# Epilogue

When I started as a senior lecturer in global history at Stockholm University in 2023, my first teaching assignment was an undergraduate seminar in theory and method. While I had hoped that I would be finished with the revision of this book before embarking on this new stage in my academic career, the inevitable overlap of preparing the course in Swedish and making the final edits to the manuscript had a silver lining in the form of Herman Paul's *Key Issues in Historical Theory*.[1] Reading Paul's textbook on the philosophy of history not only reassured me about my take on how Murakami constructed history but also made me aware of how I constructed Murakami. The vibrant examples Paul chose to emphasize his points about how different relations with the past influenced historical research made me realize how Murakami's search for Yamada Nagamasa was comparable to my own search for the world behind Murakami's texts. Getting a better grip on the scholarly conventions and geopolitics of the world he lived in constituted the essence of my entangled biography approach. Hence, engaging with historical theory from a slightly different angle reminded me of how my own scholarly biography became part of my narrative frame and of how the messy crossing of time periods was unavoidable for the story I wanted to tell. Paul's reference to the British writer Rose Macaulay, incidentally a contemporary of Murakami, offered yet another insight. What she described as the romantic pleasure of ancient historians' 'Ruinensehnsucht'[2] could be applied to Murakami's feelings for archives. And indeed, the idea of a historian's *Archivssehnsucht* has gained new meaning with rapidly evolving digitization and Covid-19-related lockdowns and travel bans.

The larger point I want to make is that books are not just the result of research and the author's explicit choices but also involve a great deal of implicit considerations. The legacy of historical publications is often subject to chance. The awareness that historical studies are as much

[1] Herman Paul, *Key Issues in Historical Theory* (London: Routledge, 2015).
[2] Rose Macaulay, *Pleasure of Ruins* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1953).



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influenced by external factors as by theoretical reflections must not diminish the importance of the latter. When it comes to historical writing, theoretical interventions are not only essential for novel insights but also determine whether or not a certain publication makes an impact. That said, it is all the more striking that Murakami's scholarship lacks clear theoretical positioning. Still, his historical research shaped how generations of historians after him understood Japan's early modern position in world history. The diverse genres and formats of his work are complementary elements of his legacy on the whole. Until today, (reprinted) expensive hardcover editions of Murakami's oeuvre are visibly placed on the shelves of libraries and private collections. They include seven research monographs, twelve edited volumes (eight in Japanese and four in English), and four volumes of source translations based on European archival manuscripts. In addition, large numbers of students work with Murakami's contributions to the *Dai nihon shiryō* and the *Manuscript of Taiwan Historic Materials* every year. Yet, the scope of his legacy goes much further, not least because he recycled much of the archival material in multiple publications.

Murakami' s dissemination and publication output is difficult to assess in quantitative terms. In fact, my attempt to list them up in Chapter 1 is problematic and comes with major limitations when it comes to qualitative aspects of his scholarship and the venues in which he presented it. His publications ranged from articles in scientific journals to articles in popular magazines. His work appeared in the renowned *Shigaku zasshi* and other established humanities journals such as the *Rekishi chiri* (*History and Geography*), the *Kokōgaku zasshi* (*Archeology Journal*), and *Monumenta Nipponica*. Some of his publications targeted peers in his academic, educational, or diplomatic circles, others the Japanese public, yet others foreign audiences. Some concerned cultural diplomacy and popular science, some were in-house publications of research associations and learned societies, and others appeared in collaboration with national newspapers.

Many of Murakami's publication titles and narratives would focus on those whom he perceived as important historical personalities or 'great men' involved in early modern foreign relations. In addition to Sebastián Vizcaíno, Rodrigo Vivero, and Yamada Nagamasa, who have received ample attention in the previous chapters, Murakami wrote a positive account of the German physician Philipp Franz von Siebold who lived in Japan twice, first in the 1820s and again in the early 1860s. In 1923, Murakami coedited (with William S. Lewis) the memories of Ranald MacDonald, a native American whaler who appeared as a castaway on the coast of Ezo (present-day Hokkaido) and was brought to Nagasaki

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where he spent several years teaching English to local officials.[3] Living in the nineteenth century, MacDonald and Siebold may appear as outliers to Murakami's seventeenth-century focus, but they were important actors in the broader story that Murakami aimed to tell the world: namely that historians only had to look to find proof of Japan's vibrant international past and geopolitical importance, and that foreign-language skills were key to decoding the existing material.

