11 Centrisms

Questions of Privilege and Perspective in Global Historical Scholarship

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Centrisms and Centres in the Global Historian's Toolbox

In fields like political theory, the term 'centrism' has recently received quite some attention. In an age of growing social and ideological polarisation in many societies around the world, some schools understand 'centrism' as a political programme that can help the political cultures of entire countries overcome ideological divisions and extreme factionalism. It is supposed to offer a possibility of bringing a society together by first focusing on concrete problems shared by most of society and subsequently working on bipartisan approaches to solving then. Such neo-pragmatist approaches are particularly prominent in the United States, with its strong tensions between the Democratic and Republican parties.[1] To be sure, these visions of political moderation remain highly controversial in parts of the social sciences (and in the body politic), but they are certainly under discussion.

In history departments, there is no definition of centrism that would come close to the political visions mentioned here. Certainly, historians in general and global historians in particular intensely debate various kinds of centrism, but in striking contrast to some other academic fields, the term (however it might be understood) carries hardly any ecumenical meaning in the sense of standing for a vision to bridge the gap between rival worldviews. The most prominent 'centrisms' – Eurocentrism and Western-centrism – do not evoke any programmatic hopes for historians and their messages to a wider public. On the contrary, these terms carry distinctly negative connotations and express disciplinary suspicion. Other well-known centrisms – such as Afrocentrism – are meant to provide the specific experiences of suppressed

[1] See, for example, Charles Wheelan, *The Centrist Manifesto* (New York: Norton, 2013); Brink Lindsey et al., 'The Center Can Hold: Public Policy for an Age of Extremes', *Niskanen Center*, December 2018: www.niskanencenter.org/wp-content/uploads/old_uploads/2018/12/Niskanen-vision-paper-final-PDF.pdf.

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and subalternised parts of the global population.[2] It would almost be absurd to expect that they would reach out to Eurocentric perspectives and find a common ground between them. Rather, they are based on clear visions to overcome the long tradition of hegemonic perspectives.

As I will discuss in more detail, the growing importance of global history and allied fields can hardly be fathomed without the mounting criticism of Eurocentrism and related forms of centrism. Yet before turning to this and other topics, we should pause and differentiate between the place of centres and centrisms in our current historiographical practice. While historians have made an effort to distance themselves from many forms of centrism, centring techniques have certainly not disappeared from the historian's toolbox. Academic authors usually define the focal points of their own research, whether they are writing monographs or project proposals. In other words, if historians want to meet expectations of high-quality academic work, they need to be clear about the centres of their analyses, and they also need to specify what issues and themes are relevant for their studies but are situated at the margins of their analyses. The structures of dissertations, research monographs or journal articles still resemble a drawing with a clear vanishing point; rarely do they look like an abstract painting in which perspective has been abandoned. In other words, historical research usually remains centred in terms of its overall composition and the methodologies that come with it.

To be sure, the nature and function of centres in historiography have not remained unchanged over the past few decades, let alone the past century. Likewise, it would be misleading to assume that within the current landscapes of historiography, there is a standard practice of setting centres in historical inquiry. The different subfields of global history – social history, cultural history and diplomatic history, for instance – tend to use specific centring techniques. Data-based research areas like economic history have ways of defining their objects of analysis and zooming in on them that differ significantly from global historical scholarship that investigates topics such as ideas of citizenship. In terms of centring, there are also big differences between different genres of global historical publications that range from case studies, at one end of the spectrum, to epochal syntheses, at the other end. Some influential works in the latter category have abandoned the idea of trying to view an entire epoch from a singular narrative vantage point. Instead, they focus on specific

[2] Examples of the (highly diverse) landscape of articulations of Afrocentrism include Molefi K. Asante, *An Afrocentric Manifesto* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007); Marimba Ani, *Yurugu: An African-Centered Critique of European Thought and Behavior* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1994). Examples of the controversial debates on this topic are Clarence E. *Walker, We Can't Go Home Again: An Argument about Afrocentrism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Amy J. Binder, *Contentious Curricula: Afrocentrism and Creationism in American Public Schools* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

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themes in single chapters, and the concrete objects of inquiry (and their underlying timeframes) are largely conditioned by these topics and vary from chapter to chapter.[3] Such chapter-specific centring techniques in larger historical syntheses are not uncommon in similar works that are more regionally defined than global history, like European or Chinese history.[4]

To be sure, the focal point of historical research can be set on very different scales of analysis; these can vary from a single historical individual or event to a larger transformation such as the emergence of a new political ideology or the collapse of a trading system,[5] but on these different analytical scales, the criteria for successful global historical research and more locally focused historical scholarship are remarkably alike, and centring techniques are among these commonalities. To put it in a different way, when it comes to ways of defining analytical or narrative centres, the field of global history has hardly strayed beyond the boundaries of what is common in historical research. These and other congruences might be a reason why, as a designated subfield, global history has gained so much recognition in history departments (and beyond), and it was probably a precondition for its unexpected growth over the past two or three decades.[6]

Yet centring is not only a normal, commonly accepted aspect of writing global history; it is also widely acknowledged as a means of overcoming privileged perspectives. This is the case, for example, with the wide range of literature that is centred on the experiences of women in various global and local historical contexts and that has become an important voice in the mounting critique of both male-centred perspectives in academic literature and male-dominated history departments.[7] Similar things can be said about histories from below – that is, works that are centred on the under-privileged parts of society,

[3] Examples are Jürgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); Timothy Brook, *Vermeer's Hat: The Seventeenth Century and the Dawn of the Global World* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009).

[4] For example: Timothy C. W. Blanning, *The Pursuit of Glory: Europe, 1648–1815* (London: Penguin, 2008); Marius B. Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002).

[5] On related themes, see Valeska Huber, 'Spheres: Openness and Closure' (Chapter 6, this volume); and Dániel Margócsy, 'Scales of Nature: From Shipworms to the Globe and Back' (Chapter 7, this volume).

[6] For more details on this topic, see Dominic Sachsenmaier, 'Global History', in Mark Juergensmeyer et al. (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Global Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 113–26.

