

GENERAL AND MISCELLANEOUS

Handbook of Cliometrics. Edited by Claude Diebolt and Michael Hauptert. Berlin Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag, 2016. Pp. xxii, 590. \$339.00, cloth.
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How would you organize an original “Handbook of Cliometrics,” given that you were allowed 600 printed pages? First, you might want to assemble an international cast of authors. Claude Diebolt and Michael Hauptert, the editors of this *Handbook*, selected 26 authors (including themselves), 14 with U.S. affiliation and 12 with Western European affiliation spread among five countries. In my view the main omission is a Chinese scholar. If cliometrics is to have relevance to the present, then China as the fastest growing country today and with a history rich with economic issues and quantitative data should have representation. However, I commend the editors for the variety in age, experience, and specializations of the contributors.

Second, you would have to decide on the organization of the book. For example, that could be chronological, geographical, according to turning events (pandemics, wars, etc.), or according to research steps (data, technique, results, implications). Of course, the organization would depend on the purpose of the volume. Diebolt and Hauptert state the purpose as dissemination (not creation) of knowledge—whence the review-essay nature of many of the chapters, notwithstanding their express statement that the contributions should be neither original research nor a review article but rather “an overview of the contributions of cliometrics to the topic of discussion (p. xi).”

Third, you would have to determine the primary audience, whence the level of sophistication of the volume. The editors specify “digested knowledge in an easily accessible format,” and see “economists, historians, and social scientists in general” as the readership. Also, the *Handbook* will be immensely useful to quantitative economic historians as presentations of cliometric findings in economic-history specialties other than their own. Personally, I learned a lot about the state of research in several fields in which my ignorance is great. For most of us, I do not advocate that the *Handbook* be read from beginning to end even in several sittings. Rather, the *Handbook* is most efficiently approached as a reference volume—but, in my opinion, it is a reference volume that literally every cliometrician must have on his or her bookshelf! Each chapter ends with a list of references that in many cases is impressive in scope and depth.

There are six parts to the *Handbook*: History (of cliometrics), Human Capital (physical capital is deemphasized, in line with conventional wisdom and, of course, with cliometric findings), Growth (the longest part of the book), Finance (deep if not broad essays), Innovation (could be classified as a second Growth part—revealed preference of the editors suggests that, in their view, growth is the most-important topic in cliometrics), Statistics and Cycles (an odd title, but consistent with the two component chapters), and Government (chapters only on the Great Depression, with no other economic contraction considered, and war, with various conflicts over many centuries included).

One can approach the *Handbook* from the data-techniques-results-implications paradigm mentioned earlier. In his chapter on the history of cliometrics, Hauptert observes

that the development of data sets are a tremendous contribution of economic historians, but this comment is made only in passing. A chapter on data would have been welcomed. Still, some authors carry the data torch. Kacob Weisdorf pays substantial attention to church-book datasets and stresses the importance of more data collection; James Foreman-Peck has a section on economic-demographic data; Emanuele Felice does well on data issues and data sets regarding GDP convergence; Larry Neal discusses data sets in his chapter on financial markets, mentioning *measuringworth.com* and *eh.net* databases among others.

The chapters in *Statistics and Cycles* deal with econometric techniques but are more interesting than useful. Thomas Rahlf presents the history of statistical inference and Terrence C. Mills a theoretical chapter on trends, cycles, and structural brakes that is oriented more to the econometric specialists than to the typical cliometrician. However, Mills deserves praise for using a long-run series of British per-capita GDP for examples.

Regarding results of cliometric research, most of the book is concerned with just that phenomenon, though with varying mixtures of narrative description, quantitative findings, formulas, tables, and charts. I do take issue with the exclusion of certain topics. Yes, I know, I know that I am being unfair to the editors. But how could they not have a chapter on slavery—given both that slavery was the topic that essentially began cliometrics and that slavery—at least in the United States—has again become a hot topic in economic history. When I saw Stanley L. Engerman's name as an author, I hoped against hope that slavery, or at least the slave trade, would be one of his contributions—but that was not to be. And how about monetarism, relegated only to the Great Depression? Then there is the history of China, again viewed as not deserving a chapter or even a major section of existing chapters. To their credit, Engerman and Nathan Rosenberg do mention China in their history of innovation. This is China, China, China, where paper money was innovated, gunpowder was invented, shipbuilding and exploration celebrated, warfare systematized, and so on—let alone that China is the current growth leader of the world.

Many chapters deal with controversies, of which the most important concerns—you guessed it—the Industrial Revolution. Gregory Clark provides a chapter that summarizes the main explanations of why the Industrial Revolution happened at all and why it happened in England—but the chapter is almost entirely destructive rather than constructive. Every theory, whether based on incentives or institutions, is rejected. The counter-example of the Netherlands not having an Industrial Revolution of its own in an earlier century is offered. (Naturally, I wish that Clark had also considered the similar case of China.) At the end, Clark turns to his famous *Farewell to Alms* tome: “the excess fertility of the rich in the years 1250–1800 could itself be a factor changing the characteristics of the population across the preindustrial era” (p. 231). However, he acknowledges that the association of the economically successful with the demographically successful over generations has not yet shown to be more advanced in England than elsewhere (France? Netherlands? China?). So, with intellectual honesty, he is not ready to accept his own theory!

Yes, many chapters deal with controversies—but there is also consensus. The most important consensus is the Malthusian model. And, given that growth is the primary topic of the Handbook, that consensus is to be expected. Lord Byron (*Don*

Leon. London: the Booksellers, 1866: 28)—contemporary but no friend of Malthus—wrote:

Come Malthus, and, in Ciceronian prose,
 Tell how a rutting population grows,
 Until the produce of the soil is spent,
 And brats expire for want of aliment.
 Then call on God his mercies to dispense,
 And prune the mass by war and pestilence.
 Arm with your sophistry oppression's hand,
 And interdict coition through the land....
 Economists, who seek the world to thin,
 'Tis you that teach this so named deadly sin.

This, Malthusian, theory—much elaborated and of greater scholarly though not literary elegance—is the foundation of the Growth part of the Handbook.

All in all, the *Handbook of Cliometrics* is a truly admirable presentation and explication of the state of the art of quantitative economic history.

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Selling Empire India in the Making of Britain and America, 1600–1830. By Jonathan Eacott. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016. Pp. vii, 455. \$45.00, hardcover.
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This book is an exhaustive account of how the British and North Americans interacted with India. The discussion includes economic as well as cultural and political interactions. The number of pages devoted to describing each of these types of interactions are approximately equal. The book is organized chronologically in that each chapter covers all interactions within a space of years rather than covering individual topics. The overall argument of the book is that interactions with India were vital in shaping the economies, culture, and politics of Britain and North America. The symmetric issue of the role of Britain or North America in shaping India is not addressed.

The relevant economics facts are not new. Initially, in the 1600s, Britain purchased cotton goods manufactured in India from Indian cotton. Britain traded the cotton goods for enslaved peoples from Africa and sugar from the West Indies. By 1830, due to new technology for cotton spinning and weaving developed in England, and, though it is not mentioned, the invention of the cotton gin in North America, Britain was able to sell cotton goods manufactured in Britain from North American cotton to India. The basics of this transition are covered here. But Joseph Inikori (*Africans and the Industrial Revolution in England. A Study in International Trade and Economic Development.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) covered these trade patterns in much more detail. Eacott highlights the argument made by Griffiths, Hunt, and O'Brien (Political Components of the Industrial Revolution: Parliament and the