The command of European languages doubtlessly played a key role for Murakami as a historian, although his greatest translatory efforts were often relegated to the annotations or footnotes of his source editions. Because he understood foreign-language learning as a necessity for progressive cultural encounters, communication featured frequently as a topic of his research publications. Language and education were explicit parts of his studies on the Jesuit printing press and early modern vocabularies. On other occasions, the language focus was more implicit, for instance, when tracing the legacy of European knowledge on Japanese medicine. Notwithstanding his achievements based on translations, his negligence of transparency needs to be mentioned. When Murakami let historical sources speak for themselves and presented his translations without background information, he failed to reflect on the power imbalances perpetuated by the archive, the bias of the sources, and the possibility that early modern authors had ulterior motives or even told lies. His tendency to remain as close to the original wording and style of the primary source as possible while producing a subjective translation deprived his readers of the possibility of critically evaluating the authenticity of the source material and the validity of the content he presented. Murakami's constructivism may come across as a problem to historians of the twenty-first century; for Murakami, who believed in the archive's power to give ultimate evidence, it was not. It was part of his relation with the past and as such compensated for theoretical reflections. It is also characteristic for history in which theory is applied implicitly.

The variety of Murakami's work may explain why his research has been classified in so many ways. In Japanese historiography, the classifications include *nambanshi* (literally, 'history of the southern barbarians'), *kirishitan shi* ('history of the [sixteenth and seventeenth-century Japanese] Christians'), and *nan'yōshi*, which literally translates as 'history of the

[3] Naojiro Murakami and William S. Lewis, eds., *Ranald MacDonald: The Narrative of His Early Life on the Columbia under the Hudson's Bay Company's Regime; of His Experiences in the Pacific Whale Fishery; and of His Great Adventure to Japan; with a Sketch of His Later Life on the Western Frontier, 1824–1894* (Spokane, WA: Eastern Washington State Historical Society of the Inland-American Printing Company, 1923).

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southern seas' (a.k.a. Southeast Asia after the Second World War). These labels, which were put on his work at different times during the twentieth century, are all still in use. Aware of the risk of creating further bias, I should add my own classification of his work as *gaikōshi*. All these labels have their limitations while being of heuristic relevance as colligations. When applying them it is essential to remember they gloss over implicit Euro- and Japan-centrism and they have been mediated by multilayered translation processes backed by both silencing and overemphasizing.

While I have presented an exhaustive discussion of knowledge creation related to Japanese history, Murakami's ulterior motives and ideological standpoints remain enigmatic. Indeed, both his biography and his bibliography hint at his belief in Japanese historical superiority. In the 1920s and 1930s, his work appeared frequently in a variety of propagandistic popular science outlets including magazines with such telling names as *Tōyō* (*The Orient*), *Bunmei kyōkai nyūsu* (*The Civilization Association Newsletter*), and the *Taiwan Jihō* (*News from Taiwan*), including titles such as "The Past and Present of *Our* [my emphasis] Expansion in Southeast Asia" (1937) and "Taiwan before the Zheng" (1935). Murakami's contributions to educational publications – including textbooks, pedagogical journals such as *Rekishi kyōiku* ('History Education'), and anthologies produced by *Teikoku kyōikukai shuppan* ('Imperial Education Press'), a Taiwan-based imperial publishing house – and to local history projects featuring his native Bungo hint at his involvement with imperialist agendas. In the early 1940s, however, the imperialist orientation disappeared. Working mainly on Japan's Christian past, publications in *Nihon Igakushi* (*Japanese Medical History*) and other outlets demonstrate that his approach remained transdisciplinary, appearing in diverse publication formats. It stands to reason that he distanced himself from the theme of expansion and tried to sanitize his image, searching for protection from unbiased research environments.[4]

Like any historian, Murakami instrumentalized the past. He produced hegemonic historical narratives designed to perpetuate and justify imperialism by purposefully accentuating select aspects of the past and silencing others. As a key representative of what I have called empirical imperialism, his positivist knowledge shaped how the Japanese overseas expansion to Southeast Asia is remembered. Put into a global context

[4] He contributed studies on the golden folding screen of the bishop of Evora, a translation of a letter by Angelo, the first Japanese baptized Christian; surveys of Christian residences in Japan, supplied entries to the Catholic encyclopedia (*Katorikku daijiten*) and the *Fuzanbō kokushi jiten*, a national history reference.