[7] For the history of gender history see, for example, Sonya O. Rose, *What Is Gender History?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), 80–121. An important earlier work reflecting on that field's historiographical context: Joan W. Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, revised ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999). For global gender history, see Bonnie G. Smith, 'Women, Gender and the Global', in Prasenjit Duara et al. (eds.), *A Companion to Global Historical Thought* (Malden: Wiley, 2014), 437–50.

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which are meant to overcome elitist biases in the cultures of historiography.[8] In all these schools, primary source-based research, case studies and, more generally, centring techniques are not at stake when it comes to outlining the parameters of a new historiographical culture.

In the 1990s, when global history was still more a postulate than an academic reality, not everyone anticipated that, in terms of its centring techniques and other methodological devices, global history would move in line with the main body of historical scholarship. At that time, some scholars envisioned global history as a project that would start thinking globally in an extreme manner, without regional emphases. For instance, in his introduction to the edited volume *Conceptualizing Global History,* published in 1993, Bruce Mazlish wrote:

> The starting point for global history lies in the following basic facts of our time (although others could be added): our thrust into space, imposing upon us an increasing sense of being one world – 'Spaceship Earth' – as seen from outside the earth's atmosphere, . . . nuclear threats in the form of either weapons or utility plants, showing how the territorial state can no longer adequately protect its citizens from either militarily or ecologically related 'invasions', environmental problems that refuse to conform to lines drawn on a map, and multinational corporations that increasingly dominate our economic lives.[9]

To be sure, during the 1990s not all the early advocates of the term 'global history' shared Mazlish's view, yet many expected this intellectual project to be centred on the present understood as a global condition. Many scholars envisioned global history operating on planetary scales; they hoped it would study facets of an allegedly new global reality that they saw as shaped by new technologies and global institutions (most of which stemmed from highly developed countries) and as facing new kinds of crises, including environmental ones. In this view, global historical research would break with mainstream historical research by operating on spatial dimensions in which archival work and local case studies would only play minor roles. In contrast to detailed historical studies, global historical methodologies were supposed to move closer to fields like macroeconomics or computational sociology – fields where the study of detailed local contexts was largely irrelevant. By implication, Eurocentrism seemed only a minor concern for this specific academic project; rather, the priority was to move beyond conventional historiographical centring techniques that usually implied a strong attention to local and regional contexts.

[8] An early example: Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States: 1492 – Present* (New York: HarperCollins, 1980).

[9] Bruce Mazlish, 'An Introduction to Global History', in Bruce Mazlish and Ralph Buultjens (eds.), *Conceptualizing Global History* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), 1–24, here 1–2.

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In hindsight, we can say that global historical research has moved in a different direction, and that already around the turn of the millennium, the term 'global history' was related to very different academic hopes and expectations.[10] Rather than operating with planetary data, during the past two decades global historical work has been very much shaped by academic currents that emphasise local historical contingencies and are decidedly critical of Eurocentrism and many other kinds of elite-centred, privileged perspectives in history-writing.[11] Jürgen Osterhammel portrayed this trend in the following manner:

> The old hierarchy where Westerners were in charge of the general, and the Others were reduced to re-enacting their own particularity, came apart. Flattening all barriers of ethnocentrism, orientalism, and exoticism was a strong and almost utopian inspiration behind the first flowering of global history around the turn of the millennium. It involved the expectation that in a massive reversal of perspectives, non-Eurocentric takes on world history would gain equal acceptance, and that such histories would be written from a variety of novel vantage points.[12]

The main force underlying this development was the growing influence of regional studies expertise on the field of global history. No other branch of historiography has assembled such diverse regional expertise and such a broad spectrum of language competence as global history: the field has become a meeting ground for academic knowledge on very different world regions. The global history research community brings together scholars trained in Latin American history, European history, East Asian history or other regions and languages. If one checks the author list of important disciplinary forums

[10] To be sure, the presentist aspects and decidedly global aspects are not entirely absent today, and they are even highly visible to general audiences in different parts of the world. For instance, see Yuval Noah Harari, *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow* (London: Vintage, 2017); Diego Olstein, *A Brief History of Now: The Past and Present of Global Power* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021).

[11] In many regards, perspectives emanating from regional studies have greatly strengthened critiques of Eurocentrism in global historical scholarship: see, for example, Rochona Majumdar, *Writing Postcolonial History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010); Dane Kennedy, 'Postcolonialism and History', in Graham Huggan (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Postcolonial Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 467–88. The basic transformations of academic historiography that have led to a growing critique of Eurocentrism in the humanities in general and in history departments in particular have become increasingly an object of academic research that is looking at academic transformations in single countries or in larger, international networks. See Lutz Raphael, *Geschichtswissenschaft im Zeitalter der Extreme: Theorien, Methoden, Tendenzen von 1900 bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2003); Georg G. Iggers et al., *A Global History of Modern Historiography* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2008); Axel Schneider and Daniel Woolf (eds.), *The Oxford History of Historical Writing*, vol. 5: *Historical Writing since 1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Alessandro Stanziani, *Eurocentrism and the Politics of Global History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 117–44.

[12] Jürgen Osterhammel, 'Global History 2020: Fragility in Stability', *Balzan Papers* 3 (2020), 11–30, here 16.

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like the *Journal of Global History*, it soon becomes evident that it includes scholars who work in very different languages and localities without necessarily operating on a global level. As there is no regionally defined entry ticket to the field, there is no shared space, no regional centre that global history is to investigate *per definitionem.*

Yet the global understood as a holistic space above and beyond all regional contexts has also not become an analytical level where the diverse groups of global historians meet. On the contrary, the levels of the local and the regional remain crucial for the main body of global historical scholarship, and the centring techniques that are most common in the field remain loyal to them. The growing involvement of regional studies expertise in the field of global history even accentuated a disciplinary culture that prioritises regional case studies and primary source work. While there are obviously great differences between transregional and global historical scholarship, on the one hand, and locally defined research, on the other, the two sides remain connected at these points.[13] Both pay attention to historical details and distrust universalising narratives or perspectives that lose sight of local specificities.

