

# STUDIES IN ITALY ON MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY INDIA<sup>1</sup>

by  
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## *Introduction*

Italy has a long and well developed tradition in the field of classical Indian studies. Unfortunately, the situation is starkly different as far as modern Indian studies are concerned. Since the 1940s, however, a certain number of Italian scholars - mainly historians - have focussed their research interests on modern India. Since then, Italian studies on modern India have gone through three stages. The first started in the 1940s and went on up to the mid-1960s. It was dominated by the research and teaching work of Giorgio Borsa (of the University of Pavia), who criticized both the traditional eurocentric approach of the colonial historians and the nationalist and Marxist historiographies which had developed in Asia as a reaction to Western intellectual and political domination. He maintained that history of Asia had to be studied as history of the development of the modern world in Asia.

The second phase started in the late 1960s and went on up to the end of the 1980s. In fact, one of the consequences of the intellectual and political turmoil that, in Italy, characterized the end of the 1960s and the 1970s, was a spurt of interest for non-European peoples. Although the lion's share of this new interest went to China, Vietnam and Latin America, a number of scholars, most of them very young, started to work on modern India. Most of these scholars were historians, and their main field of enquiry was the freedom struggle. Some of these scholars were deeply influenced by Borsa's work, some others were non-academic scholars, some others still were people with the classic orientalist training, who now switched from ancient or medieval India to modern India. Moreover, particularly in the 1980s, an increasing interest for both modern Indian literature and modern Indian philosophy became apparent.

The result of this new climate was the publication of a number of works on Gandhi, the freedom struggle, modern Indian literature, and modern Indian philosophy. In the course of time, some of the young historians, without completely leaving aside their original interest for the nationalist era, became concerned with the politics of independent India and, later, with the roots, in the pre-colonial period, of problems such as the retarded capitalist development of India, and the Hindu-Muslim conflict.

The latest and current phase in modern Indian studies in Italy began in the late 1980s, and was a response to the end of the cold war, the rise of the process of globalization, and, later on, the perception of the growing international importance of India, particularly as a result of the new economic policy started by the Rao government. This phase has been characterized not only by the increase in the number of scholars working on modern South Asia, but by the widening of the methodological approaches applied to the study of modern and contemporary India. The most clear-cut indications of the new depth and extension of modern Indian studies in Italy have been the organization of two important international conferences - one in Bologna, and one in Rome - aimed at discussing modern India, and the decision to create an Italian association of Italian scholars and laymen with a sustained interest in modern and contemporary India.

## *The modernization paradigm*

The pioneers of modern Indian studies in Italy were three. Virginia Vacca was a Sanskritist who, in course of time, had developed an interest in the Muslims of India; the other two were historians without any kind of previous orientalist background: Luigi Suali and Giorgio Borsa.

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<sup>1</sup> A first version of this paper was presented to the Seminar *Indo-Italian Relations. The Next 50 Years*, held in New Delhi on the 5 and 6 January 1998.

*For simplicity's sake, most the diacritical marks, appearing in the titles of the works quoted in this article, have been eliminated.*

Virginia Vacca published, in 1941, a monograph on Muslim India<sup>2</sup>; in the same year, Luigi Suali published a two-volume history of modern India<sup>3</sup>; just one year later Giorgio Borsa published a monograph on Gandhi<sup>4</sup>.

Vacca' s monograph was an in-depth study of the Muslim community, mainly focussed on its political and social evolution in the 1920s and 1930s. For its detailed and careful reconstruction, Vacca' s work can still be of use today as a reference book. This comes as no surprise, if one remembers that Vacca - a convinced Fascist - was involved in the Fascist regime' s attempt at building bridges with those political groups and social movements which, in the Middle East and South Asia, were assumed to be potentially hostile to the British Empire.

Suali' s history of modern India was a much more ambitious work, which aimed at reconstructing India' s past in order to explain India' s present. According to Suali, the birth of modern Indian history was determined by two phenomena, namely 'the penetration of Islam in [India' s] political and social life, and the great geographical discoveries'. And, he added, 'the latter, maybe, more than the former'.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, Suali' s work started with the year 632 A.D., the death of the Prophet Muhammad, and went on to the close of the 1930s, giving a great deal of emphasis to the colonial period.

Suali' s background as modern European historian and historian of international relations was impressive. The result was that, in spite of the fact that Suali had not made use of primary sources, his book was a very sound introductory work to the history of India. Because of the elegance of its prose, the detail of its analysis, and the ability to set Indian history in the wider framework of world history, Suali' *Storia* compared favourably with the then existing works of similar scope by British historians. Suali' s interpretation, however, was in no way innovative as compared with those given by contemporary British scholars, whom, in fact, Suali closely followed. Frankly put, Suali was heir to an intellectual tradition started by James Mill' *History of India*. Consequently, he devaluated India' s civilization, and was an open admirer of British colonialism. He underplayed the importance of Indian nationalism, and his lack of understanding for Gandhi' s political work and its significance was more or less total.

Suali' s admiration for British imperialism had the net result of rapidly dooming his work to oblivion. When his *Storia* was published, Italy was at war with Great Britain; the Fascist regime, mightily displeased by Suali' s positive evaluation of all that was English, prevented the circulation of his work, although without actually banning it. Having incurred the displeasure of the Fascist regime could have become a positive introductory card in the new Italy which emerged from the ruins of World War II. Unfortunately for Suali, among the positive consequences of Italian military defeat in the war, there was - besides, of course, the end of the Fascist regime - both the sudden folding up of the Italian colonial empire and the cessation of any respectability for colonialism. Hence Suali' s work fell into the dustbin of historiography. On the other hand, Virginia Vacca' s Fascist affiliation, and the fact that her interest for Muslim India had developed when she was already a fairly old person, prevented her from having any disciple. Even in Vacca' s case, her work fell into the dustbin of historiography.

In the case of Borsa' s monograph on Gandhi, the approach was quite different. As Borsa himself has remembered, as a young man and member of an anti-Fascist organization (*Giustizia e Libertà*), he was engaged - mainly unsuccessfully - in the attempt to organize some modest public manifestations against the Fascist regime. His repeated failures brought Borsa to ask himself what was the secret that explained the extraordinary success that, more or less in the same period,

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<sup>2</sup> Virginia Vacca, *L'India musulmana*, Milano: Ispi, 1941.

<sup>3</sup> Luigi Suali, *Storia moderna dell'India*, Milano: Ispi, 1941, 2 vols.

<sup>4</sup> Giorgio Borsa, *Gandhi e il Risorgimento indiano*, Milano: Bompiani, 1942.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. XI.

Gandhi was obtaining in organizing his mass campaigns against the British Raj. This resulted in Borsa' s decision to choose Gandhi as the subject of his *Laurea* dissertation, which, later, was published as a book<sup>6</sup>.

After the war, and after beginning his university career, Borsa' s interest expanded to include the modern history of China and Japan, on which he published a couple of monographs and several papers. This part of his work was really focussed on the history of international relations, and, although the field of his inquiries - the Far East - was relatively new (in the Italian academia), his methodological approach was rather traditional. By the late 1950s, however, Borsa had become influenced by some recent works by European and Asian historians<sup>7</sup>. As a consequence, Borsa developed a new approach to the history of India, China, and Japan, and became critical of the traditional Western approach to Asian history. An integral part of his new approach was his strong criticism to both the idea that modern Asian history could be reduced to the history of Europe outside Europe and its consequent (implicit or explicit) corollary of an unchanging Orient. On the other hand, his critique did not spare the new nationalist and/or Marxist historiography, born in Asia as a reaction to the political and intellectual hegemony of the West. Borsa acknowledged the many merits of the nationalist/marxist historiography, namely - as he himself pointed out in the introduction to a later work - the fact that, particularly in its marxist variant, this historiography had 'not only played a useful role in correcting and integrating the unilaterality [of the existing Western historiography], but brought in a whole range of new themes, particularly as far as economic and social history [is] concerned ...?'<sup>8</sup>. Yet, Borsa found sterile the fact that, too often, the new nationalist/marxist approach ended up by giving an image of the modern history of Asia which seemed a mirror-like, reverse reflection of the image arising from Western historiography. In his own words, 'the age that the European historians ... had described as a new golden age, appeared to them [the Asian historians] as a period of decline and crisis; the following age, which witnessed the decline of the imperialist powers in Asia, was seen as a vibrant era of renewal and redemption. Rebellions became freedom wars, villains became heroes and heroes became villains?'<sup>9</sup>.

Borsa, himself, on his part, chose to be with those new historians, both Westerners and Asians, who based their own work on the idea that the history of Asia 'was not anymore the history of Europe in Asia, nor, as narrowly, the history of Asia' s liberation from European domination, but the history of the making of the modern world in Asia, of which Western conquest and Asian reaction to it are two dialectical - and necessary - phases.'<sup>10</sup>

Here, it is necessary to stress that, while speaking of 'modernization?', Borsa was quite clear that 'modernization?' was not the same as 'westernization?'. According to his paradigm, the Western impact had caused or helped the dissolution of the existing Asian societies. Their crisis

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<sup>6</sup> Funnily enough, Borsa' s monograph on Gandhi did not provoke any adverse reaction on the part of the Fascist authorities. The fact was that Italian Fascism, particularly its most radical wing, had a considerable sympathy for Gandhi. In spite of what appeared to any true Fascist as his nonsensical ideas on non violence, the Mahatma was considered a kind of objective ally, as he was the most dangerous enemy of a most dangerous enemy (the British Empire).

<sup>7</sup> Among the European scholars there were Percival Griffiths, L.S.S. O' Malley, K. Ballhatchet, and, particularly, Percival Spear (whose *India - a Modern History*, was later translated into Italian in a series directed by Borsa himself). Among the Indian scholars there were P. Chandra Gupta, N.H. Sinha, B.B. Misra. Moreover, even if with some qualification - related to the 'strongly nationalist inspiration?' of his work - Borsa was favourably impressed by K.M. Panikkar' s historiographical work. See Giorgio Borsa, 'L' India moderna nelle storiografie britannica e nazionalista indiana?', in *Nuova Rivista Storica*, XLVIII, I-II, 1964, pp. 24-25.

<sup>8</sup> Giorgio Borsa, *La nascita del mondo moderno in Asia Orientale*, Rizzoli, Milano 1977, p. 9. This later work integrated and developed many ideas first presented by Borsa in the 1960s. See below.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

resulted in two kinds of initial responses, both doomed to failure: one was the blind reaction against all that was Western, the second was the uncritical and total acceptance of Western values. In the case of India, he saw these two responses exemplified by the 1857 revolt and Harry Derazio's doctrines respectively. In the wake of the failure of these extreme responses, a new position was bound to emerge. This was the product of a complex process of interaction between the new ideas coming from the West and the traditional wisdom of Asian society. The result of this elaboration was something new: Western intellectual tradition, changed and adapted to the new climate, became an integral part of the local intellectual tradition. As such, it was something vital and vibrant, capable of autonomous development. Parliamentary techniques, cultural associations, modern parties may have been a British (direct or indirect) import to India, but in the course of time they became as Indian as the *Vedas*. This was not the result of a kind of revolution from above, carried out by the colonial masters, but the outcome of an autonomous effort by Indians, who borrowed from their masters what they needed, reworked it and made it indigenous. It was this process that resulted in modernization. Of course, the fact that Indians could make an innovative use of values and institutions typical of the modern world did not necessarily imply that they were 'westernized'. As Borsa himself pointed out in a different context, that would be tantamount to claim that an Italian who is a liberal has to be considered 'anglicized'<sup>11</sup>.

In Borsa's modernization paradigm, a great deal of importance was given to Asian nationalisms. In fact, according to him, there were at least two reasons which made the rise of Asian nationalisms a necessary step on the path to modernization. First of all, nationalism was an essential feature of the modern world. Moreover, the idea of nation, being European-made, was, once brought into an Asian context, bound to trigger an intellectual reaction and a reassessment of a whole range of traditional ideas. By itself, this could not but start that process of creative conflation and remoulding of Western and Asian concepts that was a most significant aspect of the process of modernization.

These ideas were developed by Borsa in a number of papers<sup>12</sup>, and in some courses of lessons which were subsequently edited by one of his students and published by the University of Pavia<sup>13</sup>. Particularly his published lessons, although circulated in a limited edition, had a profound influence on some young scholars who were then starting their career.

### *The Islamic connection...*

Borsa's work played a crucial role in opening the way to modern Indian studies in Italy. But, together with Borsa's, one has to remember Alessandro Bausani's pioneering work in the 1950s and 1960s. Bausani was a specialist in Islamic studies, with exceptional linguistic abilities. This is shown by the fact that, although regarded as an authority in Iranian culture and language, his translation of the Qur'ân remains to this day the standard Italian version. A man of wide interests and a prolific writer<sup>14</sup>, Bausani devoted much attention to India, particularly to Muslim India<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> Id., *La Fine dell' era coloniale in Asia Orientale. Asia Major 1993* Bologna: Il Mulino, 1993: *Presentazione*, p. 8.

<sup>12</sup> E.g. Giorgio Borsa, 'Il nazionalismo e l' ingresso dell' Asia Orientale nel mondo moderno', *Politico*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (1964); id., 'La proprietà della terra in India sotto il dominio inglese?', in *Nuova Rivista Storica*, Vol. 50, parts 3-4 (1966); id., 'L' Estremo Oriente: nuovi orientamenti storiografici?', in *Nuove Questioni di Storia Contemporanea*, Milano: Marzorati, 1968.

<sup>13</sup> E.g. Giorgio Borsa, *Le origini del nazionalismo in Asia Orientale* (edited by G. C. Calza), Università di Pavia, Facoltà di Scienze Politiche (without date, but mid-1960s).

