



Religion and Trade: Cross-Cultural Exchanges in World History, 1000-1900

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Introduction

The Historical and Comparative Study of Cross-Cultural Trade

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Abstract and Keywords

The introduction lays out the volume's contours and agenda. It outlines key approaches and concepts that have characterized classic studies of cross-cultural trade by historians such as S. D. Goitein, Fernand Braudel, Jerry H. Bentley, and especially Philip D. Curtin. In taking stock of these contributions and in order to advance the scholarly agenda, the chapter elaborates on a set of five questions for the historical and comparative study of cross-cultural trade. These five questions link the volume's chapters together and can inform future inquiries on the subject in different times and places: (1) Did religion affect cross-cultural trade? (2) Did trust work across religious groups? (3) What role did legal institutions play in building cross-cultural trade? (4) When and how did violence coexist with cross-cultural trade? (5) Do material artifacts bear the imprint of cross-cultural trade?

Keywords: cross-cultural trade, religion, violence, legal institutions, trust, material artifacts, S. D. Goitein, Fernand Braudel, Jerry H. Bentley, Philip D. Curtin

COMMERCIAL EXCHANGES ACROSS religious, geographical, and political boundaries have always been risky propositions. E-commerce, Bitcom, the World Trade Organization, and other recent technologies and institutions have solved some problems, and created others. Risks were greatest in the pre-industrial period, when in order to engage in cross-cultural trade, seafaring vessels and overland convoys often had to overcome tremendous physical obstacles. Marco Polo is only the better-known name among a small and audacious group of merchants from Venice and Genoa who made their way to India and China at a time when traveling such distances came with hardships and dangers defying the modern imagination.¹ Once they reached distant markets, merchants had to grapple with strange

customs and manners. Little wonder that specialized intermediaries emerged in most towns and ports to facilitate dealings between strangers. Foreign merchants, however, had to exercise necessary caution when relying on intermediaries who possessed insiders' knowledge and may have wished to take advantage of newcomers and passersby. Defying all odds, merchants across the globe, along with ordinary people, travelers, pilgrims, missionaries, and interlopers, nonetheless concocted ways of bartering, (p.2) securing credit, and establishing durable commercial relations with persons who did not speak their language, wore different garb, and worshipped other gods.

Along docks and caravan routes, in bazaars and city squares, they exchanged precious and bulky merchandise. Some of these goods acquired new value when they entered a new environment; hugely desirable and popular, they could also be seen as menacing. Religious and secular leaders from around the world thus sought to curb tobacco consumption when the use of this new drug spread rapidly in the early seventeenth century, while rulers as different as the Safavid Shah and the English Crown soon adopted more lenient attitudes.² Cross-cultural trade, in other words, was both a boon and a threat to the status quo. For every institution and group that sought to promote it, there were others that wished to quell it. Guardians of religious orthodoxy were often among those who differentiated between legitimate and illegitimate exchanges, between stigmatized and upright groups of traders, between pure and corrupting commodities.

This volume seeks to advance the historical understanding of cross-cultural trade by focusing on commercial exchanges between groups of different religious backgrounds and by examining both day-to-day operations and the broader cultural meanings and political underpinnings of these exchanges. To this effect, the ten chapters that follow investigate the infrastructures (political, legal, technological, and social) that expedited or hindered cross-cultural economic transactions and the meanings associated with the goods involved in these transactions. They explore examples from across the world, spanning the course of the second millennium C.E. Taken together, they pursue two aims: to offer a fine-grained analysis of individual cases and to provide a roadmap for the historical and comparative study of cross-cultural trade.

Thirty years ago, Philip Curtin's groundbreaking *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History* inaugurated an exciting new field of inquiry.³ The chapters gathered in this volume take stock of Curtin's milestone contribution, as well as others that appeared before and after, and seek to advance their scholarly agenda. The insights of *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History* remain challenging and wide-ranging, and will be discussed again both below and in several chapters. Thematically, they include geographical and chronological breadth that is simply stunning and which, for example, helped to integrate Africa and Southeast Asia into world historical analysis. Curtin also highlighted Islam's friendliness to trade. In so doing, he brought that theme, too, to the attention of a wider audience. His analytical (p.3) contributions were no less provocative and focused on identifying patterns that cut across time and space, such as the function of foreign resident brokers and the role of trade diasporas. By his own admission, and by the very nature of the project that he undertook, Curtin did not aim to provide a detailed treatment of cross-cultural trade in each corner of the world. Rather, the categories that he deployed to make sense of an arresting heterogeneity of cases have defined his legacy across fields and specializations—as well as generated heated debates. None of them has enjoyed greater fortune or ignited more controversies than that of trade diasporas. Curtin's definition is intentionally broad and aims to group together a variety of communities that were scattered across distant regions

and that performed important functions as commercial and cultural mediators. Borrowing from the anthropologist and Africanist Abner Cohen, Curtin conceives of a trade diaspora as a group of merchants “linked to one another by several kinds of mutual solidarity: common profession, religion, language, and so on.”⁴ These diasporas generally lacked sovereign authority and the monopoly of violence. But in some instances Curtin adopts the same terminology for enterprises that operated as the commercial and military arm of European states. Later in this introduction I will return to the implications of this ambiguity in the definition of trade diasporas for the study of cross-cultural trade.

In the opening chapter, Leor Halevi expands on Curtin’s study as part of a critical appraisal of landmark contributions to the literature on cross-cultural trade produced over the last century by a diverse array of sociologists, anthropologists, economists, and scholars of religion. A historian of religion and a specialist of Islamic law and material culture, Halevi treats the concept of “religion” with a higher degree of sophistication and precision than in most of the existing scholarship on cross-cultural trade. He thus sets the tone for the rest of the volume. He also invites us to pursue the material-culture angle, that is, to examine the very objects that crossed religious boundaries rather than, as is more frequently done, only the agents and modalities of those material exchanges. The focus on materiality provides an important, and so far under-explored, comparative framework. For example, both the papacy and Islamic law prohibited trade in goods that could aid “infidels” in waging holy wars (notably weapons, but also certain types of metals and wood), but only Islamic law included the notion of “impure” or defiling goods, which jurists associated in many cases with commodities manufactured by non-Muslims.

(p.4) Other parallels cut across the Christian-Muslim divide. On both sides of what is sometimes described as a civilizational cleavage, we find not only that merchants regularly infringed rules about prohibited goods, but also that the elites charged with preserving religious orthodoxy defined those proscriptions with an awareness of their political implications. In other words, when both Muslim clerics and Catholic theologians granted exceptions to stringent norms about the conduct of foreign trade, they did so knowing the impact these exceptions could have on the political economy of their states.

