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EUROCENTRISM AND THE POLITICS OF GLOBAL HISTORY

Alessandro Stanziani



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CHAPTER 1

Why We Need Global History

Abstract This chapter provides an overview of the main approaches to global history in the twenty-first century. World history, history of globalization, comparative and connected history, and subaltern studies are presented at length. The critics and definition of Eurocentrism and other forms of historical centrisms (Sinocentrism, Africa-centrism, and so on) are equally discussed. This chapter argues that the solution to long-standing Western domination in historical tools and writing does not consist so much in replacing one centrism with another (although this is somewhat necessary) as in overcoming the using of history as a clash of civilizations' perspectives.

Keywords Global history • Connected history • World history
Eurocentrism • Great divergence

On Thursday, 24 November 2016, former Prime Minister of France François Fillon declared there was an urgent need to rewrite history: in his view, too much attention was being given in schools to world history and not enough to France and its values. Two years earlier, in September 2014, Vladimir Putin had announced that Russian textbooks henceforth would go back to recounting the country's patriotic history. On 12 February 2017, Donald Trump tweeted that American schoolchildren needed to learn about the history of the United States and its political parties.

I thought about my own students: some of them are French, Russian and Chinese, others are European and African; there are also a few Americans, two Indians, some Brazilians, and one Japanese. What should I be teaching them: the history of France, the history of Europe, or the history of the world?

In class on that Thursday, 24 November, I seemed unsure of the answer. And I was. So I asked the students: “When I use the expression ‘global history’, what do you think of?”

Their replies varied: an American student said: “capitalism and American power”. A student from École Normale Supérieure answered confidently: “connected history”. At first, the Japanese student appeared intimidated, then whispered: “world history”. Finally, one of the Indian students mentioned colonial history and imperialism, and a Senegalese student concluded, with a hint of annoyance: “Professor, global history is just one more gimmick invented by the North to control the South”. I thought to myself: each of these students is partly right; global history is indeed a bit of everything they mentioned. But why should Trump, Putin, or Fillon, not to mention Le Pen, be so worried about it?

This book is an attempt to answer that question. At first glance, the answer seems simple: global history refers to various approaches designed to decompartmentalize national histories and Eurocentric paradigms that interpret the planet and its history and diversity using the yardstick of a few Western categories and values. On the contrary, what global history really does is view the history of each country as part of broader processes in which the role of the West is not necessarily synonymous with progress. This way of thinking and engaging in history developed in response to the major phenomena of our time since 1989: first, the end of the “two blocs”, communist and capitalist; second, globalization and its effects; and, finally, the return to nationalism. All too often, these phenomena encourage us to view the historical process itself as a clash of civilizations. Global history seeks other solutions.

Thinking globally requires a journey into worlds that are different but interconnected. History can never be reduced to *national* history: every country—every steeple in France, as Fernand Braudel once said—is connected to other countries and even to other worlds. Engaging in history from a global perspective does more than merely satisfy intellectual curiosity, for it is constantly being called upon to provide context for contemporary political debates.

Since the 1600s, discussions about the nature of “historical truth” and how to demonstrate it have been rooted in global processes: Western expansion, revolutions, capitalism, colonization and decolonization, totalitarianism and the Cold War, up to and including globalization today. Ever since the globalization in the seventeenth century, there have been two opposing currents: the ardent supporters of globalization, on the one hand, and those who, for various reasons, were frightened by it and sought refuge in national identity. Global history as an expression of global thinking has often been a global practice as well, in the twofold sense, first of connecting different cultures and bodies of knowledge and second of seeking to achieve a comprehensive understanding of societies. The rise of nationalism in politics as well as history and hostility toward “others”—what Freud designated as “uncomfortable strangeness” (*das Unheimliche*)—have accompanied globalization in the past and even more in recent years. This was not the only possible outcome, however, and it is necessary to understand how it came about.

The detour we are about to make through history is not the whim of a historian trying to justify his profession by showing that “there is nothing new under the sun”. On the contrary, it is precisely because the world has given rise to different kinds of global history and different forms of globalization that it is important to distinguish what is happening now from analogous phenomena that occurred in the past. This means we must simultaneously reject the hypothesis that today’s world, contemporary globalization, and global history writing are totally unprecedented and, conversely, that history and history writing have been nothing but a series of successive globalizations from pre-historic times to the present. Thus, since antiquity and especially since the second millennium of our era (Chapter 2), there have been important connections between the Euro-Asiatic and African worlds as well as with respect to historiographical knowledge.¹ Voyages, along with historical methods and books, connected the Arabo-Muslim, Chinese, and Indian worlds to one another and connected these regions to Europe and Africa. Contrary to received opinion, Renaissance Europe did not invent early modern and scholarly historiography alone but rather borrowed from previous centuries as well as other worlds. It also added new elements, such as philology and erudition, along with law and economic

¹ Benjamin (2014).

and anthropological reflections about “the others”. Most important, these tools were part of state and empire building, deeply different in Asia and the West.

A process that some called “global enlightenment”,² widespread in all the continents, stressed these dynamics (Chapter 3) but also provided a new perspective in which a plurality of worlds was less at issue than universalist visions; in the West, this attitude often took the form of civilizationist projects. Europe did not have a monopoly over the enlightenment, although expectations and projects differed within Europe and even more so between Europe and other areas of the world. The question, of course, is not so much determining who invented and then exported “modernity” based on a scale of values fixed for one and all. Rather, we take seriously the question that the actors themselves asked during the eighteenth century: how to conceive history, its tools, and its social role in a context that is rapidly changing and, moreover, increasingly connected?

We will see that the answers differed inside Europe and even more so in Europe and other worlds.

With Western domination during the nineteenth century, these new tools and methods were sought to be exported to the rest of the planet (Chapter 4), and the opposition between orality and writing took on a new significance, that between history on the one hand and anthropology, sociology, and “indigenous” literature on the other. In this movement, Europe and its historians invented a new chronology, and the division between ancient, medieval, and early modern was gradually affirmed. This chronology was imposed on non-European worlds that henceforth were supposed to measure their time and history according to European performances.

During the interwar period (Chapter 5), history in general and global history in particular expressed the failure of conceiving globality beyond national frameworks. Civilization as decadence (Spengler), the rise of nationalism and nationalistic historiographies in China and India accompanied new trends in the totalitarian states where globality became a source of oppression (the global Aryan myth or the global revolution).

The reconstruction of Europe after the war was not solely an economic affair but also a political and historiographical one (Chapter 6).

²Conrad (2012).

The reconstruction of history participated in this movement by exploring the origins of Fascism and Nazism as well as the breaks and continuities in terms of ideas, ideology, and actors. Memory as denunciation and claims of colonial crimes were the subject of a great many debates. Meanwhile, decolonization was accompanied by a synchronous process of implementing archives in ex-colonies and reorganizing colonial archives in metropolitan France and Britain. History also underwent a profound renewal in the USSR after Stalin's death. Moving beyond the official historiography in the USSR, unlike in the former colonial world, took place through the evidence of archives rather than their denial. Since the 1990s, the publication of archival documents has continued in Russia, following the tradition that was developed during the Soviet period.

ONE WORLD OR DIFFERENT WORLDS?

When you walk through the halls of a French university, the Sorbonne let us say, or any other faculty of history, you cannot help but notice that it has something in common with universities in Rome, Moscow, Washington, Delhi, or Tokyo: everywhere history is synonymous with national history, whereas the history of other countries is taught in departments of Chinese or Russian or Indian or American studies. The teachers and researchers in these departments readily explain this division by the “specificity” of their country: Russia is not France, India is not China or Senegal. We agree, but what is it that makes them different?

This is where the question becomes complicated. Unless we use clichés to distinguish countries (for example, the centralized state and the Enlightenment in France, the frontier myth and freedom in the U.S., the size of the population and mandarins in China, or the Mafia and pizza in Italy), the nature of national specificities and how they developed is by no means self-evident. It was not enough for George W. Bush to assert that his Democratic opponent, John Kerry, was “like a Frenchman” (in a pejorative sense) to convey his meaning. Indeed, if such specificities exist, what would be the specificity of Russia and its history compared with that of France, Germany, or China?

To ask this question is in no way to deny that there are real differences between countries; rather, the question simply aims to identify more precisely what those differences are—without necessarily referring to “national culture”. France belongs to the French, China to the Chinese,

Russia to the Russians... such slogans tend to slip from political rhetoric into political science. Nowadays, many politicians in France and elsewhere in the world preach the importance of preserving national history and ensuring that immigrants learn it, instead of explaining how different worlds are interrelated and connected.

Therefore, we must begin by explaining what “global history” means today. My effort here is deeply different from other valuable attempts made in recent years to define global history. Thus, unlike Belich, Darwin, Frenz, and Wickam, I will not oppose European to, say, Chinese or Islamic perspectives on globalization, but I will show when and how this attitude developed and with what consequences.³ It is less a question of “political correctness” or to repay the Western debt vis-à-vis the rest of the world than to understand how history can help to overcome political confrontation and nationalistic attitudes presented as universal claims.

While sharing many of his propositions, I will also differ from Conrad’s attempt to define global history and its boundaries⁴; first, because, as we will see, many approaches that today are presented as totally new are far from being so; they often find their roots in global connected historiographies from many centuries ago (as Subrahmanyam correctly stated).⁵ Second, global history requires less a strict definition and related exclusions of “what is not real global history” than a conversation about and between approaches and categories. Global history encompasses all historical approaches that are not narrowly focused on a particular cultural area or country, from universal history to comparative and connected history.⁶ Through their rich detail, such approaches enable us to examine history from new angles and call into question widely adopted chronologies and orientations. Instead of affirming the superiority of Western thought for its universality, scientific character, rights, and freedom, global history brings out the interactions between different values and systems of thought. It outlines the multipolar dynamics at work; never before has the history of China, India, or various countries in Africa attracted more attention from historians, sociologists, political

³ Belich et al. (2016).

⁴ Conrad (2016).

⁵ Subrahmanyam (2014).

⁶ Guimaraes (2015).

scientists, teachers, and the general public than in recent years. In this way, global history has challenged conventional Eurocentric periodization into ancient, medieval, modern, and contemporary⁷; changed the conventional view of Roman history; and stressed the importance of the ancient history of China, Eurasia,⁸ and above all Africa, long neglected by traditional historians.⁹ It has produced new explanations for, among other things, the rise of science¹⁰ and of capitalism and its dynamics¹¹; these phenomena are no longer viewed exclusively as achievements of the Western world but rather as parts of a global process spanning a long period of time in which mutual influences were not exceptions but the rule. The point was not just to shine a spotlight on the significant role of Islam, Asia, and Africa in world history but also to reveal the thousands of years of encounters that took place between those worlds. Therefore, it is perfectly legitimate to speak of a genuine global turning point today, after the “social turn” of the 1960s and 1970s (when historians highlighted social dynamics) and the “cultural turn” of the 1980s and 1990s (which insisted, on the contrary, on the role of knowledge in historical processes). Yet, like every shift that is labelled a “turning point”, in this case too the novelties tend to be exaggerated and the continuities forgotten.

In 1982, the World History Association was created in the U.S. In 1990, it gave rise to the *Journal of World History*. The historical context was quite unusual: Bill Clinton and Tony Blair were vaunting the advantages of the free market and globalization. The fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of the Cold War, and the attention drawn to the phenomena of globalization, together with the emergence, first of China and then of India, had considerable impact on the American academic community. “Global” became *the* category to promote. The fact that the vast majority of dissertations and university chairs were still devoted to national history, whereas cultural areas elicited only marginal interest, seemed out of step with the concerns of globalization. Not only China and India but the world in its globality became the new focus of study. Since then, a great many books on world history have been written; syntheses, like

⁷Douki and Minard (2007), Manning (2003).

⁸Pitts and Versluys (2014), Fibiger Bang and Bayly (2011), Di Cosmo (2002).

⁹Gilbert and Reynolds (2012).

¹⁰Law (1998), Raj (2007).

¹¹Riello (2013), Beckert (2014).

those of Bayly, Darwin, Cooper and Burbank, and Osterhammel¹² among countless others, have presented pictures of world history radically different from those of Hobsbawm, Rondo Cameron, and North and Thomas, for example.¹³ What should we retain from this current?

If God does not exist, then everything is permitted: many historians experience Dostoevskian anguish in the face of world history, which they accuse of superficiality, lack of rigor, a poor grasp of the regions under study, and reliance on secondary sources. In reality, the primary failing of the recent syntheses lies in the fact that, despite the authors' claims, they are not truly free from Eurocentric thinking. Bayly never questions British supremacy but merely seeks to embed these phenomena in broader dynamics in which non-European worlds were not just merely passive recipients of Britain and the West in general. These syntheses are, of course, reminiscent of old universal histories, but with one major difference: these works bring to the fore the dynamics of non-European worlds before, during, and after the expansion of the West. Similarly, Osterhammel's work does everything but challenge the accounts provided by national historiographies. The importance of the Industrial Revolution is accepted uncritically in spite of numerous controversies in the field and historiographical developments that have reopened the debate over the very notion of an industrial revolution. Finally, the syntheses and series put out by major Anglo-Saxon publishing houses convey exclusively scholars settled in American and British centers and blithely ignore historiographies in languages other than English. It is as if no studies in German, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Dutch, and (of course) Chinese or Russian deserved attention. In 1933, Marc Bloch criticized the growing number of collective works, universal and world history series, first for leaving out nations and national history and second for never mentioning the problems and limitations of their authors' knowledge and of available historiographies.¹⁴ World history today still suffers from the same limitations. Yet, unlike previous and old universal histories, global history today cannot be resumed to this attitude.

¹² Bayly (2004), Darwin (2007), Osterhammel (2014), Burbank and Cooper (2010).

¹³ Hobsbawm (1962), Cameron (1993), North and Thomas (1973).

¹⁴ Bloch (1933).

GLOBALIZATION OR DIVERGENCE?

In addition to world history, global history has expanded to include other approaches. The globalization that has taken place in recent decades is largely responsible for the development of global history, which often starts in the present and works backwards.¹⁵ While all the observers agree that this globalization process is both new and widespread, there is disagreement over the time scale: when did it all begin?¹⁶

Some of these writers focus on the major break that occurred when the Cold War ended and a single deregulated economy was introduced. According to this interpretation, globalization is a product of the last twenty-five years.¹⁷ Others argue that the process began earlier, in the 1970s, with the end of decolonization, the oil crises, and the decline of the welfare state after the success of neoliberalism.¹⁸ Still others assert that the crisis of 1920 was already global and pinpoint its source in international financial flows after 1918 or even in the phenomenon called the “late nineteenth-century globalization”, between 1870 and 1914. During that period, a planetary movement involving people (world migrations), goods, and information (trading shares and commodities) had already been introduced through stock exchanges, the rise of communications, and new means of transport.¹⁹

This link to capitalism encouraged some authors to situate the first globalization and hence a unified time scale in the inception of industrial capitalism at the turn of the eighteenth to the nineteenth century. The proponents of *la longue durée* pushed the first globalization even further back to the seventeenth century, following the great geographical discoveries, colonization, and scientific progress, especially in the field of navigation.²⁰

Naturally, a number of medievalists were quick to point out that equally important connections were at work as early as the twelfth century, both within Europe and beyond its frontiers.²¹ Specialists of ancient

¹⁵ Hopkins (2002).

¹⁶ Hosterhammel and Peterson (2009).

¹⁷ Sterns (2010).

¹⁸ Cooper (2005).

¹⁹ O'Rourke and Williamson (1999).

²⁰ Hopkins (2002).

²¹ Le Goff (2014), Kedar and Wiesner-Hanks (2015).

history retorted by revealing the global trading and transfers that took place during their period; in turn, experts on the Paleolithic and even Neolithic ages have recently arrived at the same conclusion.²²

In other words, globalization as a category is now playing the role that modernization played during the decolonization period.²³ Everything was attributed to modernization at the time, just as everything is attributable to globalization nowadays, even though no one seems quite capable of defining it. In reality, the history of globalization is a Eurocentric history that takes the rise of the West as its subject and main—if not sole—argument. Studying history in reverse attracts a wider readership by assigning an atemporal value to the present day and its concerns, making them valid for the entire planet at any time in history. In so doing, we lose sight of the significance of the choices and forks in history: how can we be sure the world was destined to be globalized?

This is precisely the question at the heart of the debate over “the great divergence”. It was hardly an accident that the lively discussions surrounding Kenneth Pomeranz’s book were centered on quantitative data and estimates of per-capita income, first in China and Britain and then gradually in India, Japan, and other European countries. Legions of economists and their students strove to unearth and criticize the data, coming up with new estimates and regressions without ever questioning their sources.²⁴ Aside from the serious problems raised by the data itself, the obsession with economic growth led historians to ignore the issues of wealth distribution and inequality within each country and between countries.²⁵ This position stemmed from the enthusiasm for globalization, perceived during the 1990s and 2000s as a positive contribution to the well-being of humanity as a whole. That confidence was to be swept away in the years to come.²⁶

²²Christian (2004).

²³Cooper (2005).

²⁴Allen (2009), Parthasarathai (2011).

²⁵See my comment on Piketty’s book: Stanziani (2015).

²⁶Adelman (2017).

CONNECTIONS AND DEPENDENCE: FROM SUBALTERN STUDIES TO COMPARATIVE HISTORY

There are two possible ways to overcome historical determinism and Eurocentrism at work in the abovementioned approaches to history: First, we could examine more closely non-Western values and categories of thought, such as Buddhism, Hinduism, and even Islam.²⁷ The second option consists in highlighting the connections between these cultures. Dipesh Chakrabarty's approach has the virtue of questioning the categories we use when we think about our world in comparison with others and insisting on the need to take the values of other cultures into consideration. It is perfectly legitimate to wonder whether there are equivalents in other cultures for Western notions such as human rights,²⁸ civil society, cosmopolitanism,²⁹ or even religion and secularism.³⁰ There is nothing trivial about these questions at a time when encounters between different worlds and values seem to generate the most trouble, not only in Europe and the U.S.—in relation to Islam—but also in other contexts (for example, the conflicts between India and Pakistan or of opposing values within Africa itself). This attention to “other” values is necessary and welcome, but it carries a risk. The insistence on “genuine” Hindu, Chinese, or Muslim values is a feature of nationalist political projects but it also influenced so many attempts made by Western specialists of the so-called area studies to oppose the European perspective to a world history made along a Chinese, Islamic, or African perspective.³¹ This is a dangerous path; by emphasizing more or less monolithic entities called “cultures” or “civilization”, historians tend to overlook the cross-pollination and reciprocal influence that occur between “cultures”, which are never monolithic entities.³² It is one of the chief criticisms that connected history has levelled against subaltern studies. European values and practices have been profoundly affected by interactions and

²⁷ Chakrabarty (2000).

²⁸ Barreto (2013).

²⁹ Lefevre et al. (2015).

³⁰ Göle (2005).

³¹ One recent example of this attitude is Belich et al. (2016).

³² Subrahmanyam (1997, 2001).

exchanges with non-European worlds.³³ Recognizing such interactions and exchanges is a fundamental step toward seeing globality not as a confrontation but as a dialogue between worlds.³⁴

People, books, and ideas circulated (or did not circulate) under circumstances that should be fully explained—the modes of transport, relations, influences, markets, religious ties—and shown to interact in any analysis of how knowledge circulated. It is just as important to study why knowledge failed to be transferred and circulate as it is to grasp connections. The circulation of knowledge must be embedded in structural dynamics—both economic and social—which in turn cannot be confined to a few paragraphs at the beginning of a chapter. Circulation never takes place on equal footing and usually creates hierarchies, which may (of course) be reversed over time (as the current return to Asia demonstrates) but are nevertheless significant. These inequalities reflect not so much the intrinsic superiority of a given value or type of thinking as the powerful interrelation between values and ideas on the one hand and economic, political, and social structural dynamics on the other. It is these tensions between circulations and hierarchies, mixing and exclusion that deserve to be investigated from a *longue durée* perspective—as this book will seek to do.³⁵ The new global labor history strongly contributed to cross subaltern studies and connected global history.³⁶

This is also why it seems useless to oppose *l'histoire croisée* and connected history to comparative history.³⁷ The opposition between comparison and connection—the first is supposedly subjective, the second objective and source-based—undermines *l'histoire croisée* and connected history in general. The connections found in archives are just as subjective as the comparisons made by a historian. Archives and documents are never ready-made, lying in wait of discovery; they are produced first by the historical actors in administrations or companies that originally provided them, then by the archivists who classified them, and finally by historians who select a given document and present it in an equally individual manner.³⁸

³³Subrahmanyam (2013), Gruzinski (1999, 2004, 2008, 2015).

³⁴Middell and Naumann (2010).

³⁵Chartier (2001).

³⁶Van der Linden (2008), Stanziani (2014, 2018).

³⁷Werner and Zimmermann (2004).

³⁸Haupt and Kocka (2009).

EUROCENTRISM AND GLOBAL HISTORY

Dominic Sachsenmaier has already shown the way that global history shapes national approaches to history and how they are rooted in institutions.³⁹ The interrelationship between history as a branch of the humanities and history as a social science is not the same in Germany and the United States or in France and Japan. Masashi Haneda perfectly shows the way that global or world or universal history (these terms being the same in Japanese) has been conceived in Japan since the Meiji reform.⁴⁰

These differences help to explain the relatively mixed impact of global history in terms of teaching and recruitment. Although the number of global history courses has increased, most dissertation topics and new faculty recruits in every country still reflect a definite preference for national history. This observation holds true to an even greater extent outside the West. Many historians in Africa as well as Asia, Russia, and Turkey accuse their Western colleagues of using global history to reintroduce a strictly Western approach, thereby denying the value of the nation, which is a core concern for these countries today.⁴¹ This viewpoint sometimes—but not always—leads to the conclusion that the history of Africa should be written by Africans, the history of Russia by Russians, and so on. Therefore, our overview of historical approaches will have to include Indocentric, Russocentric,⁴² Sinocentric, and Africancentric versions and so on,⁴³ alongside the Eurocentric attitude decried by Western global history. This is crucial: for lack of a shared approach, the various currents of global history are unified in their critique of Eurocentrism. Their position, for the most part justified, has the unfortunate effect of confusing a subject with the way it is studied. Specializing in a non-European region carries no guarantee that the historian will avoid Eurocentric thinking: it is quite possible to make use of European categories in the study of India. Conversely, it is theoretically possible—though seldom the case and therefore highly desirable—to study a given region of Europe without necessarily associating it with progress, civilization, or any form of superiority over other parts of the

³⁹ Sachsenmaier (2011).

⁴⁰ Haneda (2011).

⁴¹ Cooper (2012).

⁴² Stanziani (2012).

⁴³ Asante (1998).

world. In reality, the critique of Eurocentrism, however defensible, tends to be vague or even, paradoxically, Eurocentric itself. Nowadays, it is often inspired by the Orientalism of Edward Said⁴⁴ and subaltern studies as well as by the work of Samir Amin on the economics of dependency.⁴⁵ Some global historians have taken over the notion and made it a basic premise of their own approaches.⁴⁶ Yet this is not the only definition of Eurocentrism, and it hardly seems applicable to the “West” as a whole. What is common to the Enlightenment, liberalisms,⁴⁷ socialisms, theories of modernization, and so on must be demonstrated rather than taken for granted.⁴⁸ By imagining Eurocentrism as consistent and clearly defined, the various currents of global history and post-colonial studies are in danger of remaining trapped within that same Eurocentric thinking. Such attitudes produce a sort of reverse Orientalism: instead of improving our understanding of different historical realities, they stifle those realities beneath ideal types. The question is not to deny that Western-centric attitudes were imposed in other parts of the world or that, even today, all around the West, students in Chinese or African history are obliged to know the basics of Western history while the reverse is not true. This must be overruled; however, the solution does not consist in replacing one centrism with another but to overcome the using of history as a clash of civilizations’ perspectives. Hopefully, several works in global history openly adopt a humankind perspective.⁴⁹

In some presentations of this book, a critical observation was that, after all, the following chapters reflect the positionality of a European and thus Eurocentric historian. For sure, everyone comes from a place, but I may say that for many years I have been struggling with myself to understand my belonging; I spent my childhood in Naples, where “Moorish”, Spanish, and French influences are strong while the Italian and even more so the European identities are relatively weak. In particular, in the 1960s and the 1970s, when I was at school, the “Mezzogiorno” question and the colonial interpretation of the Italian

⁴⁴Said (1978).

⁴⁵Amin, *L'eurocentrisme*, 1988.

⁴⁶Lambropoulos (1993).

⁴⁷Gray (2009).

⁴⁸Conrad (2012).

⁴⁹Hunt (2014).

unification were extremely widespread in my textbooks. I was then formed on Russian history in France and the U.S. and I may say that history writing is persistently different in these three places.

In my previous works, I often embraced a resolutely non-Eurocentric attitude and advanced interpretations of historical dynamics and “modernization” from a Russian or an Indian Ocean perspective. Here, I will adopt a different approach aiming at a different goal: I wish to understand the historical meanings of Euro- and other “centrism” in historical writing and politics. Rather than criticize Eurocentrism in general and replace it with an equally atemporal and undefined global perspective, I am going to explain how these elements were introduced and evolved starting in the sixteenth century. Since then, global thinking and its opposite have coexisted in multiple and varied configurations in Europe as well as in Asia, Africa, and the Americas. These representations of the global and its obverse—Eurocentrism, Islamocentrism, Afrocentrism, Sinocentrism, and so on—have in turn reflected and influenced the structural transformations of worlds through the expansion of trade, the consolidation of empires and capitalism up to and including the Cold War, decolonization, and the globalization of today.⁵⁰ In short, this book shows, first, that history writing always was a global and interconnected practice with mutual though unequal influences between worlds and areas. But, second, the way the “global” was conceived changed over time; it differed from one place to another in response to structural interconnections. If we want to understand the strength and limits and the involved stakes in current debates on global history, we need to put it into a *longue durée* and global perspective. Thus, the history of global history, which forms the core of this book, has several meanings: first, it is the history of history writing in its connections between different worlds, and this makes a huge difference with recent syntheses and collective series presenting global history writing as a sequence of separated national or areas’ approaches to history⁵¹; next, it is the history of the structural dynamics that gave rise to the way that historians approached their subject; finally, it is a history of global thinking: global history—and history itself—is meaningful only in dialogue with the other social sciences.

⁵⁰ Drayton and Motadel (2018).

⁵¹ Woolf (2011), Rabasa et al. (2011–2014).

