Why Europe Grew Rich and Asia Did Not provides a striking new answer to the classic question of why Europe industrialized from the late eighteenth century and Asia did not. Drawing significantly from the case of India, Prasannan Parthasarathi shows that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the advanced regions of Europe and Asia were more alike than different, both characterized by sophisticated and growing economies. Their subsequent divergence can be attributed to different competitive and ecological pressures that in turn produced varied state policies and economic outcomes. This account breaks with conventional views, which hold that divergence occurred because Europe possessed superior markets, rationality, science or institutions. It offers instead a groundbreaking rereading of global economic development that ranges from India, Japan and China to Britain, France and the Ottoman Empire and from the textile and coal industries to the roles of science, technology and the state.

Why Europe Grew Rich and Asia Did Not: Global Economic Divergence, 1600–1850

Prasannan Parthasarathi
To Juliet
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List of figures</th>
<th>page viii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of maps</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of tables</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of abbreviations</td>
<td>xiv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maps</td>
<td>xv</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Part I Setting the stage: Europe and Asia before divergence

1. Introduction
   - 1

2. India and the global economy, 1600–1800
   - 21

3. Political institutions and economic life
   - 51

### Part II The divergence of Britain

4. The European response to Indian cottons
   - 89

5. State and market: Britain, France and the Ottoman Empire
   - 115

6. From cotton to coal
   - 151

### Part III The Indian path

7. Science and technology in India, 1600–1800
   - 185

8. Modern industry in early nineteenth-century India
   - 223

9. Conclusion
   - 263

### Notes to the text

- 270

### Bibliography

- 324

### Index

- 353
Figures

2.1 Detail of an end-panel of a *pha-nung*, skirt cloth, Coromandel Coast for the Thai market, eighteenth century  

2.2 Man’s military coat or *Su'a senakut*, Coromandel Coast for the Thai market, eighteenth century  

2.3 *Kain sambagi*, skirt or shoulder cloth, Coromandel Coast for the Indonesian market, late eighteenth century  

5.1 Swatches of Blackburn cloth woven for the West Africa market, 1751  

5.2 Exports of British cotton cloth to West Africa as a proportion of total cotton cloth exports, 1751–1807  

6.1 Detail of a view of the coal depot at Ying-tih-heen, in Shaouchow foo (Guangdong), late eighteenth century  

8.1 Distribution of British great inventors by level of education and birth cohort
Maps

1 India in the eighteenth century  page xv
2 Europe in 1815  xvi
3 The Middle East in the eighteenth century  xvii
4 China and Southeast Asia in the eighteenth century  xviii
Tables

2.1 Sales of cotton cloth by British slave traders in West Africa by decade, 1699–1808  
2.2 Slave purchases in West Africa by decade, 1698–1807  
2.3 Average current and constant prices of selected textiles in English retailers' inventories, 1660–1738  
2.4 Grain earnings in the mid-eighteenth century  
2.5 Daily grain wages in eighteenth-century South India  
5.1 Cotton prices in Cairo, 1687–1797  
5.2 An index of cotton and linen cloth prices in Cairo, 1700–1789  
5.3 Distribution of cotton workers in Rouen, 1727
Acknowledgments

I have incurred many debts in the research and writing of this book. Grants from Boston College supported several research trips to Britain and India. Fellowships from the American Council of Learned Societies and the Dibner Institute and a sabbatical from Boston College freed me from my day-to-day academic responsibilities and gave me the time to write much of the book. The Dibner also provided wonderful space and congenial company for which I am grateful to George Smith, Bonnie Edwards, Trudy Kontoff and Rita Dempsey. While writing this book I was also a member of the Global Economic History Network (GEHN), which gave me many opportunities to present my ideas to gatherings of knowledgeable and engaged colleagues. I am grateful to Patrick O’Brien for including me in that enterprise.

I benefited from the comments of three anonymous readers for Cambridge University Press. William Ashworth, Robin Fleming, Kevin Kenny, Rebecca Nedostup, Sarah Ross, Subashree Rangaswami, Patrick O’Brien and Giorgio Riello read and commented upon portions of the manuscript. Juliet Schor gave a close reading to the whole work in its final stages.

