

CHRONOLOGICS

PERIODISATION IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT



**Barbara Mittler,
Thomas Maissen
& Pierre Monnet
(Eds.)**

HEIDELBERG
UNIVERSITY PUBLISHING

CHRONOLOGICS

CHRONOLOGICS

PERIODISATION IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT

Edited by

Barbara Mittler, Thomas Maissen & Pierre Monnet

HEIDELBERG
UNIVERSITY PUBLISHING

ORCID®

Barbara Mittler  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7867-3120>

Thomas Maissen  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0356-2191>



CENTRE FOR ASIAN AND
TRANSCULTURAL STUDIES



INSTITUT FRANCO-ALLEMAND
SCIENCES HISTORIQUES & SOCIALES
GESCHICHTS- & SOZIALWISSENSCHAFTEN

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de>



This book is published under the Creative Commons Attribution License CC BY-SA 4.0. The cover is subject to the Creative Commons License CC BY-ND 4.0.

Published at Heidelberg University Publishing (heiUP), 2022

Heidelberg University/Heidelberg University Library
Heidelberg University Publishing (heiUP)
Grabengasse 1, 69117 Heidelberg, Germany
<https://heiup.uni-heidelberg.de>

The electronic open access version of this work is permanently available on Heidelberg University Publishing's website:
<https://heiup.uni-heidelberg.de>
urn: urn:nbn:de:bsz:16-heiup-book-607-6
doi: <https://doi.org/10.17885/heiup.607>

Text © 2022, the authors.

Cover illustration: Huang Yongping: *La Carte du Monde* (2000).
Photo credits: Huang Yongping. (p. 6 in this volume)

ISBN 978-3-96822-137-3 (Hardcover)
ISBN 978-3-96822-138-0 (Softcover)
ISBN 978-3-96822-136-6 (PDF)

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Periodisation in a Global Context Barbara Mittler, Thomas Maissen, Pierre Monnet	
Section I	
CHRONOTYPOLOGIES	
Questions of Space, Time, Class, Race and State	
Chronotypologies	13
An Introduction Barbara Mittler, Thomas Maissen, Pierre Monnet	
1. Making Periodisation Possible	15
The Concept of the Course of Time (<i>Zeitverlaufsvorstellung</i>) in Historical Thinking Jörn Rüsen	
2. 'Islamic Civilisation' as a (Medieval) Problem	29
The Idea of Islamic Modernity in <i>Islamwissenschaft</i> David Moshfegh	
3. Temporalities, Historical Writing and the Meaning of Revolution	71
A Eurasian View Alessandro Stanziani	

**4. Periodisation as Dialectic
in a Peasant Discourse
from Late Colonial India** 89

Milinda Banerjee

5. The Pitfalls of Terminology 107
Uncovering the Paradoxical Roots
of Early Modern History
in American Historiography

Justus Nipperdey

**6. Historical Timeframes
for Stateless Nations** 119

Analysing the Colonised Periodisation
Paradox of Palestinian History

Susynne McElrone

Section II
CHRONOLOGICS
Contested Ways of Thinking Time

Chronologics 139
An Introduction

Barbara Mittler, Thomas Maissen, Pierre Monnet

7. The Time of World History 141
Essaying Marshall G. S. Hodgson's Work
on Islamicate Societies
and Afro-Eurasian World History

Michael Geyer

8. Time and Its Others	173
Contesting <i>Telos</i> through a Sociospatial Analysis of Islamicate Chronotopes Heather Ferguson	
9. Transnational Modernism and the Problem of Eurochronology	191
Özen Nergis Dolcerocca	
10. The Mythical Medieval	205
Periodisation, Historical Memory and the Imagination of the Indian Nation Anubhuti Maurya	
11. Reframing Time to Save the Nation	221
The Jewish Historian as Cultural Trickster Bernard D. Cooperman	
12. Nationhood and Imposing Power over Historical Time and Chronology	253
Özlem Çaykent	
Conclusion	271
Region, Nation, World Remarks on Scale and the Problem of Periodisation Sanjay Subrahmanyam	

Introduction

Periodisation in a Global Context

Barbara Mittler , Thomas Maissen , Pierre Monnet

When I was a small boy and was taught history . . . I used to think of history as a sort of long scroll with thick black lines ruled across it at intervals. Each of these lines marked the end of what was called a ‘period’, and you were given to understand that what came afterwards was completely different from what had gone before. It was almost like a clock striking. . . .