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CHAPTER 2

Connected Historiographies in Expanding Worlds: Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

Abstract This chapter shows that since antiquity, and especially since the second millennium of our era, there have been important connections between the Euro-Asiatic and African worlds as well as with respect to historiographical knowledge. Voyages, along with historical methods and books, connected the Arabo-Muslim, Chinese, and Indian worlds to one another and connected these regions to Europe and Africa. This chapter also proves that, contrary to received opinion, Renaissance Europe did not invent early modern and scholarly historiography alone but rather borrowed from previous centuries as well as other worlds. It also added new elements, such as philology and erudition, along with law and economic and anthropological reflections about “the others”. Most important, these tools were part of state and empire building, which were rather different in Asia and the West.

Keywords First globalization · Renaissance · Philology · Empire · Law

EUROPE AND ITS METHOD: ONE SOLUTION AMONG OTHERS

Europe has often been credited—not only by Western historians but even by some intellectual and political elites in Japan, China, and Russia since the seventeenth century—with the invention of so-called modern

historiography (that is, philology and erudition).¹ In fact, it evolved over the *très longue durée* since well before the Renaissance, and similar methods were developed outside Europe.²

In reality, well before Lorenzo Valla, philological analysis had gained strength through the analysis of sacred texts. What changed with Valla was the notion of an authority that could establish the authenticity of a document. Valla's approach situated itself at the crossroads of the theological, political, and legal dispute; by demonstrating that the Donation of Constantine was a fake, Valla called into question the pope's authority in relation to the emperor's (argued by the aforementioned Donation).³ Authority no longer came from the official interpretation of the Church but from the philologist: truth was not limited to commentary on sacred texts, and historicity, according to him, is not what is said or what "occurred" but rather what is proven.⁴ Following this viewpoint, history and philological criticism became part of the larger movement of humanism, a vision of the world opposed to that of the Church. Philology and the criticism of anachronism played a central role; the rediscovery of ancient classics was also important.⁵

Religious controversy thus took part in the identification of the philological and historical method. Already during the Renaissance, the return to antiquity was expressed in the re-establishment of three languages: Latin, Greek, and Hebrew; the first two were given pride of place by Italian philologists and the third by the Arabic language and Spain. First Valla and later Erasmus relied on Hebrew to update the true Gospel. Later it was Protestants who developed philological analyses of the Old Testament and then the Gospels in order to show the erroneous interpretations of the Roman church. Luther's arguments precisely took the form of a challenge to the authenticity of letters attributed to the first popes. Spinoza would do no less in challenging the authenticity of the Pentateuch.⁶

¹ Dirlik et al. (2000).

² Pollock et al. (2015), Subrahmanyam (2014), Iggers et al. (2008), Rao et al. (2001), Wang (2001), Gershoni et al. (2006). On connected global philologies, see the new online Brill journal, *Philological Encounters*.

³ Valla (1440).

⁴ Kriegel (1988: 41).

⁵ Momigliano (1983).

⁶ Gregory (2007), Popkin (1979).

The question of the historical truth and authenticity of documents arose whether one sought to affirm (or criticize) the authority of the Church or the State. A number of solutions were proposed: in 1560, the philosopher Francesco Patrizi suggested giving all of the versions of a history or event in the same text.⁷ This was one of the variants of the skepticism that spread precisely around the mid-seventeenth century, a solution that we find in India and the Ottoman Empire or with Bernier in France a century later.

As for Valla, his successors emphasized language and philology as a response to skepticism. Valla had challenged the authenticity of a document by using linguistic errors; for example, the terms used in the Donation postdated the period in which the text was supposed to have been written. History and philology intervened together. Valla's epistemology, and that of the Rinascimento in general, ran counter to Aristotelianism. The principle of truth did not coincide with the principle of authority in the religious and acritical sense of the word. Truth did not come down to a commentary of a text but required proof based on the historicity of the text and the language. Erasmus pursued this path, as did a great many authors throughout Europe during the seventeenth century.

Things were rather different in France where history writing and the question of truthfulness emerged not only in connection with religious matters but also in the definition of State legitimacy vis-à-vis provincial powers. Thus, Mabillon emphasized searching for and identifying originals.⁸ His diplomatic practices classified and identified ancient charters, titles of nobility and property, and genuine coins. Archeology, numismatics, and "antiquarianism" intervened in support of historical analysis.⁹ The historian and the antiquary converged.

With regard to Jean Bodin (*Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem*—Method for the easy comprehension of history, 1566), he opposed the functioning of royal monarchies with seigniorial powers on the basis of this same discussion on the origin, validity, and classification of documents.¹⁰ Sovereign power found its most forceful definition

⁷ Patrizi (1961–1971).

⁸ Mabillon (1685).

⁹ Momigliano (1983).

¹⁰ Bodin (1579).

during the civil wars under Henry III of France; Bodin identified a three-part conception of the State: vis-à-vis the exterior, internally vis-à-vis other powers, and finally from the viewpoint of the law as generator and certifier. The definition of sovereignty and historical knowledge went together. In fact, in the mid-sixteenth century, the monarchy had already imposed an administrative classification for documents. This solution did not, for all that, resolve the distinction between private and public archive to the extent that, at the time, “public” did not mean accessible to all but solely that which was linked to public power.¹¹ This distinction was the subject of legal controversies and political negotiations; in France, royal power tended to “privatize” administrative and royal documents, much more than in Austria and Spain during the same period. The individuals responsible for various departments did not always deposit their documents at the *Trésor des chartes* but instead transmitted it to their successors.

This is where the question of language arises. Administrative centralization was accompanied by an effort to adopt a single language, which was a slow process in France and even slower in the Iberian Peninsula and Italy. The unification of regional languages within a single administrative language had to face competition not only from local elites but also from church elites and scholars, both of whom were pushing for an increased role for Latin as a *lingua franca*. Philology thus acted not only to validate and certify but also to produce and legitimize these new hierarchies that were in the process of forming: hierarchies of languages between national and regional languages on the one hand and between these languages and Latin on the other. These relations then related to those between local, national, religious, and secular institutions, each trying to impose its authority vis-à-vis the others.

The history of historiography shows how the philological method gradually became established by providing textual evidence in religious controversies and for the organization of the monarchical state. Europe is said to have thereby introduced a particular process—the so-called “modern” historical method—to support the establishment of “modern” law and the “modern” State. Are there grounds for claiming the West’s uniqueness in this respect?

¹¹Favier (1958).

Hundreds of books have answered that question in the affirmative, reflecting an attitude commonplace among European history students and researchers, accustomed as we are to thinking of our world as solely responsible for the invention of modern historiography. This is not at all certain, as several recent global works on philology show.¹² Humanists tend to minimize what they owe to their predecessors as well as to scholars in Islamic lands and in Asia. In fact, they were familiar with their works: manuscript hunters travelled the length and breadth not only of Italy, like Poggio Bracciolini and Coluccio Salutati, but also the rest of Europe, the Mediterranean, the Orient, and Central Asia.¹³ The fall of Constantinople contributed to this intermingling, when numerous scholars took refuge in Italy and France and brought their precious manuscripts with them. The Silk Road was open to more than trade in spices, metals, and slaves; manuscripts also circulated along the route, linking regions stretching from China all the way to Venice and from there to the rest of Europe. The Port of Venice was famous for fragrant spices and textiles but also for scrolls and manuscripts arriving from the East. The city possessed hundreds of such documents from Egypt, China, Central Asia, and Persia.¹⁴ The Indian slave in Cairo, brought back to life by Amitav Ghosh in a book entitled *In an Antique Land*, set out in search of manuscripts, travelling from Cairo to India and the Near East. These manuscript hunters were not all collectors; philological analysis was indeed widespread outside the Christian West.

History and Philology in Connected Worlds

Unlike in European antiquity, in China history and historians had a well-defined status already in the fourth century BCE.¹⁵ Chinese historiography includes digressions, conversations, anecdotes, and flashbacks in similar fashion to those found in Greek historiography.¹⁶ It was under the Eastern Han dynasty (third century CE) that Chinese historiography began to become bureaucratized to include well-defined styles

¹² Pollock et al. (2015).

¹³ Gordon (1991), Greenblatt (2012).

¹⁴ Anonymous (1787).

¹⁵ Watson (1989).

¹⁶ Lloyd (2000), Momigliano (1930).

(from annals to chronicles) and training programs for men of letters.¹⁷ Under the Tang, the distinction and relation between the recording and preservation of historical documents and history writing were clearly expressed during the seventh century. The “veritable documents” produced, identified, and classified in this way served as a basis for the writing of history, dynastic histories, and chronicles.¹⁸ Under the Song—the hunting grounds of my Sinologist friend—history became one of the required sections in the training of elites during the eleventh century. The production of history became a centralized activity under state control. A central bureau was supposed to compile “true events” that could constitute the memory of the current dynasty and stabilize that of preceding dynasties in order to avoid any proliferation of interpretations other than its own.¹⁹ Historians compiled the “Veritable Records” of each emperor; they also produced six comprehensive histories of the regime and their territories, annals, and monographs. Although the notion of history as *magistra vitae* inherited from Confucianism was still important, emphasis shifted toward the role of institutions and the government. Analogism became one of the primary elements of this historiography seeking to provide governors with the elements for decision making. This is why history became, more than ever, a central element in the education of Chinese elites.²⁰ Sima Qiang (1019–1086), an official of high standing, produced several works, among which was the *Zizhi Tongjian* (Comprehensive Mirror in Aid of Government). He pressed the need to make use of original evidence instead of later texts, and he dismissed the invocation of the supernatural to explain events.²¹

Yet it is symptomatic that, precisely during the Song era, the power of the Mongols strengthened in what is modern-day North China. The Mongol empire reached its apogee in the early thirteenth century and then fragmented into four large units located in Southern Russia, Persia, Mongolia, and China. The Yuan controlled China for 73 years and were overthrown by the Ming in 1368. The latter settled in the heart of Chinese territory, in the center and the south, a territory that was

¹⁷Puett (2001).

¹⁸Twitchett (1993).

¹⁹Lee (2005).

²⁰Will (1992).

²¹Nienhauser (1994).

much more limited than that of the Yuan, and different Mongol groups guarded the western and northern parts of what is modern-day China. The Ming officially tended to distinguish themselves from their “barbarian” and Mongol predecessors. However, as they continued their expansion in the south and west of the country, they ultimately integrated them within their administration. It is in this context that the writing of history took all of its political meaning. The Ming inherited practices from preceding dynasties; the compilation of official history mobilized about a thousand people across a number of ministries; “veritable documents” (*Ming shilu*) contained all of the relevant elements on which official history was supposed to be written. These documents were produced in two copies: one under seal and another preserved by the grand secretary. These two copies were deposited in the imperial archives, whereas the original documents were often (not always) burned.

Despite this control, critical analysis of sources and the multiplication of non-official histories experienced a considerable rise, such as in the work of Wang Shizen (1526–1590).²² These different sources and approaches encouraged the philological analysis required to identify authentic documents and to attest to their authenticity.²³ Historical volumes and studies increased to such an extent that a bibliography from the period identifies ten genres for writing history, which were organized into 1378 categories and numbered 28,000 booklets.²⁴

Connections were important between China and Japan. Here, historical texts were produced since the Nara period (710–794), in particular the *Kojiki* (Records of Ancient Matters) and the *Nihon Shoki* (Chronicles of Japan). Both texts related the creation of the world and the foundation of Japan. Chinese history was both a model and a source.²⁵ However, the Chinese attitude, consisting in dividing history into dynasties, conflicted with the Japanese attempt to present all emperors as belonging to the same dynasty, being directly descended from Jinmu. In the following century, a different type of history, written in Japanese, appeared in the form of *monogataries*’ stories in which fiction, myth, and chronicles were mixed up. The *Gukansho* (Jotting of a Fool)

²²Ng and Wang (2005).

²³Crossley (1999).

²⁴Franke (1968).

²⁵Harrison (1959).

and *Okagami* (Great Mirror) were written in Japanese and looked for a sort of reason (both divine and human) and predictability in history starting from experience.²⁶

Political turbulence between 1400 and 1600 divided Japan; chronicles and war tales were produced together with *emaki* (picture scrolls), historical narratives in a variety of forms, including stories, tales, biographies, and temple histories. With the Tokugawa shogun (1603–1868), new trends emerged. All aspects of history were traced as far back as possible in order to settle precedent and legitimate the Tokugawa. Hostility toward the Chinese dynastic approach persisted and even strengthened with the rise of the first nationalistic rejection of Chinese superiority. Yet these feelings did not avoid important circulation of knowledge between the two realms. Hayashi Razan (1583–1657), a former Buddhist monk, greatly contributed to the “official” history of the shogun. In 1644, he began writing, in classic Chinese, a new history of Japan (*Honcho tsugan*) strongly inspired by Chinese historiography. He also expressed skepticism about the divine origin of Emperor Jinmu and concluded that the imperial line was founded by humans. Even more significant novelties emerged with Arai Hakuseki (1657–1725), in particular in his “Essays on history” (*Tokushi yoron*), modelled after Sima Qiang’s “Comprehensive Mirror”, written in China under the Song.²⁷ Hakuseki was also influenced by Bossuet and sought to advance the idea of “benevolent despotism” to design the shogun system.²⁸

A different approach was found in Tokugawa Mitsukuni’s *Dai Nihon shi* (History of Great Japan), a monumental text of early modern Japanese historical scholarship. This project involved dozens of scholars over two and a half centuries and had immense influence on Japanese scholarship and ideology. Mitsukuni’s primary goal was to define the relationship between the sovereign and subject according to the neo-Confucian conception of history. As such, the text opposed Razan’s perspective stressing the role of the shogun.²⁹

Debates similar to those occurring in this period in Islam, China, India, and the West on testimonies, archives, and historical truth took place in Japan. In particular, Hanawa Hokiichi, strongly inspired by

²⁶Brown and Ishida (1979).

²⁷Wildman Nakai (1988).

²⁸Brownlee (1997).

²⁹Razan (1979).

Motoori Norinaga's philological approach, believed that the study of the past should be based on reliable materials, subject to careful textual criticism. To this aim, he examined and classified hundreds of historical materials published in the *Gunsho ruiju* (Great collection of old documents) beginning in 1786.³⁰

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when contact intensified between Europe and Asia, the geopolitical balance shifted in China and Eastern Asia. In the seventeenth century, the Ming dynasty faced the expansion of Mongol powers (described as “nomads”, which we now know was far from accurate). At the turn of the sixteenth to the seventeenth century, alliances among the Mongol peoples were substantially increased through marriages, treaties, and even the formation of a single entity, a genuine confederation known as the Later Jin.³¹ Feeling threatened, the Ming tried to counter this trend, but they were defeated in 1619. The Jin occupied the territory corresponding to present-day Korea and succeeded in rallying to their cause the troops that the Ming had stationed in Manchuria. Starting in the 1630s, the confederation and particularly its leaders—the Jurchen, henceforth known as Manchus in China—stepped up their raids and penetrated ever deeper into northern China. To ensure necessary supplies, they forged alliances with the peoples of Korea and Liaodong. They made similar pacts with groups in the north of the Ming dynasty in China, promising them more advantages than the Ming rulers: better economic conditions (access to land) and greater political authority (high-ranking positions in the administration). In 1636, their leader, Hong Taiji, again changed the name of the confederation and founded a new dynasty—the Qing (meaning “pure” or “clear”)—to conceal his Manchu origin. He was determined to reunite *Zhongguo*, a task he set out to accomplish in 1644. For decades, the Manchus (now known as Qing) single-mindedly pursued their aim to wipe out the Ming, who continued to resist in the south until they were finally crushed in the late seventeenth century.

The presence of the Jesuits before, during, and after the Ming-Qing transition and their interpretations of Chinese history must be viewed in this context. The Jesuits were not mere missionaries or observers; they

³⁰Norinaga (1959–1960).

³¹Zlatkin (1978).

played a significant role in influencing China's elites.³² Matteo Ricci tried to fit Chinese history into the framework of European historiographical and religious canons. He presented Confucianism as a monotheistic religion, ignoring the tensions between Buddhism and neo-Confucianism.³³ Martino Martini (1614–1641) included Emperor Fuxi in a European chronology,³⁴ whereas Giuseppe Castiglione (1688–1766), “*pittore et umile servo*” (painter and humble servant), did a portrait of Emperor Qianlong, borrowing from those of Louis XIV. Influences in fields as varied as history and its methods, mathematics, and cartography³⁵ were not limited to the effects of Europe on China; they were mutual. Thus, a polyglot (not a Jesuit!) like Joseph de Guignes (1721–1800) had no qualms about using his knowledge of Chinese, Arabic, and Turkish to write a *General History of the Huns, Turks, Moghuls and other Western Tartar Peoples* (1756–1758), in which he compared the world of Asian nomads to Western civilization. He produced a critical analysis of Arabic and Chinese sources, contrasting Arab histories, which he considered factual and committed to the truth, with Chinese histories, which he believed were written under the emperor's influence. He went so far as to claim that he had discovered Egyptian influences hidden in Chinese characters.³⁶ His work was both a Eurocentric and Sinocentric synthesis inasmuch as he compared sedentary European and Chinese peoples to barbarian nomads.

During the same period, Chinese historiography evolved from contemplation and philosophical reflection to textual analysis and philology, under the twofold inspiration of Chinese traditions and Western influences transmitted by the Jesuits.³⁷ Skepticism about historical knowledge, which was widespread in Europe at the time, was mirrored in China by the works of Li Zhi (1527–1602), whereas Qu Jingchun (1506–1569) developed a critical philological method. This process continued under the Qing until the eighteenth century, when China manifested a tendency toward universalism and an interest in travel

³²Romano (2016), Spence (2000).

³³Trigault (1616).

³⁴Martini (1654, 1998).

³⁵Hostetler (2001), Kontler et al. (2014).

³⁶De Guigne (1760).

³⁷Brockey (2007).

and cartography equivalent to those in the West. Yet, unlike in the Enlightenment, in the course of the century, Chinese historiography grew increasingly distant from philosophy. Some Chinese authors openly emphasized the transition from philosophy to philology to demonstrate the impartiality of their analyses.³⁸ The circulation of historiographical knowledge and mutual influences was not limited to Europe and China, however; for centuries, the Chinese also had connections with the Mongol world through the Manchus as well as with the Russians, the Ottoman world, and India.³⁹ Scholars and their works circulated alongside pilgrims, merchants, and goods.⁴⁰ The evolution of Chinese historiography was shaped by internal dynamics as well as by the influences of Western, Islamic (including Iranian), Indian, and Mongol thought.⁴¹

According to traditional European interpretations, Muslim historiography was essentially religious and did not permit any criticism of its sources.⁴² In fact, Islamic historical studies were among the world's major historical schools of thought. Thanks to a unique bibliomania, Islamic historiographers were thoroughly familiar with Jewish and Christian critical thought, together with the Persian and pre-Islamic Arab traditions.⁴³ Islamic historiography expressed a sense of temporal progress from Creation through the prophets, culminating with Muhammad. During the ninth century, in Baghdad alone, the production of works capable in one way or another of claiming to be "historiographical" far surpassed production in France and Germany combined.⁴⁴ One can distinguish between three historiographical genres: chronologies, biographies, and prosopographies. The attention given to the original texts of the Prophet gave rise to analyses seeking to reconstruct the chain of transmission of the texts themselves. In the ninth century, a "science of traditions" henceforth identified the rules for evaluating and authenticating texts, allowing the possibility of distinguishing between the authentic from the fake (*hadiths*). Hadith scholars scrupulously

³⁸Crossley (1999).

³⁹Rossabi (2013).

⁴⁰Wang and Fillafer (2007).

⁴¹Balbir and Szuppe (2014).

⁴²Quinn (2000), Mukhia (1976), Faroqhi (1999).

⁴³Robinson (2003).

⁴⁴Khalidi (1994), Cheddadi (2004).

provided information of deeds and events. The constitution of caliphates also pushed in this direction to the extent that each caliph sought to legitimize his authority by relying on the Koran, its interpretations, and the legitimizing of conquest. The Islamic expansion beyond the Arab world, from the Guadalquivir to India, sustained the development and diffusion of historical studies at the crossroads of multiple traditions.⁴⁵ Several Muslim authors shared with their Byzantine, Chinese, and European counterparts the use of fictional dialogues to convey a message. In the eighth century, Muslim rulers governed a vast multi-ethnic and religiously diverse empire stretching from Spain to Central Asia; by the tenth century, the Abbasid Caliphs lost control of Baghdad; while the Abbasids retained their status as the legitimate leaders of the Sunni world, the Buyids (945–1055), a Shi's dynasty from northern Iran, occupied Baghdad.⁴⁶

Contact with non-Muslim populations indeed raised new problems. Up to then, the authenticity of a text was based on the analyses and accounts of scholars and believers through the word of the prophet. The infidels now presented their own version of events, to which were added new accounts by Muslims, even on the subject of regions and populations unknown in the prophet's texts. The result is a blossoming of narratives, chronicles, and accounts, along with a diversification of styles and arguments between Arabia, Iraq, and Syria. Historians presented themselves as authors and not just recorders of ancient documents. Chronographies, biographies, and prosopographies were widespread. It is therefore possible to distinguish between a religious (*athar*) and a secular (*akhbar*) orientation in the writing of history within the Islamic world.

Al-Tabari (d. 923) produced a universal history starting from the creation of the world, using not only Arabic but also Chinese, Greek, Turkish, and Indian texts. Its *Ta'rikh al-rusul wa'l-muluk* started with the Creation; events were seen as leading to or presaging Islamic rule by the Prophet. Its subtle temporal divisions in terms of dynasties were similar to those adopted by the Western annalists of that time.⁴⁷ Al-Biruni (973–1048), who spent most of his life in India, also turned

⁴⁵ Rosenthal (1968).

⁴⁶ Chittick (2007).

⁴⁷ Al-Tabari (1997).

to philological and mathematical knowledge to solve problems related to chronology, the calendar, and the genealogy of ruling elites. He was an Iranian from Mawarannahr. Profoundly inspired by Aristotelian philosophy, he succeeded in calculating the earth's circumference by using trigonometry. After learning Sanskrit, he wrote a history of India.⁴⁸

The special patronage of the Ghaznavid rulers (persianized rulers of Turkic origin based in Afghanistan) made seminal contributions, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, toward a process of persianization of the Islamic world. Connections with Central Asia and the Timurids gave rise to an Islamic world spanning much of Eurasia. Islamic historiography was further developed by Rashid al-Din (1247–1318), Ata Malik Juvaini (d. 1285), and Nasir al-Din Tusi (1201–1274).⁴⁹

In India, the first Indo-Muslim dynasty succumbed to the factional infighting of Turkic officers who took control of the state and founded a new dynasty in 1290.⁵⁰ Six years later, the new sultan, Ala al-Din, instituted a military dictatorship but successfully resisted a series of attacks by Chagatai Mongols and extended Turkic Muslim paramountcy into Rajasthan and Gujarat. The Delhi sultans administered a military occupation but also built the administrative infrastructure of the state. They also encouraged immigration of talented and prestigious foreign Muslims, among whom was Ibn Battuta (1304–1369). He made a number of journeys and explorations starting from Tangiers: first, he went south to Timbuktu and Bamako and then to eastern Africa. Next, he travelled to the East: Central Asia, Arabia, India, and Southeast Asia and on to China. He became a chronicler for the sultan in Delhi and his official envoy to China. While visiting the Maldives Islands, he became a judge and took several wives before finally setting off for China.⁵¹ Battuta provides invaluable descriptions of Sultan Tughluq's palace in Delhi, caravans crossing the Sahara, and commercial dispute resolution conducted according to Islamic law. His writings form an unusual sort of travelogue, replete with a mixture of observations and practical knowledge in a variety of fields, including botany, navigation, trade, and law.⁵²

⁴⁸Biruni (1971).

⁴⁹Tusi (1998).

⁵⁰Jackson (1999).

⁵¹Gordon (2004).

⁵²Battuta (2004).

The convergence of the Indian, Persian, and Islamic historiographies in India manifested in the forms, genres, and sources of historical writing. Islamic traditions in chronographies and biographies added to chronicles and annals. Political narratives in the form of versified history (*mathnawi*) were introduced in India by Amir Khusrau and, later, Isami. Indo-persan biographies included memoirs (*tazkira*) of *ulamas*, nobilities, political rulers, and so on. The impact of the Sufi traditions was significant, in particular as expressed in the *malfuzat* (collection of Sufi discourse or conversation) and *Maktubat* (collection of letters). To this, one has to add administrative sources such as royal decrees and seals, memoirs, orders, and permissions. Official news writers—*akhbar-nawis* or *waqi-nawis*—were charged with keeping the rulers informed through regular reports. For reasons we will detail in the next section, the extensive mass of materials in the Persian language was supplemented by an equally abundant body of historical sources in Rajasthani, Marathi, Punjabi, Sindhi, and Bengali.

The decadence of the Mongol Empire continued; the Golden Horde began dissolving in 1350, producing not only highly unstable and relatively nomadic steppe societies like the Nogais (a confederation of Turkic and Mongol tribes) but also city-states like the khanates of Crimea, Kazan, and Astrakhan. The Turkic Kazakh, Bashkir, and Tatar forces represented a formidable threat, even though they were often in competition with each other. After waging campaigns in Indian territories for three decades, Timur (or Tamerlane), the last great Mongol leader, ravaged Delhi in 1398. At the time, the great Mongol Empire of Genghis Khan had already fragmented and Tamerlane was the first (and the last) to try to rebuild it. He knew he could count on the various nomad groups in his confederation to provide him with considerable resources in men, horses, and wheat. With their help, and lured by the precious metals of the “Hindu infidels”, Tamerlane set out to conquer first Samarkand and then Kabul and finally pushed all the way to Delhi.

It was in this context that new historiographical thinking developed, notably through the work of Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406). In the global history of historiography, whereas Battuta made a name for himself among enthusiasts of travel writing, trade history, and adventure stories, Ibn Khaldun is considered one of the greatest theoreticians. He, too, travelled widely, but he did something else as well: he developed methods of historical analysis linked to the sciences and philosophy. His historical accounts were based less on biographies and

individual experiences than on the general principles governing human development. He was the author of the *Kitāb al-ʿIbar* (Discourse on Universal History).⁵³ In his view, history was more than merely the story of past events: “History consists in meditating, striving for truth, carefully explaining the causes and sources of facts, having a thorough understanding of the why and how of events”.⁵⁴ He pointed out the factors contributing to historical change: customs, climate, economics, politics, and so on. For Khaldun, the group takes precedence over the individual; context is a more powerful engine of history than individual action. From there, he postulated that states are born, evolve, and die, just like individuals. At the same time, he thought that the principle of solidarity was crucial to achieving balance in society and in historical evolution; this principle is expressed in family and clan relationships, in religion and ethics, and even in the professions. Solidarity is stronger among savages than in advanced urban societies in particular, which explains why the latter fall victim to the former.⁵⁵

The establishment of the Safavid dynasty in 1501 marked a turning point in Persian history and in history writing in general.⁵⁶ It continued the Timurid chronicle tradition, in particular with Iskandar Beg Munshi and his *Tarikh-I Alam-ara-yi ʿAbbasi* (World-Illuminating History of Abbas).⁵⁷ Administrative documents developed as well; mostly in Persian, these documents also made use of Arabic, Turcic, and Mongolian terminology.⁵⁸ By the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Safavid royal power reached its zenith under Shah Abbas the great. The majority of chroniclers wrote dynastic histories.

