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Activist Religion, Empire, and the Emergence of Modern Long-Distance Advocacy Networks[*]

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Abstract: The emergence of transnational networks for political advocacy is commonly understood as driven by the enlarging scale of political authority in the course of post-World War II globalization. Yet such networks have a much longer and richer history and this history reveals the importance of religious values and organizational structures for the formation of modern forms of transnational advocacy. At least since the beginning of European imperial expansion in the fifteenth century, long-distance networks have advocated the interests of the indigenous populations entering the orbit of European imperialism. These networks grew out of the cultural and organizational resources of a distinctively activist religion institutionalized by Catholic religious orders within the Iberian imperial context. Led by a specifically religious interest in the salvational status of distant strangers, religious specialists radicalized in the course of their contention with other imperial actors and mobilized to defend the interests of indigenous people. The very same process of religious radicalization, and not the forces of political globalization, drove the emergence of the first modern long-distance advocacy network, the movement against colonial slavery initiated by Quakers and evangelical Christians in late eighteenth-century England.

Activist Religion, Empire, and the Emergence of Modern Long-Distance Advocacy Networks

The study of political activism that transcends the nation state has been an integral part of the scholarly turn towards global and transnational processes in the last two decades. Sociologists and political scientists have developed a sustained interest in the previously ignored topics of transnational social movements, global civil society, and international non-governmental organization. Keck and Sikkink (1998) made a far-reaching contribution to these debates by introducing the concept of network to describe the activist organizations engaged in international politics.[1] A usefully broad concept, their long-distance activist networks capture the variety of actors, organizational forms, and practices that different fields of inquiry have identified as important wielders of political power beyond the nation state. Two characteristics define these networks: they span geographical space, and, unlike other supranational actors, they are motivated by principled ideas to exercise influence on politics through a variety of means.

    Existing research has established the importance of such long-distance advocacy networks. Well-documented are both their proliferating numbers and the effects they have on national and international politics, most notably by institutionalizing moral regimes that often go against the interests of nation states narrowly construed (Boli and Thomas 1999; Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Klotz 1995; Maney 2001; Nadelmann 1990; Risse, Ropp and Sikkink 1999; Smith, Chatfield and Pagnucco 1997; Wapner 1996).

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[1] Keck and Sikkink's original concept is "transnational advocacy network." To avoid the implication that these networks operate necessarily in a world of clearly defined nations, I use the phrase "long-distance advocacy networks."

There has been, however, no systematic inquiry into the organizational history of long-distance advocacy networks before the post-WWII period. The accumulated body of research characterizes these networks as uniquely linked to the present, ignoring their rich history before the second half of the twentieth century. As a corrective to this customary presentism, this article sketches out the history of long-distance advocacy since the sixteenth century. From there, I proceed to spell out the theoretical insights derived from this extended view of the full history of long-distance activism.

Seen in the exceedingly long historical perspective, distinctively modern forms of advocacy across space emerged around the turn of the nineteenth-century with the rise of the antislavery movement, and not in the second half of the twentieth century. Against approaches that explain transnational advocacy as driven by recent transformation of the global political or cultural landscape, a closer attention to the historical record highlights the decisive contribution of the organizational and cultural resources of activist religion for the institutionalization of long-distance advocacy networks in the context of empire. The spark for the emergence of these networks came from the radicalization of adherents of activist religious movements in the course of European imperial expansion overseas from the sixteenth century on. Following their distinctively religious interests and in contention with other imperial actors, these radicalized religious specialists mobilized to defend the welfare of actual and potential converts to Christianity among the geographically and culturally distant populations that had been drawn in the orbit of European imperialism. It is this process of religious radicalization, too, that laid the foundations of the first distinctively modern instance of a long-distance advocacy network, the nineteenth century antislavery movement.

LONG-DISTANCE ADVOCACY NETWORKS IN HISTORY

Understanding distance-spanning activism as a distinctively recent phenomenon has been a habit of thought at least since the 1970s when, e.g., Huntington (1973) defined the post-World War II period as a time of "transnational organizational revolution." In recent discussions, the novelty of post-World II transnational activism has been emphasized either by describing it as something without historical precedents (e.g., Cmiel 1999) or by considering past campaigns as incomplete and preparatory initial steps towards the full-fledged global advocacy networks of the present (Evans 2000; Lipschutz 1992:399; Passy 2001:9-11; Rucht 2001).

In either version, this view neglects a "long history of effective transnational activism" (Klotz 2002:63) which, as Cooper (2001:211) notes, has "won a few victories along the way." The beginnings of modern long-distance advocacy networks go all the way back to 1787 when the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade was founded in London (Anstey 1975; Clarkson 1839; Jennings 1997; Oldfield 1992). Its foundation heralded the beginnings of the international movement against colonial slavery and the slave trade which persisted at least until the abolition of slavery in Brazil in 1888.

The antislavery movement was the first modern long-distance network of political advocacy both in its substantive orientation and in the geographical scope of its organization. Whereas by the seventeenth century slavery was extinct in most of Europe, enslaved Africans were exploited in the highly profitable plantation economies of overseas colonies ever since Portuguese traders had reached the African slave market in the mid-fifteenth century (Blackburn 1997; Davis 1966; Eltis 2000; Russell-Wood

1978).[2] By attacking colonial slavery, the antislavery movement was thus guided by principled ideas of human equality. It worked for the "homogenization" of moral space by insisting on the application of universalist ethical standards across the globe. As an early Quaker antislavery pamphlet argued, "the principles of justice, the distinctions of right and wrong" should not "vary according to the latitude of the countries in which they are recognized" (Harrison 1792:14).

