3. Temporalities, Historical Writing and the Meaning of Revolution
A Eurasian View

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In recent years, new approaches have put the revolutionary moment at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries into a global perspective.[1] One of the major efforts consisted in escaping from a nation-state-based and Eurocentric vision of revolutions; thus, the American as well as the French revolutions are now presented as both the consequence and the beginning of global economic, political and social transformation of the world, while revolutions in Saint-Domingue, India or Latin America are considered to have responded to local as well as to global factors.[2]

If this is so, then the historical notion of revolution itself must be scrutinised as well. Here, our main reference is, of course, Koselleck and his *Futures Past*.[3] The main lines of this study are well known: echoing Hanna Arendt,[4] Koselleck argued that the notion of revolution moved from astronomy (the Copernican revolution) to politics and history. The shift from cyclical to linear time in the notion of revolution was first expressed by Hobbes (among others) in the 1640s, then again by Locke some forty years later. In both cases it was associated with the restoration of

1 Suzanne Desan, Lynn Hunt, and William Max Nelson, eds., *The French Revolution in Global Perspective* (Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 2013); David Armitage and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, eds., *The Age of Revolutions in Global Context, c. 1760–1840* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

2 Jeremy Adelman, *Sovereignty and Revolution in the Iberian Atlantic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); D.A. Brading, *The First America: the Spanish Monarchy, Creole Patriots and the Liberal State, 1492–1867* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

3 Reinhart Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft: Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* [Futures Past: On the Semantics of historical time] (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979); the chapter on revolution was originally published, probably not by chance, right after 1968: "Der neuzeitliche Revolutionsbegriff als geschichtliche Kategorie" [The modern concept of revolution as a historical category], *Studium Generale* 22, no. 8 (1969): 825–838.

4 Hanna Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Viking Press, 1963).

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the crown.[5] However, in order to make evolution possible, in political terms, these conflicts had to be moved on from civil war (and restoration) to revolution. As such, cyclical time gave way to unilinear time and the idea of progress.[6] Time became a horizon of expectation in society and politics. This expressed a shift from the order of the ancient regime, based on estates, to a bourgeois society, based on individuals.[7] This new approach strongly influenced historians in their investigation of changing perceptions and organisations of time, not only in intellectual, but also in social and economic history.[8] Their interpretations preserved the idea of the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution as breaking points, the organization of time was directly related to that of the new society that had evolved accordingly.

However, more recently, several authors have in turn criticised this interpretation; some, like David Armitage, have contested Koselleck's theory by arguing that the idea of revolution as radical change had been widespread since antiquity, and therefore, that the building of the British Empire expressed less the tensions between restoration and revolution than a coexistence of multiple forces over a long span of time.[9] This approach found broad support in a recently edited volume in which several authors stressed the coexistence of these two meanings of revolution in Britain.[10] The strength of this work consists in its efforts to escape from historical determinism and from a clear-cut opposition between the history of ideas and the socio-economic history of the revolution. Its main limitations are located in the lack of global synchronic connections and the quick dismissal of any structural explanation of revolutions.

From a more general perspective, François Hartog has argued that since the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the obsession with the present coexisted and to an extent overburdened Koselleck's futures-past in the social construction of (historical) time.[11] Anthropologists have also advanced perspectives different from

5 Reinhart Koselleck, „Revolution," in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, 9 vols., ed. Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Koselleck (Stuttgart: Klett, 1972–1990).

6 On this: Alexandre Escudier, "Temporalisation et modernité politique: penser avec Koselleck," *Annales HSS* 64 (2009): 1269–1301.

7 For further interpretations of Koselleck, see the excellent synthesis by Willibald Steinmetz, "Nachruf auf Reinhart Koselleck (1923–2006)," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 32, no. 3 (2006): 412–432; Willibald Steinmetz, Michael Freeden, and Javier Fernandez-Sebastian, eds., *Conceptual History in the European Space* (New York: Berghahn, 2017).

8 Witold Kula, *Les mesures et les hommes* (Paris: EHESS, 1985); E. P. Thompson, "Time, Work Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism," *Past and Present* 38 (1967): 56–97.

9 David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

10 Keith Michael Baker and Dan Edelstein, eds., *Scripting Revolutions* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013).