Ubiquitous and Elusive: Cross-Cultural Trade as a Puzzle in Historical Writing

It would be only slightly hyperbolic to maintain that cross-cultural trade has existed everywhere and at all times. Some populations lived in greater isolation than others. Now that older views about the immobility of pre-modern societies have faded away, however, most places and epochs have become good candidates for the study of circulation, connectivity, transculturalism (if not cosmopolitanism of assorted varieties), and associated phenomena. Ongoing interest in cross-cultural trade reflects this broader trend. Yet precisely because cross-cultural trade is ubiquitous and impinges on so many aspects of life, it can be approached from multiple perspectives. Differences in scales of analysis and defining criteria account for some of the imprecision that continues to surround the topic, as well as the polarization between different approaches to it.

Before it became fashionable to speak of “cross-cultural trade,” Shelomo Dov Goitein was engaged in a lifelong project that in many respects we can group under that rubric. Goitein was, in Isaiah Berlin’s famous metaphor, a fox—someone who “knows many things” and “pursues many ends,” as opposed to a hedgehog, who “knows one thing” and “relate[s] everything to a single central vision, one system,

less or more coherent or articulate.”⁵ Goitein devoted his career to deciphering and interpreting the records of an exceptional trove of documents known as the Cairo Geniza; he sought to unearth details with which to draw larger pictures. His monumental, five-volume *A Mediterranean Society*, published between 1967 and 1993, is an epic portrayal of a segment of the Jewish diaspora living under Muslim rule in North Africa and trading as far as Iberia and South Asia between the tenth and thirteenth centuries.⁶ Underneath this seemingly inductive project lies a concerted (p.5) attempt to single out “interfaith relations,” especially business relations, between the Jewish minority and the Muslim majority.⁷

An idealized view of affluent, upwardly mobile postwar America as a melting pot colored Goitein’s meticulous close readings of Geniza documents. The result is a rosy tableau of a medieval Mediterranean in which “free trade” and harmonious religious coexistence were the norm. The sources for this tableau are fragments of records written in a language, Judeo-Arabic, that few Muslims were able to read. This selection bias makes references to Jewish-Muslim business transactions all the more telling. But it also explains why these references are rare—so rare that in one recent and influential re-interpretation of the same body of documents, the commercial organization mirrored in the Cairo Geniza becomes the antithesis of cross-cultural trade. Instead, it is a commercial organization that revolves around a closed “coalition,” a sub-group of Jewish merchants who, deprived of recourse to state legal institutions, oversaw the degree of compliance of its own members via reputational control and social ostracism but was unable to build durable commercial alliances with outsiders, whether non-Jews or other groups of Jews.⁸

The scholar who introduced the twin notions of “cross-cultural trade” and “trade diaspora” into the mainstream of the historiographical vocabulary was Philip Curtin, who, in contrast to Goitein, was a hedgehog and built on his extensive historical knowledge of Africa and the Atlantic slave trade to pioneer the field of world history.⁹ Before and after Curtin, other quintessential hedgehogs were drawn to the study of cross-cultural trade, most notably Fernand Braudel, who never explicitly adopted the expression, but whose magna opera on the Mediterranean and on pre-modern capitalism focus on commerce as a vehicle for interaction between (p.6) distant peoples and distant regions and as the preeminent agent of change.¹⁰ Midway in his career, the late Jerry H. Bentley also chose the optic of a hedgehog, putting his earlier interest in Renaissance Italy aside and turning to founding, in 1991, *The Journal of World History* and to publishing, in 1993, *Old World Encounters: Cross-Cultural Contacts and Exchanges in Pre-Modern Times*. The latter covers the millennia leading up to 1492: it paints in broad strokes processes of migration, conversion, economic expansion, and state formation that transformed the geopolitical and cultural landscape of the planet before the rise of the West. For the purpose of his wide-ranging analysis, Bentley takes “civilization” (one of Braudel’s most controversial terms) to be synonymous with “culture” and charts the existence of vast cultural spheres separated by wide gaps that trade, missionary work, and military expansion helped bring closer together.¹¹

Goitein, Curtin, Braudel, and Bentley are only the most illustrious names among a galaxy of scholars who, whether foxes or hedgehogs, have delved into the multifaceted relation between commerce, politics, and religion. Landmark studies by Immanuel Wallerstein and Janet L. Abu-Lughod mapped the geography of inter-regional and intercontinental trade to advance opposing theses about the timing and structural patterns of an integrated world system and of Europe’s commercial domination of it.¹² From a radically different perspective, one that is more actor-centered, studies of diasporic merchant

communities active from the South China Sea to the Atlantic and from the Mediterranean to Central Asia have proliferated, all aiming to flesh out the impact of trading networks operating in the interstices of multiple states and empires.¹³ Scholarship on merchant networks and **(p.7)** diasporas often exalts the figure of cross-cultural brokers, those called to bridge linguistic, legal, economic, and diplomatic divides.¹⁴ It also collectively makes a decisive contribution to advancing a less Eurocentric, less hierarchical notion of what we may call “globalization before globalization.”¹⁵ Far from being the exclusive province of historians, the study of cross-cultural trade has been pioneered by anthropologists and has gained currency among economists and sociologists, particularly in relation to the concept of trust. It is thus not surprising that, as we will see, several contributions in this volume engage with ideas and models developed in the social sciences.

Across this vast if amorphous literature, *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History* stands out as the field-defining work.¹⁶ In the mid-1980s, Curtin located his contribution in “the small but growing field of comparative world history.”¹⁷ The present volume takes up many of the challenges that he put before us with renewed focus. However, it departs from Curtin’s ambition to synthesize by means of a unified theory of cross-cultural trade. It zooms in on specific episodes to inject analytical precision while preserving the diversity that comes with a plurality of approaches and primary sources. In this respect, it remains mindful of Clifford Geertz’s urging, in his justly famous 1973 essay “Thick Description,” that “the essential task of theory building...is not to codify abstract regularities but to make thick description possible, not to generalize across cases but to generalize within them.”¹⁸

Therefore, the volume as a whole endeavors to develop a comparative framework from the ground up. The questions elaborated in the last section of this introduction capture this twin effort at thick description and comparative analysis. Since they are rooted in the examples discussed in various chapters, a brief overview of the chapters’ content is in order.

(p.8) Overview

Each of the chapters presents an in-depth analysis of relevant episodes of cross-cultural trade on the basis of original, often little-known primary sources. Whereas world history is often written on the basis of secondary sources to provide grand, synthetic narratives, here authors roam across the globe scouting for and parsing new evidence.

And they roam far: the volume spans multiple regions of the globe, from roughly 1000 C.E. to 1900 C.E. By choice and by necessity, it does not cover every corner of the world. The chapters concentrate on three maritime spaces—the Mediterranean, the Atlantic, and the Indian Ocean—and the vast regions that surrounded them, because there, encounters and clashes between religious groups have sparked the most controversy, both historically and historiographically. There, members of the three so-called religions of the book lived side by side and, in certain areas, also interacted with non-monotheistic religious groups. Religious conflicts and coexistence shaped, and in turn were shaped by, commercial exchanges of both commodities and human beings. If other regions, such as East and Central Asia or Latin America, fall outside the purview of this volume, it is not because they were unaffected by the trends described here, and the volume aspires to offer insights that might extend to those contexts as well.