Antislavery spanned geographical space in organizational terms, too, as it grew to involve activists from several states. By 1791 at the latest, the London Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade had established structures and organized petition campaigns in England, Wales, and Scotland. But antislavery networks were an international enterprise since the very beginning. Their inception and organizational growth was prepared by the trans-Atlantic networks of Quakers whose governance structures had adopted, by the 1770s, the radical antislavery stance. The London Society was the result of the alliance forged by Quakers with Church of England abolitionists. Already in the first months of it existence, the Society began to pursue active contacts with like-minded individuals in France and the United States, urging them to form antislavery associations, dispatching emissaries, and providing polemical literature for distribution in support of their activities. Although in the following decades the personnel of antislavery remained predominantly Anglo-American, it coordinated activities with activists across Europe and the Americas (Anstey 1975; Clarkson 1839; Davis (1975) 1999; Drake 1950; Ekman 1976; Fladeland 1972; Girardin 1984; James 1963; Jennings 1997; Loft 1989; Oldfield

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[2] Although harsh penal practices persisted in Europe, they were—unlike enslavement— the punishment for specific offenses and not a hereditary status (Eltis 2000:71-73).

1995; Schmidt 2000; Temperley 1972). Indicative of the geographical breadth of movement are the itineraries of Quaker antislavery envoys who, between 1849 and 1854, traveled to the Netherlands, Belgium, several German states, Sweden, Denmark, the Habsburg Empire, France, Switzerland, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Brazil, and the United States (Yearly Meeting 1854).

Earlier Precedents

The antislavery movement was certainly not the first advocacy network in history to span significant geographical territory organizationally and in the issues it addressed. Compared with earlier instances, however, it was the first institutional crystallization of a distinctively modern pattern of long-distance advocacy.

The most prominent precedent was the "indigenist" movement of religious humanitarians who advocated the rights of indigenous people in the Iberian empires in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In 1511, Dominican missionaries, newly arrived to Hispaniola (Haiti), voiced their protest against the exploitation of indigenous people. Since then, numerous clergymen developed a critique of Spanish imperialism in America, ranging from denunciations of the abuses of the system to outright condemnation of the legitimacy of imperial conquest. Most prominent among them was the Dominican Bartolomé de las Casas who in the course of his long life (1474-1566) initiated a variety of projects for the reform of exploitative imperial institutions (Giménez Fernández 1971). Galvanized for action by Las Casas or acting on their own, numerous Dominican, Franciscan, and Augustinian friars, often at the risk of severe persecutions, turned to the royal court in Madrid, the Council of the Indies, and the Pope in Rome to influence policies and legislation for a more humane treatment of indigenous populations (Acuña

1995; Assadourian 1985; 1988; 1989; Borges 1960/61; Casas 1971 (1527); Friede 1971; Hanke 1935; 1937; 2002 (1949); Poole 1966).

Franciscans and Jesuits mobilized similarly to defend the rights of the indigenous inhabitants of Brazil in the course of the Portuguese expansion there in the seventeenth century. There, the Jesuit António Vieira achieved a prominence comparable to Las Casas' position in the Spanish case (Alden 1969; 1996; 2003; Boxer 1952; 1957; 1963; Hemming 1978; Kiemen 1954; Silva 2003). Capuchins and other religious orders defended the interests of African slaves in the French Antilles in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century (Hurbon 2003; Peabody 2002).

Like antislavery, these earlier networks spanned significant distances and, motivated by principled commitment to human equality, fought against the exploitation of culturally and geographically distant strangers. Antislavery combated the enslavement of Africans in European overseas colonies. Earlier Catholic indigenism targeted—in addition to the enslavement of indigenous people—a variety of institutions of forced labor, as well as the system of *encomiendas* or *repartimientos* which, despite all official intentions to the contrary, condemned the conquered people to the exploitation of European settlers (Chamberlain 1939; Sherman 1979; Zavala 1973).[3]

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[3] Although Las Casas himself came to realize that "black slavery was as unjust as Indian slavery" (Casas 1971 (1527):257), the stance of the Catholic Church towards African slavery remained complex and contradictory, rarely reaching the outright condemnation which characterized the later antislavery movement (Davis 1966:165-96; Vila Vilar 1990). An exception were the Capuchins Epifanio de Moirans and Francisco José de

The Modernity of Antislavery

Beside such similarities, the two instances were remarkably different in other important aspects. Nineteenth-century antislavery operated with distinctively modern institutional patterns, mobilizing wide audiences in enduring organizations. By contrast, earlier Iberian indigenism, although far from neglible in its effects and influence, remained largely the concern of a minority of religious specialists who were unable to create a durable organizational foundation for their activities.

Different Organizational Patterns. The antislavery network of associations, in which women were increasingly prominent, connected activists in Europe and America and mobilized them for a variety of practices that continue to form the standard action repertoires of modern social movements even today. Distributing widely printed materials on the inhumanity of slavery, antislavery campaigns developed the "information politics" (Keck and Sikkink 1998) through which modern civil society institutions counter hegemonic information and raise consciousness. Adherents were mobilized to exert pressure on political authorities in public meetings, petition drives, and demands for antislavery "pledges" from electoral candidates. Antislavery also pioneered modern practices of selective consumption through which ordinary people expressed adherence to moral norms. Visual artifacts, such as images of slave ships and suffering slaves were purchased and displayed, while the consumption of "free-produce" sugar and cotton was encouraged as an alternative to slave-produced Caribbean sugar and American

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Jaca who forcefully attacked slavery in the late seventeenth century (Gray 1990; Lenhart 1946).

cotton (Billington 1977; Drescher 1987; Midgley 1996; Nuermberger 1942; Oldfield 1995; Wood 2007)

These distinctively modern practices of popular mobilization were absent in the earlier Iberian case where a narrow minority of religious specialists operated by gaining the personal favor of powerful persons of political and religious authority. Las Casas, for example, had allies among the Flemish courtiers of Charles V, while Antônio Vieira relied on his close personal relationship with King John IV (Alden 2003:8-9; Casas 1994 (1527):2176-2212, 2326-2440). Iberian indigenism was not able to mobilize the support of wide audiences as antislavery was to do through its numerous associational activities.