11 François Hartog, *Régimes d'historicité* (Paris: Seuil, 2003).

Koselleck's:[12] on the one hand, structuralist perceptions of time and the Braudelian *longue durée* put an emphasis on continuities in culture, politics and society. On the other hand, Geertz and several other anthropologists insisted (like Armitage), on the multiplicity of time perceptions even within one and the same society and within the same temporal space.[13]

In the following pages, I would like to pursue this conversation which is one that touches importantly on the questions asked in this volume about *chronotypologies* and *chronologics* by putting forth the following questions and arguments:

1. Were perceptions and practices of the revolution in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries a purely German, French or Anglo-American affair? In other words, how Eurocentric are these approaches to revolution and time? I will show that the identification of the notion and practices of the revolution were not just a western and trans-atlantic, but a global affair.
2. Can we still hold that the notion of revolution moved from cosmology to society and politics? I will argue that the answer is not so clear, and that not only in Asia but also in the 'West' this transition persisted over time. However, differing with Armitage, I will put this persistence into a Eurasian space and relate it to history writing and the changing meaning of 'historical truthfulness' more generally.
3. Was the notion and practice of the revolution related to the rise and transmutation of the modern (nation) state? We will see that empire building rather than the 'crisis' of the monarchic state was at the roots of the changing meaning of 'revolution'.

This line of reasoning—from Koselleck to Armitage to my own—adopts what could be called an 'internalist' approach to the question of temporalities: the main goal consists in understanding how historical actors' perspectives of time and temporalities changed, why and with which consequences. Epistemologically, this approach forms a contrast with Rüsen's position in this volume. He adopts an 'externalist' approach to sources: he suggests a typology of representations of time and then checks in which category this or another historical author can be put. His approach consists in identifying certain categories of time in the present, then to move on to identify these same categories in the past. This is a 'presentist' approach. An 'internalist' approach, on the other hand, looks for changes and continuities in historical representations of time: Kosellecks stresses a break in the eighteenth century while Armitage insists on

12 Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Others: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

13 Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge* (London: Basic Books, 1985).

continuities. Each of their aims is to identify the role of revolutions in the construction of time. Arquing for quite the opposite, Rüsen presents a typology of time outside of historical temporality, as by definition a taxonomy is static. His aim is to provide historians with categories useful to the task of periodisation. As such, it is fundamental to validate, or not, conventional western periodisation, such as ancient, medieval, modern contemporary history, in the West itself, and of course outside of it, where other periodisations are in use (dynasties in China, for example). While obviously contemporary historians cannot erase their own perceptions and think in the same way as eighteenth century people once did, my point here is that the dialogue between the present and the past is inevitably asymmetrical—eighteenth-century actors cannot know our categories. In addition, not unlike in anthropology, the interest of history is to look for diversities and varieties, not homogeneities across space and time. It is for this reason that I argue that internalist and externalist/presentist approaches to historical time (and to any other category), are complementary and not substitutes, that they are useful tools but to answer different questions. My aim here is not to categorize and validate time and history but to understand how actors in their own time did it. Any attempt to mix the two approaches, by testing, for example, Rüsen's categories to understand the eighteenth century, will have the same limitations as previous attempts at periodisation made by Marx and the Marxists, the Hegelians, colonial and post-colonial authors and the like: they weaken both our understanding of the past and of the present by conflating them into one single melting-pot.

Where Multiple Worlds Meet: Revolution, Theatre and Cosmographies

In late 1658, François Bernier (1620–1688) 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 (1592–1666) to the Mughal throne. Bernier remained at the Mughal court for three years. He became the official imperial chronicler for all of Europe, seeking to 'expose' false elements in the histories of the Moghul monarchs, and erroneous notions about India entertained by Europeans at the time.[14]

An increasing body of scholarship on Bernier is available, concerning his attitude towards the Moghuls, the impact of Pierre Gassendi (1592–1655) and Spinoza, his

14 François Bernier, *Un libertin dans l'Inde moghole* (Paris: Chandeigne, 2008); Michael Harrigan, "Seventeenth-Century French Travellers and the Encounter with Indian Histories," *French History* 28, 1 (2014): 1–22.

orientalism, his role in the French colonial ambitions, his notion of race etc.[15] In this chapter, I will focus merely on his notion of revolution in connection with historical writing. His experiences with Dara and later Aurangzeb (1618–1707), prompted him to reflect on the notion of 'revolution,' a term he readily employed to describe Aurangzeb's overthrowing of the Crown Prince. The use of this term by Barnier derived from both French and Moghul influences. Thus, on November 13th, 1661, Jean Chapelain (1595–1674) wrote to Bernier, encouraging his desire to travel and suggesting he read "l'histoire et les révolutions de ce royaume" since Alexander the Great.[16] Cleary, in this letter—differently from what Koselleck is arguing—revolution already signified political changes which were not conceived within a cyclical frame but considered irreversible.[17]

There were important mutual interconnections between the French and the Indian context and these were clear in Bernier's approach. Like most Indian chroniclers of the period, Bernier presented several versions of the same event, drawing at the same time on Gassendi for his probabilistic approach to history.[18] Multiple interpretations and variations were all equally possible and, instead of presenting one as the real and unique, Bernier (like Gassendi) translated the statistical principle of probability and likelihood (le vraisemblable) into a style of history.[19] Bernier combined his critique of geocentric thinking with a critique of historicity: the Copernican revolution and the search for historical truth were one and the same process.[20]