The considerable Arab, European, Persian, and Indian influences, already present in the works of Battuta and Khaldun, became even more prominent in the Ottoman Empire, which fostered the cross-fertilization of Islamic and European traditions. Persian influences were particularly strong in universal histories, some of which were written in Persian. Translations from Greek and Latin into Turkish, Arabic, and Persian

⁵³M'Halla (2007).

⁵⁴Khaldun (2002).

⁵⁵Al-Azmeh (1981).

⁵⁶Newman (2006).

⁵⁷Subrahmanyam (2010).

⁵⁸Marcinkowski (2002).

increased, especially after the fall of Constantinople.⁵⁹ This trilingual growth of Ottoman historiography continued in both verse and prose well until the seventeenth century, even though Ottoman Turkish became the dominant language of the historiography.⁶⁰

A few learned men criticized the varying styles of writing and the multitude of languages; Turkish scholarship expanded, producing histories designed specifically to consolidate the state, or universal analyses, or biographies in accordance with Islamic tradition.⁶¹ There was renewed interest in dynastic histories, especially to praise the dynasty in place. During the sixteenth century, along with these histories written and commissioned by the court,⁶² the variety of historical topics widened to include regional histories, general histories of Islam, even outside the Ottoman world, and histories of European countries, especially France.⁶³ Once again, these changes bore a close resemblance to those taking place during the same period in Europe. In his *Encyclopedia*, under the “History” heading, Katib Celebi (1609–1657) explained that historiography pertained to peoples, their customs and habits, and genealogies; his goal was to understand the past and learn from it to avoid making the same mistakes.⁶⁴ Until then, Ottoman historians had made use of several different notions of time and temporal divisions (temporalities), calendars, annals, cosmologies, and so on. With Celebi, they began looking for ways to unify these temporal units and to highlight the breaks and continuities in history. This approach was distinct from the expression of temporal divisions in keeping with divine revelation.⁶⁵ Some Muslim historians claimed that, in addition to having astronomical time and prophetic time (revelations), which were universal, communities had their own history. Consequently, epics and histories of regions and cities proliferated, along with biographies.⁶⁶ At the same time, contrary to the ideas of Ibn Khaldun, Celebi and other Ottoman historians thought the

⁵⁹Cipa and Fetvacı (2013).

⁶⁰Tezcan (2007).

⁶¹Kafadar (1995).

⁶²Aksan and Goffman (2007).

⁶³Bacqué-Grammont (1997).

⁶⁴Kafadar et al., <https://ottomanhistorians.uchicago.edu/>.

⁶⁵Al-Azmeh (2007).

⁶⁶Reinkowski and Karateke (2005).

cyclical process that inevitably doomed dynasties to extinction could be interrupted by an exceptional instance, namely the Ottoman dynasty.

The influence of Islamic historiography and literature eventually reached Africa.⁶⁷ In this case, even more than in India, colonial historiography often referred to Africa as a continent without a history or any written documents.⁶⁸ In reality, along with oral history, there was indeed a plethora of non-colonial and pre-colonial written sources, many of them dating back to the expulsion of Muslims from Andalusia, which generated considerable traffic in goods and people in the direction of West Africa. This accounts for the sources of jurisprudence and a huge collection of fatwas, together with the works of the main Muslim historians, biographers, and chroniclers like Khaldun, found in the libraries of the region, notably from the Songhai Empire.

Similarly, Indian historiography did not develop solely under the influence of Buddhism and Hinduism; its connections with the Islamic world were equally important. This is an essential point that has been obscured time and again, first by British colonizers and historians and more recently by Indian nationalist historiographers, in their search for “pure” Indian traditions “opposed” to Islam.⁶⁹ In fact, it is precisely the intermingling of these different cultures and currents of thought that gives the Indian subcontinent its specificity. There are, of course, countless Sanskrit sources, mainly epics (*itihasa purana*). Other Puranic texts (the *Vishnu Purana*) help to differentiate history from myth (the succeeding chapters show history gradually emerging from myth) and add prophecies.⁷⁰ The various Sanskrit sources were shaped into two epics—the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*—at the heart of a controversy in India today. These ancient narratives have been exploited politically by the Hindu nationalist movement, which has not hesitated to challenge the interpretations of certain Indian researchers criticizing its “pure Indian” roots. Paradoxically, the nationalists have demanded, often successfully, that those interpretations be retracted in the name of religious tolerance. In reality, both epics have been repeatedly rewritten and interpreted in a wide variety of ways over thousands of years. These multiple genres and forms of history circulated inside India and between the subcontinent

⁶⁷ Lovejoy (2012), Eckert (2014).

⁶⁸ Mbaye (2004), Falola and Jennings (2003).

⁶⁹ Schwartz (1994).

⁷⁰ Chatterjee (2009).

and other regions, particularly through Buddhism, which linked India to China, Japan, and East Asia. Monastic histories and lineages implying the primacy of one version of Buddhism over another spurred the writing of numerous historical works.⁷¹ Connections with the Islamic world were equally important. As early as the twelfth century, there was a sizeable Arab-Muslim population in India, linked in particular to the Delhi sultanate. Sultanate chroniclers developed several genres of historical writing that often were influenced by the Arab-Muslim world. Along with these documents in Persian, many others were produced in Hindi, Marathi, Rajasthani, Punjabi, Sindhi, and Bengali.⁷² The ties between the Indian, Persian, and Arab-Muslim worlds reached their peak under the Mughals. Abu'l Fazl was the author of *Akbar-nama* (Book of Akbar) and *A'in-i Akbari* (Rules of Akbar) in 1596 and 1599, respectively.⁷³

These attitudes reflect the openness of the Mughal Empire, which took care to integrate the traditions and religions of different groups, as we will see in detail in the following pages.⁷⁴ This approach is confirmed in the spread of historical works in vernacular languages, especially in South India, where local polyglots, or Karanams, relied on sources and inscriptions of different origins.⁷⁵ Alongside these documents produced in the Mughal court, numerous other texts saw the light of day both in different regions—in languages that were equally different—as well as in the principalities that emerged during the eighteenth century from the ashes of the Mughal Empire, especially Mysore and the Maratha in the south and Punjab in the north. Legal and mystical documents were produced, as were chronicles and biographies.

This was especially the case in the Hindu state of Vizianagaram.⁷⁶ Recent studies on these documents have led to a long debate among Indianists. The authors behind this movement, Rao Shulman and Subrahmanyam, argued that contrary to the claims of subaltern studies, these ancient texts do not express “another” way of conceiving history, one opposed to that advanced in the West, but instead in both cases an opening up of an entire range of possibilities in terms of (historical)

⁷¹ Harris (2005).

⁷² Kumar (2007).

⁷³ Fazl (1873–1887).

⁷⁴ Chandra (2008), Lefèvre et al. (2015).

⁷⁵ Mantena (2012).

⁷⁶ Rao et al. (2001).

writing. Genres increased and discussions of what was true history took place not just in the West but also in India. Here, the question arose concerning the relationship between how history is written and its truthfulness. The answers proposed by historians on the subcontinent did not always coincide with those in the ancient, medieval, and modern West; this does not mean they were incompatible: their reciprocal borrowings demonstrate they clearly were. Let us take the case of François Bernier, a former student of the philosopher Pierre Gassendi (1592–1655). In late 1658, he arrived in Sourat, a port city on the coast of Gujarat. By the spring of 1659, he had joined the circle of associates surrounding Crown Prince Dara, who was to succeed Shah Jahan to the Mughal throne. Bernier remained at the Mughal court for three years. There, he became the official imperial chronicler for all of Europe, seeking to “expose” the false elements in the histories of the Moghul monarchs and the erroneous notions about India entertained by Europeans.⁷⁷ Like the Indian chroniclers of the period, Bernier presented several versions of the same event, drawing on Racine for stylistic inspiration.⁷⁸ His writing was enriched by textual analysis, studying local languages, knowing the origin of his sources, and direct observation. Bernier combined his critique of geocentric thinking with a critique of historical sources: the Copernican revolution and the search for historical truth were one and the same process.⁷⁹ His interpretations were also shaped by the Indian context, particularly the way dynastic changes were incorporated into the framework of Mughal cosmography.⁸⁰ In this respect, historical writing was produced at the interface with statistics and astronomy on the one hand and literature and theatre on the other hand.⁸¹ Actually, the using of the theatre in historical representation and analysis was extremely widespread in Western Europe (from Camillo through Lull down to Giordano Bruno and Rameau)⁸² and in Russia.⁸³

⁷⁷Bernier (2008), Harrigan (2014).

⁷⁸Bulle (2003).

⁷⁹Freches (1973).

⁸⁰Mugnai (1984), Rubies (2013).

⁸¹Bernier, “Lettre envoyé à Monsieur Chapelain”, 4 Octobre 1667, in *Un Libertin dans l’Inde Moghole*: 301–344.

⁸²Yates (1966).

⁸³Stites (2005).

Through the interaction among these various influences, Bernier's work became a model of the Eurasian crossroads of historical and scientific knowledge. Even when he criticized "the ridiculous beliefs" of Hindus (for example, concerning eclipses), he in fact was denouncing the persistence of similar attitudes in Europe itself.⁸⁴ For these same reasons, when histories of the evolution and use of the term "revolution" are based entirely on French sources, they miss an essential aspect, namely the transnational and global nature of the analyses. Revolution as a political and historical category did not come into being with the French Revolution, but indeed much earlier, in the context of knowledge circulating in Eurasia.

To sum up, in the seventeenth century, among European travelers and missionaries, the wonderment aroused by "others" and the construction of empires still left room for a humanist-inspired interest in new discoveries and other civilizations, even ancient, non-European ones. This wonderment already coexisted with another tendency, namely to impose European values on the "others" while depriving them of land ownership and management of the newly developing European empires. The specific features of the West reside in the connection between historiographical reconstruction on the one hand and law, economy, and imperial constructions on the other.

THE ROLE OF HISTORY IN IMPERIAL CONSTRUCTIONS

Asian Universalist Empires and the Role of History Writing

In France as in other countries, the birth of what is known as "modern" historiography is often associated with that of the modern state, the latter being identified with the nation-state. This interpretation calls for qualification, for during the period studied and well beyond, it was empires that dominated the world stage. This connection is often lost in Eurocentric histories of European historiography, which tend to underestimate not only the importance of similar dynamics in non-European worlds but also the very early interface between empire and nation in Europe itself and its role in the emergence of a historiography known

⁸⁴Bernier, "Lettre envoyé à Monsieur Chapelain", 4 Octobre 1667, in *Un Libertin dans l'Inde Moghole*: 301–344.

as “modern”. Quite the contrary, erudition and philology not only constituted a demand of the monarchic state vis-à-vis the papacy and local authorities but also served as powerful tools for imperial and colonial expansion. It is here that the forms for writing history and their use in the organization of empires differ the most between Europe and Asia. The universalist policies of Asian and Eurasian empires (Mughal, Ottoman, and Russian) are often opposed to those of West Europe, which sought to submit and exclude the colonized peoples.⁸⁵ Universalism manifested in symbolism, ceremony, and diplomatic relations and in cosmopolitan literary high culture but also in the bureaucratic and political inclusiveness of local elites and population. For instance, during its expansion, the Ottoman Empire and its elites sought through history to legitimize themselves to their subject populations. These operations not only were on the surface but also influenced the very organization of the empire.⁸⁶ The fall of Constantinople in 1453, often referred to in the West as the end of the Byzantine Empire and the beginning of the Islamization of the East, the Near East, and Eastern Europe, is presented differently in Ottoman sources. The sultan decided to take the title of Basileus, like the Byzantine emperors who in their turn chose this title to mark the intersection of Christian, Roman, and Greek traditions that was the basis of their empire. After the taking of Constantinople, the sultan called himself the leader and guide of the two seas (Mediterranean and Black Sea) and two continents (Europe and Asia).⁸⁷ Mehmet II later took the title of Kaysar and referred to Constantinople as both *takhtgah* (in Persian: *gah*, the place; *takht*: of the throne) and *dar al-saltana* in Arabic. Similarly, expansion in Central Asia—and the victory against the khanates deriving from the fragmentation of the Golden Horde and the descendants of Tamerlane—encouraged the sultan to also adopt the title of *khan*, even though the Ottomans could, of course, claim no direct kinship with Tamerlane. Like Akbar in India, Shah Abbas in Iran, and Ming and Qing emperors, Mehmet II and his successors consolidated the imperial administration by relying on personnel from the primary ethnicities of the empire and by using multiple languages. This mixing reveals itself especially in the

⁸⁵Burbank and Cooper (2010), Bang and Kolodziejczyk (2012).

⁸⁶Dariusz Kolodziejczyk, “Khan, Caliph, Tsar and Emperor: The Multiple Identities of the Ottoman Sultan”, in Bang and Kolodziejczyk: 175–193.

⁸⁷Kafadar (1995).

evolutions of statuses: while numerous aristocratic families that owned domains were reduced to the rank of managers and possessors, converted Christians were appointed Grand Viziers. The legal and tax machinery relied on Islamic institutions, such as Sharia, but also on those inherited from conquered regions. Genoese merchants kept their privileges, while Armenian, Greek, and Jewish communities were referred to as *ahl al-kitab* (peoples of the great book). These populations were integrated but subordinate to Muslims with regard to political rights. They also paid a specific tax.

In India as well, the Mughals emphasized their descent from Tamerlane, origins in Afghanistan, and links with Persia. In the 1570s, the Mughals, who were originally from Afghanistan and closely linked to the Persian world, launched an attack on Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Bengal. Mughal chronicles expressed constant nostalgia for the land of their origins, the Fergana, as well as claims against the Uzbeks, who were accused of having chased them from there. As in China, in Mughal India, imperial construction went hand in hand with an appropriation of history by the emperor. For instance, Akbar (1542–1605) presented himself, beginning in 1579, as the true interpreter of the law at the expense of the *ulama* (theologians, often Sunni).⁸⁸ As a result, it was up to the central power to control not only the practicing of law but also its archives.⁸⁹ The Mughals gave rise to a dual operation: to rewrite earlier history in accordance with their own legitimizing and opening up to other ethnic and religious groups in order to integrate them in their imperial project. Akbar sought to move beyond any division between Muslims and Hindus, and the writing of history was an integral part of this project. The new historiography claimed to be rationalist and objective rather than mystical in its explanations and descriptions. On this basis, Akbar and his historians contested the preceding historiographies that conflicted with Hindu groups.

Mughal emperors did not limit themselves to adopting Persian as the official administrative language of the Empire but also adopted the title of *Shah*. This link to the Persian Shiites did not prevent Aurangzeb from asserting his role with Sunni Muslims, thereby provoking the anger of the Ottomans. For this same reason, Mughal chronicles did not hesitate

⁸⁸ Fazl (1873–1887).

⁸⁹ Alam (2004).

to call the Ottoman sultan “Roman Emperor” and called into question his legitimacy in guiding the Muslim world.⁹⁰ The relations between religion and political philosophy—and in this context also the role of history in Mughal India—expressed themselves through the law (*sharia*), the practice of Sufism, and language.⁹¹ The adoption of Persian as the official language was not trivial: it reflects the search for a solution that could surpass the tensions between the languages of the subcontinent and Arabic languages, all while laying claim to the Persian origins of the Mughals.⁹² In turn, *Sharia* made it possible to take into account the interactions between communities and tensed in this regard only during the colonial era.

The literature that would be known as *adab* originally consisted of Arabic translations from Greek and Persian.⁹³ This dynamic became consolidated in *akhlāq* literature, which indicated the correct behavior to adopt in politics, administration, and the arts. These orientations took inspiration from a number of traditions at the same time and indeed influenced the administration of the Mughal Empire. Mughal chronicles expressed constant nostalgia for the land of their origins, the Fergana, as well as claims against the Uzbeks, who were accused of having chased them from Central Asia.⁹⁴ In reality, the corridor linking India to Central Asia was fundamental for the supply of horses, the pre-eminent weapon of choice in these regions. The caravan trade between China, Persia, Central Asia, the Ottoman Empire, and Russia on the one hand and between Russia, Inner Asia, and the Ottoman Empire on the other continued to develop from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries.⁹⁵ This caravan traffic represented the latest reincarnation of the Buddhist journeys and pilgrimages along these same routes dating back for centuries. The expansion of Islam in Central Asia and Northern India developed pilgrimages and journeys by Islamic scholars, who traveled with merchants selling spices, slaves, and fabrics. The links intensified between Bukhara and Istanbul, extended across the Kazakh Steppe that had converted to Islam, and crossed through Chugiyak and Tashkent, from which

⁹⁰Farooqi (1989).

⁹¹Alam (2004), Marlow (1997), Khalidi (1994).

⁹²Robinson (1996).

⁹³Nizami (1983).

⁹⁴Richards (1993).

⁹⁵Levi (2002).

they proceeded into Muscovite territory. Indian merchants, both Hindu and Muslim, spoke multiple languages, including Persian (Farsi), the primary commercial language in these regions.

In China, we find similar links between historiographical constructions, their political use, and the organization of the empire. Thus, beginning with the overthrow of the Ming, Nurhaci ordered the recording of his father's documents as well as the writing of an official history of the Ming and Manchu that legitimized the latter's seizure of power. To the bureau of historiography that was already in place under the preceding dynasties, the Qing added a bureau of documentation for military affairs and another for history "Notebooks". Multiple official revisions of the history of the Ming were produced in relation to the internal dynamics of China as well as its relations with former Mongol territories. The documents that had been produced by the Ming in fact described the Jurchen and the Manchu, who were now in power, as tribal populations. These assessments no longer suited the new authorities.⁹⁶ The same was true of the invasion of Liaodong by Nurhaci himself, which was criticized in Ming sources but henceforth presented as the beginning of the "great enterprise". The Qing process of expansion continued during the eighteenth century, notably in the northeast and northwest, at the expense of the Dzungars.⁹⁷ This process was accompanied by a rewriting of official history that sought to legitimize it. Emperor Qianlong (1736–1796) organized a central bureau that was supposed to collect and order the histories of dynasties as well as those of the provinces and their administrations. Important changes also took place in the history of the origins of the Jurchens and the Manchu, who henceforth were connected to a sort of superhero.⁹⁸ To this same end, Qianlong ordered the Office for National History to expand the production of gazettes in the northern territories in order to collect documents and compile a history of these territories that conformed to the demands of central authorities. However, as in previous periods, the accounts produced in these local publications often ended up being at odds with this ambition.

⁹⁶Struve (1998).

⁹⁷Perdue (2005).

⁹⁸Crossley (1999).

As in India, the insertion of different ethnicities and populations within the empire was an essential component of Ming and later Qing policies. The latter allocated offices and hereditary properties to the Manchu heads of the army, who simultaneously were appointed as local tax officials. This solution helped overcome resistance in the south. The Qing later embarked upon the colonization of both the northeast and the northwest. In the first case (especially in the region of Liaoning), the Qing implemented a colonization system that granted peasants a specific status as peasant of the state, one that was also common near Beijing.⁹⁹ In the northeast, the situation had both similarities to and differences with Liaoning; migrations from southern China toward the northwest were considerable between 1660 and 1750. The Ming and Yuan strategy that the Qing carried on—applying it on a vaster scale—consisted of using soldier-colonists. The colonists were Han from the northwest or Turks from south Xinjiang. The similarity to European colonization in North America is striking. The Chinese implemented a system quite similar to the English indenture (*engagisme* in French) that was so broadly developed during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (for white colonists) in the new American colonies. At that point, the question arose as to the integration of local elites, both Han and Manchu, within the new Empire. The strategy of the Manchu was simple: they sought first and foremost to obtain enough resources from peasants but without applying enough pressure to push them onto the side of the Ming. At the same time, they reduced the tax independence of southern provinces and sought to increase the distance between landholding elites and peasants in majority-Han agricultural regions. A few years later, the Qing decided to put an end to the superimposition between tax administration and military hierarchy that had characterized the war against the Ming. This strategy, which was launched in southern provinces, was later expanded to the entire Chinese territory. By separating tax administration and military hierarchy, the emperor sought to take control not only of Han-Ming elites but also of Manchu military officers. This separation of careers in reality aimed less to isolate than to gradually integrate the Han-Ming within the new regime; posts in administration, even the most senior, were not reserved for the Manchu. Once this objective was achieved, high imperial elites encouraged diversity instead,

⁹⁹Campbell and Lee (2001).

through marriages between Han and Manchu as well as the mixing of administrators from the two ethnicities in all regions of the empire. Finally, in the eighteenth century, the Qing emphasized the process of administrative and military centralization.¹⁰⁰ However, this process was not necessarily synonymous with a stamping out of linguistic and administrative differences. In accordance with Chinese and Mongol tradition, the Manchu-Qing gave life to relatively autonomous administrative organizations in the new provinces of the north. The documents conserved in the archives show this well: in these regions, the official languages of the administration and the army were Mongol and, later in the West, Tibetan.¹⁰¹ In other words, there is an important connection between writing and imperial management: expansion led to a subjection of populations, who were integrated within the empire, and with them their languages, customs, and norms. The combination of practices and values was a desired policy and a reality and is confirmed in the writing of a history that, as we have seen in the previous section, precisely aimed to confirm this universal management of the empire. This was a characteristic common to China, India, and the Ottoman Empire. Was this similar to Western Eurocentrism during this era?

Writing History in European Exclusive Empires

Law and historical argumentation supported European colonial expansion, particularly in the form of subjecting and excluding “others”. It is in the confluence of these elements that the origins of Eurocentrism should be sought. Translating from and learning the languages of colonized peoples were both part of imperial management and influenced the constitution of modern historiography. Said saw this clearly for Europe and linked it to European domination; however, this process also took place in Russia, China, India, and the Ottoman Empire. In all of these cases, the identification of “historical method”, the content of history, and the legitimizing of empires were linked; yet these interactions yielded different results, which were not so much expressed in the conventional opposition between European “scientific history” founded on erudition and philology and mythological history outside of Europe,

¹⁰⁰Wakeman (1985).

¹⁰¹Crossley (2008), Crossley et al. (2006).

since these elements were present everywhere. The differences are elsewhere; in Europe, the association between history and philology is a product partly of humanism and partly of colonial expansion. Western Empires tended to be much more exclusive in relation to Eurasian empires and in this respect produced notions and practices of historicity that aimed to confirm this exclusivity vis-à-vis colonized peoples. However, this difference is not connected exclusively to philology and erudition, as Said and Greenblatt among many others have shown,¹⁰² but to the use that European authorities made of history in the practices of law, economy, and anthropology. These fields of knowledge acted to justify property, profit, and race and thereby to legitimize the European conquest of the world.

In 1664, Pierre Boucher wrote his *Histoire véritable et naturelle des mœurs et productions du pays de la Nouvelle France* precisely to combat the reluctance of the French to settle in Nouvelle France and the first-hand accounts of the Jesuit missionaries. In his book, Boucher presented some historical background on the local population groups and a description of the environment, concluding that, apart from Iroquois, mosquitos, and harsh winters, life across the ocean was idyllic. He also demonstrated that the worlds undergoing colonization were inhabited by savages who needed to be civilized.¹⁰³ This is where history came in: it was not simply a question of invoking the natives' lack of property deeds to justify occupying their lands but henceforth of recounting the story of colonization itself.

For instance, in Louisiana, French national sentiment became much more significant precisely in those colonies opposed to slaves; the nation became racialized as it grew more diverse. This was a two-way process, as in the metropole these elements raised problems in the relations between the French, Creoles, and those slaves arriving in France. This latter problem was in principle settled very quickly during the time of Louis XIV, when it was decided that any slave setting foot on French soil would be free. However, in practice, the question remained highly controversial, and different tribunals issued varying decisions.¹⁰⁴ With regard to creoles, once again the meaning of the term evolved; along with slavery, it became

¹⁰² Greenblatt (1992), Said (1978).

¹⁰³ Boucher (1664, 2014).

¹⁰⁴ Peabody (1996).

important to distinguish creoles of French origin from mixed-race creoles and especially from free people of color. Yet again, certifications and genealogies acted to validate or disprove these elements.

In similar fashion, across the Channel, beginning in the 1540s, a number of actors in England evoked the “mission” and duty of their kingdom to subjugate Scotland, while on the Scottish side there was instead an insistence on equality between the two powers.¹⁰⁵ The English and Scottish each invoked their own national myths, which they presented as well-founded history.¹⁰⁶ They also attacked their opponent’s version, calling it invention. They used philological techniques and erudition to prove their respective arguments and to produce a critical analysis of the sources and documents used.¹⁰⁷ For example, on the English side, documents were mobilized proving that the Scottish had already been vassals of the king of England during the Middle Ages, while Scottish books hastened to demonstrate the opposite. This debate led to the emergence of the concept of empire within English political thought: the imperium of the English king included *dominii* in Scotland.¹⁰⁸

Once the question of Scotland was settled, the ambitions of this new entity—the Kingdom of England (Scotland, Wales, and England)—with respect to Ireland changed the situation. James VI of Scotland, who founded the Stuart dynasty and took the title of James I of England, proposed for the first time a notion of Britishness that was inclusive of Ireland. For this, he relied not only on the imperial construction that began in the 1540s but also on the Imperium Anglorum of the tenth century and then on the edicts and charters from the reign of Edward I (1272–1307) in order to make evident the long-term nature and precedents of his claims. Great Britain became a *res publica* in the Roman sense of the term: a common good basing its sovereignty on an empire. James I launched an undertaking to develop plantations in Ulster supported by “British families”, which is to say Scottish and English owners and colonizers. He received such support from British elites that,

¹⁰⁵ Armitage (2000: 37).

¹⁰⁶ Murray (1872).

¹⁰⁷ James Henrisoun, “An Exhortacion to the Scottes to Coinforme Themselves to the Honourable, Expedient, and Godly Union Between the Two Realmes of England and Scotland, 1547”, Murray (1872), appendix.