Another contrast emerges between the organizational endurance of antislavery and the relatively short-lived and largely episodic Iberian indigenism. Antislavery had a remarkably long continuous existence between 1787 and, at least, the 1860s. Meanwhile, there were shifts towards different goals, ups and downs in the fortunes of abolitionism, splits within the movement, and different degrees of public support (Temperley 1972). Yet at no point did the movement die out to the point of extinction. There is indeed a direct line of succession between the earliest Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade of the eighteenth century and the Antislavery International (www.antislavery.org) of today (Kaye 2007). By contrast, there was no continuity between sixteenth century Catholic humanitarianism and the Spanish abolitionist movement that developed from 1865 on as a remarkably secular affair from which representatives of the Church were conspicuously absent (Martínez Carreras 1990; Pozuelo Mascaraque 1990; Vila Vilar and Vila Vilar 1996).

Impact on Legislation and Culture. Different organizational patterns led to significantly different outcomes, too. The abolition of slavery and of the traffic in slaves virtually worldwide under the pressure of antislavery networks is perhaps the most impressive transformation of a global moral regime in history (Nadelmann 1990). By contrast, Catholic clergymen in the Americas were much less successful in influencing official policies and public attitudes in their effort to prevent the exploitation of indigenous populations.

The Catholic humanitarian effort in the Iberian empires was, nevertheless, far from negligible. In response to indigenist pressure, successive Spanish monarchs initiated investigations of the reported abuses and summoned the consultative institution of the *junta* which produced a series of laws regulating the *encomienda* system, outlawing slavery, and imposing restrictions on further territorial conquest. Most prominent among these were the Laws of Burgos (1512-13) and Charles V's "New Laws" of 1542 for "the Good Treatment and Preservation of the Indians" (Altamira 1938; Casas 1994 (1527); Hanke 1935; 2002 (1949); Hussey 1932; Sherman 1979; Simpson 1960). Prompted by missionaries, the Portuguese Crown, too, issued a series of laws aiming to prevent abuses and enslavement in Brazil (Alden 1969; 2003; Boxer 1952; Kiemen 1954). Lobbying by Dominicans and Franciscans led the Papacy to issue, between 1537 and 1567, a series of official documents condemning the enslavement of indigenous people and the despoiling of their goods. Among these was the bull "Sublimist Deus" (or "Veritas Ipsa") of 1537 which in strong words proclaimed the full rationality of the "Indians" and the sanctity of their property (Bocchini Camaiani 1995; Hanke 1937). And, according to some, the critique of imperial expansion developed by

Spanish theologians of the period, provided the foundation for modern international law (Scott 1934).

Yet the reforms sought by humanitarians remained severely limited in practice. The effect of "Sublimis Deus" was practically negligible after its revocation by Charles V who considered Papal legislation on the "Indies" an infringement on his own royal authority. The implementation of the official policies formulated under indigenist pressure remained unequal and fraught with difficulties. The Crown did not always have the capacity or will to enforce its own legislation against the hostility of the Spanish settlers who considered any restriction on their exploitation of local populations as infringement upon their rights. Well into the 1560s, their resistance against the "New Laws" erupted in a series of revolts which weakened the effects of the ordinances. While Indian slavery was largely abolished and the *encomienda* system undermined, abuses continued and the Spanish settlers' increased influence in the royal court undercut the indigenists' ability to shape legislation and policy (Chamberlain 1939:25; Góngora 1975:25-28; Hanke 1935; MacLeod 1990; Sherman 1979). Even Las Casas' posthumous reputation suffered. His views were officially condemned as heretical and anti-Spanish, while his books were banned and not reprinted until the 1870s (Keen 1971).

Similarly, Antônio Vieira and other missionaries provoked the hostility of Brazilian colonists who periodically mobbed, imprisoned and expulsed clergymen attempting to implement royal and papal orders for more humane treatment of indigenous labor. Long before the final expulsion of the Jesuits from Portuguese territories in 1759, their jurisdiction over indigenous people was revoked, which, in turn, which deprived

them of any ability to prevent or influence slaving expeditions into the hinterlands (Alden 1969; 2003; Boxer 1952; 1963:97-103; Kiemen 1954; Silva 2003).

By contrast, antislavery was not only able to delegitimize the institution of slavery worldwide, but also, through its wide organizational reach, ensure the wide dissemination of antislavery norms. It also had a "spillover" effect by providing cultural and organizational resource for other public campaigns. Like the invocations and appropriation of "civil rights" by different social group in the twentieth-century United states, "slavery" served as a "master-frame," a cultural resource which, pioneered by one movement, facilitates the emergence of related movements (Snow and Benford 1992). As slavery and its evils captured the popular imagination, the concept was applied to other troublesome issues, such as the subjection of women or industrial workers (Drescher 1985; Fladeland 1982; 1984; Halbersleben 1993; Hollis 1980; Midgley 1993; 1998; Toole 1998). Although often critical of antislavery itself, the champions of these causes adopted not only the language, but also the techniques of abolitionist organizing. In this way, antislavery exercised strong generative effects (McAdam 1995; Meyer and Whittier 1994). The "spin-off" campaigns that emerged out of its networks include the international peace movement, the movement for women's rights, and the movement against the opium trade (Brown 1973; Ceadel 1996; Holton 1994; Johnson 1975; Linden 1987:18-20). The increasing span of issues that such transnational campaigns addressed again stands in stark contras with the focus of earlier Iberian indigenism on the narrower issue of just imperial governance.

The Early Organizational Evolution of Long-Distance Advocacy Networks.

