

Joerg Baten (ed.), *A History of the Global Economy: 1500 to the Present*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016). 369 p. ISBN 9781107507180.

Our understanding of the origins of the modern world economy has advanced steadily over the last two decades. There are two areas in which scholarly progress in economic history has been especially fast. First, we have paid much more attention to the period before 1820 (or even 1870) than used to be the case. It has become clear that if we are to understand the origins of modern economic growth, we have to study the early modern and medieval periods in great detail. Second, we are now much less Eurocentric, and even less Northwestern European-centric, than we used to be. We now have good per capita GDP, real wages and fiscal capacity series for many European and non-European countries. As this book documents, we now also have anthropometric and numeracy data in reasonable quantities, especially for some eras and parts of the world. International comparisons across time present many challenges, but there is no question that we have come a long way.

This book is an updated introduction to these matters, which reflects this progress well. It is appropriate to an audience of undergraduates, and it could also be useful to researchers as a guide to the recent literature. Topics such as comparative levels of per capita GDP are covered, but the book also pays much attention to alternative measures of development using anthropometric data and measures of human capital. There is also some emphasis on patterns of regional economic specialization (supported by an abundance of beautiful and informative maps). Although these choices are made at the expense of a more traditional narrative (especially for Western countries, which are inevitably better covered) it is appropriate to impose a trademark style to a book of this kind, as there is more value added in this way.

While it is remarkable how much information is packed into such a small book, I feel that at times the presentation may be too concise for many undergraduates; without prior knowledge of these topics it may not be easy to absorb the information without additional support materials provided by their teachers. In particular, some debates may be difficult for them to follow without time for the basic material to sink in. Nevertheless, it is an excellent choice as a textbook.

Although I found something (usually minor) to disagree with in almost every chapter, a certain level of scholarly disagreement is to be expected. Most chapters are well-written, and for an edited book written by a long list of distinguished authors, covering a wide variety of topics, geographical areas and time periods, there is a remarkable degree of coherence. Overall, the book succeeds in its aims.

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