, a view consistent with the robe-wrapping dispute that roiled the Myanmar monkhood for much of the eighteenth century.

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Along with economic centripetalism and cultural circulation, a third spur to ethnic unity, broadly congruent between Britain and Myanmar, was a reduction in intra-communal violence within each kingdom's core. Most obviously, this was a function of political pacification, which, I suggested, benefited from commercial shifts. Steven Pinker has linked pacification to trade more indirectly by showing from the early 1500s that stronger market ties joined modestly improved living standards to expand the circle of reciprocity and reduce domestic homicides and mayhem.[16] Sanctifying such changes were textually based movements of religious reform, which expressed a self-sufficient internal logic but which also benefited from rising literacy and trade. By promoting self-discipline and community obligation, from the early 1500s both the Protestant Reformation and Sinhalese-based Theravada purification helped to align personal salvation with public welfare, to fuse religious obligation with communal loyalty, and, in the long run (lethal English sectarianism notwithstanding), to strengthen ethnic cohesion. Religious reform created infrastructures – schools, churches, Buddhist monasteries, models of family organization – that compensated for the still limited reach of officialdom. Such developments strengthened central ethnicity by nurturing claims to superiority over 'backward' minorities within the realm (such as the Irish and the Myanmar hill peoples) and over 'benighted' peoples without (French and Siamese, for example). This, then, was a double exclusion. But, ironically, insofar as minority elites sometimes internalized the pretensions of the mainstream culture, reform increased the potential for inter-ethnic cooperation.[17]

As polities, benefiting from economic and cultural integration, expanded their territories, conflicts grew more expensive and administratively taxing. Warfare, our fourth dynamic, reinforced the homogenizing effect of religious/cultural reform by strengthening the state and promoting ethnic stereotypes and tales of communal danger and salvation. From the twelfth to fifteenth centuries, although Plantagenet goals were dynastic rather than national, their French, Scottish, Welsh, and Irish campaigns bred periodic anti-alien expressions. Yet more consistently, during the gruelling Anglo-French wars of 1689 to 1815, self-congratulatory contrasts between Protestant truth and popish 'superstition, servitude, and poverty' helped English, Welsh, Scottish, and Irish Protestants forge a novel overarching British identity. Myanmar armies, which in the eighteenth century fought a series of brutal wars against Siam, Manipur, and southern rebels, boasted of their martial prowess and Buddhist devotion, while mocking their foes' pitiful weakness and religious ignorance.[18]

Finally, as organizational capacities improved and wars valorized cohesion, states sought to define and police cultural norms. In keeping with each monarchy's soteriological *raison d'être*, these efforts were pre-eminently religious, hence ostensibly universal; but, to the extent that each throne controlled ecclesiastic organization and espoused idiosyncratic doctrinal or ritual understandings, identification with official religion tended to promote identification with central ethnicity. Thus Christian and Buddhist regimes strove not only to purify texts and enforce orthopraxis, but to proselytize and/or repress religiously heterodox minorities: Catholic Irish and Catholic Scots Highlanders, Shans before their conversion to Buddhism, and animist hill tribes. To such religious concerns must be added efforts to unify lay status hierarchies, to prescribe architectural and literary standards, and to spread capital dialects to provincial courts. Less intentionally, by appealing to a combination of snobbery and ambition, Ava (the Myanmar capital) and London afforded provincial elites an incentive to engage in what might be termed self-Myanmarization and self-Anglicization. The critical element in both official and spontaneous

[16]Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined* (New York: Penguin Books, 2011), 60–3.

[17]Philip Gorski, *The Disciplinary Revolution: Calvinism and the Rise of the State in Early Modern Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Brad S. Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation: How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012); Anthony W. Marx, *Faith in Nation: Exclusionary Origins of Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Braddick, *State Formation in Early Modern England*, part IV.

[18]See discussion below and bibliography in n. 24.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1740022820000194 Published online by Cambridge University Press

local transformations was an exemplary centre that could define and epitomize cultural excellence.[19]

The progress of ethnic consolidation and politicization

In response to these forces, in Britain and Myanmar in the centuries after 1400 political ethnicity underwent three broad transformations. First, ethnicity in each core grew more horizontally and vertically coherent, while core ethnicity expanded to new districts. Second, in outlying zones that retained distinct ethnic personalities, central cultural practices nonetheless gained cachet, at least on an elite level. Third, ethnicity grew more overtly political and figured more prominently in official discourse. I will sketch these changes for each realm.

The population of western mainland Southeast Asia in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries was divided among tribal peoples in mountains north and east of the Irrawaddy basin, Shans in mountain valleys adjacent to tribal peoples, Myanmars and minor ethnic groups in the northern basin (Upper Myanmar), and Mons concentrated in the south (Lower Myanmar). Contemporary inscriptions thus distinguished between 'the Myanmar country' (*myanma-pyei*), 'the Mon country' (*talaing-pyei*), and the 'Shan country' (*shan-pyei*), but each region was itself deeply fragmented. Whereas in the thirteenth century the northern empire of Pagan had enjoyed a nominal authority over most of the basin and a highland fringe, by 1400 the same area supported nine or ten independent kingdoms, each with distinctive historical claims, sacred sites, and in some cases dialects. Ethnic fragmentation and personalized allegiances ensured that all armies and courts had significant ethnic minorities, that self-interest led predominantly Myanmar polities to ally with Mon polities against fellow Myanmars, and that cross-ethnic defections bore no particular stigma.[20]

With accelerating force between 1500 and 1825, however, the population of the basin became overwhelmingly Myanmar and the category 'Myanmar' assumed a new solidity. Directly and indirectly, these processes benefited from economic renewal. Cultivated acreage in Upper Myanmar more than doubled. Better-yielding rice strains, more extensive double-cropping, the spread of cotton, peanut, maize, tobacco, and tea cultivation, and new handicraft industries promoted regional specialization and interdependence. Maritime trade and overland trade with China powerfully reinforced domestic trends. Symptomatic of commercial expansion, urban populations and the number of market towns grew notably, commercial contracts proliferated, and land sales, hitherto in kind or in a mixture of cash and kind, by 1830 were almost exclusively in cash.[21] Greater wealth permitted a marked proliferation of Buddhist monasteries, whose residents, in a symbiotic relation with lay officials, not only promoted popular literacy but sought with demonstrable success to promote an ethic of social discipline and respect for royal authority. These were necessary, if insufficient, preconditions for a less fractured, more territorially inclusive Buddhist-cum-Myanmar identity. Economic growth facilitated political integration more directly by allowing ambitious kingdoms to expand their revenues, armies, and territories in a Darwinian contest that continued until a single state dominated the entire western mainland. This was the achievement of the Toungoo dynasty (1486–1752), whose administrative and

[19]See bibliography detailed in n. 15.