Compared to its Iberian predecessors, nineteenth-century antislavery was far more influential on concrete policies, produced important changes in the general cultural environment and the global "moral" climate, mobilized wide international cohorts of supporters, and was successfully institutionalized. Although far from negligible, the earlier humanitarian efforts of Catholic clergymen to protect indigenous populations in the Iberian context failed to produce any dramatic policy change comparable to the abolition of the colonial slavery or launch a comparable proliferating field of transnational advocacy campaigns.

The long-term history of transnational advocacy is thus the history of an organizational evolution. While Iberian Catholic indigenism in the sixteenth century marked an important initial stage, nineteenth-century antislavery was decidedly the first modern instance of full-fledged advocacy network of the kind we are familiar with today. By instituting an important organizational break with past precedents, antislavery marks an important moment of transformation of patterns of transnational collective action. In contrast with the failure of Iberian Catholics to establish an enduring organizational framework, the networks of antislavery were able to institutionalize organizational structures that have informed developments in long-distance solidarity ever since.[4]

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[4] Klotz (2002) has highlighted, for example, the important similarities between the nineteenth-century antislavery movement and the transnational mobilization against South African apartheid in the 1980s: they both mobilized around a surprisingly similar normative agenda, sought a far-ranging political, economic, and social transformation by

A variety of interrelated factors account for this organizational evolution. The remarkable differences between Catholic indigenism and later antislavery were the product of the different political and economic environment in which they occurred, but also of the different organizational forms and resources of religious organizations in the two contexts. While the further exploration of these factors offers a fertile ground for comparative research, it remain beyond the scope of this article. More modestly, my purpose there is to draw attention to the neglected organizational history of long-distance advocacy networks and, within this historical framework, locate the emergence of the distinctively modern forms of these networks in the late eighteenth century. This is in stark contrast with the received wisdom that equates transnational activism with the "new social movements" of the post-World War II present. Having thus established the discontinuities in the organizational development of long-distant advocacy, I will, in the rest of the article, use the patterns common to the two cases as an analytical leverage for the investigation of the social origins of these advocacy networks.

THE ORIGINS OF LONG-DISTANCE ADVOCACY NETWORKS

The recognition of the rich organizational history of long-distance advocacy networks even before the global "moment" of our present not only corrects the historical record, but has also wider theoretical implications. As my overview of this history suggested, in its initial stages it was invariably the work of religious specialists. And indeed, the cultural and organizational resources of religion, although unacknowledged by current

addressing both national governments and international institutions, recruited similar constituencies across national boundaries, and had an important religious dimension.

sociological approaches, were an important factor for the emergence of modern long-distance advocacy networks.

Perhaps the most prevalent explanation of the rise of long-distance advocacy networks within sociology today sees them as emerging from the decline of the nation state. In this view, the increasing supranational connectivity produced by globalization changes the organizational landscape of collective action by increasingly facilitating mobilization which involves actors and issues spanning nation state boundaries smith (See Albert and Brock 2001; Della Porta and Kriesi 1999; Dorsey 1993; Koopmans 1999:67-68; Lipschutz 1992; Rucht 1999:206; Smith 2004).

Quite often, this is a transposition onto the transnational level of Tilly's (1984; 1986) argument that modern social movements were uniquely conditioned by the rise of the modern nation state. Indeed, contemporary transnational activism is understood in these arguments as the global extension of traditional "national" social movements. In the nineteenth century, the predominance of consolidating nation states in the political landscape transformed typically sporadic and uncoordinated local protests into social movements of truly national scale addressing primarily national issues. In the course of globalization, however, the role of the nation state as an organizing focus of social action recedes as it is forced to compete, in the international ecology of organizational forms, with alternative sources of power, such as inter-governmental bodies, regional blocs, and transnational corporations. In this context, effective collective action transcends its anchoring in the nation state and acquires transnational dimensions, both in its scope and in the issue it addresses.

In its core, thus, this is a argument of scale. The causal mechanism implied is that patterns of collective action adjust to the scale of predominant forms of political authority: national in the past and increasingly transnational in the present. Yet whereas this might sound plausible when the post-WWII present is contrasted with its immediate past, this causal logic is not borne out by the evidence of a longer historical framework.

Empire as Context.

It is historically inaccurate to contrast a putatively global present with a putatively national past. Globalization today does not necessarily entail the decline the nation state (Sassen 2000). The opposite is true, *ceteris paribus*, for the nineteenth century. True, it is a standard move to represented that period as singularly dominated by rising nation-states. Yet this representation brushes aside important global processes that, in many respects, were structurally equivalent to the globalization of our days (See Ballantyne 2002; Mann 1997). The often invoked robust "Westphalian system" of supremely sovereign states in the past is at best a highly simplified ideal typical construct (Krasner 1995/96). Not unlike today's world, the world of the nineteenth-century contained a variety of long-distance interactions and flows of ideas, capital, and people. The political framework of empire, for example, was an important distance-spanning "transnational" political form in an age allegedly dominated by the nation-state. The classical examples of consolidating national states in Western Europe were building empires even as (if not before) they built their nation states (Brady 1991).

In other words, the historical complexity of the political landscape does not fit easily into a narrative of unrivaled dominance of the nation state in the past and its retreat in the present. The acknowledgment of this complexity belies the assumption of the

nation-state as "unquestioned reference for political mobilization" (Cooper 2001:195) in the past. The birth, with antislavery, of distinctively modern forms of long-distance advocacy networks occurred not as a recent "upgrade" of traditionally national social movements, but was simultaneous with the birth of the modern social movement documented by Tilly. It is misleading, then, to attribute the contemporary proliferation of transnational collective action to the relative decline of the nation state. If the global political context beyond the nation state has important implications on contemporary instances of collective action, it had such effects in the past, too.

And indeed, the emergence of first long-distance advocacy networks was closely linked with the political context of empire. Catholic indigenism crystallized concurrently with the geographical extension of political authority by Iberian empires. Similarly, nineteenth-century antislavery was intricately connected with imperial processes, if only because colonial slavery was such an important part of the economy of European expansion overseas. If we need to anchor rising long-distance networks in a specific political context, it is more accurate to say that they emerged from the vigor of empire, not from the decline of the nation state.