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there is nothing particularly unusual about historians promoting meta-narratives of early modern greatness to boost concurrent identities on a global scale. Even after serious attempts to provincialize and decolonize history in the twenty-first century, there is an uninterrupted fascination with European expansion among historians. Spanish historians recently even advocated 'hispanofilia' in defense of pride in past 'achievements.' Such specific uses of the past in which a country or a group's actions are overemphasized are cyclical. When reviewing and judging Murakami's performance, it is moreover important to acknowledge that he worked in a time when the political and epistemic relations of historians were not yet a matter of debate.

In the greater scheme of things, the real issue lies in history as an academic discipline that overemphasizes the written archive and fails to deliver on its promise to be transparent about the motivations behind and process of source selection. Murakami and his colleagues stand at the beginning of a tradition that continues to haunt the field today. Their imperialist agenda was at the forefront of hegemonic thinking about how history ought to be studied, which sources were relevant, whose actions and achievements were important, which groups had histories worth implementing into meta-narratives, and whose voices were to be heard and included. This brings me back to the coloniality of knowledge. In the case of East and Southeast Asia, academic research and education remain intrinsically linked to the concepts and institutions established by Japanese imperialism. Once the backbone of Cold War Area Studies, the legacies of postimperial links to rehabilitation initiatives continue to affect neoliberal funding schemes that help to maintain the dominance of Japanese history while replicating power imbalances, institutional asymmetries, and epistemic discrimination. The written sources that Murakami and his colleagues collected and stored in Japanese research libraries are the insurance for the self-sufficiency of a system strong enough to resist the dynamics of the digital turn, as the more recent online access restrictions of the National Diet Library show.

In Murakami's day, the document-based and state-, male-, and literate-centric history-writing was a violent technology of European and Japanese imperialisms. Although most of today's academic historians are less focused on the making of states and certainly critical of greatness discourses, the majority continue to write about the past mainly by relying on written sources, and hence continue to neglect those groups with oral traditions. In this way, the legacy of narrative frames continues to downplay power relations, gender, and Indigenous issues despite mainstream criticism of Euro-, Sino-, and Japan-centrism. As the study of history is for the first time truly global in its practice, the archive is still

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not, and the traditional method of immersing oneself in the documents will undoubtedly be insufficient for the process of writing a truly global history. This discrepancy between global thinking and parochial archival structures reflects the crisis in which history as a field is stuck. While categories deriving from the needs of nineteenth-century nation-building have become obsolete, many unresolvable questions about truth, value, and ideology remain current. What is more, tensions between professionalism and popular history have increased as digestive narrative strategies of podcasts, digital history, and social media memes contribute to the constantly increasing flow of information that generate new historical narratives, images, and tropes.

These concluding reflections clearly benefited from an approach that depended both on spatial and temporal comparisons. While I have been critical of Murakami's frequent use of implicit comparisons, I am a strong advocate of comparison for the sake of creating perspective and as a way of telling more than one story. Questions of comparison and methods of comparison have in fact accompanied the entire process of writing this book, from the very first moment of trying to make sense of Murakami's uses of the past, to situating Murakami's historical scholarship in the context of imperial expansion and scientific colonialism, and finally to assessing Murakami's publications. Comparison was also behind the juxtaposing of digitally available material and the findings in analogue archives and libraries. What is more, there is an element of comparison in every act of translation and analysis. This becomes most obvious when looking at my own translatory choices, for instance, when it comes to whether I translate Murakami's Japanese term 'bansha' with 'barbarian' or 'Indigenous.' In the process of finding equivalents in English, I compare possible terms to the existing literature in other languages of both Murakami's time and my own. My choices are also colored by my native tongue. Certain terms and concepts caused a strong reaction in me as a German speaker, while others may have eluded a more critical scrutiny. Ultimately, comparisons are inherent to all cognitive processes. On that note, I wish this book to be a reminder that every contributing party to historical knowledge is responsible for creating and maintaining a critical awareness of implicit comparisons and of the multilayered, coproduced tropes in the source material. To be sure, the multitude of examples and cases I have introduced in this book has reinforced the value of comparison: Comparing is essential for the integration of *gaikōshi* into global diplomacy studies and for the decolonization of Southeast Asian history in Japan and beyond in the service of the greater goal of yielding a nuanced and more inclusive narration of contested pasts and challenging the legacies of historiographical violence.

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