After Halevi’s primarily historiographical piece, the empirically grounded chapters begin with the early phase of Europe’s expansion into the Atlantic, and thus with the meeting of people with no

previous knowledge of each other. David Harris Sacks (Chapter 2) detects references to “silent trade” in English traders’ accounts of exchanges with native inhabitants of Newfoundland, where the English first landed in 1612. Many scholars hold silent trade to be a myth. Sacks shows that an implicit understanding of gift-giving rituals shared by the two sides allowed complete strangers to barter goods in terms regarded equitable by all, at least for the brief period before colonialists turned to violence and expropriation. Giuseppe Marcocci (Chapter 3) reads Latin disquisitions that today economic historians normally neglect in order to appreciate the political and theological arguments underpinning the first century of Portuguese overseas expansion. Rather than a conflict between church and state, he finds that the Portuguese Crown marshaled subtle theological justifications in order to grant leeway to its subjects in their trade with certain groups of “infidels” but not others, depending on the perceived political threat and commercial utility of those groups and the interests of various factions at court.

Wolfgang Kaiser and Guillaume Calafat (Chapter 4), as well as Kathryn Miller (Chapter 5), bring new evidence and concepts to bear on a well-known feature of the medieval and early modern Mediterranean: the ransoming of captives taken by Christians, Muslims, and Jews. Unlike a multitude of studies that give preference (p.9) to the symbolic dimension of this singular branch of trade, both chapters focus on the day-to-day aspects of the exchange of human booty. Predicated upon violence and religious war, the “economy of ransoming” only worked if “infidels” cooperated with one another. Cooperation, in turn, built upon the services of middlemen and legal institutions that, on both the Muslim and the Christian sides, created regularities of behavior and managed expectations across the religious divide. In the following two chapters, Cátia Antunes (Chapter 6) and Silvia Marzagalli (Chapter 7) dissect the many ways in which legal contracts facilitated some (and yet not other) joint economic ventures between members of different religious groups, whether in the post-Reformation United Provinces (the most tolerant of all European countries at the time) or in eighteenth-century France (traditionally described as a country in which religious obscurantism stifled capitalism). Roxani Eleni Margariti (Chapter 8) and Eric Tagliacozzo (Chapter 9) examine cross-cultural trade along the shores of the Indian Ocean at the beginning and the end of the period under consideration here. Margariti identifies minted coins as tools that facilitated commercial transactions between Jews and Muslims in a context of highly fragmented political authority. Tagliacozzo explores the economic determinants of the pilgrimage to Mecca (the Hajj) undertaken by men and women from Southeast Asia and thus documents the relationship of mutual interdependence between religious worship and profit-making activities.

Finally, Peter Mark (Chapter 10) brings us back to the early modern Atlantic in a probing analysis of artwork produced by West African artists for an affluent European clientele in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. A historian of art and culture, Mark follows Curtin in insisting on the role of middleman groups who acted as brokers across vast cultural divides—in his case, Portuguese known as *lançados*, including some of Jewish descent, who settled in coastal West Africa, where they mixed with local populations and provided essential services to both African and European traders. By focusing squarely on the artifacts that emerged from the meeting of foreign merchants with local artists, Mark also adds to Curtin’s agenda the importance of integrating the study of material culture in relation to cross-cultural trade.

Chronologically, then, the volume spans nearly an entire millennium. By embracing such a capacious time frame, it does not provide a new periodization for the writing of world history. That has been one

of the pursuits of Jerry Bentley, for example, for whom the intensity and scale of cross-cultural interactions led by mass migrations, large-scale conversion movements, imperial expansion, and the growth of long-distance trade offer alternative yardsticks to periodize the history of humanity.¹⁹ Nor does any chapter delve at length into the usefulness and drawbacks of **(p.10)** categories such as “medieval” and “early modern” for the purpose of comparisons on a planetary scale.²⁰ A different thread weaves the chronological span of the chapters together. In keeping with two of their main foci—the relationship between commerce and religion, and the infrastructures of long-distance trade—the examples collected here turn to times and places in which cross-cultural trade occurred between actors who saw themselves as belonging to distinct, if not also antagonistic, religious groups and to times and places in which trade occurred with the help of only fragile transportation technology.

With respect to both religion and technology, the period from 1000 C.E. to 1900 C.E. does not represent a coherent unit. But it does allow us to observe continuities and discontinuities. After circa 1000, and at an increasing pace after the sixteenth century, ever more distant regions of the globe came into closer relation with one another. With these increased connections came more opportunities for cross-cultural trade. It was the “Westernization of the world commerce between about 1740 and 1860,” Curtin writes, that decreased the importance of trade diasporas.²¹ As sociologists of “middleman minorities” before him had shown, and as he recognizes, religious and ethnic networks continued to occupy important economic niches well beyond the mid-nineteenth century, and still do to this day.²² But industrialization, the rise of nation-states, and the consolidation of European colonial rule altered significantly the conditions under which these networks operated. In addition to new transportation technology—steam power, as an instance, and steel-hulled ships—European nations and territorial empires engaged in systematic reclassifications of individual and collective identities, in ways that also affected cross-cultural trade. Citizenship as inscribed in passports, for example, became at **(p.11)** least as important as religious affiliation in defining group membership and in allowing recourse to political, financial, and legal institutions.

The chapters that follow show that discontinuities occurred at different times in different regions of the world and that these discontinuities stemmed from different causes, both internal and external. Before the sixteenth century, when no large polity in the Indian Ocean controlled vast regional territories, the circulation of silver and gold coins, more than far-reaching legal jurisdictions, simplified transactions between discrete religious groups. The early modern Mediterranean also remained a politically fragmented space. The conditions for the ransoming of captives there were not radically altered by the appearance of northern European creations, such as the stock market and the joint-stock company. It was the cumulative effect of centuries of diplomatic and commercial exchanges between Christian and Muslim powers that oiled the mechanisms of ransoming. In Southeast Asia, the impact of colonialism on cross-cultural trade was not felt until the late nineteenth century, and even then, colonial power did not alter all extant trade patterns. Eric Tagliacozzo explains in his contribution that Dutch and British colonial governments found aspects of the Hajj, along with other pan-Islamic networks, threatening, but by making more secure steam lines and cheaper loans available to those who wished to embark on the pilgrimage to Mecca, they also fueled the Hajj’s expansion while profiting from it.

