

Die Geburt der modernen Welt



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The Birth of the Modern World is a wonderfully ambitious book that effectively demonstrates the global nature of the modern world and the need to decentre national histories and think big. It is a 'thematic history' demonstrating how 'historical trends and sequences of events, which have been treated separately in regional or national histories, can be brought together' (p. 1). Bayly's emphasis is on the interdependencies and interconnectedness of political and social changes across the world in a period well before contemporary globalisation. It is in part a culmination of his own work over a long period – using his rich and detailed knowledge of Indian and South Asian history as he did previously in *Imperial Meridian* – as a basis from which to reflect on national, imperial and global concerns. It is an intervention in the current debates over globalisation, for he shares the insistence of A. G. Hopkins and others that the contemporary version of this is not the first; theorists must be more careful to specify the particularities of phases of globalisation given its long history. (2) It is also an attempt to put a particular reading of connection and interdependence at the heart of the making of the modern world, thereby unseating E. J. Hobsbawm's magisterial

four volumes on the long nineteenth century, *The Age of Revolution*, *Industry and Empire*, *The Age of Capital* and *The Age of Empire* with its drama of the unfolding logic of capitalism and exploitation, and providing a new account for these post-Marxist times. In the process it cocks many a snook at post-colonial theorists with their 'polemic' and their 'jargon' and the particular sets of antagonisms and dynamics that they stress – racialised difference – and is proud of its sceptical stance towards theory, keen to avoid 'pretentious words'. The strength of Bayly's analysis is that it insists on modernity as a global process. The downside from my perspective is the absence of an analysis of power. As he admits right at the end of the book an emphasis on networks and connections can (and indeed does in this instance) take away from the question of power – who wields it, over whom, and how? His account, he insists, is not one of collaboration but subordination.

作者介绍:

Sir Christopher Alan Bayly, FBA (born 1945) is a British historian specializing in Indian, British Imperial, and Global History. He is currently the Vere Harmsworth Professor of Imperial and Naval History at the University of Cambridge. He was knighted in the Queen's Birthday Honours List of 2007 for his services to History. Upon being informed of the award he stated: "I regard this not only as a great personal honour but, as an historian of India, as recognition of the growing importance of the history of the non-western world."

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书评

这本《社会简史》，果然够“简”。作者没有为我们讲述历史事件，而是着力于挖掘现代世界浮现的过程。在过去的500年中，生活总是一点点走近现代化的，舞台上固然有大人物们精彩的演出，然而，它与我们有什么关联？现代化是纷繁的价值观：不同的家庭结构，改变了的心态，公民意识...

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