



The *History of World Trade since 1450* offers help in understanding the complex interactions between peoples over time as they sought to exchange goods and services to their own benefit. Economics activity has been described as “getting” and “spending.” All people have done this since humankind began. Individually, people cannot do as well for themselves as they can collectively, either in getting or in spending. Trade broadens the return from such activities, widening the audience for what people have to offer as they try to get as much as they can to spend, and widening their range of choices as they seek the most when they spend. Geographical constraints limit what individuals are able to accomplish in selling the fruits of their labor and in maximizing their gains.

Over time some individuals began to occupy the middle ground between buyer and seller, offering to help individuals earn more and buy more, quantitatively and qualitatively. Traders charged fees to function as business brokers and bring together buyers and sellers, but diminished the competitive disadvantage suffered by anyone who initiated a transaction. With their help, trade grew from neighborly to local, to regional, to national, to international. With the growth of trade, peoples’ worlds grew and—ideally—the returns from their efforts and their standards of living grew, too.

The 500 years since the middle of the fifteenth century witnessed a spectacular expansion of world trade. These volumes are designed to offer the reader information about the changes in the world that caused and were caused by this expansion. Precipitated largely by European voyages of exploration and discovery that had as their primary purpose a search for better markets in which to sell and to buy, the growth of world trade has had numerous consequences, including the ending of the very empires that started and initially prospered from that expansion. It is a tale with many players, a story with many parts, all told here.

The *History of World Trade since 1450* is intended for general readers with a high-school or college-level education, but the editors and authors expect that many others also will find much here of use and interest. There are more than 400 entries in the encyclopedia, arranged in alphabetical order for easy reference. The entries vary in length from 200 to 3,000 words and concern everything that has to do with the subject in the period from 1450, the beginning of European expansion, to the present day. The entries explore all regions of the world. Thus they deal with persons and places, and developments and ideas that are global in their reach and global in their implications. The stories told are not always

wonderful; the consequences of world trade have not always been good. The expansion of world trade across the Atlantic Ocean included the expansion of African slavery to the Western Hemisphere, for instance. But all is fodder for this discussion.

The entries have been written by experts, authorities in their respective fields; each contributor is identified by name. Like the topics they address, the authors are international. As much as possible, the authors and editors have used language that should be easily accessible to the public at large. The result is a set of entries reflecting immense and solid scholarship. A glossary of terms with which the reader might be unfamiliar appears at the end of volume 2, and each entry concludes with a short list of articles and books to guide readers to further sources of information. Cross-references at the end of each entry refer to related topics. In addition, an outline of contents at the beginning of volume 1 groups the entries thematically.

The *History of World Trade since 1450* contains historical images and contemporary photographs to illustrate the entries. Particularly for this topic, it is often difficult to visualize the subjects discussed. The editors have chosen the images carefully to provide further information and representation of the things included. There are sidebars that expand on an interesting aspect of a subject. At the end of the second volume, further material is included to assist the reader. In addition to the glossary, the concluding matter includes primary source documents and a comprehensive subject index. The primary documents may be of particular interest to those undertaking research in this field (for instance, extracts from United States Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton's 1791 "Report on Manufactures"; and key passages from the famed "Navigation Acts" issued by the British Parliament during the reign of King Charles II). The editorial board and contributors have all benefited from the editorial assistance given by individuals at Macmillan Reference USA, in particular Hélène Potter and Mark Drouillard. Their dedication to the project and infinite capacity for work inspired everyone. We express our thanks to them and to the others who contributed by suggesting authors, entries, and materials for the set.

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