



Religion and Trade: Cross-Cultural Exchanges in World History, 1000-1900

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Although trade connects distant people and regions, bringing cultures closer together through the exchange of material goods and ideas, it has not always led to unity and harmony. From the era of the Crusades to the dawn of colonialism, exploitation and violence characterized many trading ventures, which required vessels and convoys to overcome tremendous technological obstacles and merchants to grapple with strange customs and manners in a foreign environment. Yet despite all odds, experienced traders and licensed brokers, as well as ordinary people, travelers, pilgrims, missionaries, and interlopers across the globe, concocted ways of bartering, securing credit, and establishing relationships with people who did not speak their language, wore different garb, and worshipped other gods.

Religion and Trade: Cross-Cultural Exchanges in World History, 1000-1900 focuses on trade across religious boundaries around the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic and Indian Oceans during the second millennium. Written by an international team of scholars, the essays in this volume examine a wide range of commercial exchanges, from first encounters between strangers from different continents to everyday transactions between merchants who lived in the same city yet belonged to diverse groups. In order to broach the intriguing yet surprisingly neglected subject of how the relationship between trade and religion developed historically, the authors consider a number of interrelated questions: When and where was religion invoked explicitly as part of commercial policies? How did religious norms affect the everyday conduct of trade? Why did economic imperatives, political goals, and legal institutions help sustain commercial exchanges across religious barriers in different times and places? When did trade between religious groups give way to more tolerant views of "the other" and when, by contrast, did it coexist with hostile images of those decried as "infidels"?

Exploring captivating examples from across the world and spanning the course of the second millennium, this groundbreaking volume sheds light on the political, economic, and juridical underpinnings of cross-cultural trade as it emerged or developed at various times and places, and reflects on the cultural and religious significance of the passage of strange persons and exotic objects across the many frontiers that separated humankind in medieval and early modern times.

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