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Session 64

Commodities:
Understanding the Global
Economy through the History of
Things, 1000-2000 CE

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Session 64: Understanding the Global Economy through the History of Things, 1000-2000 CE

The production, trade, and consumption of commodities such as silk, salt, oil and cotton have woven together different parts of the world throughout the centuries. This panel will explore the character of these international links and show how they have changed during the past 1000 years. Papers will investigate the connections between agriculture, trade, industry and consumption created by particular commodities, examine the impact of an increasing global integration of markets on the way things were produced and ask how we can understand the particular ways specific places were integrated into the world economy. Taken together, the papers will inquire into the impact of states, diverse resource endowments, non-state actors, and the distribution of social power in particular places on the spatial structure of the production and consumption of a number of core commodities. We will pay particular attention to the people who facilitated these global networks--merchants, diaspora communities, and migrant workers, among others.

During the past years, historians have increasingly become interested in understanding processes, identities and networks that transcend the nation-state. The papers in this panel will explore more global approaches to understanding the development of past economies by interrogating the changing relationships between the economies of different towns, cities, regions and nation-states to one another through the history of particular commodities. Among the commodities this panel is exploring are tea, coffee, opium, cod, cotton, silk, rice as well as cloth and clothing. Papers touch upon the history of all continents and range in time from the

fourteenth to the twentieth century. These diverse studies bring together historical, economic, anthropological and sociological approaches to the study of past economic connections and focus on the relationships between diverse and sometimes seemingly contradictory developments. They all share an interest in how a focus on commodities can help us think more globally about history and economic change.

Sven Beckert and Cemal Kafadar, Session chairs

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4. *Cloth Consumption, Commodity Chains, and Caribbean Colonies: Jamaica and Saint-Domingue in the 18th-Century Global Economy*. Robert S. DuPlessis
5. *The Globalization of Codfish and Wool in the Early Modern Period: The Emergence and Impact of Spanish-English-North American Triangular Trade*. Regina Grafe
6. *A History of Coffee*. Cemal Kafadar
7. *The Empire's Commodity Chain: Indian Tea in the World Economy C 1840-1947*. K Ravi Raman
8. *The Commodification of Opium and the Great Chinese Opium Plague*. Carl A. Trocki
9. *The Worldwide Web of Silk Production, 1300-2000*. Claudio Zanier