In unraveling the multiple dimensions of cross-cultural trade, historians are sometimes confined by a dearth of sources and at other times overwhelmed by an overabundance of documents. Whether scarce or plentiful, textual or non-textual, records are never transparent. In some cases, evidence of economic

transactions between religious groups that eyed each other with suspicion was purposefully suppressed, though a careful inquiry can turn up fragments of those transactions.²³ Even when the absence of records is accidental rather than intentional, the search for indirect clues leaves us with highly mediated accounts. Legal compendia compensate only in part for the lack of surviving business records from medieval Muslim Spain (Kathryn Miller). European travel narratives and engravings are all we have left to reconstruct the commercial logic of Native Amerindians (David Harris Sacks). Portuguese travel accounts omit any references to kola, an important commodity in West African trade, which nonetheless turns up in the artwork the Portuguese imported from West Africa (Peter Mark).

(p.12) As the last example suggests, written records documenting cross-cultural trade are often missing entirely or are less abundant than material artifacts. To supplement the paucity of local archives, Roxani Margariti creatively combines numismatics and hard-to-decipher fragments written in Judeo-Arabic in order to uncover the forms of Jewish-Muslim commercial cooperation across the Indian Ocean in the first three centuries of the second millennium. Mark juxtaposes textual descriptions of West African coastal societies written by Portuguese traders and missionaries to other ethnographic sources in order to interpret the iconography of ivory carvings sculpted by West African artists for European consumption. In so doing, he seeks to recover the meanings of figural and natural representations as they traveled across groups that, even when they shared a linguistic understanding, continued to maintain radically different (though not necessarily incommensurable) symbolic frames of reference.

In some cases, then, mentions of cross-cultural trade are far and wide, but historians have been blinded by their own assumptions and have failed to notice them, as Silvia Marzagalli argues in relation to Old Regime France. In other cases, the paper trail is so rich that only statistical sampling can yield meaningful trends (Cátia Antunes). In yet other instances, the religious affiliation of the parties involved is purposefully distorted or at least needs to be contextualized accurately. Thus, Jews expelled or forced to convert to Catholicism in Iberia during the 1490s, and their descendants who fled to France and the United Provinces, had different contractual rights depending on whether documents identified them as Jews, as Catholics, or as so-called “New Christians.”

Five Questions

Earlier in this introduction I contrasted influential studies of cross-cultural trade authored by two ideal-types of scholars—foxes and hedgehogs. Although they are too reductive to encapsulate the contributions of historians like Goitein, Braudel, Curtin, and Bentley in their entirety, these metaphors capture a real contrast in approaches. This volume strives to bring together the strengths of both foxes and hedgehogs by addressing a set of five questions that tie the chapters together. The same questions will also, I hope, offer springboards for further research and comparisons.²⁴

(p.13) I. Did Religion Affect Cross-Cultural Trade?

The word “culture” in “cross-cultural trade” operates on two levels: it denotes the boundaries (whether religious, ethnic, or linguistic) across which trade occurred, but it can also signal the existence of a shared understanding of the terms of the exchanges (notions of value and contractual obligations, for example) that allowed for the crossing of those very boundaries. To disentangle these two dimensions is a crucial first step in pursuing any further analysis. To simplify, we can distinguish between cultural

identities, including religious affiliations, that predated a durable commercial interaction and those that emerged in the process.

This analytical distinction may appear artificial, since in many instances it is difficult to isolate the commercial norms that were specific to one group but not the others or the cultural transformations that were the direct result of trading relations. The distinction, however, is worth preserving in order to make an important point: a mutual understanding of economic transactions between strangers would not necessarily blur all preexisting cultural boundaries. This was a key conclusion reached by the Norwegian anthropologist Fredrik Barth.²⁵ Curtin's contribution to this line of thought was to insist on the mediating role that trade diasporas fulfilled in those situations and to conclude that "cross-cultural brokerage was often best performed by a foreign merchant of long residence."²⁶ Questions II and III below probe these insights further by asking what other mechanisms eased trade across groups that remained fundamentally separate.

Special consideration is given here to the role that religion played in the definition of group boundaries, as well as in the mechanics and the political economy of cross-cultural trade. The chapters of this volume do not claim that religious affiliations or religious institutions were invariably determining factors in cross-cultural trade. Rather, they ask when and how these factors mattered and how they were understood in whatever context. Therefore, they begin by clarifying when and how religion constituted a primary marker of group identity, since religious boundaries were not always contiguous with linguistic and political identities. Sometimes they were not even unequivocal. Marzagalli wrestles with the implications of the period in French history when segments of the merchant community hid their religious beliefs: Jews in southwestern France before 1723 and Calvinists from the revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685) to the promulgation of the Toleration Act (1787). **(p.14)** Catholic in earnest or nominally, these people all operated within the same legal and linguistic realm. Marzagalli asks whether religious affiliations made a difference in determining merchants' choices of entering into contractual obligations with one another and whether "cross-religious trade" (that between Christians and Jews) and "trans-confessional trade" (that between Catholics and Protestants) followed the same patterns.

The politics and the mechanics of cross-cultural trade often defined the categories of religious ascription for the individuals and groups involved in those exchanges. When examining papal bans against commerce with "infidels," Marcocci argues, it would be anachronistic to conclude that the omnipresence of contraband rendered those bans dead letters. In sixteenth-century Portugal, papal proscriptions were taken seriously, but were also adapted to political circumstances. In the course of Portugal's commercial and military expansion along the African coast and in the Indian Ocean, secular and ecclesiastical authorities debated the definition of "prohibited goods" and the classification of Muslim and pagan societies as "infidels" in relation to strategic needs. That is, they asked whether different goods, and the societies that traded them, were dangerous or economically useful. In redesigning the map of legitimate trade and contraband, Portuguese authorities thus also redefined religious taxonomies. "Infidel" turned out to be a flexible term.

In short, a renewed focus on the role of religion in cross-cultural trade permits us to revisit long-standing historical questions about how religious norms affected the everyday conduct of trade and how, in turn, religious beliefs and institutions were themselves affected by commercial relations with

members of other religions. In many cases, moreover, commercial networks were intertwined with military and missionary expeditions. Ultimately, we are thus confronted with the question of when trade between religious groups gave way to more tolerant views of “the other” and when, by contrast, it coexisted with hostile images of commercial partners that were decried as “infidels.”

The focus on religion also presents specific challenges for historians of cross-cultural trade, for religious boundaries were done and undone in the process of establishing economic ties with non-coreligionists. Socioeconomic historians often take for granted that a common religious affiliation sealed the boundaries of merchant communities and thus aided these communities’ commercial success by reducing the risk of opportunism among coreligionists. In this view, religious affiliations create more stable market exchanges. Meanwhile, cultural historians have progressively challenged characterizations of religious groups as monolithic blocks and have turned instead to concepts of fluidity, hybridity, cross-fertilization, and border-crossing to describe them. How to square these two approaches is an important and challenging task, which brings us to our next question.

