Open Research Online

The Open University's repository of research publications and other research outputs

'Un impérialiste libéral'? Jean-Baptiste Say on colonies and the extra-european world

Journal Item

How to cite:

Plassart, Anna (2009). 'Un impérialiste libéral'? Jean-Baptiste Say on colonies and the extra-european world. *French Historical Studies*, 32(2) pp. 223–250.

For guidance on citations see [FAQs](#).

© 2009 by Society for French Historical Studies

Version: Accepted Manuscript

Link(s) to article on publisher's website:

<http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.1215/00161071-2008-018>

<http://fhs.dukejournals.org/content/32/2/223.full.pdf+html>

Copyright and Moral Rights for the articles on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. For more information on Open Research Online's data [policy](#) on reuse of materials please consult the policies page.

oro.open.ac.uk

Un ‘impérialiste libéral’? Jean-Baptiste Say on Colonies and the Extra-European World.

That major proponents of political and economic freedom such as Tocqueville in France and John Stuart Mill in England could simultaneously put forward imperialistic views has long been seen as somewhat of a paradox.¹ Seeking to understand the intellectual roots of ‘free-trade imperialism’, scholars have scrutinized the shift in mentalities that occurred sometime between the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century. In doing so they have usually identified a contrast between the Enlightenment’s often positive views of extra-European worlds, and the negative outlook of the mid-nineteenth century, which produced theories justifying the political domination of Europe over Asian and African nations.² Most recently, the political theorist Jennifer Pitts has offered detailed analyses of those thinkers who embody, she believes, the shift from ‘enlightenment cosmopolitanism’ to ‘imperial liberalism’.³ Condorcet, Constant, Desjobert and Tocqueville are prominent figures in her narrative, but as the nineteenth-century focus of the list reveals, much remains to be done before we can reach a comprehensive understanding of the eighteenth-century roots of French ‘imperialism’.⁴

Pitts’ approach is also far more descriptive than explanatory. As a political theorist, her account is more interested in establishing links with contemporary theoretical concerns than in putting the texts studied within their own intellectual and historical framework.⁵ This article seeks to discover what the ‘shift to Empire’ looks like, when investigated within a more historical framework, and more specifically within a French context. The French economist Jean-Baptiste Say offers a particularly interesting case study: Say (1767-1832) lived and wrote at the turn of the nineteenth century. He was heir to the tolerant tradition of Diderot and Turgot, and his works formed the core of the following generation’s instruction

in political economy.⁶ A proponent of free-trade, Say was deeply interested in the question of the colonies and the extra-European world.⁷ Yet the generation brought up with Say's economic works put forward the negative views of extra-European societies that led to the French colonial expansion of the mid- and late nineteenth century. This generation comprised, most famously and most controversially, Tocqueville.

Say's views on the extra-European world and the colonies have been studied in little detail. Only two scholars have analyzed Say's colonial views in any depth, and both have chosen to focus on specific aspects of his position. Philippe Steiner concentrates on the history of economic thought and offers a short but comprehensive analysis of Say's economic views on the colonies, while Bernard Gainot is interested in Say's views only insofar as they are representative of the 'milieu' of the *Décade philosophique* between 1794 and 1802.⁸ Yet Say has found a place in French colonial history, mostly because his free-trade argument against colonial monopolies was widely advertised throughout the nineteenth century. Indeed Say is regarded as the intellectual father of French enthusiasm for free-trade,⁹ and of an Anglophile tradition that has consistently deployed economic arguments against colonial rule.¹⁰ Say's economic writings are supposed to have influenced a long line of French 'liberal' writers putting forth utilitarian arguments against colonization, among which have been ranked Frédéric Bastiat, Frédéric Passy and Raymond Aron.¹¹

Yet, the tradition that considers Say as the origin of an English-inspired, supposedly 'liberal' anticolonialism fails to acknowledge the complexity of his position. Say's intellectual background was much wider than is usually assumed by historians of economic thought, since it included not only the sceptic tradition of the French eighteenth century but also the Protestant and republican influence of his Genevan background.¹² It has also remained unnoticed that his writings offer ambiguous views of the extra-European world; several of his texts bear striking similarities with James Mill's defence of Britain's political

domination in India.¹³ This article will therefore argue that Say's colonial thought was more ambiguous than is usually assumed since neither Steiner nor Gainot has called into question the traditional view of Say as a staunch opponent of colonialism. It will also suggest a reassessment of his views towards colonies and the extra-European world. Through an examination of his economic writings as well as some of his lesser-known moral texts, it will trace out Say's intellectual evolution and attempt to account for the apparent contradiction formed by his parallel economic-based advocacy of independence for the colonies, and defence of European rule, most notably in India.

I.

In his study of Say's republican ideology, Richard Whatmore suggests that Say's economic ideas and overall vision were misinterpreted by his son after his death, so that his image became that of a disciple of Smith and Bentham, characterized by compassionless English industrialism and utilitarianism. Whatmore's point is certainly valid – Say's disciple Adolphe Blanqui, himself an advocate of free-trade, felt compelled to criticize Say's English-like 'cold-heartedness' in his history of political economy, written during the nationalist 1830s.¹⁴ Yet Say's image as an Anglophile and enthusiastic advocate of all things British, however divorced from historical reality, is based on one genuinely accurate observation: Say was remarkably knowledgeable not only about the English and Scottish schools of political economy, but also about the British intellectual tradition as a whole and the country's social and political scene. As a young man, Say was sent to England by his father to serve as an apprentice to a merchant and observe English commercial affairs. He remained there for two

years, so that when he returned on the eve of the Revolution, he had acquired both a good knowledge of English, and a life-long respect for English industrialism.¹⁵ In the late 1780s his interest in economic affairs led him to borrow the *Wealth of Nations* from his employer Etienne Clavière (future Minister of Finance), and then to purchase his own copy.¹⁶ He must also have come into contact with Bentham's writings while working for Mirabeau's *Courier de Provence* in 1790;¹⁷ in any case he did become acquainted with Bentham's translator Etienne Dumont.¹⁸

Say's interest in the English-speaking world is apparent in his early writings, most of which were published by the republican and anti-Jacobin *Décade philosophique, politique et littéraire* between 1794 and 1800. There his regular mentions of figures such as Bacon, Hume or Smith leave no doubt that the English and Scottish traditions were part of his intellectual background.¹⁹ Say's articles also suggest a strong interest in English affairs. His language credentials – he translated Franklin's *Poor Richard Saunders* in 1794, and Hélène-Maria Williams's *Tour in Switzerland* in 1798 – qualified him to review English works such as the *Account of Macartney's Embassy to China* and William Guthrie's *New System of Modern Geography*; he also wrote for the 'American literature' section, described the prisons of Philadelphia and praised the English system of canal navigation. It is therefore not surprising that Say's early works of political economy should have been heavily influenced by British economists. The *Traité d'économie politique* (1803), which drew many of its ideas from Turgot and the utility theory of Condillac, openly acknowledged its debt to Adam Smith: 'Whoever reads Smith like he deserves to be read, understands that political economy did not exist before him.'²⁰ It was, however, only much later in his life that Say created personal connections with the English and Scottish economists, notably James Mill, Ricardo and Malthus.²¹

For Say, Smith's analysis was directly influential, both for the development of his economic thought and for his consequent appraisal of the colonial system.²² Of course Say was heir to the larger eighteenth-century trend that tended to look upon colonies in a critical way: Hume, Smith and Bentham in England, and Diderot's *Encyclopédistes* and Turgot in France had all spoken against the colonies by levelling economic, political or even moral criticisms.²³ But because Say's discussion of the colonial system was primarily developed in economic works, he heavily drew on his teachers in the field of political economy, namely Adam Smith and Turgot. As a consequence, his assessment of the colonies reflects that of most eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century political economists: the colonial system, as it was organized by France and Britain, did not benefit the mother countries (or *métropoles*).

It must be underlined that, for Say as for Smith, the word 'colonies' brought together various schemes and models of establishment.²⁴ As both men were writing,²⁵ several colonial models co-existed: the model of the colonial plantation, virtually inseparable from a slavery-based economy, where imported black slaves often outnumbered the ruling white planters; the model of dependencies such as British India, where the colonizing minority ruled and administrated the native population; the model of European settlement, the main example of which was America, where large European immigration had pushed away or exterminated the indigenous people. Trading posts in North America or Asia constituted a fourth category, but primarily aimed at developing trade rather than establishing a political domination over the surrounding country.