¹⁰⁸ Fitzmaurice (1997).

between 1606 and 1610, a number of observers, including Francis Bacon, contrasted the profitability and value of plantations in Ulster with the folly of plantations in Virginia.¹⁰⁹ The Irish experience was fundamental, as the appropriation of land, use of forms of servitude, and the authority of the king of England were exported to Ireland and the New World. However, justification for possessions in America quickly appeared more complicated than for domains in Ireland. The Spanish in turn were seeking to legitimize their colonization through a papal bull giving property of American territory to the king of Spain.¹¹⁰ They believed that similar authorization was required for other European powers. English observers quickly replied that only the authority of the king counted; to do so, they set out to analyze documents from the twelfth century in addition to the meaning of the Latin word *dominium*. They ultimately ended up converging *dominium* and *imperium*, and empire was thus a domain of the crown. This rhetoric could not hide, in addition to the obvious analogies, the differences between the Irish experience and that of the New World. Unlike Ireland, no American colony had a king or a parliament. Also, the English and Scottish were a minority in Ireland, while in America they quickly surpassed the Indians because of immigration and extermination.¹¹¹ The definition of real property also transformed in the New World: while in Ireland it retained the primary characteristic of English aristocratic property,¹¹² it was different on the other side of the Atlantic. In the mid-seventeenth century, sovereignty remained a difficult notion to define and subsequently put into practice: chartered companies (such as the East India Company) and those close to the crown enjoyed major privileges in the Americas.

In this same context, John Locke published *Two Treatises of Government*.¹¹³ It is important to stop for a moment and focus on this point because this work and its author are systematically cited as examples of *la nouvelle pensée* and “liberalism” of the Enlightenment. According to some interpreters of Locke, he started from the premise that writing history required philosophical reflection more than erudition. This argument calls for revision: in reality, the *Two Treatises*

¹⁰⁹ Bacon (1861: IV, 123).

¹¹⁰ Kagan (2009).

¹¹¹ Belich (2009).

¹¹² Jack Greene, “Introduction” in Greene (2010: 1–24).

¹¹³ Locke (1821), original: 1698.

confirms that there was a close connection in Britain between historiography, colonial expansion, and the emergence of Enlightenment philosophy. While Locke defended liberty and saw slavery as subjection to the arbitrary power, he nevertheless justified the enslavement of prisoners of war.¹¹⁴ He linked these reflections drawn from the colonial experience to problems of poverty and vagrancy in England itself. In his view, putting the poor, vagrants, and slaves to work would rule out even more terrible states of deprivation and famine in Britain and Africa.

However, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, European empires still met difficulties to put into practice their exclusionary (vis-à-vis local populations) attitudes. This was so because the globalization of this period took a different form from the one in the nineteenth century and *a fortiori* the one we are experiencing today.¹¹⁵ To be sure, important connections developed among the various parts of the world as a result of trade, migration, and the circulation of knowledge, including historiographical knowledge. However, from the point of view of economics, international trade in the seventeenth century meant something altogether different from the integration of capital markets, financial systems, and world economies. When we talk about “globalization” in the seventeenth century or similarly when we see Europe’s expansion in that period as a prelude to future world supremacy, we are making a double mistake: we are exaggerating the importance of Europe and England at the time and giving credence to the idea of history as predetermined. In reality, at the end of the seventeenth century, no one would have wagered on the global supremacy of Europe, and even a century later, that outcome was still very much open to question.¹¹⁶

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¹¹⁴Armitage (2004), Hinshelwood (2013).

¹¹⁵Reinert and Roge (2008), Subrahmanyam (2002).

¹¹⁶Pomeranz (2000).

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CHAPTER 3

Inventing Modernity

Abstract Europe did not have a monopoly on the Enlightenment, although expectations and projects differed within Europe and even more so between Europe and other areas of the world. The global enlightenment, widespread in all continents, provided a new perspective in which a plurality of worlds was less at issue than universalist visions. With Western domination during the nineteenth century, new tools and methods were sought to be exported to the rest of the planet. The opposition between orality and writing and the invention of modern archives and its connection with state building were at the core of this process. Europe-centered chronology was imposed on non-European worlds.

Keywords Archives · Nation · Orality · Periodization · Revolution
Empire · Civilization

Europe's role as the sole driving force behind the Enlightenment has been called into question by the growth of post-colonial studies and later of global studies.¹ Some authors have accused the Enlightenment as a whole of Eurocentrism²; others have highlighted the heterogeneity

¹ Kors (2002).

² Chakrabarty (2000).

among Enlightenment thinkers in Europe³; still others have called attention to the existence of Enlightenment thinkers outside Europe, even though their methods differed from those employed in Europe (“multiple modernities”)⁴ as well as the reciprocal influences and circulation of ideas between these worlds.⁵ One of the problems with these debates is that often they are teleological and normative; the very possibility of identifying multiple modernities implies a general, ahistorical definition of “modernity” itself. This has become a crucial issue today, when historians are trying to determine whether there is such a thing as “Western-style modernity”; whether it can be defined and, if so, how; whether it is homogeneous; and in what way or ways it might be incompatible with other forms of “modernity”. The question is not only to decide whether, say, there was a “modernity” at work in the Islamic world or whether this was the same as in Europe but why interaction with other values and other worlds becomes so problematic for European modernity today while it was a constant practice over many centuries. We might answer by focusing on so many topics such as religion, public sphere, and global economies; instead, we will keep our aim and discuss these points by studying the way history and its writing were conceived and practiced in the age of the Enlightenment.

THE CONCEPTION OF HISTORY DURING THE ENLIGHTENMENT

Reflection on history and its methods and its relationship to philosophy, religion, law, and the social sciences took place not only in Enlightenment Europe but in other areas, particularly Asia. In every instance, these reflections were a response to structural transformations in states, societies, and economies and the growing importance of trade, consumption, and proto-industrial activity. “Enlightenment” thinking developed in response to these global dynamics: encounters with other worlds no longer fueled the exoticism and wonderment of previous centuries but instead raised questions about which values, economic systems, and types of warfare could dominate and whether this new order

³Trevor-Roper (2010), Venturi (1969), Israel (2008), Sebastiani (2013).

⁴Pocock (1999–2011), O’Brien (1997).

⁵Subrahmanyam (1998), Conrad (2012).

of priorities was acceptable.⁶ Could European values be exported or did local realities have to be taken into account? Was it appropriate for trade and economics to be based on profit rather than on ethical values—and, if so, which values could they supplant? Was it legitimate to use slavery and finance as instruments for imperial expansion?

In pondering these questions, travelogues and religious and philosophical reflections on “other worlds” had a decisive influence. It is impossible to understand the Enlightenment solely on the basis of French or even Europe-wide debates. This Eurocentric view of the Enlightenment has come down to us through the excessive influence of nineteenth-century interpretations that hold sway even today. In this context, debates on historical writing and historical “truthfulness” were particularly cogent. These debates were part of the transnational and imperial philosophical and anthropological thinking of the time.⁷ Thus, historiographical and philosophical thought developed in China in reaction to ongoing transformations in the empire and participation in the global context. From a political standpoint, the successful expansion of the Manchus and later the Qing was linked to the intelligent imperial policy of incorporating the various ethnic groups and local elites into the administration and the army. In eighteenth-century China, historical thought reflected the success against the Mongols on the steppe as well as growing concern about the West and its expansion. Thus, a learned court historian, Zhao, was commissioned to write a history of the campaigns carried out against the Zhungars. Although he glorified the army’s pacification efforts, Zhao sought to promote a new way of using sources. He criticized Ming scholars in particular for failing to grasp the real intentions of the Manchus and thereby avoiding war; he also underscored the relationship between political analysis and the study of history.⁸ Zhang Xuecheng (1738–1801), who was learned in philosophy as well as history, and Wang Mingsheng (1722–1798), also a scholar-historian, insisted on the need to write history starting from philology rather than from philosophy and cosmology.⁹ In his *General Principles of literature and history*, Zhang Xuecheng adopted philology and textual analysis to evaluate the authenticity of Chinese classical texts. According

⁶Brewer and Sebastiani (2014).

⁷Duchet (1971).

⁸Waldron (1990).

⁹Elman (1984).

to him, the fact that these texts had been written in a poetic style did not make them less appropriate as historical source. According to him, style and content must not be confused and philology instead of philosophy must orient historians. To this aim, he advanced a bibliographic taxonomy in which he classified works according to their sources, style, and orientation.¹⁰

Against this attitude, Gong Zizhen (1792–1841) considered that history always has a moral influence and a moral duty and as such it cannot be strictly separated from philosophy. In particular, he sought to show the decadence of the Chinese empire and, starting from this, the urgency of reforms.¹¹ In part, these worries reflected the changing political and economic situation of the Chinese empire. At the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, its previous expansion began weakening the administrative unity, especially in the area of tax.¹² The supply of the army was increasingly achieved through the market instead of local gran collection as before; at the same time, the financial—and, to some extent, monetary—autonomy of Chinese provinces raised new problems. The rise of England and of its monetary system (the *gold standard*) led to a hemorrhage of silver outside China, facilitated by a downturn in the Chinese economy during the first quarter of the nineteenth century (in relation to the Napoleonic Wars and the destabilization of the international economy).¹³

Similar changes were under way in Mughal and post-Mughal India, where history was being rewritten in a context of growing influence and greater circulation between these regions and Europe. At the turn of the eighteenth century, the Mughal Empire found itself in an increasingly difficult situation: its policy of fiscal and military decentralization, which had previously paid off, was beginning to show signs of weakness. Imperial decline was especially obvious in recently annexed regions, particularly in the South among the Marathas, whose expansion during the first half of the eighteenth century no doubt substantially helped to undermine the Mughals.¹⁴ The Marathas had set their sights on the

¹⁰Ng (1994).

¹¹Huang (1995).

¹²Perdue (2005).

¹³Lin Man-Houng, *China Upside Down*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006.

¹⁴Gordon (1994), Wink (1986).

long-term objective of replacing the Mughals by a Hindu dynasty, which they tried to achieve through expansion. Given the conditions in Mughal India at the time, the project had a good chance of succeeding, but it ran up against two unexpected obstacles. First, a coalition of Afghans and Persians led by Nadir Shah invaded Delhi in 1739; after defeating the Mughals, the coalition came under the control of the Durrani, who had formerly served as mercenaries of Nadir Shah. In a letter to Ottoman Sultan Mustafa III, their chief, Ahmad Shah Durrani, openly declared his intention to re-establish the Empire of Tamerlane. Contrary to the assertions of some Indian historiography, later repeated in many Western accounts, the struggles between the Durrani and Marathas cannot be reduced to the fall of a civilization (the Mughal Empire) at the hands of pillaging barbarians. Significant advances were also made in political, philosophical, and religious thought, linked to the new encounters with the West as well as with the Durrani and Central Asia.¹⁵ Both political entities developed their own sources and archives of tax, land, and administrative records, together with their own chronicles and historiographies.¹⁶ The documents they produced, like those in Europe, were used to support the introduction of a new fiscal state. The transformation of these political entities and their efforts to legitimize local populations were reflected in the writing of history, just as in the West and in other Asian countries. When they finally turned inwards, it was to protect their cultural identities against the fragmentation of the old world and the increasing interpenetration of other worlds.

In one interpretation, similar to Said's "Orientalism" and colonial history, some historiography today discusses how the British appropriated Indian history and insisted on differentiating "genuine" history (that is, English and European) from Indian mythology.¹⁷ Although this interpretation presents numerous examples to justify its conclusions, it neglects two important aspects. First, British experts, scholars, and administrators resorted to Indian assistants as well as local sources and were profoundly influenced by both.¹⁸ Second, while there was a universalist tendency to employ British and European categories

¹⁵ Alam and Subrahmanyam (1998).

¹⁶ Mantena (2012).

¹⁷ Dirks (1992).

¹⁸ Trautmann (2006).

uncritically in the Indian context, a number of interpreters insisted on the need to become familiar with native languages and local institutions. As in previous times, the relationship between sovereignty, state building, and history writing was crucial. Thus, the East India Company (EIC) decided to rely primarily on Mughal and post-Mughal legal institutions such as the Qazi (appellate courts) at the local level and apply English law at the central level.¹⁹ Warren Hastings, the governor-general of the EIC, ordered his agents to collect all Islamic and Hindu “laws”, thereby encouraging the study of local languages to bring the British closer to the population. Indeed, Hastings recognized the “specificities” of both the Indian context and Britain and consequently the importance of promulgating appropriate laws. His views were challenged in England, where a majority of members of Parliament insisted that there were irreconcilable differences separating English law from Indian traditions, and it was therefore necessary to adopt British categories and institutions.²⁰ Starting from this, the Permanent Settlement Act of 1793 transformed the famous *zamindars*—the tax collectors—into landlords. Subaltern studies used this fact as their flagship argument to show that the British had imposed their own categories to despoil the local population. In fact, the situation was far more complex. First, the settlement reform was intended for Bihar and Bengal, not for the entire country (in much of the historiography of the period, “Bengal” referred to India as a whole). The provisions of the Act did not apply in western India, notably Gujarat. Moreover, even with regard to Bengal, the members of the EIC and *a fortiori* of Parliament were divided: some thought local institutions should be preserved; others adopted the classic Eurocentric approach, calling for the implementation of British rules. It should be pointed out that Bengali notions of property and ownership practices had been in constant flux prior to the arrival of the EIC and even more under its control.²¹ Local actors developed new interpretations and practices evolved; in short, the British presence was grafted onto a society already in the throes of change. Hence, the effect of the British reform was a combination of multiple dynamics rather than the result of a top-down process. Once again, history was reconstructed whenever issues of sovereignty,

¹⁹Banerjee (1963: 130), Fischer-Tiné and Mann (2004).

²⁰“Extract of the Proceedings of the Committee at Kishan Nugar (June 28, 1772)”, in Seventh Report from the Committee of Secrecy (May 6, 1773), in Lambert (1975).

²¹Sartori (2014).

law, and ownership arose. British commentators examined Indian history to determine whether local rules complied with English law and to validate property deeds. Post-colonial historiographers harshly criticized the British for claiming that India lacked a truly scientific history and using that argument as a pretext to write their own version.²² In fact, there were conflicting views among the British on this question. No doubt, some British officers and historians embraced a highly Eurocentric approach; others, on the contrary, realized that proficiency in local languages and sources was necessary to produce a genuine history of the country.²³ Recently, historians have been able to show in detail the interaction between Indian and British texts and historians along with their assistants on both sides in constructing, for example, archaeology,²⁴ manuscripts, and colonial archives.²⁵ The Enlightenment brought about changes in human knowledge as a result of global and interconnected structural transformations. The point here is not to determine which region exported “modernity” or was “the most modern”, based on a scale of values defined once and for all, but to understand the origins and impact of these reciprocal evolutions and influences.

THE QUEST FOR UNIVERSALITY: THE ENLIGHTENMENT AND NON-EUROPEAN WORLDS

Contrary to the dominant Eurocentric view—the Enlightenment was an intellectual movement that radiated outwards from its source in Europe—it is important to emphasize the fact that European thought changed precisely in response to contacts with other worlds. Thus, in the late sixteenth century, the Jesuit missionaries in China argued that inasmuch as Confucianism was not a religion but rather a philosophy and a civic ethos, it was not opposed to Christianity. The Church condemned this position in 1742, triggering a vast controversy over the definitions of religion, history, and government. From the early eighteenth century, several *philosophes* were caught up in the widespread fascination with

²² Chatterjee (1993), Guha (1993).

²³ Dirks (1992).

²⁴ Sen (2015).

²⁵ Mantena (2012).

China and its civilization.²⁶ In *Continuation des pensées diverses* published in 1705, Pierre Bayle sought to show parallels between Chinese classical philosophy and Spinoza's thought, claiming to find in Confucianism not only religious toleration but also the idea that social and political stability depends on morality.²⁷ Citing Bernier and his travels, he also argued that similar tendencies had been detected in India and Persia and more broadly in Sufism. Confucianism, Sufism, and Hinduism continued to be associated with Spinozism during the first half of the eighteenth century among Spinoza's followers as well as his critics such as Malebranche. Voltaire, on the other hand, rejected any connection between these ideas in his *Essai sur les mœurs* on the grounds that Chinese philosophers were disciples of "natural religion" and therefore incompatible with Spinoza.²⁸ Although he criticized certain aspects of Chinese society, he wrote an opportunistic and partly erroneous defense of China's examination-based social hierarchy compared with the French social hierarchy based on rank. Montesquieu came to a similar conclusion but from a different angle: he attacked the Jesuits for propagating erroneous ideas about China. In his opinion, the Chinese lived according to some of the world's highest moral precepts, which had nothing to do with religious principles.²⁹

The reflections of Enlightenment thinkers regarding Islam confirm their divergent attitudes toward other cultures. During the second half of the seventeenth century, numerous Islamic works had been translated from Arabic into Latin and later into Spanish and the principal European languages. The publication of these texts continued in the eighteenth century, helping to revive discussions about Averroism and Islam. In his *Dictionnaire* published in 1697, Bayle was one of the first to underline the power of Arab scientific and philosophical thought, which he championed in opposition to "Muslim foolishness". He came to this conclusion relying upon the long-standing Averroist tradition developed using Spanish translations; he also noted considerable affinities between Averroes and Spinoza.³⁰

²⁶ Étienne (1989).

²⁷ Bayle (1705).

²⁸ Voltaire (1756).

²⁹ Montesquieu (1748).

³⁰ Bayle (1697).

Pietro Giannone (1678–1648), a Neapolitan, encouraged greater familiarity with Islam, which he considered the “sister of Christianity”.³¹ Henri de Boulainvilliers went even further in *La vie de Mahomed* (published in 1730 though written ten years earlier), in which he asserted that Islam was perfectly consonant with the spirit of the Enlightenment.³² Voltaire and others agreed, arguing that once the core of Mahomet’s thought had been purified of its later irrational fanaticism, it was compatible with Enlightenment principles.

It is important to note that these positions did not necessarily imply a belief in Western superiority. Indeed, some authors established a definite hierarchy between genuine civilization (that is, European) and the others. Yet, even within this approach, at least two different tendencies emerged: on the one hand, there were those who saw the value of the civilizations revealed in the writings of the Jesuits and the missionaries, including Guillaume Raynal in the first editions of the *l’Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes* (*Philosophical and Political History of the Two Indies*) and Comte de Buffon. Others, such as Voltaire and Cornelius de Pauw, were radically opposed to this attitude and insisted that the education of savage peoples be based on Enlightenment principles.

Still others took a totally different position. Starting mainly in the late 1770s, thinkers like Diderot and Rousseau argued that the other civilizations in fact were superior to the one in a corrupt Europe.³³ Their negative reactions stemmed from disappointment in the enlightened French and Russian monarchs who had failed to introduce the reforms expected by the *philosophes*. Nevertheless, even when they criticized the West and exalted Noble Savages and other civilizations, these authors were reasoning according to criteria that had little to do with the non-European worlds they often idealized.

For most actors in this period, the paramount question was this: how can we understand the meaning of history, its methods, and its social role in a rapidly changing context not only in France and in Europe but on a global scale?

³¹ Giannone (1998).

³² Boulainvilliers (1730).

³³ Raynal (1780).

Indeed, this question became inescapable because reflections on history provided the only grounds for accepting or rejecting both the transformations under way and “others” (in the broad sense not only of “exotic” peoples but also of peasants in relation to city dwellers, merchants in relation to noble elites, and so on). As most Enlightenment authors were intent on writing universal histories, the issue of source reliability was especially crucial in the case of non-European worlds.³⁴ The travel literature and firsthand accounts of missionaries were well known; these works were found in the personal libraries of Voltaire, Raynal, Diderot, and Turgot.³⁵ Abbé Prevost was one of the first to question the trustworthiness of these narratives. In Volume XII of his *Histoire des voyages*, written in 1754, he distinguished the reports made by observers from the stories produced by writers who had never set foot outside Europe, and he limited his reading to the writings of real travelers.³⁶ In his view, the boundary line between history and fiction was blurred because they depended on the same sources. A novelist himself, Prevost therefore decided to bring some order to the process and develop a genuine history and geography, signaling the shift from wonderment to the analysis of sources.

Rousseau adopted a similar approach in the notes to his *Second discours*, insisting that although “for three or four hundred years, the inhabitants of Europe have been flooding across the rest of the globe and constantly publishing new accounts of travels and encounters, I am convinced that the only men we know are Europeans”.³⁷ This sort of skepticism toward travel literature was common among *les philosophes*; some distinguished the writings of genuine travelers from the secondhand accounts of anthologists; others relentlessly exposed Western prejudices (for example, those of the Spanish compared with those of British).³⁸ The new literature no longer sought to create a sense of wonderment and reveal curiosities but rather to offer reasoned, philosophical analysis of the world. Writers no longer needed to know languages; on the contrary, they could rely on philosophical reason alone to validate (or invalidate) a source.

³⁴Duchet (1971).

³⁵Raynal (1774).

³⁶Prevost (1746–1759), in particular vol. XIV.

³⁷Rousseau (1967, III: 212).

³⁸Pauw (1768–1769).

This last point generated controversy not only in France but in other countries as well. In Russia, ever since Peter the Great, increasing attention had been given to the origin of Slavs. In 1739, Vasily Tatishchev, a proponent like Peter of the Russian “Westernisation”, published a history of Russia dating back to ancient times (*Istoriia Rossiiskaia s samykh drevneishikh vremen*). His five-volume opus, the fruit of twenty years of research, was based on Russian chronicles, his own travels and observations, and extensive reading of Western literature.³⁹ Along with other European and Asian authors during this period, Tatishchev criticized conventional histories—the *Letopises* (chronicles)⁴⁰ and synopses—which he called mythologies. He took on the task of separating historical truth from falsehood. He conceived of Russian history as imperial and universal and therefore devoted special attention to the empire’s non-Russian populations and the specific origin of its slaves.⁴¹ Tatishchev’s universal history had to contend with the interpretation of Mikhail Lomonosov, who aimed to show that Russians and the populations of the North (Germanic and northern European) were not merely interconnected but in fact one and the same people. At the Academy of Sciences, Lomonosov set out to identify the purely Slavic origins of Russia, which, in view of its age and civilization, he considered comparable to Rome and Byzantium. Based on these principles, Lomonosov produced a four-volume history of ancient Russia (*Drevniaia rossiskaia istoriia*).⁴² His critique of the sources resulted in a Russocentric history. In 1783–1784, Catherine II published her own *Remarques concernant l’histoire de la Russie* in an attempt to demonstrate the ancient origin of the Slavs and their language. This rewriting of the country’s history, begun in the mid-eighteenth century, was used to justify Russian imperial expansion into Ukraine, Poland, and Lithuania based on the specificity of Slavs and their presence outside Russia *strictu sensu* since antiquity. In Russia, as in Western Europe, when confronted with “backward” peasants in the mainland and indigenous people in the colonies, the new historiography made a clear-cut distinction between oral tradition (peasants and nomads) and written documents as well as between myth and genuine history.

³⁹Tatishchev (1739, 1962).

⁴⁰*Polnoe sobranoe russkikh letopisei* (full collection of the Russian chronicles), 43 vols. (Saint-Petersburg 2002).

⁴¹Mazour (1975).

⁴²Lomonosov (1766).

In Western Europe, David Hume challenged the authenticity of the Ossian fragments and oral traditions, which he dismissed as myths. Gibbon adopted a similar approach in writing his synthesis on the decline of the Roman Empire.⁴³ Not all Enlightenment writers shared this position, however. Rousseau defended the value of “uncontaminated” oral sources; Adam Ferguson⁴⁴ and Giambattista Vico⁴⁵ viewed such traditions as a way of learning about what was “different” without relying on the accounts of European observers. This was obviously an ingenuous approach—especially as none of these authors could read non-European languages or was trained in ethnography—that aimed to achieve a political and philosophical objective: “young” and “savage” civilizations could “show the way” to Europe, which was advanced and “corrupt” (in the sense of “degraded”). In *l’Histoire des deux Indes* and its many subsequent editions, Raynal and Voltaire’s Eurocentric attitude evolved into a viewpoint more closely aligned with that of Rousseau. From the outset, they characterized their book as a philosophical and political history; the emergence of Europe was no longer linked to the rise of monarchical states but instead to international trade, expansion, and contact with the other worlds. It was a new way of producing universal history. *L’histoire des deux Indes* deliberately abandoned description in favor of philosophical and political analysis, thereby altering the relationship between national culture, European civilization, and universal dynamics. Henceforth, the role of history was no longer to describe and marvel at exotic worlds but to fit them into a universal framework of historical transformation.⁴⁶

If we include this last example in our overview of the period, we come to some interesting conclusions. The age of Enlightenment by no means formed a homogeneous whole. Doubtless, the number of civilizational and Eurocentric attitudes increased compared with previous periods, but their content and scope varied widely according to the author, time, and place. The interaction among the strands of European thought which we call “the Enlightenment” also changed according to the context, producing different syntheses in India, Russia, and the Americas. The

⁴³Gibbon (1776).

⁴⁴Ferguson (1767).

⁴⁵Vico (1725).

⁴⁶Duchet (1971).

Enlightenment was global, but it was above all interconnected and heterogeneous. For example, “liberty” did not mean the same thing when European thinkers were talking about Russia, America, or India. Non-European societies and authors affected Europeans in different ways, but their impact was always considerable. In this framework, there were two basic attitudes toward reconstructing the method and content of history: the universalist approach, grounded mainly in philosophy, law, and henceforth political economy; the other view focused more on “exceptional” events and “local” phenomena. These two positions reflected the compound transformations of eighteenth-century worlds; increasingly far-reaching interaction generated a desire for homogeneity on the one hand and a rejection of everything resulting from “globalization” on the other. The revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were responses to these complementary and interwoven dynamics.

THE NATION VERSUS THE GLOBAL? HISTORY AND ITS ARCHIVES IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Increasing connections and a certain form of globalization in the eighteenth century produced surges of universalism and national reactions, which were closely linked in revolutionary and counterrevolutionary movements.⁴⁷ Ultimately, the world that emerged after 1815 depended to a large extent on Great Britain; the Pax Britannica gave Europe and the rest of the world some degree of stability. From an ideological standpoint, the old empires (Austro-Hungarian, Russian, Ottoman, and Chinese) and the new ones (British and increasingly American) continued to coexist with growing political and ideological demands for national sovereignty. Such national claims became a central feature of the long nineteenth century in Europe, Asia, and America.⁴⁸ Europe still owed a great deal to its aristocratic elites, and, as several authors have pointed out, the old social regime did not really come to an end until after the First World War.⁴⁹ These tensions between global and national as well as between old and “new” regimes must be our starting point for assessing the debates over the role of history and its tools. Topics such as breaks versus continuities, myth versus history, and philosophical

⁴⁷Adelman (2016), Armitage and Subrahmanyam (2010), Desan et al. (2013).

⁴⁸Gellner (1983).