[20]See inscriptions in U Ngein Maung, ed., *Shei-haung myan-ma kyauk-sa-mya, s. 700–797* (*Old Burmese Inscriptions, 1338–1435*), vol. 4 (Rangoon: Directorate of Historical Research, 1983), 3–4, 44, 203, 207–9, 230; U Ngein Maung, ed., *Shei-haung myan-ma kyauk-sa-mya, s. 800–998* (*Old Burmese Inscriptions, 1438–1636*), vol. 5 (Rangoon: Directorate of Historical Research, 1987), 21, 23, 47, 54, 95, 99, 115; and inscription nos. 619, 644, 654, 666, 667, 670, 682, 697, 698, 789, 886, 916, 934, 941, 1014, and 1043 as enumerated in Charles Duroiselle, comp., *A List of Inscriptions Found in Burma*, part I (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing, 1921); U Kala, *Maha-ya-zawin-gyi* (*The Great Chronicle*) (hereafter cited as *MYG*), vol. 1, ed. Saya Pwa (Rangoon: Pyei-gyi Mandaing, 1926), 366–440, and vol. 2, ed. Saya Pwa (Rangoon: Burma Research Society, 1932), 1–147.

[21]Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, vol. 1, 139–49, 164–79.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1740022820000194 Published online by Cambridge University Press

military reforms were refined by Kon-baung kings (1752–1885). Rooted in the northern Myanmar homeland, both dynasties promoted Myanmar ethnicity not only by ending centuries of polycentrism and thus creating a single focus for Myanmar loyalty, but also by deliberately privileging Myanmar norms over minority traditions.[22]

Finally, economic growth disseminated Myanmar culture by facilitating the physical movement of people. As interregional trade expanded, monks, peddlers, entertainers, and pilgrims, all bearers of predominantly Myanmar culture, circulated more easily throughout Upper Myanmar itself, and between Upper Myanmar, Lower Myanmar, and the Shan Highlands. More dramatically, overpopulation in Upper Myanmar, a function of ecology and superior agrarian technique, pushed large numbers of settlers into relatively open tracts in the middle and lower Irrawaddy basin. The southern progress of Myanmar settlement between about 1300 and 1700 can be traced in the extension of Myanmar place names, the adoption of Myanmar orthographic conventions and loan words in Mon inscriptions, and the gradual retreat of the Mon language.[23]

Myanmar encroachment engendered a bitter counter-movement, emphasizing the past glories of southern kingdoms, that exploded in 1740 with the massacre of Myanmars in the chief southern city. By this time, Myanmars were already referring to themselves as a 'lineage', a 'race', a 'people' (*lu-myo*). In response to the southern rebellion and a southern invasion and occupation of Upper Myanmar that lasted to 1754, the first Kon-baung king, Alaung-hpaya, appealed explicitly to ethnic unity. Myanmar-speakers who joined the Mons were pilloried as traitors to the 'Myanmar people' (*myan-ma lu-myo*). Alaung-hpaya ordered Mon prisoners killed, but Myanmars spared. A widely circulating omen promised that, although the head of the fish (referring to the last Toungoo king, who was executed by his Mon captors in 1754) had grown putrid, the tail of the fish – the Myanmar people – was yet vital and would flap about.[24] Starting in 1755, in what may be termed rolling genocide, a sustained Myanmar offensive effectively destroyed Mon civilization through expanded colonization, massacres, expulsions, and inducements to assimilation – inducements which show that, whatever genealogical claims Myanmars produced, ethnicity had an elective, context-dependent quality that made joining the dominant community both feasible and welcome. About 1560 it was said that Mons in Lower Myanmar

[22]*Ibid*., 131–49, 164–202.

[23]*Ibid*., 133–34; see also the India Office sources given in n. 24.

[24]Of the following sources describing eighteenth-century ethnic conflict, the first ten were written between 1740 and *c*. 1806 and the last three between *c*. 1806 and 1833: Burmese translation of the Mon history of the Monk of Athwa, Oriental MS no. 3464, fols. 139–40, 148–9, British Library, London (hereafter cited as BL); Thi-ri-u-zana, *Law-ka-byu-ha kyan* (*Book of Court Punctilio*), ed. U Hpo Lat (Rangoon: Ministry of Culture, 1968), 4; *Letters to Fort St. George*, vol. 26 (1741) (Madras, 1916), 8–9, 35–37, India Office Records (hereafter cited as IOR), BL; 'Abstract of Letters Received from "Coast" and "Bay" 1734–44', Correspondence with India (Examiner's Office), E/4/4, 332, IOR, BL; *Reprint from Dalrymple's Oriental Repertory, 1791–97 of Portions Relating to Burma* (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing, 1926), 1:133–42 (an account from 1755); Hkin Hkin Sein, ed., *Alaung-min-taya amein-daw-mya* (*Edicts of King Alaung-hpaya*) (Rangoon: Ministry of Culture, 1964), 3, 9, 28, 67–121, 129, 175–84, 212–13; Let-we-naw-yahta, 'Alaung-min-taya-gyi ayei-daw-bon' ('Biography of King Alaung-hpaya'), in *Alaung-hpaya ayei-daw-bon hna-saung-dwe* (*Two Biographies of King Alaung-hpaya*), ed. U Hla Tin (Rangoon: Ministry of Culture, 1961), 29, 131, 150; Twin-thin-taik-wun, 'Alaung-min-taya-gyi ayei-daw-bon' ('Biography of King Alaung-hpaya'), in *ibid*., 162, 170–1, 183–4, 230; Than Tun, comp., *The Royal Orders of Burma, A.D. 1598–1885*, vol. 4 (Kyoto: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University, 1986), 75, 83, 388, and vol. 5 (Kyoto: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University, 1986), 333; Michael Symes, *An Account of an Embassy to the Kingdom of Ava* (London: W. Bulmer and Co., 1800), 12–13; *Hman-nan maha-ya-zawin-daw-gyi* (*The Great Glass Palace Royal Chronicle*), vol. 3 (Mandalay: Upper Burma Press, 1908), 380–4; U Tin, comp., *Kon-baung-zet maha-ya-zawin-daw-gyi* (*The Great Royal Chronicle of the Kon-baung Dynasty*), 3 vols. (Rangoon: Le-di Mandaing, 1967–8), 1:100, 105–6, 114, 130, 311–13; John Crawfurd, *Journal of an Embassy from the Governor General of India to the Court of Ava*, 2 vols. (London: R. Bentley, 1834), 2:37. See too the discussion of ethnic patterns in Victor Lieberman, 'Ethnic Politics in Eighteenth-Century Burma', *Modern Asian Studies* 12 (1978): 455–82; Charney, *Powerful Learning*, chap. 6.