In their economic discussions of the European overseas possessions, the criticism put forward by Smith and Say primarily aimed at monopolistic trade, and as a consequence focused on colonial plantations and dependencies. Throughout his life and in all his writings, Say constantly denied that France or England could ever financially benefit from a

monopolistic system of trade in the colonies. This belief drew heavily from Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, which offered a nuanced assessment of the benefits and drawbacks of colonial rule.²⁶ Smith notably explained how the 'mercantile' system organized a network of regulations controlling the trade of the *métropole* with its colonies, so as to ensure a commercial monopoly. For Smith this system had both positive consequences, in that it extended the size of the markets, and negative consequences that stemmed from the situation of monopoly. Not only were the advantages of monopoly relative rather than absolute (it 'gives a superiority to the country which enjoys it, rather by depressing the industry and produce of other countries, than by raising those of that particular country above what they would naturally rise to in the case of free trade'),²⁷ but even these advantages were cancelled out by the losses suffered in all other branches of trade, where the mother country did not hold a monopoly.²⁸ Smith's conclusion was that even though, in the particular case of Britain, the extension of the size of the markets still counterbalanced the negative effects of monopoly, the colonial system as organized by Great Britain was in essence economically inefficient.²⁹

Smith's monopolistic criticisms deeply influenced Say's *Traité d'économie politique* (1803).³⁰ In the first edition of the *Traité*, Say treats the colonial issue in a series of chapters (21 to 27) dedicated to an analysis of commerce. Chapters 28 and 29 conclude this analysis with a discussion of the colonies themselves. There Say radicalizes Smith's criticism of the colonial system. He takes up Smith's assertion that colonial taxes do not cover the expenses occasioned by the colonies, and adds that even the commercial gain is non-existent: the monopolistic trader makes a profit by selling products at a higher price in the colonies, and buying them at a lower price. But the colonial products are sold at their market price in the *métropole*, which means that the *métropole* gains nothing, and that only the trader benefits

from the situation of monopoly.³¹ Say therefore concludes that colonial trade offers at best illusory advantages, and that it is more probably commercially harmful.³²

Say's assertion that the colonies, and in particular the plantation colonies, were a financial burden for the *métropole* was gradually reinforced in the subsequent editions of the *Traité* and eventually in the *Cours Complet*.³³ In the chapter entitled *De la culture du sucre et de l'esclavage des nègres*, Say attempts to demonstrate thoroughly the economic inefficiency of a system supporting subsidized plantations. He illustrates the arguments developed in his *Traité* with the example of one of the most common colonial products, sugar. France heavily subsidized sugar culture in its West Indian colonies; yet sugar was more expensive for the French than for countries without colonies. In addition, the subsidies failed to keep the planters from accumulating more and more debt.³⁴ For Say, the planters' inextricable financial situation will 'naturally' lead to the end of the colonial system. Asking for more subsidies and tariffs would not save them from the 'forces of concurrency' either: 'More privileges will not save them. The nature of things is too powerful. With or without political turmoil, we will have to give up the old colonial system and yield to the influence of costs.'³⁵

Say concludes this analysis by pleading for a system of global free-trade, arguing that the 'mutual advantages, whether for the colonies or for the *métropoles*, all depend on the nature of things, and not at all on the political relations of dependency established between them'.³⁶ In other words, the political dependency of colonies is either economically irrelevant or, worse still, harmful; it is never an advantage.³⁷ Say puts forward as an example Mexico, which he sees as still remarkably backwards after three hundred years of Spanish domination.³⁸ As a consequence, Say recommends that the European *métropoles* grant all colonies their independence, since this process is unavoidable:

As regards the colonies, we are just now starting to see what map of action is most favorable to us. The unavoidable progress of the enlightenment will do the rest. Those new nations will all successively become independent, and this will be for them the time of a true development. Only then will Europe enjoy all the advantages that could derive from its communication with them.³⁹

Like many contemporary advocates of free-trade,⁴⁰ he points out that ‘the United States are much more profitable to England than when she was governing them’.⁴¹ This allows him to draw a glowing picture of a world in which all colonies will become independent:

The true colonies of a commercial nation are the independent nations of all parts of the worlds. All commercial nations must wish for all of them to be independent, so that they all become more industrious and wealthier. Indeed the more populous and productive they are, the more opportunities there are for trade. These nations then become useful friends.⁴²

The case of India

After Say’s long silence during the Napoleonian era, his *De l’Angleterre et des Anglais* (1815) contained a comprehensive evaluation of British rule in India. In keeping with his economic analysis, Say was violently critical of the East India Company’s monopoly in India. *De l’Angleterre et des Anglais*, written after a four-month stay in England, offers a harsh assessment of the British colonial system. The work sets out to demonstrate that the common idea according to which Britain derives much power and wealth from its Indian

dominion, is not based in fact. Using British figures,⁴³ Say shows that the Company is running a heavy deficit.⁴⁴ Say then proceeds to answer a common argument put forward in favor in the company. ‘Some’ assert that the Company is still useful to English economy, despite its overall deficit, because India offers a commercial outlet for English goods. This was the position defended previously by Adam Smith. For the first time, Say draws clearly on the argument of his famous 1803 chapter ‘Des débouchés’ (often quoted as the origin of ‘Say’s Law of Markets’) in order to reject Smith’s claim: should India stop buying English products, the English production would not drop as it would find other outlets. In addition, England could still hold commerce with an independent India, and sell the Indians the exact same products.⁴⁵

Say concludes by extending his conclusions on India to all colonial dependencies (the case becomes clearer when the government cannot compensate the cost of administration by a commercial monopoly), and once again predicts the fall of the ‘old’ colonial system:

In the nineteenth century the old colonial system will fall apart everywhere. We will abandon our mad ambition to administrate countries located two, three or six thousand miles from us; when they are finally independent we will have profitable trade relations with them.⁴⁶

It therefore appears clearly that Say developed his economic criticism of colonies along the lines initially set up in the *Wealth of Nations*, and consequently put forward an uncompromising economic criticism of the system of colonial monopolies by analyzing both the French plantation colonies and British India. However, this was also true of other contemporary political economists now branded as ‘imperialists’: James Mill for instance

argued against the commercial benefits of colonies in his pamphlet *Commerce Defended* (1808). It remains to be seen whether Say's criticism was, like Mill's, paralled by a strong disdain for the low place occupied by most extra-European people on the 'scale of civilizations'.⁴⁷ This requires turning to Say's moral assessment of extra-European societies.

II.

Say's *Décade* articles testify that his early intellectual references included Diderot, Montesquieu and Voltaire. It is therefore not surprising to find Say's first writings, and particularly his reviews of theatre plays, promote a general spirit of tolerance for extra-European people and societies. Thus, he commends an author 'for having dedicated his entire work to the defence of justice and humanity, which these unfortunate [black] people have often been deprived of', singles out the role of a 'negro' as 'full of sentiment, and very well played', praises a performance for its fair and accurate description of oriental society, celebrates French tolerance towards foreign customs, and even criticizes a play for its artificial Europeanization of Persian society.⁴⁸ This broadly positive attitude translated into more specific praise as he moved away from theatre reviews in order to publish more substantial articles between 1796 and 1798. Writing on the issue of travels and colonial attitudes, Say distinctly reproduced the *philosophes*' admiration for the antiquity and wisdom of eastern civilizations. In a review of a work recounting travels in China, he highlights, in typical Voltairian fashion, China's millenary history, as well as its technological and agricultural development, huge population and military potential.⁴⁹ In his description of Egypt during the Napoleonic campaign, he insists on 'the antiquity [of the pyramids], built

in the early ages of the world', as well as on 'the wisdom and magnificence of its kings'.⁵⁰ In other places he criticizes expansionist policies for being despotic and generally harmful.⁵¹

It is however worth noticing that Say was not blind to the occasional partiality of the *philosophes*' praise for oriental societies. He suggests for instance that the truth about Chinese civilization is to be found somewhere between Voltaire's praise and de Pauw's criticism:

It is so difficult to study [China] that one must distrust the assessment of the missionaries, who considered it from one point of view only. One must also distrust the praise of Voltaire as well as the satire of de Pauw, since they were both based on second-hand observations.⁵²

In this relative dissociation from the *philosophes*' enthusiasm, Say shows he was a product of his time. New accounts of oriental societies, such as Volney's *Voyage en Syrie et en Egypte*, sought to offer a more balanced, non-romanticized view of oriental civilizations. Say's admiration for such accounts is illustrated by his frequent references to Volney's writings.⁵³

Both Volney and Say were also following the eighteenth-century tradition that refused to think in terms of biological hierarchies between men. Because he was convinced of the inherent equality of all races, and refused to think of civilization in terms of linear progress,⁵⁴ Volney insisted on the importance of education. Say thus directly quotes a passage from Volney stating that the depraved morals of the Malmouks are to be attributed to their education and social environment:

They become ignorant and superstitious because of their upbringing, fierce because of murder, seditious because of political turmoil, treacherous because of plots, cowardly because of dissimulation, and corrupted because of debauchery.⁵⁵

Say similarly appraised men as being fundamentally social beings. In modern terms, he could be said to believe that all men were shaped by their 'culture'. It must here be noted, however, that the word 'culture' was not used in its modern anthropological sense of 'civilization and customs of a people' until the mid-nineteenth century (*OED*), and that Say instead uses it in the metaphorical sense of 'improvement'. He did believe, however, that there was no such thing as a human being without morals (*moeurs*).⁵⁶ In doing so he followed the eighteenth-century currents of thought which refused to see members of pre-commercial groups as 'natural humans' still free from social characteristics. Instead they preferred to think in terms of differences of morals (in the French meaning of *moeurs*). In particular thinkers highly admired by Say, such as Diderot in France or the Scottish 'conjectural historians',⁵⁷ rejected the then popular idea of a 'natural man'.⁵⁸ The influence of their conceptions of human nature is reflected in Say, who refused Rousseau's portrayal of the savage state as the 'original', 'natural' state of man,⁵⁹ and ascribed social characteristics to 'savage' nations. Say thus writes that social laws exist in all countries and times.⁶⁰ Because 'the state of society is the state of nature', 'it is a mistake to look for the "type" of our species in the deserts of America'.⁶¹ It is interesting that Say should have placed himself in this perspective, because the rejection of the 'natural man' has been argued to be the basis for Enlightenment anti-colonialism.⁶² Indeed, in the *Histoire philosophique* Diderot bases his critique of colonialism upon the idea that all men are fundamentally social beings, which enables him to argue that Europeans had no right to export their obviously deficient morals or social and political systems.⁶³