⁴⁹North (1981), Chandler (1977), Mayer (1981).

versus scholarly history, frequently debated in the eighteenth century, took on new significance after 1800. Revolutionary changes and restorations raised the issue of breaks and continuities in history, leading in turn to the question of whether a few general principles could be derived from historical experience and hence to the philosophy of history. Enlightenment thinkers had put forward a notion of history often rooted in a Eurocentric political philosophy with universalist aims. It was a history that expressed the globalizing ambitions of the West. The nineteenth century maintained this universalist outlook but sought to detach it from its previous revolutionary claims, highlighting instead the nation as the subject of history, archives as its source, and philology as its instrument. With the French Revolution, archives became a public institution and a place of remembrance.⁵⁰ The very organization of the archives testifies to this fact: the new regime constructed its own memory as well as that of the previous regime; archival documents were entered and classified in accordance with this requirement.⁵¹ However, instead of locking up the original documents in the state secretariat and destroying those from the previous dynasty like archivists in China, post-revolutionary France allowed public access to state archives.⁵²

The main countries of Europe followed and built their own national archives almost everywhere during the second half of the nineteenth century. Setting up public archives sometimes became a synonym for independence, even before it was achieved. This was the case in Hungary, for example,⁵³ whereas in Italy, the creation of national archives and libraries was seen as a milestone in establishing the legitimacy of the new state after the wars of independence and unification.⁵⁴

Archives usually became synonymous with the nation and diametrically opposed to a global view of history; this attitude sometimes surfaced in the way the archives were organized. In France, documents were divided between those pertaining to the *Ancient Régime* and those concerning the modern era. Archival classifications signaled institutional

⁵⁰Nora (1986).

⁵¹Pomian (1999).

⁵²Ducheyne (1992).

⁵³Baàr (2010).

⁵⁴Di Costanzo (1990).

breaks and covered up the continuities.⁵⁵ Inventories and documents of the ancient regime (invented precisely at this moment) were opposed to modern archives, *en train de se faire*, in the spatial organization of the archives themselves. The so-called conservatory, provenance principle of classification was supposed to confirm this approach. French archivists love stressing the full adherence to this principle.⁵⁶ Documents were classified and ordered according to their “producer”.⁵⁷ The nineteenth century constructed its own memory as well as its imagination, which has influenced the perceptions of virtually all historians ever since.

Outside of Western Europe, in Russia, after the reforms implemented by Peter the Great in 1718–1720, each central institution had its own archive (closed to the public), which was organized either chronologically or according to the “case” or topic or the region concerned. In 1765, two scholars—Gerard F. Miller (real German name: Gerhard Friedrich Müller, 1705–1783) and Nikolai N. Bantich-Kamenskii (1737–1814)—proposed to group documents together in a single archive housed at the College of Foreign Affairs, under the ministry of the same name. At that time, the College classified documents according to their topic. Instead, Miller and Bantich-Kamenskii suggested splitting collections and re-organizing them by region (for example, explorations in Siberia). However, this principle proved difficult to apply to all ministry sections. The archivists therefore decided to supplement the regional criterion with a classification according to the geographical origin of the document and, within that framework, subclassifications into certain thematic categories.⁵⁸

In Brazil, the Real Biblioteca was set up in 1810, followed in 1824 by the Arquivo Público, which was based in large part on the British Public Record Office.⁵⁹ The system of organization was designed in keeping with a pro-independence, liberal view of history. Thus, the archive and its classifications had to highlight the country’s distance from Portugal while avoiding a system like the one adopted by the French archives, which was suspected of validating revolutionary principles. Britain’s

⁵⁵ Delsalle (2000).

⁵⁶ Béchu (2008).

⁵⁷ Favier (2004).

⁵⁸ Prozorova-Thomas (2006).

⁵⁹ Rodrigues (1965, 1979).

influence in Brazil extended beyond economics and diplomacy to the construction of the country's national memory, which was expected to avoid Jacobin radicalism. Brazilian scholars sought to identify national commonalities between those which were still seen as poorly integrated regions: North, North East, East, South, and Centre West of Brazil. The small Brazilian elite saw itself as having the burden of governing and civilizing a mass of ignorant and potentially dangerous barbarians.⁶⁰ The German naturalist Karl Friederich von Martius wrote a Brazilian history in 1843 in which he put the accent on the fundamental distinction between three races present in the Brazilian nation: Europeans, Indians, and black Africans. If he called for a study of Indians, he excluded Africans from the historical investigation.⁶¹ After him, Joao Capistrano de Abreu, probably the most important historian of nineteenth-century Brazil, was mostly inspired by the German historical school (Schmoller and Bücher in particular) as well as by Hippolyte Taine and Auguste Comte. He started with the study of native Indians but then moved into colonial history (*Capitulos de Historia Colonial*, 1907).

Instead, in the United States, the state archives were inventoried relatively late and the National Archive was founded only in the 1930s.⁶² As in the Netherlands, the classificatory principle per key words and concepts was introduced from the very onset. This did not mean that history legitimizing the nation was not developed. In 1789, David Ramsay published his *History of the American Revolution*, followed seven years later by Mercy Otis Warren's *History of the Rise, Progress, and Termination of the American Revolution*. During the first half of the nineteenth century, considerable efforts were made to establish and publish local archives of the revolution by local historical societies (in Massachusetts, Wisconsin, Kentucky, Louisville, Chicago, and so on). Jared Spark, appointed professor of Ancient and Modern History at Harvard in 1838, played a central role in this effort. However, it was only at the end of the nineteenth century that a national system of research universities began to be settled and professional historians emerged.⁶³ The American Historical Association was founded in 1884; in 1899, the profession established

⁶⁰Iglesias (2000).

⁶¹Martius (1844).

⁶²Tyrrell (2005).

⁶³Bender (1993).

a high school curriculum in history that distinguished a sequence of ancient, medieval, and modern European; English; and American history.⁶⁴ Time scale and history meanings were strictly Eurocentric. While rejecting philosophy of history, most historians stressed “Anglo-Saxon” racial superiority. Authors such as John Burgess justified the end of reconstruction and denied any right to Afro-American, Indians, and many immigrants.⁶⁵ In 1893, Turner advanced his celebrated history and theory of the frontier as a founding myth of U.S. history.⁶⁶

In Japan, in the wake of the 1868 Meiji restoration, the new authorities brought up the idea of creating national archives. They assigned the task to a bureau in charge of collecting historical materials and compiling the history of the nation.⁶⁷ The chronological organization of the materials from the Edo period, the *shogunat*, and the new courts served as the basis for historical reconstruction and has continued to influence the periodization of Japanese history up to present day.⁶⁸ In 1869, shortly after the restoration, an imperial rescript asserted the urgency of re-writing history; an Office for the Collection of Historical Materials and Compilation of a National History was settled.⁶⁹ The influences of Guizot, Spencer, and Buckle, on civilization, were particularly relevant, in particular in Tazuchi Ukichi (*Nihon kaika shoshi*—Brief History of Civilization in Japan) and Fukuzawa Yukichi (*Bunmeiron no Gairyaku*—An Outline of a Theory of Civilization). Fukuzawa sought to adapt to Japan some Enlightenment ideas and approaches. He regarded civilization as a gradual process from the primitive stage to semi-development and civilization.⁷⁰

Yet these authors joined their approach to the philosophy of history to a certain taste for antiquarianism; quite differently, at the turn of the nineteenth century, in Japan as well the organization of archives became a central stake in the desired process of “modernization”. Interestingly, the newborn Office for the Collection of Historical Materials made use of a Chinese-style chronology (despite the previous critics to it) instead

⁶⁴Dunning (1907), Eggleston (1896).

⁶⁵Burgess (1902).

⁶⁶Turner (1893, 1961).

⁶⁷Mehl (1998).

⁶⁸Schneider and Tanaka (2012), McIntyre et al. (2012)

⁶⁹Tanaka (2004).

⁷⁰Nakajima (2017).

of Western periodization. However, since the 1880s, the first professors of history at the University of Tokyo—Konakamura Kiyonori and Naito Chiso—complained about the lack of history in Japanese. The University of Tokyo hired a German historian, Rudolph Riess, who strongly contributed to introduce Ranke in Japan. Therefore, history separated from literature and the nation-state became one of its central topics.

To sum up, a strong connection developed in the nineteenth century between archives and the nation-state.⁷¹ This connection is still visible in historians' practices—witness the predominance of national history—and in the continued acceptance of nineteenth-century notions about what constitutes a legitimate, authentic source. At the same time, there was often a gap between the original aim and reality. From the standpoint of political ideology and administrative organization, the nation-state unquestionably triumphed in the nineteenth century. However, it was less successful in terms of practices, where the strength and significance of the state changed—for example, in federalized and centralized states, in the role assigned to local authorities, in its social recognition (which was weak in Italy, for instance), and ultimately in its actions. Despite the emphasis on the nation-state, empires still largely dominated the nineteenth-century political scene. These aspects were reflected in the way archives were constructed and organized, as the complicated relationships between the various central, municipal, regional, and colonial archives attest.⁷² Constructing a national memory through archives is a social process, which cannot be confined to how it is viewed from above.⁷³ Archives reflect the architecture of power, as Michel Foucault pointed out; yet, by itself, this architecture cannot account at one and the same time for the construction of the state, its power, and historical knowledge.⁷⁴ If archives are a social and political construction, then so is the state, particularly the nation-state. It was precisely in this period, when discussion of the nation-state reached its peak, that archive construction became a transnational, transimperial, and global endeavor. Conferences on archival topics and meetings of historical and archive societies drew participants from other countries. The growing number

⁷¹Thiesse (1999).

⁷²Rousseau and Couture (1994).

⁷³Halbwachs (1925).

⁷⁴Foucault (1969).

of libraries, history journals, and scholarly societies reinforced this circulation. The invention of national archives was indeed a transnational process.

HISTORY WRITING: PHILOLOGY AGAINST PHILOSOPHY

The writing of history reflected this trend; historians tended to follow writers and embrace their nationalism. Ranke and his followers promoted philology and language; they succeeded in imposing their particular use of language as the only acceptable way to write history. The distinction between primary and secondary sources made it possible to separate archives from oral traditions as well as from existing historiography. This differentiation, Ranke claimed, would enable future historians, unlike their predecessors, to present facts rather than opinions. In other words, archives were simply equated with “facts” and historical truths but without any critical reflection on principles governing archive development or the selection of documents by historians.⁷⁵ Eurocentrism, already present in the seventeenth century and consolidated during the eighteenth, became so dominant in the nineteenth century that it was easily exported outside Europe. Reformers in Japan,⁷⁶ Russia, and Indonesia⁷⁷ as well as in the Ottoman Empire⁷⁸ and Latin America were eager to produce European-style history, based on its methods and adopting its categories as universal. In Japan, Chinese historiographical influences and eventually even Enlightenment thinkers were for the most part rejected in favor of Ranke.⁷⁹ In the late nineteenth century, a similar reversal took place in China, where German influence took on similar importance.⁸⁰ Imperialist Eurocentric thinking ended up producing its opposite: the defenders of local and national languages contrasted the enthusiasm of certain more or less Europeanized reformers.

In reality, internationalism, the globalization of history and its languages, and the defense of national or even regional languages and histories were components of one and the same process. In the nineteenth

⁷⁵ Ranke (1834–1836).

⁷⁶ Mehl (1998).

⁷⁷ Reid and Marr (1979).

⁷⁸ Khalidi (1994).

⁷⁹ Nakajima et al. (2001).

⁸⁰ Tang (1996).

century, the writing of history relied increasingly on national languages; these languages had replaced Latin, once the *lingua franca* of scholars, which had virtually disappeared. Publications multiplied in German, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Turkish, and so on. History became institutionalized: universities were founded in most countries and chair professorships in history were created, especially during the second half of the century, when the discipline gradually became specialized by time period and geographical area.⁸¹ In the 1800s, it was no longer simply a question of “we” and “others”; this distinction was combined with another, which divided history into nations. Positivist history actually strengthened a crucial aspect of the very mythological and literary history it condemned: the role assigned to the nation. The nation became at once the subject matter and the principal source of history.⁸² Ranke in Germany, Macaulay in Great Britain, and Michelet in France all wrote monumental national histories.⁸³ The boundaries of history coincided with those of national territory.⁸⁴ Piedmont and Prussia were viewed as components of Italy and Germany, respectively. What was later described as “Whig history” stressed Britain’s modernizing role, anticipating modernity through the Glorious Revolution in 1688. Such historiographical currents tended to associate “Britishness” with British history, emphasizing the Crown, the Parliament, and other institutions as factors in the modernization process. Italian historians both before and after unification focused on ancient history and therefore on the connections between history, archaeology, and philology. Soon, national history came up against the thorny question of how to define the nation in the past, before it was unified by a common language or had achieved its final configuration. Discussing the nation and its historiography proved far more problematic in Italy than in Germany. In Spain, Catholicism clearly influenced attempts to construct the country’s national history, which is still divided between a secular narrative and a history acknowledging the role of Divine Providence.⁸⁵ Does the success of national history imply the end of global history?

⁸¹Middell (1999).

⁸²White (1973).

⁸³Macaulay (1848–1861), Michelet (1833–1867).

⁸⁴Berger et al. (2008–2010).

⁸⁵Dardé (1999).

Late in life, Ranke produced a universal history, although it bore no resemblance to the travelers' stories of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries or the topic-based philosophical history of the Enlightenment.⁸⁶ These latter thinkers had sought to encompass the entire planet in a homogenous view of the world and of progress. On the other hand, universal histories in the nineteenth century tended to oppose the progress of the West to backward civilizations everywhere else; these histories highlighted the emergence of nation-states and Europe's essential contribution to this process. Such views spread to France, Italy, Great Britain, and the other European countries.⁸⁷

Even if these approaches made the nation the core of history, historians interacted on a much wider scale, participating in international conferences and meetings of scholarly societies. On these occasions, French and English took precedence for want of Latin but were never unanimously accepted. This dominance, though imperfect, was nevertheless real: more and more historical works produced by Europeans were translated into other languages to be exported as "scientific history", whereas historical works written outside the West were either ignored or categorized as mythology or literature. No doubt, there was a good deal of cross-fertilization, for translation always involves appropriation and encounter; the hybridization of concepts indeed played a significant role. At the same time, cultural exchange was never symmetric: historical works written in European languages were translated into the national languages of other countries such as Japan after the Meiji reforms and in Latin America and Asia, rather than the reverse. Also, the bibliographies circulating at the international level were in French, German, and English and only in part Spanish and Portuguese, and the rest of the world was expected to adapt. The European conquest of the world, in its strengths and weaknesses, was perfectly expressed in the languages of historians.⁸⁸

In this context, the study of "exotic" languages underwent a transformation. The teaching of oriental languages was introduced in France, Britain, and the Netherlands starting in the mid-nineteenth century and became more pronounced after 1880 in connection with European

⁸⁶ Ranke (1973).

⁸⁷ Iggers (1983).

⁸⁸ Balakrishnan (1998).

neo-colonialism, internationalized trade, and the vogue of exoticism in Western countries.⁸⁹ Courses initially focused on religions and languages and gradually expanded to include “civilizations”. The programs were supported by large-scale publishing and translation projects: the British, the Dutch, and to a lesser extent the Russians, the French, and the Spanish continued to search for local legal, literary, and religious texts in their colonies and publish them. These documents are still widely used by historians today both in the West and in its former colonies themselves. These works were criticized by Said and his followers: in their view, Orientalism helped to invent the “Orient”—a mythical China or India—at the very moment the West was appropriating and transforming the culture of those regions. As we have already noted in relation to India, there is undoubtedly some truth to this analysis; Orientalism did in fact play a part in forging stereotypical images of certain countries and cultures while underlining the superiority of the West. At the same time, many recent studies take a more nuanced position. We now know that there was significant interaction between the Western Orientalists and the actors in the regions they studied. The mediation of local actors was indispensable for investigations of religious texts, legal documents, inscriptions, maps, and botany, and the works produced by the Europeans were a synthesis of their own perceptions and knowledge and those of local actors.⁹⁰ The problem in the nineteenth century was not so much interaction but the fact that it was concealed on both sides because of colonialism and Western dominance.

This is where the opposition between oral tradition and written documents came in.⁹¹ We have already seen how this debate was framed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the eighteenth century, archives and the dominant historical culture transformed history and radicalized it at the same time. When priority was given to written documents and records, everything derived from oral sources was removed from history.⁹² A global process was at work here: nineteenth-century historical culture excluded everyone who was either not engaged or only marginally involved in the production of documents and who therefore

⁸⁹ Courbage and Kropp (2004), Wolff (1994).

⁹⁰ Mantena (2012), Raj (2007).

⁹¹ Goody (1977).

⁹² Ong (1982).

remained on the sidelines of progress and modernity—in other words, the peasants inside Europe and the “peoples without a history” outside it.⁹³ The solution in these cases was to compile customs, practices, and oral traditions. In India, Indonesia, Africa, and Central Asia, local customs became the subjects of scholarly anthologies ranging from law to religion and folklore and gradually evolved into anthropological and ethnographic studies. Colonial law was a complete fabrication, presenting Western law and courts in opposition to those of local populations. Were alternative approaches possible?

Nowadays and to a given extent during much of the twentieth century, Marx’s thought had often been presented as a possible alternative to the above-discussed attitudes. Was it really so?

When Marx criticized abstraction in political economy, he was not denouncing abstraction as such but its use specifically to naturalize capitalism. His outline of the stages of development, which he claimed to be historical, was in fact every bit as general and as universalist in its pretensions as that put forward by his opponents. Said, followed by Chakrabarty, has already criticized Marx’s Eurocentric and Orientalist attitude toward India, which was especially obvious in the *Manifesto* and in his letters on India published in the *Daily Tribune* in the early 1850s. Although Marx attacked British colonialism, he acknowledged that it had brought about some improvements (for example, by introducing private property and the struggle against castes).⁹⁴ In all likelihood under the influence of Hegel, he viewed Indian townships and villages as the underlying reason for Indian immobilism.⁹⁵ In 1853, he also identified public works and the role of the state as specific features of Asian powers such as India, China, Mesopotamia, and Ancient Egypt.⁹⁶

Marx began to revise his opinion after the rebellion of the Sepoys in 1857–1878. These troops formed the core of the EIC army in India, combining local military expertise with British techniques to further the Company’s gradual expansion in India. In 1857, however, the Meeruth garrison rebelled against the commander’s order, and the revolt soon spread to most of British-controlled northern and central India. Public

⁹³ Clifford (1988), Hawkins (2002).

⁹⁴ Anderson (2010).

⁹⁵ Marx and Engels (1975–2004), vol. 12: 132, 217–218, vol. 39: 333–334.

⁹⁶ Marx and Engels, vol. 12: 126–132.

opinion and the press were shocked by the events, which they viewed as a sign of ingratitude for Britain's civilizing efforts and the resources it had contributed to India. Marx joined in the debate, declaring that, on the contrary, the revolt was the consequence of authoritarian British colonial policies and exploitation.⁹⁷ At the time, he was completing the *Grundrisse*; unlike his previous works, this new book argued that several different historical dynamics conceivably could bring about the transition from pre-capitalist systems to capitalism. He introduced the notion of an Asian system of production.⁹⁸ In this same perspective, in the so-called "Economic Manuscript" (in fact, the first sketch of *Capital* in 1861–1863), Marx overturned his former theses, concluding that the Indian township and village were not necessarily the sources of the country's immobilism.⁹⁹ He added that British rule had destroyed the Indian village without introducing capitalism.¹⁰⁰

Ultimately, the Russian version led Marx to conceive of multiple historical paths. Like India, Russia did not appear to comply with the laws of historical development; on the other hand, nineteenth-century Russia produced a far larger body of historical analysis than India, which Marx was forced to confront. The famous quarrel between Occidentalists and Slavophiles from 1840 to 1860 was concerned precisely with determining whether all historical dynamics had to follow the Western model or whether other solutions were possible. This debate was at once ideological (the role of the peasantry in the revolution), empirical (how to prove the arguments used), and methodological (how to make comparisons).¹⁰¹ The Slavophiles thought the traditional peasant community could serve as the basis for Russian modernization,¹⁰² whereas their opponents maintained that it was necessary, as in Great Britain, first to go through the privatization of communally owned land and the proletarianization of the peasants. In a letter addressed to Mikhail Mikhailovskii in 1877, Marx allowed for the possibility that Russia might take a path

⁹⁷Marx and Engels, vol. 15: 297–305, Husain (2006).

⁹⁸Marx (1973).

⁹⁹Marx and Engels, vol. 31: 236.

¹⁰⁰Marx and Engels, vol. 34: 118–119.

¹⁰¹Chernyshevskii (1858–1879). On these debates: Stanziani (1998, 2014).

¹⁰²Belinskii (1953–1959), vol. 12: 444–468, Aksakov (1886–1887), vol. 2, Khomiakov (1900, vol. 3). Andrzej Walicki is one of countless authors who have analyzed the debate between the Slavophiles and Westernizers during this era Walicki (1975).

different from the one observed in the West. Four years later, in a letter to Vera Zasulich, he wrote that the peasant community could indeed form the starting point for the social regeneration of Russia.¹⁰³ Thus, the cases of Russia and India, which challenged his theories empirically, compelled Marx to shift his perspective and partially change his approach. In Russia and India as well as in Britain and the rest of Europe, a fierce debate took place over the meaning of “modernization”—that is, how it should be defined (can there be more than one form?) and put into practice. Marx’s reflections took place in this context, expressing an attempt to provide an alternative to the narrative of this process enshrined in liberalism. He succeeded from the standpoint of social and political ideology, but he failed to alter his fundamental frame of reference, which remained, like that of his adversaries, incurably Eurocentric. As a result, Marx’s thought was re-appropriated in nineteenth-century Russia and India in as many contrasting ways as his reflections on “others”.

Indeed, these tensions between national and global perspectives reflect those of European and world societies in the nineteenth century. In Western Europe, industrialization and urban development led to a decline of the rural world and regional diversities¹⁰⁴; this process was often attributed to globalization, which immediately came under fire.¹⁰⁵ The tensions were exacerbated by the fact that, far from disappearing at the turn of the nineteenth century, the landed aristocracy had learned to accommodate itself quite well to the bourgeois, capitalist world. The history of European worlds expresses these contrasting tendencies: at first, the nation was showcased before it actually existed; then, in the course of the century, with the actual rise of nation-states, followed by access to education and the adoption of national languages in addition to the crisis of the rural world, national and nationalist history faced an insoluble problem: How did the nation and its regions fit into the changing world?

The question was especially difficult as empires continued to play a central role alongside nations. Although political and public action and debate were focused on the nation, empires were undeniably present: though weakened in Central and Eastern Europe, they remained in place in trans-oceanic spaces and grew even stronger with the partitioning of Africa.

¹⁰³ Shanin (1983).

¹⁰⁴ Feinstein and Pollard (1988).

¹⁰⁵ Findlay and O’Rourke (2006).

The violent acquisition of land in America and Asia and later Africa, slavery, and other extreme forms of dependence within colonial empires radicalized the same economic, social, and institutional traits found in Europe at the time. The influence was reciprocal: although the European powers exported their notions of property, subordination, and inequality to the rest of the world and the colonies, the other parts of the world and colonial areas were not merely passive recipients of the West. They helped to forge Western institutions and practices. Without empires and their form of domination, the resistance shown by European institutions, values, and economies that predated the great transformation would have been more tenuous and short-lived. The empire confirmed values (land, inequalities, and the need to control labor through coercion) and often brought with it profits arising from exclusion and violence. The persistence of aristocratic societies and *rentiers* within liberal capitalism owed a great deal to empires.

Yet, as we have seen, for much of the nineteenth century, the imperial dimension was lacking in the reflections of historians, not only in Ranke-style national history but also in the global studies of Marx and Weber. Empire was secondary or even absent from these analyses because it was associated with the old regime world in Europe and not with capitalism. Even today, European societies are still paying for that mistake.

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The End of the Old Order: History, Nationalisms, and Totalitarianism

Abstract During the interwar period, history in general and global history in particular expressed the failure of conceiving globality beyond nationalist frameworks. The Bolshevik Revolution altered the way we conceive of history (the construction of temporalities and the relation between past and future). In the West, while philosophy and universal history examined the decline of the West (Spengler) or its role in relation to other civilizations (Toynbee), the interactions between history and the social sciences were renewed in a different project, notably in France with the *Annales*. The rise of nationalism and nationalistic historiographies in China and India accompanied new trends in the totalitarian states where globality became a source of oppression (the global Aryan myth or the global revolution).

Keywords Totalitarianism · Nationalism · Civilization · History writing · Revolution

The First World War was experienced everywhere as a fundamental shift that broke up the old order; the United States asserted itself as the leading global power, while France and Great Britain, despite victory, were left to cope with the difficulties of reconstruction. The internal equilibrium of these countries was irreversibly shattered: the landed aristocracy, which had survived the political and economic turmoil of the previous century, was finally brought to an end. At the same time, small

industries, manufactures, and craftsmen as well as the peasantries were also shuttered by the second industrial revolution. The Western world was threatened by growing problems within its empires as well; colonial regions and populations embarked on a process of nationalist construction that ultimately turned the empires into powder kegs. The phenomenon spread to French, British, German, and Dutch territories in Asia and Africa, and there were signs of political instability in Latin America.

In Central and Eastern Europe, the old-regime empires—Russia, Austro-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire—crumbled, leading to considerable instability in these regions. Some of the same factors contributed to the Bolshevik Revolution: the reaction of the peasantry to war and the lack of resources; the reaction of former landowners to the collapse of their estates; the crisis of the manufacturers and new industries; and finally the paralysis of the Tsarist apparatus. The October Revolution marked the convergence of nationalist and communist forces as a reaction to the great transformation (the end of the peasantry–aristocracy–manufacturing triad and its replacement by large industries). Similar processes were at work in Eastern and Central Europe, the Balkans, and the other regions of the former Ottoman Empire, reaching all the way to the Near East and Egypt. In all of these cases, nationalism and geopolitical tensions were mounting.¹

The Republic of China was also being torn by centrifugal forces: nationalism was on the rise, particularly when hostility to the colonial West was compounded by resentment against Japanese expansion. Sun Yat-sen and the Kuomintang relied precisely on these sentiments. In India, Gandhi brought new vigor to the nationalist independence movement. Everywhere, the nation was increasingly viewed as a bulwark against the destruction and reconfiguration of the global order, considered the principal enemy of national aspirations.

This is where history and its political role entered: hostility to global economic, political, and social dynamics stoked populist nationalism in Europe, Asia, and parts of Africa and the Americas.² During the inter-war period, historiographical nationalism reached heights never before achieved, even in the nineteenth century.³ The political role of nationalist

¹Tooze (2014).

²Berger et al. (2008).