As a meeting ground of different kinds of regional expertise, the realities of global historical scholarship are quite decentred, and the fragmentation into different regional focal points fits well with some of the field's most important self-definitions. Today, the bulk of global history stands more for a set of loosely related border-crossing perspectives than any kind of holistic, technology-centred interpretation of the world. This in turn is closely tied to a wider set of intellectual and political agendas: generally speaking, global historical scholarship is decidedly critical of Eurocentrism and other hegemonic traditions.

Eurocentrism and Ways of Moving Beyond It

Needless to say, not all research that is analytically centred on aspects of European history and its global entanglements is automatically Eurocentric. What counts as Eurocentrism and Western-centrism today are hegemonic assumptions about the global significance of European history or the Western past. These are not necessarily triumphalist accounts of the worldwide significance of Western civilisation; they can also be articulated as critiques of Western modernity or Europe's roles in the world. Eurocentrism has been debated, problematised and criticised extensively, yet it is still not easy to define what exactly we mean by it. It is clear that today's problem of

[13] On possible definitions of global history that take this disciplinary practice into account, see Dominic Sachsenmaier, *Global Perspectives on Global History: Theories and Approaches in a Connected World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 11–58.

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Eurocentric perspectives is no longer tied to the geopolitical might of Europe – Dipesh Chakrabarty famously differentiated between the 'hyperreal Europe' and the actual Europe that after the epoch of world wars and the era of decolonisation is already provincialised in the sense of no longer figuring as the main global power centre.[14]

In the past, Eurocentrism had very different faces, and many of them remain – in one form or another – as challenges and problems in historical scholarship up until the present day. Among them is the idea that only the trajectories of European history are relevant for understanding the global past, which was directly reflected not only in Hegelian thinking but also in many influential historiographical works. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many world-historical overviews began their accounts with the ancient civilisations in Asia and then remained centred on European history, with the rest of the world returning to the picture only during accounts of modern colonialism and the processes it triggered in other corners of the globe. One such example is a work that is little known today but was an international bestseller: *The Story of Mankind* by the Dutch-American historian Hendrik Willem van Loon.[15] Out of sixty-four chapters, van Loon devoted nine to prehistory and ancient Western Asian and Egyptian civilisations, followed by a staggering forty-nine chapters that exclusively deal with facets of the European and then North American past, discussing topics such as the 'Medieval City' or the confrontations between Russia and Sweden. These are intersected by only two chapters on Muhammed, and Buddha and Confucius, and the final part of this work contains one chapter on colonialism and two chapters that reflect upon the new world of the present and the future to come.

Since the middle of the twentieth century, the presence of such crude Europe-centred world-historical works has greatly diminished, and a monopolisation of world history by European history à la van Loon would hardly be thinkable as a college level textbook today. Yet this does not mean that the notion of a given primacy of European or Western history has completely disappeared from the landscapes of historical scholarship as an academic research and teaching field. As I will discuss in the final section of this chapter, we can clearly see the after-effects of this worldview in the institutional designs of history departments (most notably the distribution of regional expertise in them) and the asymmetries of knowledge that come with them. We recognise them quite clearly when we start looking at historiography as a global professional field.

[14] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 3–6.

[15] The work was first published in 1921, and it was originally written for children, but later was widely read by adult audiences and was translated into several languages. The latest edition dates from 2014 (New York: Liveright).

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Yet Eurocentrism of course poses not only institutional challenges but also epistemological and conceptual ones. For instance, while there is a broad consensus that linear historical thinking has played an important role in Western-centric understandings of the past, it is less clear what other notions of time historians can use in today's world.[16] Another major aspect in the debates on Eurocentrism is the role played by European ideas and concepts as analytical tools in historical scholarship.[17] During the early stages of postcolonial historiography, attempts were made to abandon terms of Western provenance such as class, rights, labour, economy and nationhood as analytical categories. This intellectual move was connected to the hope that it would be possible to unearth the conceptual worlds of subalternised communities in the Indian countryside and elsewhere, and then to develop historical narratives based on these concepts. A main obstacle to these projects was the global spread of modern concepts and their influence on the semantic worlds even in allegedly remote social formations such as the South Asian or Chinese peasantry. It became quite clear that conceptual worlds virtually everywhere had been widely shaped by global connections and cross-regional entanglements, and that there was no way to ignore this. We can detect a similar pattern in the current Chinese debates on China-centred historical perspectives, as I will discuss.

This speaks to the lasting tension between the critique of certain concepts as Eurocentric historiographical tools and their wide usage in many languages around the world. In recent years, as the field of conceptual history that originally focused primarily on Western European languages and societies has experienced a global turn, historians have addressed this tension.[18] A growing number of studies explore the ways in which concepts such as 'society', the 'economy' and 'civility' started circulating globally and became

[16] For instance, Priya Satia points to the role of linear historical thinking in attempts to relativise the heritage of Western imperialism by embedding the latter in visions of progress and increasing connectivity. Priya Satia, *Time's Monster: How History Makes History* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2020). On the search for new, more complex temporalities in history-writing see Matthew S. Champion, 'The History of Temporalities: An Introduction', *Past & Present* 243, 1 (2019), 247–54.

[17] On the enduring dominance of Western categories and concepts, as well as other problems related to Eurocentrism in the field: Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'The Muddle of Modernity', *The American Historical Review* 116, 3 (2011), 663–75; Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*; Sebastian Conrad, *What Is Global History?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 185–205; Ge Zhaoguang, *What Is China? Territory, Ethnicity, Culture and History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018); Stanziani, *Eurocentrism and the Politics of Global History.*

[18] See, for example, Margrit Pernau and Dominic Sachsenmaier (eds.), *Global Conceptual History: A Reader* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).