While Say's moral assessment of the extra-European world was deeply rooted in this background of eighteenth-century philosophy, his positions on the specific issue of the French colonies were also shaped by the political and intellectual context of the French 1790s. The views put forward by Say are representative of the position held by the *Société des Amis des Noirs*, to which he belonged, as did many republican figures of the time, including his protector Clavière as well as Condorcet and Brissot. The *Société* did not consider that significant biological differences existed between the various human 'races', and as a consequence strongly believed in the possibility of progress for all societies. Notwithstanding his personal links with many members of the *Société*, in particular Clavière, it is likely that Say's early admiration for Turgot also pushed him towards the ideas promoted by the anti-slavery movement of the early 1790s. Like Say, Turgot believed that all men 'had the same potential for knowledge everywhere', and that it was 'circumstances [that developed] those talents or [left] them buried in the dark'.⁶⁴

It must also be noted that as Say was writing for the *Décade philosophique* during the Revolution, the colonies were a controversial subject firstly because of the 1791 Saint-Domingue rising, which led to the abolition of slavery in 1794, and secondly because of the brutal return both to slavery and to the old colonial policy that was imposed by the first Consul Bonaparte in 1802. As a consequence, Say's writings on the colonies were closely linked both to the issue of slavery and to the political climate in which it was debated. In particular, Say sought to reconcile the patriotic attitude expected in times of war with England with his opposition to Napoleon's expansionist colonial ambitions. Say supported Napoleon's Brumaire coup d'état (9 November 1799), along with other abolitionists such as Guinguené, but quickly distanced himself from Napoleon's colonial ventures in the following years. Although no records remain of Say's reaction to the Leclerc expedition (which aimed to re-establish French rule in Toussaint Louverture's Saint-Domingue), his growing criticism

of Napoleon's policies after the 1799 coup as well as his later support for free-trade with Saint-Domingue, suggest that he would have, like Volney, disapproved of the expedition.⁶⁵

Napoleon's efforts to regain control of Saint-Domingue reflected his adherence to many of the ideas of the *Ancien Régime* in matters of colonial policy.⁶⁶ His attitude towards the West Indian colonies has been accounted for by the influence of his acquaintances: Napoleon mainly knew the colonies through the complaints of the slave-owning planters of the West Indies, and more particularly through his Martinique-born wife Joséphine. He also thought along the lines of the mercantilist system: French colonial products were necessary because they allowed France to dispense with exotic English products. This position is illustrated by the writings of Napoleon's minister Chaptal. In his *De l'industrie française*, published after the Restoration, he argued that Britain owed its prosperity to its colonies, and that France needed to expand further in order to compete with British commercial and political power.⁶⁷ In the Napoleonic era, the question of the colonies was not only highly political, but also a *question patriotique*.

As a consequence, Say's economic writings were soon considered subversive by the French regime. The Empire favored the supporters of slavery and slave trade, and consequently promoted a series of publications favoring colonial interests, as well as censored the efforts of the anti-colonialist and abolitionist party.⁶⁸ In its early years it was helped by a context ill-disposed to public sympathy for black slaves: the defeat of the French army in Saint-Domingue, as well as the widely advertised slaughters of white settlers, had damaged the abolitionist cause. In spite of difficulties of analysis linked to the influence of censorship and the uncertain authorship of some articles, recent scholarship has shown that Say was a leading actor in the *Décade*'s opposition to Bonaparte's policy of return to the 'old' colonial system.⁶⁹ He went on defending the causes of colonial independence and

abolition until 1801, but had to tone down his writings after the Leclerc expedition, and stopped publishing after 1803.

Of course, Say was not alone in his opposition to the Napoleonian policy towards the colonies of plantation. It has in fact been argued that opposition to slavery was much more common in the Empire than what was suggested by the official propaganda.⁷⁰ In any case, it is because the issue of the colonies was intimately linked to that of slavery when Say published his *Traité* in 1803, that moral arguments hold a prominent place in his assessment of the colonies. Indeed in the *Traité* the colonial argument is primarily focused on the West Indies and on the case of the plantations. Not only is Say's assessment pervaded with moral statements about the evils of slavery, but the moral aspects of things in the end supersedes the economic assessment. Indeed Say's analysis of slave labor is favorable to the logic of colonial plantations. He believes that although well-meaning, his predecessors in political economy, namely Steuart, Turgot, and Smith, were wrong to argue that slave labor was less profitable than free labor.⁷¹ On the contrary he asserts that slave work is both less costly, and more productive than free work.⁷² Yet he advocates the abolition of slavery, because 'it remains to be seen whether [the profits] reaped by a few individuals are worth allowing the most awful trade ever conducted – that of our fellow men'.⁷³ This advocacy is clearly grounded in a moral claim.

Because of the specific national context in which he was writing, Say linked the issue of colonization to that of slavery, which was ultimately resolved by a moral statement. His argument remained largely the same in the following editions of the *Traité* as well as in his other publications.⁷⁴ Of course some evolutions did occur – in particular Say became less and less convinced of the superior productivity of slave work; in the second edition of his *Traité* (1814) his position is already more nuanced, while the fifth edition (1826) marks his

conviction that the system of the colonies, and therefore slavery, has ceased to be profitable even to the colonists.⁷⁵

Although France had been returned all its colonial possessions after the Treaty of Paris in April 1814,⁷⁶ it was only an apparent return to the system of the *Ancien Régime*. The appearance of continuity concealed deep transformations: the economic system on which colonial prosperity had rested had in fact disappeared. The plantation islands, ruined by years of warfare, could not recover their former prosperity nor even reconstitute a new labor force, because of the ban on slave trade imposed by England. In the *Cours Complet* (1828-9), Say even draws on Charles Comte's arguments to return to Smith's original position that the expenses occasioned by slave labor are too heavy a burden for the master.⁷⁷ Yet even while Say's economic case for slavery was growing weaker, he went on maintaining that the moral aspect of the question was the most important.⁷⁸ 'I wish those people [planters] understood that the issue at hand is not all about financial interests ... It is bad arithmetic to count force as being worth everything, and equity as being worth nothing.'

It therefore appears clearly that Say did not confine his critique of the French colonial policy to economic arguments. He also inherited from the French *philosophes* a certain respect for non-European societies, as well as expressed a moral disapprobation of slavery that was closely linked to the French political context of the time. It follows that if one was to compare Say's position to those of the English contemporary writers scrutinized by Pitts, it would seem to be closer to Jeremy Bentham's, whom he admired and corresponded with, than to Adam Smith's. While each man criticized the corrupting influence of the colonies, arguing that they unnecessarily inflated the military as well as put the mother country in danger,⁷⁹ Smith would have accepted a re-organized colonial system.⁸⁰ Bentham however, as he turned away from enlightened despotism and in favor of democracy, became fiercely critical of all colonies, as illustrated by his 1793 pamphlet *Emancipate your Colonies!*⁸¹

Bentham continued holding the same position into the early 1820s, by which time he was trying to convince Spain to emancipate its colonies in the New World in *Rid yourselves of Ultramarina*. His arguments were both economic and political, as they included the fact that colonies were financially unsound and inefficient, that they exacted a tax on the poor of the mother country for the benefit of the wealthy, encouraged unnecessary growth of the state's military while leaving the country vulnerable, and were fuelled by illusory, misguided, and dangerous conceptions of honor and glory.⁸² However, his arguments were also interwoven with moral appeals, particularly in *Emancipate your colonies!*:

You choose your own government, why are not other people to choose theirs? Do you seriously mean to govern the world, and do you call that *liberty*? What is become of the rights of men? Are you the only men who have rights? Alas! my fellow citizens, have you two measures?⁸³

Say seems to have largely shared Bentham's moral assessment of the colonies. Indeed the topic of the colonies appears frequently in Say's correspondence with Bentham between 1818 and 1827. Both men deplored the violation of the colonies' right to independence, and spoke wistfully of the 'Ancient' model of colonization, that is to say the formation of new independent nations through the long-term colonization of empty lands. In an 1818 letter to Say, Bentham thus advised him to flee European despotism in order to settle in democratic America.⁸⁴ Bentham and Say also seemed to be of one mind as to the question of the Spanish colonies' right to independence, which particularly preoccupied Bentham around that time. Bentham shared with Say his concern about the Argentinean movement for independence in which their common friend Bernardino Rivadavia (later the first president of Argentina) was

involved.⁸⁵ Bentham also had his pamphlet *Observations on the Restrictive and Prohibitory, Commercial System* ... sent to Say,⁸⁶ whose acknowledgement letter proves that he shared Bentham's moral analysis:

I have received your two pamphlets defending the freedom of the Spanish, of the Portuguese and of the world... One cannot admire too much, my esteemed friend, the courage with which you denounce the Vampires that devour our poor Europe. We are slowly gaining ground in public opinion; and public opinion, once steady, will resist the Vampires, for I know no army, however powerful, that can make nations obey that are set against obeying.⁸⁷

That Bentham believed Say to share his opinion on the question of the colonies is further illustrated by his writing for a cousin of José del Valle's letters of introduction to 'the four men who, I thought, it would be of most use to your country [Guatemala] and him [Valle] that he should be acquainted with', among which Say, 'the ablest writer of political economy in the French language'.⁸⁸ In 1824, Bentham and James Silk Buckingham suggested that Say review two books about British India in the *Revue Encyclopédique*, obviously confident that the article would reflect their own views.⁸⁹

Yet Say never wrote the article.⁹⁰ Interestingly enough, 1824 was also the year in which Say published his *Essai historique sur l'origine, les progrès et les résultats probables de la souveraineté des Anglais aux Indes*. The essay was dedicated to the East India Company, and restated Say's conviction that Britain did not benefit commercially from its Indian possessions. Yet strikingly, the views put forward in this little-studied text seem to stand in direct opposition to Say's support for colonial independence. Say writes: 'In the

interest of humankind, [we must not wish] that the European nations lose their influence over Asia. On the contrary, [we must wish] that their influence will increase'.⁹¹ As it underlined Europe's moral responsibility to retain their 'influence' in Asia, Say's justification of the British rule of India was reminiscent of James Mill's famously 'imperialist' argument in the *History of British India*.⁹² In fact, in spite of Say's supposed 'cosmopolitan' and 'anticolonialist' credentials, several of his texts, which have until now been overlooked, indicate strong support for European domination over extra-European societies. As one seeks to account for this apparent contradiction, it becomes clear that Say's position on European rule cannot be reduced solely to his economic and moral criticism of the contemporary colonial system.

