

Cotton, a global history

棉花，一部全球史

Spinning tales

纺织传奇

A fine account of 900 years of globalization

道尽 900 年全球化历史

Still a player, thanks to subsidies

由于补贴，(美国)依旧是一大棉花产国

Empire of Cotton: A Global History. By Sven Beckert.

《棉花帝国：一部全球史》。作者 Sven Beckert

GOOD economic history tells dramatic stories of ingenuity and aspiration, greed and national self-interest. Sven Beckert writes good economic history. But why cotton? Mr Beckert's answer is that for 900 years, until 1900, it was the world's most important manufacturing industry. Cotton is relevant now because the story explains how and why an industry goes global. It is a story of wildly fluctuating fortunes, from stunning wealth to dire social disasters.

一部优秀的经济史需要讲出好的故事，既匠心独具又发人深省，既描写贪婪又涉及国家利己主义。Sven Beckert 的这本书就是如此。为什么写棉花？Beckert 的回答是，在 1900 年之前的 900 年里，棉花产业一直都是世界上最重要的制造业。如今，棉花还能解释一个产业走向全球的形式和原因。这个故事有关财富的剧烈变动，从惊人的巨额财富到可怕的社会灾难。

India runs like a thread through this tale. Cotton was being spun in the Indus Valley

in3000BC; Herodotus admired its quality. Spinning and weaving cotton (the word comes fromqutn in Arabic) were introduced to Europe by Muslim invaders in the tenth century. In Indiacotton as a cottage industry was so successful that it established a substantial market inBritain. This had two consequences. The first was technological innovation in the industrialnorth; spinning machines, the invention of the flying shuttle, the spinning jenny and powerlooms were the forerunners of the Industrial Revolution. The second, introduced in 1774 toassist English spinners and weavers, was protectionist legislation that made it illegal to sellimported cotton.

故事中一直充斥着印度的身影。早在公元前 3000 年，印度河流域的人们就已经学会纺纱，希罗多德就曾赞赏它的质地。当穆斯林在 10 世纪入侵欧洲时，也把纺纱和织布的技术带到了欧洲(棉花 cotton 一词就源自阿拉伯语 qutn)。家庭手工业形式的棉花生产在印度非常成功，甚至在英国的市场占据了不小的份额。这造成了两个结果。首先是让北部工业区诞生了许多的技术革新。诸如飞梭、珍妮纺纱机、动力织机等纺纱机器的发明都是工业革命的先驱。其次，英国为了帮助本国的纺织业从业者而在 1774 年颁布了贸易保护法，将出售进口棉花认定为违法行为。

By 1800 mass-produced British cotton dominated world markets, including in India where theindustry collapsed. In the three decades to 1820 innovation helped productivity in Britain'snew cotton factories increase 370 times. Mr Beckert, a history professor at Harvard, calls thisnew economic order “War Capitalism” as it is based on imperial expansion, expropriation ofland, and slavery.

到了 1800 年，产量巨大的英国棉花称霸了全球市场，包括棉纺产业已经崩溃的印度。在 1820 年之前的三十年中，技术创新使得英国棉花工厂的产量提高了 370 倍。身为哈佛大学

历史系教授的 Beckert 把这种新式的经济秩序称为“战争资本主义”，因为它是基于英帝国的扩张、征用(殖民地)土地的和奴役(被侵略地区的人民)。

Slaves and wide open spaces in the southern states transformed America's economy, too. Capital, raised mainly in London, financed the expansion. By the late 1850s, 77% of the cotton consumed in Britain came from America. Profits soared on both sides of the Atlantic. Manchester became a centre of the universe, always feeding on cheap labour, mostly women, who, unlike slaves, were paid a wage, albeit a poor one. (This reviewer's great-aunt was among the first women to earn a guinea a week from piece-work in her Rochdale mill, in the 1920s.)

奴隶和南部开阔的土地同样改变了美国的经济。随着英帝国不断扩张在美国的领土，伦敦从中获得了大量资本。到了 18 世纪 50 年代末期，英国消费的棉花中有 77% 来自于美国。大西洋两岸都获得了大量的利润。依靠廉价的劳力，尤其是妇女们，曼切斯特成为了这一切的中心。这些劳力和黑奴不同，他们有一些薪水，虽然并不多。(本书评作者的伯祖母就是 19 世纪 20 年代的罗奇代尔磨房中第一批能从计件工作中赚到每周一基尼的妇女们的一员。)

Deprived of raw American cotton when the civil war broke out in 1861, English manufacturers rediscovered India. Railways were built in the newly acquired state of Berar to shift raw cotton for export to Bombay. By 1862, 75% of Britain's cotton originated in India. The industry had gone global; Egypt and Brazil also provided new sources of supply. When news of the Union Army's victories in 1865 reached India, property prices in Bombay collapsed, anticipating the renewed competition that the end of the war might bring. In the event, as peace returned to the American South and former slaves became sharecroppers, the global industry

recovered quickly, helped by a surge in demand.

到了 1861 年，美国内战爆发，无法从美国得到原棉的英国制造者只好重新开发印度。他们在刚刚占领的贝拉尔邦建造了很多铁路，用来将原棉运往孟买。1862 年时，英国 75% 的棉花都来自印度。此时，这个行业已经走向了国际化；埃及和巴西也加入了供应源的行列。到了 1865 年，当同盟军赢得内战的消息到达印度时，孟买的房价一泻千里。这是由于人们都估计美国内战结束将引来新的竞争。结果是，随着美国南部恢复和平，奴隶成了佃农后，高涨的需求使得全球棉花产业快速恢复了。

In the late 19th century the cotton industry in England began to decline. At the height of the Great Depression in 1932 only 11% of the world's mechanical spindles were operating in Britain, compared with 61% in 1860. The terrible blight that has overwhelmed cotton towns such as Rochdale began then, and has grown worse since. By the late 1960s Britain accounted for only 2.8% of global cotton exports.

到了 19 世纪末期，英国棉花业开始倒退。1932 年大萧条最为严重时期，英国只拥有的全球机械纱锭中的 11%，而 1860 年时则有 61%。当时，可怕的枯萎病袭击了包括洛奇代尔在内的产棉城镇，而且情况越变越糟。到了 19 世纪 60 年代末期，英国只占全球棉花出口的 2.8%。

Today the main sources of raw cotton are China (29%) and India (21%). Supported by grotesque subsidies (\$35 billion between 1995 and 2010), America clings on in third place. Producers sell to the new merchants of cotton: global retailers such as Gap and Adidas. Mr Beckert's story is both inspirational and utterly depressing, a reflection of the white-knuckleride that has been the characteristic of globalisation through the centuries.

现如今主要的原棉产国是中国(29%)和印度(21%)。由于离谱的棉花补助(1995 至 2010 年间总计达 350 亿美元), 美国仍位居第三。生产者将产品卖给新一代的棉花商人们: 诸如 Gap 和阿迪达斯这样的国际零售商。Beckert 的故事既振奋人心又让人非常绝望, 这是对绵延数世纪的全球化进程中间一段跌宕起伏的发展史进行的一次沉思。