The whole of history was like that in my mind—a series of completely different periods changing abruptly at the end of a century, or at any rate at some sharply defined date.¹

George Orwell, *The Rediscovery of Europe*

In C. H. Williams’ ironic description, German historians in particular “have an industry they call ‘Periodisierung’ and they take it very seriously.” He argues (in a manner that does sound familiar to Orwell, above) that “Periodisation, this splitting up of time into neatly balanced divisions is, after all, a very arbitrary proceeding and should not be looked upon as permanent.”² In producing and reproducing periodisations, historians structure possible narratives of temporality, they somehow “take up ownership

* We would like to thank the Forum Transregionale Studien as well as our own institutions, the Center for Asian and Transcultural Studies (CATS), the Deutsches Historisches Institut Paris and the Institut Franco-Allemand de Sciences Historiques et Sociales (IFRA/SHS) Frankfurt and all participants at the Berlin conference and in the open peer review process, namely Renate Dürr and Eva Maria Stolberg, for their intellectual input to this volume.

1 George Orwell, *The Collected Non-Fiction*, ed. Peter Davison (London: Penguin, 2017), 1014. This epitaph is discussed at length in Sanjay Subrahmanyam’s Conclusion to this collection.

2 Charles H. Williams, ed., *English Historical Documents 1485–1558* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1967), 1.

of the past,” (Janet L. Nelson)³, imposing particular logics, or “regimes of historicity” (François Hartog).⁴ Epochal divisions and terminologies such as ‘antiquity,’ ‘baroque,’ the ‘classical age,’ the ‘renaissance’ or ‘postmodernity,’ are more than mere tools used pragmatically to arrange school curricula or museum collections. In most disciplines based on historical methods, these terminologies carry very specific meanings and convey rather definite imaginations for the discursive construction of civilisations, nations and communities. Indeed, many contemporary categories of periodisation have their roots in teleologies created in Europe, reflecting particular national, religious or historical traditions. Thus they are also closely linked to particular power relations. As part of the colonial encounter they have been translated into new ‘temporal authenticities’ in Africa, Asia and the Americas.

Accordingly, periodisations are never inert or innocent. What some of the authors in this book call *Eurochronologies*, that is, periodisation schemes modelled on European historical developments (such as the triad Antiquity, Middle Ages, Modernity, or Renaissance) have been used and applied as models to the histories of other regions of the world, as part of what Jack Goody calls a “theft of history” which refers, in his words, “to the take-over of history by the West. That is, the past is conceptualized and presented according to what happened on the provincial scale of Europe, often western Europe, and then imposed upon the rest of the world.”⁵ Goody thus describes what he sees as a pervasive Eurocentric bias in western historical writing: it does not give credit to (and thus “steals”) the possibility of highly divergent historical developments in different parts of the world.⁶

In considering periodisation schemes from different parts of the world, then, the aim of this volume is to uncover some of the dynamics behind particular cultural and historical uses of these periodisation schemes, as concepts for ordering the past, and to understand the powers, the method, the logics behind them—their *chronologics*, as David Damrosch once put it⁷—and thus to reconsider these periodisation schemes as terminologies “devised to think the world,” and their possible uses in the writing of

3 Janet L. Nelson, “The Dark Ages,” *History Workshop Journal* 63 (2007): 191–201, here at 191–192.

4 François Hartog, *Régimes d'historicité: Présentisme et expériences du temps* (Paris: Seuil, 2002). See also Reinhart Herzog and Reinhart Koselleck, eds., *Epochenschwelle und Epochenbewusstsein* (München: De Gruyter, 1987) and Stéphane Gibert, Jean Le Bihan, and Florian Mazel, ed., *Découper le temps: Actualité de la périodisation en histoire*, ATALA Cultures et sciences humaines no. 17 (2014).

5 Jack Goody, *The Theft of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1.

6 For a longish description which puts Goody into the broader context of other writings re-Orienting historical thinking, see Riva Berleant, “Review of Jack Goody, *The Theft of History*,” *Anthropology Review Database* 2011/01/01 <http://wings.buffalo.edu/ARD/> (last accessed, November 2019).

7 David Damrosch, “Chronologics,” in *A World History of Literature*, ed. Theo D’haen (Brussels: Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie van België, 2012), 35–46.

world of global history.⁸ The transregional and transcultural approach to periodisation suggested here is our second attempt to grapple with this question of *chronologies*, from a perspective that is neither exclusively driven by History as the ‘master discipline’ of periodisation, nor by Europe as the ‘center’ of gravity and scale.

At a first conference in Frankfurt, in 2016, we met to discuss *Les usages de la temporalité dans les sciences sociales*.⁹ Then, our focus was on the disciplines and their particular ways of structuring and shaping the past. We asked since when certain disciplines had begun to use specific periodisation schemes, and whether these schemes, and with them the introduction of temporality as a key concept for the writing of history, had changed the discipline and its methods and sources of study. We also questioned whether there were particular ways of (not) handling temporality in, say, Anthropology, Sociology, Philosophy, Geography, History, Art History and Literary Studies and how this had changed over time and in the history of the respective discipline. And we aimed to find out to what extent periodisation schemes were important elements in the self-perception of certain disciplines. Each of the disciplines, so it appeared, had its own semantics, and accordingly, its own rules of narrative, discourse and practice—its own *chronologies*. A specific disciplinary *chronologies*, therefore, would always (only) be able to express specific disciplinary contents, but when this *chronologies* becomes naturalised, these limitations are often no longer critically reflected. Accordingly, we asked questions about the transferability, translatability and reproducibility of periodisation schemes, moving betwixt and comparing between the disciplines and their conceptions in the francophone and germanophone traditions.