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'are as numerous as hairs on a bullock, but we Myanmars are as few as the horns'.[25] However, by 1825, following the failure of fresh southern revolts, perhaps 80% of the people in Lower Myanmar used Myanmar as their primary tongue, sported Myanmar hairstyles, earrings, and tattoos, and identified in some contexts as 'Myanmars'. To adopt these traits was to proclaim one's loyalty to the Myanmar-led state in the interior.[26]

Meanwhile, north and east of the Irrawaddy basin, Buddhist Shan tributaries, without abandoning Shan ethnicity, also incorporated Myanmar themes in elite religion, art, music, literature, and court organization – to which they gained access through Myanmar court patronage and the movement of Myanmar monks and traders. In turn, Shan leaders served as a conduit for the transmission of select lowland motifs to more isolated, illiterate upland hill tribes. In these ways Shan principalities, which began to come under firm Myanmar control from the 1550s, grew distinct from principalities subject to Siam. Thus cohered in western mainland Southeast Asia a Myanmar-dominated cultural and political ecumene in which Myanmar influence receded with distance from the capital and with altitude.[27] Before the sixteenth century it is difficult to talk about 'Myanmar' as a coherent sphere, but from the mid or late 1500s this becomes more feasible.

I would emphasize, however, that in 1825 the Myanmar empire (in contemporary usage, *myan-ma naing-ngan-daw*) was still conceived as an agglomeration of kingdoms, often with distinct ethnic personalities, all joined by loyalty to a Myanmar sovereign who was venerated as World Ruler (*cakkavatti*) and Future Buddha and whose obligation to promote True Doctrine was expressly pan-ethnic. There was no secular system of thought, no conceptual vocabulary that could elevate Myanmar ethnicity per se over Buddhist universalism. On the contrary, the institution of kingship was rooted in Buddhist scriptures, and the more numerous and diverse a High King's tributary domains, the more credible his canonical claim to be World Ruler. Myanmars reconciled Buddhist universalism with Myanmar particularism by stressing not ethnic virtue but their religious fidelity and Upper Myanmar's unique early association with Gotama Buddha. In practical terms, moreover, Myanmars, although dominant in the basin, were demographically insignificant in outlying sectors.

For all these reasons, absent a direct challenge to Myanmar pre-eminence, the royal court was generally content to leave minority peoples in peace. Arguably, it was only the aggressive Mon challenge that led Kon-baung officials to suppress symbols of Mon ethnicity. But after that threat subsided, although Myanmar settlement and assimilation continued, the court relaxed its restrictions and sought to rebuild a polyethnic clientele.[28] Even in the 1750s a handful of Mons had supported Alaung-hpaya, while some southern Myanmars fought against him. In short, political appeals to ethnicity were conjunctural, rather than sustained, theorized, or institutional. The polity rested not on horizontal ties between uniform subjects but on individualized, vertical patron–client ties between the High King (*min-eka-yaza*) and tributary kings, his principal ministers, and relatives. In popular understanding, royal power flowed from the king's accumulated good karma in previous incarnations, rather than from anything resembling popular elevation in this life, and the state was the king's personal possession. In all these ways, Myanmar political ethnicity may be distinguished from modern nationalism.

[25]*Han-tha-wadi hsin-byu-shin ayei-daw-bon* (*Biography of the King of the White Elephants*) (Rangoon: Sun Press, 1918), 8. Although it may have taken artistic liberties, this work was written not long after the events described, and there is no reason to doubt its basic demographic portrait (H. L. Shorto, personal communication, 1974).

[26]On the progress of Myanmar ethnicity in the south, see Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, vol. 1, 133–4; H. L. Shorto, personal communication, 1974; W. Hunter, *A Concise Account of the Kingdom of Pegu* (Calcutta: John Hay, 1785), 28–30; Francis Buchanan, 'Account of Burma and Pegu', Home Miscellaneous Series 388, fol. 599, IOR, BL; 1145 and 1164 Han-tha-wadi, Martaban, Bassein, and Prome *sit-tans*, private collection of Prof. Yi Yi; *MYG*, 2:145–439 *passim*; and U Kala, *MYG*, vol. 3, ed. Hsaya U Hkin So (Rangoon: Han-tha-wadi Press, 1961), 1–112 *passim*.

[27]Lieberman, 'Ethnic Politics'; Lieberman, *Burmese Administrative Cycles*, chaps. 4–5; Lieberman, *Strange Parallels*, vol. 2, chap. 2; Koenig, *Burmese Polity*, chap. 1.

[28]Charney, *Powerful Learning*, 137–45; Lieberman, 'Ethnic Politics'.

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In the British Isles we find certain broadly comparable patterns and trajectories. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, as Pagan extended its authority in Lower Myanmar and some upland districts, the Plantagenets subdued Wales and extensive parts of Ireland. If Scotland escaped conquest, Norman-Plantagenet culture, introduced by Norman nobles invited to the Scottish court, had almost as great an impact north of the border as south. However, from 1320/1350 to the early 1500s, as the Irrawaddy basin fragmented, Plantagenet influence in Ireland and in Scotland contracted sharply in response to problems of climatic deterioration and overextension familiar from Southeast Asia.[29] Admittedly, in south-east Britain itself, despite peasant revolts and savage intra-elite struggles, royal institutions themselves remained relatively intact. The decline of the use of the French language among Norman-descended nobles, the development of Middle English as a serviceable vernacular, and, above all, the loss of Plantagenet holdings in France in 1453 contributed to a more distinct 'English' elite persona. But that identity had minimal ties to pre-Norman traditions, and Middle English, displaying a variety of scribal and regional dialectical forms, was at best a modest instrument of cultural integration.