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well-established in very different languages around the world.[19] There has also been an attempt to understand the local adaptations of translated concepts as well as the contradictions (conceptual, societal and political) that have accompanied such localisations. Some scholars are also interested in the ways in which global transformations impacted languages in Europe. Global conceptual history primarily seeks to understand how the complex local and translocal histories of particular globally hegemonic concepts unfolded.[20] Scholars in the field usually proceed based on case studies (that require extensive linguistic expertise and local background knowledge),[21] and research is chiefly based on concrete inquiry, not abstract theoretical debates on how to overcome Eurocentrism.[22]

Nevertheless, in the daily practice of historical research, balancing an interest in global conceptual transformations with sensitivity to local contingencies remains quite challenging. The challenge is not only conceptual, and it goes beyond the task of using the right terms (or definitions thereof) for the right types of context. As research in various fields has shown, the question of terms is often tied to normative assumptions that can often be understood as Eurocentric. For instance, labour historians have debated whether categories such as 'worker' or 'serf' are shaped by universalising assumptions that disregard locally specific sociocultural experiences and modes of societal interaction in the Global South.[23] Recognising that locally sensitive concepts alone will not solve that problem, labour historians have become increasingly cautious about positing non-Western workers as oppressed and passive victims awaiting liberation by the normative worlds of supposedly more advanced societies. Still, finding ways to convincingly combine global research agendas

[19] Dominic Sachsenmaier, 'Notions of Society in Early Twentieth-Century China, 1900–25', in Hagen Schulz-Forberg (ed.), *A Global Conceptual History of Asia, 1860–1940* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2014), 61–74; Margrit Pernau et al., *Civilizing Emotions: Concepts in Nineteenth Century Asia and Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[20] As an intellectual direction, these studies of the dynamics of conceptual hegemonies, globally and locally, are quite compatible with research trends in fields like postcolonial studies.

[21] For example: Lydia H. Liu (ed.), *Tokens of Exchange: The Problem of Translation in Global Circulations* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999); Andrew Sartori, *Bengal in Global Concept History: Culturalism in the Age of Capital* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

[22] On the dangers of hegemonic suppositions in global scales of thinking: Frederick Cooper, 'What Is the Concept of Globalization Good For? An African Historian's Perspective', *African Affairs* 100 (2001), 189–213; Rebecca Karl, 'What Is World History? A Critique of Pure Ideology', in Tina M. Chen and David S. Churchill (eds.), *The Material of World History* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 18–32.

[23] See, for example, Marcel van der Linden, 'The "Globalization" of Labour and Working Class History and Its Consequences', in Jan Lucassen (ed.), *Global Labor History: A State of the Art* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2006), 13–36; Andreas Eckert and Marcel van der Linden, 'New Perspectives on Workers and the History of Work: Global Labour History', in Sven Beckert and Dominic Sachsenmaier (eds.), *Global History, Globally: Research and Practice around the World* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 145–62.

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with sensitivity to local contingencies remains a major intellectual task. Similar things can be said about women's history, gender history and feminist history once they move to a transcultural or global level of analysis: here, too, some historians have been charged with imposing particular understandings of liberation and emancipation on different cultural contexts.[24]

In addition to problems of conceptual or normative hegemonies, in many other areas of global historical scholarship facets of Eurocentrism or Western-centrism are subject to ongoing controversy. The debates on *The Great Divergence* by Kenneth Pomeranz, an early classic of global and comparative history, are just one of many potential examples.[25] In this work, which was meant to help his field move further from Eurocentric traditions, Pomeranz famously distanced himself from earlier answers to the question of why sustained industrial growth first emerged in a European context and not China. He did so by arguing that according to some key indicators, Europe had *not* pulled away from China during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. He maintained that in many crucial regards, the structures and outputs of the Chinese and European economies remained remarkably similar until the eighteenth century. Pomeranz's work triggered strong reactions, with many scholars arguing that his strict focus on economic data excluded social, institutional and other factors from the picture, and, in this manner, they returned the debate on the differences between China and Europe to Weberian categories of analysis.[26] Others held that both his comparative approach and his measures of economic performance were based on Eurocentric concepts.[27] These disputes and others were part of a wider debate on whether comparative perspectives (far more common in the social sciences) are a fruitful alternative to Eurocentric vantage points or instead risk imposing similar categories of analysis on different historical contexts.[28]

As a general pattern, however, the main stream leading global history away from Eurocentric perspectives is primarily formed by individual research

[24] See, for example, Chandra Mohanty, 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses', *Feminist Review* 30, 1 (1988), 61–88; Merry Wiesner-Hanks, 'World History and the History of Women, Gender, and Sexuality', *Journal of World History* 18, 1 (2007), 53–67; Pete Sigal, 'Latin America and the Challenge of Globalizing the History of Sexuality', *American Historical Review* 114, 5 (2009), 1340–53.

[25] Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

[26] See, for example, Peter A. Coclanis, 'Ten Years After: Reflections on Kenneth Pomeranz's The Great Divergence', *Historically Speaking* 12, 4 (2011), 10–12; Peer Vries, *State, Economy and the Great Divergence: Great Britain and China, 1680s–1850s* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

[27] For example, Stanziani, *Eurocentrism and the Politics of Global History*, 9–10.

[28] On this topic, see, for example, Jürgen Osterhammel, *Geschichtswissenschaft jenseits des Nationalstaats: Studien zu Beziehungsgeschichte und Zivilisationsvergleich*, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003); Peter van der Veer, *The Value of Comparison* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

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projects rather than big, potentially politicised debates. The list of examples is very broad – almost as broad as a typology of global historical scholarship would be. There is research that problematises conceptions of history that see Europe as the centre of global flows or source of innovations without considering more complex cross-regional and global dynamics.[29] Other projects pay needed attention to the agency of groups living under colonial conditions and their capacity to build trans-continental networks and interest groups.[30] There are many studies that discuss repercussions of global entanglements for facets of the Euro-American past, and thus further erode the idea that globalisation is tantamount to Westernisation.[31] Works that focus on particular commodities (such as sugar or cotton) are quite influential and help us understand how changing patterns of production, trade and consumerism transformed regions in and out of the West, albeit in locally specific ways.[32] We could add to the picture such diverse examples as research on trading systems outside the West or attempts to view the history of world communism during the twentieth century from an East Asian vantage point.[33]

This list offers just a brief glimpse of some current global historical literature, but the point is clear: in the main landscapes of global historical scholarship, Eurocentric models of history have primarily been replaced by a decentred pattern of individual case studies. At the same time, broader alternative models of global historical thinking are not entirely absent: for example, a small but growing number of historians are trying to rethink our current planetary conditions from perspectives that are less centred on human agents and put natural forces like climate change into

[29] See Marwa Elshakry, 'When Science Became Western: Historiographical Reflections', *Isis* 101, 1 (2010), 98–109; David Washbrook, 'Problems in Global History', in Maxine Berg (ed.), *Writing the History of the Global: Challenges for the Twenty-First Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 21–31; Stefanie Gänger, 'Circulation: Reflections on Circularity, Entity, and Liquidity in the Language of Global History', *Journal of Global History* 12, 3 (2017), 303–18.

