

Call for papers to Session 94  
on the XVIth World Economic History Congress, Stellenbosch, 9-13 July, 2012:

**LOOKING FOR THE ROOTS OF DEVELOPMENT IN EARLY TRADE STATISTICS (18TH-19TH CENTURY)**

The structural changes of the eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century, including the Industrial Revolution, are at the root of the development of our economic system. However, the on-going discussion about the Great Divergence between Europe and Asia (Pomeranz, Clark, etc.) shows that the nature and the immediate causes of these structural changes are still a matter of debate among economists and historians.

This session will explore these from the point of view of early trade statistics. This parallels the motivation of eighteenth and nineteenth state officials and economic authors who stressed time and again the importance of foreign trade for prosperity and the need to know it better. Indeed, foreign trade statistics are for many countries (including Europe, the US and the Ottoman Empire) among the earliest and most reliable economic data produced by past governments. They are available from mid-eighteenth century onward for most of these nations, sometimes even earlier (England, France), and present fairly continuous series. True, for a long time, external trade was seen and interpreted as a minor factor (if a factor at all) in the explanation of the British Industrial Revolution. As the impact of globalization on modern economies has proved that international trade has the potential to accelerate or impede the growth of national economies, this lack of interest in international trade has been called into question. In light of the importance of extra-European goods in fuelling an industrious revolution through the diversification of consumption and releasing the Malthusian constraints of pre-industrial, 'organic' economies, international trade is now being presented as a major dimension of the first industrial revolution. Researchers have often used trade statistics of individual countries, but little comparative work has been done to assess their reliability and provide a more comprehensive view of the picture they give of early economies.

We welcome:

- Papers that use early trade statistics series to measure the contribution of external trade to early economic development.
- Papers that use early trade statistics series to measure the transformation of economies in 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century.
- Papers that compare early trade statistics series from different countries to discuss the evolution of their bi-lateral trades.
- Papers that examine the way trade statistics series were constructed by early modern states, assess their quality and how they may be used by economic historians.

Proposals for papers should be sent to the corresponding organiser no later than 1 November 2011.

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