A comparative approach again drives this volume. This time, we engage in a regionally expansive global examination of periodisation schemes. The interdisciplinary perspective, taken in our first conference and volume and the transregional perspective taken here, allow for a reconsideration of the transferability as well as the non-transferability of concrete historical periodisation schemes. This may help us work out categories of historical analysis that go beyond disciplinary as well as national or civilisation-bound interpretative patterns. The essays in this volume therefore focus on travelling *Eurochronologies*, as they will be called by some of our authors, or *chronotypes*, as they are called by others—particular forms of periodisation which are often modelled

8 Sebastian Conrad, “Enlightenment in Global History: A Historiographical Critique,” *The American Historical Review* 117, no. 4 (2012): 999–1027, here at 1011, considers the Enlightenment in such a manner.

9 Pierre Monnet, Thomas Maissen, Barbara Mittler, and Jean-Louis Georget, eds., *Les usages de la temporalité dans les sciences = Vom Umgang mit Temporalität in den Sozial- und Geisteswissenschaften* (Bochum: Winkler, 2019).

on European examples.¹⁰ In the Enlightenment, Europeans started structuring what they considered *the* History, a global process, in a collective singular (and no longer as *histories* in the plural).¹¹ Along with that, particular *chronotypes* have been translated worldwide into universal, national or—scaling down even further—community or group models.¹² This volume does not consider these European models, alone, however. It also considers alternative, complementary or silenced morphologies and models of periodisation and epoch-making—which have been termed *chronotopes*, building on and expanding on Bakhtin’s narratives of space-time¹³—and thus presenting alternative styles, or patterns of discourse about time and historical periods as used by different actors in different parts of the world, at different times and in different power constellation: comparing space-time as it is represented through certain periodisation schemes with the types of space-time experienced and described by those on the ground.¹⁴ As different scales (from group to nation to region to world) may also determine the narration of space-time, these are considered as *chronoscales* in this volume. Our collection thus considers the making of periodisation schemes through categories of diffusion and scope as these can teach us how successfully certain periodisation schemes have been ‘sold’ both in the official and in the popular realms, in certain groups, but also nationally, regionally and globally.

Throughout, we will attempt to answer some of the following questions: What shapes and forms the making of certain *chronologies* and not others? What are the ideological, cultural, religious and material reasons behind them? How can we rethink established models of periodisation, and especially dominant *Eurochronologies* or *chronotypes* along new trajectories of time, space, material and power? And what does this mean for a reconsideration of World or Global History?

The interdisciplinary and transregional perspective that we have chosen in this collection allows for a reconsideration of the “pitfalls of terminology” as Justus Nipperdey

10 See, most recently, the work done in a collaborative research project “East Asian Uses of the Past: Tracing Braided Chronotypes” (EAU-TBC), last accessed June 25, 2018, <https://eautbc.hypotheses.org>.

11 Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, translated and with an introduction by Keith Tribe (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 33–37.

12 This question of scale is important in several of the contributions to this volume (Banerjee, McElrone, Maurya) and returns in the Conclusion.

13 Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Austin and London: The University of Texas Press, 1988).

14 For the question of power-relations when it comes to chronotopes or space-time, consider especially Christian Grataloup, “Les périodes sont des régions du monde,” *Géohistoire de la mondialisation: Le temps long du monde*, ATALA Cultures et sciences humaines no.17 (2014), 65–81. See also the “Erfurter RaumZeit-Forschung,” a project running since 2011, which specifically deals with aspects of space-time, accessed July 20, 2020: <https://www.uni-erfurt.de/philosophische-fakultaet/forschung/forschungsgruppen/erfurter-raumzeit-forschung>.

puts it in his chapter. We suggest the study of the (non-)transferability of specific periodisation schemes (or *chronotypes*) in different historical and regional situations. We offer thoughts on the possibility of coming up, in this process of dialogic negotiation, with new tools or categories of historical analysis, that may go beyond conventional interpretive patterns.

This volume intends to show the specific cultural, social, religious and national leanings and predispositions of periodisation schemes. The authors discuss the making of discrete *chronologies*, and the variable systems (e.g. religious, spatial, political) and morphologies (e.g. linear, spiral, cyclical). They focus on different agents and modes involved in the making of periodisation schemes, institutions ranging from the university to the education ministry, for example, but also on manifold genres such as the documentary, the editorial, the religious tract, or the historical novel. By bringing together scholars with an expertise in different regions of the world, we hope to better understand the importance of temporality (often combined in a complicated relation with spatiality, as discussed above) in the making of global history.