(p.15) II. Did Trust Work across Religious Groups?

The word “trust” peppers historical accounts of long-distance commerce, and of trade diasporas in particular. In spite of protracted scholarly debates—across the humanities, social sciences, and behavioral sciences—about the definition and usefulness of the concept of trust, there remains among historians a tendency to invoke the word as if it were self-evident, that is, to assume that relatives and coreligionists trusted one another and that their bonds gave them an advantage over merchants operating without the support of extended kin or other social ties. This basic assumption holds more than a grain of truth: personal allegiances can compensate for the lack of effective means of coordination, such as rapid transportation or reliable and fair tribunals. But it also stems from the projections of modern scholars looking at past societies as traditional, as dominated by family and religious solidarities. In fact, relatives and coreligionists were not always the most competent or best equipped to open new market opportunities; from time to time, they also willfully undermined one another. Even among the Quaker community that traversed the eighteenth-century Atlantic, brotherly love could give way to bitter disputes.²⁷ As if these issues weren’t sufficiently complicated, a diaspora’s internal cohesion—whatever its sources—does not automatically explain how economic alliances were sustained with outsiders. That is, what made long-lasting intergroup economic ties possible?

For Curtin, as mentioned, the answer lies in trade diasporas’ distinctive ability to mediate across groups. The means through which different diasporas fulfilled this function, however, varied greatly, not only because different environments called for different solutions to problems of commitment, but also because Curtin offers different definitions of what a trade diaspora was. He oscillates between a more specific definition, which identifies trade diasporas with stateless groups living in dispersal while linked by kinship, religion, language, profession, or place of origin, and a looser definition that conceives of them simply as “trade communities of merchants living among aliens in associated networks.”²⁸ This looser definition is at the same time the strength and the weakness of Curtin’s analysis. It allows for more capacious comparisons, but it also groups together organizations that had recourse to radically different means of contract enforcement. It can thus apply to stateless minorities, such as Greek, Armenian, or Jewish traders, or to entities, such as the Dutch and English East India companies or the Hudson’s Bay Company, which were granted the monopoly right to deploy military

force overseas on behalf of their respective (p.16) states. This looser definition, in other words, has the virtue of deflecting the prevailing Eurocentrism that singles out chartered companies as forerunners of modern corporations and agents of radical change in the conduct of transoceanic commerce.²⁹ Curtin, however, did not elaborate on the analogy between trade diasporas as “moral communities” and as state-chartered companies by means of a sustained comparison of their respective business organization, and specifically their respective methods of contract enforcement within and across group boundaries. This vagueness may explain why one critic deemed *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History* “in many ways inconclusive.”³⁰

It is the more conventional definition of trade diasporas as stateless and geographically scattered merchant communities that has become preponderant. The preference for this notion of trade diaspora is another measure of the widespread and commonsensical definition of “trust,” mentioned above, which has continued to obfuscate our understanding of cross-cultural trade. Even those historians who do not take the internal solidarity of stateless diasporas for granted, for the most part scrutinize the sources of intragroup cooperation more than they do the mechanisms allowing for economic transaction across (rather than within) groups. In so doing, they implicitly regard a trade diaspora’s geographical dispersion as indication of that group’s engagement in cross-cultural trade more than they analyze how a diaspora actually conducted business relations with outsiders.³¹

A distinction between intra- and cross-group economic cooperation hardly preoccupies those economists who avoid the notion of trust altogether on the grounds that it can be replaced—and improved upon—by the standard tools of economic theory.³² This proposition echoes Adam Smith’s credo that “the propensity to truck, barter, and exchange one thing for another...[is] common to all men.”³³ (p.17) Following this line of argument, K. N. Chaudhuri has challenged Curtin’s interpretation of merchant communities active across the Indian Ocean, including Parsees, Armenians, and Jews, and has attributed their vitality not to their social organization and spatial dispersion, but to “the general characteristics of human behaviour,” by which he means a universally shared economic rationality.³⁴ Contrary to Curtin, Chaudhuri regards these merchant communities as less effective in curbing the risks of long-distance trade than “the bureaucratic operations of the Dutch and English East India Companies,” which he views as having imposed not only the use of force, but also more rational forms of economic organization in the Indian Ocean.³⁵

The gulf that separates scholars whom Curtin would have labeled either as “substantivists” or “formalists” has, on the one hand, widened over the last half century, because of the formalists’ increased use of mathematics, and, on the other, contracted, thanks to the adoption by historians of tools from the new institutional economics and network analysis, for example. Paul E. Lovejoy and David Richardson borrowed insights from transaction cost economics to interpret the use of human pawns in contractual obligations between British and African dealers in the Atlantic slave trade.³⁶ My study of the Western Sephardic diaspora adopts the idea of selective trust to examine how credit relations worked within different circles of coreligionists and with non-Jews.³⁷ Several chapters in this volume pursue these lines of inquiry by examining what specific threats, incentives, and guarantees facilitated economic transactions across religious groups. In using the words “trust” and “trade diasporas” sparingly and judiciously, these contributions inspire others to clarify the meaning they may wish to attribute to these expressions.

Wolfgang Kaiser and Guillaume Calafat borrow the concept of “credibility without trust” from sociologist Erving Goffman in order to explore the economy of ransoming and to illustrate the bases on which credibility was built, even among sworn religious enemies. Kathryn Miller turns to a related concept, that of “diffused reciprocity,” articulated by political scientists of modern international relations, in order to interpret the legal opinion of a Muslim jurist from fifteenth-century Malaga, who advised against reneging on a commitment to release a Christian captive on the ground that future (p.18) treatments of Muslim captives, and future exchanges in general, depended on honoring binding agreements, since merchants based their decisions on past experience.

A persistent challenge lurks even in these sophisticated approaches: the issue of group identification. In order for moral suasion and common values or for certain institutions, ranging from marriage to corporate tribunals, to sustain a high degree of conformity within a trade diaspora, middleman groups at least in theory need to possess finite and homogeneous boundaries.³⁸ That in reality the identification of such boundaries is not always uncontroversial should warn us against assuming that merchant communities could deploy informal mechanisms such as ostracism in order to enforce compliance among their members and thus reduce the risks of long-distance trade.

