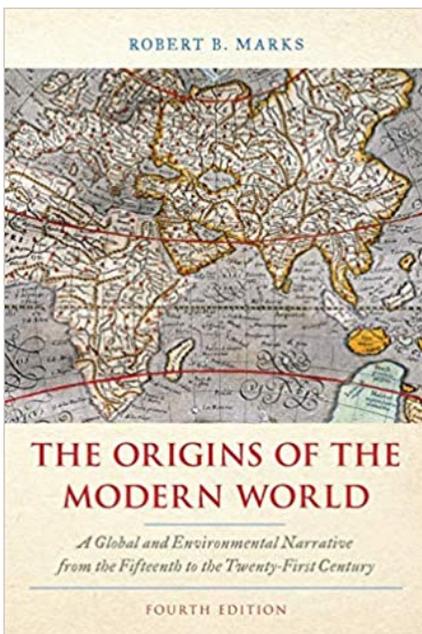


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The Origins of the Modern World: A Global and Environmental Narrative from the Fifteenth to the Twenty-First Century, Fourth Edition



Author: Robert B. Marks

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About the Book

This clearly written and engrossing book presents a global narrative of the origins of the modern world from 1400 to the present. Unlike most studies, which assume that the “rise of the West” is the story of the coming of the modern world, this history, drawing upon new scholarship on Asia, Africa, and the New World and upon the maturing field of environmental history, constructs a story in which those parts of the world play major roles, including their impacts on the environment. Robert B. Marks defines the modern world as one marked by industry, the nation state, interstate warfare, a large and growing gap between the wealthiest and poorest parts of the world, increasing inequality within the wealthiest industrialized countries, and an escape from the environmental constraints of the “biological old regime.” He explains its origins by emphasizing contingencies (such as the conquest of the New World); the broad comparability of the most advanced regions in China, India, and Europe; the reasons why England was able to escape from common ecological constraints facing all of those regions by the end of the eighteenth century; a conjuncture of human and natural forces that solidified a gap between the industrialized and non-industrialized parts of the world; the mounting environmental crisis that defines the modern world; and the ways in which the forces of globalization stress the economic and political underpinnings of the modern world.

Now in a new edition that brings the saga of the modern world to the present in an environmental context, the book considers how and why the United States emerged as a world power in the twentieth century and became the sole superpower by the twenty-first century, and why the changed relationship of humans to the environment likely will be the hallmark of the modern era—the Anthropocene. Once again arguing that the US rise to global hegemony was contingent, not inevitable, Marks also points to the resurgence of Asia and the vastly changed relationship of humans to the environment that may in the long run overshadow any political and economic milestones of the past hundred years.

About the Author

Robert B. Marks is professor emeritus of history and environmental studies at Whittier College. His books include *China: Its Environment and History*. He is the recipient of Whittier College's Harry W. Nerhood Teaching Excellence Award.

Review

In accessible prose, Robert Marks distills world history of the past six centuries to its essence. Truly global in scope, and fully attentive to environmental contexts, this book is ideal for the classroom: it will provoke both thought and discussion—and occasional disagreement.

— **John R. McNeill, Georgetown University**

This new edition accentuates the book's strengths while remaining compact, highly readable, and easy to connect with contemporary concerns. Fair-minded but not bland, it has the potential to spark classroom discussion that conventional textbooks rarely have, while providing a helpful basic narrative around which to organize an appealing world history class.

— **Kenneth Pomeranz, University of Chicago**

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