<sup>14</sup> For a bibliography of his writings, running up to 329 titles, see Bianca Scarcia Amoretti and Lucia Rostagno (eds.), *YÂD-NÂMA*. In memoria di Alessandro Bausani, Roma: Bardi Editore, 1991, vol. I. pp. XIII-XXVII.

<sup>15</sup> His first paper related to India was 'Su alcune recenti pubblicazioni urdu?', in *Oriente Moderno*, XXVII, 1947, followed some years later by 'L' India vista da due grandi personalità musulmane: Bîrûnî e Bâber?', in *Iran Society* (a cura di), *Al-Bîrûnî commemoration volume A.H. 326 - A.H. 1362*, Calcutta: Iran Society, 1951.

During his many years at the Istituto Orientale in Naples, he revived the Istituto's concern with Urdu studies - a tradition which, in fact, dates back to the 19th century. He not only gave new impetus to the teaching of this language, but published several studies on the history of Urdu literature and some well known literary figures, such as Ghalib<sup>16</sup>. His history of Pakistani literature, originally published in 1958 and reprinted in 1968<sup>17</sup>, is really a history of the development of Urdu literature in India. Beside giving much attention to linguistic problems<sup>18</sup>, Bausani devoted much attention to Islam in the Indian context, with particular emphasis, not always sympathetic, to its modern trends<sup>19</sup>. These different strands found an appropriate synthesis in Bausani's interest in Iqbal. In fact, Bausani was possibly the first European to give a sustained scholarly attention to the poet from Lahore. As a result, Bausani published a series of important papers, written either in Italian or English, discussing various aspects of Iqbal's philosophy and poetry<sup>20</sup>. Moreover, he translated and commented on a considerable part of the poet's work<sup>21</sup>.

... and the Sanskrit connection

Finally, our survey of the Italian pioneers of the study of modern and contemporary India would not be complete without mentioning Giorgio Renato Franci. Franci was - and still is - mainly a Sanskritist and a scholar working on Indian classical culture. However, from his years as a university student, if not before, he developed an enduring interest for contemporary India and Gandhi. This interest was the mainspring behind his three year stay, in the early 1960s, at the University of Calcutta. In turn, the vivid impressions left by his Bengali sojourn strengthened his interest in modern and contemporary Indian culture and, in the course of time, resulted in a series of studies, beginning with a paper published as early as 1960<sup>22</sup>. Since then, Franci's contribution to the study of modern and contemporary Indian culture has been more or less continuous and is articulated along three main lines of enquiry.

The first is the study of the renewal and the continuing vitality of Hinduism in modern and contemporary India<sup>23</sup>. The second line of enquiry is represented by the linguistic problems of

<sup>16</sup> See, e.g., his 'Hali Ideas on Ghazals', in *Choristeria Orientalia*, Prague, 1950; 'The Position of Ghalib (1796-1869) in the History of Urdu and Indo-Persian Poetry?', in *Islam*, XXXIV, 1958; and 'Bedil and Ghalib?', in *University Studies*, II, 2, 1965.

<sup>17</sup> Alessandro Bausani, *Le letterature del Pakistan e dell' Afghanistan* Milano: Sansoni/Accademia, 1968 (first edn. 1958).

<sup>18</sup> See, e.g., his 'Notes on Persian words in Tamil?', in *Proceedings of the II Conference - Seminar of Tamil Studies 1968*, Madras: Madras University, 1971, vol. I.

<sup>19</sup> See, e.g., 'Note su Shah Waliullah di Delhi?', in *Annali dell' Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli*.s. X, 1960; *L' Islam in India. Tipologia di un contatto religioso* Roma: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1973, and 'Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898) e il moto della terra?', in *Rivista di studi orientali*, LIV, 1980.

<sup>20</sup> See, e.g., his 'Dante and Iqbal?', in *East and West*, n.s., 11 1952; 'The Concept of Time in M. Iqbal's Religious Philosophy?', in *Die Welt des Islam*, n.s. III, 1954; 'Satana nell' opera filosofica-poetica di M. Iqbal?', in *Rivista degli studi orientali*, XX, 1955; 'Classical Muslim Philosophy in the Work of a Muslim Modernist: M. Iqbal [1877-1938]?', in *Archiv fur Geschichte der Philosophie*, Berlino: Walter De Gruyter and Co., 1960.

<sup>21</sup> See, e.g. Muhammad Iqbal, *Il poema celeste*, Traduzione dal testo persiano e note di Alessandro Bausani, Roma: IsMEO, 1952; Alessandro Bausani, 'Sette poesie inedite di Muhammad Iqbal?', in *Il punto nelle lettere e nelle arti*, II, 3, 1953; id., *Poesie di Muhammad Iqbal*, traduzione dal persiano e dall' urdu con introduzione e note, Parma: Guanda, 1956.

<sup>22</sup> Giorgio Renato Franci, 'Recenti sviluppi delle questioni linguistiche indiane?', in *Quaderni dell' Istituto di Glottologia dell' Università di Bologna* V, 1960.

<sup>23</sup> See, e.g., his 'La tradizione del pensiero indù ha un futuro?', *Quaderni dell' Istituto di Glottologia dell' Università di Bologna*, VI, 1961; *Studi indologici*, Bologna: Forni, 1969 (particularly the paper entitled: 'Appunti in margine ad alcune interpretazioni induiste della *Bhagavadgita*?'); *Studi sul pensiero indiano* (particularly the paper 'La religione nell' India di oggi?'); 'Tradizione e rinnovamento nell' induismo contemporaneo?', in Enrica Collotti Pischel (ed.), *India oggi*, Milano: Franco Angeli, 1984; 'Vocazione e futuro: *Indian Philosophy at the crossroads?*', in *Studi Orientali e*

contemporary India. Franci, although assigning pride of place to studying the survival of the Sanskrit language<sup>24</sup>, gives a great deal of attention to the study of recent Bengali literature<sup>25</sup>, and Indian literature in the English language<sup>26</sup>. Finally, a third line of enquiry is represented by his studies of the continuing relevance of the classical intellectual tradition in modern and contemporary India, and the encounter between India and the West at the philosophical level<sup>27</sup>. Part of this line of enquiry has been Franci' s interest for Aurobindo' s thought<sup>28</sup>

### *The studies on Indian nationalism*

Borsa' s most ambitious monograph, which was the summing up of his previous work on India, Japan and China, was published in 1977<sup>29</sup>. By that time a new phase had begun as far as Italian studies on modern India were concerned. Its starting point was represented by that sort of cultural revolution that was the student movement. In Italy, it developed in 1968, but its general rehearsal had already been made in Turin in 1967. The cultural and political changes that were the result of, or were initiated by, the student movement were conspicuous and destined to affect Italian culture and politics deeply over the next ten or twelve years. Without going into detail, in this context it suffices to point out that, among the cultural consequences of the turmoil of those years, there was a sudden rise of interest for the revolutionary struggles of non-Western countries. For the first time, University students and at least some intellectuals became aware of the political struggles in Latin America, China and Vietnam, and, last but not least, became cognizant of the existence of a Palestinian people. India, of course, was not in the forefront of the revolutionary conflicts of those years, and, consequently, there was much less interest in her. In spite of this, some intellectuals did realize that both the freedom struggle in India, because of its sheer magnitude, and the peculiarly Indian nonviolent techniques employed by Gandhi deserved attention. The result was a flowering of studies particularly on Indian nationalism and Gandhi.

In this perspective, a significant contribution was given by Francesco Cataluccio, who, in fact, was not a young historian, but belonged to Borsa' s generation. Cataluccio had started his career as a historian of international relations, working on Italian foreign policy before the First World War. Later on, however, his interests had widened to cover the Arab world and Asia. In 1968, in the wake of the already quoted spurt of interest for revolutionary struggles in the non-European world, an Italian publisher, Dall' Oglia, started a series of books entitled 'The great revolutions of the 20th century'. Among the many revolutions which were examined in the monographs published in that series, a book focussed on the 'Indian Revolution' found somehow its way beside such works as 'The Cuban Revolution?', 'The Mexican Revolution?', 'The Chinese

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*Linguistici*, II, 1985; 'Vivekanânda in America - Un secolo dopo?', *ivi*, V, 1996.

<sup>24</sup> Id., 'Un nuovo dramma sanscrito: il Dharmaraksana di Dhupati Lakshminarayana Rao?', in *Quaderni dell' Istituto di Glottologia dell' Università di Bologna* VII, 1962-63; 'Una poesia sanscrita recente: Vinci, dea Indipendenza!', in *Paideia*, XXIII, 1968; 'Il sanscrito nell' India di oggi?', in *Atti dell' Accademia delle Scienze* Bologna, 1975; 'Note aggiuntive sul sanscrito nell' India di oggi?', in *Studi Orientali e Linguistici*, VI, 1996.

<sup>25</sup> Id., 'Prima notizia della lirica bengali dopo Tagore?', *ivi*; *Studi indologici* (particularly the papers: 'Liriche bengalesi contemporanee?', and 'Un sonetto bengali in onore di Dante?'); 'Rassegna tagoriana?', in *Paideia*, XXIX, 1974.

<sup>26</sup> Id., 'La lingua inglese in India?', in *ivi*, *Studi indologici*; 'Note premcandiane?', in *Paideia*, XXXIV, 1979.

<sup>27</sup> Id., 'India ed Occidente oggi?', in AA.VV., *Religioni e filosofie dell' India* Modena: Fondazione San Carlo, 1984; 'Vocazione e futuro: *Indian Philosophy at the crossroads*?', in *Studi Orientali e Linguistici*, II, 1985; 'Le cosiddette università indiane antiche, e le moderne?', in AA.VV., *Profili accademici di ' 800 e oltre* Bologna: Accademia delle Scienze, 1988.

<sup>28</sup> Id., 'Appunti sul ' progetto uomo ' di Sri Aurobindo?', *Gururâjamanjarikâ. Studi in onore di Giuseppe Tucci*, Napoli: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1974; Sri Aravinda (Aurobindo) interprete della cultura indiana più antica?, in *Indologia Taurinensia*, III-IV, 1977.

<sup>29</sup> Borsa, *La nascita del mondo moderno*.

Revolution?, and 'The Algerian Revolution'?<sup>30</sup>. In fact, Cataluccio' s monograph<sup>31</sup> was a kind of modern history of India with a strong emphasis on the colonial period *and* the freedom struggle. His approach closely followed Borsa' s. He saw modern Indian history articulated in two key aspects, summarized by the titles of the second and third parts of his four-part work, namely 'The British renewal of India?' and 'The Indian renewal of India?'. The former centred on the building of the modern state in India by the British; the latter focussed on the renewal of Hinduism and the rise of Indian nationalism. Appropriately, the fourth part was mainly taken up by an analysis of Gandhi' s role<sup>32</sup>. Without being startlingly innovative - when compared with contemporary works of a similar scope by Indian and British historians - Cataluccio' s work was a balanced appraisal of the transformation of India into a modern nation. In it, much attention was given to the role played by British policies and ideas, but at least as much attention was given to Indian creative reaction to colonial policies, particularly to the extraordinary cultural change that had been the necessary precondition to the rise of nationalism.

In the same year, Cataluccio' s publisher, namely Dall' Ooglio, brought out the second book length Italian work on Gandhi, a massive 600-hundred page biography. Its author, Clemente Fusero, was not an academic historian but a successful publicist, whose biographies or monographs on great men, particularly Renaissance Italians but also non-Italian artists such as Stendhal, Mozart, Rimbaud, and Apollinaire, had been translated into several European languages. A competent and careful artisan, Fusero had approached his work in full humility: 'To write about Gandhi - he confessed - is something that frightens?'. Moreover, Fusero was well aware that 'on Gandhi it would be possible to write - and should be written - two different biographies: the spiritual one, and the political one?'<sup>33</sup>.

Fusero' s work, although superficial in its description of Indian society and colonial policies, moved on a much firmer ground as far as Gandhi' s own history was concerned<sup>34</sup>. On the whole, Fusero' s proclaimed aim of trying to balance the spiritual and political sides of Gandhi' s life was successfully attained. Moreover, the strategic choice of allocating just under half of the book to the pre-1915 phase of Gandhi' s life<sup>35</sup> resulted in an in-depth exploration of the making of the Mahatma' s personality, of the gradual development of his philosophical and political ideas, and of the way in which he gradually built up and experimented with his innovative political strategies of nonviolent mass action. The weak point of the whole work was an excessive reliance on the concept of charisma as sufficient by itself to fully explain Gandhi' s extraordinary political success.

Gandhi' s role in Indian politics was at the centre of the first work by a much younger scholar, Michelguglielmo Torri. Torri, one of Borsa' s disciples, was stubbornly and mistakenly - convinced of the non-relevance of charisma as a key element in explaining Gandhi' s political success. Accordingly, in order to single out the real mainsprings of Gandhi' s political success, he wrote a monograph, published in 1975, analysing the political sea-change that affected Indian politics in the years 1914-1920, and the role played in it by Gandhi. In Torri' s analysis the Mahatma was shown as a person deeply committed to moral reform who, by 1919, had identified the colonial regime as the main obstacle to the attainment of his goal. According to Torri, after the setback of

<sup>30</sup> Some of the titles of the series were decidedly peculiar. So there was a 'Spanish Revolution?', a 'Fascist Revolution?', and an 'Israeli Revolution?!

<sup>31</sup> Francesco Cataluccio, *La rivoluzione indiana*, Dall' Ooglio, Milano 1968.

<sup>32</sup> The work concluded with an epilogue on 'The first twenty years of independent India?.

<sup>33</sup> Clemente Fusero, *Gandhi*, Milano: Dall' Ooglio, 1968, p. 9.

<sup>34</sup> The times being different, Fusero was able to base himself on a much more thorough examination of Gandhi' s writings than Borsa. In particular, Fusero had the possibility to make use of the first 60 volumes of Gandhi' s *Collected Works*, whose publication, then in progress, had been started in the 1950s by the Government of India.