Starting in the early sixteenth century, however, at the same time as Upper Myanmar revived and extended its authority, the Tudor dynasty (1485–1603) initiated a movement of political and cultural integration that would continue and gain strength dramatically into the nineteenth century. In brief, the English landed nobility surrendered claims to political autonomy, and literate strata in northern and western England came to accept a south-eastern linguistic/cultural template. Ties deepened as well between England and the archipelagic periphery, with Wales and Ireland becoming formally incorporated between 1535 and 1542 into an ever more powerful London-centred polity. In 1603 and 1707 Scotland followed suit. Although Britain lacked a system of tributary rulers, the persistence to 1707 of juridically separate kingdoms for England, Ireland, and Scotland, unified only in the person of the monarch, represented an intermediate phase between full independence and full subordination. As such, this evolution broadly resembled the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century transformation of independent Irrawaddy basin kingdoms into provinces governed at first by royal princes and later by short-term non-royal appointees.[30]

By transforming one of the most Catholic countries of Europe into an expressly anti-Catholic realm, the Reformation, traumatic though it was for much of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, ultimately heightened (some might say, created) England's sense of unified mission and ethnic distinction. Shared Protestant fear of and hostility to Catholic France in turn helped England and Scotland transcend their traditional enmity and cemented English ties to Wales and to Anglo-Irish elements. At the same time, of course, Protestant–Catholic hostility poisoned relations with Ireland's Gaelic Catholic majority, who became subject to an Anglo-Scottish colonization and displacement no less brutal, although ultimately less successful, than the contemporaneous Myanmar assault on Mon civilization.

Reinforcing religious-military spurs to British integration were economic forces. Feeding on the post-Black Death reversion of much good farmland to pasture, the production chiefly for European markets of 'new drapery' high-quality woollen cloths in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries boosted English exports, which contributed substantially to London's rapid growth and the development of a high-wage urban economy. As we shall see, these changes were followed in the eighteenth century by major agrarian and manufacturing changes and by a surge in colonial trade. As England's commercial, financial, and cultural heart, home to the printing industry, chief

[29]Davies, *First English Empire*; Lieberman, 'Charter State Collapse'.

[30]Lieberman, *Burmese Administrative Cycles*, chaps. 1, 2, 5. In 1535–42, hitherto autonomous Welsh principalities and marches were incorporated into the Kingdom of England. In 1541, Ireland was declared a kingdom that was joined to the Kingdom of England in a personal union of crowns. Likewise, from 1603 monarchs ruled simultaneously as King (or Queen) of Scotland and King (or Queen) of England, but in 1707 Scotland and England merged to form the Kingdom of Great Britain. Finally, in 1801, the Kingdom of Great Britain and the Kingdom of Ireland joined to form the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland with a single parliament.

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port, and hub of a growing road network, London became the arbiter of taste whose judgements radiated not only across England, but through Anglophone parts of Wales, Scotland, and Ireland.

Nationalism emerges in the British Isles

In sum, at the far ends of Eurasia curiously parallel dynamics drove political and cultural integration. Moreover, through the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries similar assumptions, at a reasonable level of abstraction, animated both the Myanmar and English kingdoms. Sovereignty resided solely in the ruler, whose authority derived from cosmic law (God or karma) and dynastic right, and to whom loyalty was personal. Insofar as the crown's ultimate *raison d'être* was soteriological, its embrace of secular culture remained qualified and ambivalent. Sanctioned by the cosmos, inequality and hierarchy were inherently moral because they were integral to social order. Thus, a Myanmar king warned in 1694 that, unless his subjects remained divided into grades of noble, medium, and base, anarchy would ensue.[31] Likewise Tudor and Stuart writers likened social estates to parts of the body (the king the head, peasants the feet), each obliged to perform its assigned role so that the organism as a whole could function. Not horizontal community, but a common subordination joined these horizontal ranks, each in theory secure in its particularity. As subjects rather than citizens, all but the highest stratum lacked agency. Such, then, were the hallmarks of political ethnicity, as distinct from nationalism.

These conventions flourished in Myanmar virtually until the end of the monarchy in 1885, but England began to introduce major modifications as early as the sixteenth century. Tudor monarchs succeeded in reducing noble and church authority by collaborating more extensively with Parliament. Building on late medieval notions of the 'commonweal' and acting in the name of political community – defined as propertied interests represented in Parliament – the legislature compressed the distance between state and society and developed an ideology that was English, Protestant, and eventually anti-absolutist. These concepts inspired the execution of Charles I, but failed to produce a stable alternative to monarchy during the interregnum of 1649–60.[32] The Glorious Revolution of 1688 sought to redress this weakness by redefining the state as a balanced mix of royal and parliamentary power. In the nineteenth century, people came to accept that the balance should be altered further by widening the electorate, reducing electoral corruption, and strengthening the House of Commons. According to Paul Langford, in the eighteenth century government became parliamentary, but in the nineteenth century it became democratic.[33] By 1850, although the franchise remained severely restricted, Englishmen were seen as juridically and legally equal members of a politically sovereign community embracing a distinct, publicly celebrated, quasi-secular culture. Those features that England had shared with Myanmar three hundred years earlier – exclusive royal sovereignty, ascriptive hierarchy, popular political impotence, the crown's soteriological function – had been modified or rejected altogether. Political ethnicity had evolved into English nationalism.

England's story should not obscure the simultaneous development of a less secure, yet increasingly prominent British nationalism. I have referred to the landmarks on the road to British

[31]Edict of 1056 wa-zo 12 wan, *si* verso, MS 1950, National Library, Rangoon.

[32]Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, 84–7; David Rollison, *A Commonwealth of the People: Popular Politics and England's Long Social Revolution, 1066–1649* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), esp. chaps. 6–9; Kishlansky, *Monarchy Transformed*, 187–212; Tim Harris, *Rebellion: Britian's First Stuart Kings, 1567–1642* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Jonathan Scott, *England's Troubles: Seventeenth-Century English Political Instability in European Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

[33]Langford, *Polite and Commercial People*, 683. See too Edmund S. Morgan, *Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America* (New York: Norton, 1988); J. C. D. Clark, *The Language of Liberty: Political Discourse and Social Dynamics in the Anglo-American World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715–1745* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

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political integration – 1535–42, 1603, 1707, 1801.[34] I have also alluded to those forces propelling integration, and we shall return to them shortly. For now let it suffice to say that, as island-wide economic and social ties multiplied, and especially after the Treaty of Union of 1707 joined England, Wales, and Scotland in the Kingdom of Great Britain, the residents of those three regions, especially the more affluent, internalized an emergent British identity. All manner of eighteenth-century sermons, histories, political tracts, ballads, novels, maps, and prints invoked the language and imagery of British island-hood, while 'Briton' was increasingly used as an ethnonymic self-referent. Identities remained multiple, labile, and context dependent, and 'Scotland', 'Wales', and 'England' often provided more potent rallying cries than 'Britain', but (as in France and England itself) regional loyalties and emergent national sentiment were by no means incompatible. In 1801 Britain's component regions boasted similar if not identical legal regimes, a unified monarchy, a single quasi-sovereign parliament, one flag, one customs union, an increasingly coherent Anglophone elite culture, and a distinct ethnonym. As such, Britain, like its English prototype, embodied a recognizable form of national identity as defined in my opening discussion.[35] The contrast with Myanmar is therefore marked, for, whereas the British Isles coalesced into a unified polity, the Irrawaddy basin and its highland perimeter remained an assemblage of autonomous kingdoms. Nor did the Myanmar empire have anything resembling an overarching ethnonym comparable to 'Briton'.