[30] For example: Su Lin Lewis and Carolien Stolte, 'Other Bandungs: Afro-Asian Internationalisms in the Early Cold War', *Journal of World History* 30, 1 (2019), 1–19; Mona L. Siegel, *Peace on Our Terms: The Global Battle for Women's Rights after the First World War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020). As a related example, we can add research projects that seek to undo simplistic assumptions about Western dominance in a particular region – for instance, by economists who have revised the idea of a complete collapse of the East Asian tribute system under the weight of British-led international order. See Takeshi Hamashita, *China, East Asia and the Global Economy: Regional and Historical Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

[31] On this topic, see Gareth Austin, 'Global History in (Northwestern) Europe: Explorations and Debates', in Beckert and Sachsenmaier, *Global History, Globally*, 21–44.

[32] For instance, Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (New York: Knopf, 2014). On related issues, see also Stefanie Gänger, 'The Material World' (Chapter 10, this volume).

[33] For example: Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System AD 1250–1350* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Wang Hui, *China's Twentieth Century: Revolution, Retreat and the Road to Equality* (London: Verso, 2016).

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the foreground.[34] Nevertheless, the main body of global historical literature remains centred on smaller facets of the past.

Sinocentrism and Other Forms of Centrism

The critique of Eurocentrism is a subject of concern to scholars all over the world.[35] Yet while historians in many countries are united in their opposition to Eurocentric traditions, there is much less consensus when it comes to defining Eurocentrism and specifying its alternatives. A frequent issue of contention is the question of how to regard the modern nation-state as a container when conceptualising the past. In many states, education systems emphasise national history, which impacts the ways history is researched and taught at the university level. No matter whether in Brazil, India or South Korea, it is not untypical for state education systems to portray national history primarily as the outcome of indigenous traditions rather than as the result of modern global dynamics. It is perhaps thus hardly surprising that a strong body of historians criticises Eurocentric traditions from strictly national or even nationalist perspectives. Against these currents, other groups of scholars argue that national historiography in and of itself can be understood as an imposition of European institutions and concepts onto a previously non-national indigenous world.[36] In this context, a standard argument points out that while national history today is a global phenomenon, it has its roots in global transformations that took place under the conditions of Western hegemony. These include transfers among academic experts and educational policymakers, but also forces such as nation-building processes, the global spread of the modern research university and the emergence of national education systems.[37] On that basis, some research tries to formulate alternative visions of a pre-modern past that leave national narratives aside and search for conceptions of history that are less distorted by ideas of Western provenance.[38]

[34] For example, Dipesh Chakrabarty, *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021).

[35] On this topic, see for example, Beckert and Sachsenmaier, *Global History, Globally*.

[36] For a broad account of the nationalisation of the past in modern historiography, see Stefan Berger (ed.), *Writing the Nation: A Global Perspective* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). Examples of monographs dealing with the history of historiography (including national history) from translocal and global perspectives are Christopher L. Hill, *National History and the World of Nations: Capital, State, and the Rhetoric of History in Japan, France, and the United States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); Daniel Woolf, *A Global History of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[37] On this topic, see, for example, Iggers et al., *A Global History of Modern Historiography*; Raphael, *Geschichtswissenschaft im Zeitalter der Extreme*.

[38] For more details on this topic, see, for example, David Simo, 'Writing World History in Africa: Conditions, Stakes, and Challenges', in Beckert and Sachsenmaier, *Global History, Globally*,

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Some of the scholarship that takes particular regions outside of the West as its point of departure seeks to gain new kinds of global perspectives. Based on his studies of Latin America, Walter Mignolo developed the concept of 'border gnosis', understood as a conscious negotiation between concepts of European provenance and alternative epistemes as a way of first problematising occidentalist perspectives and then moving beyond them.[39] And the Cameroonian thinker Achille Mbembe suggests seeing the entire condition of humankind through the lenses of black historical experiences. He sees a 'becoming black of the world' in an increasing age of surveillance and objectification and in the loss of all human agency in the face of impending global crises.[40] When regions like Sub-Saharan Africa or Latin America figure as enunciation centres for alternative global visions, the latter are articulated as intellectual perspectives from subalternised and marginalised voices in the world. In other words, such imaginations of a regional and global order beyond modern Western hegemony are usually not embedded in a context of concrete alternative aspirations for global power.

In the case of today's China, the situation is remarkably different. On the one hand, intellectual debates in the People's Republic are based on a historical experience with Western and Japanese imperialism that are shared with similar voices in the formerly colonised world and other regions at the receiving end of global hegemonies. On the other hand, for obvious reasons the position of today's China differs greatly from countries in Latin America, Africa and elsewhere. The PRC has become a world power that now clearly articulates global visions such as the New Silk Road or the Belt and Road Initiative. The Chinese government presents these programmes as alternatives to a Western-centric world order that could be brought about by China as an upcoming global power system. This situation is also new for China itself. About a century ago, there were many Chinese visions of an alternative order, some of which were also influential in the West.[41] Yet such critiques of the West and its global

235–49; Jie-Hyun Lim, 'World History, Nationally: How Has the National Appropriated the Transnational in East Asian Historiography?', in Beckert and Sachsenmaier, *Global History, Globally*, 251–68; Qingjia Edward Wang, 'Re-presenting Asia on the Global Stage: The Rise of Global History Study in East Asia', in Beckert and Sachsenmaier, *Global History, Globally*, 45–65.

