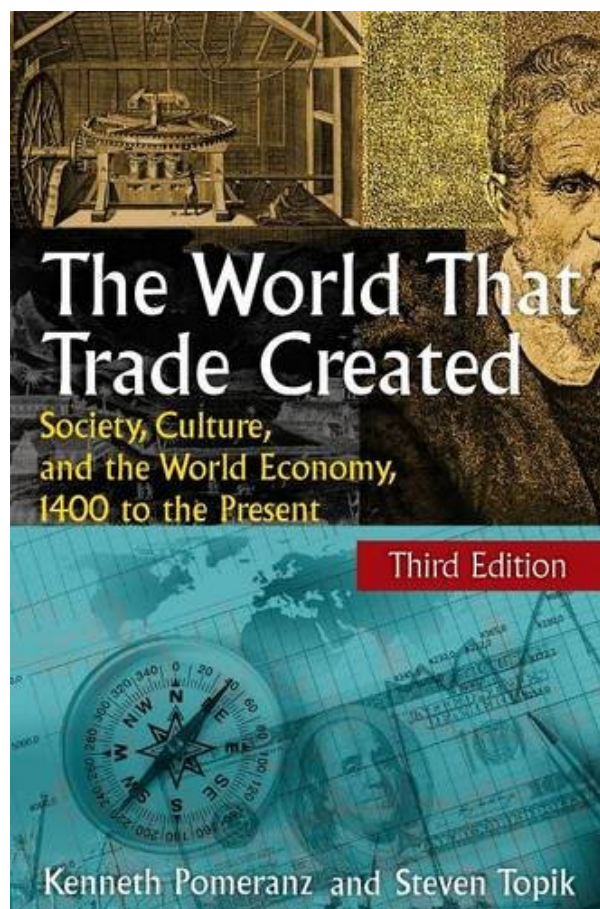
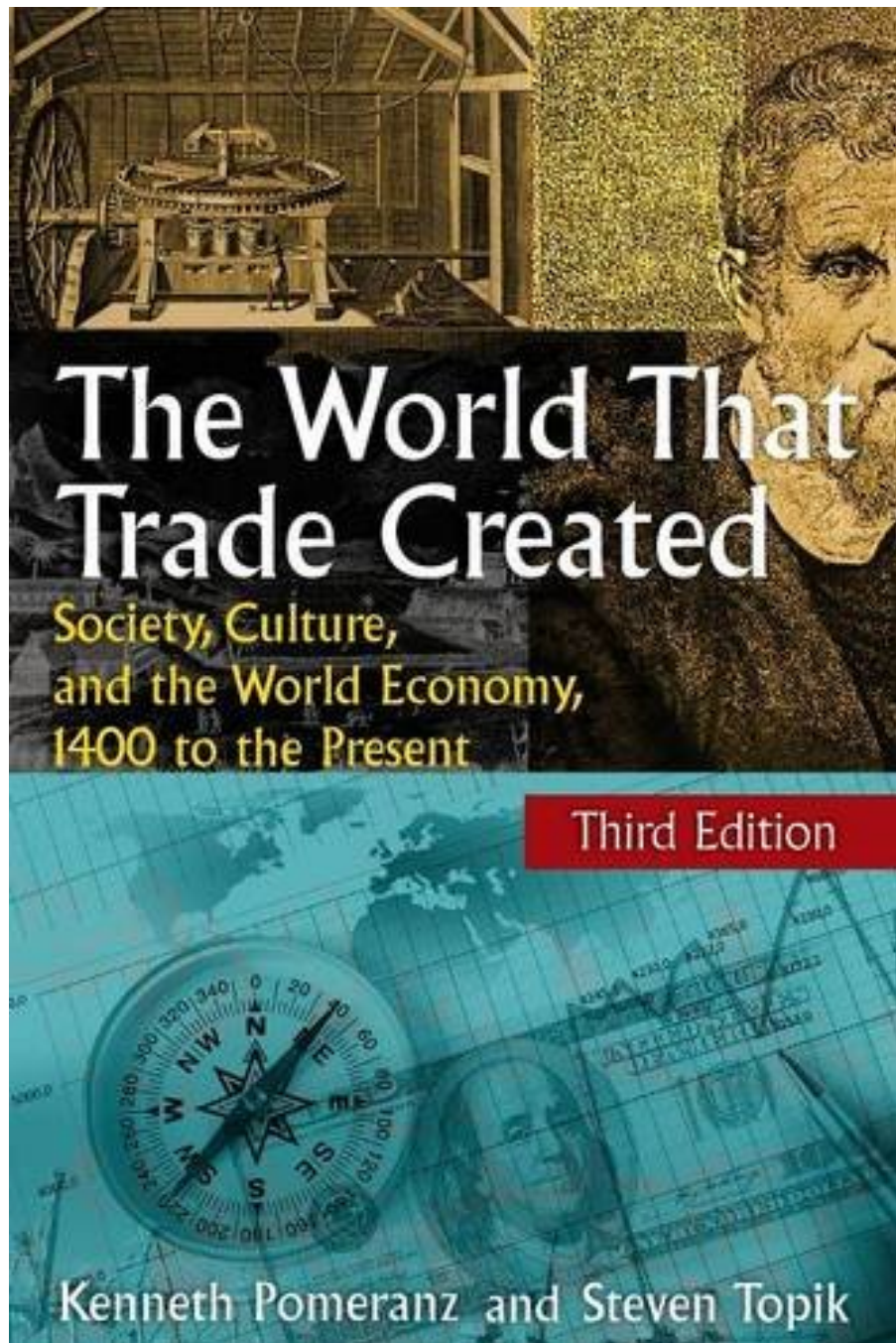


