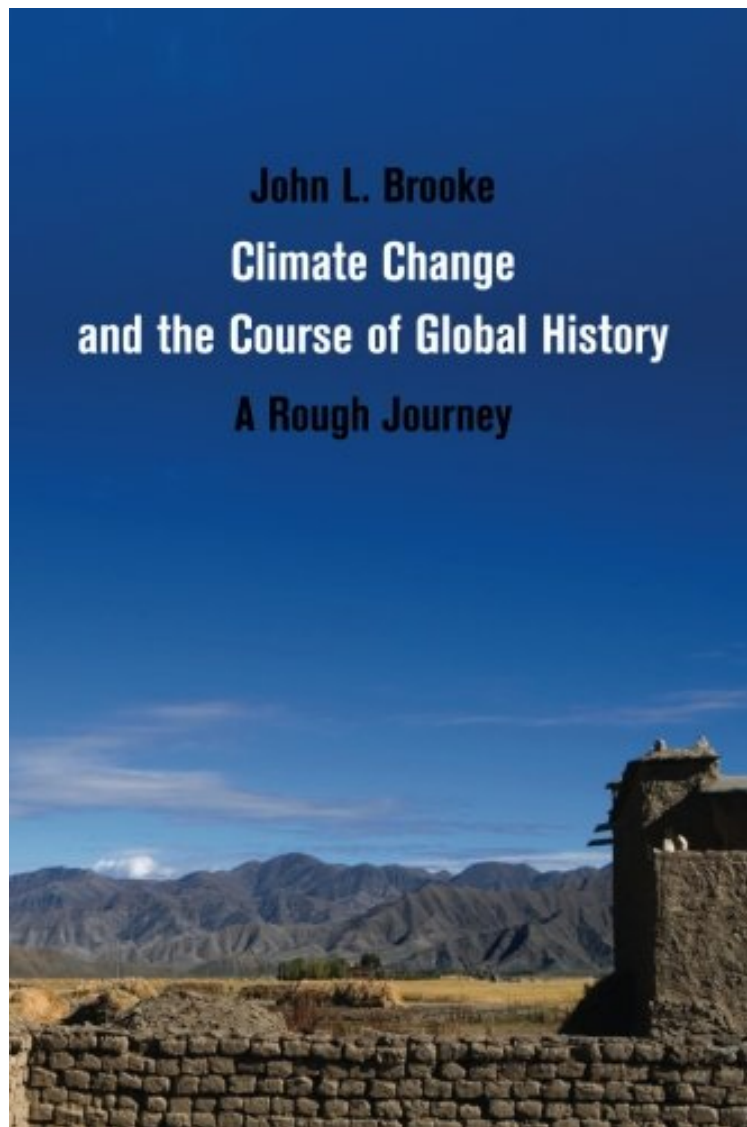


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John L. Brooke

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#954998 in Books 2014-03-17 2014-08-05 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.98 x 1.50 x 5.98l, 1.80 #File Name: 0521692180648 pages | File size: 21.Mb

John L. Brooke : Climate Change and the Course of Global History: A Rough Journey (Studies in Environment and History) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Climate Change and the Course of Global History: A Rough Journey (Studies in Environment and History):

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Clear, concise, and well-documented examination of the