[39] Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs*.

[40] Achille Mbembe, 'Introduction: The Becoming Black of the World', in Achille Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 1–9.

[41] Important thinkers in this context included Kang Youwei, the young Liang Shuming and the late Liang Qichao. An example of the comparative scholarship on corresponding voices in China and other parts of the world during the early twentieth century is Pankaj Mishra, *From the Ruins of Empire: The Intellectuals Who Remade Asia* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012). More generally on the struggles with Eurocentrism in China, see, for example, Manuel Pérez García, 'From Eurocentrism to Sinocentrism: The New Challenges in Global History', *European Journal of Scientific Research* 119, 3 (2014), 337–52.

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hegemonies were still formulated from a position of powerlessness and lack of international agency, which underlined their utopian character. By contrast, in today's China corresponding intellectual positions are inevitably measured against the reality of a changing world and a globally ever more influential China.

This is the case with efforts to promote the concept of 'Under Heaven' (*tianxia*) as a Chinese civilisational achievement that is of great potential relevance to our future world order. Ideas about the global implications of *tianxia* have a longer history but today's most prominent thinker on this topic is the Beijing philosopher Zhao Tingyang.[42] He envisions *tianxia* as a world system that differs from the current international order in having only internality and no externality in the sense of foreign relations. In this context, he expresses great doubts about the modern nation-state, international law and democracy as potential foundations on which a sustainable global order could be built. Rather than operating with modern theories (whose Western origins he critically emphasises), Zhao Tingyang formulates his scenario of a better future world from Confucian concepts. In line with the reversed eschatology that characterised many Confucian schools in the past, he maintains that during the early Zhou dynasty (starting about 1000 BCE), the principles of a *tianxia* system had already been realised, albeit only in one part of the world. According to him, this epoch of the early Chinese past (which various Confucian schools long treated as an ideal age) speaks to the present of both China and the world at large, offering an alternative to the current facets of international order.

Zhao Tingyang's philosophy has found its critics, within and also outside of China. Many disapproving voices not only problematise the accuracy of Zhao Tingyang's work and its power of persuasion, they also articulate concerns about its potential hegemonic qualities. For instance, the Korean scholar Baik Youngseo argues that the *tianxia* vision could be read as a philosophical programme for a revitalisation of the tribute system that had placed China at the very centre of a larger inter-state order.[43] This leads back to the specific contexts of our time, in which Zhao Tingyang formulates his idea: the vision of the *tianxia* world cannot merely be read as an anti-hegemonic programme that is formulated from the perspective of Confucianism as an ethico-political

[42] A key work is Zhao Tingyang, *All Under Heaven: The Tianxia System for a Possible World Order* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2021). See also Xu Jilin, 'Tianxia zhuyi yixia zhibian jiqi zai jindai de bianyi [Tianxia-ism/Civilized-barbarian Distinctions and their Modern Transformations]', *Journal of East China Normal University (Philosophy and Social Sciences)* 6 (2012), 66–75.

[43] Bai Yongrui (Baik Youngseo), 'Zhonghua diguolun zai Dongya de yiyi: Tansuo pipingxing de Zhongguo yanjiu [The Implications of the View of 'China as an Empire' in East Asia: Exploring Critical Chinese Studies]', *Kaifang Shidai* 1 (2014), http://www.opentimes.cn/Abstract/1928.html.

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tradition, and it cannot merely be heard as a voice that had been marginalised under the conditions of Western hegemony. Even though in his main work Zhao Tingyang doesn't make any direct connections with Chinese state programmes such as the Belt and Road Initiative, his ideas about a new world inevitably need to be related to Chinese public debates on similar themes. At a closer look, it turns out that Zhao's philosophy shares many elements with government positions on topics like the Belt and Road Initiative or Socialism with Chinese Characteristics. These commonalities include the notion that an allegedly purely self-interest-driven and antagonistic Western-led system could be replaced by a worldwide order based on shared interest and collaboration, and that the latter would emanate from China.

Yet also in Chinese academia, such attempts to return to indigenous traditions and make them relevant for the Chinese and global future are more controversial than is often assumed in the West. Many scholars, including the prominent Shanghai (Fudan University) historian Ge Zhaoguang, have argued that there is no evidence for the historicity of the Zhou system as it is presented by Zhao Tingyang;[44] others note that his philosophy remains very vague about the main pillars of a radically inclusive world system.[45] On a broader level, like their colleagues in other parts of the world, Chinese historians are searching for possibilities to move beyond Western dominance in both the intellectual world and the world of politics. But in contrast to Zhao Tingyang, a broad return to Confucian terminologies or epistemologies is not an option for most historians, just as it would not be possible to seek to write the history of medieval Europe with a conceptual toolbox from the age of scholasticism.[46] Consequently, the vast majority of research heading in this direction is developed with methods (including centring techniques) that are very similar to the most common methodological toolkits in Western history departments.

Many important concepts that historians use in their own research do not differ profoundly from Western historiography; field designations like 'social history' or historical methods like 'discourse analysis' have their equivalents in modern Chinese historiography. It is certainly a fact that in contrast to the situation in India, Sub-Saharan Africa and many other world regions, colonial languages such as English or French have always played a minor role in

[44] Ge Zhaoguang, 'Dui tianxia de xiangxiang: yige wutuobang xiangxiang beihou de zhengzhi sixiang yu xueshu [Visions of 'Tianxia' – Politics, Ideas, and Scholarship Behind a Utopian Vision]', *Sixiang* 29 (2015), 1–56.

[45] See, for example, the dialogue between Zhao Tingyang and the French philosopher Régis Debray: Régis Debray and Zhao Tingyang, *Du ciel à la terre: La Chine et l'Occident* (Paris: Arenes Edition, 2014).

