



From Silver to Cocaine: Latin American Commodity Chains and the Building of the World Economy, 1500–2000 (American Encounters/Global Interactions)

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Demonstrating that globalization is a centuries-old phenomenon, *From Silver to Cocaine* examines the commodity chains that have connected producers in Latin America with consumers around the world for five hundred years. In clear, accessible essays, historians from Latin America, England, and the United States trace the paths of many of Latin America's most important exports: coffee, bananas, rubber, sugar, tobacco, silver, henequen (fiber), fertilizers, cacao, cocaine, indigo, and cochineal (insects used to make dye). Each contributor follows a specific commodity from its inception, through its development and transport, to its final destination in the hands of consumers. The essays are arranged in chronological order, according to when the production of a particular commodity became significant to Latin America's economy. Some—such as silver, sugar, and tobacco—were actively produced and traded in the sixteenth century; others—such as bananas and rubber—only at the end of the nineteenth century; and cocaine only in the twentieth.

By focusing on changing patterns of production and consumption over time, the contributors reconstruct complex webs of relationships and economic processes, highlighting Latin America's central and interactive place in the world economy. They show how changes in coffee consumption habits, clothing fashions, drug usage, or tire technologies in Europe, Asia, and the Americas reverberate through Latin American commodity chains in profound ways. The social and economic outcomes of the continent's export experience have been mixed. By analyzing the dynamics of a wide range of commodities over a five-hundred-year period, *From Silver to Cocaine* highlights this diversity at the same time that it provides a basis for comparison and points to new ways of doing global history.

Contributors. Marcelo Bucheli, Horacio Crespo, Zephyr Frank, Paul Gootenberg, Robert Greenhill, Mary Ann Mahony, Carlos Marichal, David McCreery, Rory Miller, Aldo Musacchio, Laura Nater, Ian Read, Mario Samper, Steven Topik,

Allen Wells

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Editorial Review

Review

“*From Silver to Cocaine* is an ambitious and novel application of the ‘commodity chain’ approach to the insertion of a whole continent into the world economy. It has no rivals.”—William Gervase Clarence-Smith, author of *Cocoa and Chocolate, 1765–1914*

“*From Silver to Cocaine* is an important and innovative collection. It provides a corrective to the purely national studies of commodities and of export sectors, and to studies that posit influence in only one direction, focusing on the international penetration of capital and trade into Latin America. This book makes a strong statement about the direction of future research: it should be required reading for anyone interested in the economic history of Latin America, broadly conceived.”—Edward Beatty, Kellogg Institute for International Studies, University of Notre Dame

“[A] very sound economic history of some of the most important Latin American commodities, one that sheds new light on the histories of the producing countries. Anyone wishing to learn about the individual commodities and the impact of this trade on Latin America history will do well to read this great collection. Just as importantly, though, it provides a sound starting point for a comparative, more global history that can explore the integration of Latin America into the world economy in a more complex manner than can be achieved through the aggregation of national economic histories.”

(Alejandra Irigoin *Social History*)

“All in all, this is an important volume. The commodity chain approach stimulates economic historians to think beyond national boundaries and contextualizes products within a wider geographical framework. It combines production with consumption, the latter a largely overlooked theme . . . [T]hese case studies illuminate the economic realities of Latin America and beyond in new and interesting ways.”

(Erick D. Langer *Journal of Social History*)

“There is much merit in this book, and indeed, in a commodity-chain approach to the study of the varied primary products emanating from Latin America and the Caribbean. It is well put together by the editors, and the translations of chapters written originally in a different language are of a high standard. It is also timely, as globalization and the rise of Chinese demand are driving many Latin American countries back to concentration on commodity exports.”

(Victor Bulmer-Thomas *Business History Review*)

From the Back Cover

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About the Author

Steven Topik is Professor of History at the University of California, Irvine. His books include *The World That Trade Created: Society, Culture, and the World Economy, 1400 to the Present* (with Kenneth Pomeranz) and *Trade and Gunboats: The United States and Brazil in the Age of Empire*.

Carlos Marichal is Professor in the Centro de Estudios Históricos at El Colegio de México. He is the author of *A Century of Debt Crises in Latin America: From Independence to the Great Depression, 1820–1930* and numerous books in Spanish.

Zephyr Frank is Assistant Professor of Latin American History at Stanford University. He is the author of *Dutra's World: Wealth and Family in Nineteenth-Century Rio de Janeiro*.

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