Roxani Margariti applies the notion of trade diaspora to the Jewish merchants documented in the records of the Cairo Geniza. Yet she highlights the lack of consistency in the religious taxonomies that appear in those records. More than one label could indicate the religious identity—Jewish or Muslim—of those involved in a contract. In certain cases, it is not even possible to pinpoint religious status beyond a doubt; in others, that religious status is accompanied by other markers of identity, such as geographical origin. A similar set of problems emerges in relation to the Sephardic merchants of France and the United Provinces. Until 1723, everyone of Jewish descent living in southwestern France was qualified as a “Portuguese merchant.” Generations of intermarriage with local Catholic families interfere with the assumption that all Iberian refugees were crypto-Jews and formed a tight community. In the Protestant countries of northern Europe, by contrast, Jews were allowed to congregate, but some wealthy New Christians did not join community life or attend services in synagogue in order to better their chances of integrating into the dominant society. Such examples, and more could be cited, demand that we dig deeper into the empirical evidence to determine a trade diaspora’s composition and the effectiveness of informal mechanisms of internal self-policing, not to mention the means that made a diaspora able to enforce contracts with outsiders.

(p.19) III. What Role Did Legal Institutions Play in Building Cross-Cultural Trade?

If not trust, what governed cross-cultural economic exchanges? Economists who are skeptical of the notion of trust tend for the most part to emphasize the importance of reliable legal institutions that protected property rights and enabled economic transactions between strangers. Several chapters engage with this hypothesis by asking what difference the law made for trade across religious groups, particularly when we examine not simultaneous transactions, but deferred payments and long-lasting partnerships. Legal forums were not always available and were not always the most effective deterrents of devious behavior. It is also unclear whether merchants from disparate backgrounds shared a common set of rules, as proponents of the existence of a universal *lex mercatoria* in the medieval Mediterranean would have it. More commonly, merchants had to navigate among a multitude of foreign legislation and courts. When that happened, local merchants belonging to the dominant or resident population could realistically count on more favorable treatment than merchants in transit, or

at least on better knowledge of the intricacies of the system and the men who staffed it. The central issue, then, is to determine when efficient legal regimes and reputational oversight reinforced and when they replaced one another.

Those contributions to this volume that concern the infrastructure of cross-cultural trade do not posit an opposition between the enforcing mechanisms assured by state-sponsored enterprises and those mobilized by family and religious ties. They start from a different perspective: they ask what range of resources—written contracts, intermediaries, social pressure, minted coins—helped merchants from different religious groups arrive at a common understanding of the terms of exchange and how these different resources enhanced the chances that all counterparts would abide by their promises.

The ransoming of Christian, Muslim, and Jewish captives in the medieval and early modern Mediterranean existed because the region was religiously and politically divided. Its persistence over the centuries did not lead to the creation of a unified legal system. Rather, what made possible the enforcement of obligations between Christian, Muslim, and Jewish agents was a mixture of diplomatic agreements, specialized brokers, and widely shared customary norms and routines about the exchange of war prisoners and commodities. Particularly important was the mutual recognition of written agreements stipulated on either side of the Christian-Muslim political and legal divide. A fifteenth-century Malaga Muslim jurist favored standing by contractual obligations toward Christian dealers (Miller), and in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries civil and commercial courts of Mediterranean Europe accepted as binding contracts signed before a Muslim judge in North Africa (Kaiser and Calafat).

(p.20) Early modern France and the United Provinces represent an example unlike the Mediterranean. In those states, merchants belonging to multiple religious groups had easy access to a common legal and jurisdictional system, at least insofar as their business contracts were concerned. The challenge there is to recognize when this legal homogeneity made merchants indifferent to the religious identities of their contractual parties and when, by contrast, extralegal elements affected decisions about whom to enter into a contract with and on what terms. Antunes and Marzagalli develop a typology of contractual agreements that allows us to move beyond the question of whether cross-cultural business cooperation existed or not, and to determine instead for what purposes and under what circumstances parties were willing and able to cooperate with members of other religious and confessional groups. Across most of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe, certain types of credit contracts, such as marine insurance or freight contracts, entailed less risk than general partnerships, because their stipulations were specific and could thus be more easily monitored via the courts. In those types of contracts, we should not be surprised to find a high degree of opportunistic alliances between merchants of different religions and confessions. General partnerships, by contrast, were normally formed by relatives or at least coreligionists because their members were fully liable to one another and thus needed to count on robust social incentives, rather than on the threat of the law, in order to behave honestly.

IV. When and How Did Violence Coexist With Cross-Cultural Trade?

The word “trade” conjures images of willing parties coming together to bridge all other differences in the name of the pursuit of profit. As Sacks reminds us, the European discourse that depicts the international division of labor as an instrument of peace and prosperity harks back to Aristotle. In spite

of the legacy left by colonial exploitation and the vast economic inequalities that exist between nations, irenic views of international trade die hard. In the period considered in this volume, military conquest, piracy, contraband, slavery, and pillage accompanied most overseas trading ventures. Defensive reactions against foreign goods and foreign traders can be documented more frequently than not. And it is often impossible to draw a clear line between private and state violence or between institutions devised to deploy violence and those promoting commercial enterprise. One need only think of the Portuguese *Estado da Índia* and English East India Company to know how intertwined these functions were.

The captive trade in the Mediterranean offers striking evidence of the interdependence of commercial cooperation and religious antagonism. It flourished precisely because Christian and Muslim powers were in a state of open and permanent (p.21) conflict. Yet it operated on the basis of rules established not only for the exchange of prisoners but also for commodity trade, and it even promoted commodity trade. Spanish authorities, for example, issued licenses to trade in forbidden goods to those merchants willing to invest in the ransoming of Christian captives in North Africa. The Muslim jurist from Malaga who urged respect for contractual obligations with Christian traders did not argue in favor of a peaceful embrace of the “infidels.” He worried about the possible interruption of trade flows. The medieval and early modern Mediterranean was not a “middle ground,” in the sense in which Richard White has defined it, because, although neither side had the ability to subjugate the other by force, elaborate legal and diplomatic systems determined the modalities of legitimate trade.³⁹ By contrast, the first encounter between English and native traders in Newfoundland can indeed be described according to the “middle ground” model, not only because the parties involved stood on equal footing, at least until violence ensued, but also because they lacked formalized rules of contracting and dispute resolution.

V. Do Material Artifacts Bear the Imprint of Cross-Cultural Trade?

Variations of this question have interested older generations of art historians and today animate broader debates in the humanities. Halevi and Mark in this volume make a strong case for why we should pay more attention to the material traces left by cross-cultural trade. Artifacts are sometimes all that remain of ancient trade routes; other times, they are as numerous as written records. Even natural goods—a colorant or some spices—changed meanings and functions as they changed hands. Halevi reflects on those objects that divided symbolically one culture from another and, specifically, on the problems that cross-religious trade in books, candles, meat, clothes, slaves, and weapons of war posed to Islamic scholars. He insists, however, that many other goods traversed religious boundaries without causing hostile reactions.