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. Bernier drew on Racine for stylistic inspiration (in particular the principles Racine exposed in the second preface to Bajazet, where he stressed the advantage of writing on distant

15 Pierre H. Boulle, "François Bernier and the Origins of the modern concept of Race," in *The Color of Liberty: Histories of Race in France*, ed. Sue Peabody and Tyler Stovall (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 11–27; Peter Burke, "The Philosopher as Traveller: Bernier's Orient," in *Voyages and Visions: Towards a Cultural History of Travel*, ed. Ján Elsner and Joan-Pau Rubiés (London: Reaktion Books, 1999), 124–137; Nicholas Dew, *Orientalism in Louis XIV's France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). Joan-Pau Rubiés, "Oriental Despotism and European Orientalism: Botero to Montesquieu," *Journal of Early Modern History* 9 (2005): 106–180.

16 Quoted in Bernier, *Un libertin dans l'Inde moghole*, 18 from Jean Chapelain, *Lettres*, tome 2nd (2 janvier 1659 – 20 décembre 1672), ed. Philippe Tamizey de Larroque (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1883).

17 Armitage and Subrahmanyam, eds., "Introduction" in *The Age of Revolutions* (see note 1), xv–xvi.

18 José Freches, "François Bernier, philosophe de Confucius au XVII^{e} siècle," *Bulletin de l'Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient* 60 (1973): 385–400.

19 Sylvia Murr, ed., "Bernier et le gassendisme," *Corpus* 20/21 (1992): 115–135.

20 Paolo Francesco Mugnai, "Ricerche su François Bernier filosofo e viaggiatore (1620–1688)," *Studi filosofici* 7 (1984): 53–115, Joan-Pau Rubies, "Race, Climate and Civilization in the Works of François Bernier," in *L'Inde des Lumières: Discours, histoire, savoirs (XVIIe–XIXe siècle)*, ed. Marie Fourcade and Ines G. Županov (Paris: EHESS, 2013).

people and times).[21] In Athalie, Racine put on the stage the British glorious revolution transposed to mythical antiquity. The King's legitimacy descended from the law of God and the exercise of power in itself, therefore, was not a valuable legitimation.[22] Actually the use of the theatre in historical representation and analysis was extremely widespread in Western Europe (from Camillo, through Lull down to Giordano Bruno and Rameau)[23] and in Russia.[24]

Yet, Bernier's approach found his inspiration also in how in the Mughal world, dynastic changes were incorporated into the framework of cosmography. These aspects have been studied brilliantly by a number of authors, notably Muzzafar Alam.[25] In fact, universality as an ideal accompanied the writing of history in Mughal India, which in itself was constituted of a synthesis of Hindu and Muslim elements, but cosmographies and the writing of history were also part of this synthesis. Persian and Islamic interpretations of history were well-known in the Mughal court and state. Along with documents in Persian, many others, produced in Hindi, Marathi, Rajasthani, Punjabi, Sindhi and Bengali were also considered, reflecting the cosmopolitanism of the Mughal Empire.[26]

Through the interaction among these various influences, Bernier's work became a model of the Eurasian crossroads of historical and scientific knowledge. Thus, histories of the evolution and use of the term 'revolution' based entirely on French sources miss an essential aspect, namely its transcultural and global dimension. Revolution as a political and historical category did not come into being with the French revolution, but much earlier, in the context of knowledge circulating in Eurasia. In order to understand this point, we must put Bernier's efforts into a broader context of debate about time, periodisation, and historical writing.

21 François Bernier, "Lettre envoyé à Monsieur Chapelain," 4 Octobre 1667, in *Un libertin dans l'Inde moghole*, 301–344.

22 Jean Marie Goulemot, *Le règne de l'histoire* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1996), 102–104.

23 Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966).

24 Richard Stites, *Serfdom, Society, and the Arts in Imperial Russia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

25 Muzzafar Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam, 1200–1800* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004); Louise Marlow, *Hierarchy and Egalitarianism in Islamic Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Tarif Khalidi, *Historical Thought in the Classical Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

26 Satish Chandra, *State, Pluralism, and the Indian Historical Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Corinne Lefèvre, Ines Županov, and Jorge Flores, eds., *Cosmopolitismes en Asie du Sud: Sources, itinéraires, langues (XVIe–XVIIIe siècles)* (Paris: EHESS, 2015).