An apt example for this approach to the powerful rhetoric and realities of time-space is an art work by Huang Yongping (1954–2019), a Chinese-born artist who had long been resident in France. In his *Map of the World—La carte du monde* (2000) (Fig. 1), arranged in spiral form, he uses 400 copper needles, with little flags giving specific dates between the years 2000 and 2046, to pinpoint the beginning moments (*chronos*) and locations (*topos*) of a series of epoch-making catastrophes. According to the artist, this artwork is a mix of “the past, the present and the future,”¹⁵ as it illustrates the modification of the world, the metamorphoses of political and economic forces, the ascension of new geographic regions and the decline of ancient empires, followed by the provisional apparition of new candidates for power and the violence that these ambitions provoke. *La carte du monde* is one in a series of works entitled *Empires* in which Huang reflects on what he considers “the engine for the transformation of the world” (and at the same time, its destruction): Power. For Huang “maximum power equals maximum destruction.”

The art work captures, in a creative way, what this volume hopes to achieve in analytical terms: zooming in and out on periodisation, and the multiple and expansive possibilities of thinking about it—in terms of spaces, of times and of materialities. We want to understand the powers, the method behind it—its *chronologies*, that is—and we suggest, thus, a rethinking of its possible uses in the writing of world or global history.

15 Huang Yong Ping, “Pour ‘Empires’, je mélange le passé, le présent et le futur,” interview by Jérôme Badie, *Le Monde*, May 13, 2016. All quotes following here are taken from this interview.



Figure 1 Huang Yongping: *La Carte du Monde* (2000).

Periodisation is the business, first and foremost, so it may seem to many, of History or rather Historiography. As an academic discipline with particular methods, History in turn is a typical product of nineteenth century Europe, not unlike other disciplines in the humanities and the social sciences: Musicology, Philosophy, Political Economy, Sociology, Anthropology, Political Science, etc. In terms of their *chronologies*, they each follow teleological narratives, which lead, essentially, from archaism to modernity.¹⁶ This does not necessarily mean that this is a narrative of progress; different kinds of ‘classicism’ from earlier times are also seen as exemplary, and indeed, distant ‘noble roots’ have been considered at least as important for the making and the genealogies of national histories, as the glorious unfolding of the respective nations in their respective present.¹⁷ In these ‘traditional models,’ as Rösen calls them in his theoretical contribution to this volume, history has thus been interpreted as a sequence of political

16 Stéphane Gibert, Jean Le Bihan, and Florian Mazel, eds., *Découper le temps: Actualité de la périodisation en histoire*, ATALA Cultures et sciences humaines no. 17 (2014).

17 See the discussion by Maurya in this volume.

(e.g. monarchical, constitutional, democratic), socio-economic (e.g. nomads, farmers, burghers) and cultural phases (e.g. use of paper, use of print technology, etc.) which, on the one hand, structured the development of mankind and, on the other, have made possible the formation and growth of particular nations.

These two processes, the development of mankind on the one hand and of individual nations on the other, were linked since the Enlightenment and along with its philosophy of history through the concept of civilisation in the sense of the continuous emancipation of mankind from nature. In this vision, mankind originated a set of cultural skills through time and space, on a path leading from the Middle East to the West, as several powerful civilisations handed the torch on, one to the next. Dividing the history of literature, art or music into particular segments meant positioning particular nations on the (always already validatory) scale of this ‘civilising process,’ one which was headed, inevitably, towards Modernity—and this is one of the reasons why it was emulated by others, as many of the chapters in this volume show. Many well-known concepts stem from this teleological interpretation of the past—‘development,’ ‘progress,’ and ‘the non-simultaneity of the simultaneous,’ for example were introduced by a German art historian, Wilhelm Pinder, in his 1926 book *The Problem of Generation in European Art History*¹⁸—an interpretation that Jörn Rüsen, in the typology introduced in this volume, calls “genetic.”

Prominent scholars such as Jacques Le Goff or Reinhart Koselleck, have criticised the arbitrary choices of particular periodisation schemes. Kurt Flasch even went so far as to state: “The concept ‘epoch’ had its time, and its time is over.”¹⁹ Others, such as Johan Huizinga, however, have shown how much we were to lose were we to discard periodisation schemes all together.

Indeed, the use of periodisation schemes is not only comfortable, it may even be unavoidable. Both Aleida Assmann and Jacques Revel argued, in their conclusions to our Frankfurt conference on temporalities in the disciplines, that the most important question was not whether certain groups, societies, nations or regions should cut and slice their past into pieces according to typified patterns (the “thick black lines ruled across the long scroll of history” in the words of George Orwell), but rather for what reasons specific groups, societies, nations or regions, or the world at large, would choose to go back to their own past and create their specific *chronologies*, a question which is, to some extent, at least, quite ‘universal’ and thus need (and must) not be burdened by European prioritism.²⁰ Indeed, it is to be questioned whether in fact the practice of periodisation and the use of specific *chronotypes*, i.e. the European

18 Wilhelm Pinder, *Das Problem der Generation in der Kunstgeschichte Europas* (Frankfurt am Main: Frankfurter Verlags-Anstalt, 1926).