Religion as Catalyst

Yet, even with such factual corrections that accommodate better the historical record, important questions remain about the causal link between the scale of political organization and the scale of collective action. To what extent and how exactly was the emergence of the first networks of long-distance advocacy shaped by the imperial context in which they crystallized? In other words, can we accept the more general causal logic

according to which the scale of collective action is determined by the scale of political authority?

If empire provided the necessary conditions for the development of distant-issue initiatives in the past, it did not, in itself, provide the sufficient conditions. Although deeply enmeshed with imperial expansion, early advocacy networks were not simply the accidental byproduct of empire. They had an autonomous ideological and institutional logic that was often at odds with the political and economic foundations of European imperialism. However important this structural environment of spatially expanding political and economic power, the decisive factor for the crystallization of these advocacy networks was religion as a set of organizational and cultural resources. Although the imperial globalization of the past—not unlike globalization today—provided necessary conditions for these networks to emerge, religion was the indispensable catalyst without which their emergence would have not occurred.

To think of religion as the driving forces behind these networks is counterintuitive not only because of a general neglect of religion in the historical study of collective action and social movements (See Smith 1996), but also because, in the study of European overseas expansion in particular, Christian churches are often understood as active agents of imperialism who enabled and consolidated the cultural domination over conquered populations (See Abernethy 2000; Comaroff and Comaroff 1991; Thorne 1999).

A growing body of literature argues, however, that Christianity in the imperial context was a complex phenomenon which cannot be reduced to a willing transmitter of hegemonic ideas in the service of European supremacy (See Cox 1994; Dunch 2002;

Faschingeder 2002; Porter 1997; Tyrell 2004). One important ingredient of European overseas expansion and conquest was the drive for economic profits which, in turn, engendered double moral standards legitimizing the exploitation of distant strangers. For Spanish conquistadors indigenous American populations were mainly a source of cheap labor, as were African slaves for the British, French, and Dutch colonial planters and slave traders. It is against these exploitative ideologies that religious specialists and organizations articulated humanitarian discourses and practices. Religious commitment was a robust source of principled opposition to the geographical expansion of European political, economic, and cultural power at least since the High Middle Ages.

THE RADICALIZATION OF RELIGIOUS SPECIALISTS AND THE CRITIQUE OF PREDATORY IMPERIALISM

As a "core" of Western European power institutions crystallized in the late Medieval period, it spread by conquest first in the immediate periphery of Europe and then into the rest of the world overseas. Christianity was an integral part of the fabric of this European expansion, not least because it provided important cultural and organizational elements out of which a distinct European identity and a distinct European institutional culture were constructed. The strong position of the Catholic Church in Europe in the period between the eleventh and thirteenth century and the Christian identity it forged led to the crystallization of strong common self-understanding of Western Europeans as distinct from non-European "heathen" both in ethnoracial and in geographical terms. The Europeans' common Christian culture cast them as a people or race apart and naturalized the expectation that Christendom was to expand territorially and extend over the lands of surrounding heathen (Bartlett 1993:243-55).

Yet the role of Christianity in all this was complex and contradictory. While it reinforced ideologies of European superiority which, in turn, justified the exploitative treatment of non-Europeans, the resources of religion provided the inspiration and the organizational base for a persistent critique of European political and economic expansion. This critique urged humane treatment of the people entering the orbit of European imperialism, if only to facilitate their evangelization and conversion to Christianity.

The first intimations of such a religious critique go as far back as the late eighth century when Alcuin of York decried the hasty imposition of tithes upon the Saxons conquered by Charlemagne as counterproductive to their evangelization. Better documented in surviving evidence from the early thirteenth century is the more systematic denunciation of the atrocities committed by the military orders commissioned with the conquest and evangelization of Prussia and the Baltic. Clerical outcry against the abuses to which newly conquered "pagans" were submitted resulted in a series of papal and imperial bulls affirming, although rather cautiously and ambiguously, the freedoms of the conquered population and threatening infractions with ecclesiastical penalties like excommunication (Boockmann 1990; 1991; Maschke 1928).

Outside of mainland Europe, the first imperial context in which the Catholic Church engaged in efforts to protect indigenous populations from the depredations of European settlers was the fifteenth-century Iberian colonization of the Canary Islands which is often seen as "rehearsal" for the later conquest of America. Again, clergymen sought authorization from the monarchs and the Pope to prevent the enslavement and

excessive taxation of converts and potential converts from among the indigenous islanders (Rumeu de Armas 1967; Torres Campos 1901:56-64; Wölfel 1930).

Imperial Contention and Religious Radicalization

The same religious critique of predatory European expansionism led to the emergence of later advocacy networks. The complex fabric of imperial expansion included interacting and competing interests and institutions. Religious specialists were often poised there in an adversarial relationship with secular agents of empire who, with a certain degree of simplification, can be divided into settlers and representatives of imperial governance (See Lester 2001). Commitment to Christian ethics radicalized religious specialists in their struggles with secular settlers and political authorities, the carriers of a different, profit-oriented logic of imperialism. It is this process of radicalization that led to the organizational crystallization of modern forms of long-distance advocacy.

Iberian indigenism emerged out of the gradual radicalization of Catholic friars in their conflict with unethical settlers. Las Casas is the best known example of such gradual radicalization, but numerous less well-known clergymen went through the same process: the Dominican Antonio Montesinos, the Franciscan Juan de Zumárraga, missionary bishop of Mexico, the Dominican Bernardino de Minaya, Juan Del Valle, first bishop of Popayán, or the Franciscan Alonso de Maldonado (Borges 1960/61; Casas 1971 (1527); Cuevas 1946; Friede 1961; MacLeod 1990; Traslosheros 2004). Later, in seventeenth-century Brazil, Franciscans and Jesuits radicalized in response to the effort by European settlers to prevent them from representing the interests of indigenous populations (Boxer 1952; 1963; Hemming 1978; Kiemen 1954). In the same period, Catholic friars in the French Antilles underwent a similar process of radicalization in

their frequent clashes with planters and colonial authorities suspicious of missionary efforts to evangelize African slaves and defend their interests (Hurbon 2003; Peabody 2002).

