

Trade and Civilisation

Economic Networks and Cultural Ties,
from Prehistory to the Early Modern Era

Edited by Kristian Kristiansen,
Thomas Lindkvist, and Janken Myrdal



TRADE AND CIVILISATION

This book provides the first global analysis of the relationship between trade and civilisation from the beginning of civilisation around 3000 BC until the modern era around AD 1600. Encompassing the various networks including the Silk Road, the Indian Ocean trade, Near Eastern family traders of the Bronze Age, and the Medieval Hanseatic League, it examines the role of the individual merchant, the products of trade, the role of the state, and the technical conditions for land and sea transport that created diverging systems of trade and developed global trade networks. Trade networks, however, were not durable. The contributors discuss the establishment and decline of great trading network systems, and how they related to the expansion of civilisation, and to different forms of social and economic exploitation. Case studies focus on local conditions as well as global networks until the sixteenth century when the whole globe was connected by trade.

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

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One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108425414

DOI: [10.1017/9781108340946](https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108340946)

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First published 2018

Printed in United Kingdom by Clays Ltd

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Kristiansen, Kristian, 1948– editor. | Lindkvist, Thomas, 1949– editor. | Myrdal, Janken, 1949– editor.

Title: Trade and civilisation : economic networks and cultural ties, from prehistory to the early modern era / edited by Kristian Kristiansen, University of Gothenburg, Thomas Lindkvist, University of Gothenburg, Janken Myrdal, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences.

Description: New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

Identifiers: LCCN 2017053363 | ISBN 9781108425414 (hardback) |

Subjects: LCSH: Commerce – History – Medieval, 500–1500. |

Commerce – History – To 500. | Civilization – History.

Classification: LCC HF395.T73 2018 | DDC 380.9–dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2017053363>

ISBN 978-1-108-42541-4 Hardback

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PREFACE

Trade and Civilisation results from a three-step academic venture. The idea for the book originated in two Swedish interdisciplinary conferences on Global Histories held in 2011 and 2012, where a number of central research themes were identified and discussed. It inspired the three editors to propose a carefully prepared international follow-up conference on the theme of trade and civilisation that should lead to a book. The conference was held in Gothenburg in May 2013, and papers were precirculated and discussed by commentators. After that, manuscripts were revised and finalised in the light of the conference. Finally, two peer reviewers made substantial, but constructive, comments on manuscripts, leading to a final editing of the chapters before publication.

We owe our gratitude for economic support of the conference to the Swedish Riksbank Foundation, which also generously supported the initial Global History conferences. We are also grateful to the Department of Historical Studies at the University of Gothenburg, for allowing us to draw heavily on its publication services. Rich Potter did all digital work on illustrations and graphics, as well as formatting, and Sara Ellis Nilsson did the copy editing. Finally, we are grateful to the Cambridge University Press editors: Asya Graf for taking the book on board, and Beatrice Rehl for leading it on to final publication. We hope readers will find as much inspiration in reading the chapters as we did in doing the conference and writing the book.

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