19 Kurt Flasch, “Epoche,” in *Historische Philosophie: Beschreibung einer Denkart*, vol. 1 of *Philosophie hat Geschichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2003), 134.

20 See the concluding contributions by Aleida Assmann and Jacques Revel in Pierre Monnet, Thomas Maissen, and Barbara Mittler, eds., *Les usages de la temporalité dans les sciences sociales:*

or rather occidental form of interpreting very particular pasts as universal processes leading, inevitably, towards Modernity, is really tantamount to a “theft of history,” as Jack Goody had put it, a “usurpation of history” by those who have now, for quite some time, dominated the process of globalisation declaring the imposition of their chronologies imposed on mankind a victory. The alternative rhetorics and styles of the *chronotopes* offered in this volume, taken as viable ways of fashioning and describing possibilities of historical development, while coming from different directions, both within certain groups or regions, suggest that we are in fact dealing with a very common, if culturally shaped enterprise, which many different groups, no matter whether from the East or the West, the North or the South are in fact engaged in.

Is the all-encompassing modernity in which we appear to live, the product of only a few occidental societies, or should we follow Shmuel Eisenstadt in speaking of “multiple modernities” all over the world, and consequently of different ways of coming to and shaping such modernities?²¹ Or is there indeed such a thing as a “modernity-in-common,” as Carol Gluck calls it, and what would that then entail?²² In using European periodisation schemes—or *Eurochronologies*—would it make a difference to modify these ‘traditional’ terminologies, by adding, for example ‘Chinese’ or ‘Italian’ to ‘Renaissance?’ Or should we look for new terms and create new periods altogether?²³ Not only when it comes to periodisation might one have to think and write history in a manner different from what has been done traditionally, if we aim to cope with the realities and challenges of the twenty-first century. As of now, however, we do not quite know how—as established approaches in world or global history do not seem to offer an easy way out.

In the *Histoire mondiale de la France*, Patrick Boucheron proposes the globalisation of both the national and the regional as categories.²⁴ Without following a continuous narrative, he has chosen a series of sometimes surprising and even provokingly unconventional dates to structure his book. This kind of decentering of an established temporal perspective, or *chronologies*, facilitates new manners of thinking national or regional histories.²⁵ It is much more difficult to find convincing temporal perspectives

Vom Umgang mit Temporalität in den Sozial- und Geisteswissenschaften (Bochum: Winkler Verlag, 2019), 317–337.

21 Shmuel Eisenstadt, “Multiple Modernities,” *Daedalus* 129, no. 1 (2000): 1–29.

22 Carol Gluck, “Modernity in Common: Japan and world history,” in *Internationalizing Japan Studies: Dialogues, Interactions, Dynamics* (Tokyo: Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.15026/91239>

23 This question is discussed in Thomas Maissen and Barbara Mittler, *Why China Did Not Have a Renaissance—And Why that Matters: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018).

24 Patrick Boucheron, *Histoire mondiale de la France* (Paris: Seuil, 2017); cf. also Patrick Boucheron, ed., *Histoire du monde au XV^e siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 2009) and Patrick Boucheron and Nicolas Delalande, *Pour une histoire-monde* (Paris: PUF, 2013).

25 Leigh K. Jenco, “Recentering Political Theory: The Promise of Mobile Locality,” *Cultural Critique* 79 (2011): 42.

on historical change at the level of the global. If one were to hope that global or world history could be more than just adding up specific local or national events in a collage, how can and how should such histories be written and structured—and which terminologies of periodisation should they use?

This is one question to be explored further in this volume: once one has acquired a better understanding of different terminologies, different practices and different processes of periodisation, and thus, the making of epochs in different parts of the world, one may be able to conceive several plausible narratives about and for periodisation in global or world history, acknowledging thereby different historical experiences, and as many different historical pasts as we possibly can, thus de-familiarising oneself with what one thinks one knows, and opening up possibilities to reconsider this knowledge. Thus, one might even allow differently formulated manners of thinking about certain ‘alternative’ periodisation schemes (*chronotopes*), to become constituents of potentially ‘generalisable’ reflections on their historical value in one’s own analytical structures (expanding the models proposed in Jörn Rüsen’s chapter by adding multiple dimensions)—thinking of productive co-creations rather than stifling enforcements of certain model *chronotypes*.

This kind of approach does not deny the global pervasion of European thought and the rise of the West over the last two and a half centuries. It highlights, however, that European periodisation schemes and epochal divisions are as ‘local’ and ‘timely’ as any others, without for that reason completely dismissing the possibility of their wider applicability. Re-centring through the kind of transregional and transcultural dialogue suggested in this volume, offers a different variety of response to any kind of centrism, thus making possible more inclusive renderings of knowledge production to counter the inequities and occlusions of what has clearly unmasked itself as a very local—European—‘universalism,’ which is only a temporary one, too, as we know, as cultural flows and the ensuing asymmetries of power are constantly shifting direction.

