

Melyvn Dubofsky's work is a main source in several chapters for Kolin's narrative. Yet Dubofsky's emphasis on the power of workers in the electoral arena is never addressed, and cuts against Kolin's stress on the encompassing nature of exclusion and repression. Indeed, Kolin only engages with other historians by claiming that nearly all have missed the systemic nature of labor repression in a long footnote in the introduction (xxxiii–xxxiv). While many important works are drawn upon, the sum is less than the parts. Thus the book largely sits outside recent debates in the field.

Legal scholars will also be disappointed not to see attention to recent debates in their field. Research from Benjamin I. Sachs ("The Unbundled Union: Politics without Collective Bargaining" *Yale Law Journal* 123 [2013]: 148–207 and "Despite Preemption: Making Labor Law in Cities and States" *Harvard Law Review* 124 [2011]: 1153–1224) and Kate Andrias ("The New Labor Law" *Yale Law Journal* 126 [2016]: 2–100) has explored the collapse of the NLRA and its pluralist regime collective bargaining alongside the expansion of employment law at the state and local level, potentially filling the void left by organized labor's decline. Similarly absent is attention to the relevant field of carceral studies. Following Bruce Western and Katherine Beckett ("How Unregulated IS the U.S. Labor Market? The Penal System as a Labor Market Institution" *American Journal of Sociology* 104, no. 4 [January 1999]: 1030–60), prisons might be explored as key labor market institutions for the twentieth century United States, and thus relevant in the study of "labor repression."

The shifting fate of organized workers in the United States belongs at the forefront of the agenda for economic history. This will require new research and a more historically nuanced understanding of the shifting strategies of employers and managers, as can be seen for instance in Chad Pearson's *Reform or Repression: Organizing America's Anti-Union Movement* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015). Kolin's account may impress with its ambition, but it offers little in terms of conceptual clarity or new perspectives. Kolin largely reiterates long-established arguments while leaving aside more creative avenues for exploring the political economy of labor repression in the United States.

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*A Culture of Growth: The Origins of the Modern Economy.* By Joel Mokyr. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017. Pp. 400. \$20.65, hardcover.  
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There are few questions in economic history as important as understanding the preconditions for Western Europe's transition from Malthusian stagnation to sustained economic growth during the Industrial Revolution. And there are undoubtedly few people in a better position to shed light on this question than Joel Mokyr, who has dedicated his entire academic life to improving our knowledge of this unique episode in human history.

Nearly a decade ago, Mokyr argued in "The Enlightened Economy" that the belief in progress and science was essential in laying the foundations of the Industrial Revolution. In his new book, "A Culture of Growth," Mokyr goes back in time to document that much of this "enlightened" attitude had its origin in the earlier cultural shift that took place in early modern Europe, before the actual Enlightenment. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, European culture changed towards an increased willingness to manipulate nature for the material benefit of humankind. The scientific elite came

to believe that modern culture could outdo the achievements of classical civilization. The study of nature through experimentation became widespread, and the idea that the accumulation of useful knowledge was the driver of progress became common place.

The description of this cultural change inevitably brings us to a deeper question: Why did this same shift fail to materialize elsewhere? Given the important technological advances during the Song dynasty, China should have been a natural candidate. Mokyr believes Europe's advantage had to do with its unique combination of political fragmentation and knowledge market integration. Because of the carved up political landscape in Europe, dissent was harder to control, and non-orthodox thinking survived. And because ideas could easily travel across borders, thanks to the printing press, a continent-wide mail system, and the increased mobility of scientists, knowledge progressed.

In Mokyr's view, this shift towards a culture of scientific progress was neither preordained nor random. Rather, he interprets the change that occurred in Europe through the lens of cultural evolution, where culture is a set of beliefs, values, and preferences. Cultural change often depends on the persuasiveness of a few "cultural entrepreneurs." Without someone like Francis Bacon, who was essential in pushing the idea of inductive empirical research, history might have turned out differently. Yet, in spite of this apparent randomness, Bacon's success was not independent of the environment he lived in. China had its fair share of enlightened scientists, but they did not benefit from the fertile ground that existed in Europe, and so their novel ideas failed to become widespread.