Why, then, was nationalism ultimately western European? In part, because of distinct legal and religious systems. Since these systems were well in place in south-eastern Britain – whose political culture came to dominate the archipelago – by the sixteenth (and, in some cases, the thirteenth) century, they can hardly by themselves explain the rise of nationalism. But, I would argue, they were a precondition.

Consider first south-eastern Britain's socio-legal heritage. Without invoking clichés of oriental despotism, we can acknowledge that Anglo-Norman feudal law, which governed England and Wales but also heavily influenced southern Scotland, accorded individuals a degree of security without obvious Southeast Asian parallel. Whereas in Myanmar ministerial prebends and private lands remained subject to royal confiscation, English law and tradition promised protection against arbitrary seizure and fines. Originally confined to the king's chief vassals, such rights were gradually extended to the generality of property holders and corporate bodies (towns, universities, and Parliament). By the Elizabethan period, Patrick Collinson argues, respect for the law had become 'practically a religion' and the force of parliamentary statute, irresistible.[36] Seventeenth-century judges ruled that the monarch was the custodian, not the fountainhead, of the common law (the body of accumulated legal precedents) and that, as such, royal prerogatives were constrained. Parliament cited the 'laws and liberties' of the land to dethrone two Stuart kings. Although Buddhist tradition enjoined Myanmar kings to avoid arbitrary actions

[34]See n. 30 above.

[35]Colley, *Britons*, xxviii–xix, 147, 158, and *passim* (hence the title and subtitle of this highly praised work: *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707–1837*). On the progress and emotional/cultural implications of British integration, see too Paul Langford, *Englishness Identified: Manners and Character, 1650–1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Brian Levack, *The Formation of the British State: England, Scotland, and the Union, 1603–1707* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987); Connolly, *Divided Kingdom*; Geraint Jenkins, *The Foundation of Modern Wales 1642–1780* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987); Colin Kidd, *British Identities Before Nationalism: Ethnicity and Nationhood in the Atlantic World, 1600–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Grant and Stringer, eds., *Uniting the Kingdom*; Brendan Bradshaw and Peter Roberts, eds., *British Consciousness and Identity: The Making of Britain, 1533–1707* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Steven Pincus, *Protestantism and Patriotism: Ideologies and the Making of English Foreign Policy, 1650–1668* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[36]Collinson, 'Conclusion', in *Sixteenth Century*, ed. Collinson, 231. See also Peter Lake and Steven Pincus, eds., *The Politics of the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 34, 36; Harold Berman, *Law and Revolution: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), part II; Brian Downing, *The Military Revolution and Political Change: Origins of Democracy and Autocracy in Early Modern Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), chap. 2; Kishlansky, *Monarchy Transformed*, chap. 11.

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(*pa-pathat*), such admonitions lacked institutional enforcement. Nor within Great Britain was the notion of legal entitlement and protection by any means an English monopoly.

Another idiosyncratic feature of obvious medieval origins was Latin Christendom's division between the universal church and territorially confined kingdoms. In the tradition of Eastern Orthodoxy, early medieval kingdoms had often favoured Caesaropapism, which was inherently universalist. But by awarding the church a monopoly on universal authority, the Papal Revolution of the eleventh and twelfth centuries obliged each state to identify more closely with a particular people and territory.[37] In thus contracting their horizons, European polities (with the debatable exception of the Holy Roman Empire) diverged from Theravada – as well as Orthodox Christian, Confucian, and Muslim – states. Myanmar, to repeat, never developed a formal theory of ethnic supremacy. Even as he decimated Mon communities, Alaung-hpaya proclaimed himself not king of the Myanmars, but Embryo Buddha, King of Righteousness, and World Ruler.[38]

The Reformation, I suggested, reinforced English distinctiveness. By severing ties to Rome, translating the Bible into the vernacular, and declaring their people the new Israel, English reformers pioneered anti-Catholic patriotism and what might be termed missionary nationalism. The King James Bible (1611) was pivotal in fostering among English-readers of diverse backgrounds a sense of English, and ultimately British, community. However, because the Civil Wars showed the toxicity of sectarian enthusiasm and because the Church of England was obliged to cohabit with dissenters and Catholic recusants, in the long term the Reformation contributed to greater tolerance and to state withdrawal from matters of conscience. Shying away from religious strife, many Britons began to privatize religion and remove it as a source of public contestation. In its place came a growing emphasis on secular culture and commerce as forces for harmony, and on the nation-state as an instrument of domestic peace. Furthermore, by promoting personal Bible study – in effect by universalizing the clergy – the Reformation joined rising literacy and consumerism to weaken corporate in favour of individual identities, which aided the shift from subjecthood to citizenship. By the mid 1700s, without forsaking Christian belief, many – perhaps most – educated Britons, had come to regard the nation, however defined, as the fundamental arena for human activity and national concord as the only guarantee of stability in a post-theodictic world. Again, none of these developments had a recognizable Myanmar, indeed Asian, parallel.[39]

Yet discursive shifts of this sort are inexplicable without also considering physical and economic contexts. Britain and Myanmar, recall, both enjoyed a natural cohesion from the grouping of more thinly populated zones around a prosperous lowland core. But Britain's island geography was more sympathetic to visualizing and controlling discrete spaces than the vast Myanmar uplands that extend from the northern basin to the foothills of the Himalayas.

The rigours of upland transport, the relatively small size of Myanmar's urban markets, and, above all, Myanmar's position off the main Indian Ocean trade routes meant that by 1500 its economy was already less monetized and commercial than that of Britain. Thereafter, as Britain came to dominate Atlantic trade along with some sectors of Asian and European commerce, and as British agriculture, industry, marketing, and transport experienced substantial, in some cases revolutionary, transformations, the gap widened. To follow Robert Allen, one critical difference between British and Asian economies from the late seventeenth century to the early nineteenth lay in Britain's remarkably high urban wage structure, which was chiefly a function of the country's heavy involvement in international trade. Urban demand and the high cost of labour contributed to a capital-intensive, technically innovative agrarian pattern and, more especially, to

[37]Berman, *Law and Revolution*, part I; Joseph Strayer, *On the Medieval Origins of the Modern State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 20–3.