Throughout this volume, therefore, questions of space-time and power will be a major focus. How do different regions, cultures, and times use periodisation as a means and a figure of political and intellectual domination, both within and without these regions/cultures/timespans? The volume begins with a handful of chapters scrutinising periodisation as method: what are important motors, conditions, factors in creating certain periodisation schemes—*chronotypologies*. We then turn to discussing different morphologies of periodisation in a global context, European and otherwise, *chronotypes* and *chronotopes*: how are they made, how are they performed, how can they be traced? In our second section, we consider how both *chronotypes* and *chronotopes* are constantly contested as they are becoming legitimised, and how they are turned into co-creative rather than imposing und oppressive concepts and regimes for periodisation. In this second section, the volume also offers a rethinking of periodisation on different *chronoscales*, considering micro- and macro-levels of historical thinking,

re-considering hierarchies and perspectives in the making of periodisation schemes from the community to the nation, to the region and, eventually, the world.

Our hope is that readers of this volume will become a bit more conscious of those shortcomings that are unavoidable whenever one uses a certain *chronologies*—set terminologies or periodisation schemes and their systemic powers—and when one engages a specific intellectual habitus coined by one particular discipline or regional expertise in using periodisation schemes to understand global change, when these schemes and typologies remain always already culturally limited.

Since periodisation schemes from all over the world are studied and understood in this volume not only on their own terms, but also in the comparative context of others at the same time, there is room for interaction and dialogue. An idea, an event, an epochal frame may thus be read from a variety of different angles as expressed by vastly different and often dissenting interlocutors. This volume (as well as the conference and the open peer review that preceded publication), is an attempt to make interlocutors from different disciplines and fields engage with each other in something one might call a productive process of ‘history-in-dialogue.’²⁶ While this process is necessarily one where none of the protagonists naturally agrees, as they do not share specific disciplinarily or regionally informed presumptions and terminologies, a dialogue like this may still enable these protagonists to escape the dilemma of misunderstanding claims for uniqueness as claims for precedence or superiority. One day, perhaps this may even allow for new ways of conceiving world or global history.

Figure

Fig. 1 Photo credits: Huang Yongping.

26 See the conclusion to Thomas Maissen and Barbara Mittler, *Why China Did Not Have a Renaissance—And Why that Matters: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018): 133–158.

Section I

CHRONOTYPOLOGIES

Questions of Space, Time,
Class, Race and State

Chronotypologies

An Introduction

Barbara Mittler , Thomas Maissen , Pierre Monnet

In this section, we engage in a critical dialogue with the idea of periodisation types, taking as our starting point the typology developed by Jörn Rüsen and introduced in chapter 1, “Making Periodisation Possible.” Here, Rüsen categorises “concepts of the course of time” (i.e. *Zeitverlaufsvorstellungen*) or periodisation models as “traditional,” and “exemplary,” “genetic” and “critical” types of narrative. In the five case studies that follow, we attempt to re-examine these typologies, considering, for example, the powerful hold of some of the most prevalent “traditional” and “exemplary” periodisation schemes in the world—speaking of the recurrence of revolutions, for example, in establishing linear concepts of historical thinking, or making use of established *chronotypes* such as the division into Ancient, Medieval, and Modern History. “Genetic” readings, according to Rüsen, emphasise the particular (national, racial, state) development of certain time frames within certain socio-historical and space-time contingencies, while “critical” approaches question the usefulness of specific periodisation schemes and the entire idea of their permanence. While Rüsen would contend that all of these typologies can be read as universal schemes, able to cover “the multitude and diversity of human life forms,” the authors in this section, each of whom take the perspectives of individual historical actors very seriously, are offering a variety of readings with different regional and disciplinary foci: from Islamic history writing (race), to subaltern history (class politics), from American history (time logics), to EurAsian *Histoire croisée* (space-logics) and finally, from the perspective of the Palestinian (non-) state.

The papers critically position themselves vis-à-vis the typology offered by Rüsen, by showing variations to what he has called “traditional” approaches to periodisation which emphasise the enduring value of certain normative epochal events (such as the Italian Renaissance, the Mongolian Invasion, the French Revolution, the Fall of the Berlin Wall) and their aftermath from which general rules for the development of time, with a universal and eternal validity within a certain historical unit, are formulated. While they discuss what Rüsen calls “exemplary” narratives which take such normative epochal events and make these events into *chronotypes* (Medieval, Modern), falling themselves more into the “genetic” than the “critical,” they simultaneously question to what extent typologies such as the four suggested by Rüsen,

are in fact applicable to different regions, times, races and state forms. As Susynne McElrone argues, periodisation is “temporal and temporary” and “in function it is impermanent.”¹ Indeed, in her view, all periodisations are always already “subjected to re-evaluation and likely reorganisation in the future as a result of, or sometimes in order to engender, a paradigmatic turn in our interpretation of the significance of the pasts they have ordered.” In her words: “The future restructuring of periodisations may be catalysed by uncovered aspects of the past that had remained hidden, future pasts that will have occurred in the interim, or the development of an innovative mode of thought that shifts perceptions about existent interpretations of the past.” It is the purpose of this section to scrutinize some of the theoretical possibilities enabling such a restructuring of chronological orders, thus rethinking the importance of particular ways of segmenting the past for the present and the future.