<sup>35</sup> In 1915 Gandhi (1869-1948) returned to India for good, after spending most of his early adult life abroad, particularly in South Africa.

the 1919 *satyagraha* movement, Gandhi realized the importance of both a mass organization and adequate financial resources in order to carry on his fight in a non violent manner. Hence, Gandhi' s decision to conquer or subordinate to his will *all* the existing nationalist institutions, a decision which at Christmas 1920 culminated in the conquest of the Congress and the beginning of its transformation into a mass party. In sum, differently from some English scholars, members of the so-called Cambridge school, Torri was convinced of the authenticity of Gandhi' s patriotism. Nevertheless, by following a down to earth approach that might appear not very far from that characterizing the Cambridge school, Torri had arrived at the conclusion that Gandhi' s success in changing the nationalist landscape in India derived from the Mahatma' s exceptional ability in conquering and/or manipulating the existing nationalist institutions. In fact, in Torri' s analysis, Gandhi' s charisma and saintliness did not play any role at all.

A subordinate theme of Torri' s monograph was the role played by Tilak during the last phase of his life. The former firebrand of Indian nationalism was shown as a deeply changed man, convinced of the opportunity of accepting English reforms in spite of their objective limitations. In Torri' s analysis, Tilak appeared as a newborn democrat who made use of his clout and political prestige in order to bring the leaders of right wing Hindu nationalism to sign the Lucknow Pact. Moreover, Tilak was shown as the man who succeeded in inducing the most extreme left wing Indian nationalists to accept British reforms, effectively stalling - while he lived - Gandhi' s more radical positions<sup>36</sup>.

Torri had written the bulk of his monograph being unaware of the work of the Cambridge school of Indian historians. Once he had discovered it<sup>37</sup>, he found much to be learned from a historiographical school with which he did not agree. Accordingly, Torri played some role in making the ideas of the Cambridge historians known to his fellow-scholars in Italy, at the same time trying to give a critical appraisal of those ideas<sup>38</sup>. He analysed what, in his opinion, made up the main features of the Cambridge model<sup>39</sup>, and showed how, ironically enough, some aspects of it nicely dovetailed with the drain theory<sup>40</sup>. At the same time, he discussed the Cambridge historians' criticism of the concept of 'westernized middle class?', criticized their proposal of the concept of 'broker?' to define the role of westernized Indians, and, basing himself on Gramsci, suggested the concept of 'intellectual?' as a more appropriate tool in order to describe their status and role<sup>41</sup>. Finally, he tried to make use of the methodological ideas deriving from his revision of the Cambridge approach, in order to analyse both the rise of Annie Besant' s AIndia Home Rule League in Madras during the years 1914-1917, and the evolution of the Congress and the role played in it by Gandhi during the years 1919-1939<sup>42</sup>. In writing this latter paper, he was deeply

<sup>36</sup> Michelguglielmo Torri, *Dalla collaborazione alla rivoluzione non violenta. Il nazionalismo indiano da movimento di élite a movimento di massa*, Turin: Einaudi, 1975.

<sup>37</sup> Thanks to the seminars on the subject, organized at Berkeley, in the academic years 1973/74 and 1974/75, by Eugene F. Irschick. By then his *Dalla collaborazione* had been already accepted for publication. He dealt with some of the contributions by the Cambridge school in an *Appendix* to his book.

<sup>38</sup> At first he pursued this objective through discussions and seminars with other Italian scholars working on modern India. To his embarrassment, he was sometimes mistaken for a member or a follower of the Cambridge school. Gradually, Torri' s ideas were set out in a series of published papers. See the following footnotes.

<sup>39</sup> His first attempt to do this in writing was a review article of D.A. Washbrook' s monograph on the Madras Presidency in the years 1880 to 1920: see Michelguglielmo Torri, 'Social System and Ideology in South India?', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 16 July 1977.

<sup>40</sup> Id., "Colonialismo e nazionalismo in India, il modello interpretativo degli storici di Cambridge", *Rivista di storia contemporanea*, CIII, II, 1991.

<sup>41</sup> Id., "'Westernized Middle Class', Intellectuals and Society in Late Colonial India?', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 27 January 1990; reprinted in John L. Hill (ed.) *The Congress and Indian Nationalism. Historical Perspectives*, London: Curzon Press, 1991.

<sup>42</sup> Id., 'The Rise of the Home Rule Movement in Madras (1914-1917)?', *Asian Profile*, August 1977, pp. 325-354;

influenced by the Rudolphs' studies on Gandhi' s charisma<sup>43</sup> and so arrived at a somewhat more balanced appraisal of it.

The role of politically engaged Indian intellectuals was at the centre of the work of another of Borsa' s pupils: Simonetta Casci. Focussing her research on Bengal, she first analysed the evolution of the local press in the years 1857-1878<sup>44</sup>, and, later, went on to analyse Pyaricad Mitra, translating into Italian and writing a commentary of his *Âlâler gharer dulâl*<sup>45</sup>. Moreover, some time before, Casci had co-authored with Giorgio Borsa a longish paper on the origins of the Indian National Congress<sup>46</sup>. The paper was part of a collective publication edited by Giorgio Borsa and issued to celebrate the first one hundred years of the Indian National Congress. Together with the paper by Borsa and Casci, and the already quoted article by Torri on Gandhi and the Congress in the years 1919-39, the book included three additional papers on the nationalist Muslims (by Daniela Bredi), the Congress and the harijans (by Simonetta Casci), and the approach followed by the Congress in the years 1931-1950 in relation to the politics of development (by Claudio Zanier).

The just quoted paper written by Torri on Gandhi and the Congress was not, by any means, the only Italian work published in the 1980s on the Mahatma. Borsa himself, in 1983, had published the updated version of his work on Gandhi - which carried the story up to the Mahatma' s death - and had prefaced to his work a new 'Introduction?', which was a short but extremely stimulating summing up of the various scholarly interpretations of Gandhi' s personality and work<sup>47</sup>. Some years later Pier Cesare Bori and Gianni Sofri wrote a fine monograph on the relationship between Gandhi and Tolstoj<sup>48</sup>, in which, apart from discussing the main subject, some new light was shed on Gandhi' s relationship with Savarkar. Neither Bori, nor Sofri were students of India, but Sofri had an enduring interest in Gandhi, which, after this first work in collaboration with Bori, resulted in other publications on the Mahatma. In 1988 he published an interesting paper, entitled 'Questions on Gandhi?', in which, falling back on the rhetorical device of 'answering some questions?', he aimed at giving a critical appraisal of the received wisdom on Gandhi, the necessary byproduct - in his opinion - of 'a literature at times reductive and contemptuous, at times apologetic and idyllic'<sup>49</sup>. The result was a very perceptive assessment of Gandhi, the man and the politician. Later, Sofri published a delightful little book on Gandhi' s passage to Italy (December 1931), where much light was shed both on Gandhi' s personality and style, and on the reactions of the Italian political and intellectual milieu to Gandhi' s visit. A reaction that included the Fascist regime' s miscarried attempt at 'appropriating' Gandhi as a Fascist sympathizer<sup>50</sup>.

The same year of the publication of Sofri' s monograph, namely 1988, saw the printing of a

and "L' evoluzione del Congresso da movimento a partito dominante e il ruolo di Gandhi, 1919-1939", in Giorgio Borsa (ed), *Nazionalismo e società in India*, Pavia/Milano: CSPEE/Franco Angeli, 1988.

<sup>43</sup> Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and Lloyd I. Rudolph, *Gandhi. The Traditional Roots of Charisma*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1983. This was the second part of the Rudolphs' *The Modernity of Tradition* (1967), which Torri, then a student, had unfortunately missed.

<sup>44</sup> Simonetta Casci, *La stampa periodica in Bengala (1857-1878)*, Milano: Giuffrè, 1980.

<sup>45</sup> Id., *Pyaricad Mitra ed il Rinascimento bengalese*, Pavia/Milano: Centro studi per i popoli extraeuropei/Franco Angeli, 1990.

<sup>46</sup> Giorgio Borsa & Simonetta Casci, 'Le origini del Congresso nazionale indiano?', in Giorgio Borsa (ed.), *Nazionalismo e società in India*, Pavia/Milano: CSPEE/F. Angeli, 1988.

<sup>47</sup> Giorgio Borsa, *Gandhi: un uomo di pace che divenne la fiera anima di un popolo*, Milano: Bompiani, 1983. The new title [Gandhi, a man of peace who became the fierce soul of a people] was an idea of the publisher, not of the author. At the time, Attenborough' s movie on Gandhi had just been shown in Italy, obtaining a considerable success and sparking additional interest in the Mahatma and his work.

<sup>48</sup> Pier Cesare Bori and Gianni Sofri, *Gandhi e Tolstoj. Un carteggio e dintorni*, Bologna: il Mulino, 1985.

<sup>49</sup> Gianni Sofri, 'Domande su Gandhi?', in *Rivista di storia contemporanea*, XVII, 1, 1988, p. 37.

<sup>50</sup> Gianni Sofri, *Gandhi in Italia*, Bologna: il Mulino, 1988.

short book on Gandhi by Enrico Fasana<sup>51</sup>, a historian with a formation as political scientist and a distinct interest in anthropology. In his book, Fasana described Gandhi as mainly a religious hero, the 'prophet' of the spiritual and social renaissance of India, mainly engaged in the internal purification of Indian society. According to Fasana, the political liberation of India was seen by Gandhi as only a step, although a necessary one, on the path to spiritual and social liberation. Consequently, Gandhi was described by Fasana as a reluctant politician, who saw the political power given to the Congress as only a transitory one, destined to end with the conquest of independence. In fact, as Fasana points out, it was Gandhi's intention that, after the completion of the freedom struggle, the Congress should be transformed into a non-political organization: the *Lok Sevak Sangh* ('Association of the Servants of the People')<sup>52</sup>.

Another Italian historian who, during this period, briefly wrote on Gandhi, was Claudio Zanier. In penning down a harsh evaluation of 'Gandhi', the Attenborough motion picture, Zanier advanced some further criticism on Gandhi the man, if not on Gandhi the politician<sup>53</sup>. But Zanier's incursion into the field of Gandhian studies was brief and exceptional. Trained as an economist, and mainly interested in economic history, Zanier, whose main field of interest was Tokugawa Japan and, later, modern Europe, is the author of a series of papers on the economic history of modern India. Apart from the already quoted paper published in the Borsa edited centenary volume on the Congress, Zanier wrote on the negative impact of the first phase of colonialism on Indian economy<sup>54</sup>, and on silk production in India<sup>55</sup>.

The period under discussion was also characterized by the contributions of some young scholars with a formation as classical orientalists. These scholars, following Bausani's example even if not always his teachings<sup>56</sup> - made use of their linguistic tools, in order to study Indian modern cultural and political movements. One of these scholars was Amedeo Maiello, who centred his research work on Indian Muslims. He started by analysing Sayyid Ahmad Khan's thought, and

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<sup>51</sup> Enrico Fasana, *Gandhi, Mahatma e uomo politico*, Trieste: Scientific Press, 1988.

<sup>52</sup> The book on Gandhi was only the latest in order of time of a series of works on Indian history written by Fasana. In fact his first one, a short monograph on the tribal problem in India, was published as long ago as 1967. See Enrico Fasana, *Il problema tribale in India: saggio storico politico*, Torino: Giappichelli, 1967. After nine years of silence, Fasana published a more or less continuous stream of papers, mainly but not exclusively, on the nationalist era. Among the most significant of the period up to the late 1980s there are: 'Riforma sociale e conversione nella comunità musulmana del subcontinente indiano?', in *Annali dell' Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli* 36 (n.s. XXVI), 1976; 'Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar and the caste system: the social thought of an Indian political leader?', in *Il Politico*, XLI, 4, 1976; 'Pratap Singh a Satara: "Rise and Fall" di un principe indiano (1818-1839)', in *Annali della Facoltà di Scienze Politiche dell' Università degli Studi di Trieste* 1980; '"Moderati ed estremisti" nell' India Occidentale di fronte al Risorgimento italiano?', in Giorgio Borsa and Paolo Beonio Brocchieri (eds.), *Garibaldi, Mazzini e il Risorgimento nel risveglio dell' Asia e dell' Africa*, Pavia/Milano, Centro studi per i popoli extraeuropei/Franco Angeli, 1984; 'Samarth Ramdas e il Dharma: un ' santo' indiano nella vita, nella storia e nell' immagine?', in AA.VV. *realizzazione spirituale nell' uomo*, Milano: Istituto di propaganda libraria, 1987.

<sup>53</sup> Claudio Zanier, *Il Gandhi di Attenborough*, in 'Passato e presente?', 4, 1983. The episode in Gandhi's life that was singled out for some harsh criticism was the notorious incident of Gandhi caught to sleep with his two nieces.

<sup>54</sup> Claudio Zanier, 'Alle radici del sottosviluppo in India: le deformazioni produttive nelle prime fasi della colonizzazione britannica?', in *Nuova Rivista Storica*, III-IV, 1979.

<sup>55</sup> Id., 'Silk Culture in Western India: the "Mutti Experiment" (1830-1847)?', in *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 21, 4, 1984; id., 'Sericoltura ed industria serica in India: una modernizzazione incompiuta?', in AA.VV., *La modernizzazione in Asia e in Africa. Problemi di storia e problemi di metodo*, Pavia: Editoriale Viscontea, 1989. These essays were part of a wider research on the history of silk production. The results of this research were later presented in a full-blown monograph: *Alla ricerca del seme perduto. Sulla via della seta tra scienza e speculazione (1858-1862)*, Milano: Franco Angeli, 1993.

<sup>56</sup> Bausani had many disciples, but only one, Amedeo Maiello, elected modern India as his main research field. On Maiello see below.