III.

Although Say and Bentham were in agreement as to the right to independence of the colonies of white settlement such as those in South America, Say's letters to Bentham do not indicate whether Say would have equally advocated the independence of primarily indigenous populations. Indeed the passage previously quoted ('I have received your two pamphlets defending the freedom of the Spanish, of the Portuguese and of the world') might even suggest that it is primarily the independence of European populations that Say defends. Investigating this issue will therefore first require to explore in more detail the contemporary understanding of the word 'colony'.

As the problem of the colonies was discussed throughout the eighteenth century, the classification of the various sorts of European overseas possessions was always an underlying

element in the debate. The distinction between inhabited and uninhabited lands in particular was seen as essential, and was the source of much disagreement between thinkers now often characterized as ‘anti-colonialist’.⁹³ The distinction was important because it was the colonies’ very purpose to be settled by European populations.

Most French writers in the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century took the word ‘colony’ to have quite a specific meaning.⁹⁴ For most *Encyclopédistes* it merely implied the settling of a new land – the *Encyclopédie* thus defines ‘colony’ as ‘the movement of a people, or a portion of a people, from one country to another’.⁹⁵ Turgot’s use of the word ‘colony’, in his famous 1750 *Discours en Sorbonne*, follows this definition. He writes that ‘colonies are like fruits that hang on the tree only until they are mature: once self-sufficient, they do what Carthage has done, and what America will do one day’.⁹⁶ The reference to ancient colonies suggests Turgot is referring only to the independence of European people settled in a new land, not to the independence of the native people.⁹⁷ Raynal’s *Histoire philosophique* uses the word in much the same way: ‘[Colonies] are peopled by the scum of nations, or foreigners; but severe laws, a fair administration and an easy living soon give morals to those men, who were sent away from Europe because they had none.’⁹⁸

Say followed this understanding of the word ‘colony’. Even in later writings such as the *Cours complet*, he defined a colony as being ‘formed by a people established outside of its mother land’.⁹⁹ The *Cours Complet* distinguishes four types of colonies:

Those establishments were formed sometimes in yet entirely uninhabited lands, like the Maurician islands or St Helena; sometimes in countries where the inhabitants were slaughtered, like in St Domingue and most of the West Indies, then peopled by the now-extinct Caribbean people; sometimes in lands where the indigenous people were either subdued and subjected to a sort of slavery, like in Mexico and in Peru, or

pushed back into the inside of the land like they were by the settlers of northern America.¹⁰⁰

In all cases the emphasis remains on the settling of a European group on a new land, either empty or emptied. Even in the case of Mexico and Peru, the indigenous population is not organized and ruled by a white minority, but rather ‘subdued or enslaved’ so as to create as little inconvenience as possible for the white settlement. That the case of a numerous indigenous population politically ruled by a white minority is not compatible with Say’s conception of a colony is further demonstrated by another remark in the *Cours Complet*:

India is not a colony in the proper usage of the term, that is to say, that the English have not driven away or killed the indigenous people.¹⁰¹

Thus when Say calls for the emancipation of European colonies, he calls for the emancipation of white European nations, such as the United States. Nowhere does he advocate the emancipation of a black nation in Africa, or of an Asian nation. One possible exception would be the case of Saint-Domingue; however the case was atypical, because its black inhabitants were not the original indigenous people but ‘settlers’ of a sort.¹⁰² In any case there is no record of Say supporting the independence of Saint-Domingue until the specific context of the 1810s,¹⁰³ when he advocated English trade with Haiti,¹⁰⁴ and opposed the Catholic Church’s efforts to recover Saint-Domingue.¹⁰⁵ On the contrary the first edition of his *Traité* is remarkable for setting out an argument for future colonial independences without ever referring to the actual independence of Saint-Domingue.¹⁰⁶

The second edition of the *Traité* (1814) is equally ambiguous. At first sight Say seems to be advocating the independence of all European possessions: He suggests that all

‘enlightened’ European countries give up ‘all their dependent colonies’, in order to create ‘independent colonies in the equinoctial areas closest to France, as well as in Africa’.¹⁰⁷ However, in suggesting this, Say was probably not imagining independent black countries, but rather independent colonies of white settlement. He believed that there remained plenty of uncultivated land available for European settlers in Africa.¹⁰⁸ As Say’s use of the word ‘colony’ followed the common usage of the late eighteenth century, it was clearly understood by his contemporary readers as referring to white colonies of settlement only.

As previously mentioned, the economic criticisms put forward by Say mainly aimed at colonial plantations as well as at dependencies organized along a system of monopoly. Conversely, Say puts forward a positive view of the colonies of settlement. In all the editions of the *Traité* between 1803 and 1841,¹⁰⁹ he opens his discussion on the colonies with a lengthy praise of the ‘ancient’ model of colonization. The first distinction underlined is that of the origins of the colonies: while ancient colonies were established by people forced to flee their native land (because of persecution or lack of land), modern colonies were never meant to be permanently settled by Europeans. They were established by travellers seeking quick and efficient ways to find wealth, and who would then go back to Europe in order to enjoy their new fortune.¹¹⁰ Modern colonists are therefore not hindered by the desire to reputedly establish themselves and their family in that land, and can introduce ‘violent means of exploitation’, among which slavery. Because ancient colonies were to be settled in a long-term perspective however, they were usually new lands with strong potential for development. They were chosen for their fertile land, their favorable climate and their strategic geographical position. Their development was rapid, not only because the settlers brought along civilization (i.e. practical and theoretical knowledge, work habits, tools), but also because they were not hindered by the necessity to share their profits with the landowner, nor by quantity of land. Say argues that settlers are quick to form financial

capitals, because they are little drawn to luxury.¹¹¹ Such colonies give themselves unobtrusive, independent governments. Their economic development is quick and they often end up more prosperous than their mother country. That the name of ‘ancient colonies’ points at a particular system of colonization rather than at a particular historical time is illustrated by Say’s understanding of the United States, which he ranks as belonging to the ‘ancient’ system, as they are ‘what is nowadays most similar to the Greek colonies’.¹¹² Say’s admiration for the ‘ancient’ model of settlement exemplified by the United States extends to his praise for the Quaker establishments in Pennsylvania. This owes primarily to the exemplary behavior of William Penn, the colony’s founder:

The territory of Pennsylvania was bought from the savages by the illustrious Penn; it was an acquisition more noble and glorious than those achieved through mere conquest – an honest word, which usually refers to a thing that is not so.¹¹³

This admiration for the Quaker model of colonization was strongly linked, for Say, to the idea of ‘civilising’ the native people through education and the power of example. Say commends the American efforts to accelerate the development of the indigenous societies by inducing them to adopt agriculture:¹¹⁴

The example [of Penn] is still followed by the government of the United States, which ... buys [the Indians’] territory and then sells it to those who want to establish themselves there. When the Indian tribes refuse to sell their territory, they soon find themselves surrounded by cultivated land; since they can no longer hunt in the wild of distant forests, they have no choice but to follow the example of their neighbors and

become cultivators, and they eventually adopt the law of the State that surrounds them.¹¹⁵

This demonstrates that although Say attacked the mercantilist system of colonial trade, he was not in fact opposed to all forms of colonization. He admired the ‘ancient’ system of colonization, that is to say, the long-term settling of new lands and the establishment of free-trade relations with the *métropole*. The example of Pennsylvania shows that the colonized land did not have to be entirely empty; indeed small population such as the Native Americans could easily be taught to behave like the European settlers. Some of Say’s articles in the *Décade* even suggest that he was not opposed to educating more substantial populations to that effect: indeed Say proposed to teach non-commercial societies (in particularly African societies) the rudiments of agriculture and technology, with the aim of accelerating their development and one day developing fruitful commercial relations with them, which would in turn encourage further diffusion of knowledge and enlightenment.¹¹⁶ Say wrote in 1798 this utopian description of Europe’s future relations with Africa:

European nation form many establishments along the African coastline, where sugar and coffee are grown by the free natives of the country, who offer their work in exchange for good food and good treatments. These establishments make Europe independent from America, and the awful human commerce called *slave trade* collapses naturally.¹¹⁷

The *Décade* called this policy ‘colonisation nouvelle’ since it was devised as an answer to the eighteenth century’s ambiguity towards colonization. For radical encyclopaedists such as Diderot, Pechmeja or Damilaville, the only acceptable form of

colonization was the model of ‘ancient’ colonization. Yet many eighteenth-century *philosophes* retained ambivalent attitudes to modern colonies. The colonists were sometimes condemned for the injustice and violence of their conquests (for instance, the Spanish colonization of South America), and sometimes praised for fostering social and economic progress.¹¹⁸ As a consequence, the *Décade* writers sought to conceptualize a ‘new colonization’, through the regeneration of modern colonies and the search for new colonies established on the principle of general liberty.¹¹⁹ The *Décade* therefore advocated the exploitation of new land by Europeans through a transfer of technology to the natives. The model for this ‘new colonization’ was Charles-Bernard Wadström’s *Essay on Colonization*, and Africa was presented as the best place for its implementation.¹²⁰

Like Wadström, Say belonged to the *Société des amis des Noirs et des colonies*. The aims of the newly-formed *Société* were put forward in 1798 a letter to the *Décade* (Say was then serving as its editor):¹²¹ Africans did not know how to develop their land, but were considered to be capable of improvement. Europeans therefore needed to teach them how to cultivate efficiently, through education as well as technology:

The Africans do not know how to take advantage of their land and climate ... they are without instruction and without knowledge of useful arts ... Do they not have an urgent need for moral and physical instruction? ... Must we not provide them with the means to greatly increase the productivity of [their land], and relieve the hardships of physical labor with the help of mechanical inventions and of the discoveries of Agronomy ...?¹²²

This position reflected both the *Décade*’s advocacy of a ‘new colonization’, and its long-term interest for agronomy. The *Décade* called this scheme ‘colonization’ because the

establishment of trading posts and the transfer of knowledge and technology would require European ‘colonies’ of settlement in Africa; however it did not imply political domination.