1 The citations following here are taken from her contribution to this volume, McElrone, 121.

1. Making Periodisation Possible

The Concept of the Course of Time (*Zeitverlaufsvorstellung*) in Historical Thinking

Jörn Rüsen

Levels of Time in Historical Thinking

Periodisation is a cognitive process by which the totality of history is divided into several parts.¹ This partition makes it easier to concretise the course of history and to concentrate on special issues of understanding the past. The periods we are familiar with from European history (like antiquity, the medieval period, early modern history, contemporary history etc.), are well established. From time to time these *Eurochronologies* have been criticised as outdated, or contested as inadequate for specific regional and historical circumstances: it is the purpose of this volume to address these issues in detail, as we describe how these established (European) periodisation schemes are still in use as concepts of historical thinking. Periodisation schemes somehow presuppose an idea of historical totality. But in contrast to the issue of periodisation itself, this question of the totality of history (which throughout this volume will be called *chronologies*), has not been a standard issue in the discourse of historical studies. This chapter attempts to analyze this pre-position of history as a temporal whole or a totality, as a logical system. I begin by considering the issue of time, since it is time that is central, whatever may be said about periodisation and history in general. Time is an essential element in historical thinking.² It is both a provocation and a challenge, as change happens inevitably and people have to come to terms with it. In many civilisations, the experience of change itself is therefore called ‘history.’ History

- 1 Cf. allusions to and a longish discussion of Orwell’s cynical references to this process in the epithet to the introduction and in the conclusion to this volume.
- 2 See Jörn Rüsen, ed., *Zeit deuten: Perspektiven—Epochen—Paradigmen* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2003); Jörn Rüsen, ed., *Time and History: The Variety of Cultures* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007); Chun-Chieh Huang and John B. Henderson, ed., *Notions of Time in Chinese Historical Thinking* (Hongkong: Chinese University Press, 2006).

can thus be considered a cultural tool which enables people to find their place in the ongoing changes of both the world outside and within themselves. History tells them what happened in the past in such a way that they are given a future perspective for their lives and thus, they are able to place their personal activities and sufferings in the ongoing temporal processes of their world. History thus provides a meaningful relationship between the past, the present and the future. It presents the past as a chain of events leading to the present, while opening up a perspective of the future. By doing so it refers in different ways to time.

First, history evokes the experience of time in the present, mainly in the form of ‘contingency.’ Second, it refers to the ‘changes of the human world in the past.’ Third, it places the time of the present in ‘a comprehensive relationship with the past and the future,’ and fourth this serves the ‘future-directed intentions and expectations of human activity.’

In all four instances, time has specific ‘meaning.’³ It is more than just a relationship between what went on before and after, more than only a change of circumstance in human life and more than a simple chronicle of affairs. Historians need a chronological order, so that they can arrange the events of the past in a reasonable and comparable way. In our period of intensifying inter- and cross-cultural communication such an order is all the more important. At the very moment when events of the past are interrelated by means of a *chronologics*, or historical order, their physical placement in time becomes enriched by historical meaning. This meaning changes a simple chronological order into a perspective of development and provides it with an explanatory function.

I would like to address this fundamental qualification which time achieves as a frame for historical meaning. It is a logical presupposition of each historical cognition, including periodisation. But it is rarely expressed in the discourse of professional historians. It is a condition of possibility for their work, pre-given in the historical culture of their time and mainly reflected in the academic field of philosophy of history. In order to consider this problem I would like to propose a list of levels of time in historical thinking (in order of increasing abstraction):

1. *level of existential experience of time:*
before/after, changes, coming into life/passing away, contingency;
2. *level of experiencing temporal change:*
in the past; (like the process of modernisation);
3. *level of temporal perspectives:*
as frames for interpreting the chain of events in the past (like rise and fall; progress);

3 See Jörn Rüsen, ed., *Meaning and Representation in History* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006).

4. *level of a comprehensive perspective on temporal changes in the past or of fundamental principles of meaning of temporal change:*
 this last level constitutes what I have called the *Zeitverlaufsvorstellung* (concept of the course of time).⁴

History as Unified Totality

History is usually presented as a series of singular changes which happened in the past (e.g. the history of the French Revolution etc.). This presentation uses time perspectives, which are constructed by general principles of meaning. The most fundamental and widely used principle is that of a general meaning of time in the human world.⁵ It defines history as a field of thinking, as a frame of reference, which includes all events which happened in the past. It integrates the evidence of the past into an encompassing dimension. It decides the selection of events as more or less important for historical knowledge; it decides the mode of explanation which combines different events and orders them in a meaningful, linear sequence which is teleological: changes in the past are given a direction at the end of which the present appears. Thus, chronology is transformed into history. It endows historical narration with a plot of temporal development which may serve as part of the temporal orientation for human life in the present. It makes the events of the past 'narratable' in their temporal succession and connection, and gives this connection an explanatory function.