History Writing and Time

Well before Bernier, in 1560, the philosopher Francesco Patrizzi (1529–1597) suggested providing all of the different versions of one particular history or event in the same text. This was one of the variants of a historical skepticism that had begun to spread precisely around the mid-seventeenth century, and a suggestion that we find in India, the Ottoman Empire through to Gessendi and Bernier a century later. Ottoman historians made use of several different notions of time and temporal divisions (temporalities), calendars, annals, cosmologies, etc. Thus, in the ninth century, attempts were made to expand the time and space horizon to include not just the biblical account, but also the history of the 'great peoples' of antiquity, particularly the Persians. As a consequence, the synchronisation of these ancient nations with the biblical and Quranic time became a prominent purpose of history writing. A century later, al-Tabary (d. 23) began his history with the Creation, and then introduced a periodisation in which all nations were included, but in which he corrected the Quranic themes with insights from the Persian historical tradition. With Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406) of Tunis, history could no longer be understood as a flow of events, but instead he looked for its inner structure: according to him, states, like biological organisms, had their cycles of growth, maturity, and decay.

With Katib Celebi (1609–1657), these writers began looking for ways to unify these different temporal logics and to highlight breaks and continuities in history. This approach was distinct from the expression of temporal divisions in keeping with divine revelation.[27] In addition to astronomical time and prophetic time (revelations), some Muslim historians actually claimed that each community also had its own history.[28] Consequently, epics and histories of regions and cities proliferated, along with biographies.[29] At the same time—and contrary to the ideas of Ibn Khaldun—Celebi and other Ottoman historians thought the cyclical process that inevitably doomed dynasties to extinction had been interrupted by an exceptional factor, that of the Ottoman dynasty.[30]

Philosophical Scepticism and its impact on historical writing was mirrored in China in the works of Li Zhi (1527–1602). Qu Jingchun (1506–1569) developed a

27 Aziz Al-Azmeh, *The Times of History: Universal Topics in Islamic Historiography* (New York: Central European University Press, 2007).

28 Cemal Kadafar, Hakan Karateke, and Cornell H. Fleischer, *Historians of the Ottoman Empire*, accessed September 3, 2020, https://cmes.fas.harvard.edu/projects/ottoman-historians

29 Maurus Reinkowski and Hakan Karateke, eds., *Legitimizing the Order: Ottoman Rhetoric of State Power* (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

30 Gottfried Hagen, Ethan Menchinger, "Ottoman Historical Thought," in *Wiley Companion to Global Historical Thought*, ed. Prasenjit Duara, Viren Murthy, and Andrew Sartori, (London: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 92–106.

critical philological method containing passages strikingly reminiscent of Jean Bodin's (1529–1596) observations. This process continued under the Qing dynasty until the eighteenth century, when China manifested a tendency towards universalism (explaining world history in accordance with Chinese temporalities), and an interest in travel and cartography equivalent to that in the West. The circulation of historiographical knowledge and mutual influences was not limited to Europe and China however; for centuries, the Chinese had also had connections with the Mongol world through the Manchus, as well as with the Russians, the Ottoman world and India.[31] Scholars and their works circulated alongside pilgrims, merchants and goods.[32] The evolution of Chinese historiography was shaped by internal dynamics as well as by the influences of western (through Jesuits),[33] Islamic (including Iranian), Indian and Mongol thought.[34] Conversely, Europeans, as they did for the Mughal court, did not hesitate to categorize as a 'revolution' the transition from the Ming to Qing dynasty.[35]

To summarise: the two meanings of 'revolution' and the tension between cosmological and political time were widespread in Europe and Asia and circulated within these areas. These multiple meanings were related to certain political and intellectual ideals—the notion of historical truthfulness, on the one hand, and state and empire building, on the other, were at stake. We will now turn to this point.

History Writing and Empire Building

In France as in other western countries, the birth of what is known as 'modern' Historiography is often associated with the rise of the modern state, the latter being identified with the nation state. Koselleck's analysis of 'revolution' relies on this argument.[36] This interpretation calls for qualification, for during the period under consideration here, Empires, not just monarchic and nation states dominated the world stage. Eurocentric histories of European historiography tend to underestimate not

31 Morris Rossabi, ed., *Eurasian Influences on Yuan China* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2013).

32 Edward Wang and Franz Fillafer, eds., *The Many Faces of Clio: Cross-Cultural Approaches to Historiography* (New York: Berghahn, 2007).

33 Liam Brockey, *Journey to the East: the Jesuit Mission to China, 1579–1724* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

34 Nalini Balbir and Maria Szuppe, eds., *Lecteurs et copistes dans les traditions manuscrites iraniennes, indiennes et centrasiatiques* (Rome: Istituto per l'Oriente C. A. Nallino 2014).

35 Sven Trakulhun, "Das Ende der Ming-Dynastie in China (1644): Europäische Perspektiven auf eine 'große Revolution'," in *Revolutionsmedien—Medienrevolutionen*, ed. Sven Grampp, Kay Kirchmann, Marcus Sandl, Rudolf Schlögl, and Eva Wiebe (Konstanz: UVK, 2008), 475–508.

