

## **Useful and Reliable Knowledge in Global History of Material Progress in the East and the West**

Following on from the GEHN project, Professor Patrick O'Brien has been awarded a large grant from the European Research Council to convene and manage a research project on behalf of the Department and the School. The title of the project is: Useful and Reliable Knowledge in Global Histories of Material Progress in the East and the West (URKEW).

The project falls into paradigms for historical research in the comparative economic history of long-run global histories of material progress associated with the scholarship of Max Weber and Marc Bloch. It is focussed upon cosmologies and cultures, promoting or restraining the accumulation of useful and reliable knowledge for industrial and agricultural production in the Orient and the Occident in the early-modern period – from the accession of the Ming Dynasty (c. 1368) to the First Industrial Revolution (c. 1756-1846).

The working hypothesis behind the proposal is that for the past three centuries, Western Exceptionalism in the economic sphere has been in some considerable degree based upon a distinct regime for the generation and diffusion of such knowledge.

The project consists of a Principal Investigator and five post-doctoral fellows specialising on Europe, China, Islamdom, India, and Japan in the pre-industrial period. They will be asked to produce 5 comparable case studies analysing the content and organisation of systems of "higher" education - as an available entrée through historical records into the cosmologies and cultures of elites who patronised and supported or failed to support and patronise innovation and enquiries leading to the accumulation of useful and reliable knowledge behind technological divergence between the east and the west.

The project will start on 1st March, 2009, and run for three years.