relationships ...By James E. Woods, Ph.D., P.E. Clear, concise, and well-documented examination of the relationships of the effects of natural and cultural forces on the evolution of humanity. Although scientifically and historically rigorous, it is written in a style that is enjoyable to read, 2 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Very Useful Information, Questionable "Hooks" By John Meyer This is a very useful book with a huge amount of information laid out in both the text and very detailed graphics. I'd recommend buying the book if you are interested in this topic and are wondering what the modern world is in for. My main criticism is using the likes of Malthus, Darwin and Franklin as straw men with very rigid positions on moderately paced evolutionary change rather than the cataclysmic social change which has been clearly evident. I am very sure these men were completely aware of climate dynamics in shaping human misfortunes. While they may not have said so outright, claiming that their failure to mention it was in fact because they denied it is over the top. Nevertheless, a worthwhile addition to the library. Cheers, John Meyer 9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Impressive and Important Book; 4.5 Stars By R. Albin This very impressive and very ambitious book is a strong and largely successful effort to demonstrate the decisive role of climate fluctuations in human history. A measure of Brooke's ambition is the very broad frame of the book. Brooke literally begins with the formation of the solar system and early history of the Earth and finishes with our contemporary confrontation with human-induced climate change. In the early chapters, Brooke discusses the emergence of the basic features of terrestrial geology and the emergence of life, the evolutionary history of hominins, and the nature of the major features of the present climate system. This is followed by chapters on human prehistory following the end of the last major glaciation, the development of agriculture and the emergence of early states, the development of early empires, the collapse of early empires across many parts of the globe, the rise and fall of a variety of successor states-empires, the impact of true globalization with the exploitation of the western hemisphere, the early modern period, and the explosive development of scientific-industrial society. Brooke's scholarship is remarkable as this book integrates geology, climatology, archaeology, and historical scholarship proper across many, many millennia. The major theme is the essentially determinate impact of climate changes, and to a lesser degree, epidemic disease, on human history. This is true for both major transitions, such as the end of the last glacial epoch creating the conditions for agriculture and sedentism, and the impact of less dramatic changes on the history of specific civilizations and societies. Examples of the latter include the impact of global cooling and epidemic disease on the Roman Empire, the demise of the classic Maya, the Black Death and the end of Medieval Europe, and the traumatic Little Ice Age centered on the 17th century. Brooke consistently contrasts the impact of these exogenous shocks with a naive Malthusian view of the fate of civilizations and societies being determined by endogenous overshoot of carrying capacity. Brooke has an interesting view of preindustrial societies. He views them as more resilient, better adjusted to their environments, and over the longer term, more creative than suggested by naive Malthusian views. Brooke explicitly states repeatedly that absent exogenous shocks, premodern societies would be stable over very long periods. In an interesting, and in my view, very well justified analysis, Brooke sees our industrial civilization, which has liberated us from many traditional environmental constraints, as producing greater danger of a disastrous Malthusian overshoot. Brooke amply demonstrates his basic thesis. The sheer volume and detail of Brooke's analyses leave no doubt as to the critical and in many cases, determinate effects of climate fluctuations on human history. I have to stress that this is not a schematic presentation. Brooke includes many detailed analyses drawing on a remarkably wide range of sources and clearly demonstrating the reality of his thesis in many contexts. In this respect, I think this book will be a landmark in historical scholarship and the point of departure for much, much future work. This book is not, however, without some flaws, both in analysis and presentation. Some of these are unavoidable. Paleoclimatology is a dynamic discipline and some of the facts accepted when Brooke was writing are now wrong or incomplete. The role of solar changes in the Little Ice Age has been controversial and newer data suggest it was driven mainly by volcanism. Brooke ties the rapid emergence and collapse of Cahokia to climate changes, which is justified but very recent analyses tie the history of Cahokia specifically to the frequency massive floods in the Mississippi valley. I think a bigger problem is Brooke's consistent contrast of his view of exogenous climate and epidemiologic shocks with naive Malthusianism. As he admits in some of his detailed analyses, there are commonly important interactions between these shocks, and population growth and environmental degradation. To some extent, his description of Malthusianism is a bit of a straw man as a fluctuating environment can easily be accommodated in a Malthusian model by specifying that the critical limits must be below the range of significant fluctuations. In addition, as he sometimes acknowledges, epidemic disease is density and interaction dependent, so it inevitably has a somewhat Malthusian component. While I respect Brooke's really impressive effort to present the whole story in the broadest sense possible, the initial chapters on early Earth history are not crucial to his main argument and detract from the presentation of the main story. These pages would have been better spent on clearer exposition of the recent climate system. They also contain some errors and misunderstandings. Eukaryotes were not, for example, responsible for the great oxygenation event. Brooke also makes too much of the punctuated equilibrium concept. Brooke has also been served poorly by this publisher. There are a lot of important figures, charts, and tables in this book but their reproduction quality is mediocre at best. Even worse, they are not placed at the appropriate points in the text but packed together at the beginnings of each major section. This makes more work for readers and a book of this importance deserves better.

