For better or for worse, in recent times the rapid growth of international economic exchange has changed our lives. But when did this process of globalization begin, and what effects did it have on economies and societies? Pim de Zwart and Jan Luiten van Zanden argue that the networks of trade established after the voyages of Columbus and Da Gama of the late fifteenth century had transformative effects inaugurating the first era of globalization. The global flows of ships, people, money and commodities between 1500 and 1800 were substantial, and the realignment of production and distribution resulting from these connections had important consequences for demography, well-being, state formation and the long-term economic growth prospects of the societies involved in the newly created global economy. Whether early globalization had benign or malignant effects differed by region, but the world economy as we now know it originated in these changes in the early modern period.

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The Origins of Globalization

World Trade in the Making of the Global Economy, 1500–1800

PIM DE ZWART
Wageningen University, The Netherlands

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For my parents, Maria and Wim – PdZ
For my grandson, Maarten Matthijs – JLvZ
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This book is a work in global economic history and by implication a work of synthesis. Research into the economic development of all regions of the world has boomed in recent years, and, perhaps even more importantly, thanks to the development of a unified, quantitative framework for this research, has resulted in a high degree of comparability. This has been the result of collaborative research, often carried out by teams of scholars who used the same concepts to study economic change in the countries and regions of the world. One such team is the Maddison project, which continues the pioneering work by Angus Maddison to measure historical GDP per capita (and population). Our work draws heavily on the results from studies that have estimated long-run GDP for all parts of the globe. Scholars combined in the Maddison Project are Leticia Arroyo Abad, Bart van Ark, Jean-Pascal Bassino, Luis Bertola, Stephen Broadberry, Nicholas Crafts, John Devereux, Robert Inklaar, Giovanni Federico, Johan Fourie, Herman de Jong, Kyoji Fukao, Andre Hofman, Bas van Leeuwen, Peter Lindert, Debin Ma, Mikolaj Malinowski, Branko Milanovic, Sevket Pamuk, Leandro Prados de la Escosura, Pierre van der Eng, and Harry Wu, but especially the central role played by Jutta Bolt should be mentioned here. A related network, which has produced a similar dataset of estimates of real wages, has mainly built upon the innovative work by Robert Allen, and consists of, amongst others, Leticia Arroyo Abad, Jean-Pascal Bassino, Elwyn Davies, Bas van Leeuwen, Peter Lindert, Debin Ma, Tommy Murphy, Christine Moll-Murata, Sevket Pamuk, Jaime Reis, Klas Ronnback, Eric Schneider, Jacob Weisdorf and Jeffrey Williamson. Joerg Baten carried out a comparable international comparative with his co-authors, measuring the evolution of the biological standard of living for a large number of countries and regions, and a small team of Utrecht researchers, most notably Eltjo Buringh and Maarten Bosker, did much to quantify the long-term evolution of urbanization (data
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