³Verdery and Banac (1995).

history found its most extreme embodiment in the totalitarian states when Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin made the rewriting of history the core of their respective political projects. Now nation and ethnicity became strongly connected and social Darwinism penetrated historical discourse.⁴

THE DECLINE OF THE WEST? THE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY AND THE POLITICS OF HISTORICAL WRITING

It is important here to understand the relationship between these political uses of history and the attitudes assumed by professional historians. The relationship worked both ways: while the political climate could not help but influence historians' reflections, conversely historians bore their share of responsibility for shaping the way the political world and the public in general grasped history and its connections to the present. In the decades between the world wars, ordinary notions of time and of temporal periods were called into question, not only in history but also in the arts and sciences and in philosophy. Atonal music and stream-of-consciousness literature—from Joyce to Proust, Svevo and Pessoa—reflected the reconstruction of time brought about in physics by the theory of relativity. Linear time seemed to be definitively compromised in physics as well as history just as the idea of historical progress, which had sustained the West for two hundred years, looked increasingly hollow. The fragmentation of time led to a pessimism that seeped into history, notably in the syntheses of global history, like Spengler's *Decline of the West*, which is perhaps the best example of this phenomenon. In this view, Western civilization was inexorably losing its pre-eminence in the face of barbarianism from within (that is, the First World War) and from without, partly the Bolsheviks but above all the “yellow peril”. Spengler's history was not just global, it was total: the author studied multiple civilizations spanning a period of 4000 years, weaving art, mathematics, sciences, political economy, and history into a single narrative organized around a few underlying principles.⁵ He tried to show that all aspects of any given civilization are interrelated and on that basis undertook comparisons between civilizations. However, Spengler

⁴Smith (1986).

⁵Spengler (1918–1922).

failed to see the connections between worlds and measured civilizations against each other. In his opinion, the decline of the West was regrettable when compared with other, more backward civilizations. It was a final attempt to address the disintegration of the notion of progress and of Europe's worldwide supremacy. Once again, his interpretation was strongly influenced by the context of post-war Germany, where this end-of-an-era feeling was widely shared. Spengler blamed the decay on the breakdown of European civilization, which he unconsciously associated with Stephan Zweig's "the world of yesterday" and thus with liberalism, in which the empire and the landed aristocracy had coexisted with the rise of the nation and bourgeois capitalism. Despite his mistaken assessment, his book enjoyed enormous success among a certain number of intellectuals as well as the public; his appraisals were in tune with the mood of the times, at once fueled by and reinforcing growing nationalism and xenophobia.⁶ Spengler came under harsh criticism from most academic historians for his vagueness; Robert Musil attacked his method and his theses for being closely in line with Fascist and National Socialist arguments. Nevertheless, his work influenced not only philosophers such as Martin Heidegger and Emil Cioran but also other global historians of the period, particularly Arnold Toynbee (1889–1975).⁷ Toynbee set about writing his own universal history in twelve volumes. Although he devoted special attention to the West, its primacy, and its decline, he nevertheless rejected Spengler's historical determinism. He claimed instead to be a follower of Ibn Khaldun, expressing agreement with his notions of temporality at the intersection between Christian and Muslim views and, more broadly, his emphasis on the connections between civilizations. Although Toynbee abandoned Spengler's idea that each civilization had its own coherence, he did not fall into an absolute relativism prohibiting any sort of comparison.⁸ On the contrary, he endeavored to alter the terms of the comparison and, on that basis, the assessments of Western superiority. In his view, a civilization becomes decadent when the "creative minorities" responsible for its rise can no longer generate ideas.⁹ Like Spengler, Toynbee was severely criticized by professional

⁶Herman (1997).

⁷Not to be confused with his homonym, a nineteenth-century economic historian (1852–1883).

⁸Toynbee (1934–1961).

⁹On Toynbee: McNeill (1989), Montagu (1956).

historians, particularly those specializing in area studies, not only for making vague generalizations but also for subordinating empirical analysis to theoretical arguments drawn from philosophy, economics, and the social sciences. Later on, philosophers of history, such as Raymond Aron, took issue with his highly ahistorical, Eurocentric notion of civilization. All these tensions revealed an increasingly radical questioning of the meaning of history and how it should be practiced. The distaste for the philosophy of history, already obvious in nineteenth-century attitudes toward Ranke, increased significantly during the interwar period because of specialization and the distinction between teaching and research disciplines. From now on, the philosophy of history and grand historical syntheses were deemed incompatible with empirical knowledge and field-work results pertaining to a specific region.

BIRTH OF THE ANNALES SCHOOL

In 1920, Lucien Febvre published an article in the *Revue de synthèse historique* setting forth the political and social role of history in a “world in ruins”.¹⁰ He repeated the embittered reflections published a year earlier in the same journal, in which Henri Berr underscored the negative effects of the world war tragedy on history and the social sciences.¹¹ Berr nevertheless thought the outcome of the war had confirmed the superiority of the French spirit (*esprit*) over German nationalism. Febvre agreed with Berr’s observations regarding the crisis of history and the social sciences, but he did not share his Germanophobia. In fact, he was convinced it was necessary to distance history from nationalist tendencies altogether. Febvre was not looking for a theory but rather for an approach to history that would explain, among other things, the World War and its origins. Here is where the global nature of history comes in: a global perspective is not as important in developing a political project for society (as was the case for Marx and Spengler among many others) as it is in connecting different levels of history. Global history actually was *histoire totale*. Febvre emphasized that “posing problems correctly—the *how* and *why*—expressed the end and means of history. When there are no problems, there is no history—only narratives and

¹⁰Febvre (1920).

¹¹Berr (1919).

compilations”.¹² The other issue pertained to the use of language in analyzing societies distant from the historian in time or space. Febvre noted that mastering the language used is an absolute prerequisite to undertaking a historical study.

Marc Bloch also insisted on linguistic proficiency in his *Apologie pour l'histoire* and in his famous article on historical comparison.¹³ For a long time, this approach set the standard in the field of comparative history in France, where the rejection of Weberian comparative analysis and the attention to language and sources owe a great deal to Bloch.¹⁴ A certain French-style connected history grew out of his remarks; it radicalized his critique by claiming that comparisons can have meaning only if they are present in the sources themselves, as part of a history of cultural transfers.¹⁵

The relevance of comparisons within the European area was something Bloch took for granted. Of all the positions he adopted, this one was perhaps most heavily influenced by the interwar context. Tensions in the European area and the desire to affirm its homogeneity—despite the First World War and the conflict between France and Germany—were key issues, especially from the vantage point of Strasbourg, where Bloch lived. As a result, contrary to his own method, he assumed far more than he demonstrated the homogeneity of the European area as a relevant basis for making appropriate comparisons. The question here is actually one of scale, a fact that is lost on those who claim to be following Bloch by objecting to any form of historical comparison. Bloch conceived of multiple scales within European and French space: the village, the region, and the trans-border socio-economic areas. On the other hand, his analysis excluded non-European worlds and above all the “global waves” of capitalism that were fundamental for Braudel. Bloch acknowledged circulation and was open to synchronic comparisons but excluded the global dimension; Braudel made use of three spatial levels, corresponding to his three temporal scales.¹⁶ Neither one

¹²Febvre (1992: 22).

¹³Bloch (1928).

¹⁴Green (1990).

¹⁵Espagne (1994).

¹⁶Braudel (1949).

would have accepted the radical rejection of comparisons formulated by a certain type of connected history and within area studies these days.¹⁷

Nationalism, the Quest of "Specificity" and Historiographical Constructions

Similar debates about national "specificity" took place in other countries as well. Historiographical discussions in interwar Britain often highlighted the specificity of British history and its role in politics (the Glorious Revolution of 1688) and in economics (the Industrial Revolution). Most Whig historians of the period hailed the country's role as a forerunner and its modernity in politics (representative institutions) and economics (capitalism and the Industrial Revolution). This self-satisfied assessment can be partly explained as a reaction to the resurgence of political nationalism, communism, and Fascism, not only in Europe but also in Great Britain itself.¹⁸

Before long, this view came under attack. The debate began with the emergence of Irish historiography, particularly through the development of universities in Ireland and scholarly journals such as *Irish Historical Studies*.¹⁹ An analogous process was soon under way in Scotland.²⁰ Both movements questioned the soundness of English historical interpretations linking the specificity of England (which English historians equated with Britain) to the early development of democracy. They were sharply criticized by Irish and Scottish historians who were quick to point out the abuses perpetrated by the English in their respective countries.

The second critique came from the colonial world and India, where several forces collided after the First World War. Nationalism and the independence movement gained strength, foreshadowed by the riots that broke out in Punjab and Bengal during the war. In this context, the writing of Indian history became a crucial political issue in this context, generating debates over sources, methods, and proposed theories. In the preface to the *Cambridge History of India*, Henry Dodwell described the revolt of the Sepoys as a demonstration of ingratitude for the benevolent

¹⁷Middell and Naumann (2010).

¹⁸Copsey and Olechnowicz (2010).

¹⁹Moulton (2014).

²⁰Finlay (2012).

changes brought about by Britain. Verney Lovett blamed Gandhi and Indian nationalism.²¹ Such works generated a raft of strongly nationalistic studies in Indian history,²² emphasizing Indian democratic traditions, the strength of the Indian economy prior to the arrival of the East India Company, and the British threat to India's fundamental unity.²³

Once again, these tensions were reflected in debates over the instruments of historical knowledge. Conventional tools of historiographical investigation were challenged, starting with the validity of "local" Indian sources in vernacular languages. Several British historians characterized these sources as "mythology", suited to the study of literature and folklore but not serious history. Yet some of these sources had been translated by "Orientalists" at the end of the eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth century. Thus, the issue was raised during the interwar period, well before subaltern studies: Can these sources be considered legitimate? Are they genuine expressions of "Indian traditions" or merely another variant of Orientalism?

After the First World War, the context of the debates changed in the face of rising nationalism in India and even in the Britain. In London, Sanskrit and Indian history were henceforth taught at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), which was founded in 1916 to train colonial administrative personnel, military forces, and businessmen looking to work in Asia or Africa. Chair professorships in oriental languages had been created mainly in London and Oxford in the nineteenth century, but they formed few students and were chiefly intended for a scholarly audience without any particular plans to join the imperial administration or the business world. The foundation of the SOAS therefore met the demand to produce better-trained colonial staff and encourage British investment in the colonial worlds.²⁴ However, when Indian nationalism started expanding in the mid-1920s, SOAS professors also put their expertise to work in opposing what they considered increasingly ideological interpretations of history being expressed in India. Thus, the SOAS was a scholarly-institutional response to the transformations under way in the British Empire.

²¹ Lovett (1920).

²² Banerjee (1933), Chakrabarty (2015).

²³ Philips (1961), Sena (1973).

²⁴ Brown (2016).

Indeed, in India, the history department at the University of Allahabad launched a series of translations from vernacular languages as well as the *Journal of Indian History*, which focused from the start on handwritten sources from Indian states during the pre-colonial and colonial periods. Jadukar Sarkar, one of the leading actors in the movement, helped with the publication of several Marathi documents and the history of the Marathas.²⁵ He argued against the interpretations of another historian, G. S. Sardesai, who challenged the reliability of “Western” methods used in critical analysis of the sources. Thus, the tensions inherited from the eighteenth century over the proper foundation of history—literature versus history, archives versus genealogies—continued in the middle of the twentieth century, setting not only British and European but also Indian scholars against each other.²⁶ In 1926, Suryya Kumar Bhuyan, the pioneering scholar of Assamese history, asserted that the study and translation of *buranji* (the chronicles of local courts) could account for the existence of a local form of civilization, whereas in Bengal, British and Indian researchers²⁷ were divided as to the value of local genealogies²⁸: did such documents constitute “genuine history”?

To answer these questions would require not only linguistic but also historical knowledge: it would have required determining who developed a particular usage of Indian languages in the past and how this was done prior to and under colonial rule. Unfortunately, such an investigation was impossible during the interwar period because archives in India were closed to Indian students and researchers. To find the answers, scholars could rely only on philology and their knowledge of languages or on political philosophy or ideology full stop. Thus, the attitudes of the British authorities and Indian researchers toward constructing and granting access to archives developed in reaction to each other.²⁹

There was more at stake in these dynamics than mutual influences and the usual tensions between Indians and the British. The search for an Indo-European civilization was also of interest to the Germans and they transferred the issues surrounding the subject of Aryans from the European arena to the colonial world. The fact that German and Indian

²⁵ Sarkar (1912–1952, 1932–1950).

²⁶ Sardesai (1946–1957).

²⁷ Guha (2005).

²⁸ Chakrabarty (2004).

²⁹ Winks (1966).

researchers found common ground precisely in their shared hostility toward the British was indicative of that shift. German nationalists, sometimes closely aligned with the National Socialists and Hitler, joined certain Indian nationalists in criticizing British arrogance. A similar alliance took shape between German and Indian Marxists, who converged in their critique of British imperialism.³⁰

In the interwar period, national historiographies also developed in Latin America and China and to some extent in Africa. The Mexican Revolution of 1910–1920 gave rise to vehement debates over the origins and significance of the revolution. These quarrels were based on autobiographies and firsthand accounts. Oral tradition resurfaced within official history, in opposition to pre-war historiographies heavily influenced by Europe and the United States that gave priority to written documents over other sources. In addition to the demand concerning methodology and content, other trends were taking shape: the rise of pre-colonial archaeology laid the groundwork for very long-term histories of Mesoamerican civilizations,³¹ and real social history based on archives developed for the first time, particularly in the work of Silvio Zavala, who combined the methods of historians and the social sciences in writing a social history of Mexico.³² Finally, the history curriculum expanded in universities, prompted by questions about how the history of Mexico should be taught compared with the history of Europe or Spain and henceforth in relation to the United States. The search for national specificities that had evolved over many centuries (hence the recourse to archaeology) and for “authentic” eyewitness accounts (hence the use of oral sources) was a feature of this movement.³³

In certain respects, this process resembled the one taking place simultaneously in Brazil, where the institutionalization of history in the universities was profoundly influenced by French scholars from Claude Lévi-Strauss and Braudel to Émile Coornaert and Henri Hauser. These imported approaches did not preclude autonomous developments, however; “new interpretations” of Brazilian history were put forward, some

³⁰Manjapra (2014).

³¹Brading (2011).

³²Zavala (1948).

³³Morales (2014).

of which still carry considerable weight today.³⁴ Gilberto Freyre and his *Casa-Grande & Senzala* (masters and slaves) offered a fresh perspective on slavery and plantations before, during, and after the official abolition of slavery in 1888.³⁵

Comparable interactions took place between European historiographical methods and local approaches in Argentina, where the influence of German historians had already been significant before the war.³⁶ While maintaining the same focus on erudition and archives, the post-war institutional context led to significant transformations.³⁷ Universities in Argentina as well as in Bolivia, Chile, and Peru³⁸ acquired their autonomy from central government authorities to preserve independent faculty recruitment and academic freedom.³⁹ From that point onwards, major innovations took place: regional history was studied in a long-term, international context. In 1933, Ezequiel Martínez Estrada published an essay entitled *Radiografía de la pampa*, which was highly commended by Braudel.⁴⁰

Historiographical knowledge also circulated between Europe and the Republic of China, giving rise to a dilemma resembling the one in Russia and Mexico: the historians of the new generation wanted to highlight China's participation in the concert of nations, while their elders emphasized its uniqueness and specificity in world history. The continuities and breaks in Chinese history and its relationship to world history were hotly debated. One of the leaders of the so-called "1898" reform movement, Kang Youwei, disseminated a view of history combining Confucianist texts by late Qing scholars with a Chinese version of stadial evolution developed in eighteenth-century Scotland.⁴¹ Other historians—Liang Qichao, Xia Cengyou, and Liu Yizheng—rejected this approach in favor of European periodization (that is, ancient, medieval, and modern) for China. Prior to 1914, Liang Qichao (1873–1929) had criticized conventional Chinese history for what he considered its excessive focus on

³⁴ Abreu (1907), Glénisson (1977).

³⁵ Freyre (1933), Cardoso (2011).

³⁶ Levene (1913).

³⁷ Devoto (1993–1994).

³⁸ Arguedas (1922), Arana (1884).

³⁹ Zea (1979).

⁴⁰ Estrada (1933).

⁴¹ Kung-chuan (1975).

the court and the imperial family. After the First World War, however, Liang reversed his position and, under the influence of Buddhism and neo-Kantianism, refused to accept a unilineal view of historical development or a causal explanation of historical events like the one used in the natural sciences. He began by trying to identify what China had contributed to the progress of the global civilization of humanity. To answer that question, he undertook a comparative study of historical methods, associating their evolution with underlying social transformations. In contrast to Western European approaches, he not only compared oral tradition with writing but also differentiated between material sources (relics, oral testimonials, and archaeological materials) and written sources (genealogies, dynastic histories, and archives). Finally, Liang thought that sources should be distinguished according to their usefulness (that is, their relevance to the subject under study).⁴²

Zhang Taiyan (1868–1936), who was initially close to Liang, suggested that history was not mechanical but rather a process governed by human activity, which therefore varied according to the period and the country. His aim was not to get rid of the Chinese classics but to historicize them. He wanted to determine China's national historical specificities and discovered them not in the classics but in race, through a comparison of Han and Manchu traditions.⁴³ In the end, he combined race, Buddhist classics, and Marxism in a theory of revolution that claimed to be specifically Chinese. Opposition to capitalism was found in the Chinese classics and in the evolution of China itself. In keeping with Yogacara Buddhism, which was widespread in India, China, Korea, and Japan at the time, Zhang criticized the Western unilineal view of progress.

The First World War changed this view, however. When the war ended, Western approaches to history continued to be disseminated among some historians and to be attacked by others. There were profound disagreements over methods, the philosophy of history, and periodization. The textbooks by Langlois and Seignobos as well as the works of Dewey, Buckle, and Ranke all had their defenders. The two French historians in particular set the standard for most Chinese historians

⁴²Hao (1971).

⁴³Murthy (2011).

during this period.⁴⁴ It is interesting to note that the same works drew radically different reactions in China and France. In France, the *Annales* School saw Langlois and Seignobos as the “enemy”, certainly an overstatement compared with their intentions. In China, on the other hand, these authors became major references used to introduce methods for the critical analysis of sources while avoiding the positivism of Ranke and others and remaining open to interaction with conventional Chinese approaches.

In this context, new sources, notably archaeological finds, were brought to light, paving the way for a radical renewal of the interpretations of ancient Chinese history.⁴⁵ Fu Sinian (1896–1950), one of the founders of the “4th May” movement (see below), set up an institute of history and philology, which insisted on the need to discover new sources, especially through archaeology, that would enable historians to transcend the limitations of traditional chronicles. Archaeology and the way it was used to reformulate China’s ancient history had enormous political impact. The main leaders of the movement quickly saw what was at stake. Sun Yat-Sen, the leader of the Kuomintang, was among the founders of the Institute of History and Philology at the University of Guangzhou. Later on, when Fu Sinian went to Beijing, the institute was transferred along with him, but it came under the control of Chiang Kai-shek, who immediately grasped its potential political benefits in the interwar Chinese context. At the time, he had launched his offensive in northern China to bring the warlords into submission and re-establish the unity of the country. Under these circumstances, rewriting Chinese history using archaeological discoveries made precisely in the country’s northern provinces could be a powerful tool to ensure political legitimacy.

Other historiographical currents set out in a different direction with regard to methodology and above all their interpretation of Chinese history. The “May Fourth Movement”, led by Gu Jiegang (1893–1980), questioned the fundamental principles of traditional Chinese historiography and called for the development of a national history based on classical Chinese, Japanese, and Western knowledge. Hu-Shih (1891–1962), another movement member, who was trained at Columbia University

⁴⁴Schneider and Tanaka (2012).

⁴⁵Kohl (1998).

in New York, developed a passion for the scientific approach of John Dewey (who himself lived in China from 1919 to 1921) and applied his “genetic” history method to China. Hu thought historians should formulate hypotheses and test them like scientists; he was a proponent of a transcultural and transnational history that took multiple and reciprocal influences into consideration. Both Fu and Hu expressed strong nationalist tendencies that were radicalized during the Japanese occupation of Manchuria.⁴⁶ Fu became an activist and published a work demonstrating that the region belonged “historically” to China. This concern about establishing the Chinese identity of areas outside the Han provinces, thus including regions such as Manchuria, was a response to global geopolitical transformations during the interwar period, particularly Japanese imperialism. The fact that an Asian power could operate like a Western empire was a shock not only for the West but also in Asia, resulting in a resurgence of Chinese nationalism and, in that framework, of the central political role of history itself. Fu assigned the members of the history society he founded the task of making Chinese knowledge an integral part of global intellectual trends, reforming Chinese society through historical knowledge, encouraging research, and promoting an “ideal type” of the youth of the future.⁴⁷

More and more Chinese historians joined in the criticism of European approaches, especially the linear, progressive view of history. Chinese students, enrolled at German, American, and British universities, facilitated the circulation of this knowledge. The “New Cultural Movement” launched by historians in Beijing (Beida) drew inspiration from the historiographies of those countries. In 1918, they launched a journal called “The New Wave”, which enjoyed an extremely wide readership (about ten thousand copies per issue). These authors emphasized the importance of criticizing sources and distinguishing between primary and secondary sources and, on that basis, between historical realities and fiction. They were challenged by the emergence not only of the “modernisers” but also of the first Marxist historians. The latter group initially adopted what was described as an “orthodox” Marxist approach, insisting on the universality of Marx’s stages of historical development. Guo Morou (1892–1978) attempted to express the periods of China’s ancient history

⁴⁶Schneider (1997).

⁴⁷Wang (2000).

in terms of slavery, followed by feudal society and finally modernization. Some Marxists began seeing in the Asian mode of production and in certain Soviet interpretations of Marx a way to reconcile Marx's ideas with a number of different historical paths. They participated actively in the Soviet debate in those years specifically to determine whether or not the Bolshevik Revolution had distorted Marx's texts. Negative assessments of Trotsky and his historical interpretation of the revolution, including Stalin's criticisms, found their way into the Chinese discussions.⁴⁸

The Bolshevik Revolution: The Universality of History Versus Socialism in One Country

The Bolshevik Revolution fundamentally altered the way we conceive of history, even beyond political judgments. We do not intend to recount the history of Bolshevik Revolution historiography here. Instead, we plan to stay focused on our subject and therefore on the impact the Bolshevik Revolution had on the content and practice of history during all the twentieth century. The construction of temporalities hinges in large part on this revolution, the images it evokes, and its political role. Among the issues surrounding the October Revolution and its history are future-oriented history; Russia as a model or an exception and thus the nature of "historical laws"; the possibilities of seeing the revolution reproduced elsewhere, above all outside Europe; and the absolutely central role of history in justifying or criticizing the revolution and conversely its role in political debate. Even today, this influence is obvious in the shift in focus from a forward-looking history, capable of predicting the future, to a history of its failure and the attempt to explain it without falling into the trap of historical necessity yet again. In the end, the Bolshevik Revolution reopened the debate concerning "truth" in history, along at least three main quarrels: whether these theses can be proven without access to archives, the role of propaganda in historiographical construction, only to end (after 1989) with almost blind faith in the archive documents finally available. For the past century, all of these problems arising from within the notion of history and of its methods have been heavily conditioned by the Russian Revolution. In every case, the connections to the globality of history are clear: revolution, by its

⁴⁸ Dirlik (1978).

very nature, raises the question of whether it is exceptional or supposedly universal, local or worldwide. The globality of historiographical constructions is expressed in historiographical methods and reciprocal influences as well as in the disparities between the ways history is conceived and practiced in the USSR and in the West and how these debates were passed on to the “Third World” after the Second World War.

In reality, these questions came up in Russia itself prior to the revolution, as we have seen in our discussion of Marx. The debates over the specificity of Russia and the globality of history continued in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. At that point, a new liberal historiography emerged in Russia, seeking to show at once the country’s “backwardness”, the progress under way, and hence the measures that still needed to be taken. This historiography was often oriented toward Great Britain, the idealized model of liberalism. Authors such as Maksim Kovalevskii strove to demonstrate, first, the necessity of historical laws (drawing especially on Henri Maine and his theory of the transition from customary worlds to modern worlds); second, how Russia deviated from those laws; and, third, how those gaps could be closed if new measures were adopted (for example, by establishing a parliament and privatizing peasant communities).⁴⁹ Other historians, such as Boris Chicherin (1828–1904) and Aleksandr Kornilov (1862–1925),⁵⁰ complained, like Dostoevskii before them, about revolutionary extremists who were impeding the modernization process in Russia.⁵¹ These authors, together with Pavel Miliukov (1859–1943),⁵² a historian and politician who belonged to the constitutional democratic party, highlighted the importance of institutional reforms and used the example of the British and (in part) Russian history to prove their argument.⁵³

These historians were opposed by theorists described (partly by their adversaries and partly by themselves) as “orthodox” Marxists, who criticized not only the liberals but also the Marxist “revisionists”. The latter suggested the possibility of Russia evolving differently from the blueprint envisioned on the basis of Marx’s writings, which would demand not so much revolution as negotiations within capitalism. The “orthodox

⁴⁹ Kovalevskii (2000).

⁵⁰ Chicherin (1856).

⁵¹ Kaplan (2017).

⁵² Miliukov (1896–1903).

⁵³ Kireeva (2004).

Marxists”, on the contrary, defended the universalist conception of Marx’s approach to history supported by Friedrich Engels and later by Karl Kautsky within the International. At the time, Lenin’s own view was close to this interpretation. To bolster Marx’s predictions and his own strategic orientations within the social-democrat party, he presented an exaggerated image of reality and of the transformations of the Russian economy and Tsarist society into a capitalist society.

With the 1917 Revolution, these approaches changed once again: how could the revolution be justified in a country that had not yet reached the peak of capitalism foreseen by orthodox Marxism?

We have already talked about how the revolutions at the turn of the nineteenth century changed both historiographical debates and methods. The Revolution of 1917 had an equally radical effect, first of all in Russia, where the use of history was crucial to legitimize the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks. Trotsky and Menshevik authors saw the revolution as a deviation from the “normal” path of historical development. Liberal and socialist authors held the same view.⁵⁴ Lenin, on the other hand, altered his earlier position and henceforth justified Russia as an exceptional case, demonstrating the possibility of carrying out a revolution and arriving at a socialist society without going through capitalism.

The revolution and the civil war eliminated many of the historians from the Tsarist period through death or exile.⁵⁵ Among those who were left, very few were critical of the new regime. The most notable was Sergei Platonov (1860–1933),⁵⁶ one of the greatest Russian historians since Vasilii Kliuchevskii.⁵⁷ Reputed for his knowledge of European historiography and philosophy, Platonov specialized in the study of seventeenth-century Russian history, employing philology and Ranke’s methods in a broad philosophical framework. Others, like Yevgeny Tarle (1875–1955), made greater use of Marxist categories.⁵⁸ These authors, both of them experts in archival research, helped to set up the Soviet archives, aided by archivists trained before the war.⁵⁹ Tarle drew on the

⁵⁴ Barber (1981).

