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978-0-521-84009-5 - An Economic History of Europe: Knowledge, Institutions and Growth, 600 to the Present

Karl Gunnar Persson

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## An Economic History of Europe

This concise and accessible introduction to European economic history focusses on the interplay between the development of institutions and the generation and diffusion of knowledge-based technologies. The author challenges the view that European economic history before the Industrial Revolution was constrained by population growth outstripping available resources. He argues instead that the limiting factor was the knowledge needed for technological progress, but also that Europe was unique in developing a scientific culture and institutions which were the basis for the unprecedented technological progress and economic growth of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Simple explanatory concepts are used to explain growth and stagnation as well as the convergence of income over time whilst text boxes, figures, an extensive glossary and online exercises enable students to develop a comprehensive understanding of the subject. This is the only textbook students will need to understand Europe's unique economic development and its global context.

KARL GUNNAR PERSSON is a professor in the Department of Economics at the University of Copenhagen, where he has been teaching comparative economic history and the history of globalization over the last thirty years. He is the author of *Pre-Industrial Economic Growth: Social Organization and Technological Progress in Europe* (1988) and *Grain Markets in Europe 1500–1900: Integration and Deregulation* (1999).

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**NEW APPROACHES TO ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL HISTORY**

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This book evolved over the years from the lectures I have given and give to my students at the Department of Economics in Copenhagen. I have, however, attempted to write a book for a wider audience who are searching for a very concise introduction to European economic history which is in tune with recent research. I make use of a few basic and simple economic tools which turn out to be very effective in the interpretation of history. The book offers a panoramic view rather than close-ups. However, the analytical framework will be useful in further studies of the specialized literature. For readers with little background knowledge in economics I provide a glossary defining key concepts, which are marked by italics and an asterisk, for example *bar-ter\**. Economic ideas demanding more attention are explained in the text or in appendices.

This is a work of synthesis, but it attempts to give challenging and new insights. I am indebted to generations of economic historians as well as to a great many of my contemporaries. That normally shows itself in endless footnotes, which not only interrupt the narrative flow but also drown the general historical trends amidst all the details. Instead, I have chosen to end each chapter with a selective list of references which is also a suggestion for further reading. Authors I am particularly influenced by are referred to in the main text.

A large number of colleagues have guided me. Cormac O'Gràda has as usual been a very stimulating critic and Paul Sharp has not only saved me from embarrassing grammatical errors but is also the co-author of two chapters. I would also like to thank Carl-Johan Dalgaard, Bodil Ejrnæs, Giovanni Federico, Christian Groth, Tim Guinnane, Ingrid Henriksen, Derek Keene, Markus Lampe, Barbro Nedstam and Jacob Weisdorf for helpful comments and suggestions.

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