Western influence on the whole Aligarh movement<sup>57</sup>. He went on to study several other topics related to Muslim India, such as Sibli Nu' mani' s historiographical approach<sup>58</sup> and some lesser known aspects of Iqbal' s thought<sup>59</sup>.

Another scholar with an orientalist training was Giuseppe Flora, whose research work was then mainly aimed at exploring both the cultural inter-relationship between India and Italy during the nationalist era, and the intellectual influence of the Italian Risorgimento on the Indian nationalist movement. The latter topic was investigated by Flora mainly through the analysis of the importance of Mazzini, his life and work, on some main Indian nationalist leaders<sup>60</sup>.

Finally, this period saw the first awakening of interest for modern Hindi literature. To a large extent this was the result of the work of an Indian scholar, Laxam Prasad Mishra, who, during the latter part of his life, settled in Italy and taught the Hindi language and literature at the University of Venice.<sup>61</sup> Among his pupils there was Mariola Offredi, who, after being trained as a social scientist, had gone on to study Hindi under Mishra' s direction. In 1971 Offredi published a short monograph on Hindi journalism from its beginnings in 1826 to 1926<sup>62</sup>. This was soon followed by a somewhat more detailed study on the contemporary Hindi novel<sup>63</sup>. This was only the beginning of an intensive work which explored Hindi journalism, Hindi contemporary novel, and, later on, Hindi poetry. In the course of time, the last mentioned field became the dominant one in Offredi' s work<sup>64</sup>.

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<sup>57</sup> Amedeo Maiello, 'Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and the Christian Challenge?', in *Annali dell' Istituto Orientale di Napoli*, Vol. 36 (1976), and id., 'The Social Ideas of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan?', in *Annali dell' Istituto Orientale di Napoli*, Vol. 37 (1977).

<sup>58</sup> Id., 'Dara-Aurangzeb nella moderna storiografia musulmana in India?', in *Atti del convegno sul centenario della nascita di L. Massignon*, Napoli 1985.

<sup>59</sup> Id., 'Il simbolismo del sangue in Iqbal?', in *Atti della V settimana di studi 'Sangue e antropologia. Riti e culto'*, Roma 1984.

<sup>60</sup> On Mazzini' s influence on Indian nationalism see Giuseppe Flora, 'Surendra Nath Banerjea e Mazzini?', in *Rassegna Storica del Risorgimento*, Vol. 69 (1982); id., 'Studi mazziniani in India?', in *Rassegna storica del risorgimento*, Vol. 70 (1982); id., 'Il nazionalismo hindu ed il Risorgimento: La figura di Mazzini nell' opera di Lala Rajpat Rai?', in Giorgio Borsa e Paolo Beonio Brocchieri (eds.), *Il Risorgimento nel risveglio dell' Asia e dell' Africa* Cspee/F. Angeli, Pavia/Milano 1984. More generally, as example of Flora' s studies on the cultural interrelationship between India and Italy see: 'L' India nella cultura storica e civile italiana della prima metà dell' Ottocento?', in U. Marazzi (ed.), *La conoscenza dell' Asia e dell' Africa in Italia nei secoli XVIII e XIX* Istituto Universitario Orientale, Napoli 1984, Vol. 1; and 'Bertrando Spaventa e la filosofia indiana?', in A. Sorrentino e M. Taddei (eds.), *Napoli e l' India* Istituto Universitario Orientale, Napoli 1990.

<sup>61</sup> Among Mishra' s works there are the translation of and introduction to a selection of short stories by Prem Chand (*Lo scrigno. Racconti di vita indiana*, Bari: Leonardo da Vinci, 1965), the section on modern Indian literatures in Vittore Pisani and Laxman Prasad Mishra, *Le letterature dell' India* Firenze: Sansoni, 1970, and the translation of and introduction to Vidjâpati' s *Padâvalî* and Kabîr' s *Granthâvalî* (Laxam Prasad Mishra, a cura di, *Mistici indiani medievali*, Torino: UTET, 1979). It may be worth noticing that Mishra' s translations of the *Padâvalî* and the *Granthâvalî* are the first integral translations ever of those two works into a Western language.

<sup>62</sup> Mariola Offredi, *I primi cento anni del giornalismo hindi (1826-1926)*, Venice: ITE, 1971.

<sup>63</sup> Id., *Il romanzo hindi contemporaneo*, Rome: Cesviet, 1974.

<sup>64</sup> Offredi' s works in the 1980s include: 'Gli anni Settanta nella stampa hindi: alla ricerca dell' identità nel mondo moderno? (The 1970s in the Hindi Press: The search for national identity)', in M. Offredi, C. Cossio, A. Simonelli, *Contributi ad uno studio sui rapporti fra Occidente e Terzo Mondo* (Contributions to a Study on the Relationship between the West and the Third World), Milan: Cesviet, 1977; 'Gajanan Madhav Muktibodh (with translation of Adhere me and other poems)?', in M. Offredi, C. Cossio, S. Vannucchi, *Tre tendenze della poesia hindi contemporanea* (*Three Trends in Contemporary Hindi Poetry*), Milan: Cesviet, 1980; 'Dhumil' : rivolta e rivoluzione (Dhumil' s Poetry between Rebellion and Revolution, with translation of the collection of poems Sansad se sarak tak), in M. Offredi, V. Mingiardi, D. Di Virgilio, *Saggi sulla poesia hindi contemporanea* (Essays on Contemporary Hindi Poetry), Milan: Cesviet, 1986. Offredi also kept an enduring interest for social history, her original area of specialization. See her monograph *I tessitori musulmani di Banaras e Mau (India)* (The Muslim Weavers of Banaras and Mau), Milan:

Another student of Hindi and pupil of Mishra who gave some attention to modern Hindi culture and modern Indian history was Donatella Dolcini. In 1980 she published an essay on Prem Chand and the question of the national language<sup>65</sup>, and, some years later, explored Lala Lajpat Ray' s intellectual relationship with the life and work of Mazzini and of Garibaldi, and his attempt to appropriate the two Italian patriots as *arya* heroes<sup>66</sup>.

Finally, mention must be made of Giorgio Milanetti, himself a pupil of Mishra, although a much younger scholar than Offredi and Dolcini. Milanetti, a student of medieval Hindi literature, has nevertheless maintained a continuous interest in the evolution of the modern Hindi language and literature. As a result, in the late 1970s he published two studies on Prem Chand - always, as we shall see below, a very popular topic of study among Italian scholars. Later, in the 1980s, Milanetti went on to publish two papers, the first on the work of the Chayavadi poet Sumitranandan Pant during the 1920s and 1930s<sup>67</sup>, and the second on the great literary critic Ram' candr Sukl.<sup>68</sup> This was followed by a short monograph (in Hindi) on Hazari Prasad Dvivedi, a well known writer and student of Hindi literature. Milanetti' s interest in Dvivedi' s literary work had been kindled by Dvivedi' s important contributions to the study of the Indian Middle Ages, namely as has already been recalled - Milanetti' s main field of interest. In assessing Dvivedi' s literary work, Milanetti showed how the driving force behind this author' s work was the need for personal and active involvement in worldly affairs. This, of course, was an ideal very far from that of renunciation, supposedly so widespread in 'traditional' Indian culture. Nevertheless, again according to Milanetti, the remaining characteristics of Dvivedi' s literary work amount to a creative blend of 'traditional' and 'modern' ideas. First of all, there was the strict interrelation - to use Milanetti' s own word, the 'contiguity' - between Dvivedi' s production as historian and his work as fictional writer. Then, in fashioning his idea of modernity, Dvivedi made use of the building blocks provided by history, but, true to a peculiarly Indian tradition, it is a history that shadows into and is encompassed by mythology. Finally, the effort to show the divinity in man - an idea equally part of a modern, humanistic vision of the world as well as of the most traditional Indian heritage - loomed large in Dvivedi' s work<sup>69</sup>.

### *The studies on pre-colonial and early colonial India*

Whereas, during this whole phase, the nationalist era remained the main field of enquiry for Italian historians, some of them started to cast their net wider and began to work both on independent India and on pre-colonial - and early colonial - India. As far as the pre-colonial period is concerned, it had been already explored by Borsa in his work on the making of the modern world in Asia<sup>70</sup>. Borsa was convinced that, in the pre-colonial period, India had been trapped in a sort of

Cesviet, 1984.

<sup>65</sup> Donatella Dolcini, *La partecipazione di Prem Chand alla questione della lingua nazionale indiana*, Milano: IsMEO, 1980.

<sup>66</sup> Id., Lala Lajpat Raj, un Arya-Samaji di fronte a Mazzini e Garibaldi, in Giorgio Borsa e Paolo Beonio Brocchieri (eds.), *Il Risorgimento nel risveglio dell' Asia e dell' Africa* SPEE/F. Angeli, Pavia/Milano 1984.

<sup>67</sup> Giorgio Milanetti, 'L' attiva bellezza di un mondo in evoluzione' nella poesia di Sumitranandan Pant (da ' Pallav' a ' Gramya' )? *Atti delle giornate di studio su il Chayavad, Supplemento a ' Quaderni Asiatici* n. 1, 1983 (Milano).

<sup>68</sup> Id., *Indagine sulla metodologia critica di Ram' candr Sukl: il 'Tul' si Das? (1923)*, Roma: Il Bagatto, 1983.

<sup>69</sup> Id., *Acarya Hazari Prasad Dvivedi aur 'Anam' das ka potha?: ek vivecan* Delhi: Star Book Center, 1984. This is, as far as I know, the only monograph in Hindi on a Hindi author written by an Italian. Here it is worth recalling that, in the late 1980s, Milanetti published some notes on the transliteration of Hindi into the Latin alphabet. Among other suggestions, he put forth that of making use of the apostrophe to render the short 'a', namely a letter hardly ever pronounced at the end of the word, and rarely so when appearing inside multi-syllabic words. See his 'Alcune osservazioni per la definizione di un sistema di trascrizione integrato della lingua hindi?', in *Rivista di Studi Orientali*, vol. LXII, 1988.

<sup>70</sup> Giorgio Borsa, *La nascita del mondo moderno*, chr. I.

low-level equilibrium. In Borsa' s appraisal, this lowlevel equilibrium - in spite of some trade, including long-distance trade - was characterized by the virtual irrelevance of the urban world and the absolute prevalence of a subsistence peasant economy, based on largely self-sufficient villages. This thesis was criticized, both implicitly and explicitly, by Zanier and Torri. Zanier showed that the main Asian countries had a positive commercial balance vis-à-vis Europe, that Asian agriculture - including Indian agriculture - was far from being at the subsistence level, and that international trade was triggering a series of changes in the Asian economies, particularly in the Indian sub-continent<sup>71</sup>. A similar criticism was carried out by Torri, who by then had begun to study the Mughal period. Torri was largely influenced by the Aligarh historians, particularly by Irfan Habib' s brilliant essay on the potentialities of capitalist development in Mughal India. However, he did not share Habib' s belief in the parasitical nature of the Mughal polity and the consequent impossibility of autonomous capitalist development in pre-colonial India. In fact, Torri reread and reinterpreted Habib' s theses in the light of the work of a Polish historian, Jerzy Topolski, on the rise of capitalism in Europe and on the decisive role played in it by the European nobility<sup>72</sup>. Torri' s conclusions were twofold: the first was that pre-colonial India was far from being characterized by a stagnant economy; the second was that the Mughals, before their military defeats at the hands of the Marathas, and their subsequent political collapse in the first half of the 18th century, were playing some role in promoting capitalist development<sup>73</sup>.

The necessity to ground his theses on in-depth research work induced Torri to shift his analysis from a general appraisal of Mughal (and Maratha) India to the study of the situation of an economically relevant area of India in the transitional period between the collapse of the Mughal Empire and the rise of the Company Raj. Initially, the chosen area was Gujarat; soon, however, Torri cut down his research area to the great port-city of Surat and its hinterland, during the 18th century. The related research had just begun when Ashin Das Gupta' s admirable monograph on Surat during the first half of the 18th century was published. The publication of Das Gupta' s work forced Torri both to reassess the range of his analysis, focussing it on the second half of the century, and to confront Das Gupta' s claim that, by the late 1740s, the economic importance of Surat was over for good. This last problem was first tackled in a paper published in 1982: in it Torri demonstrated that, in spite of ups and downs, Surat was still an important economic centre at the very end of the 18th century<sup>74</sup>.

This was the first of a series of papers on 18th-century Surat. Soon, however, their main emphasis shifted from economic change to local society. Torri strongly objected to a theory according to which local society was divided into two communal blocks, at war one with the other. According to this theory (which was baptized by its author 'the Anglo-Bania order' theory), local

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<sup>71</sup> Claudio Zanier, *La struttura socio-economica delle nazioni asiatiche al momento dell' impatto mercantile e coloniale europeo (1750-1850)*, Discussion Paper No. 1 dell' Istituto di Studi Economico-sociali per l' Asia Orientale, Università Commerciale "Luigi Bocconi", Milano 1974. In fact this paper was published before Borsa' *La nascita del mondo moderno*. But Borsa and Zanier had already debated their respective theses in a series of seminars.

<sup>72</sup> See Jerzy Topolski, *La nascita del capitalismo in Europa*, Torino: Einaudi, 1979. This important monograph was originally published in Poland by its author, a well known Polish historian. Unfortunately, as far as I know, it has not been translated into English.

<sup>73</sup> Michelguglielmo Torri, 'Le origini del processo di modernizzazione in Asia Orientale. Alcune note a proposito di un libro di Giorgio Borsa?', in *Rivista storica italiana*, XCIII, II, 1981; id., 'L' India dei Moghul e dei Maratha?', in *La storia*, vol. III, Turin: UTET, 1987.