36 Reinhart Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft* and "Der neuzeitliche Revolutionsbegriff" (for both see note 3).

only the importance of similar dynamics in non-European worlds, but also the very early interface between Empire and nation in Europe itself. Erudition and philology certainly constituted a demand of the monarchic state vis-à-vis the papacy and local authorities, they were also powerful tools for imperial and colonial expansion. In this context, the opposition between the term civil war and revolution was in fact not as clear-cut as Koselleck has argued.[37] In particular, if this distinction was often advocated in the late eighteenth century, and to a certain extent since the mid-century, before that date 'revolution' could equally be used in the context of the absolutist monarchy, as such, it coexisted with the term 'civil war' to describe institutional breaks in the past and in the present as well.

In this context, philology acted not only to validate and certify, but also to produce and legitimise new hierarchies of languages, between national and regional languages on the one hand, and Latin on the other. Thus, in seventeenth-century France, law and history intervened to validate royal power, and also to establish a new class of legitimate estate owners. Attempts to establish cadasters and validate certified titles of ownership reflected this aim.[38] The stake was not just academic, but it was relevant to justify the royal authority vis-à-vis the pope, the estate owners and the so-called 'provincial authorities.' The Bourges school and Jacques Cujas (1522–1590) supported a nation-wide interpretation of Roman law at the very moment when the nation—the monarchic state at the time—was still attempting to establish and confirm its authority.[39] The historian and the antiquarian thus converged and directly intervened in state building.[40] Jean Bodin in his *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem* ("Method for the easy comprehension of history") of 1566 opposed the functioning of royal monarchies with seigniorial powers based on this same discussion of the origin, validity, and classification of certain documents.[41] The definition of sovereignty and historical knowledge progressed hand in hand.

However, it would be shortsighted to explain these quarrels exclusively with reference to the tensions between monarchism and republicanism. What was at stake was the identification of *imperium* and *potestas*. Without the empire, the evolution in the meaning of history, historical truth, and revolution would not have been the same. Jean Bodin thus distinguished imperium and summum imperium and identified the latter with sovereignty. He therefore contested the interpretation of the Roman

37 For further interpretations of Koselleck, see Steinmetz, "Nachruf auf Reinhart Koselleck (1923–2006)," and Steinmetz et al. eds., *Conceptual History* (for both see note 7).

38 Jean Bodin, *La méthode pour la connaissance de l'histoire*, ed. Pierre Mesnard (Paris, 1951); Henri See, "La philosophie de l'histoire de Jean Bodin," *Revue historique* 175 (1935): 497–505.

39 Blandine Kriegel, *L'histoire à l'âge classique* (Paris: PUF, 1988).

40 Arnaldo Momigliano, "L'histoire ancienne et l'antiquaire," in *Problèmes d'historiographie ancienne et moderne* (Paris: Gallimard, 1983).

41 Jean Bodin, *Les six livres de la République* (Paris: 1579).

law as provided by the Pope, by the Holy Roman Empire and its Germanic roots as being incompatible, according to him, with the 'real Roman Law.' Unwritten rules had been gathered and codified by the monarch, and state power would eventually have given legal validity to them, not the other way round. The written documents, and their validation by the monarch, law and philology, were primary compared to all other rules: merchant rules, peasant and seigniorial rules and, in addition, indigenous customs and habits in the colonies.[42]

Well-studied regarding the Spanish conquest of the Americas,[43] this approach to law-making was equally central in France, at first along the Mediterranean, when captives were redeemed vis-à-vis Turkish and municipal (Marseille in particular) attempts to do so. Only the King's authority provided legitimacy to redeem captives and negotiate with the Moors. It was starting from this experience, that the French state authority exerted its claims and rights vis-à-vis war captives in the American colonies, that is, the indigenous populations or, slaves. In this context, the certification and validation of documents and authority was essential.[44]

However, it was not only a question of certification but also of translation. This aspect, already essential in the validation of documents translated from Latin into French (or Italian, Spanish, etc.), became ever more relevant when non-European worlds were concerned. Translating from and learning the languages of colonised peoples was both part of imperial management, and influenced the constitution of modern historiography. Said saw this clearly for Europe, and linked it to European domination, he did not however see that 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 legitimising 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, since these elements were present everywhere. The differences were located in other features of historical knowledge. In Europe, the association between history and philology was partly a product

42 Gillian Weiss, *Captives and Corsairs: France and Slavery in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011); Vincent Denis, *Une histoire de l'identité: France, 1715–1815* (Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 2008); Nabil Matar, *Islam and Britain, 1558–1685* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

43 Lewis Hanke, *La Lucha española por la justicia, en la conquista de América* (Madrid: Aguilar, 1967); Anthony Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man: the American Indians and the origins of comparative anthropology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Tzvetan Todorov, *La conquête de l'Amérique: la question de l'autre* (Paris: Seuil, 1982).