[38]Hkin Hkin Sein, ed., *Alaung-min-taya*, 15–48, 67–119.

[39]Gregory, *Unintended Reformation*; Langford, *Polite and Commercial People*; Roy Porter, *The Creation of the Modern World: The Untold Story of the British Enlightenment* (New York: Norton, 2000).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1740022820000194 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the capitalization of early industry.[40] As I have just argued, Myanmar's economy was anything but static, and conceivably total output doubled between 1600 and 1800. But British national income rose 500% in the eighteenth century alone.[41] Whereas in Myanmar in 1800 probably no more than 15% of the population were urban (using a generous definition), of whom a substantial proportion still grew much of their own food, in England as early as 1700 up to 40% lived in towns, and subsistence agriculture was retreating to marginal areas.[42] At the start of our period, both Britain and Myanmar were peripheral to their wider regional economies, but by 1800 Britain had become the most dynamic sector of the world's most innovative economy, that of western Europe.

As convincingly as any factor, economic growth explains the strength of English and British nationalism between 1600 and 1850. The direct and indirect contributions were several. A central dynamic was the synergy between commercial rivalry and war, a synergy that helped to transfigure political structures, recast England's relation to its periphery, and catalyse patriotism. From 1654 to 1815 England/Britain was at war one year in two, and when it was not fighting, it was preparing for war. On balance, colonial acquisitions – a primary goal of warfare – and mercantilist impositions probably aided the economy by relieving resource scarcities in Britain, creating new markets for British manufactures, and raising wages, which favoured labour-saving technologies. But in reciprocal fashion, commercial intensification provided the radical increase in taxation, deficit financing (through the Bank of England), and public administration that were critical to Britain's overseas triumphs. What Michael Braddick and John Brewer term the British fiscal/military state arose to harness the nation's burgeoning wealth for war, first for the Civil Wars of the 1640s and then for epic competition with France.[43] From 1680 to 1815 the British government's share of national income rose from 4% to 20%, which, along with the expanding economy itself, permitted a threefold increase in fiscal, army, and navy personnel from 1680 to 1780 alone. As the state machinery grew more specialized, patrimonialism yielded to routinized bureaucracy.[44]

Moreover, because Parliament had to consent to taxes, the crown's chronic need for military finance in the eighteenth century strengthened parliamentary supremacy.[45] By allowing the bureaucracy and Parliament to displace the royal court as the centre of power, commercial–military synergies thus transformed government institutions. Indirectly at least, this same dynamic recast political geography. Between 1536 and 1800, fear of Spanish or French interference led to the incorporation of Wales, Ireland, and Scotland into the English-led union and to the suppression of revolts in Ireland and Scotland.[46] Most critical, as I have already indicated, warfare

[40]See the gap from 1675 to 1825 between labourers' wages, calculated in grams of silver, in Beijing and Delhi, on the one hand, and London, on the other. Allen, *British Industrial Revolution*, 34, fig. 2.1, and Allen's discussion *passim*. The cheapness of British coal and a tradition of technical education also spurred early industrialization. On the relation between market stimuli and agrarian innovation, see Overton, *Agricultural Revolution*.

[41]Myanmar's population rose roughly 50% from 1600 to 1800. See nn. 11 and 12 above. We lack GDP figures for Myanmar, but informed estimates of GDP per capita in India and Japan between 1600 and 1800 show an increase in per capita economic output in Japan of only 12% and in India a decline of 18%. Larry Neal and Jeffrey Williamson, eds., *The Cambridge History of Capitalism*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 269, table 10.1. It is hard to imagine that agricultural expansion and commercial and handicraft specialization in Myanmar raised total output by 50% beyond that produced by population growth. On eighteenth-century British national income, see Michael Duffy, 'Contested Empires, 1756–1815', in *Eighteenth Century*, ed. Langford, 239.

[42]Koenig, *Burmese Polity*, appendices 1 and 2; Lake and Pincus, *Politics of the Public Sphere*, 11, with 40% figure. But Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, 493, merely says that 'more than one quarter' in England and Wales lived in towns in 1801.

[43]Braddick, *State Formation in Early Modern England*, part III; Brewer, *Sinews of Power*.

[44]Martin Daunton, 'The Wealth of the Nation', in *Eighteenth Century*, ed. Langford, 162, with 20% figure (some authors cite a higher number); Brewer, *Sinews of Power*, 29, 67, and chap. 3 *passim*.

[45]Langford, *Polite and Commercial People*, 702–10; David Hayton, 'Contested Kingdoms', in *Eighteenth Century*, ed. Langford, 39–40.

[46]Philip Bradshaw, 'Seventeenth-Century Wales', in *British Consciousness and Identity*, ed. Bradshaw and Roberts, 227–8; Hiram Morgan, 'British Policies before the British State', in *The British Problem, c. 1534–1707: State Formation in the Atlantic*

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fostered loyalty by juxtaposing indigenous virtue to alien evil. We see this adumbrated during the Hundred Years War and during public thanksgiving following the defeat of the Catholic Spanish Armada. But Britain's eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century struggles, first against French 'popery' and absolutism and then against French radicalism and 'tyranny', encouraged unprecedentedly inclusive concepts of citizenship that melded Protestant loyalty, English/British liberties, empire, and shared island-hood.[47]

Myanmar's potential was more limited. During the same period that England/Britain fought wars one year in two, Myanmar was at war only one year in five. In the eighteenth century, Britain perfected a revenue system heavily reliant on excise taxes and managed by closely supervised crown employees. But from the vast Shan uplands, the Myanmar court received only periodic tribute, itself often symbolic; and even in the Irrawaddy lowlands governance and taxation were indirect, dependent on hereditary headmen who routinely retained a portion of all collections. The Bank of England facilitated deficit financing, but Myanmar had no banks or institutionalized system of credit. Unsurprisingly, whereas the British state in 1815 obtained 20% of GDP, the Myanmar court may not have secured 10% of an economy that itself was probably not much more than 10% the size of Britain's.[48] Administrative expansion and military operations were correspondingly constrained.