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SOCIETY, CULTURE, AND THE WORLD
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Review

"If you teach world history from 1500, you'll want to assign this book. It is filled with engaging essays about ordinary people whose day-to-day activities connected them to the global economy. Pomeranz and Topik avoid abstract generalities; instead they offer a truly global buffet of interesting accounts that makes sense of economic history in the modern era--the world that trade created." --Mary Jane Maxwell, Green Mountain College

"In this new edition, Pomeranz and Topik present a broadly inclusive portrayal of the development of international commerce. The authors blend previously published articles into a coherent series of vignettes that capture the trend of trade over the past 600 years. ... This volume offers a balance to traditional approaches to trade history and is noteworthy for its attention to the role of Asia in the development of world commerce. ... Recommended. Academic audiences, upper-division undergraduate and above; general readers; professionals." --Choice

"Undergraduate or even high school students in world history classes should respond well to the non-academic prose and to the often off-beat topics. ... Professors in world history classes can profitably use *The World That Trade Created*, as I have, to reinforce concepts covered in lecture or in standard textbooks, as a source for lecture material or for student presentations, or for student papers analyzing one or another course theme." --World History Connected

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In a series of brief vignettes the authors bring to life international trade and its actors, and also demonstrate that economic activity cannot be divorced from social and cultural contexts. In the process they make clear that the seemingly modern concept of economic globalisation has deep historical roots.

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A wonderful Overview

By RV

This is a very entertaining overview of the development of world trade and world economy. The short essays (3 to 4 pages each) each cover a different topic and are far too short to become boring. If anything some of

the chapters are too short.

The authors take an approach which is refreshingly not euro-centric, with many chapters covering the Far East and South America. In fact the authors' cynicism and disapproval of the hypocrisy of European colonial expansion is a recurring theme throughout the book.

My favorite essay in the book discusses the rise and fall of Potosi, now a small dusty town in Bolivia but formerly one of the largest and richest cities in the world. Potosi's wealth came from the numerous silver mines dug into Cerro Rico, a mountain overlooking the city. Once the silver was gone, so were the good times. Having visited Potosi in 1993, I was delighted to read about the former glory and world renown of what is now, essentially little more than a village.

The book covers such varied topics as the connection between tea and the drug trade; the adoption of international timezones; piracy; the origin of coffee; and the impact of slave trade on the industrial revolution.

Overall the book is a great read interspersed with many amusing anecdotes that make history come alive. If you are interested in history, I definitely recommend this book.

16 of 17 people found the following review helpful.

Lacks citations

By cssmith

I was excited when I heard that a new edition of this book had come out. I really enjoyed the previous edition, but found the complete lack of citations to be frustrating. So you can imagine how dismayed I was to learn that this generously expanded 3rd edition fails to correct this problem. There is a select bibliography at the end but it isn't much help without links to the text. What a bad editorial decision by the publisher, M.E. Sharpe. Otherwise, this is really a fantastic book on global trade and the interconnectedness of the modern world. One of the best things about it is the way the authors illustrate both the impact of large scale processes of globalization on local life and the way globalization happens because of the actions of particular people in particular places and times.

22 of 25 people found the following review helpful.

More Than Just Facts

By A Customer

The World That Trade Created: Society, Culture, and the World Economy 1400 to the Present is similar to recent cultural histories of seemingly unimportant topics like germs and the senses. There is a treasure trove of tiny facts that amaze, but do amount to an argument. The authors in very concise, cross-referenced articles set out on an ambitious project. They reject western triumphalism without resorting to anti-imperialism, to reconstruct the world economy as it was before western science turned history to science.

The authors humorously undermine the teleological notion of an impersonal, dismal science of economics by producing counter-intuitive examples of irrational, political, and cultural policies. Little questions assume global importance. Any belief in market forces is reduced to tatters under the weight of facts, like railroad track gauges, coffee beans, and chocolate. This agenda gives the individual subjects, each the subject of it's own study in other places, coherence.

I sometimes found the organization of information annoying, however. Although well annotated and cross-referenced, a more chronological or geographical standard would be preferable. Although zooming from one end of the globe to another through centuries does achieve an effective de-westernizing quality, it seems repetitive and blurs the main argument. However, the reader is left with the strong impression of a very multi-faceted, multivalent world slowly reduced to western sterility.

However, this book is entertaining just for the individual sections, and the reader will never look at coffee or tea the same way again. So many myths are exploded in this book; its title should be more explosive too. The authors do a very good job of making economics light.

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