44 Cécile Vidal, "Francité et situation coloniale: Nation, empire et race en Louisiane française, 1699–1769," *Annales HSS* 64 (2009): 1019–1050. Cécile Vidal, "The Reluctance of French Historians to Address Atlantic History," in *Imagining the Atlantic World*, ed. Douglas B. Chambers, special issue, *The Southern Quarterly* 43, no. 4 (2006): 153–189.

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 colonised peoples. This difference was connected not only to philology and erudition, as Said and Greenblatt have shown,[45] but also to the use that European authorities had made of history in the practice of law and history. They were used to justify ideas of property, profit and race, and thus, to legitimise the European conquest of the world.

Thus, in 1664, Pierre Boucher (1622–1717) wrote his *Histoire véritable et naturelle des mœurs et productions du pays de la Nouvelle France,* precisely to combat first-hand accounts by the Jesuit missionaries and thus, the reluctance of the French to settle in Nouvelle France. In his book, Boucher explains the historical background of the local population groups and provides a description of their environment, concluding that, apart from the Iroquois, mosquitos and harsh winters, life across the ocean was in fact quite idyllic. He also demonstrates that the worlds undergoing colonisation were inhabited by savages who needed to be civilised. This is where history comes 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 colonisation itself. Revolution intervened here to justify the escape from paganism and the restoration of the 'real' authority, that of the King of France.

In Louisiana, French national sentiment became much more significant precisely in those colonies opposed to slaves, and the nation became racialised 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 the 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.[46] Yet again, certifications and genealogies acted to validate or disprove these elements. Revolution in this context signified both a radical transformation of local societies and the restoration of the legitimate power of the Monarchy over them.

In a similar fashion, across the Channel and 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 in turn an insistence on equality between the two powers.[47] This is where history intervened: the English and Scottish each invoked their own national myths, which they presented as well-founded history. They also attacked their opponent's version, calling it an 'invention.' They used philological

45 Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).
46 Sue Peabody, *There Are no Slaves in France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).
47 Armitage, *The Ideological Origins* (see note 9), 37.

techniques and erudition to prove their respective arguments and to produce a critical analysis of the sources and documents used. For example, on the English side documents were mobilised 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.[48]

Once the question of Scotland was settled, the ambitions of the new entity—Great Britain (Scotland, Wales, and England)—changed the situation with respect to Ireland. The Stuart dynasty was founded under James I of England, and for the first time a notion of Britishness was proposed that was inclusive of Ireland. For this, he relied not only on the imperial construction that had begun in the 1540s, but also on the *Imperium Anglorum* of the tenth century, and on the edicts and charters from the reign of Edward I (1272–1307), in order to make evident the long-term nature of the precedents for his claims.[49] Great Britain thus 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 colonisers. He received support from British elites and accordingly, between 1606 and 1610, a number of observers, including Francis Bacon (1561–1626), contrasted the profitability and value of plantations in Ulster with the folly of plantations in Virginia.[50] The Irish experience was fundamental: the appropriation of land, the introduction of forms of servitude, and the acceptance of the authority of the King of England—who was henceforth the sovereign of Great Britain—was exported to Ireland and the new world. However, justification for possessions in America quickly appeared more complicated than for domains in Ireland. The Spanish were seeking in turn to legitimise their colonisation through a papal bull giving possession of the American territories to the King of Spain. They believed that similar authorisation was also required for other European powers. English observers quickly replied that only the authority of the king counted; to do so they set out to analyse documents from the twelfth century, in addition to the meaning of the Latin word *dominium*. They ultimately converged *dominium* and *imperium*, with empire thus being 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

48 Andrew Fitzmaurice, "Classical Rhetoric and the Promotion of the New World," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 58 (1997): 221–244.

49 Jane Dawson, "Two Kingdoms or Three? Ireland in the Anglo-Scottish Relations in the Middle of the 16th Century," in *Scotland and England, 1286–1815*, ed. Roger Mason (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1987), 113–138.

50 Francis Bacon, "Certain Considerations Touching the Plantation in Ireland, Presented to his Majesty, 1606," in *The Letters and the Life of Francis Bacon*, ed. James Spedding, Robert Leslie Ellis, and Douglas Denon Heath (London: Longmans, Green, Reader and Dyer, 1868), 4: 123.

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 due to immigration and extermination. The definition of real property was also transformed in the New World: while in Ireland it retained the primary characteristic of English aristocratic property,[51] it was different on the other side of the Atlantic. In the mid-seventeenth century, sovereignty still remained a difficult notion to define and to subsequently put into practice: chartered companies (such as the East India Company) and those close to the crown enjoyed major privileges in the Americas: the interpretation of the revolution of 1648 was used here to justify the colonial expansion.