Yet it must be underlined that Say was ready in some cases to implement a modern type of ‘colonization’ that implied political domination, as illustrated by his support for Napoleon’s expedition in Egypt. It does seem that he was in 1798 enthusiastically supporting the conquest.¹²³ According to his article *De l’Egypte*, Egypt’s under-developed and despotic society is in want of a ‘new order’. He underlines ‘its hateful administration until the Hero of France, followed by our brave legions, entered it’,¹²⁴ and writes:

This description of the state of Egypt before the invasion of the French would seem overly negative, if all the visitors did not agree in their assessment. All are struck both with the extent of the wrongs inflicted upon the country, and with its amazing potential. All wish for a new order that would free the country from the oppression under which it moans.¹²⁵

A conquered Egypt, far from illustrating the ‘ancient’ model of colonization, would have been a clear case of dependency, with a French minority ruling over an Egyptian majority. Of course allowances have to be made for the particular context in which Say was writing: expansionist patriotism was mandatory, and censorship remained ever-present. Yet in the following years Say never accepted to defend Napoleon’s expansionism and colonial policy. It is only in the specific case of Egypt, before the coup of 18 Brumaire, when Say still believed Napoleon to be a republican and the possible savior of the Revolution, that he defended his colonial ventures.¹²⁶ Say’s enthusiasm for the Egyptian expedition is the direct consequence of his conviction that the republican principles of the Revolution should be spread in order to facilitate the process of civilization in non-European countries.

That this was not an isolated and circumstantial defense of European political domination is illustrated by Say's attitude towards British India. Say's belief that Britain had never, and would probably never benefit from its Indian colonies was counterbalanced by a moral argument. In his 1824 *Essai historique*, Say develops the harsh economic assessment presented in *De l'Angleterre et des Anglais* in 1815, with similar arguments and updated figures.¹²⁷ The diagnosis is essentially the same: 'The East India company must be looked upon as a commercial, sovereign association which derives no profit from its commerce or its sovereignty, and is every year reduced to borrowing the little money it distributes to its shareholders.'¹²⁸ However, the proposed remedy is strikingly different. In *De l'Angleterre de des Anglais*, Say predicted and encouraged the independence of India: 'The nations of Europe cannot fail to understand how much their colonies are costing them'.¹²⁹ In the *Cours complet* however, he points out that this prediction failed to take into account the fact that India, because it is overwhelmingly populated by indigenous people, is not a colony in the strict usage of the term: 'It has sometimes been said that this colony [India] would become independent like all other colonies; yet one has failed to notice the fact that India is not a colony in the proper usage of the term.'¹³⁰

Say's new prediction is that British rule will assert itself in an even stronger manner in the future, by getting rid of the intermediary power of the East India Company: 'I would not be surprised if, when their current privileges expire in 1834, they were not renewed, and if India was to be governed by a viceroy and the company's debt declared part of the national debt.'¹³¹ Say welcomes this continuing rule of England, not on an economic but on a political and moral basis:

Would it be in the interest of mankind, if European nations lost their influence over Asia? Must we not rather wish for their influence to increase? ... With their despots

and their superstitions, the Orientals do not have any good institutions to lose; they could receive many good ones from the Europeans.¹³²

Say reiterates this self-criticism in the fifth edition of his *Traité* (1826). In a footnote to the chapter *Des colonies et de leurs produits*, Say indicates that the indictment of colonies drawn by the chapter was not relevant to the case of India:

What I have been saying about the colonies does not strictly apply to that of the English in India, because there the English are not mere colonists. ... India, which enjoys peace and increasing prosperity under the enlightened despotism of the English, could not become independent without falling prey to a multitude of princes who would continually wage war, as well as plunder and slaughter their subjects like they used to. There would be nothing to gain from independence, neither for the Hindus nor for the English.¹³³

Say therefore changed his mind sometime between 1815 and 1824, from thinking that the independence of India was both highly probable and something to be hoped for, to thinking that India would and should remain British. It is possible that something – possibly the publication of James Mill's *History of British India*¹³⁴ – focused his attention on the fact that India was not a 'colony' in the strict sense of the word, but an old, populous country.¹³⁵ His prediction that all colonies (meaning all colonies of settlement) would eventually become independent therefore did not apply to the case of India anymore. Significantly, the angle of his assessment also changed. In 1815 he predicted that England would eventually abandon its commercial and political advantages in India, because they were not in the interest of the

English. When he writes ‘We will renounce our mad ambition to administrate countries located two, three or six thousand miles from us’,¹³⁶ the pronoun ‘we’ refers to the English or the Europeans. The point of view has shifted by 1824; then Say speaks in terms of the interest of humanity as a whole (‘in the interest of humankind’), as well as in terms of the interests of the Indians themselves, who benefit from the ‘enlightened despotism’ of the English. The idea of Indian independence can be conceived as both beneficent for the English economy, and harmful for the development of the Indians and therefore for humanity as a whole.

Say’s volte-face illustrates the fact that there is no simple dichotomy separating ‘imperialist’ from ‘anti-imperialist’ thinkers at this time. It also exemplifies the gradual evolution that led many thinkers to reject a pre-nineteenth-century model of colonization based on the research of commercial profit, in favor of new policies of expansion that found their justification in a mission to civilize the extra-European world. In this regard, I have suggested that it is more fruitful to look at early nineteenth-century proponents of free-trade such as Say as the products of the philosophic tradition of the eighteenth-century than as the starting point of a so-called ‘liberal’ tradition. Indeed, there is from Say’s point of view no contradiction between his support for economic and political freedom, and his conviction that it is Europe’s duty to help other countries reach higher stages of economic development. More crucially, he would have argued that such ‘imperialism’, far from clashing with his ‘liberalism’, was perfectly consistent with the tolerant views put forward by Voltaire and Diderot.

While much research still remains to be done, it seems that a close examination of Say’s writings in their own terms goes a long way towards revealing the roots of the rationalist justifications for political domination put forth by his disciples and successors. Approaching Say’s writings as the products of a rich philosophical tradition developed in a complex political context has shown that the standard interpretation of his colonial thought is

inaccurate. Far from putting forth a clear-cut opposition to Europe's despotism on the grounds of free-trade principles, Say was in fact much closer to advocating despotism over extra-European societies than is usually suggested.

Yet Say's place in the French colonial movement remains problematic. As it has been generally assumed since the 1830s that his colonial thought was directly inspired by British utilitarian arguments for free-trade, it remains unclear how the more ambiguous positions put forth in such popular works as the *Cours Complet* fitted into the French debate. It may not be fortuitous that the year following the publication of the *Cours Complet* marked the French invasion of Algiers and the beginning of France's 132-year long rule in Algeria.

Anna Plassart is completing her PhD thesis at the University of Cambridge. Her work focuses on Scottish responses to the French Revolution in the late eighteenth century. She wishes to thank all those who commented on earlier drafts of this article, especially Gareth Stedman Jones and Christophe Salvat.

¹ The historiographical debate on the ‘imperialism of free trade’ was triggered by John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson. See John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, "The Imperialism of Free Trade", *The Economic History Review* 1 (1953).

² This shift was already underlined in Duncan Forbes, "James Mill and India", *Cambridge Journal* 31 (1951-52).

³ Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton, N.J. Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005).

⁴ According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word ‘imperialism’ only appeared in England in the late 1850s. As for the French word ‘impérialisme’, it originally referred to the Napoleonian and Roman empires; its modern meaning was borrowed from the English and was in common usage by 1880.

⁵ This accounts for her use of modern concepts and vocabulary such as ‘liberalism’ and ‘imperialism’, which eighteenth and early nineteenth-century writers would not have recognized as their own, and which can unsettle historian readers.

⁶ Say’s disciple Adolphe Blanqui thus writes that ‘J.B. Say was more influential than any other writer in popularising political economy in France and in Europe.’ Adolphe Jérôme Blanqui, *Histoire de l’économie politique en Europe: depuis les anciens jusqu’à nos jours* (Paris: Guillaumin, 1837), 234. All the translations are my own.

⁷ For a discussion of the boundaries between Europe and the extra-European world, see J. G. A Pocock, "Some Europes in Their History", in *The idea of Europe: from Antiquity to the*

European Union, ed. Anthony Pagden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). In the eighteenth century 'Europe' could either designate the Western European countries, or in a broader sense, all Christian countries.