In addition to animating patriotism through warfare, commerce nurtured English and British ethnicity by promoting cultural circulation and empowering new social groups. Already in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries we see the spread of a pan-English, even an island-wide, culture of gentility.[49] But in the seventeenth century and more especially the eighteenth, market integration, urbanization, printing, and the lure of empire magnified the attraction of London manners and social connections not only for provincial English elites, but also for their non-English counterparts. While the American colonies had been treated as an exclusive English concern, from the late 1700s as Welsh, Scots, and Anglo-Irishmen (seeking political appointments and new commercial opportunities) moved closer to the centre of power, the English empire became an emphatically British enterprise. Periodic English expressions of Scottaphobia testified to the fact that Scots, in particular, were gaining unprecedented power within Great Britain, and that Celtic landed elites were amalgamating with their English counterparts more extensively than before.[50] At a popular level as well, migrations, cross-border friendships, marriages, schooling, and trade had a homogenizing impact. Between 1500 and 1700 the proportion of English-speakers in the archipelago rose from some 65% to 85%, which was significant because English was the lingua franca of Britishness. Thereafter, linguistic Anglicization would continue to gain strength.[51]

In vertical terms too, most notably in England, the growing size, wealth, and self-confidence of new and intermediate strata aided cultural diffusion while broadening the base of politics. During the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, market-oriented, modest scale farmers were among the chief beneficiaries of rising food prices. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries,

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Archipelago, ed. Brendan Bradshaw and John Morrill (New York: Palgrave, 1996), 66–88; Bucholz and Key, *Early Modern England*, 85, 146–49, 318–22; Levack, *Formation of the British State*; Hayton, 'Contested Kingdoms', 42–3, 54–5; Thomas Bartlett, *Ireland: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 132–7, 211–35.

[47]See bibliography in n. 35 above; also Duffy, 'Contested Empires', 218–19; Wilson, *Sense of the People*, chap. 3.

[48]Britain's population in 1815 was roughly twice that of Myanmar, but British per capita GDP and per capita income may have been four to six times higher. See nn. 40 and 41 above. Ancien régime France, whose tax system was at least as efficient as that of Myanmar, secured only 9–13% of national commodity production. Peter Mathias and Patrick O'Brian, 'Taxation in Britain and France, 1715–1810', *Journal of European Economic History* 5 (1976): 601–50.

[49]Philip Morgan, 'Ranks of Society', in *Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, ed. Griffiths, 84–5.

[50]Colley, *Britons*, xvi, xxii, xxiv, xxvi, 118–34, 146, 158.

[51]John Morrill, 'The British Problem, *c.* 1534–1707', in *British Problem*, ed. Bradshaw and Morrill, 2–3. See also Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, chaps. 12–15; Colley, *Britons*, esp. chap. 4; Clare McManus, '"What Ish My Nation?" The Cultures of the Seventeenth Century British Isles', in *Seventeenth Century*, ed. Wormald, 183–222; Porter, *Creation of the Modern World*, chaps. 2–4; Bob Harris, *Politics and the Rise of the Press: Britain and France, 1620–1800* (London: Routledge, 1996).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1740022820000194 Published online by Cambridge University Press

mushrooming colonial trade and urbanization converted a substantially aristocratic society into a plutocracy in its upper reaches, while nurturing in its middle sector an array of often novel employments in trade, transport, merchandising, and the professions. Kathleen Wilson estimates that by 1770 the so-called 'middling strata' had doubled to 40% of the English and Welsh population.[52] Even as the middle strata policed a strict separation between themselves and the property-less 60%, their influence grew. We see this in the proliferation of schools offering practical training, in rising literacy, and in the urban-based explosion of printed materials.[53] We see it in a consumer culture which, by providing imitations of aristocratic fashion, encouraged emulation, class indeterminacy, and individual autonomy.[54] We see it in the arts and literature, where middle-class values, without mounting a frontal challenge to aristocratic norms, began to dominate.[55] But it was in politics that middle-class influence became most notable. Nurtured initially by the upheavals of the Civil Wars, from the late seventeenth century a public sphere grew ever more socially inclusive, politically independent, and intellectually ambitious.[56] By the late 1700s, urban, middle-class demands for parliamentary and moral reform had begun to set the national agenda. The foundation for this new outlook was a politicized press and an urban network of coffee houses, clubs, masonic lodges, fraternities, and debating societies where national affairs and patriotic proposals were freely discussed. In lieu of aristocratic clientage, businessmen, shopkeepers, professionals, and artisans championed a participatory model of citizenship that let individuals appropriate and redefine patriotism. After public pressure helped push through the Reform Act of 1832, spokesmen for the emergent industrial working class began to amplify demands for democratic inclusion.[57] As Nietzsche would later point out, whereas aristocratic morality saw inequality as the foundation of order and civilized refinement, morality now demanded equality.

Myanmar also enjoyed substantial cultural circulation, critical to imperial cohesion. But, whereas social categories in Britain grew more open and diffuse, in Myanmar after 1760 the new Kon-baung dynasty, in its determination to restore the military service system, strengthened hereditary distinctions. If British subjects became citizens, Myanmar sovereignty continued to reside exclusively with the ruler. Amid an outpouring of Kon-baung religious texts, histories, and legal works, I see no references to urban sites devoted to political discussion, no aspirant social groups critical of royal institutions.[58] Courtiers and commoners sought not to assert collective or individual rights vis-à-vis the throne, but to find a sheltering patron whose authority derived from the throne. Personal liberty, standing alone without a patron, equated to exposure and

[52]Wilson, *Sense of the People*, 57. The starting date for this comparison, however, is not specified. On long-term social changes and their political implications, see Robert Allen, *Enclosure and the Yeoman: The Agricultural Development of the South Midlands, 1450–1850* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992); Langford, *Polite and Commercial People*, chap. 3; J. A. Sharpe, *Early Modern England: A Social History, 1550–1700*, 2nd ed. (London: Hodder Education, 1997); Clark, *English Society*; Hindle, *State and Social Change*; Wilson, *Sense of the People*; Braddick, *State Formation in Early Modern England*.

[53]See sources in n. 15 above, and Peter Borsay, 'The Culture of Improvement', in *Eighteenth Century*, ed. Langford, 183–210.

[54]Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, and J. H. Plumb, eds., *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985); Lorna Weatherhill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain, 1660–1760*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1996).

[55]Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*; Paul Langford, *Eighteenth-Century Britain: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), chap. 4.

[56]Lake and Pincus, *Politics of the Public Sphere*; Harris, *Politics and the Press*; Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, Politics, and English Society, 1695–1855* (Harlow: Longman, 2000); Geoffrey Parker, *Global Crisis: War, Climate Change and Catastrophe in the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 365–8.