⁵⁵ Shteppa (1962).

⁵⁶ Platonov (1989).

⁵⁷ Kliuchevskii (1871, 1904–1921).

⁵⁸ Byrnes (1991).

⁵⁹ Samoshenko (1989).

history of the French archives and their classifications.⁶⁰ The French had faced the same problem after 1789: How could documents classified for the use of government administrations or companies, associations, and private individuals be transformed into sources for historians and other readers? Like France and other countries in the early nineteenth century, Russia too had to deal from the outset with the question of the break and continuity between the old regime and the new in the process of document classification itself. The first Soviet archivists had three objectives: first, to classify and make available Tsarist documents; second, to highlight the revolutionary documents (that is, the actions of the Party, workers, trade unions, and peasants); and, third, to determine how the new regime's documents should be organized.⁶¹ Here, too, the debate in Russia echoed the one that had taken place in France and Europe in the nineteenth century. Some historians and archivists recommended organizing documents on the basis of their origin and transposing the classification used in Tsarist ministerial archives to the peoples' commissariats. Others favored dividing up the documents according to destination, the solution favored by the Soviet managers in order to highlight the revolutionary break. For this purpose, the formation of new Marxist archivists was deemed necessary, to be supported by the creation of archives of the revolution bringing out the role of the party and the revolutionaries. However, this aim was impeded by the fact that those archives were widely dispersed, most of them abroad. Recovering the documents then became one of the main tasks of the Soviet diplomatic and archivist apparatus. This archive system was supplemented by the anthology of eyewitness accounts and testimonials of the revolution.

Mikhail Pokrovskii, an official historian of the revolution and of the regime in its early years, tried to reconcile "the universal laws of history" with the Revolution of 1917.⁶² "Before 1917", declared Pokrovskii, "I maintained that the same regularity (*zakonomernost'*) existed in the field of social phenomena as in the field of chemical and biological phenomena, and that there was no difference between these disciplines. Today my position has changed. There is an essential difference between the natural sciences and the science of society. While in fact all science

⁶⁰ Alatortseva and Alekseeva (1971).

⁶¹ Salomoni (1995).

⁶² Pokrovskii (1928).

expresses the development of the forces of production, the social system and class struggle, it is also true that these phenomena are expressed differently by the different disciplines. Unlike the natural sciences, the science of society directly expresses class struggle”.⁶³

During the 1920s, the desire to “accelerate” the pace of history gradually came to dominate other concerns. The end of the New Economic Policy, forced collectivization, and the purges of the 1930s altered the Soviet conception of history. Although most of the existing historians disappeared during the purges, by 1934 history had nevertheless become a required subject in primary and secondary schools, and the number of history chairs grew in the universities. That same year and again two years later, Stalin, Zhdanov, and Kirov wrote a history textbook in which they rejected Pokrovskii’s approach, concluding that henceforth the history of the USSR should be the history of its peoples and nationalities but should also include European and world history.⁶⁴ Therefore, Soviet-style global history was part of a discipline that wanted to take all aspects of human beings into consideration while subordinating “culture” and the superstructure of economic dynamics. It was also a history that strove to reconcile socialism in a single country with the aim to “show the way” to the rest of humanity. In spite of the contradictions, this conception of history had considerable influence on Marxists all over the world. Nevertheless, it should be noted that contacts continued between Soviet historians and those of other countries, notably Germany and Western Europe, even under Stalin, and developed significantly after his death.⁶⁵ Yet, owing precisely to censorship and repression, the ideological control over history ended up paradoxically fostering the major development of erudition and the search for unpublished archival sources. *Istochnikovedenie*—the study of primary sources—became a focal point of Soviet historiography. This method, which had been criticized and shelved by Pokrovskii, was revived around the mid-1930s through the efforts of the medievalist Mikhail Tikhomirov and soon after by the students of Alexander Lappo-Danilevskii.⁶⁶ These “Soviet” approaches, based on an almost obsessive insistence on sources at the expense of

⁶³ Pokrovskii (1928: 23).

⁶⁴ Yilmaz (2015).

⁶⁵ Venturi (2006).

⁶⁶ Tikhomirov and Nikitin (1940), Andreev (1940).

analysis, were frequently the target of criticism by Western historians. Though not altogether mistaken, this interpretation missed an essential aspect, namely that, in the USSR, the decision to emphasize archive sources had two implications: first, the focus on sources reduced the risk of being persecuted for an interpretation that was always in danger of failing to comply with official directives and the party line; second, many historians saw sources as means of transcending official historiography and its lies. Thus, historical positivism and the attachment to “facts” took on a special significance in totalitarian regimes. This should be kept in mind when we in the West reproach Russian historians for their lack of critical thinking and rejection of postmodernism.

CONCLUSION

During the first half of the twentieth century, history had a political impact that was not only critical but different from the influence it had had in other periods. The fall of the Central and Eastern European empires and the often-extreme nationalism of the states that succeeded them, the birth of the USSR, and the new global role of the United States and Japan fundamentally changed the maps and even the very idea of “development” as well as the role of the West in this context. Nationalist tensions rose in Europe, Asia, and Latin America, and relationships between independence movements and colonial powers grew increasingly strained in Africa during the interwar period.

Against this backdrop, history became an indispensable political instrument in several respects: its arguments were supposed to confirm (or deny) the dynamics under way. The historic role of the nation was crucial, first of all in the way it was presented empirically, when it became important to demonstrate, for example, the presence of a long-standing “national spirit”. This attitude was expressed in discussions about the tools of historiography: in India, Germany, the USSR, Mexico, Brazil, China, and Argentina, the tensions between “genuine history” and fiction, erudition, languages and social models, and “primary” and “secondary” sources surfaced in political discussions, influencing historians’ attitudes and the role they assigned to their discipline in relation to political debate. This was the context in which the “real” history of revolutionary Russia, India, Aryan Germany, and Fascist Italy came into being. The interwar years witnessed the emergence of a global phenomenon:

nationalism and national histories. What was new, compared with the nineteenth century, was that this approach developed not only in Western Europe but also in Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and Russia and began rapidly expanding in the colonial world.

Aside from forms of world history that compared civilizations, often to highlight Western decadence, global history as a methodology and an object of study lagged behind during this period. The global history approach was not really opposed to nationalism; in fact, it lent further support to it by crowning certain civilizations with distinction and expressing regret for a lost world characterized by stability and Western supremacy.

At the same time, in spite of their intensely nationalistic nature, these attitudes were embedded in the global transformations taking place in economies, societies, and knowledge. Although historiography was often national and nationalistic, its approaches were an integral part of global history. The great transformation of capitalism during the interwar period marked the decline of classical liberalism and the arrival of mass production and the welfare state. This transformation went hand in hand with that of the colonial empires and the disintegration of empires in Europe. Thus, European approaches—the philosophy of history and historiographical methods—evolved and encountered the new orientations emerging in India, the Soviet Union, China, and Latin America. The historians in those countries were familiar with Western authors and interpreted them in their own ways. Indian historiographical nationalism, for example, grew out of the tension between the evolution of historiography in Britain and the emergence of national identities in India. Similarly, the USSR maintained significant contacts with the rest of the world, above all during the 1920s. It is also important to remember the circulation of historiographical influences, for example, between China and Japan; India, Brazil, and Germany; or Argentina and Bolivia. Such circulation continued despite attempts by states to control historiographical production through censorship and the prohibition of archives or simply by classifying archives in such a way as to enhance national history. Although extreme variants of these attitudes were recorded in totalitarian countries, they were at work elsewhere (for example, in the decision to deny archive access to colonial “subjects” in the French and British empires). After the Second World War, all of these elements helped to bring into being the historiographies of the *Trente Glorieuses* and the Cold War.

Thus, global and connected history is slowly being erased by national histories, reflecting the shift to political nationalism, protectionist economic policies, and growing hostility toward “others”. The weakness of cosmopolitan thinking and its inability, especially in Europe, to revitalize itself through encounters with other worlds reveal the difficulties of the “great transformation” in the West and confirm the danger in times of global downturn. Of course, global history alone cannot stop these wayward trends but allowing it to vanish from the classroom and from public debate will certainly help them to flourish.

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Global History in the Cold War and Decolonization

Abstract The reconstruction of Europe after the war was not solely an economic affair but also a political and historiographical one. The reconstruction of history and memory participated in this movement by exploring the origins of Fascism and Nazism as well as the breaks and continuities in terms of ideas, ideology, and actors. Meanwhile, decolonization was accompanied by a synchronous process of implementing archives in ex-colonies and reorganizing colonial archives in metropolitan France and Britain. History also underwent a profound renewal in the USSR after Stalin's death. Since the 1990s, the publication of archival documents has continued in Russia, following the tradition that was developed during the Soviet period.

Keywords Perestroika · Modernization · Development theory
Colonial archives

HISTORY AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF EUROPE

The reconstruction of Europe after the war was not solely an economic affair but also a political one. The tension and continuities between new and old elites, notably in the countries affected by Fascism (Italy, Germany, and France), represented a crucial political issue. The reconstruction of history participated in this movement by exploring the origins of Fascism and Nazism as well as the breaks and continuities

in terms of ideas, ideology, and actors.¹ This process was nevertheless difficult, as the analyses of East Germany historiography were dictated by Soviet debates over revolution and capitalism. History departments were reorganized by the selection of Marxist historians and dividing history according to the canonical Marxist periodization. For instance, Alexander Abusch classified the actors and events of German history into two categories: the negative influences of Luther, Frederick the Great, Bismarck, and Hitler on the one hand and the progressive role of Thomas Müntzer and Marx, up until the communist movement, on the other.² At the same time, some research within this larger dynamic distinguished itself through its originality, such as that of Walter Markov in Leipzig, who sought to develop a form of global history inspired by Marx. With time, however, the selection of not only interpretations but even of “legitimate” subjects (for example, the priority given to labor history) would have a negative impact on historiographical production. No movement comparable to the *Sonderweg* in West Germany would develop in the German Democratic Republic. This silence was particularly burdensome after reunification, as half of Germany had never been confronted with a critical analysis of Nazism.³

However, in the Federal Republic of Germany, a critical historiography of Nazism in the context of the *histoire longue* of Germany did not emerge until the 1960s, the preceding period having been marked by embarrassment. The Historical Society never officially made amends to the 134 historians deported or exiled under Nazism, only 21 of whom returned. Most of the historians who dominated the postwar scene struggled to produce a critical history of Nazism, instead offering liberal interpretations and even some that were openly positive about the Reich and Bismarck in particular: hence, National Socialism was an unfortunate and accidental deviation away from this path.⁴

The challenging institutionalization of contemporary history in teaching reflects these ambiguities, as this new periodization sought to include teaching of the twentieth century but quickly emphasized Soviet

¹ Friedländer (1992).

² Abusch (1946).

³ Berger (2003).

⁴ Schulze (1989).

totalitarianism instead of Nazism and Fascism. In any event, historians of the Holocaust were marginalized, especially in Munich.⁵

This situation changed in the mid-1960s when a new generation of historians adopted stances that were much more critical toward German history. These historians set out to find nationalist and racist continuities, and even unification under Bismarck was interpreted in light of nationalism and intolerance. Fritz Fischer's work on World War I in 1961 validated the arguments of British and French historiography and accused Germany of having started the war. The reactions of conservative historians and some members of the press were vehement, offering a good illustration of the difficulty that the profession and a segment of the public had in resigning themselves to the Third Reich. The critical wave nevertheless won out, and German history was increasingly seen as a series of nationalist excesses: National Socialism was no longer seen as a "deviation" and an "exception" but as an extension of German history.⁶

From this point forward, there were an increasing number of comparative studies attempting to understand the reasons for this German dynamic. The specific characteristics of its modernization, particularly the alliance between landowning Junkers and the state and major industry, were advanced to explain the alliance between Fascism and capitalism.⁷ These comparisons were broadened to social and labor history, notably at Bielefeld with Jürgen Kocka.

Italy, a defeated country that had also been destroyed, presented similar problems with the onerous legacy of Fascism. The latter was passed over in silence in postwar historiographical interpretations; it took until the 1970s for a genuine critical historiography of Fascism to be implemented as part of the *histoire longue* of the peninsula. The first volume of Mussolini's biography, published in 1965 by Renzo de Felice, prompted criticism from a segment of the public and historians, who were still attached to the myth of a Fascism imposed by Germany. Fascist archives for the most part were closed until the 1970s, when a historiography critical of Fascism in Italian history was established. The divergences between Marxist and liberal democratic historians were considerable, notably with regard to the interpretation of Fascism. Some placed

⁵Iggers (1985).

⁶Mommsen (2001).

⁷Blackburn and Eley (1980).

emphasis on the distortions of Italian capitalism, which was different from England's and impervious to patterns originating from Marx. The alliance between landowners, the state, and capitalism was seen as the origin of Fascism. Liberal historiography insisted on Fascism as a deviation with respect to earlier dynamics. All agreed that the true polemic involved the continuities between Fascism and postwar Italy,⁸ continuities that were partly denounced by historians on the left and denied by their opponents. These debates remained fairly ideological because of the importance of and lack of access to Cold War archives. While communists criticized liberals and democrats for continuities with Fascism, their opponents retorted by highlighting the connections with Stalinist totalitarianism.

Conventional methods of national history were preserved, while the division between ancient, medieval, early modern, and modern history was institutionalized in the 1950s. Universities struggled to open up before 1968, but when they did this was accompanied by the rise of communist historians and intellectuals. A number of often-innovative currents subsequently emerged. While Momigliano acquired an international reputation in ancient history and historiography, microhistory and its connections with the Annales School were also important and found fruitful and original counterparts in Italy. Contrary to what Guildi and Armitage have recently claimed,⁹ Braudelian approaches were not opposed to microhistory; Ginzburg and, to an extent, Poni relied on Bloch and less on Braudel,¹⁰ whereas Levi decidedly moved closer to the latter. These links with France encouraged the intersection between history and the social sciences. Anthropology and historical sociological in particular experienced an important rise, while social history in the manner of E.P. Thompson found its equivalent in the journal *Passato e Presente*. Finally, comparative and transnational history was developed in major works, such as Venturi on the Enlightenment.¹¹

Although they were highly visible on the international scene, these authors were still exceptions in Italy, where history remained national, as in other European countries of the same period: in most university

⁸ Cantimori (1971).

⁹ Armitage and Guildi (2015).

¹⁰ Ginzburg and Poni (1979).

¹¹ Venturi (1969–1990).

curricula, history was synonymous with the history of Italy. The history of a few European countries was perhaps present in universities specializing in the humanities; but, in general, area studies were kept separate and located in Institutes of Eastern Languages and Civilizations, such as the Langues Orientales in France or the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in England. Relations between area studies were practically nonexistent, and even European construction hardly had an impact on the organization of historic disciplines.

Great Britain, which did not carry the burden of the Nazi legacy, presents a partly different evolution: postwar history and historiography expressed conservative attitudes with regard to method and content. Resistance to the rise of the USSR and the collapse of the Russian Empire did not encourage British historians to open up, at least initially. As in Germany, it took until the 1960s for social groups to have broader access to higher education and university as well as for history to be diffused in the curriculum and for a new generation of frequently Marxist historians, such as Eric Hobsbawm and E.P. Thompson, to arrive on the scene. British history remained central; that of other worlds, such as Asia and Africa, was developed at the SOAS in particular and remained in the minority as well as separate in the curriculum, as in university institutions where history was identified with that of Great Britain and perhaps the West. After 1945, historical works showed more than ever the exceptional role of England and Great Britain as a precursor and bulwark of democracy and capitalism. The Glorious Revolution of 1688, the Industrial Revolution, and the English role during the world wars became the keystones of a history associating England with modernity. British history was always presented as being connected to but distinct from that of Europe, which was associated with despotism—from Napoleon up to Hitler—and economic regulation.¹²

In other words, national history, which was often nationalist, remained dominant in Western Europe until the late twentieth century, while that of other continents entered into different curricula, those of languages and civilization. Europe itself was not the subject of a *histoire longue* and, on the contrary, appeared exclusively in the very last pages of manuals, like a recent invention. This gap was reduced only beginning in the 1990s with the Erasmus program and then its equivalents at the

¹²Bentley (2005).

masters and doctoral levels, often in connection with particular initiatives within universities.

Despite this mobility of students in most universities, European history continued to be presented as a convergence of national histories and less as the surpassing thereof. More importantly, Europe was projected in the past as a relatively heterogeneous but nevertheless coherent front to other worlds, the Muslim one in particular. Even today, these historiographical limits compromise the understanding of European history as one connected to that of other worlds. To what extent did Braudel's work enable the surpassing of these limits?

BRAUDEL: GLOBAL HISTORY OR GLOBAL EUROCENTRISM?

In France, the postwar context was characterized by reconstruction and then by decolonization and the Fifth Republic. American aid supported not only reconstruction but also scientific and intellectual activities, such as the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme. History recruiting, along with the subjects studied and approaches that were advanced, reflected the role of national history, along with the difficult relations with Marxism and decolonization.¹³ From the secondary level to the university, education hardly changed during this period, and the *agrégation* and thesis even emerged strengthened. The same was true of the historian's tools: erudition and philology were considered the tools par excellence, while relations with the social sciences remained practically nonexistent with the exception of the School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences (EHESS) beginning in the 1970s. Archeology, oral sources, and quantitative history, of course, had their moments of glory, although tradition imposed itself in all French universities. This was true despite the exploding number of historians paid by the state, including on the secondary, university, French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS), and *Grandes écoles* levels: from 3000 in the very early 1950s, they grew to 8000 in 1967. This movement became more contrasted, even though *enseignants-chercheurs* in higher education and research

¹³Bédarida (1996).

alone numbered approximately 1155 in 1991.¹⁴ Almost all theses, articles, and books were about France, something that is mentioned in numerous reports during the 1960s. A quarter of a century later, the history of other worlds had developed, and nearly half of the CNRS's researchers in history and social sciences were working on non-European areas, although this percentage was much less important in universities, especially given that the researchers and books not focusing on France concentrated above all else on Germany and Italy. It is in this context that the evolution of the Annales School and Braudel's approach should be understood. Braudel sought to distinguish himself from those such as Tawney or Spengler who produced global and *longue durée* syntheses. According to him, these syntheses used a linear and static time and in this respect were similar to traditional universal history.¹⁵ In comparison with Weber and Tawney, Braudel was less attracted by comparisons than by overall dynamics; he did not seek a totality and a structural relation between religion, the economy, and society but rather *durées longues* of economic and social transformations. To this end, and unlike Bloch, he did not hesitate to study non-European worlds using secondary sources. His analysis of the Mediterranean was conducted exclusively using Christian sources, those of Italy and Spain in particular, along with French and German sources. He went even further in *Civilization matérielle*, in which he embarked upon a global history by using essentially secondary sources, which specialists of cultural areas have spurned since. Yet *Civilization matérielle* was above all else a synthesis of knowledge acquired on multiple areas and regions. The legacy of Sombart is visible in his definition of capitalism. The association between capitalism and monopoly, capitalism and finance, and the role played by Italy and its international trading networks is present in Braudel and Sombart. However, when it was a matter of explaining the economic dynamics of other worlds, Braudel based himself on essentially European research; Chinese capitalism thus would have obstacles and limits in relation to European capitalism, English capitalism in particular. In this way, the synthesis remained fundamentally Eurocentric, as Braudel sought to explain Western expansion, and neglected the strength of Asia. This attitude was profoundly influenced by Sombart from an intellectual

¹⁴Charle (1996).

¹⁵Gemelli (1995), Tendler (2013).

point of view and by the Cold War and European construction with regard to politics. It was a particular yet nevertheless well-consolidated Eurocentrism, which provided sometimes surprising divisions: on the one hand, his effort to propose a Mediterranean in which Islam was an integral part of Europe was a courageous act; but on the other, Russia, which was also identified as a separate civilization, remained outside of Europe despite the intense relations and transfers—cultural, economic, and political—between the Russian world and Europe over the *longue durée*, which Braudel even knew all too well.¹⁶ The division of spatial scales remained a central preoccupation for Braudel and his followers and does so in global history today. This is where the possibility of surpassing “isms” (Eurocentrism, Sinocentrism, and Afrocentrism, and so on) takes place, although it is a difficult operation. Braudel included other worlds in his approach, but did so using secondary sources, and did not hesitate to recruit historians and especially anthropologists from non-European worlds. At the same time, these other worlds were seen almost solely according to European expansion and took on consistency only in relation to Europe. Modernity was a European affair for Braudel, although he did not go all the way in Wallerstein’s direction, as Braudel relied on the notion of an economy-world but in a more flexible way than his American colleagues and with no historical determinism or Marxism for support. This strength was also his weakness, for colonization did not play a genuine role in Braudelian analysis. Proximity to Wallerstein was also lost with most other historians of the Annales School, while attention directed toward colonialism instead could be found with Henri Brunschwig and Gabriel Debien¹⁷ or anthropologists such as Balandier.¹⁸ Beginning in the 1960s, Marxist influence won out in almost all French research in this area. As a result, an analysis focusing on economic domains and dependence for a long time encountered difficulty with the history of slavery and especially the experience of Saint Domingue, which has systematically been excluded from the history of the French Revolution almost up to the present. French colonial history underwent a profound renewal only with the rise of the “memorial” moment of the

¹⁶ Braudel (1987).

¹⁷ Brunschwig (1960), Debien (1954).

¹⁸ Balandier (1957).

new millennium, finally opening up toward the history of slavery and especially of decolonization, with the Maghreb in particular.¹⁹

In reality, Braudel borrowed from a number of historiographical traditions, including those of the interwar period, when, in different contexts, Pirenne on the one hand and Huizinga and Spengler on the other evoked *temps longs*, notably to explain the decline of a period and the affirmation of another. This is what Braudel had done in his turn for the Mediterranean.²⁰ This legacy can be extended until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and long temporalities are present in Gibbon (again a decline!), Montesquieu, and then Michelet and Ranke. This, of course, involved in all cases a usage of “*temps longs*” that was largely different from Braudel’s. The decline of civilizations, positivism of sources, and absence of any strong interaction with the social sciences and economics in particular set these other works apart from that of Braudel. The continuities, however, are also important.²¹ In particular, the role of geography in long historical time continued to be at the center of Braudel’s preoccupations. Civilizations defined themselves through spaces (territory), societies (the existence of cities), economies (the need for a system of exchange), and collective mentalities (a religion). It is important that these elements endure in time, even though Braudel was ready to admit that exchanges and circulations, along with colonialism, reshuffled the deck and modified civilizations over time. Does that mean that the world will gradually converge toward a single civilization?

Braudel was skeptical of this and believed that the historian had to grasp both ends—global civilization and existing civilizations—and that this coexistence was far from disappearing. But for what reasons?

In precisely Braudel’s lack of a response to this question can be found the rise of subaltern studies, orientalism, and later the global history of our time. Critiques have been made of the identification of the primary Braudelian civilizations. For instance, in the case of Islam, the debate over whether an Islamic community (Islamicate) existed at a specific period was (and is) lively. Some have responded in the affirmative,²²

¹⁹ Coquery-Vidrovitch (2009).

²⁰ Braudel (1949).

²¹ Pirenne (1955), Momigliano (1984).

²² Hodgson (1993).

others in the negative.²³ In similar fashion, Braudel's identification of an African civilization was welcome by some as a recognition of this continent and a renewed discussion regarding the written sources of early modern territorial powers as the sole foundation and legitimacy of history. Yet it appears difficult to identify a unified "Africa" opposed to other civilizations as such.²⁴ This distinction is relatively recent and is in large part a result of decolonization. Much ink continues to be spilled regarding African identity and, with it, any form of comparison and distinction. Although Cooper criticizes the very category of identity, it is strongly affirmed in the studies of Africanists, especially in African studies departments.

Seen from other regions of the world, the Braudelian chronology (roughly from the twelfth to the eighteenth centuries) was not necessarily pertinent. For instance, Sinologists and Indianists proposed a division that did not at all coincide with that of the West. For some, modernity began two thousand years ago—or with Mao (depending on the historiography)²⁵—and for others with the English occupation.²⁶ These chronological frameworks are different though not necessarily incompatible with the Western approach, especially in the case of nationalist historiographies. This is particularly true of India, where the periodization into pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial generally confirms rather than invalidates British and Western domination.

Similarly, in the case of Chinese historiography, despite an emphasis on the continuities over 2500 years, these elements are not justified but rather assumed: hence, the unity of China is identified with Han culture and domination. This reading sets aside the fact that the region call "China" nowadays, actually changed its boundaries over time: it was sometimes limited to the South and coastal lines, sometimes to the North-East. Most important, the presumed millenary unity of China ignore the major coexistence of Mongol and "Han" populations and cultures.²⁷

Moreover, the historiography on China maintains a division by dynasties.²⁸ The acceptance of this dynastic chronology is surprising. Why is this type of chronology—so criticized in Europe not only by the *Annales*

²³Muzzafar (2004).

²⁴Millar (1999).

²⁵Mote and Twichett (1988).

²⁶Subrahmanyam (1997).

²⁷Mote (2003).

²⁸Tin-bor Hui (2005).

School but well before in the nineteenth century and even earlier—so widespread in the historiography on China, both Chinese and Western?

Therefore, we must avoid confusing Braudelian *longue durée* and chronology extending over centuries and even millennia, the latter representing a nationalist claim (eternal China); it is not, for all that, a *histoire problème* in the mode of Braudel. The presumed “specificity” of a particular area is most often associated with *temps longs*, and enduring elements make up the specificity of an area.²⁹ This was the case, for instance, with the importance of the state in Russia and the USSR: the *longue durée* thus transformed into a boomerang, turning from a heuristic tool into an intellectual prison.

The connection between economy-worlds was central. The historical dynamics of capitalisms, in Europe and elsewhere, thus found a possible explanation and not the only one. Let us consider the case of Asia. What is the pertinent space? China, Southeast Asia, the entire Indian Ocean?