In this same context, John Locke (1632–1704) published *Two Treatises of Government*.[52] 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. In reality, the *Two Treatises* confirm 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 arbitrary power, he nevertheless justified the enslavement of prisoners of war.[53] It is precisely starting from the colonial experience that Locke and his followers progressively moved from the idea of revolution as restoration (in the cyclical sense of history), to the notion of revolution as a major political break (in the linear sense of history). The Enlightenment contributed to the consolidation of this trend.

History Writing and the Philosophy of History

Eighteenth-century discussions of history, its meaning and methods were part of the transnational and imperial philosophical and anthropological thinking of time.[54] This wave of thinking moved well beyond the boundaries of France and Western Europe into Eastern Europe, Russia, Asia and the Americas.[55] History writing and the philosophy of history were at the roots of the new meaning of the revolution. This also entailed a new approach to non-European worlds. Thus several *philosophes* were caught

51 Jack Greene, "Introduction" in *Exclusionary Empire: English Liberty Overseas, 1600–1900*, ed. Jack Greene (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1–24.

52 John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (London: Butler, 1821, original: 1698).

53 David Armitage, "John Locke, Carolina, and the Two Treatise of Government," *Political Theory* 32, no. 5 (2004): 602–27; Brad Hinshelwood, "The Carolinian Context of John Locke's Theory of Slavery," *Political Theory* 41, no. 4 (2013): 562–590.

54 Michèle Duchet, *Anthropologie et histoire au siècle des lumières* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1971).

55 Sebastian Conrad, "Enlightenment in Global Perspective: a Historiographical Critique," *American Historical Review* 117, no. 4 (2012): 999–1027.

up in the widespread fascination with China and its civilisation.[56] In *Continuation des pensées diverses* published in 1705, Pierre Bayle (1647–1706) 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 depend on morality. Quoting Bernier and his travels, he also argued that similar tendencies had been detected in India and Persia and more broadly in Sufism.

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.[57]

The reflections of Enlightenment thinkers regarding Islam confirm their divergent attitudes towards 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. Pietro Giannone (1678–1648), a Neapolitan, encouraged greater familiarity with Islam, which he considered the 'sister of Christianity.' Giannone spoke of the revolution in Islam and extended this term to describe the changing dynasties in the Islamic world as well as the passage of Naples from Spain to Austria.[58]

In a similar vein, Gabriel Bonnot de Mably (1709–1785) judged in 1751 the Arab conquest of the Near East, Iran, and North Africa of the seventh century as one of the most important revolutions in history.[59] In short, revolution as a fundamental change related to dynastic breaks and not only to social movement from below was quite common during the first half of the eighteenth century. Influences from Chinese and Islamic thought and historiography, eventually mediated by Jesuits and other intermediaries, were highly important.

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? This question became inescapable because reflections on history provided the only ground for accepting or rejecting both the transformations under way and the relative position of the Other therein (in the broad sense not only of 'exotic' peoples, but also peasants in relation to city dwellers, merchants in relation to noble elites, and so on). The new meaning of 'revolution' emerged in this context. As most Enlightenment authors were intent

56 René Étiemble, *De la sinophilie à la sinophobie*, vol. 2 of *L'Europe chinoise* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989).

57 Charles Louis de Secondat de Montesquieu, *De l'esprit des loix*, vol. 1 (Genève: Chez Barillot et fils, 1748).

58 Pietro Giannone, *Opere*, ed. Sergio Bertelli and Giuseppe Ricuperati (Milan: Hoepli, 1971), 60.

59 Gabriel Bonnot de Mably, *Observations sur les Romains* (Geneva: Gems et Muller, 1751), 2: 271.

on writing universal histories, the issue of source reliability was especially crucial in the case of non-European worlds. Travel literature and first-hand accounts by missionaries were well known; they could be found in the personal libraries of important writers such as Voltaire, Raynal, Diderot and Turgot. Abbé Antoine François Prévost (1697–1763), however, was one of the first to question the trustworthiness of these narratives. In Volume 12 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 a foot outside of Europe, and decided to limit his readings to the writings of 'real travellers.'[60] 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 into the process and develop a genuine history and geography, signalling the shift from fascinated wonderment to the critical 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, constantly publishing new accounts of travels and encounters, I am convinced that the only men we know are Europeans."[61] This sort of scepticism towards travel literature was common among *les philosophes*; some distinguished the writings of genuine travellers from the second-hand accounts of anthologists, while others relentlessly exposed western prejudices, e.g. those of the Spanish compared with those of British, etc.[62] The new literature, synthesised in *l'Encyclopédie* or in *l'Histoire des deux Indes,* 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. Historical change, and thus the new meaning of the revolution was a by-product of this general reflection.