Different interpretive challenges emerge when that was the case. Mark takes up some of those challenges. To interpret the semantics of elaborate creative objects in the absence of direct evidence of artistic patronage is particularly arduous when the objects traversed vast cultural frontiers. Orders had to be communicated across wide linguistic and cultural divides. Forged in one semantic field, religious symbols were absorbed into a new one. Mark’s study of West African ivory carvings highlights how trade was more than an infrastructure for cultural exchange. The artwork (p.22) produced by local artists for European consumers includes representations of the very objects that were exchanged with those consumers and with others. It thus offers a commentary—sometimes tragic, sometimes ironic—of the very trade networks to which artistic objects belonged. The spiritual and ritualistic meanings

embodied in certain figures can be very hard to decipher but point to a double hermeneutics in which religious constructs both crossed boundaries and remained estranged—that is, one that fits neither a model of incommensurability (in which producers and consumers passed like ships in the night), nor one of hybridity and *métissage* (in which multiple symbolic references converged and influenced one another in a seemingly fluid process).

* * *

By means of these five interlocking questions, this volume pursues an alternative approach to what Curtin called “comparative world history.” Certain phenomena and institutions, such as port cities or middlemen, can be found in many corners of the world. For this reason alone, it is important to tease out meaningful comparisons and to challenge Europe’s conceptual and empirical function as the standard against which comparisons are drawn—two principal goals of world history writing. At the same time, this book registers some dissatisfaction with the degree of generality that is required to write a synthetic history of the world, or even the history of one phenomenon on a planetary scale. Prompted by Geertz and some microhistorians, my questions chart a different route: one that generalizes the questions we ask more than the conclusions we can reach on the basis of individual case-study.⁴⁰ It is a route that forces us to delve into salient details while also developing a grammar for comparisons. Naturally, other questions could be added to those I proposed.

If a broad canvas is not part of this research agenda, out of the great diversity of cases and approaches that the ten chapters discuss, we can nonetheless emphasize two larger points. First, a creative combination of contract enforcement mechanisms, including the entire spectrum ranging from social coercion to legal means, characterizes the majority of cases analyzed here. More specifically, legal specialists and institutions were central to the commercial organization of both Christian and Muslim traders. This creative combination calls for a more refined analysis of the governance of both intra- and intergroup economic transactions.

Second, protracted commercial relations between members of different religious groups did not invariably generate more benevolent attitudes toward those viewed as enemies of one’s faith. In other words, accommodation and utilitarian pragmatism in the face of cross-cultural trade were widespread, but did not necessarily (p.23) express an incipient form of secularism. Sustained economic exchanges between traders of different religious backgrounds existed where (and sometimes because) religious boundaries were clearly demarcated. Political rulers, religious leaders, and legal scholars could adjust to the imperatives of commerce while they also injected religious concerns into their economic pursuits and military strategies.

These two points should, of course, be subjected to further specification and scrutiny. Even when stated in such general terms, though, they demonstrate why cross-cultural trade has become a linchpin of world, transnational, and comparative history, and can offer a new impetus to test these hypotheses the world over.

Notes:

(1) Robert Sabatino Lopez, “European Merchants in the Medieval Indies: The Evidence of Commercial Documents,” *Journal of Economic History*, 3 (1943): 164–184.

- (2) Rudi Matthee, *The Pursuit of Pleasure: Drugs and Stimulants in Iranian History, 1500–1900* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 137–140.
- (3) Philip D. Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).
- (4) Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade*, 46. See also Abner Cohen, “Cultural Strategies in the Organization of Trading Diasporas,” in *The Development of Indigenous Trade and Markets in West Africa*, ed. Claude Meillassoux (London: Oxford University Press for the International African Seminar, 1971), 266–281. Via Curtin, Cohen’s article has become a staple citation among historians. For its usage, see also Chapters 1 and 8 in this volume.
- (5) Isaiah Berlin, *The Hedgehog and the Fox: An Essay on Tolstoy’s View of History* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1993 [1953]), 3.
- (6) S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza*, 5 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967–1993).
- (7) For a concise statement of this intellectual pursuit, see the talk that Goitein delivered at Columbia University on October 22, 1973, published as *Interfaith Relations in Medieval Islam* (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Post Press, 1973). The position of Jews in medieval Muslim societies and, specifically, Goitein’s reading of Jewish-Muslim economic relations remain highly contested subjects. Pertinent reflections can be found in Leor Halevi, “Christian Impurity versus Economic Necessity: A Fifteenth-Century Fatwa on European Paper,” *Speculum*, 83 (2008): 917–945, 921, and Jessica L. Goldberg, “On Reading Goitein’s *A Mediterranean Society*: A View from Economic History,” *Mediterranean Historical Review*, 26.2 (2011): 171–186.
- (8) Avner Greif, *Institutions and the Path to the Modern Economy: Lessons from Medieval Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). Margariti in Chapter 8 expands on Goitein’s lessons to demonstrate the richness of Geniza records for the study of cross-cultural trade when they are used alongside other sources, including non-textual records.
- (9) In assessing the disputed position of world historians amidst the larger group of professional historians, Philip Pomper emphasized that “the task of grand synthesis requires hedgehogs, Isaiah Berlin’s great system-builders or holists, whereas the history profession attracts foxes, Berlin’s thinkers who relish detail and particularity.” Pomper, “World History and Its Critics,” *History and Theory*, 34.2 (1995): 1–7, 1–2. Among Curtin’s many earlier publications on African and Atlantic history, see in particular his *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969) and *Economic Change in Precolonial Africa: Senegambia in the Era of the Slave Trade*, 2nd ed. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975).
- (10) Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Siân Reynolds, 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Row, 1972–1973) and *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th–18th Century*, trans. Siân Reynolds, 3 vols. (New York: Harper and Row, 1981–1984). Braudel has been recognized as an early proponent of what became the study of trade diasporas, specifically regarding his interest in the Armenian merchants of the seventeenth century. Ina Baghdiantz McCabe,

The Shah's Silk for Europe's Silver: The Eurasian Trade of the Julfa Armenians in Safavid Iran and India (1530–1750) (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1999), xxi–xxii, 27.

(11) Jerry H. Bentley, *Old World Encounters: Cross-Cultural Contacts and Exchanges in Pre-Modern Times* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

(12) Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System*, 3 vols. (New York: Academic Press, 1973–1989); Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System, A.D. 1250–1350* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

(13) A few titles will suffice, listed here in chronological order. Ng Chin-Keong, *Trade and Society: The Amoy Network on the China Coast, 1683–1735* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, National University of Singapore, 1983); Stephen Frederic Dale, *Indian Merchants and Eurasian Trade, 1600–1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Claude Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants, 1750–1947: Traders of Sind from Bukhara to Panama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Scott C. Levi, *The Indian Diaspora in Central Asia and its Trade, 1550–1900* (Leiden: Brill, 2001); Ina Baghdiantz McCabe, Gelina Harlaftis, and Ioanna Pepelassis Minoglou, eds., *Diaspora: Entrepreneurial Networks* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2005); Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012 [2009]); David Hancock, *Oceans of Wine: Madeira and the Emergence of American Trade and Taste* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009); Sebouh David Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean: The Global Trade Networks of Armenian Merchants from New Julfa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

(14) Among a larger literature, see Alida C. Metcalf, *Go-Betweens and the Colonization of Brazil, 1500–1600* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), and Simon Schaffer, Lissa Roberts, Kapil Raj, and James Delbourgo, eds., *The Brokered World: Go-Betweens and Global Intelligence, 1770–1820* (Sagamore Beach, MA: Science History Publications, 2009), which includes critical remarks on the concept of “go-between” by Sanjay Subrahmanyam (429–440).