<sup>74</sup> 'In the Deep Blue Sea: Surat and its merchant class during the dyarchic era (1759-1800)?', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. XIX, Nos. 3-4, 1982. Unfortunately, the paper just quoted is overburdened with extensive, weird and quite inventive typographical mistakes (such as the misspelling of the author' s own, admittedly overlong, first name in three different ways at different points in the headings of the paper). The *Errata corrigé* published in the following issue of the journal must be consulted, but with the *caveat* that, even there, there are additional typographical errors.

society was split between a politically and economically declining, aggressive Muslim community, and a wealthy and politically influential Hindu (and Jain) trading community, then on the rise because of its alliance with the English overlords of the city. In a series of articles, Torri knocked down all the props of the 'Anglo-Bania order' theory. He showed that religion had no role then as an aggregating political factor and that co-operation among men belonging to different communities was the rule. In fact, cooperation between men of different communities did exist at all levels of the surviving Mughal polity in Surat. Likewise, most of the key economic activities were carried out by ethnically mixed partnerships of merchants and *shroffs* (indigenous bankers or moneylenders). Even more important, according to Torri, was the fact that, although it is true that some ethnical specialization did exist in the various branches of the local political economy, this same political economy was an integrated system. This means that the decline of one of its sectors was bound to cause the decline of the whole system, irrespectively of the communal connotations of its operators. Torri's conclusion was that no in-depth communal conflict could develop among people who shared crucially important common economic interests, and that communal strife was one, basically unimportant and rare, form of conflict among the many ones bound to happen in a demographically dense and ethnically kaleidoscopic city such as Surat<sup>75</sup>.

The second point tackled by Torri was that of the nonexistence of an alliance between the English and the Hindu/Jain bankers as a group. This could not happen for the simple reason that Hindu/Jain bankers never acted as a group and - claims to the contrary notwithstanding - never had a common organization. There were alliances between the English and some individual Indian notables or, at the most, small networks of Indian notables. However, contrarily to the 'Anglo-Bania order' theory, these notables were as often Hindu/Jain bankers as they were Muslim shipping magnates or Mughal nobles<sup>76</sup>.

Finally, on a more general level, Torri criticized not only the 'Anglo-Bania order theory?', but the wider historiographical thesis of which it was an expression. According to this thesis, the rise of British colonial power in India must, to a large extent, be explained by the organic alliance between the English and influential groups of Indian merchants and bankers. Basing himself on a detailed analysis of the business world of the Surat bankers during the second half of the 18th century, namely during an era that Torri characterized as the era of the 'rising colonial order?', he showed that, viewed from the vantage point of eighteenth-century Surat, the rising colonial order appeared to be 'an alien and fundamentally hostile force which ruthlessly manipulated and progressively devastated the traditional society.' Furthermore, Torri highlighted the fact that the decision by certain influential indigenous groups to collaborate with the new order 'can be seen less as the product of a free choice than as the compulsory outcome of a lack of real alternatives.' Finally, in Torri's evaluation, even 'the decision to collaborate with the rising colonial order was far from assuring the long-term survival of the collaborators?', inasmuch as, far from being partners in the new order, 'they were powerless pawns and its prospective victims.'<sup>77</sup>

In Italy, Torri's theses were well received. So much so that, by the time of the publication of

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<sup>75</sup> 'Surat During the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century: What Kind of Social Order?', in *Modern Asian Studies*, 21, 4, 1987; 'Ethnicity and trade in Surat during the dual government era: 1759-1800?', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 27, 4, 1990; 'Trapped inside the Colonial Order. The Hindu Bankers of Surat and their business world in the second half of the 18th century?', *Modern Asian Studies*, 25, 2, 1991.

<sup>76</sup> Id., 'A Loch Ness monster? The Mahajans of Surat during the second half of the 18th century?' in *Studies in History*, 13, 1, n.s., 1997; 'Mughal Nobles, Indian Merchants and the Beginning of English Conquest in Western India: The case of Surat, 1756-1759?', in *Modern Asian Studies* (forthcoming). In addition to the already quoted papers, Torri's work on Surat includes 'Social Groups and the Redistribution of Commercial Wealth: The Customs Houses of Surat (1759-1800)?', in *Studies in History*, 1, 1, n.s., 1985, and 'Surat, its hinterland and its trade, c. 1740-1800: The British documents?', in *Moyen Orient et Océan Indien* (forthcoming).

<sup>77</sup> Torri, 'Trapped inside the Colonial Order?', *passim*. The quotations are from p. 370.

the paper from which the above quotations are taken, his mentor, Giorgio Borsa, had revised his early position on the stagnant nature of India's pre-colonial economy and, making use of Braudel's categories, had described the Indian Ocean as an *économie monde*, characterized by 'a high degree of development before the Europeans arrived'<sup>78</sup>.

While Borsa and Torri were mainly interested in the maritime history of pre-colonial India, another Italian scholar, Stefano Piano, had been exploring the religious, philosophical and cultural world of Sikhism. Piano, who was - and still is - mainly a Sanskritist, has shown an enduring interest in the modern and contemporary manifestations of Indian culture. The result has been the publication of a monograph<sup>79</sup> and series of papers on the intellectual world of the Sikh Gurus<sup>80</sup>, on the history of the Sikh-panth<sup>81</sup>, and on the modern mystics who have expressed themselves in the Hindi language<sup>82</sup>. The main thrust of Piano's research on the history and doctrine of the Sikhpanth was that it was less a byproduct of Islamic influence at the cultural level than the outcome of a natural evolution of some religious principles embedded in the Brahmanical tradition. In Piano's analysis, Guru Nanak's thinking was mainly influenced by such intellectual currents as the natha yogin, the bhakti vaisnava, and, more than anything else, the tradition represented by the nirguna-sampradaya Sants.

Finally, before closing this section, it is necessary to remember the work on early colonial India by two scholars who were both pupils of Claudio Zanier, namely Rolando Minuti and Guido Abbattista. Minuti and Abbattista coordinated their research work and, in the resulting writings<sup>83</sup>, explored the debate carried on between the second half of 18th and the early 19th century by European - mainly British<sup>84</sup> - intellectuals on such themes as Oriental despotism, land ownership in India, and the nature of Indian civilization. As shown by both Minuti and Abbattista, it was a debate through which the main elements of the European vision of India - or rather, as Edward Said would have it, of the European 'construction' of that part of the Orient that is India - were fixed for the whole colonial period and beyond.

Although the first publications of two then very young scholars, both Minuti and Abbattista's monographs were detailed and in-depth studies, characterized by important insights on the theme analysed, namely a theme characterized by the overlapping of Indian and European history. Unfortunately for the development of modern Indian studies in Italy, after those early

<sup>78</sup> Giorgio Borsa, 'Recent Trends in Indian Ocean Historiography 1500-1800?', in id. (ed.), *Trade and Politics in the Indian Ocean. Historical and Contemporary Perspective*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1990, p. 7. The papers published in this volume were originally presented at the 10th European Conference on Modern South Asian studies, held in Venice in 1988.

<sup>79</sup> Stefano Piano, *Guru Nanak e il Sikhismo*, Fossano: Editrice Esperienze, 1971.

<sup>80</sup> Id., 'Arjan e Govind Singh, maestri e riformatori del Sikhismo?', in *Indologica Taurinensia*, Vol. I, 1973; 'Guru Tegh Bahadur between Sikhism and Hinduism?', in *The Sikh Review*, XXIV, No. 276, Dec. 1976.

<sup>81</sup> Id., 'Fonti puraniche nel pensiero religioso dei maestri del Sikhismo?', in *Indologica Taurinensia*, Vol. X, 1982; 'La realizzazione spirituale dell' uomo secondo il Sikhpanth?', in AA.VV., *La realizzazione spirituale dell' uomo. Atti del Convegno interdisciplinare tenuto presso il Dipartimento di Mediavistica dell' Università di Pisa* (Milano: Istituto Propaganda Libreria, 1987). It is worth remembering that Piano has translated into Italian and published a selection of the *Guru Granth*. See *Canti religiosi dei Sikh*, Milano: Rusconi, 1985.

<sup>82</sup> 'Aspetti della bhakti nella poesia religiosa di Namdev?', in 'Orientalia Iosephi Tucci Memoriae Dedicata, edenda curaverunt G. Gnoli et L. Lanciotti?', in *Serie Orientale Roma*, Vol. 61, part 3, 1988.

<sup>83</sup> Rolando Minuti, *Proprietà della terra e despotismo orientale. Aspetti di un dibattito sull' India nella seconda metà del Settecento*, in *Materiali per una storia della cultura giuridica*, raccolti da Giovanni Tarello, VII, 2, 1978 (Bologna: il Mulino); Guido Abbattista, *James Mill e il problema indiano. Gli intellettuali britannici e la conquista dell' India* (Milano: Giuffrè, 1979). Minuti's just quoted essay, in spite of being published as part of a collective work, is, in fact, a 177-page-long monograph.

<sup>84</sup> In fact, Minuti gives much attention to analysing the French Orientalist Anquetil-Duperron's intellectual position. See his *Proprietà della terra*, pp. 38 ff.

works, Minuti and Abbattista decidedly shifted their research interests to the European side, and, since then, have gone on to work on the history of the European Enlightenment.

### *The studies on independent India*

In the same period under analysis, namely the late 1960s- late 1980s, there was a first start in the attempt to make use of the methodological tools of the historian to try to analyse the post-1947 period. Torri' s interest in the role of charisma led him to study Indira Gandhi' s conquest of power in 1969 and 1971. Torri had then just finished his monograph on Mohandas K. Gandhi and was still trying to discover the hidden political mechanisms which he believed to be the real motive force behind the rise of charismatic leaders. This resulted in the publication of two papers, one on the origins of the green revolution, the other on the nationalization of India' s banks in 1969, and the role played in both cases by Indira Gandhi<sup>85</sup>. The main thesis in these papers was that the implementation of the new policies behind the green revolution and bank nationalisation brought about conspicuous economic and, in the case of banks' nationalization, propaganda successes. In turn, those successes go far to explain Mrs. Gandhi' s electoral triumph in 1971.

At the time, Torri was convinced of the positive role played by Indira Gandhi, a conviction that still sustained him some years later, when he published a paper analysing the events leading to the imposition of the regime of internal emergency in 1975<sup>86</sup>. However, a fairly detailed examination of the ensuing period of authoritarian rule and the role played in it by Sanjay Gandhi led Torri to start a radical reassessment of Mrs. Gandhi' s role. The first results of this revision were sketched in a paper published soon after the 1977 elections<sup>87</sup>.

In the same years, Torri' s work was not limited to the study of Indira Gandhi' s rise and fall, but aimed at trying to give a provisional assessment of the history of independent India and the gains and failures brought about by the economic policies implemented by its governments. Accordingly, Torri wrote a bibliographical article dealing with the existing political and economic studies on independent India, followed, some years later, by a paper on the political and economic history of independent India<sup>88</sup>. In those years the interest in post-1947 India led another of Giorgio Borsa' s pupils, Enrica Collotti Pischel, whose work is mainly centred on China<sup>89</sup>, to coordinate a series of studies on various aspects of the politics and economy of independent India. This resulted in the publication of a pioneering collective book, where, among other topics, a great deal of attention was devoted to economic problems<sup>90</sup>.

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<sup>85</sup> ?Economic Policy and Political Gains: The First Phase of India' s Green Revolution (1966-1971)?, *Asian Studies*, Nos. 2-3, 1974 (reprinted in *Asia Quarterly*, 1976) and, id. ?Factional Politics and Economic Policy: The Case of India' s Bank Nationalization? *Asian Survey*, No. 12 (1975).

<sup>86</sup> ?L' India e il contesto politico interno?, in *Politica internazionale*, September 1976.

<sup>87</sup> Id., ?La fine del regime di Indira Gandhi?, in *Politica internazionale*, November-December 1977.

<sup>88</sup> Id., ?India indipendente?, in E. Collotti Pischel (ed.), *Storia dell' Asia (Il mondo contemporaneo, vol.III)*, Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1980, and ?L' India contemporanea?, in *La storia*, Vol. X, Turin: UTET, 1988.

<sup>89</sup> Enrica Collotti Pischel is Borsa' s most senior pupil, and, although as just stated - her main field of interest is China, her scholarly interests are hardly less wide-ranging than those of her mentor. She had, in fact, already briefly dealt with Indian topics in the 1950s and 1970s. In the 1950s she published two papers on international relations in Asia, largely focussed on Nehru' s neutralist foreign policy (?Alcune considerazioni sul neutralismo asiatico?, in *Nuovi argomenti*, 23/24, 1955/57, and ?Considerazioni su una nuova fase della politica asiatica?, *ivi*, 33, 1958); later on, in the 1970s, she edited a book on the Indian freedom struggle - made up of passages taken from the works of mainly Indian and British historians - to which she prefaced a 56-page-long introduction (*La lotta dell' India per l' indipendenza* Messina: D' Anna, 1973). It is unfortunate that Pischel did not follow up on her early interest for Indian foreign policy, as, in Italy, this has remained a sadly undeveloped field of research.

<sup>90</sup> Enrica Collotti Pischel (ed.), *L' India oggi. Lo sviluppo come speranza e come dramma* Milano: Franco Angeli, 1984. The papers on India' s economy were contributed by Franco Gallucci, Piero Venturi, Pietro Spagni, and Giorgio Ferrante. Pischel contributed a paper on the colonial background of independent India and two further papers on

*Other methodological approaches to modern India*

The late 1960s-late 1980s phase of Italian studies on India was characterized not only by the widening of the chronological scope of the work of modern historians, but by the appearance of scholars belonging to fields other than the historical. A case in point is that of Icilio Vecchiotti, a philosopher with a sound linguistic background who, in the 1970s and the 1980s, authored a series of studies on modern Indian philosophy or political thought. His most ambitious work was a history of modern Indian philosophy, which started with Ram Mohan Roy<sup>91</sup>.