[57]Wilson, *Sense of the People*, 54–73; Joanna Innes, 'Governing Diverse Societies', in *Eighteenth Century*, ed. Langford, 103–40; Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, 505–12; Porter, *Creation of the Modern World*, chap. 2; Barker, *Newspapers, Politics, and English Society*; Vincent, *Literacy and Popular Culture*; Harris, *Politics and the Press*; Owen Ashton, Robert Fryson, and Stephen Roberts, eds., *The Chartist Legacy* (Rendelsham, Suffolk: Merlin Press, 1999).

[58]Maung Thu-ta, *Sa-hso-daw-mya ahtok-pati*; Charney, *Powerful Learning*; Lammerts, *Buddhist Law in Burma*; Kirichenko, 'From *Thathanadaw* to Theravada Buddhism'; Kirichenko, 'Dynamics of Monastic Mobility'; Kirichenko, 'Making of the Culprit'.

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vulnerability (which Myanmars found about as appealing as we would find walking naked in public). Myanmars used commercial wealth to win patrons and to buy happy reincarnations with religious donations (itself a form of patronage seeking). If Theravada practices grew more textually oriented, the focus on accumulating good karma for the afterlife remained intact.[59]

Salvationist religion also remained vigorous in Britain, as shown by the fortunes of missionary nationalism and the Church of England, including its Methodist offshoot. In contrast to secular visions in France, in England the Enlightenment was tied closely to Protestantism. But, as we have seen, Protestantism and commerce favoured individual expression and exploration, which translated not only into citizen empowerment, but, as Dror Wahrman has shown, into new understandings of personal identity.[60] More broadly, a novel consumerism, proliferating overseas discoveries, the Copernican and Newtonian revolutions, the dethroning of the biblical histories, weariness with religious strife, notions of a self-regulating nontheistic universe – all these forces joined less to secularize society than to weaken, at least for many educated Britons, the authority of religious texts and classical wisdom to a degree unknown in Southeast Asia and Asia generally. Protestantism evolved into a more rational, private, and tolerant faith, with a post-Calvinist emphasis on cosmic benevolence, material progress, and the pursuit of happiness in this world.[61] People looked to Parliament, along with the monarchy, to protect the nation and to promote empire, domestic peace, and prosperity. Thus, in Britain, patriotism – that is to say, nationalism – filled much of the space opened by the growth of commerce and the transformation of religion.

Conclusion

At the outset I referred to the historiographic tension between traditional views of European exceptionalism and more recent critiques that have sought both to compress the gap between European and Asian achievement, and to attribute post-1600 European success less to inherent cultural advantages than to geographic good fortune. Anti-Eurocentric economic historians, for example, have attributed Britain's superiority over the Yangzi delta primarily to the benefits of colonial trade and the ready availability of coal.[62]

This article has focused not on economic trajectories, which to date have dominated Eurasian comparisons, but on the origins of nationalism, which, in combination with industrialization and advanced armaments, in my view provided the tripod of global modernity. Between European

[59]Michael Aung-Thwin, 'The "Classical" in Southeast Asia', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 26, no. 1 (1995): 75–91; Koenig, *Burmese Polity*, chap. 3; Matthew Walton, *Buddhism, Politics, and Political Thought in Myanmar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), chaps. 1–3. The tepid reformers U Hpo Hlaing and U Kaung, discussed in Walton, were exceptions proving the rule about the conservatism of Myanmar political thought insofar as both men, active between the Second and Third Anglo-Burmese Wars (1852, 1885), were heavily influenced by Western examples. For insights into later Asian political adjustments to Western norms, see Stein Tønnesson and Hans Antlöv, eds., *Asian Forms of the Nation* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1996); and Anthony Reid's fascinating *Imperial Alchemy: Nationalism and Political Identity in Southeast Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[60]Dror Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004). See also Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

[61]Porter, *Creation of the Modern World*; David Spadafora, *The Idea of Progress in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); David Hempton, 'Faith and Enlightenment', in *Eighteenth Century*, ed. Langford, 71–102; Clark, *English Society*, chap. 4.

[62]Major contributions to the debate on European economic exceptionalism include Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: Europe, China, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Jean-Laurent Rosenthal and R. Bin Wong, *Before and Beyond Divergence: The Politics of Economic Change in China and Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011); Peer Vries, *State, Economy and the Great Divergence: Great Britain and China, 1680s–1850s* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015); Allen, *British Industrial Revolution;* Jan Luiten van Zanden, *The Long Road to the Industrial Revolution: The European Economy in a Global Perspective, 1000–1800* (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Joel Mokyr, *The Enlightened Economy: An Economic History of Britain, 1700–1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

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exceptionalist and revisionist approaches to comparative history, I chart an essentially middle course.

On the one hand, I argue that nationalism in western Europe should be seen as a variant of a more widespread, but hitherto unrecognized, Eurasian pattern that I term political ethnicity. I emphasize similarities in chronology, dynamics, and symbolic function between European and Asian (in this case, British and Myanmar) political ethnicities. And I agree that geographic good fortune, as distinct from culture, spurred English/British nationalism in at least two respects. First, insofar as international trade broadened the social base for English/British politics, and insofar as such trade benefited from Britain's location at the juncture of north European and Atlantic trade, fortuitous geography indeed helps to explain democratic and nationalist sentiment. Absent Britain's global commerce, England and Poland, whose restrictive concepts of nobiliary patriotism in 1400 were broadly comparable, still might have resembled one another in 1800. Pro-maritime English and British policies were, of course, a major enabling factor, but without island status and favourable commercial location that factor alone would have been insufficient. Second, ecological, maritime, and montane barriers sheltered western Europe and other Eurasian rimlands from Inner Asian occupation, and in so doing protected them from incorporation in supra-ethnic universal empires. Such empires were normative in most of Asia throughout the second millennium.

At the same time, however, I call attention to specific cultural features which lacked analogy in Myanmar (and, I believe, in other Asian rimlands) and without which English/British nationalism would have been inconceivable. I refer specifically to English feudal restrictions on royal prerogatives, legal and customary protections for landowners, and notions of sovereignty shared between crown and parliament. Critical as well were religious patterns: Rome's monopoly on universal jurisdiction and the ensuing localization of secular power, the Reformation's spur to national churches, and the Reformation's assault on Christian unity, which reinforced regnal and national loyalties. Likewise, rather than elide differences in the locus of sovereignty and the role of subjects, I employ a modernist definition of nationalism sharply to distinguish western European political culture as it cohered in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, not only from earlier European forms, but from pre-1850 Asian political ethnicity.

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Cite this article: Lieberman V. 2021. Why was nationalism European? Political ethnicity in Asia and Europe 1400–1850. *Journal of Global History* 16: 4–23, doi:10.1017/S1740022820000194

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1740022820000194 Published online by Cambridge University Press