I presented portions of the book at seminars, workshops or conferences where I benefited from the responses of participants at Boston College, the London School of Economics, the Dibner Institute, Cambridge University, the University of Pennsylvania, Istanbul University, Sussex University, the Indian Institute of Technology (Madras), the annual meeting of the Economic History Society at Leicester, the International Economic History Association Congress at Helsinki, the International Congress of Historical Sciences at Amsterdam, the Anglo-American Conference on History, and meetings in Oxford, Leiden, Padua and Pune. I thank the organizers of these events and am especially grateful to the helpful suggestions that I received from Aashish Velkar, Maxine Berg, Kent Deng, Ken Pomeranz, Tine Bruland, Beverly Lemire, Kapil Raj, David Ludden,
Acknowledgments

Bob Nichols, Robert Duplessis, Huw Bowen, Chella Rajan, Richard Grove, Vinita Damodaran, Filippo Osella, Jeff Horn, Şevket Pamuk, Giorgio Riello, Patrick O’Brien, the late Larry Epstein, Tirthankar Roy, David Washbrook, Gareth Stedman Jones, Norbert Peabody, Harold Cook, Dhruv Raina and Deepak Kumar.

The staffs of the British Library, the Manchester Central Library, the John Rylands Library (Manchester), the Bolton Central Library, the National Archives of the United Kingdom, the Archives of the Royal Society of Arts, the Tamil Nadu Archives, the Burndy Library and Houghton Library were of the greatest assistance. I owe a special thanks to Mary Ginsberg of the British Museum who tracked down “A view of the coal depot at Ying-tih-heen, in Shaouchow foo” for me to see and then sent me a photograph of it that she took herself. The staff of the Boston College libraries never failed me and I am deeply indebted to Anne Kenny and Daniel Saulean of the Interlibrary Loan Department who supplied me with copies of even the rarest publications.

At Cambridge University Press Michael Watson supported the project from its earliest days and his editorial hand improved the book enormously. For this I am deeply grateful. Chloe Howell and Jo Breeze made the process of production and publication a smooth one and Diane Ilott was an exemplary copy-editor. Pierce Butler and Susan Holbert compiled a superb index.

Thanks are due to Hidetaka Hirota of Boston College who translated materials for me from Japanese. I also benefited from the suggestions of undergraduates in my “Wealth and Poverty of Nations” and graduate students in my “Introduction to Global History” who read early versions of the manuscript. I am also grateful for the friendship and support of my colleagues in the history department at Boston College, especially Peter Weiler, Lynn Johnson, Jim Cronin, Rebecca Nedostup, Robin Fleming, Kevin Kenny and David Quigley. While at the Dibner Institute I learned a great deal from my almost daily conversations with David Cahan as well as from George Smith and Conevery Valencius. In London, the department of economic history at the London School of Economics welcomed me for two extended stays. I am grateful to Patrick O’Brien for making those visits possible and to Giorgio Riello for extensive intellectual engagement as well as continued friendship and support. I thank John Styles for showing me the cloth swatches in the London Foundling Museum. He and Beverly Lemire taught me a great deal about British cottons.
Acknowledgments

In Cambridge, I always received a warm welcome from Jennifer Davis and the late Raj Chandavarkar. I am sorry that I will not be able to share this work with Raj, who I still miss terribly.

Closer to home, many friendships sustained me during this project. Bernard and Louise Lown have been unflagging with their support and encouragement, as have Eric Fernald and Navjeet Bal. Vicky Steinitz, Elliot Mishler and others in the Biolab fight carried me through good times and bad, as have my friends in Boston Mobilization, Newton Dialogues and the 25% Solution. John Maher has been a good friend throughout.

My greatest debt is to my family. I am grateful for the love of my parents as well as that of my sister Ranja, Dan, Maya, Jimmy, Sharon, Oliver and Jon. Krishna and Sulakshana have made so many things worthwhile and they were always patient with my preoccupation. To Juliet, who is the love of my life, I dedicate this work.
Abbreviations

APAC  Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections
BL    British Library
CSSH  Comparative Studies in Society and History
IESHR Indian Economic and Social History Review
JAS   Journal of Asian Studies
JEH   Journal of Economic History
MAS   Modern Asian Studies
P&P   Past & Present
PRO   Public Record Office
TNA   The National Archives of the United Kingdom
Map 1 India in the eighteenth century
Map 3 The Middle East in the eighteenth century
Map 4  China and Southeast Asia in the eighteenth century