Another scholar who must be remembered in this context is Giuliano Pontara. Pontara was - and is - not a student of India but a moral philosopher working on the relationship between ethics and politics and concerned with the debate on pacifism. For these and other (personal) reasons, Pontara developed an early and enduring interest in Gandhian thought and its concrete applications. In fact, as long ago as the 1950s if not earlier, many Italian intellectuals involved in the then ongoing debate on pacifism made reference to Gandhi as an example. However, they had hardly any first-hand knowledge of the Mahatma's thought and very little in-depth cognizance of his actual ways of operating. The need to fill these gaps induced Pontara to edit a wide selection of Gandhi's writings, which remained the most exhaustive anthology of this kind available in Italy for around two decades<sup>92</sup>. The anthology itself was in two parts: the first aimed at presenting in a logically organized fashion the essentials of Gandhi's ideas on non-violence; the second presented a series of writings shedding light on the Mahatma's praxis as a non-violent leader. What further enhanced the value of Pontara's work was that he prefaced it with a 137-page-long essay, explaining and systematizing Gandhi's thought. Pontara's aim in writing this essay - an aim successfully achieved - was to show that - in spite of the unsystematic way in which they had been articulated, and the occasional contradictions - Gandhi's ideas and musings were the expression of a comprehensive ethical and political conception, in relation to which it might make sense to interrogate ourselves on its general relevance and validity?<sup>93</sup>.

In addition to these two philosophers, one must remember the emergence of a small band of scholars working on 20th-century Indian literature in the English language. Here the pioneer was Silvia Albertazzi, who in 1978 published a monograph which analysed 'the temple and the village' in the Indian literature in the English language<sup>94</sup>. The emphasis of this work was on such writers as Anand, Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan and Kamala Markandaya, and on the problem of language. Up to the early 1980s, Albertazzi worked practically alone in her field, which was then considered hardly relevant<sup>95</sup>. Things changed suddenly and dramatically with the publication (in 1981) of Salman

Nehru's internal and foreign policy respectively. The book also included papers by Borsa on Gandhi's relevance for independent India, by Giorgio Renato Franci on modern Hinduism, by Simonetta Casci on castes, by Bruno Grandi on *Panch Shila*, and by Alberto Toscano on India's foreign policy in the 1970s.

<sup>91</sup> Icilio Vecchiotti, *Storia della Filosofia Indiana dal XVIII al XX secolo. Da Râm Mohan Rây a Râmakrsna*, Ubaldini Editore, Roma 1982, e id., *Storia della Filosofia Indiana dal XVIII al XX secolo. La filosofia di Vivekânanda*, Ubaldini Editore, Roma 1985. Vecchiotti also had an enduring interest in Gandhi's political thought; see his *Gandhi*, Roma: Ubaldini, 1972, and his 'Mohandâs Karamchand Gandhi?', in Gian Mario Bravo and Silvia Rota Ghibaudi (eds.), *Il Pensiero Politico Contemporaneo*, Milano: Franco Angeli, vol. III, 1987.

<sup>92</sup> M.K. Gandhi, *Teoria e pratica della non violenza*, a cura e con un saggio introduttivo di Giuliano Pontara, Torino: Einaudi, 1973.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. LXXI.

<sup>94</sup> Silvia Albertazzi, *Il tempio ed il villaggio. La narrativa indo-inglese e la tradizione britannica*, Bologna: Patron, 1978. As we have seen above, Giorgio Renato Franci had already briefly dwelled upon Indian literature in English (see fn. 26). However his interest in this subject has always remained limited.

<sup>95</sup> Silvia Albertazzi's work on India in the 1980s includes: 'R.K. Narayan's Impossible Epiphanies?', *Africa America Asia Australia*, 1, 1985; 'The Story-Teller and the Talkative Man: Some Conventions of Oral Literature in R.K. Narayan's Short Stories?', in *Commonwealth*, 9, 2, 1987; 'In the skin of a Whale: Salman Rushdie's Responsibility

Rushdie' *Midnight Children*, and the subsequent international acclaim it received. After which, several other Italian students of literatures in the English language started to work on the modern Indian novel. In fact, the field became a fashionable one, as shown, among other things, by the frequent translations into Italian of novels by Indian authors. However, most of the Italian students of literatures in the English language, who started to work on India in the 1980s, really began to publish in a sustained way in this field only at the closing of the 1980s and in the 1990s.

*The current phase: the historians*

The current phase in the study of modern and contemporary India started in the years spanning the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. In a way this can be considered a byproduct of the process of globalization and the consequent increasing awareness of the importance of establishing new linkages, even at the cultural level, with countries which, until then, had been regarded, often mistakenly, as unimportant. Of course, the new economic policy launched by the Rao government in the Summer of 1991 helped to enhance the perception of the actual and potential relevance of India. However, a new interest in India, as part of the widening interest in Asia, was already visible in the late 1980s. The most telling example of this was the launching in 1989, by Giorgio Borsa and the CSPEE (Centre for the Study of Non-European Peoples) of the University of Pavia of the yearly publication of a volume, *Asia Major*, focussed on the analysis of the political and economic evolution during the previous twelve months of the main countries of South and East Asia. Naturally, events in India, starting with the 1989 general elections, have been widely discussed in the successive issues<sup>96</sup>.

The hallmark of the current phase is the rapid increase in the number of scholars active in the field of modern and contemporary Indian studies and further diversification in the methodological approaches. Together with the historians, who continued to dominate the field, there was a steep increase in the number of publications on literature, and, last but not least, the growing presence in the field of the economists.

Among the scholars active in the previous period, Enrica Collotti Pischel wrote a brief monograph on Gandhi and non-violence<sup>97</sup>. Donatella Dolcini was co-editor of a collective book on Gandhi as educator, in which she authored an essay on Gandhi and women<sup>98</sup>. Some years later, she

for the Story?, in *Commonwealth*, 12, 1, 1989; ?Salman Rushdie, la Storia e le storie", in *Problemi*, 86, 1989.

<sup>96</sup> So far, the chapters on India have been written by Michelguglielmo Torri. See: ?India: eclissi di una dinastia?, in G. Borsa e P. Beonio-Brocchieri (eds.), *Asia Major. Un mondo che cambia*, Bologna: Ispi/il Mulino, 1990; ?India: una società lacerata", in G. Borsa e P. Beonio-Brocchieri (eds.), *L' Altra Asia ai margini della bufera. Asia Major 1991*, Bologna: Ispi/il Mulino, 1991; ?L' India dopo Rajiv?, in Giorgio Borsa (ed.), *Le ultime trincee del comunismo nel mondo. Asia Major 1992*, Bologna: Ispi/il Mulino, 1992; ?Il tempio della discordia?, in Giorgio Borsa (ed.), *La fine dell' era coloniale in Asia Orientale. Asia Major 1993*, Ispi/il Mulino, Bologna 1993; ?India: crisi e sopravvivenza del governo Rao?, in Giorgio Borsa e Enrica Collotti Pischel (eds.), *Luci e ombre sullo sviluppo in Asia Orientale. Asia Major 1994*, CSPEE/il Mulino, Bologna 1994; ?Il declino del Congresso e le riforme economiche in India?, in Giorgio Borsa e Giovanna Mastrocchio (eds.), *Tra Democrazia e neo-autoritarismo. Asia Major 1995*, Bologna, CSPEE/il Mulino, 1995; ?India: una svolta storica??, in Giorgio Borsa and Giovanna Mastrocchio (eds), *Integrazione regionale e ascesa internazionale. Asia Major 1996*, CSPEE/il Mulino, 1996; ?L' India dello Union Front nell' anno della nuova politica estera?, in Giorgio Borsa (a cura di), *Continua il miracolo asiatico? Asia Major 1997*, CSPEE/il Mulino, 1997; ?L' India nel cinquantesimo anno d' indipendenza: dalla vittoria dei fondamentalisti indù ai test nucleari di Pokhran II?, in Giorgio Borsa (ed.), *Asia Major 1998* (forthcoming).

<sup>97</sup> *Gandhi e la non violenza*, Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1989.

<sup>98</sup> See her ?Gandhi e l' universo femminile?, in Donatella Dolcini, Enrico Fasana, Caterina Conio (eds.), *Mahatma Gandhi: ideali e prassi di un educatore*, Milano: Istituto Propaganda Libreria, 1994. The book includes papers by Giuliano Pontara, Carlo Della Casa, Giorgio Renato Franci, Enrica Collotti Pischel, Emilio Butturini, Donatella Zazzi, Gian Giuseppe Filippi, Gaetano Favaro, Enrico Fasana, Lucia Ferrajoli, Itala Vivan, Loraine Willis, Fulvio Cesare Manara, Caterina Conio, Marco Nikiforos and Vasantha Muhtiah, Angela Fiorentini, Paola Baldini, Antonino Drago,

also published a new study of Prem Chand<sup>99</sup>. Simonetta Casci focussed her attention on partition<sup>100</sup>. Enrico Fasana went on publishing on a wide range of topics<sup>101</sup>. Giuseppe Flora continued his work on Mazzini<sup>102</sup>, and pointed out the relevance of some Italian sources to the exploration of certain aspects of the history of India<sup>103</sup>. But most of his attention was now focussed on the social role of Bengali intellectuals in the period between the two partitions of 1905 and 1947, and the reworking by these intellectuals of various strands of contemporary European political thought<sup>104</sup>. On his part, Amedeo Maiello concentrated on the analysis of the life, thought and work of Italians active in India, including Nicolao Mannucci, Angelo De Gubernatis, and two military adventurers of the 18th or early 19th century: Catello Filosa and Paolo Avitabile<sup>105</sup>. Of particular interest is the long paper on Avitabile, in which Maiello highlights the distorted assessment that English sources give in relation to both Avitabile's career in India, and the nature of the new Sikh state built by Ranjit Singh. In fact, Maiello, through his reconstruction of Avitabile's passage to India, is able, implicitly but unmistakably, to show how Ranjit Singh's statebuilding efforts resulted in the construction of one of the first modern states in the subcontinent. Mariola Offredi not only went on working mainly on Hindi literature<sup>106</sup>, but revisited her original research field, namely social history. This brought about the publication of two papers, the first dealing with

Luigi De Carlini, and Renzo Vescovi.

<sup>99</sup> Donatella Dolcini, 'Nazionalismo, ideologia gandhiana e nuova estetica letteraria: la teoria narrativa in Prem Chand?' in A. Passi *et al.* (eds), *Bandhu. Scritti in onore di Carlo della Casa*, vol. I, Alessandria: Edizioni dell' Orso, 1997.

<sup>100</sup> See, e.g., her 'La spartizione?', in Daniela Bredi e Gianroberto Scarcia (eds.), *Ex libris Franco Coslovi*, Poligrafo: Venice, 1996, and *Muslim self-determination: Jinnah-Congress confrontation 1943-1944*, paper presented at the conference: 'India: Nationalism, Democracy, Development and Interculturalism. A conference to celebrate India's fiftieth anniversary?', University of Bologna, November 27-29, 1997.

<sup>101</sup> See Enrico Fasana, 'Le caste tra tradizione e modernità?', in *Politica internazionale*, No.3, May 1992; id., 'Intervista sull' induismo?', in *Psicologos: International Review of Psychology*, No.4, April 1992; id., 'Prefazione?' and 'Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi educatore all' unità nazionale?', in Dolcini, Fasana, Conio (eds.) *Mahatma Gandhi: ideali e prassi di un educatore*; id., 'I forti del Rajasthan e le corti rajput del deserto?', in Flavio Conti (ed.), *Studi castellani lombardi*, Roma: Istituto Italiano dei Castelli; id., 'From Hindutva to Hindu rashtra: the social and the [sic] political thought of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (1883-1966)?', in Passi *et al.* (eds), *Bandhu*; id., 'Le elezioni politiche in India 1996?', in *Quaderni Asiatici*, No. 40, January-April 1997.

<sup>102</sup> Giuseppe Flora, 'The Changing Perception of Mazzini within the Indian National Movement?', in *Indian Historical Review*, XIX, 1992-93.

<sup>103</sup> Id., 'An Italian Missionary Source on the Indian Mutiny?', in *Studies in History*, IX, n.s., 1993.

<sup>104</sup> Id., 'The Evolution of Positivism in Bengal: Jogendra Chandra Gosh - Bakimchandra Chattopadhyay - Benoy Kumar Sarkar?', *Annali dell' Istituto Orientale di Napoli* 53, 2, 1993, Supplemento No. 75; id., *Benoy Kumar Sarkar and Italy. Culture, politics and economic ideology*, New Delhi: Italian Embassy Cultural Centre/Munshiram Manoharlal, 1994 (Italian Embassy Cultural Centre. Occasional Papers, No. 2).

<sup>105</sup> Amedeo Maiello, 'Mughal justice in Mannucci's "Storia do Mogor"?' and 'An Aspect of A. De Gubernatis' [sic] "Peregrinazioni Indiane"?' both in Dipartimento di Studi Asiatici, *La conoscenza dell' Asia e dell' Africa nei secoli XVIII e XIX*, Napoli: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1989; id., 'Avitabile the Mastiff. The Making of an Image?', in Antonio Sorrentino and Maurizio Taddei (eds.), *Napoli e l' India* Napoli: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1990; id., 'Catello Filosa: Avventuriero stabiense nell' India mughal?', in *Presenza Araba e Islamica in Campania*, Atti del Convegno, Napoli-Caserta 22-25 novembre 1988, Napoli 1992.