⁸ See Philippe Steiner, "Jean-Baptiste Say et les colonies, ou comment se débarrasser d'un héritage intempestif", *Cahiers d'économie politique* 27-28 (1996); Bernard Gainot, "La Décade et la 'colonisation nouvelle'", *Annales historiques de la Révolution française* 339 (2005)

⁹ See for instance Mark Blaug's introduction to the 'Jean-Baptiste Say' volume of the Edward Elgar 'Pioneers in Economics' series: 'His importance, particularly for French economics, was to popularize the ideas of Adam Smith [and] to disseminate English classical political economy on the Continent.' Mark Blaug, *Jean-Baptiste Say (1776-1832)* (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1991), ix.

¹⁰ Thus Meyer, in his *Histoire de la France coloniale*, writes that in the 1870s 'most economists claiming to be following the tradition of A. Smith, through J-B Say and F. Bastiat ... condemn colonialism', and that in the 1880s 'both left-wing and right-wing anticolonialists repeat the old liberal arguments passed on by J-B Say'. Jean Meyer and Jacques Thobie, *Histoire de la France coloniale* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1990), 560, 613. Blanqui wrote that '[Say]'s immortal fame was ensured by his *Law*, which dealt the last blow to the system of monopolies and precipitated the collapse of the colonial system.' Adolphe Jérôme Blanqui, *Histoire de l'économie politique en Europe* (1837), 227-8.

¹¹ In his history of French anticolonialism, the journalist and historian Jean Lacouture argues that 'more interesting than [humanist anticolonialism] is the anticolonialism of the right, embodied by Jean-Baptiste Say for instance: colonies were a bad deal (we will see that Raymond Aron was close to this position)'; he equally argues that in the 1950s, 'In his criticism of colonization ... Raymond Aron was taking up the heritage of the liberal school,

whose masters were Jean-Baptiste Say, Frédéric Bastiat and Frédéric Passy.’ Jean Lacouture and Dominique Chagnollaude, *Le dés empire: figures et thèmes de l'anticolonialisme* (Paris: Denoël, 1993), 218, 185.

¹² Richard Whatmore has recently offered a new interpretation of Jean-Baptiste Say’s economic writings in the light of his life-long commitment to modern republicanism. See Richard Whatmore, *Republicanism and the French Revolution: An Intellectual History of Jean-Baptiste Say's Political Economy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

¹³ In particular his *Essai historique sur l'origine, les progrès et les résultats probables de la souveraineté des Anglais aux Indes* (1824) offers a moral and political argument for British rule in India very similar to James Mill’s. This text has remained unnoticed by most scholars; I am grateful to Gareth Stedman Jones for pointing it out to me. In a short article published in 1969, J. Spengler draws attention to Say’s *Essai historique*, but is more interested in assessing Say’s ‘prophetic’ abilities than in the coherence of his colonial thought. See Joseph J. Spengler, "India's Prospects According to Jean-Baptiste Say, 1824", *The Journal of Asian Studies* 3 (1969).

¹⁴ Adolphe Jérôme Blanqui, *Histoire de l'économie politique en Europe* (1837), 232-238.

¹⁵ Several anecdotes from Say’s time in England reappear in his economic writings throughout the years. See Evelyn L. Forget, *The Social Economics of Jean-Baptiste Say: Markets and Virtue* (London: Routledge, 1999), 13.

¹⁶ ‘[Clavière] had a copy of Smith, which he often studied. I read a few pages that deeply impressed me, and as soon as I could I ordered a copy, which I still have.’ 1827, J-B Say to Louis Say, in Jean-Baptiste Say, *Oeuvres diverses de J.-B. Say* (Osnabrück: Zeller, O., 1966), 545.

¹⁷ The *Courrier de Provence* had published translations of Bentham’s works as early as 1790.

¹⁸ In 1802 Dumont sent to Say the first volume of his translation of Bentham's work. Philippe Steiner, "La science de l'économie politique et les sciences sociales en France (1750-1840)", *Revue d'histoire des sciences humaines* 15 (2006): 32.

¹⁹ Say writes, for instance, that Diderot was 'le disciple et l'émule de Bacon', and put forward Locke as one of the 'grands maîtres': see Jean-Baptiste Say, "Oeuvres de Diderot." *Décade philosophique, littéraire et politique*, Pluviôse an VI, 338; see also *Olbie, ou, Essai sur les moyens de réformer les mœurs d'une nation* (Paris: Deterville: Treuttel et Wurtz, 1800), 7.

²⁰ Jean-Baptiste Say, *Traité d'économie politique: ou simple exposition de la manière dont se forment ... les richesses* (Paris: Crapelet, Deterville, 1803), xx.

²¹ Say met Ricardo, Malthus, Place, Mill and Bentham in 1814, when he was sent to England by the Restoradion government in order to report on the state of industrialization of the country. In the case of Mill the acquaintance seems to have developed into friendship, as Say famously welcomed the young John Stuart Mill in his own family in 1821, and on a visit to London in 1825, was invited by James Mill to spend two days with him at Croydon. Mill to Say, 28 May 1825. In A. Heertje, "Two Letters from James Mill to Jean-Baptiste Say", *De Economist* 118 (1970). Say remained in London from 25 May until 16 August 1825.

²² Say had been introduced to the *Wealth of Nations* by Etienne Clavière in the 1780s.

²³ The *Encyclopédie* illustrates the development of these anti-colonialist arguments. Whilst the article 'Colonies', by Véron de Forbonnais, supports slavery and colonialism, Damilaville's article on 'Population' contains both a utilitarian and moral condemnation of all colonies. For a study of Enlightenment anti-colonialism, see Sankar Muthu, *Enlightenment against Empire* (Princeton, N.J.; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003).

²⁴ For a precise typology that ranges from ancient to modern times, see M. I. Finley, "Colonies: An Attempt at a Typology", *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* (1976).

²⁵ Smith and Say belong to different, if overlapping, generations: Say was twenty-three when Smith died in 1790.

²⁶ For a presentation of Smith's colonial thought, see Donald Winch, *Classical Political Economy and Colonies* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1965), 6-19.

²⁷ Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 595.

²⁸ These losses were the consequence of the rise in prices entailed by the rise in profits from colonial trade (because of the exclusion of foreign competition); the rise of profits subjected the country 'both to an absolute and to a relative disadvantage in every branch of trade of which she has not the monopoly'. Ibid, 599.

²⁹ 'If the manufactures of Great Britain, however, have been advanced, as they certainly have, by the colonial trade, it has not been by means of the monopoly of that trade, but in spite of the monopoly.' Ibid, 610.

³⁰ That Say was particularly interested by Smith's treatment of the colonies is demonstrated by his handwritten notes on his copy of the *Wealth of Nations*. See H. Hashimoto, "Notes inédites de J.-B. Say qui couvrent les marges de la "Richesse des Nations" et qui la critiquent", *KSU Economic and Business Review* 7 (1980): 76-78.

³¹ For a more developed analysis of Say's calculation, see Philippe Steiner, "Jean-Baptiste Say et les colonies, ou comment se débarrasser d'un héritage intempestif", *Cahiers d'économie politique* 27-28 (1996).

³² In the 1803 edition Say did not yet spell out the colonial implication of his short chapter 'Des débouchés'. Yet this chapter contained the roots of his 'Law of Markets', later used by Mill and Ricardo against Smith's argument concerning the function of colonies as outlets.

³³ See Steiner's detailed analysis of this evolution in Philippe Steiner, "Jean-Baptiste Say et les colonies, ou comment se débarrasser d'un héritage intempestif", *Cahiers d'économie*

politique 27-28 (1996): 159-163. The *Cours complet*, published for the first time in 1828, gathered together the lessons Say had given at the *Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers* from 1819.

³⁴ Say does not believe that abolishing slavery would put an end to the planters' difficulties: 'Freeing one's slaves can sometimes improve productivity, but [in the West Indies] the effect would probably be different In that climate, working in the sun is extremely difficult. ... The negroes would never do it voluntarily.' Jean-Baptiste Say, *Cours complet d'économie politique pratique* (Osnabrück: Zeller, O., 1852), 252.

³⁵ Ibid, 250.

³⁶ Ibid, 623.

³⁷ 'Each country, each province ... have advantages and disadvantages, which derive from the nature of things, from their situation, their climate, the spirit of the inhabitants, their capitals Those advantages increase through the progress of industry ... ; but they cannot increase through the action of the government.' Ibid, 624.

³⁸ Ibid, 625.

³⁹ Ibid, 628. The 'advantages' referred both to commercial benefits, and to the intellectual exchanges that were supposed to help diffuse knowledge over the world.

⁴⁰ James Mill offers the same argument. See James Mill, "Emancipation of South America", *Edinburgh Review* 26 (1809), 280.

⁴¹ Jean-Baptiste Say, *Cours complet*, 633.

⁴² Ibid, 232-3.

⁴³ The figures were mainly taken from Colqhoun's *On the wealth of the British Empire*.

⁴⁴ Mathematically, Britain can gain profit from India either from tax or from commerce. The Company's spending in India (on general administration, defence, debt interest) exceeds what it receives from the various Indian governments by more than £19,000,000. As for the

commercial profits, they did not exceed £720,000 between 1807 and 1810, which Say asserts were exceptionally good years. Say therefore concludes that overall, the Company is in a situation of deficit. Jean-Baptiste Say, "De l'Angleterre et des Anglais", in *Oeuvres diverses*, 228-9.

⁴⁵ 'A subjected people will never buy what it cannot pay or does not need, and if it can afford the goods that it needs, it will buy them regardless of sovereignty.' Ibid, 229-230.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 230-1.

⁴⁷ James Mill, *The History of British India* (London: Baldwin, Cradock, Joy, 1826), Vol. 2, 46.

