

The Spinning World:

A Global History of Cotton Textiles, 1200-1850

edited by Giorgio Riello and Prasannan Parthasarathi

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This collection of essays examines the history of cotton textiles in the *longue durée*. By juxtaposing familiar pieces of the history of cotton with others that are less well-known the volume seeks to shed new answers to two questions. First, what is it about cotton that made it the paradigmatic first global commodity? And second, why did cotton industries in different parts of the world follow such different paths of development? Included in this second question is, of course, the problem of the so-called 'great divergence' that suggests that Europe and Asia followed a common path of economic development until the end of the eighteenth century. Cotton textiles have been central in explaining the nature, timing and effects of a 'divergence' in the nineteenth.

Essays included in the volume are authored by 19 scholars from eight different nations, all of whom are specialists in the study of textiles. They are drawn from a range of sub-disciplines within history and bring together their areas and periods of specialization to provide a global history. Therefore, the volume covers a wide variety of approaches to the study of history, which is essential for constructing a global picture. Some of the contributors are internationally well known for their publications on the history of cotton, as well as other textiles in different world areas. The volume also draws upon the research of a number of younger scholars whose work will form the core of the future development of textile history as a global discipline.

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