<sup>106</sup> 'The Search for National Identity as Reflected in the Hindi Press?', in Mariola Offredi (ed.), *Literature, Language and the Media in India*, Manohar, New Delhi, 1992, XVII-289 pp., pp. 221-267; 'Poetry and Commitment. Change in post-1947 Hindi poetry as reflected in the works of Muktibodh (1917-1964) and Dhumil (1936-1975)?', in *Indian Literature*, 165 (January-February 1995), New Delhi, pp. 133-157; 'The Intellectual and Society in the Hindi Novel of the Fifties?', in *Archív Orientální* (Praha) 64, 1/1996, pp. 47-58; 'Man and Society in Contemporary Hindi Poetry?', in *Archív Orientální* (Praha) 65, 1/1997, pp. 84-120; 'La poesia hindi contemporanea?', in *Riviera delle Palme* (San Benedetto del Tronto), XII-4, July-October 1996, pp. I-IV. See, also, her 'The Importance of Literature and the Relevance of its Lay Themes in the Formation of Supraregional Languages?', in Mariola Offredi (ed.), *Language versus Dialect*, Manohar, New Delhi, 1990.

the politics of development in Madhya Pradesh, the second with the Muslim Weavers of Banaras and Mau<sup>107</sup>. Gianni Sofri summed up his previous work on Gandhi in a fine short monograph<sup>108</sup>. Finally, among the historians active in the previous period, Torri went on with his work on Surat<sup>109</sup>, on the nationalist period<sup>110</sup>, and on independent India<sup>111</sup>.

In addition to these old hands, some new and younger historians started to publish their work. In 1990, Marco Restelli, a journalist with a solid academic background and an enduring interest for India, published a history of the Sikhs, inspired by the concern to show that, in spite of the terrible events of the 1980s, Sikh history and culture could not be constrained under such labels as 'terrorism' and 'political violence'. In fact, Restelli's work is a concise but well balanced survey of the Sikh experience, since its beginnings and up to Indian independence, followed by a succinct but exhaustive analysis of the political developments of the period between 1947 and 1989<sup>112</sup>. Another new entrant into the field of modern and contemporary Indian studies was Maurizio Griffo, a historian of institutions, who moved from Italian and French to Indian constitutional history. His first published paper related to Indian studies is a critical assessment of the historiographical work dealing with the institutional evolution of late-colonial India<sup>113</sup>. It represents a kind of preliminary exploration preparing the ground for a monograph on the constitutional history of India in the years from the eve of the First World War to the enactment of the Montford reforms<sup>114</sup>. Griffo also edited Jawaharlal Nehru's *Soviet Russia*. In his introduction, he analysed the evolution of Nehru's political thought during the crucial years of the nationalist leader's intellectual formation, singling out its main strands, the formative influences behind them, and their relevance for Nehru's successive action as one of the key figures in Indian nationalism<sup>115</sup>. Another young historian, Mario Prayer, worked on the cultural relationship between Italy and India. Prayer analysed how the Italian intellectual and political milieu assessed Gandhi and Indian nationalism. In particular, he focussed on some significant episodes, such as the Tagore/Croce meeting of 1926, and the Gandhi/Mussolini meeting of 1931<sup>116</sup>. In addition, Prayer explored the way in which the Bengali intelligentsia took stock of European nationalism, particularly its Italian

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<sup>107</sup> 'The Impact of Development Policies on the Bastar District of Madhya Pradesh (1948-1978)?', in D. Rothermund & S.K. Saha (eds.), *Regional Disparities in India*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1990; and, 'The Muslim Weavers of Banaras and Mau (Uttar Pradesh) in the Seventies?', in Daniela Bredi & Gianroberto Scarcia (eds.), *Ex libris Franco Coslovi* Venice: Poligrafo, 1996.

<sup>108</sup> Gianni Sofri, *Gandhi e l' India* Firenze: Giunti, 1995.

<sup>109</sup> See the relevant titles listed in fns. 76 and 77.

<sup>110</sup> In addition to *Regime coloniale, intellettuali e notabili in India* (Pavia/Milano: CSPEE/F. Angeli, 1996), which was the collection of his previously published papers related, in one way or another, to the Cambridge school, he published 'Nazionalismo indiano e nazionalismo musulmano in india nell' era coloniale?', in Mario Mannini (ed.), *Dietro la bandiera. Emanicipazioni coloniali, identità nazionali, nazionalismi nell' età contemporanea* Pacini editore, Ospedaletto (Pisa) 1996.

<sup>111</sup> As well as the titles listed in fn. 96, he published 'La democrazia in India: radici storiche, evoluzione e crisi?', Enrica Collotti Pischel (ed.), *La Democrazia degli altri*, Milano: F. Angeli, 1996.

<sup>112</sup> Marco Restelli, *I Sikh fra storia e attualità politica*, Paese (Treviso): Pagus edizioni, 1990.

<sup>113</sup> Maurizio Griffo, 'Politica e istituzioni nell' India tardocoloniale. Un' introduzione al dibattito storiografico?', in *Rivista storica italiana*, CVII, I, 1995.

<sup>114</sup> The monograph, in Italian, is now finished and soon to be published.

<sup>115</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *Lo strano paese della falce e martello*, a cura di Maurizio Griffo, Napoli: Guida, 1996.

<sup>116</sup> See his 'Gandhi e il nazionalismo indiano nella pubblicistica del regime fascista 1921-1938?', in *Storia Contemporanea*, a.XIX, 1, February 1988; 'L' intervista Gandhi-Mussolini: pagine italiane dal diario di Mahadev Desai?', *ibidem*, a.XXIII, 1, February 1992; 'Italian Fascist Regime and Nationalist India, 1921-1945?', in *International Studies* (JNU, New Delhi), 28, 3, July-September 1991; 'Contributo alla biografia di Rabindranath Tagore: l' incontro con Benedetto Croce?', in *Rivista di Studi Orientali*, LXVI, 3-4, 1992; 'Gli anni bengalesi di Giuseppe Tucci?', in *Quaderni Asiatici*, No. 32, May-August 1994.

strain<sup>117</sup>.

*The current phase: the students of literature*

In the field of literary criticism, Silvia Albertazzi continued her exploration of modern Indian literature in the English language, dwelling on such authors as Vikram Chandra, Kamala Das, Anita Desai, Barathi Mukherjee, Ravinder Randhawa, and Vikram Seth<sup>118</sup>. In the same period, several new literary critics and historians of literature started to publish their work.

One of them was Paolo Bertinetti, a student of literatures in English, with a particular attention to the 'new literatures'<sup>119</sup>. Bertinetti edited and prefaced, together with Claudio Gorlier, an anthology of Indian short stories<sup>120</sup>. He also published a collection of some of his many reviews of Indian authors, prefaced by a useful introduction dealing with Indian literature in the English language, the literature of the Indian diaspora, and Italian reactions to these new literary strains<sup>121</sup>.

Another student of English literatures who turned to India was Alberta Fabris Grube. Her interest in Indian literature in the English language was the end result of a rather circuitous approach. One of her main personal interests had always been the relationship between Europe and the Muslim world, and, in her own words, 'from there it was almost inevitable to reach India'<sup>122</sup>. However, in her case too, it was the Rushdie affair that finally led her to a systematic study of the new field. She thus became particularly interested in the 'extraordinarily rich and articulated' contribution of female authors<sup>123</sup>. A contribution that - to Fabris Grube - appeared in some instances an expression of preoccupation with problems very similar to those tackled by western women, 'in spite of the different social and cultural traditions'<sup>124</sup>. Fabris Grube was also impressed by the choice made by many modern Indian authors to scrutinise and ponder over the past as an instrument designed to involve the reader in a critical assessment of the present. In Fabris Grube's evaluation, in spite of the irony - and, in certain cases, the weirdness - characterizing the approaches of these Indian authors, their production was a form of politically engaged literature<sup>125</sup>.

<sup>117</sup> Id., *Internazionalismo e nazionalismo culturale. Gli intellettuali bengalesi e l'Italia negli anni Venti e Trenta* Supplement No.1, *Rivista di Studi Orientali*, LXIX, Roma: Bardi, 1996; 'Sadhana and Nationalism: yoga, sakti and des seva in Subhas Chandra Bose?', in *South Asia Research*, 17, 1, Spring 1997.

<sup>118</sup> In addition to the Bangladeshi Taslima Nasrin. See, e.g., Silvia Albertazzi, 'Kamala Das e Taslima Nasrin: 'È facile far sì che un uomo t'ami'. Il matrimonio nella poesia femminile indiana?', *Linea d'ombra* 100, 1995; and 'Dal romanzo borghese alla soap opera: A Suitable Boy di Vikram Seth?', in Paola Galli Mastrodonato (ed.), *Ai confini dell'Impero. Le letterature emergenti*, Marziana (Roma): Vecchiarelli, 1996. See also her 'La letteratura indoinglese?', in Agostino Lombardo (ed.), *Verso gli antipodi*, Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1995, and 'Dim Lights, Small Village: il romanzo indiano di lingua inglese e la costruzione dell'occidente?', in *Africa America Asia Australia*, 19, 1997.

<sup>119</sup> He authored the section on the new literatures, discussing among others Indian literature, in Franco Marengo (ed.), *Guida alla studio della letteratura inglese*, Bologna: il Mulino, 1994.

<sup>120</sup> Paolo Bertinetti & Claudio Gorlier (eds.), *Racconti dall'India* Milano: Mondadori, 1989.

<sup>121</sup> Paolo Bertinetti, *Dall'India* Milano: Linea d'ombra edizioni, 1995.

<sup>122</sup> Alberta Fabris Grube's private communication to Michelguglielmo Torri, Venezia, 21 November 1997.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> Apart from the several reviews of Indian authors published by Alberta Fabris Grube in *Il Tolomeo*, a literary journal of Venice, mainly concerned with the 'new' literatures, see the following papers: 'Between East and West: Anita Desai's First Novels?', in *Annali di Ca' Foscari* XXVI, 1-2, 1987; 'Anita Desai's Novels of the 80s: A New Departure?', in *Commonwealth Literary Cultures: New Voices, New Approaches*, Lecce: Edizioni del Grifo, without date; 'A Raw Quivering Wound: l'impatto dell'Indian Mutiny nella narrativa inglese e anglo-indiana?', in *Intrecci e contaminazioni*, Atti del XIV Convegno AIA, Venezia: Supernova, 1993; 'Kamala Markandaya's Golden Honeycomb: A Historical Novel in the Victorian Tradition?', in *Traditionalism vs. Modernism*, Essen: Die Blaue Eule, 1994; 'The Unresolved Question of Conflicting Loyalties and Allegiances in the Novels of Kamala Markandaya?', in *Annali di Ca' Foscari*, XXXIV, 1-2, 1995. See, also, *Il viaggio in Europa di Abu Talib Khan*, in *Annali di Ca' Foscari* XXXII, 1-2, 1993. Finally, Fabris Grube's interest for Shiva Naipaul should be recalled. See her *An Unfinished Journey: la narrativa*

Another student of English literature who went on to probe Indian literature in the English language was Paola Splendore. She translated into Italian some of the works of Bharati Mukherjee and Sujata Bhatt<sup>126</sup>, and gave a great deal of attention to the examination not only of these two authors, but also of Anita Desai and V.S. Naipaul. More specifically, her examination of these and other Indian authors led Splendore to explore such themes as exile, and such figures as the immigrant, the expatriate, the 'foreigner to himself', particularly - even if not exclusively - in their female perspective<sup>127</sup>.

On his part, Alessandro Monti focussed his research work on the problem of language. The starting point, in his case, was the nineteenth-century colonial heritage as causal factor in the evolution of a modified form of English, the end-product of the interaction between Standard English and Indian speakers. Following Bakhtin's teaching, Monti saw parody as the seminal key to the shaping of early forms of local 'Englishes'. At first, Monti explored the Anglo-Indian frame of mind and its contribution to Indian English lexicon both in an essay published in 1989<sup>128</sup>, and in an anthology, published some years later<sup>129</sup>. Then, he went on to examine Indian English - seen as a patchwork language - through a series of essays and commented translations<sup>130</sup>. In an innovative departure from the kind of analysis usually carried out by his colleagues, Monti highlighted the importance of Vedic and Sanskrit imagery in giving additional meaning to modern Indian prose in the English language<sup>131</sup>. At the same time, in his work Monti tried to deploy a short genealogy of the narrative partners and linguistic intercrossing in Indian fiction, from the Bengali writer Bankim Chandra Chatterji to contemporary writers such as Narayan, the westernized Shobha Dé, the expatriate Bharati Mukherjee and Farruck Dhondy. Finally, Monti, in two different essays, explored the dislocated culture of expatriate Indian writers in North America and the Caribbeans<sup>132</sup>.

Last, but not least, in this relatively numerous group of students of literatures in English, mention must be made of Lina Unali, the author of a stimulating monographs on the complex cultural interrelationships between England and India<sup>133</sup>. Unali seems to be deeply influenced by

di Shiva Naipaul?, in *Africa, America, Asia, Australia*, 12, Roma: Bulzoni, 1992, and 'L' Africa amara di Shiva Naipaul?', *ivi*, 1994.

<sup>126</sup> See her translations of Bharati Mukherjee ('Una donna di 400 anni?', in *Linea d' Ombra* No.85, 1993) and Sujata Bhatt ('In cerca della lingua, in *Linea d' Ombra* 92, 1994).

<sup>127</sup> See her 'Prefazione?', in Anita Desai, *Notte e nebbia a Bombay*, Milano: La Tartaruga, 1992; 'Metafore dell' altrove nella letteratura dell' immigrazione?' in Oriana Palusci (ed.) *La città delle donne*, Torino: Tirrenia, 1992; 'Esilio e scrittura nel romanzo postcoloniale di lingua inglese?' in M. Billi & M. Ferrari Zumbini (eds.), *Percorsi (Studi dedicati ad Angela Giannitrapani)* Viterbo: BetaGamma, 1993; 'A Oriente dell' Occidente: l' India?', in M.A.Saracino (ed.), *Altri lati del mondo*, Roma: Sensibili alle foglie, 1994; 'Voci dall' India?', in AA.VV. *Storie del mondo*, Roma: Artemide, 1994; 'Stranieri, estraniati, donne nella narrativa di Anita Desai?', in *Le aperture del testo*, Palermo 1995; 'V.S.Naipaul, straniero a se stesso?' (review article), in *La terra vista dalla luna*, April 1996; 'Far from Home: Nomads, Outsiders, Expatriates?', in *Textus X*, 1997.