The origins of the antislavery movement go back to the very same period, while its initial crystallization followed exactly the same pattern of radicalization of religious specialists. The Quakers who were to spearhead the antislavery movement in the late eighteenth-century engaged in their first confrontations around the evangelization and humane treatment of African slaves in Barbados from the 1670s on (Carroll 1997; Edmundson 1774:81-85; Vaux 1816). The pressure of successive generations of increasingly radical Quaker critics of slavery swayed the initially reluctant governance structures of the Society of Friends, the Yearly Meetings in London and Philadelphia, to adopt the antislavery stance. This official endorsement led, indirectly, to the formation of the first antislavery committee in 1787 (Anstey 1975; Drake 1950; Woolman (1774) 1971). James Ramsey, a Church of England minister in the island of St. Kitts, who was the only non-Quaker to attack British colonial slavery, radicalized similarly against the unrelenting hostility of European planters towards his attempts to secure decent living conditions for slaves (Bradley 1972). A further boost to the antislavery movement was given in the 1830s by Baptist and Methodist missionaries who had entered the British Caribbean colonies since the 1790s. Although initially committed to avoiding any political activity, they became vocal abolitionists in the course of increasingly violent conflicts with planters seeking to control their evangelistic activities (Jakobsson 1972; Short 1976; Stanley 1992:70-82; Turner 1982).

Activist Religion as Motivation

Within the context of empire, then, the first long-distance advocacy networks emerged out of the radicalization of religious specialists in their contention with secular settlers over issues of the evangelization and human treatment of indigenous populations and African slaves. The initial motives of these religious specialists were normally nothing more than the evangelization of these populations. Yet confronted by hostile European settlers, they invariably developed a militant activist stance which led to the crystallization of network of advocacy. It was the very same process of radicalization that led to the emergence of the first distinctively modern long-distance network of advocacy with antislavery in the late eighteenth century.

The early champions of long-distance advocacy were predisposed to enter the path of radicalization because they came from religious bodies with a distinctively activist spirit instilled by movements of religious renewal and reform. In this sense, the emergence of long-distance advocacy networks was determined, to an important extent, by developments within the religious field proper. The striving for religious reform produced an activist religion which provided the cultural and organizational resources for the radicalization of religious specialists and their confrontation with competing imperial actors.

In the Iberian case, the advocates for humane treatment of indigenous populations came from the most activist branch of the Catholic church, the religious orders entrusted with the evangelization of the newly "acquired" subjects of the Iberian monarchs. The orders as they existed then were the end product of a long organizational evolution of the *vita apostolica* of monasticism, an enduring manifestation of the reformist impulse in

Christianity for a more committed religious practice (Ladner 1959). They had grown to become institutionally and financially sophisticated organizations spread throughout the territory of Latin Christendom. In the process, they had replaced their initial emphasis on claustration with a mendicant lifestyle of activist engagement with the world (Bartlett 1993:255-60; Thompson 1926).

This disposition of activist interventionism in worldly affairs was strengthened further by a continuous drive for an even more thorough reform of the inherently reformist institution of monasticism. By the time the order of St. Francis started the evangelization of America, the reforming movement of the Observant Franciscans had transformed the order, although under papal jurisdiction, into what amounted to an oppositional activist culture within the Church (Benz 1934; Daniel 1975; West 1989). The Capuchin and Jesuit orders whose members were active in the defense imperial populations were the product of similar reformist impulses in the sixteenth century (Bireley 1999; Hsia 2005:25-33).

The orders active in the evangelization of America embodied also a historically new ideology of peaceful mission of conversion, which—articulated first by Dominicans and Franciscans in the thirteenth century—was distinctly different from the traditional aggressive combination of evangelization and military conquest pursued by the older religious orders of knights (Daniel 1969; McNeill 1936). This specifically religious interest in the peaceful conversion of the "heathen" motivated the humanitarian concern of friars as they opposed the exploitative practices of other Europeans.[5]

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[5] The humanitarian disposition of religious orders was further reinforced by contemporary ideas in cannon law and in theology, especially the revival by Dominicans and Jesuits of

More than a century later, the champions of antislavery came from a similarly activist religious background. The Quakers who initiated antislavery were the members of a reformist religious body which considered itself as the embodiment of authentic "primitive" Christianity (Barbour 1994). They were joined next by English evangelicals, members of religious bodies that either had been transformed by the reform movement of the Evangelical Revival or, in the case of Methodism, had come into existence as carriers of the Revival (Anstey 1981b; Bebbington 1989; Ditchfield 1998; Gilbert 1976; Lovegrove 1988).

Activist Religion and the Uneven Spread of Antislavery.

The further cross-national spread of antislavery networks was similarly dependent on the strength of activist religion. Where such activist religion was absent or weaker than in the Anglo-American context, popular antislavery developed later and under the pressure of British activists. This heterogeneity of antislavery in different national has been noted by Drescher (1999) who distinguishes an "Anglo-American" model of abolition under the pressure of mobilized publics and a "continental" model of abolition initiated by elites in the absence of significant popular demand for action. The variation was to an important degree the consequence of the strength of religious activism in each national context.

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the natural law theology of Thomas Aquinas. These traditions admitted the legitimate character of non-Christian political arrangements and, by extension, the rationality of non-Christians (Carro 1951; Hamilton 1963; Muldoon 1980; Pennington 1970; Skinner 1978).