Each of these responses stands up and can be justified: taking inspiration from Braudel, Bin Wong speaks of China as an economy-world,³⁰ Chaudhuri does the same for India and the Indian Ocean,³¹ Di Cosmo for Central Asia,³² and Denys Lombard and others for Southeast Asia.³³ The determination of the pertinent scale depends on the question being asked: maritime commerce invites one to gather in a single world regions stretching from China to East Africa, whereas land-based commerce relates to, for example, the Silk Road.³⁴

Yet this immediate solution—the division depends on the question being asked—is not enough, for it is an externalist and overarching approach that says nothing about how the actors themselves considered these divisions. In other words, in the common confrontation between external spatio-temporal divisions—stemming from a particular outline from the social sciences—and divisions claiming to be internal to the sources, certain elements (and not insubstantial ones at that) remain in the background: the production of models on the one hand and of sources on the other. Both are taken as givens instead of being subjected

²⁹Raeff (1989), Bin Wong and Will (1993).

³⁰Bin Wong (2001).

³¹Chaudhuri (1985).

³²Di Cosmo.

³³Lombard (1992), Pearson (2003).

³⁴Dale (2010).

to a reflexive approach and an empirical test for validating or rejecting them. This is why these approaches struggle to provide a reflexive and empirical analysis of a category that underpins them—that of the specificity or uniqueness of the area or domain studied. This element is often mentioned but almost never clarified.³⁵ A possible solution consists of no longer imagining entities called China, Africa, and India as atemporal realities. This approach is similar to that of Denys Lombard, who uses multiples sources to explore the multifarious constructs of space-times in the Java archipelago, its opening up to the exterior, slow transformations, and accelerations.³⁶ We will study this journey in detail in the ensuing pages, beginning with the production of archives and then moving on to categories of analysis.

THE DECOLONIZATION OF HISTORY

We have already mentioned the arguments of subaltern studies and their attempt to reveal the bias of Western history and thought. These tensions in fact have a long history and convey the political relations between former colonies and colonizing countries, which remain challenging today. Memory as denunciation and claims of colonial crimes were the subject of a great many debates. In France, this debate exploded during the 2000s concurrently with the history of the Algerian War and the history of slavery. These demands echoed those of African countries that had already been addressed to Great Britain and the United States during previous years. In France, however, the debate took on a particularly virulent dimension due to the silence surrounding the Algerian War and slavery, along with resistance to such openings, as shown by the nationalism of Sarkozy and the historian Pierre Nora when they were asked questions on the subject. Again, access to archives was crucial. It took until the 1990s for the French Army archives on the Algerian War to be opened to the public. It was only ten years later, in 2004, that a collective work, *La fin de l'amnésie*, finally

³⁵ Bates (1997).

³⁶ Lombard (1992).

saw the light of day.³⁷ It was followed by an increasing number of works and subsequently even by a “war of memories” over the “benefits” of colonization and its destructive effects.³⁸

These tensions surrounding archives and memory were not limited to Algeria but cut across the entire field of colonial studies. Decolonization was accompanied by a synchronous process of implementing archives in ex-colonies and reorganizing colonial archives in metropolitan France. In the first case, the fact of having national archives took on almost as much importance as having an airline and a currency. In practice, however, this operation depended on the forms taken by decolonization, violence, and tensions along with the appropriation of documents by new authorities. Sometimes, as in East Africa, archives were quite simply burned during wars of independence and civil wars to heat or clean oneself. Sometimes, colonial authorities were able to repatriate a large part of the documents but this was not always the case.³⁹ Senegal and French West Africa generally represent a good example of this latter outcome, whereas French Equatorial Africa fell in the first category. Algerian archives were also in large part repatriated, even though subsequently they were not very accessible for a long time.

While we must take into consideration the constructed nature of archives, their use not only for historical reconstruction but also for “justice” and “national reconciliation” is altogether central. Thus, in South Africa, unlike in Algeria, the organization and recovery of archives express tension not only with the metropole but also in the country itself that arose from the ashes of civil war.⁴⁰ In most African countries, the customs and issues surrounding archives often came up against a lack of specialized staff, the instability of such staff because of limited salaries, the phenomenon of corruption,⁴¹ and finally the exertion of control over archives in connection with internal political tensions. Beginning in the 1990s, the situation improved in a number of African countries, and increased national and international resources were allocated to archives for staff training, document preservation, digitization, and cataloging. Personnel transfers, often between the former metropole and its

³⁷ Harbi and Stora (2004).

³⁸ Branche (2001), Le Cour Grandmaison (2001).

³⁹ Tough (2009).

⁴⁰ Harris (2000).

⁴¹ Kenya Anti Corruption Commission (2007).

colonies, also accompanied the transfer of resources. New connections were also put in place outside of the post-colonial framework (for instance, in Sudan, where Chinese financing played a role in the construction and preservation of national archives).⁴²

Recourse to archives to write African history, however, was not a given. A number of new states adopted the same classification systems as colonizing countries in order to facilitate comparison with corresponding archives in the metropole. Numerous authors contested the relevance of this solution, which was supposed to obscure the role of “subalterns”, the colonized, and those on the margins. As a result, there were suggestions to use classifications by keywords in order to offer perspectives different from those of colonial history.⁴³

Although the classification of archives influences research and its conclusions, the colonial legacy and the European attitude of associating Africa, orality, and “peoples without history” were reproduced within a certain post-colonial thought and later in nationalist thought in Africa itself.⁴⁴ Western anthropologists were the first to oppose local knowledge with colonial constructs, including archives.⁴⁵ Criticism, when not a rejection of colonial archives, was thus expressed just as well in India as in Africa.⁴⁶ Numerous works have highlighted the existence of a genuine African civilization and economy, which were subjected and annihilated by colonial authorities. Oral sources have multiplied for lack of sufficient colonial sources on this subject, and they have been asserted as the “true sources” of African history.⁴⁷

These tensions over sources are reproduced when it comes to the background of authors: must one be African to write a proper history of Africa?

In Europe, decolonization translated into support for African history (for example, African history at the SOAS in London and centers for African history in France). In 1962, UNESCO evoked the need to develop African history throughout the world. However, in new African states, emphasis was increasingly placed on the need to have African historians.

⁴²Mban (2007).

⁴³Allis Bastian (2006).

⁴⁴Richards (1993), Echevarria (1990).

⁴⁵Evans-Pritchard (1951), Lévi-Strauss (1962).

⁴⁶Comaroff (1992).

⁴⁷Vansina (1961), McCall (1964), Falola and Jennings (2002).

Often these historians were educated in Europe or the U.S. and had a tendency to adopt nationalist postures. This positioning was even more widespread among historians educated in Africa itself and often critical with regard to their colleagues educated elsewhere, who were accused of being under the influence of colonial thought.⁴⁸ In reality, nationalism and pan-Africanism were mixed; while the homogeneity of Africa was sometimes denied depending on the context, nationalism was a constant in several African historiographies.⁴⁹ This nationalism has translated into a number of trends: some authors from the 1960s and 1970s sought to show that Africa was more civilized and advanced than even the West before slavery and imperialism.⁵⁰

However, beginning in the mid-1970s, the disillusionment prompted by the weak development of economies and post-colonial states fueled a new historiography that was less centered on economic growth than anthropology. Instead of seeking similarities with the West, these works emphasized the differences. Historical studies on decentralized societies as well as those on “identity”—African, local, and so on—underwent an unprecedented rise.⁵¹ Oral sources were emphasized even more, while journals of African history put out more issues on mentalities, identity, and all forms of historical anthropology.

It was only with the end of the millennium that more complex positions appeared, initially involving attempts to place African history in a global perspective following an approach that was similar to that of either social history⁵² or economic history. In the latter case, the effort consisted of showing not an African “economic rationality” distinct from that of the West but, on the contrary, its similarity to it and hence to the goal of profit among African actors. The differences were ascribed to the absence of effective economic institutions and protection for private property and the corruption of the state. This was an effort to “normalize” African history in the sense of applying it to criteria considered to be valid everywhere with respect to both categories and analytical tools.⁵³ The rediscovery of previously neglected archives—missionary, legal,

⁴⁸Kapteijns (1973), Neale (1985).

⁴⁹Coquery-Vidrovitch (2006).

⁵⁰Falola and Jennings (2002).

⁵¹Asante (1987).

⁵²Eckert (2002), Gilbert and Reynolds (2004).

⁵³Neale (1985).

memorial, or cross-cultural perspectives on different archives produced by colonial authorities—was part of this movement that restored a capacity for agency to African populations. From this perspective, the organization and content of archives became an ethnographic material of memory in the process of being produced rather than an opposition between colonizer and colonized in matters of sources and their interpretation.⁵⁴ The production of documents and their classification corresponded to negotiations between a series of local actors and equally fragmented colonial institutions.⁵⁵ The historian was supposed to update these elements, in this way moving beyond the uncritical positivism of sources and the deconstructionist and post-colonial approach.

Partially similar questions were raised in India, where oral and vernacular culture was the subject of great attention, as were questions of identity, nationalism, and the economic and social history of colonialism. However, in relation to the African context, these elements expressed themselves in different ways. First, the presence of Mughal archives and those of other states of the sub-continent partly unlocked the opposition between (colonial) writing and orality. This multiplicity of sources and archives is important for the pre-colonial period and differentiates the Indian context from that of most African states.

On the other hand, as we have shown in the two preceding chapters, the rediscovery of sources and “Indian” historiographical approaches has sparked a debate over the definition of history and its limit with literature rather than the simple opposition between oral culture and written culture as in Africa. The book *Textures of Time*, to cite one example among many, perfectly expresses this approach, which is different from the historiography of Africa. These discussions take place in a context that surpasses Indian nationalism and the tensions arising from the partition of Bangladesh and Pakistan. Indian historians maintain a privileged dialogue with the (especially English-speaking) Western world, encouraged by the Indian intellectual diaspora in the U.S. and Great Britain. The references are Marx and E.P. Thompson, along with Braudel and Gramsci. Connections with countries of the Global South nevertheless

⁵⁴ McCall (1964).

⁵⁵ Stoler (1995), Amin (1995).

are marginal, with the exception of Gandhi's experience in South Africa.⁵⁶ Only in recent years has research explored the links with Africa both before and during the colonial period.⁵⁷ The circulation of Africans in the Indian Ocean was part of this very same movement⁵⁸; substantial studies on the emigration of Indian indentured laborers in Africa and vice versa; the importing of African slaves and indentured laborers in India; reciprocal transfers of art, dance, and music; along with religious circulation and adaptation; and, of course, mixed marriages have nourished these trends in connected history.⁵⁹

In Latin America, the context is different, as independence was gained in the nineteenth century, and during the Cold War more attention was paid to the problem of development than to relations with former metropolises. Historians expressed these problematics on the basis of two primary movements: Marxism and French historiography, that of the *Annales* School in particular. Marxist historiography, especially in Brazil, gave rise to increased studies on economic dependence.⁶⁰ The coup d'état of 1964 and repression were followed by both an increase in the number of universities in Brazil and the rise of a U.S.-educated Brazilian intellectual diaspora, which over time exerted growing influence in the United States.

Argentina presents a history that is partly similar, with the rise and end of Peronism and then a new dictatorship beginning in 1966. In addition to the nationalist history that was under the control of censors, this period saw two primary influences: Marxism (influence of Maurice Dobb, Pierre Vilar, and Witold Kula in particular) and the *Annales* School through the intermediary of Ruggiero Romano.⁶¹

These historiographies in Latin America, India, and Africa, each in their own way, offer a synthesis of the transformations of the world after 1945. Nationalism expressed itself in analyses based on identity and partly those based on dependence. The central Western approaches were transformed and digested in these contexts, which in turn influenced Western thought. As a result, Marxism and economic analysis were

⁵⁶Swan (1985).

⁵⁷Metcalfe (2007).

⁵⁸De Silva Jayasuriya and Pankhurst (2003).

⁵⁹Hawley (2008).

⁶⁰Furtado (1959).

⁶¹Devoto (1993–1994).

profoundly transformed by theories of dependence developed in the Latin American context, while Western post-colonial thought was influenced by Indian research. The categories of analyses themselves were affected, as notions such as power, dependence, liberty, subaltern, peasant, state, economy-world, globalization, market, and capitalism, among others, were profoundly changed by these debates and the reflections of authors from the “South”. The global history of our time, whatever its tendencies, would not have been possible without these works. In what may seem surprising at first glance, the same is true of the historiography stemming from socialist worlds.

THE EVOLUTION OF HISTORIOGRAPHY IN COMMUNIST WORLDS

We now know that despite the Cold War, East-West contacts were important and significant, not only through the Communist International but also in scientific conferences. History underwent a profound renewal in the USSR after Stalin’s death. This research naturally began with the criticisms that Lenin and Marx leveled at capitalism and its ideologues. Nevertheless, Western approaches were increasingly presented and diffused under the pretext of being able to criticize them better. A new generation of historians strove to change conventional Soviet interpretations, notably with regard to national history.⁶² Stalin’s collectivization was criticized, while Lenin’s New Economic Policy enjoyed considerable support that called for similar reforms in the USSR of the 1960s.⁶³ A new journal, *Voprosi istorii* (Questions of History), founded in 1953 and headed by Anna Pankratova, became the mouthpiece for increased liberty in history.⁶⁴ Its board was quickly dismissed after the events in Hungary in 1956. One of the reactions of Soviet historians in the face of repression, in particular that of Mikhail Tikhomirov, was expressed in the rediscovery of *istochnikovedenie* (or source analysis) developed by Lappo-Danilevskii in the early twentieth century and then taken up by a first generation of Soviet historians during the 1930s. This return to sources was justified by a desire to base oneself on “genuine documents” as opposed to the

⁶²Markwick (2001).

⁶³Sidorova (1997).

⁶⁴Zelnik (2005).

arbitrariness of official history.⁶⁵ From this point forward, historians produced a great many collections and editions of archival documents, which would serve as a basis and essential starting point for historiography after the fall of the USSR. Between 1955 and 1962, the journal *Istoricheskiĭ arkhiv* published many archival documents that were often controversial in nature. The publication of archival documents would continue until the end of the communist regime and then developed in a new form beginning in the 1990s.

This ferment spread to countries in the socialist bloc, such as Poland and Hungary, where economic history often enabled new interpretations, partly due to its legitimacy from a Marxist viewpoint and partly due to the possibility of connecting with Western approaches pursuing a “technical” approach—statistics and regressions—that prompted less censorship. Witold Kula in Poland and Györgi Ranki and Ivan Berend in Hungary produced works that would also influence their Western colleagues for a long time. The same was true of historians interested in social history (such as Bronisław Geremek) or intellectual history (Andrzej Walicki), who were quickly translated and later welcomed in France and the U.S. Systematically confronted with censorship and difficult access to archival documents, these historians were surprised by postmodernism’s radical critique of archives. Moving beyond the official historiography in the USSR, unlike in the former colonial world, took place through the evidence of archives rather than their denial.

Since the 1990s, the publication of archival documents has continued in Russia, following the tradition that was developed during the Soviet period.⁶⁶ This covered fundamental domains, including the archives of Stalin and the Politburo, the gulag, collectivization, purges and the secret police, the Comintern, and so on.⁶⁷ A new generation of Russian historians embarked upon these activities. The approach remained “classic”, as the archives were discussed from the perspective of the origins and validity of the documents, and philology and erudition guided these approaches.⁶⁸ Criticisms of the “positivism of sources” remained marginal. As during the Soviet period, this attitude can be explained partly

⁶⁵ Chernyk (2006).

⁶⁶ Grimsted (1997).

⁶⁷ Khlevniuk (1995).

⁶⁸ Werth (1993).

by the education of historians and partly by the Russian context, in which arbitrary interpretations imposed by authorities too often were still present after the fall of communism. In this way, professional historians defended the “truth” and “objectivity” of archives. This has been an important issue in Russia, now more than ever, with the political and nationalist use of history by media that is often close to power.

Yet owing to these very issues, Russian historiography has usually failed to move beyond its national dimension. Central events and dynamics, such as the abolition of serfdom and the Russian Revolution, are still explained almost exclusively through a national basis, as connections with other worlds remain in the background. They either helped define the context—such as the transformations in Europe and the reforms of Peter the Great, the Crimean War, World War I, and the Cold War—even if it means returning to internal dynamics or entailed showing the international legacy of the October Revolution using primarily Comintern sources. Even in economic history, it is international trade that serves as the only link to the rest of the planet, while new approaches such as the Great Divergence remain unknown in Russia. This suspicion can be explained by a number of reasons: the political attention given to national history, the latter’s domination in universities and academies, the minimal funds available for significant operations on the international level, and the still-limited diffusion of foreign languages. English is spreading, yet historians of Russia itself are less affected than those of other areas. Historians of area studies often know their respective language more than they do English. With the current situation in Russia, it does not seem likely that these barriers will disappear in the short term.

It is important to distinguish between the evolution of historiography in Russia and China, where Marxist historians since the 1950s, such as Guo Moruo, have endeavored to show Chinese history’s conformity to Stalin’s stages of historical development. Thus, dynastic history was transformed into Western periodization with ancient, medieval (feudal), early modern (colonialism and capitalism), and modern (communism) periods. This standardization was emphasized with the purges of the late 1950s. The new historiography combines Chinese nationalism and globality in the Stalinist sense of the term (universality of historical laws).⁶⁹

⁶⁹Schmidt-Glintzer et al. (2005).

In this context, important discussions addressed the distinction between the facts (*shi*) and theories of history (*lun*).⁷⁰ In this instance, which overlapped the 1950s and 1960s, the tension centered on the relation between national history, national revolution, and global dynamics. Some historians were attacked solely because of the attention they gave to sources and their critique thereof: the party offered reminders that this perspective was that of historians of Imperial China and capitalism. With the exception of a Marxist historian, Fan Wenlan, all of the others attacked the traditional tools of historiography. Thus, unlike in the USSR, historians were unable to hide behind the sources and their supposed objectivity but, on the contrary, were supposed to take a position for or against the revolution and to show the biased nature of anti-revolutionary sources. During the early 1960s, Fan Wenlan, this time with the support of other historians (Jian Bozan and Wu Han) insisted: Marxist theory developed for Europe could not be applied as such to Chinese history, and historians had to begin with facts. He was immediately attacked by historians close to power, such as Liu Jie, who presented Marxism as the foundation for a global history.⁷¹ The press seized upon the debate, which prompted a multitude of reactions, including that of the philosopher Feng Youlan, who believed that history, unlike the natural sciences, could not identify general laws but only singularities. This was a way of supporting heterodox historians. The official reaction was vehement, and the party offered the reminder that Marxism and Leninism were historical sciences with their own laws. This line of reasoning was imposed even more so with the Cultural Revolution.

The debate over the uniqueness of Chinese history and sources spread under Deng Xiaoping, who advanced the notion of “historical truth” framed by “four [fundamental] principles” in conformity with Marxist doctrine. In the early 1980s, the debate between “facts” and “theory” was taken up again, as some still sought a compromise with Marxist doctrine while others (Li Xin in particular) pressed further and invoked the priority of “facts” against (Marxist) theory. Beginning in the 1990s, Chinese historiography was interested in subjects that were as varied as those in the West, including historical interpretations contrasting with the official versions of preceding decades seeing the light of day.

⁷⁰Weigelin-Schwiedrzik (1996).

⁷¹Goldman (1969).

This openness also had its limits. There was censorship—particularly for political subjects (democracy and its history for example)—as well as the hostility of Chinese historians, not very far removed from that of their Russian colleagues, to deconstructionism and postmodernism, partly for the same reasons, which were namely the importance of arriving at a reconstruction of facts after the “lies” in history. The revision of the “cultural revolution” was achieved in this perspective.

In this context, global history cleared a particular path for itself. First, the work of Bozhong Li anticipated that of Wong and Pomeranz and shows the dynamic of the economy and markets in China until the late eighteenth century: this was a nationalist resurgence from a different perspective. The discourse on global history after the abandonment of Marxist dogma appears to be more complicated. Recourse to a Western and Marxist but also liberal chronology and periodization for China was subjected to criticism, although the alternative, which is still valid today, of using dynasties as the primary factor of periodization raises the problem of the relations between this division and the transformations of the world. This remains an open question today.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, during the second half of the twentieth century, the Western world experienced a possibly definitive decline in the philosophy of history, at least in its “total” vision inclusive of all areas of historical knowledge, across all periods and regions of the world. This disappearance is possibly the most significant symptom of the crisis of Eurocentric history. The historical method was modified with the *Annales*, deconstructionism, and postmodernism, up until microhistory. These positions are important but they are not the only ones; while conventional and national history based on erudition and philology preserved its importance in countries in the “North”, decolonization and the Cold War raised new problems. Important research was dedicated to how archives are conceived and used, as well as the importance of memory in full opposition to deconstructionism, and the political pressure exerted in non-democratic countries. The ways of conceiving scales of analysis—the nation, the empire, the global, and the world—were key issues. Although the *Annales* and, to an extent, postmodernism surpass the national framework, it has retained all of its importance in more conventional Western approaches but also and especially in former colonies and socialist countries.

This panorama gradually transformed over the course of the century. The end of decolonization, the fall of communism, and the opening of China changed global balances as well as how history is conceived and practiced. It brought with it both access to previously forbidden archives and the recovery of oral and visual sources. In both cases, it was indeed the search for a decentralization of history that was at work. This operation is not always crowned with success, partly due to the nationalisms that are still important in the world and partly due to the fact that any operation decentering history cannot limit itself to access to new sources but also requires new ways of exploring them.

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Conclusion: Global History in the Face of Globalization and the Return of Nationalisms

Abstract The decomposition of this world beginning in the 1970s, and even more so after 1989, opened the way for our current globalization, of which global history is a reflection. The success of capitalism, so celebrated after 1989, led to a paradoxical result: the West won the Cold War but lost peace, as the speculative and political crises of recent years bear witness. The strength and limits of global history reflect those of the post-1989 world, and like it invite one to think globally and give a voice to non-European worlds. It is in starting out from the current world and its history that we can imagine different solutions to global inequalities and the return of nationalisms.

Keywords Crisis · Nationalism · History writing · Economic inequalities

Exploring global history entails examining how our world was built and historical memory was layered and how this history is used in political and social debates. One of the central arguments of this work is that reflections on historical practices are always global; they connect multiple worlds, even during the Cold War period.

However, from the perspective of both tools and historiographical thought, these circulations never took place among equals but reflected the hierarchies at work in real historical dynamics: the Han in relation to the Mongols, the Russians in relation to the peoples of the steppes and

later with Eastern Europe, the Europeans vis-à-vis other worlds, and later “Anglo-Saxon” regions in relation to the rest of the planet; these geopolitical and economic hierarchies were accompanied by historiographical constructions that were just as hierarchical.

These power relationships were far from being fixed, as the dimensions of historical analysis and the multiple notions of globality since at least the sixteenth century reflect the diversity of globalizations. Expansion toward the East and later the Americas encouraged the globalization of history. Wonder nevertheless was accompanied by initial projects of conquest and later by historiographical accounts emphasizing the differences between “us” and “the others”. Already in the sixteenth century, Western accounts distinguished themselves from those of Asian empires; the former expressed ambitions of conquest and exclusion and the latter advanced cosmopolitan ambitions. The forms of writing global history were expressed at the time in the modes of imperial constructions.

The Enlightenment questioned the validity of imperial enterprises and slavery and—in the context of an overall anthropological and philosophical thought—what constitutes a human. Similar debates took place in China, India, and the Ottoman Empire, and philosophical histories and anthropological approaches emerged there. The invention of modernity responds to the fundamental question that is shared by Europe and Asia. The solution, which is also shared, can be found in a restructuring of the tools of historical knowledge: instead of erudition alone, it is the philosophy of history that is supposed to grasp historical dynamics such as transformations of the monarchy in France and Russia, of the Ching Empire in China, and the decline of the Mughals in India.

The global revolutions of the years 1780–1820 were the consequence and extension of this process. The independence movement in Latin America, the Haitian Revolution, and tensions in Southeast Asia accompanied the better-known revolutions in France and the United States. These connected events decisively influenced historical practices, as history became a key political issue aiming to deny or, on the contrary, to support the revolutionary enterprise. The invention of modern archives was one of the fruits of revolutions. In France and Mexico, Brazil and colonial India or the Russian Empire, archives reflected the architecture of power and connected history to the construction of the nation.

The philosophy of history and political philosophy, of course, advanced universalist pretensions during the nineteenth century, alongside those of nation and Eurocentrism in history. The social sciences

and philosophy of the nineteenth century contributed as much as historians—if not more—to the consolidation of the Eurocentric view of the world, as these thinkers presented categories and analyses that were potentially valid for part or all of Europe as universal truths. The proletariat in motion found little confirmation in England itself and even less outside of it; democracy struggled to affirm itself in Europe and even less elsewhere.

These tensions between Eurocentric universalisms and national histories gave rise to important contradictions that intensified beginning in the 1870s and especially with the First World War. The end of *anciens régimes* and empires in Europe accompanied the rise of radical nationalisms. While philosophy and universal history examined the decline of the West (Spengler) or its role in relation to other civilizations (Toynbee), the interactions between history and the social sciences were renewed in a different project, notably in France, with the *Annales*. However, these approaches struggled to match up with the influence of nationalism in Europe (the central political role of history in totalitarian states) but also in the Americas and Asia—and tensions in, for example, India and China surrounded history and its political role and content. This serves as an important warning for our current debates.

Decolonization, the Cold War, and the welfare state dominated the postwar political landscape. This was a major turning point indeed as colonial empires collapsed against the backdrop of the Cold War. The tools of politics, sociology, and anthropology were broadly used by historians, and inversely history was considered indispensable in economics, the social sciences, and politics. The history of “under-development” accompanied that of the system-worlds of Braudel and Wallerstein. Although these approaches sought to be global, they still preserved a profoundly Eurocentric epistemological and conceptual framework. That is the most important legacy of colonialism, along with economic dependence.

The decomposition of this world, beginning in the 1970s and even more so after 1989, opened the way for our current globalization, of which global history is a reflection. Post-colonial studies offer an invitation to rethink history by drawing on non-Western categories, although this approach does not rule out the danger of new Sinocentrism, Indocentrism, or nationalisms in Africa. This danger became a reality when the success of capitalism, so celebrated after 1989, led to a paradoxical result: the West won the Cold War but lost peace, as the

speculative and political crises of recent years bear witness. The strength and limits of global history reflect those of the post-1989 world and, like it, invite one to think globally and give a voice to non-European worlds. It is in starting out from the current world and its history that we can imagine different solutions: how to arrive at a history of capitalism that takes into account its multiple meanings in different yet connected worlds? How to move beyond the tensions between Western political categories and practices, such as democracy and cosmopolitanism, and their difficult use outside of Europe?

These are not just questions for historians but, on the contrary, condition our reactions to globalization and the political use that is made of history. The recent polemics in France on the importance of national history in political programs and school demonstrates this. The way we conceive history—notably in its political dimensions and its scales (regional, national, colonial, global, and international)—represents a powerful tool for reflecting on how we would like to educate our children. Global history breaks down the barriers to possibilities that are present before us. Global history is both an adventure and a fight.

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