

Letter from the Editors

In his interview for this issue, Felipe Fernández-Armesto describes civilisations as “the tectonic plates of history” and extols his interest in “the places where they scrape against each other”. The importance of this metaphorical scrape or “rub” is a theme that runs through the contributions to this issue. Barbara Karl’s article discusses the exchange of goods between a Renaissance merchant in India, Filippo Sassetti, and his Medici masters back in Florence. Karl’s analysis of the exchange focuses on how the transfer of goods selected, from capes to coins, reveals a great deal about the political aspirations, commercial drive, and scholarly curiosity of his renowned patrons. John Grigg’s article on the Scottish missionary group, SSPCK (the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge), details how members gained experience in crossing lesser “tectonic divides” with their work converting the Highland Scots and then attempted to transfer that experience to the wider divide between Native American and British cultures in New England. In an interesting twist on the theme, Anne Booth’s analysis of the diverging economic fates of Southeast Asia and West Africa since 1960 suggests that historical factors, in particular colonial pasts, do not carry as much explanatory weight as scholars have been inclined to give them. While not denying that the “rub” of colonial relationships affects former colonies, she argues that the relative success of one region over the other has less to do with the policies of former masters and more to do with policies of post-independence national rulers.

Long-time *Itinerario* readers may notice some changes to the organisation of the book review section. In the past, the reviews have been organised into geographical regions and sub-regions. This continues, but the titles for the major regions (Africa, Latin America, etc.) now appear in alphabetical order. Further, given the fact that the number of titles in *Atlantic History* has been growing prodigiously, these have been moved from the General/World category and placed into a category of their own, which falls last on the list. We hope that these changes will help readers to find reviews in their areas of interest more easily.

The Editors