(15) For a highly readable yet sophisticated account, see Kenneth Pomeranz and Steven Topik, *The World That Trade Created: Society, Culture, and the World Economy, 1400–the Present* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2006 [1999]).

(16) An Ngram search in the English-language collections of Google Books shows that, with some ups and downs, the expressions “trade diasporas” and “cross-cultural trade” have become more and more frequent since the 1970s.

(17) Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade*, ix.

(18) Clifford Geertz, “Thick Description: Toward and Interpretive Theory of Culture,” in his *The Interpretation of Culture: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 3–30, 26.

(19) Jerry H. Bentley, “Cross-Cultural Interaction and Periodization in World History,” *American Historical Review*, 101.3 (1996): 749–770. The chapters in this volume would fall across two of the six eras in which Bentley divides the history of the world: the “age of transregional nomadic empires (1000–1500 C.E.)” and the “modern age (1500 C.E. to the present)” (756).

(20) The expression “early modern,” in particular, has for some time now been used in the writing of world and global history. The *Journal of Early Modern History: Contacts, Comparisons, Contrasts* is one prominent example of this tendency. As “the first scholarly journal dedicated to the study of early modernity from this world-historical perspective,” it characterizes the period between 1300 and 1800 as one “marked by a rapidly increasing level of global interaction” <http://www.brill.com/journal-early-modern-history> (accessed on December 1, 2012). For recent reappraisals of a now long-standing historiographical debate on the potential and limits of “early modern” as a periodization in world history, see Jack A. Goldstone, “Divergence in Cultural Trajectories: The Power of the Traditional within the Early Modern,” R. Bin Wong, “Did China’s Late Empire Have an Early Modern Era?,” and Kenneth Pomeranz, “Areas, Networks, and the Search for ‘Early Modern’ East Asia,” all in *Comparative Early Modernities, 1100–1800*, ed. David Porter (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 165–193, 195–216, 245–269, respectively. For the use of the term “medieval” in relation to the history of the Indian Ocean, see Chapter 8 by Roxani Eleni Margariti in this volume.

(21) Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade*, 230, 253.

(22) Edna Bonacich, “A Theory of Middleman Minorities,” *American Sociological Review*, 38.5 (1973): 583–594; James E. Rauch, “Business and Social Networks in International Trade,” *Journal of Economic Literature*, 39.4 (2001): 1177–1203.

(23) For another example of how to read against the grain sources that document cross-cultural economic transactions in a context in which those very transactions were prohibited, see Teofilo F. Ruiz, “Trading with the ‘Other’: Economic Exchanges between Muslims, Jews, and Christians in Late Medieval Northern Castile,” in *Medieval Spain: Culture, Conflict, and Coexistence: Studies in Honour of Angus MacKay*, ed. Roger Collins and Anthony Goodman (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 63–78.

(24) For the complementarity of fox- and hedgehog-like approaches to historical inquiry, see David Harris Sacks’s review essay on Robert W. Fogel and Geoffrey R. Elton, *Which Road to the Past?: Two Views of History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983): “The Hedgehog and the Fox Revisited,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 16.2 (1985): 267–280.

(25) Fredrik Barth, “Ecological Relationship of Ethnic Groups in Swat, North Pakistan,” *American Anthropologist*, 58.6 (1956): 1079–1089; Barth, ed., *Ethnic Group and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Difference* (Bergen/Oslo and London: Universitets Forlaget; George Allen and Unwin, 1969).

(26) Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade*, 174.

(27) Hancock, *Oceans of Wine*, 148.

(28) Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade*, 3.

(29) For a conventional articulation of this argument, see Douglass C. North, “Institutions, Transactions Costs, and the Rise of Merchant Empires,” in *The Political Economy of Merchant Empires*, ed. James D. Tracy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 22–40.

(30) David Abulafia, "The Role of Trade in Muslim-Christian Contact during the Middle Ages," in his *Mediterranean Encounters: Economic, Religious, Political, 1100–1550* (Aldershot, UK, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2000), I: 3.

(31) This tendency is visible, for example, in Levi, *The Indian Diaspora* and Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean*. A sophisticated and well-documented account of the early modern Armenian trading diaspora (to which Curtin had devoted an innovative chapter at a time when the secondary literature on the subject was negligible [*Cross-Cultural Trade*, 179–206]), Aslanian's study nonetheless illuminates the sources of intra-Armenian solidarity more than the way in which Armenian merchants sealed economic contracts with non-Armenians.

(32) See Oliver Williamson, "Calculativeness, Trust, and Economic Organization," *Journal of Law and Economics* 36.1 (1993): 453–486, and the exchange that ensued between the author and Richard Craswell in the same issue of the journal (487–502).

(33) Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* [1776], ed. Edwin Cannan; with a new preface by George J. Stigler (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 17 (Book 1, Chapter 2).

(34) K. N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilization in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 226.

(35) Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilization*, 5.

(36) Paul E. Lovejoy and David Richardson, "Trust, Pawnship, and Atlantic History: The Institutional Foundations of the Old Calabar Slave Trade," *American Historical Review*, 104.2 (1999): 333–355. Lovejoy has expanded on some of Curtin's interests in both African history and the study of trade diasporas and cross-cultural trade in several studies, beginning with his *Caravans of Kola: The Hausa Kola Trade 1700–1900* (Zaria, Nigeria: Ahmadu Bello University Press, 1980).

(37) Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers*.

(38) On the importance of group identification in transaction costs economics, see Janet Tai Landa, *Trust, Ethnicity, and Identity: Beyond the New Institutional Economics of Ethnic Trading Networks, Contract Law, and Gift Exchange* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), esp. 101–113. For the same author, only groups of small size can solve coordination problems informally: Robert Cooter and Janet T. Landa, "Personal versus Impersonal Trade: Size of Trading Groups and Contract Law," *International Review of Law and Economics*, 4 (1984): 15–22.

(39) Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815*, Twentieth Anniversary Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), esp. 50–93. See also Chapters 2 and 4 in this volume.

(40) Francesca Trivellato, "Is There a Future for Italian Microhistory in the Age of Global History?" *California Italian Studies*, 2.1 (2011). Permalink: <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/0z94n9hq>.

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