Climate Change and the Course of Global History presents the first global study by a historian to fully integrate the earth-system approach of the new climate science with the material history of humanity. Part I argues that geological, environmental, and climatic history explain the pattern and pace of biological and human evolution. Part II explores the environmental circumstances of the rise of agriculture and the state in the Early and Mid-Holocene, and presents an analysis of human health from the Paleolithic through the rise of the state. Part III introduces the problem of economic growth and examines the human condition in the Late Holocene from the Bronze Age through the Black Death. Part IV explores the move to modernity, stressing the emerging role of human economic and energy systems as earth-system agents in the Anthropocene. Supported by climatic, demographic, and economic data, this provides a pathbreaking model for historians of the environment, the world, and science.

"Think of this as travel writing of the highest order. A rough journey for mankind becomes a stimulating armchair adventure for the reader. This is big history, framed by big ideas but anchored in the very recent explosion of knowledge about climate through the ages and about our history and prehistory. Brooke skillfully navigates the interpretive hazards of proxy paleoclimate data. In Brooke's persuasive account, our evolution to modernity is not absolutely determined by climate and disease, but it has been substantially influenced by them. Our new knowledge shows that quite often these influences abruptly change course, and Brooke shows that much of our history is a consequence of societies scrambling to adjust." Mark A. Cane, G. Unger Vetlesen Professor of Earth and Climate Sciences, Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory, Columbia University"John Brooke skillfully joins a vast scientific literature to the historiography of virtually every major region to argue that climatic shifts always have been the primary agency determining the pace and direction of human development. He thus offers an unprecedentedly coordinated global chronology as well as a nuanced, distinctly original understanding of the relation between endogenous and exogenous forces. A jaw-dropping tour de force." Victor Lieberman, Raoul Wallenberg Distinguished University Professor of History, University of Michigan"Readers with advanced degrees in meteorology, archaeology, economics and world environmental history will easily comprehend Brooke's magisterial survey-synthesis. For others, it poses an interesting challenge. The author's mastery and referencing of the vast technical literature in different disciplines is remarkable. ... The author also explains seven phases of climate history since 3000 BCE and three industrial revolutions. The consequence is a fundamental change from a lightly populated world controlled by nature to a heavily populated world controlled by both nature and human agency. Summing up: highly recommended." F. N. Egerton, Choice'... a wide-ranging work starting with our pre-human and early human ancestor and ending with a consideration of future trajectories ... One of the reviews on the back cover has called it 'a jaw-dropping tour de force'; spanning, as it does, millennia and continents, it is hard to argue with that conclusion.' Carleton Jones, The Journal of Irish ArchaeologyAbout the AuthorJohn L. Brooke is Humanities Distinguished Professor of History at Ohio State University, where he also directs the Center for Historical Research. His books include Columbia Rising: Civil Life on the Upper Hudson from the Revolution to the Age of Jackson (2010), which won the Best Book Prize from the Society of the Historians of the Early American Republic; The Heart of the Commonwealth: Society and Political Culture in Worcester County Massachusetts, 1713-1861 (Cambridge, 1994), which won the Merle Curti Award for Intellectual History from the Organization of American Historians; and The Refiner's Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644-1844 (Cambridge, 1989), which won the Bancroft Prize for American History. He has held fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Council of Learned Societies, the American Antiquarian Society and the Harvard Charles Warren Center.