⁴⁸ Jean-Baptiste Say, "Théâtre de la cité - Le Noir et le Blanc.", Brumaire an IV, 304; "Théâtre du Vaudeville - *Honorine, ou la femme difficile à vivre.*", Ventôse an III, 428; "Théâtre de la République - *Abufar, ou la Famille arabe.*", Germinal an III, 172; "Théâtre de la rue Feydeau - *Le Tolérant.*", Floréal an III, 299; "Théâtre des arts - Reprise de *Tarare.*", Vendémiaire an IV, 110, in the *Décade philosophique*.

⁴⁹ Jean-Baptiste Say, "Voyages - Relations de l'ambassade du Lord Macartney à la Chine." *Décade philosophique*, Brumaire an V.

⁵⁰ Jean-Baptiste Say, "De l'Egypte." *Décade philosophique*, Vendémiaire an VII, 100.

⁵¹ Say writes for instance: 'It is a powerful argument against the expansion of states that the more they expand, the more injustice pervades their administration.' Jean-Baptiste Say, "Nouvelle géographie universelle, descriptive, historique, industrielle et commerciale des quatre parties du monde, par William Guthrie." *Décade philosophique*, Prairial an VII, 527.

⁵² Jean-Baptiste Say, "Voyages - Relations de l'ambassade du Lord Macartney à la Chine." *Décade philosophique*, Brumaire an V, 286.

⁵³ Say's article *De l'Egypte*, written in praise of Napoleon's expedition, thus acknowledged Volney's book as its main source of information. It is likely that Say knew Volney or had at

least heard of him before reading his *Voyage*, since Volney, like Say, moved in the social circles of the *idéologues*. Volney's writings, because they popularized the idea of the past grandeur and present decadence of Arab countries, are sometimes seen as offering an intellectual link between eighteenth-century fascination for orientalism and Napoleon's operation of conquest in Egypt. See for instance Yves Bénot, *La démence coloniale sous Napoléon*, 10, 19.

⁵⁴ It is fascinating to think that this race of black men [the Copts], which we now despise and enslave, has given us our arts, our sciences, even the usage of speech; and to consider that it is those very people who claim to love liberty and humanity, who uphold barbarous slavery and wonder whether *black men have an intelligence comparable to that of white men!*' Constantin-François De Chasseboeuf [Volney], *Voyage en Syrie et en Égypte, pendant les années 1783, 1784 et 1785* (Paris: Voland; Desenne, 1787), 76-77.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 169.

⁵⁶ In that sense the French 'moeurs' was semantically close to the modern word 'culture'. S. Muthu underlines that Enlightenment thinkers '[did not] believe that there are different cultures, that non-Europeans are members of distinct cultures, and that such cultures are of worth equal to that of all other cultures'; yet he consistently discusses those thinkers' views of extra-European worlds in terms of 'culture', which can be misleading since their own understanding of the word was different. See Sankar Muthu, *Enlightenment against Empire* (Princeton, N.J.; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003), 7-8.

⁵⁷ For an analysis of Diderot's conception of nature as essentially 'cultural', see Ibid, 46-59. Say quotes the *Histoire philosophique* (to which Diderot contributed an estimated 700 pages in the 1780 edition), for instance in Jean-Baptiste Say, *Traité d'économie politique* (1803), 205. For the Scottish historians' views, see H. M. Hopfl, "From Savage to Scotsmen: Conjectural History in the Scottish Enlightenment", *The Journal of British Studies* 2 (1978):

27. Say quotes Stewart in the *Cours Complet* (2), and took advantage of his 1814 stay in England to visit him in Scotland.

⁵⁸ Hobbes, Locke, Montesquieu and Rousseau all think of ‘savages’ in terms of a ‘condition of nature’.

⁵⁹ See Jean-Baptiste Say, *Cours complet*, 508.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 2.

⁶¹ Jean-Baptiste Say, "Politique Pratique", in *Oeuvres Morales et Politiques*, ed. Emmanuel Blanc and André Tiran (Paris: Economica, 2003), 322.

⁶² Muthu argues that ‘the idea of what it meant fundamentally to be human went through a transformation before an anti-imperialist political theory could emerge ... This account [of human nature as a stable category] came to be replaced ... by the view that humanity is marked fundamentally by cultural differences.’ Sankar Muthu, *Enlightenment against Empire* (Princeton, N.J.; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003), 7.

⁶³ For Diderot’s argument that Europe is ‘not a civilization fit for export’, see Ibid, 111-121.

⁶⁴ Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot and Gustav Schelle, *Œuvres de Turgot et documents le concernant: avec biographie et notes* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1913), 216-7.

⁶⁵ See Yves Bénot, *La démence coloniale sous Napoléon*, 68. See also the following development on the particular status of Saint-Domingue as a black colony of settlement.

⁶⁶ That he planned to reestablish the French colonies as they had been under Louis XVI is shown in the an VIII Constitution, which conveniently let him free to do so: article 91 specified that special laws would be devised for the colonies sometime in the future.

⁶⁷ Jean-Antoine Chaptal, *De l'industrie françoise* (Paris: Renouard, Antoine-Augustin, 1819), 93-4, in particular 107-8.

⁶⁸ See Lawrence C. Jennings, "La lente renaissance du mouvement abolitionniste en France", in *Rétablissement de l'esclavage dans les colonies françaises, 1802*, ed. Yves Bénéot and Marcel Dorigny (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2003), 365.

⁶⁹ Yves Bénéot, *La démence coloniale sous Napoléon*.

⁷⁰ For instance in Yves Bénéot, *La démence coloniale sous Napoléon*, 270.

⁷¹ 'How is it possible that *Steuart, Turgot and Smith* could all three assert that the work of a slave costs more than the work of a free man? I must say that when I saw those skilful men agree on the subject, I first doubted my own reasoning.' Jean-Baptiste Say, *Traité d'économie politique* (1803), 219-220. However, Say was exaggerating the difference between his position and that of his predecessors: Turgot wrote to Dupont on 6 February 1770 that '[he] would very much like [Dupont] to be justified in saying that slavery profits no one, because it is an abomination and an injustice, but he is afraid that [Dupont] is wrong, and that this injustice very much profits the man who commits it.' Quoted in Philippe Steiner, "Jean-Baptiste Say et les colonies, ou comment se débarrasser d'un héritage intempestif", *Cahiers d'économie politique* 27-28 (1996).

⁷² Jean-Baptiste Say, *Traité d'économie politique* (1803), 215-225.

⁷³ Ibid, 224.

⁷⁴ 'Not only do we want to know the price of a man's labor, but we also want to know whether justice and humanity have been hurt in the process.'; 'Stealing and keeping men, and to basing one's profit on their sufferings, is such a shameful thing that no one would dare to defend this awful traffic, for fear of being thought its accomplice.' Jean-Baptiste Say, *Traité d'économie politique* (Osnabrück: Zeller, O., 1841), 229, 230.

⁷⁵ 'Everything is changed now ... the fact is that Martinique and Guadeloupe can no longer bear the concurrency of several other countries, which supply Europe with cheaper sugar.' Jean-Baptiste Say, *Traité d'économie politique [1826]* Calmann-Lévy, 1972), 225.

⁷⁶ The English generosity is usually accounted for by the fact that England's financial crisis at the outcome of the war did not allow for new colonies.

⁷⁷ In his *Traité de législation* (1826-7), which was heavily quoted by Say, Comte had argued that the expenses needed to watch and punish slaves, as well as the expenses occasioned by domestic slaves, had been severely underestimated.

⁷⁸ Jean-Baptiste Say, *Cours complet*, 251.

⁷⁹ See Jennifer Pitts' reassessment of Bentham's colonial thought in Jennifer Pitts, "Legislator of the World? A Rereading of Bentham on Colonies", *Political Theory* 2 (2003).

⁸⁰ Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 616-22.

⁸¹ This pamphlet was originally a 1789 letter to Comte de Mirabeau, and was written with a view to influence the Estates General.

⁸² See Ibid, 312. See also *Rid Yourselves of Ultramarina*, which was in fact organized as a list of the practical evils engendered by Ultramarina. Part I for instance lists 'injuries to Spain', with headings such as 'profit none', 'corruptive influence increased', 'bad deputies longer irremovable', 'Cortes' time wasted', 'despotism secretly planted', 'defensive power weakened'.

⁸³ *Emancipate your Colonies!* in Ibid, 292. Bentham went on: 'If the happiness of mankind is your object, and the declaration of rights your guide, you will set them free – The sooner the better: it costs you but a word: and by that word you cover yourselves with the purest glory.' Ibid, 312-3.

⁸⁴ Every European that can should now fly to the United America. You will have seen *Birbeck's* little book. It makes a prodigious sensation here. ... Your works here are held in merited estimation. Write, work, go on, and prosper. Bentham to Say, 11 April 1818. Jeremy Bentham, *Correspondence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988-2006), Vol. 9, 190. Morris

Birbeck was an English-born American pioneer, whose two books (*Notes on a Journey in America* in 1817, and *Letters from Illinois* in 1818) recommended the settlement of American lands by English immigrants.

⁸⁵ ‘This day sennight dined with me for the first time our friend from Buenos ayres [Rivadavia]: we talked much of you. I am sadly alarmed for that country: a letter from thence from Place’s son in law of the 23d March represents the capital as being even then in expectation of the Cadiz expedition, with not more than a thousand men capable of bearing arms: but our friend says there are enough at a little distance.’ Bentham to Say, 28 July 1819. Ibid, Vol. 9, 340.

⁸⁶ Bentham to Samuel Bentham, 28-30 March 1821. Ibid, Vol. 10, 319.

⁸⁷ Say to Bentham, 16 November 1821. Ibid, Vol. 10, 428-9.