The supporting evidence in Mokyr's book is impressive. The chapter that describes the Republic of Letters as an embryonic transnational system of science is one of my favorites. This virtual community of scientists communicated with each other through letters which they were obliged to answer. Members were committed to sharing knowledge. This created a system of open science, where knowledge diffused and accumulated. The payoff was peer respect and academic reputation. Ideas were fiercely contested, and pluralism became the norm. This institution did much to create an integrated competitive market for ideas.

The chapters that compare China to Europe are illuminating. At some level the story is well known: China was a unified homogeneous state that did not tolerate dissent. At the same time, the country had great scientists, and knowledge was held in high esteem: a telling example is the 850,000 pages encyclopedia with 10,000 chapters, compiled by Chen Menlei in 1726. Yet, one essential difference with Europe was the neo-Confucian view that the classical canon contained everything one ever needed to know. This illustrates one of Mokyr's premises: the culture of progress—the belief that man can investigate and manipulate nature to advance—should not be taken for granted.

The book also raises some further questions. If the cultural shift in Europe flourished because of the rare combination of a fragmented polity and an integrated knowledge market, then what was the true origin of technological progress? The economic and institutional conditions that gave rise to the cultural shift, or the cultural shift itself? Ultimately, it may not matter: it is obvious that nothing happens in isolation, and Mokyr certainly does not subscribe to a unicausal explanation of why Western Europe found the path to sustained technological progress. The balance in his writing, avoiding the temptation to push his argument too far, is one of the great strengths of the book, although it occasionally comes at the cost of not completely knowing where the author stands.

Mokyr leaves few stones unturned. Maybe the one area that could benefit from a more extensive discussion is the link to the Industrial Revolution. Although this time period is covered in depth in "The Enlightened Economy," the relation to what happened in the nineteenth century is somewhat speculative. As the author readily admits, the scientific

revolution had little direct impact on the initial stages of the Industrial Revolution. In particular, the early technological advances in textiles and iron had more to do with tinkering than with the direct application of scientific knowledge. However, because the later stages of the Industrial Revolution became less artisanal-based, Mokyr argues that the transition to modern growth would not have been sustainable without the cultural shift that caused the widening of the knowledge base centuries before. It is clear that without scientific progress the Industrial Revolution would have petered out, but the question remains whether this later progress would have occurred anyway, given the increased demand for knowledge in the second half of the nineteenth century.

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#### ASIA

*Global Trade in the Nineteenth Century: The House of Houqua and the Canton System.*

By John D. Wong. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016. Pp. xi, 247. \$92.65, hardcover; \$31.99, paper.

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The book, well researched and lucidly written, tells a story of a Chinese entrepreneur (1769–1843) in Canton in the early decades of the nineteenth century, who was known as Houqua in English historical documents or Wu Bingjian in Chinese. The significance of Houqua lies in the fact that he transformed himself from a local merchant operating his business within the traditional Chinese cultural framework of the pre-Opium War era into a successful global trader by overcoming many of the perceived institutional and cultural barriers. Wong's portrayal of Houqua challenges such conventional characterizations of early Chinese merchants as being risk-averse, kinship-bound, domestic-oriented, and convention-driven—the qualities that run counter to an image of the Schumpeterian entrepreneur closely associated with *dynamic and innovative economies of the West*. Furthermore, the author constructs an evidence-based account that Canton Chinese traders played a role in shaping the patterns of global trade at the time. Over the past two decades, there has been a steady accumulation of research devoted to a reexamination of China's past, until the Sino-British conflict in the 1840s, in all aspects, including commerce. Wong's book is one such example. His extensive and meticulous archival work across the Pacific and the Atlantic Oceans provides proof persuasive enough to convince the reader to adopt a new global perspective in understanding historical facts about Canton trade with the outside world in those days.

From 1757 to 1842 the Qing state allowed Westerners to trade in China, but only with the government-licensed Hong (or Cohong) merchants at the port of Canton. Houqua became the most prominent of the Hong merchants in the early nineteenth century and made a name for himself as an important player on the global trading scene although he never left his base in Canton. According to Wong's narrative—based on genealogies, Qing official documents, and the British East India Company (EIC) records—Houqua had a long history of doing business in his family, which migrated from Fujian. He engaged in the family's business with Europeans in Canton, and found a way to deal evenhandedly with the EIC, the dominant power then, by the early 1800s thanks to his top-notch negotiation skills and his ability to supply quality goods most reliably. He quickly became the largest supplier of teas and nankeen cloth for the EIC in Canton and