The trajectory of the national chapters of antislavery networks in France and in the Netherlands, where colonial slavery was conclusively abolished in 1848 and 1862, respectively, illustrate this dependence of the institutionalization of advocacy on the existence of activist religion. In France, the beginnings of antislavery were promising enough with the foundation, in 1788, of the *Société des Amis des Noirs*. Yet the number of members was relatively small and their connection with the Girondin movement led the demise of the Society in the course of the anti-Girondin reprisalsl of 1793. A short-lived reincarnation of the *Amis* operated under the name *Société des Amis des Noirs et des Colonies* between 1796 and 1799. Subsequently, only isolated individuals made public statements against slavery until 1822, when the predominantly Protestant *Société de la Morale Chrétienne* that was active in a variety of philanthropic causes in France and abroad formed a committee for the abolition of the slave trade. The news of the 1833 abolition of slavery in British colonies reinvigorated French antislavery and the *Société Française pour l'Abolition de l'Esclavage* was formed in 1834. Only in the 1840s did a strong popular mobilization emerge as petitions were canvassed and local chapters of the Abolition Society established (Daget 1971; 1980; Dorigny 1998; Drescher 1999; Motylewski 1998; Resnick 1972; Schmidt 2000).

In the Netherlands, civil society initiatives for the abolition of Dutch colonial slavery emerged only in the 1840s, when British Quakers visited the Netherlands and converted figures of the Dutch Protestant revival movement, the *Réveil*, to abolitionism. The Dutch Association for the Promotion of the Abolition of Slavery (*Vereeniging ter bevordering van de afschaffing der slavernij*) was founded in 1842. In 1853, the year the newly published Dutch translation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* rose popular interest, the

abolitionist society was resurrected and three other organizations supported its activities (Emmer 1980; Kuitenbrouwer 1978; 1995; Reinsma 1963; Sens 1995; Siwpersad 1979; Winter 1982).

Compared to the British core of the international antislavery network, both the French and Dutch versions were weaker organizationally, reactive to British developments, and less effective in influencing both government policies and the popular culture in their countries. If English abolitionists mobilized national audiences at least since the 1780s, genuine popular mobilization in France and the Netherlands occurred only towards the middle of the nineteenth century, prepared to a large extent by the work of antislavery emissaries from Britain. The abolition of the British slave trade (1807) and colonial slavery (1833) was a direct response to popular pressure (Anstey 1981a) while French abolitions were the work of influential individuals with access to power. Although the French Revolution seemed to offer the perfect opportunity for the official ban of the slave trade that British abolitionists had not been able to achieve, effecting the legislation remained elusive for the relatively weak antislavery interest in successive legislatures. The first abolition of slavery in 1794 was largely the recognition of a *fait accompli*, when Léger Félicité Sonthonax, a radical abolitionist unaffiliated with the *Amis des Noirs*, had taken advantage of his position as civil commissary to Saint Domingue to enact the full abolition of slavery in the colony (Dorigny 1998; Geggus 1989; Stein 1985). After Napoleon had reinstated colonial slavery in 1802, the final abolition was orchestrated almost single-handedly by the committed abolitionist Victor Schoelcher, who made house calls to extract the signatures of cabinet members reluctant to sign the abolition decree (Schmidt 2003).

The Religious Determinants of Organizational Strength. The less robust character of French and Dutch antislavery was not necessarily the consequence of lacking ideological and institutional foundations. In France, antislavery could draw on a "well developed intellectuall apparatus" (Dorigny 1998:19). In addition to the ideologies of civic solidarity and *humanité* of Enlightenment republicanism, antislavery ideas had enjoyed a reasonably wide public circulation at least since the mid-eighteenth century when Montesquieu had published his critique of slavery in *The Spirit of the Laws* (McCloy 1957; Seeber 1937). Similarly, the vibrant and democratic print culture of the Netherlands afforded the highly literate population not only access to the all currents of thought in the time (Popkin 1992), but also distributed, as Sens (1995:93) notes, "enough—fictional and non-fictional—material around to inform the Dutch public about the overseas world" (See also Sens 2001; Waaldijk 1959). There, too, the second half of the eighteenth century witnessed the strengthening of an enlightened associational culture that actively pursued social reform (Mijnhardt 1992).

Yet in both cases the spread of organized antislavery had to overcome a serious obstacle: the lack of institutionalized activist religion comparable to Quaker and Evangelical structures in Britain. French Protestants, numerically weak and bleeding from decades of persecution, joined antislavery ranks only as they rebuilt their churches. Only by the 1820s was the predominantly Protestant *Société de moral chrétienne* able to address the problem of the slave trade. In the 1840s, Reformed churches, already recovered enough to organize for political action, mobilized for antislavery petitions (Osen 1967; Tudesq 1964).

On the Catholic side, the comparably weak position of clergymen prevented their radicalization against slavery. In the seventeenth century Catholic orders active in the evangelization of slaves in the French Antilles had advocated their interests. By the mid-eighteenth century, however, their activism had been effectively halted. Anticlerical suspicions against missionaries, fears of their fomenting unrest among slaves and the expulsion of the Jesuits undermined the position of Catholic orders in French colonies and placed them under the strict control of secular authorities (Hurbon 2003; Peabody 2002).

All these developments served to prevent or delay the emergence of French religious critics of slavery. Only in the late 1830s did Catholic religious orders discern a newly available opportunity to contribute to what was considered then an inevitable emancipation of slaves by educating them into good Christian subjects. As this provoked the animosity of white settlers in the colonies, a number of colonial priests developed a more radical abolitionist stance and published, in France, works that condemned the cruelty of slavery (Brasseur 1988; Delisle 1998; Schmidt 1984).