It is not by chance that the first attempts to write 'Russian' history departed from this approach. In 1739, Vasily Tatishchev (1686–1750), a proponent like Peter of 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. Along with other European and Asian authors during this period, Tatishchev criticised conventional

60 Antoine-François Prévost, *Histoire générale des voyages ou nouvelle collection de toutes les relations de voyage par mer et par terre qui ont été publiées jusqu'à présent dans les différentes langues*, 15 vols. (Paris: Didot, 1746–1759). See in particular vol. 14.

61 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Œuvres politiques* (Paris: Éditions de la Pléaide, 1967), 3: 212.

62 Cornelius de Pauw, *Recherches philosophiques sur les Américains*, 2 vols. (Berlin: Decker, 1768–1769).

histories—the *Letopises* (chronicles) 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 (thus) universal, and therefore devoted special attention to the empire's non-Russian populations and the specific origin of its slaves.[63] In this perspective, continuities instead of historical breaks were certainly put in the foreground, but they were related to the dynastic timeline. However, Tatishchev's 'universal history' had to contend with the interpretation of Mikhail Lomonosov (1711–1765), 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 civilisation, he considered comparable to Rome and Byzantium. Based on these principles, Lomonosov produced a four-volume history of ancient Russia (*Drevniaia rossiskaia istoriia*). His critique of the sources resulted in a Russocentric history in which *longue durée* and nationalism went hand in hand.

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. Again, empire building was what was primarily at stake: this rewriting 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 traditions (by peasants and nomads), and written documents, as well as between myth and genuine history. In this perspective, peasant unrests, in particular after Pugachev signed the end of the alliance between enlightened despots and philosophers, play an important role. At the opposite end, Catherine II introduced reforms protecting the nobility and encouraging it to improve agriculture while strongly repressing peasants. After the 1770s, therefore, many French philosophers, previously close to Catherine, lost their faith in her and moved to radical enlightenment. This is when and where revolution as a category intervened.

Starting mainly in the late 1770s, Diderot and Rousseau argued that the other civilisations were in fact superior to the one in corrupt Europe. Their negative reactions stemmed from disappointment in the enlightened French and Russian monarchs who had failed to introduce the reforms expected by the *philosophes*. The 1780s therefore brought a radicalisation of the *philosophes'* positions on the French and Russian monarchies. Rather than believing in reforms implemented by monarchs, who were henceforth regarded as despots, it was considered better to trust in popular movements

63 Anatole Mazour, *Modern Russian Historiography* (Westport, CT: Westview, 1975).

and revolution. From the 1780s on, Diderot and Condillac associated their skepticism about enlightened despotism[64] with a more general criticism of European civilisation. As Condillac suggested, "Too much communication with Europe was less likely to civilize (*policer*) the Russians than to make them adopt the vices of civilized nations."[65]

Conclusion

In *l'Histoire des deux Indes* and its many subsequent editions, Raynal and Voltaire's attitude evolved into a viewpoint more closely aligned with that of Rousseau. *L'histoire des deux Indes* deliberately abandoned description in favour of philosophical and political analysis, thereby altering the relationship between national culture, European civilisation and universal dynamics. Henceforth, the role of history was no longer used to describe and marvel at exotic worlds, but to fit them into a universal framework of historical transformation. The emergence of Europe was no longer linked to the rise of monarchical states but instead to international trade, expansion and contact with the worlds of the Other. This was a new way of producing universal history. The philosophy of history was the answer to solve the dilemma of historical truth. The age of Enlightenment by no means formed a homogeneous whole with regard to history writing either. While civilisational and Eurocentric attitudes increased compared to previous periods, the content and scope of history writing varied significantly in accordance with author, time and place. The interaction among strands of European thought that are conveniently called 'The Enlightenment,' also changed according to the context, producing different syntheses in India, Russia and the Americas. 'The Enlightenment' became a global affair, and 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 towards reconstructing the method and contents of history: first, the universalist approach, grounded mainly in philosophy, law and henceforth political economy; and second, an approach that focused more on 'exceptional' events and 'local' phenomena. These two positions reflected the compound transformations of eighteenth-century worlds; when increasingly far-reaching interactions generated a desire for homogeneity on the one hand, and a rejection of everything resulting from 'globalization' on the other. The revolutions

64 Duchet, *Anthropologie et histoire* (see note 54), 134–135.

65 Bennot-Etienne, abbé de Condillac, *Cours d'études pour l'instruction du Prince De Parme: Histoire moderne* T 6, vol. 20 of *Œuvres de Condillac* (Paris: C. Houel, an VI 1798), 63–64.

of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were responses to these complementary and interwoven dynamics. 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 globalising 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, with archives as its source, and philology as its instrument. It is not by chance that the counter-revolutionary tendencies of the nineteenth century associated philology with political stability (Ranke), and opposed history (as philology), to the revolutionary philosophy of history, further confirmed by Marx. Revolution had become a purely Eurocentric, normative, deterministic category.