<sup>128</sup> Alessandro Monti, *La musa lamentosa: osservazioni su Kipling e la tradizione anglo-indiana*, Torino: Stampatori, 1989.

<sup>129</sup> Id., *A Catamaran Language: una lingua bisbetica*, Chieti: Solfanelli, 1992.

<sup>130</sup> Raja Rao, *Kanthapura*, traduzione e commento di Alessandro Monti, Pavia: Ibis, 1996, and Alessandro Monti, *Do you shit inshide or outshide*, Roma: Bulzoni 1996 (where Monti takes his cue from one of Khushwant Singh's short stories).

<sup>131</sup> See his *Sri Rama Rides Again: Hindu and Raj Views of Holy Benares*, Roma: Bulzoni, 1995, where the starting point of Monti's analysis is one of Raja Rao's short stories, collected in *On the Ganga Ghat*. Again, on the problem of how Sanskrit, with its lore and treasure of myths, gives added meaning to the behaviour and names of the characters of a novel by M.R. Anand, see Monti's *Mapping out the Hindu World* (forthcoming). Monti is now engaged in writing *The Time after the Cowdust*, dealing with the myths of the Devi in modern Indian fiction.

<sup>132</sup> See his *Kala pani: l' acqua nera. Viaggio e identità in alcune narrative indiane dell' emigrazione*, Roma: Bulzoni, 1993; and *Narrazioni di confine e identità femminile in Bharati Mukherjee*, Roma: Bulzoni, 1995.

<sup>133</sup> Lina Unali, *Stella d' India. Temüperiali britannici, Modelli di rappresentazione dell' India* Roma: Edizioni

Said' *sOrientalism*, and, through the sifting and exploration of a copious number of written documents - not only literary works, but also diaries, travelogues, newspapers, and judicial proceedings - shows how and why the English in India stereotyped India, and how this stereotyped vision of India became an integral part of the English perception of India. Unali also tackles with the problem of how some eminent Indian intellectuals - Jawaharlal Nehru, Rabindranath Tagore, Nirad Chaudhuri, Prem Chand, Khushwant Singh, Ahmed Ali, and the Salman Rushdie of *Midnight Children* - coped with the problem of reinterpreting their own political and personal history in relation to the colonial experience.

Finally, mention must be made of Cecilia Cossio' s work. Cossio, a pupil of Offredi, has been working on Hindi culture, approaching it along three different avenues. The first is represented by her analysis of the *anchalik* novel, namely the regional novel, whose beginning is generally indicated as coincidental with the publication, in 1954, of *Maila anchal* by the Bihari writer Phanishvarnath Renu. Cossio' s essays on the *anchalik* novel were collected in a book published in 1987<sup>134</sup>, followed two years later by the translation of *Maila anchal*, with preface and notes<sup>135</sup>.

The second main direction in Cossio' s research work was represented by the analysis of the *nai kahani* literary movement, arising from the *moh bhang*, the collapse of hopes following the end of the first decade of independence. In fact, Cossio' s analysis was focussed on Mohan Rakesh (1925-1972), a prolific author of novels, short stories and theatrical plays. The result was the translation and commentary of some of his best known short stories<sup>136</sup> and his most famous plays, namely *Asharh ka ek din* (?A day of Ashrah?), *Lahron ke rajhans* (?Swans in the waves?), and *Adhe adhure* (?By half and incomplete?)<sup>137</sup>.

Last but not least, Cossio has started to explore the Hindi cinema, which she rightly considers ?not only the most influential among the [Indian] mass media, but also the most interesting from several viewpoints: social, phycological, and cultural?<sup>138</sup>. One of the byproducts of this new research activity - which, at the moment, is the central one in Cossio' s work<sup>139</sup> - has been her interest in Rahi Masum Raza, a former professor of Urdu at Aligarh, who, after conquering fame through his controversial novel *Adha ganv*, went on to Bollywood, to become a successful dialogue-writer for the local cinema industry<sup>140</sup>.

### *The current phase: the economists*

The latest group of Italian scholars coming to the field of modern and contemporary Indian studies is made up of the economists<sup>141</sup>. Their interest for India was finally awakened by the

Mediterranee, 1993. Unali had started to explore the themes which became part of this monograph in a series of courses given at the University of Cagliari. Her lessons, *Relazioni interculturali e letterarie tra l' Inghilterra e l' India* were collected and published in 1983.

<sup>134</sup> Cecilia Cossio, *Il romanzo anchalik hindi*, Milano: Cesviet, 1987.

<sup>135</sup> Phanishvarnath Renu, *Il lembo sporco*, traduzione, introduzione e note di Cecilia Cossio, Milano: Cesviet, 1989.

<sup>136</sup> Mohan Rakesh, *Il signore delle rovine ed altre novelle*, traduzione, introduzione e note di Cecilia Cossio, Milano: Cesviet, 1990.

<sup>137</sup> Mohan Rakesh, *Un dramma in tre parti*, traduzione, introduzione e note di Cecilia Cossio, Milano: Cesviet, 1993.

<sup>138</sup> Cecilia Cossio' s personal communication to Michelguglielmo Torri, Venezia, 26 November 1997.

<sup>139</sup> See her *Shashi Kapur. Una stella coperta da una nube*, Milano: Cesviet 1994. See, also, ?Il settimo cavallo del sole?, in *Cinema nuovo*, 44, 4-5, July-October 1995; ?Il suo pane: da Mohan Rakesh a Mani Kaul?, in *Annali di Ca' Foscari*, XXXV, 3 (Serie orientale 27), 1996; and ?Il terzo giuramento: ancora su letteratura e cinema?, *ivi*, XXXVI, 3 (Serie Orientale 28), 1997.

<sup>140</sup> Cossio is now working on the translation and editing of Rahi Masum Raza' *Sin: 75. Bollywood - a word which originates from the contraction of ?Bombay? and ?Hollywood? - is the name by which Indians indicate the Bombay headquarters of the local movie industry.*

<sup>141</sup> As has been shown, there had been some interest for modern and contemporary India on the part of economic

launching by the Rao government of the new economic policy in July 1991. After this late starting, much of the economists' work is still in the making. However, the signs are encouraging, and my personal evaluation is that their contribution is destined to become crucially important in the near future.

The first to publish on the latest developments in the Indian economy was Luigi Marcuccio, who explored the rate of growth of independent India up to the early 1990s<sup>142</sup> and wrote a detailed report (in 1995) on the economic reforms, shedding light on such topics as the economic structure of India, her economic international relations, the economic policies implemented by the Indian state, the Indian prospects of development, and the economic relationship between India and Italy<sup>143</sup>. On his part, Massimo Ricottilli has been working on the policy of planning<sup>144</sup>; Gianni Vaggi and Marco Missaglia have been exploring problems of macroeconomic management in India, the opening of Indian economy to international competition, and the related problems of macroeconomic stabilization<sup>145</sup>; Bruno Marangoni is working on the development potentialities of the medium and small industry, including rural industries<sup>146</sup>; finally, Elisabetta Basile is working on rural capitalists and industrialization in North Tamil Nadu<sup>147</sup>.

### Conclusions

If we look closely at the history of Modern Indian studies in Italy, it becomes apparent that, so far, the efforts of the scholars working in the field have been hindered by their inability to fall back on well organized centres of study, covering their field. In turn, in no Department in the whole University infrastructure in Italy, are scholars working on modern and contemporary India either the majority or a strategic minority able to push through their own brand of cultural policy, allocating resources to the study of modern India. Accordingly, any result obtained so far has been, to a great extent, the end-product of individual efforts, often hampered by the scepticism and the ill-disguised disregard of colleagues working in other fields. In the case of modern Indian history nothing has happened comparable to what occurred in the fields of North and Latin American history, which, in the 1960s, were taken under the protective wing of certain major modern historians and so allowed to develop to their present flourishing state.

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historians or, anyway, economists who had become economic historians, but professional economists had been conspicuous for their absence up to the early 1990s.

<sup>142</sup> Luigi Marcuccio, *The Indian Rate of Growth: an overview*, Quaderni di ricerca I.S.E.S.A.O. 1/1994 (Università Bocconi, Milano).

<sup>143</sup> Id., *Rapporto India. Le riforme economiche e il difficile rapporto fra centro e periferia*, Torino: Edizioni della Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli, 1995.

<sup>144</sup> Much of this work is still in the making, but the first results have been presented at a recent conference in Bologna. See Massimo Ricottilli, *Planning and Commanding the Economy: The Indian lesson*, paper presented at the conference: *'India: Nationalism, Democracy, Development and Interculturalism. A conference to celebrate India's fiftieth anniversary'*, University of Bologna, November 27-29, 1997.

<sup>145</sup> Gianni Vaggi, *Some considerations on the process of stabilization in the Indian economy in the 1990s*, paper presented at the conference: *'India: Nationalism, Democracy, Development and Interculturalism. A conference to celebrate India's fiftieth anniversary'*, University of Bologna, November 27-29, 1997. On his part, Marco Missaglia is publishing a kind of practical guide to Indian economy in the 1990s. See his *India. Guida pratica fra telai, monsoni e ingegneri. Economia, fisco, obblighi valutari*, Milano: Franco Angeli (forthcoming).

<sup>146</sup> Some of the first results of this work were presented in a recent conference in Rome. See Bruno Marangoni, *Il settore agro-industriale e lo sviluppo sostenibile*, paper presented at the conference: *'India 1947-1997. Cinquant' anni d' indipendenza'*, IsIAO, Roma, 1-4 December 1997.

<sup>147</sup> Elisabetta Basile, *Capitalisti rurali e industrializzazione diffusa nel Nord del Tamil Nadu. Riflessioni stimulate da uno studio sull' India del Sud*, paper presented at the XI Biannual Conference of AISSEC, University 'La Sapienza' of Rome, 25-26 September 1997; and *La differenziazione produttiva nell' economia rurale indiana*, paper presented at the conference *'India 1947-1997. Cinquant' anni d' indipendenza'*, IsIAO, Roma, 1-4 December 1997.

In part, this lack of interest in modern Indian studies can be explained by the fact that, up to very few years ago, India chose a kind of economic development that isolated her from the rest of the world. Accordingly, only very few people were able to pierce through the kind of invisible wall that enveloped India, and realize how important and stimulating the study of modern and contemporary India could be. In fact, at a more general level, most of that little interest that existed regarding contemporary India came from the consumers of Karma-Cola, and the devotees of exoticism.

The process of globalization and the opening up of the Indian market to international competition, however, is changing all this. It is not only the fact that, as we have just seen, the number of scholars working in the field has increased, and their methodological approaches have widened. As important is the fact that a process of organization of the field seems to be under way. A first encouraging sign has been the fact that two Ph.D. programmes, created in the late 1980s and the early 1990s, have been dedicating much attention to Indian studies, mainly thanks to Enrico Fasana's efforts. A certain space for modern Indian studies has also been allotted in other Ph.D. programmes. The consequence is that a new generation of young specialists is now on the rise<sup>148</sup>. Moreover, the 50th anniversary of Indian independence has been the occasion for a series of scholarly conferences in several Italian cities. Of particular importance have been two conferences organized by the University of Bologna and the IsIAO (*Istituto Italiano per l' Africa e l' Oriente*) of Rome. Both have brought together Italian scholars and non-Italian, mainly Indian, scholars. It is to be hoped that the (very successful) coming together of Italians and Indians working on similar topics will result in some kind of non occasional cooperation between the Universities of the two countries. Undoubtedly, such cooperation would give backing to the research and teaching activities of both Indians and Italians in their own Universities.

Last, but not least, during the conference in Rome, a conspicuous group both of Italian scholars working on modern and contemporary India and laymen with an interest in the same topic came together on the 1st December 1997 and decided the foundation of an Italian association of Indian studies. After the necessary preparatory work, carried out by a Steering Committee elected in that occasion, the Association was formally established on the 20th June 1998. It aims at coordinating and promoting the research work on modern and contemporary India done in Italy, and make it known both in Italy and abroad.<sup>149</sup> Hopefully, all this augurs well for the future.

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<sup>148</sup> Some of them have already begun to publish the first results of their work. See, e.g., Marco Corsi, 'Il separatismo Sikh nel Punjab?', in *Rivista di studi politici internazionali*, LXIII, 251, 1996, and his 'Violenza nella società indiana?', in *Annali dell' Istituto di Lingue della Facoltà di Scienze Politiche dell' Università degli Studi di Milano*, 1996. Corsi is presently enrolled in a Ph.D. programme in sociology.

In addition to the case of doctoral students and recent recipients of doctoral degrees, mention should be made of a few publicists unrelated to the academic *milieu*, who, of late years, have been contributing to our knowledge of contemporary India. A case in point is that of Catia Dini, whose recently issued monograph, based on Dini's own field work, provides precious insight both into the NGOs village-level activities and into the continuing relevance of the Gandhian tradition of social work. See Catia Dini, *Al servizio del cosmo. Esperienze di autogestione nei villaggi indiani secondo lo spirito di Gandhi*, Bologna: EMI, 1998.

<sup>149</sup> Additional information on the aims of the Association - named *Associazione italiana per l' India Moderna e Contemporanea* - can be obtained by getting in touch with its Secretary, Mario Prayer, at the following e-mail address: <pcannata@axrma.uniroma1.it>. The Association will soon have its own web page.