The most consistent representatives of an activist religion among French abolitionists was undoubtedly Henri, Abbé Grégoire (1750-1831). Like activist religious in the Iberian and British imperial context, his formative influence was the reformist movements of Jansenism and *Richérisme*, asserting the rights and authority of the truly religious lower clergy against a church hierarchy dominated by aristocrats of secular orientation (Campbell 1991:18-29; Delumeau 1977:99-128; Ravitch 1967). Grégoire entered national politics around the Revolution and remained a consistent and vocal champion of antislavery. Yet he was socially isolated. A rural priest like him was

outsider to the urban networks of Parisian nobility, financiers and intellectuals who formed the core of the different abolitionists organizations, while his engagement with the revolutionary Constitutional Church alienated him from the official structures of Catholicism (Debbasch 1961; Dorigny 2000; Necheles 1971).

The relative weakness and derivative character of Dutch antislavery was also the result of the absence of a strong activist religion. Reformed Calvinism, the only officially recognized religion in Dutch colonies until 1796, was de facto under the strict control of the trading companies that run overseas possessions. Other churches, Protestant and Catholic, faced a double obstacle to their work in the colonies: not only the power of secular authorities who controlled their access there, but also the unwillingness of the Reformed Church to admit competitors (Boxer 1965:132-42; Gerstner 1997; Israel 1995:951-54, 1057-59; Koschorke 1986; 1998; Linde 1953; 1956). In this restrictive situation, again, only isolated Protestant and Catholic missionaries in the colonies radicalized into full-fledged critics of colonial slavery (Abbenhuis 1953; Killough 1996; Knaap 1995; Kuitenbrouwer 1978; Linde 1953; 1987; Zeefuik 1973). Only the strengthening of the *Réveil* movement within Dutch Reformed Churches and the pressure exercised on it by British activists led to the institutionalization of antislavery in the Netherlands (Kluit 1970; Reinsma 1963; Winter 1982)

The uneven institutionalization of antislavery in Europe points, again, to the importance of religion as the driving force behind the emergence of modern long-distance advocacy networks. All the cases discussed here were imperial powers that profited from the exploitation of the slave labor. Yet the derivative and weaker institutionalization of antislavery in the French and Dutch cases—compared to its flourishing in the British

context—suggests that the structural context of empire was not sufficient per se to generate advocacy networks in the absence of activist religion.

THE RELIGIOUS FOUNDATIONS OF MODERN LONG-DISTANCE ADVOCACY NETWORKS

Although at different points of time, the same interactional pattern developed in all the settings discussed here: a conflict between religious activists and secular imperial actors over the treatment of indigenous or slave labor. This conflict led to the crystallization of the first long-distance networks of political advocacy. What initiated this conflict was specifically religious concerns. Religious specialists who spoke out in defense of the interests of indigenous labor and slaves wanted, initially, nothing more than spiritual jurisdiction and access to their souls. The radicalization of religious specialists into advocates occurred when the cultural and organizational resources of activist religion placed them in a position strong enough to contest the denial of such jurisdiction by secular imperial actors.

The proclivity and ability of religious specialists to radicalize, in other words, was predicated on the strength of activist religion in the respective contexts. This explains why there were important differences in degree and intensity of radicalization. It was much stronger organizationally and effective politically in the British case, less so in the Iberian context, and the weakest in France and the Netherlands.

Religion was, therefore, an important cultural resource for the emergence of long-distance advocacy networks, while religious bodies, such as the Catholic Church in Iberian empires or various Protestant churches in Britain, provided important organizational resources. It is this religiously inspired counterpoint to Western

imperialism which provided the institutional foundations for long-distance advocacy networks as we know them today. With the antislavery movement at the end of the eighteenth century, radicalized religious specialists pioneered and institutionalized the organizational forms of modern long-distance advocacy networks that were, consequently, available for adoption by other, religious and non-religious groups.

Acknowledging the rich history of long-distance advocacy networks qualifies strong claims about the conditioning power of the global political landscape on political mobilization. Long-distance advocacy networks are usually understood as involved in a global organizational zero-sum game: they are the alternative supranational forms of political organization which fills the void opened by the decline of the nation state. My discussion paints, however, a more complex picture. Far from being the result of the recent decline of once powerful nation-states, the emergence of long-distance advocacy networks must be situated in a more complex historical context of numerous and competing organizational forms of political authority.

A related point is that networks of political advocacy have their own institutional history which is not derivative of the development of modern statehood and political authority. From their beginning, they were the creation of committed religious minorities who challenged, often against serious odds, the reigning cultural and political arrangements of their time. To point out the importance of the relatively autonomous logic of such initiatives, to point out their rootedness in religious cultural idioms and religious organizational structures, is to question the logic inherent in much recent writing on transnational collective action that sees the specific contours of this action as following in the heels of anonymous, structural epochal changes. Advocacy networks are

not the product of the irresistible forces of globalization, but have been active agents that themselves shape global processes (See Nederveen Pieterse 2001).

A focus on the role of religious organizations in the institutional crystallization of modern long-distance advocacy networks allows us also to flesh out in empirical detail the processes that led to the emergence and spread of the a universalistic "world culture" that according to John Meyer and his collaborators increasingly structure behavior and identities in the modern world. The "world culture" school understands transnational actors, such as non-governmental organizations, as the vessels that carry and spread that culture of "human rights, consumer rights, environmental regulation, social and economic development, and human equality and justice" (Meyer, Boli, Thomas and Ramirez 1997:165). Critics have noted that this work is stronger in documenting the end result of adopted world cultural models than in explaining how they arise and how they get institutionalized (Keck and Sikkink 1998:33; Tarrow 2001:5-6). As a consequence, an unduly strong causal power is attributed to world-cultural models: transnational actors are no more than enactors of an already constituted world culture (See also Boli 1999; Meyer 1999). My discussion suggests, however, that both the constitution of transnational moral norms and their institutionalization is a far more contingent historical process. These norms emerge from the activities of concrete historical actors in concrete interactional constellations and religious concerns have been an important motivation for actors to articulate and fight for such universal norms.

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