⁸⁸ Bentham to José del Valle, 19 March 1827. Del Valle was a leader of Central American independence; in 1823 he was elected the first President of the United Provinces of Central America. Ibid, Vol. 12, 329.

⁸⁹ James Silk Buckingham was a fierce critic of the East India Company and a campaigner for colonial self-government. His views were expressed in his travel books, notably *Travels in Assyria, Media and Persia* (1829), as well as in several journals he had established, such as the *Oriental Herald* and *Colonial Review* (1824–9). See Say to Bentham, 17 October 1824. Ibid, Vol. 12, 64.

⁹⁰ The books, *A Letter to Sir Charles Forbes*, *A second letter to Sir Charles Forbes*, and Gavin Young, *An Inquiry into the Expediency of Applying the Principles of Colonial Policy to the Government of India...*, were eventually reviewed by Sismondi in the *Revue Encyclopédique* in December 1824.

⁹¹ Jean-Baptiste Say, *Cours complet*, 661. The *Essai historique* was later integrated into one of the last chapters of the *Cours complet*; the references will therefore be made to this reproduction of the text.

⁹² Like Say, James Mill believed that colonies, including India, were a commercial liability for the mother country. Yet he asserted that the British had a moral duty to stay in India and improve Indian society. Say cites Mill in the *Essai*: see for instance Jean-Baptiste Say, *Cours complet*, 653

⁹³ For instance in the *Encyclopédie*, the moral argument put forward by Damilaville's *Population* article explicitly concerns the settling of both inhabited and uninhabited land. Although the same moral sort of argument is found in the third edition of *l'Histoire des deux Indes* in 1780 (in particular book VIII, chapter 1), Diderot makes it clear that he only allows for uninhabited land to be colonized.

⁹⁴ That was also true of English-speaking writers. In her study on the 'rise of imperial liberalism', J. Pitts uses the term 'colony' in the modern, looser sense of 'territory ruled by a European country'. Although she occasionally distinguishes 'settlement' and 'non-settlement' colonies, her overall usage of the word is not the same as that of the eighteenth-century thinkers she is studying, which sometimes creates much ambiguity.

⁹⁵ The article is by François Véron de Forbonnais, and puts forth a justification of the dependency of colonies.

⁹⁶ Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot and Pierre Samuel Du Pont de Nemours, *Oeuvres de Mr. Turgot, ministre d'état: précédées et accompagnées de mémoires et de notes sur sa vie, son administration et ses ouvrages* (Paris: de l'imprimerie de A. Belin, 1808), 66.

⁹⁷ Some eighteenth-century authors had however prophesized the independence of black countries in the West Indies (in particular following the insurrections in the first half of the

century). Thus Sébastien Mercier in *L'an 2440: rêve s'il en fut jamais* predicts slave revolts that will bring to black independence in the New World.

⁹⁸ Guillaume-Thomas Raynal, *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissemens et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes* (La Haye: Gosse fils, 1776), 233.

⁹⁹ Jean-Baptiste Say, *Cours complet*, 621. The *Traité* is equally clear as to the fact that a colony is defined by its non-native population: 'A nation usually founds colonies when its numerous population finds itself constrained in its old territory, and when persecution drives away some particular groups.' Jean-Baptiste Say, *Traité d'économie politique* (1841), 223.

¹⁰⁰ Jean-Baptiste Say, *Cours complet*, 621-2.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, 660.

¹⁰² Say's reaction to the 1791 insurrection in Saint-Domingue is not known; however an indication of his likely response can be found in that of his mentor and employer Clavière, founder and president of the first *Société des amis des noirs*: in 1791, Clavière noted in an address to the *Société des amis des Noirs* that the Blacks 'hear the speeches of the Whites, judge them and see that the only difference is that of their skin color'. Quoted in Yves Bénéot, *La Révolution française et la fin des colonies* (Paris: La Découverte, 1987), 140.

¹⁰³ It is important to note that the French abolitionists did not always look positively upon the insurrection as they worried about its repercussions on the first *Société* (accused to be responsible for the violence against white people and mulattos) and on the Revolution (the colonists appealed to the King for protection). See *Ibid*, 141-2.

¹⁰⁴ Say to Place, June 1818. Francis Place, *The Francis Place Papers from the British Library, London* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1978).

¹⁰⁵ Say to Bentham, 16 November 1821. Jeremy Bentham, *Correspondence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988-2006), Vol. 10, 429.

¹⁰⁶ See Yves Bénéot, *La démente coloniale sous Napoléon*, 278-9.

¹⁰⁷ Quoted in Ibid, 286.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 286.

¹⁰⁹ The sixth edition of 1841 was posthumous, but it incorporated the modifications Say had been working on when he died.

¹¹⁰ Jean-Baptiste Say, *Traité d'économie politique* (1841), 223.

¹¹¹ 'It seems that the settlers leave part of their vices behind them; they renounce luxury, which in Europe is so costly and so little useful.' Ibid, 224-5.

¹¹² Ibid, 225.

¹¹³ Jean-Baptiste Say, *Cours complet*, 622. It has to be noted however that the example of the Quakers had been enthusiastically put forward by the French anti-slavery movement before the revolution. Say's praise was therefore not unusual.

¹¹⁴ Agriculture was the third stage in Adam Smith's four-stage theory of economic development.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 622.

¹¹⁶ In eighteenth-century political economy, commerce was commonly considered as an agent for the exchange and diffusion of knowledge.

¹¹⁷ Jean-Baptiste Say, "Notice historique des descentes qui ont été faites dans les Iles britanniques, depuis Guillaume jusqu'à l'an VI de la République française." *Décade philosophique*, Ventôse an VI, 465.

¹¹⁸ Abbé Raynal's *Histoire des deux Indes* exemplifies this ambivalence, as it contains both opinions.

¹¹⁹ See Bernard Gainot, "La Décade et la 'colonisation nouvelle'", *Annales historiques de la Révolution française* 339 (2005).

¹²⁰ *An Essay on Colonization, Particularly Applied to the Western Coast of Africa, with some Free Thoughts on Cultivation and Commerce* (1794-95) was an abolitionist pamphlet. Along

with a moral indictment of slavery, it argued that European countries would financially benefit from treating the Africans as trading partners and paid workers than as slaves. The essay made Wadström a central figure of abolitionism in Britain.

¹²¹ The close links between the *Décade* and the *Société* are illustrated by the issue published upon Wadström's death: the obituary was written by Helen-Maria Williams (a member of the *Société*), in the form of a letter directly addressed to the *Décade*'s editor, Say – who had himself translated several of Williams' books. Helen Maria Williams' Parisian salon was a meeting point for the French abolitionists.

¹²² "Lettre de la Société des Amis des Noirs aux auteurs de la *Décade Philosophique*." *Décade philosophique*, Floréal, an VI, 262.

¹²³ At Napoleon's request, Say prepared a portable library for Napoleon to take along with him to North Africa. Say knew Napoleon through his brother Louis Say. Napoleon was very happy with Say's library, which later helped the latter's career at the *Tribunat*. See Joseph Valynseele, *Les Say et leurs alliances, l'étonnante aventure d'une famille cévenole* (Paris (12e): l'auteur 8 rue Cannebière, 1971), 41.

¹²⁴ Jean-Baptiste Say, "De l'Egypte." *Décade philosophique*, Vendémiaire an VII, 100.

¹²⁵ Jean-Baptiste Say, "Suite de l'article intitulé 'De l'Egypte'." *Décade philosophique*, Vendémiaire an VII, 167.

¹²⁶ Indeed Say warmly welcomed, both in *Olbie* and in the *Décade*, the election of Napoleon and Sieyès as Consuls: 'Two men, whose eminent talents are morality are uncontested, ... have conceived the project of founding the stability of the Republic on the observation of the rules of morality.' Jean-Baptiste Say, *Olbie, ou, Essai sur les moyens de réformer les mœurs d'une nation* (Paris: Deterville: Treuttel et Wurtz, 1800), x.

¹²⁷ The sources quoted are Adam Smith, Colquhoun, Robert Hamilton, James Mill's *History of British India*, Henri Prinsep.

¹²⁸ Jean-Baptiste Say, *Cours complet*, 654.

¹²⁹ Jean-Baptiste Say, "De l'Angleterre et des Anglais", in *Oeuvres diverses*, 230.

¹³⁰ Jean-Baptiste Say, *Cours complet*, 1852, 660.

¹³¹ *Ibid*, 658.

¹³² *Ibid*, 661-2.

¹³³ Jean-Baptiste Say, *Traité d'économie politique* (1841), 234-5. This footnote first appears in the fourth edition, published in 1819. However, in the fourth edition the footnote merely states that the argument of the chapter does not apply to India, as it is not colony in the strict sense of the term. It is in the fifth edition that Say adds his comments about the 'enlightened despotism' of the English, and argues that neither England nor India would benefit from India independence.

¹³⁴ The chronology is suggestive: Mill's *HBI* was published in 1817, and the aforementioned footnote appears in 1819, before it is developed into a fuller statement in the 1826 edition of the *Traité*. Mill and Say were friends, and Say is known to have been aware of James Mill's efforts to finish his *History of British India*. That he most likely read it as soon as it was published is suggested by a December 1817 letter from Ricardo, which praises and recommends the book. David Ricardo, *The Works and Correspondence of David Ricardo* (London; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1951), 230-1.

¹³⁵ Of course Say would have been aware of the situation in India before reading Mill, through his knowledge of Voltaire's writings for instance. It is however possible that Mill's account focused his attention on this particular point.

¹³⁶ Jean-Baptiste Say, "De l'Angleterre et des Anglais", in *Oeuvres diverses*, 231.