[46] Zhao Tingyang's return to a philosophy based on Confucian categories lacks an equally prominent match in Chinese history departments. It would also be much more challenging to write a history of China (particularly from the mid-nineteenth century onwards) while seeking to avoid epistemologies that have become so powerful during this period.

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China's intellectual and educational worlds. Nevertheless, not only did the massive conceptual imports during the late Qing and Republican periods change the Chinese language, they were closely entangled with massive social, political, intellectual and other transformations.[47] This included the emergence of modern research universities and professional history departments, so in many regards the institutional settings and disciplinary cultures of Chinese historiography are tightly interwoven in a package that is the result of global connections and entanglements.[48]

An example is the substantial body of literature that is dedicated to studying the Silk Road.[49] This research is connected with a term that was probably coined by the German geographer Ferdinand von Richthofen, and scholarship in the field hardly operates with traditional epistemologies. Nonetheless, some of the Chinese publications that deal with the history of the Silk Road try to view it from China-centred perspectives. They differ from the literature that takes the vast realms of exchange networks that are subsumed under the term 'Silk Road' as its own space of connectivity and interaction.[50] Rather, there is a strong tendency to emphasise the historical connections between China and the Silk Road, and even to treat them as extensions of traditional Chinese foreign relations. Also in this field, some of the academic literature is situated very close to the official government rhetoric.[51]

Similar things can be said about some of the other literature that seeks to rethink facets of the local and the global past from China-centred perspectives. For instance, a number of influential historians advocate new world or global histories that would be written from strictly patriotic vantage points.[52] Some of

[47] The main work on this topic is still Lydia H. Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity, China 1900–1937* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).

[48] On this topic, see, for instance, Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Fan Xin, *World History and National Identity in China: The Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

[49] For more details, see Dominic Sachsenmaier, 'The Humanities and the New Silk Road', in William C. Kirby et al. (eds.), *The New Silk Road: Connecting Universities between China and Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 296–311.

[50] Examples for scholarship heading into this direction: Peter Frankopan, *The Silk Road: A New History of the World* (New York: Vintage, 2015).

[51] On this topic, see, for example, Tim Winter, *Geocultural Power: China's Questions to Revive the Silk Roads for the Twenty-First Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019); see also Yan Haiming, *World Heritage Craze in China: Universal Discourse, National Culture, and Local Memory* (New York: Berghahn, 2018).

[52] Some studies on this literature are available in English: Nicola Spakowski, 'National Aspirations on a Global Stage: Concepts of World/Global History in Contemporary China', *Journal of Global History* 4, 3 (2009), 475–495; Fan Xin, *World History and National Identity in China*, 153–191.

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this literature is entangled with publications that emphasise China's allegedly unique character as a civilisation state– that is, as a form of political order whose boundaries are largely congruent with its cultural ones. For example, according to Zhang Weiwei, a bestselling author with close ties to the PRC political establishment, this marks a great difference between the main patterns of the Chinese past and Europe, and it will create huge advantages for China in the great power games of the twenty-first century.[53] These ideas are part of a lively debate on the impending decline of the West and the beginnings of a China-led world order that not only takes place in the Chinese media but also in academic circles.

Yet certainly not all the burgeoning literature on the matchless political, cultural and social aspects of the Chinese past is narrowly oriented on governmental policies. There is some important work that discusses the unique patterns of China's history in ways that do not fit into chauvinist understandings of nationhood, and that are far detached from disputes about geopolitics and global power competition.[54] On that basis, quite a few historians are moving in very interesting directions when it comes to rethinking the encounter zone of Chinese and global historical perspectives.[55]

Still, some of the neo-nationalistic literature in China can be categorised as Sinocentric. But there is a caveat: such publications can hardly be understood as expressions of centrism commensurate to the reach of Eurocentric ideas. In contrast to the attempts at Sinocentric worldviews mentioned earlier, Eurocentrism not only stemmed from particular historical interpretations but built on an entire global support structure that had been created by the worldwide spread of concepts and institutions of European origins. Compared with the wider hegemonic bases of Eurocentrism, there is something decidedly reactive about much of the recent literature that postulates new China-centred visions of global history from nationalistic viewpoints. In the Chinese case, many works are often formulated as a direct contrast to the alleged nature of Western civilisation and the global roles of the West. As part of this overall pattern, China has only recently begun to diversify regional expertise in history departments. Up until the present day, world history (a sizeable field in China)

[53] Zhang Weiwei, *The China Wave: Rise of a Civilizational State* (Hackensack: World Century, 2012).

[54] Important examples for a very diverse landscape of positions are Ge Zhaoguang, *What Is China?*; Xu Jilin, 'Xu Jilin lun xintianxia zhuyi [Xu Jilin's Arguments on Neo-Tianxia-ism]', repr. *Minzu Shehuixue Yanjiu Tongxun* 202 (2016), 13–20. (2012).

[55] For example, Wang Hui, *China from Empire to Nation-State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 3–29; Zhang Xupeng, 'Quanqiushi yu minzu xushi: Zhongguo tese de quanqiushi heyi keneng? [Global History and National Narrative: How Is Global History with Chinese Characteristics Possible?]', *Lishi Yanjiu* 1 (2020), 155–73.

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mainly connotes the study of the Western world, Russia and Japan.[56] There are still very few historians in China with a primary expertise in South Asian, Middle Eastern, African or Latin American history; concomitantly, the main theoretical debates in fields such as global history hardly take perspectives from these world regions into the picture. They remain centred on the East Asian and the Western experiences.

Centrisms and Global Hierarchies of Knowledge

Despite the vociferous critiques of Eurocentrism, there is an attention gap between the global historical debates in China and the Western world: while Chinese historians are usually familiar with the latest Western debates in their field, the reverse tends not to be the case, even when the relevant Chinese academic literature is available in translation. When we regard the contents of history education at high schools and universities around the globe, a very unequal world emerges. For instance, while most European students still primarily study European history, history education at Chinese schools and universities is not comparably Sinocentric. Here – and in many other education systems, particularly outside the West – the geographies covered by history curricula usually follow a binary logic. They emphasise the history of one's own region (i.e. East Asia, in the Chinese case) and Western history.[57] Hardly surprisingly, the mental maps conveyed by history education have a deep impact on how large parts of society perceive historical events and thus the present.[58]

Hence, while history education in many European countries is by and large limited to Western history, the geographies covered in history education in many parts of Asia, Africa, Latin America and elsewhere are bi-cultural. The 'asymmetric ignorance'[59] resulting from this pattern of historical education has been debated, but we do not yet have a detailed enough grasp of such

[56] On this topic, see Xu Luo, 'Reconstructing World History in the People's Republic of China since the 1980s', *Journal of World History* 18, 3 (2007), 325–50; Sachsenmaier, *Global Perspectives on Global History*, 213–19.

[57] On the world regions that are covered in Chinese history education, see Wang Side et al., 'History Education Reform in Twenty-First Century China', in Mario Carretero et al. (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Research in Historical Culture and Education* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 657–71. On Eurocentrism in modern Chinese world history, see Ren Dongbo, 'Ouzhou zhongxinlun yu shijieshi yanjiu–Jianlun shijieshi yanjiu de Zhongguo xuepai wenti [Generally on Eurocentrism in Modern Chinese World History – Also on the Chinese School of World History Studies]', *Shixue lilun yanjiu* 1 (2006), 41–52.

[58] An example of psychological research on this topic focusing on Turkey: Serap Özer and Gökçe Ergün, 'Social Representation of Events in World History: Crosscultural Consensus or Western Discourse? How Turkish Students View Events in World History', *International Journal of Psychology* 48, 4 (2013), 574–82.

[59] On the idea of asymmetric ignorance, see Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 28–30. See also Peter van der Veer, 'Colonial Cosmopolitanism', in Robin Cohen and Steven Vertovec (eds.),

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knowledge requirements. What we do know is that many aspects of historiography and its global professional realms remain surprisingly under-studied. For instance, we have barely begun to research the global and local sociologies of knowledge in university-based historiography. Almost no literature tries to relate the history of modern historiography to the history of daily professional life in national and international academic contexts, but it is exactly this daily academic life, with all its opportunities and pitfalls, expectations and inequities, that shapes the professional reality of most historians. Not much work has been done on exploring the transnational disciplinary cultures of historiography, including the field's global gaps in the distribution of power and influence.

While historians have not paid much attention to the quotidian realities of academic life, other fields of study have. Sociologists have conducted research on the social realities at universities and how they frame professional and private interactions.[60] There has also been some excellent work situating the history of the social sciences within the context of empires, imperialism and nation-building. In other words, most of the scholarship on the lived realities of global academic life has not been produced by historians, and it doesn't specifically investigate the realities found in history departments. Perhaps this explains why this research has had limited – or no – impact on the debates on Eurocentrism in historiography.

The lack of social and cultural understandings of modern historiography as a global field is not trivial. What is at stake is not our ability to write a detailed history of daily life in history departments, but our ability to explain how international power dynamics continue to shape our field – a theme that is key to comprehensively tackling problems related to Eurocentrism and associated historical perspectives. The shortage of scholarship on the global professional landscapes of modern academic historiography puts us in an awkward position. Critiques of Eurocentrism in history departments around the world

Conceiving Cosmopolitanism: Theory, Context, and Practice (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 165–80.

[60] See, for example, Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1984): English translation: *Homo Academicus* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988); Pierre Bourdieu, 'Les conditions sociales de la circulation internationale des idées', *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 145 (2002), 3–8; Raewyn Connell, *Southern Theory: The Global Dynamics of Knowledge in Social Science* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009); George Steinmetz (ed.), *Sociology and Empire: The Imperial Entanglements of a Discipline* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013); Jeremy Adelman (ed.), *Empire and the Social Sciences: Global Histories of Knowledge* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019). See also Charles Kurzman, 'Scholarly Attention and the Limited Internationalization of US Social Science', *International Sociology* 32, 6 (2017), 775–95; Ken Hyland, *Disciplinary Identities: Individuality and Community in Academic Discourse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Cissy Li, 'The Study of Disciplinary Identity – Some Theoretical Underpinnings', *HKBU Papers in Applied Language Studies* 13 (2009), 80–119.

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have been mounting for several decades and many scholars have come to agree that the field needs to overcome its heritage of privileged and prejudiced perspectives. Seen from this angle, it is especially surprising that professional interactions among historians have not received the same levels of attention as their ideas. Thus far, the literature challenging the heritage of Western-centrism in history departments has focused largely on historiographical thinking, on concepts, narratives and ideas. By contrast, it has paid comparatively little attention to academic historiography as a social world characterised by specific professional networks and sociologies of knowledge. The result of this lack of attention is that when it comes to professional exchanges among historians, many of the older patterns of supremacy are not on the defensive: they do not have to be, as they remain widely unchallenged. In other words, while the ways historians think may have changed, the ways they act have not changed at anything like the same rate.

From this we see that it is premature to assume that we have already entered a post-Eurocentric age of historiography. Particularly when we regard them from global perspectives, much of the disciplinary structures and cultures of historiography remains metrocentric (in a metaphorical sense) in character. At the same time, nationalism is on the rise – not only as a political force in many parts of the world but also as a historiographical agenda, and, as the Chinese example shows, it can be closely connected with global power politics. It will take a lot of effort to work on a more decentred global landscape of academic historiography while at the same time critiquing the rise of historiographical chauvinism or neo-civilisationism in many countries around the world. Given these and other challenges of the current research landscape, global history as an academic field will likely need to face many tough new questions: about the directions of its research, its underlying sociologies of knowledge and its political implications.[61] These will be hard to answer, and they may return the questions of centrism to the centre of the debate, perhaps in new and reinvigorated form.

[61] For a highly visible debate on related issues, see Jeremy Adelman, 'What Is Global History Now?' *Aeon*, 2 March 2017, https://aeon.co/essays/is-global-history-still-possible-or-has-it-had-its-moment; Richard Drayton and David Motadel, 'Discussion: The Futures of Global History', *Journal of Global History* 13, 1 (2018), 1–21.

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