Typically, this comprehensive frame of time is linked to the idea of progress. Other examples for such frames are the concepts of continuity/discontinuity, development, evolution, decay, rise and fall. In the social sciences this comprehensive frame is translated into a theory of social or cultural evolution.⁶ In premodern times, one of the most influential time concepts of this universalistic dimension in the West was the idea of *Providentia Dei*, the Providence of God.

- 4 I have analyzed this level in my theory of history: Jörn Rüsen, *Evidence and Meaning: A Theory of Historical Studies*, trans. Diane Kerns & Katie Digan (New York: Berghahn, 2017), *passim*.
- 5 See Günter Dux, *Die Zeit in der Geschichte: Ihre Entwicklungslogik von Mythos zur Weltzeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989).
- 6 Examples: Bernhard Giesen, *Die Entdinglichung des Sozialen: Eine evolutionstheoretische Perspektive auf die Postmoderne* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991); Bernhard Giesen, "On Axial Ages and other Thresholds between Epochs", in *Shaping a Humane World: Civilizations—Axial Times—Modernities—Humanisms*, ed. Oliver Kozlarek, Jörn Rüsen, and Ernst Wolff (Bielefeld: Transcript 2012), 95–110; Johann P. Arnason, S.N. Eisenstadt, and Björn Wittrock, eds., *Axial Civilisations and World History* (Leiden: Brill 2005); Günter Dux, *Historico-genetic Theory of Culture: On the Processual Logic of Cultural Change* (Bielefeld: Transcript 2011).

It appears in very different forms: as a divine being, a metaphorical image, or a philosophy of history.⁷ The divine beings can be found in different cultural contexts: Walter Benjamin's 'Angel of history'⁸ is a prominent metaphor for this constitutive force shaping history as a meaningful phenomenon in the human world.⁹

There is a painting by Klee called *Angelus Novus*. An angel is depicted there who looks as though he were about to distance himself from something which he is staring at. His eyes are opened wide, his mouth stands open and his wings are outstretched. The Angel of History must look just so. His face is turned towards the past. Where we see the appearance of a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe, which unceasingly piles rubble on top of rubble and hurls it before his feet. He would like to pause for a moment so fair [verweilen: a reference to Goethe's *Faust*], to awaken the dead and to piece together what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise, it has caught itself up in his wings and is so strong that the Angel can no longer close them. The storm drives him irresistibly into the future, to which his back is turned, while the rubble-heap before him grows sky-high. That which we call progress, is this storm.¹⁰

In this description, history appears as a unit, a whole or a totality of time, which mediates past, present, and future in a highly complex network of meaning (including meaninglessness). Time as the fundament of history can be represented in one single symbol or metaphor (indicating its unity). We find a lot of examples for this in early modern (European) history. 'Father Time' (a figure from antiquity, the God Chronos) is habitually shown running, on the wheel of fortune (Fig. 1).¹¹

7 See Jörn Rüsen, ed., *Zeit deuten: Perspektiven—Epochen—Paradigmen* (Bielefeld: Transcript 2003).

8 Walter Benjamin, "Über den Begriff der Geschichte," in *Gesammelte Schriften* I (part 2) (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1991), 691–704, [Walter Benjamin, "Theses on History," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 1985)].

9 See Marion Kintzinger, "Der Engel der Geschichte: Gestaltungsformen historischen Denkens in der Frühen Neuzeit und bei Walter Benjamin," *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 81 (1999): 149–172.

10 Walter Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," §9, accessed January 9, 2018, <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/benjamin/1940/history.htm>. The image referred to by Benjamin is Paul Klee's *Angelus Novus* (1920), an oil transfer and watercolor on paper (31.8 × 24.2 cm, Israel Museum, Jerusalem, B87.0994 which can be accessed here: <https://www.imj.org.il/en/collections/199799>

11 The illustration shows a 16th century image of God Chronos to be found on the cover page of a book published by Giovanni Nanni and entitled *Berosi Chaldaei Sacerdotis Reliquorumque consimilis argumenti auctorum, De antiquitate Italiae, ac totius orbis, cum F. Ioan, Anny Viterbensis Theologi commentatione, et auxesi, ac verborum rerumque memorabilium indice plenissimo, tomus prior* (The first volume on the antiquity of Italy and the whole world, from the pen of the Chaldean priest Berosus and other authors on the same subject and with the commentary of

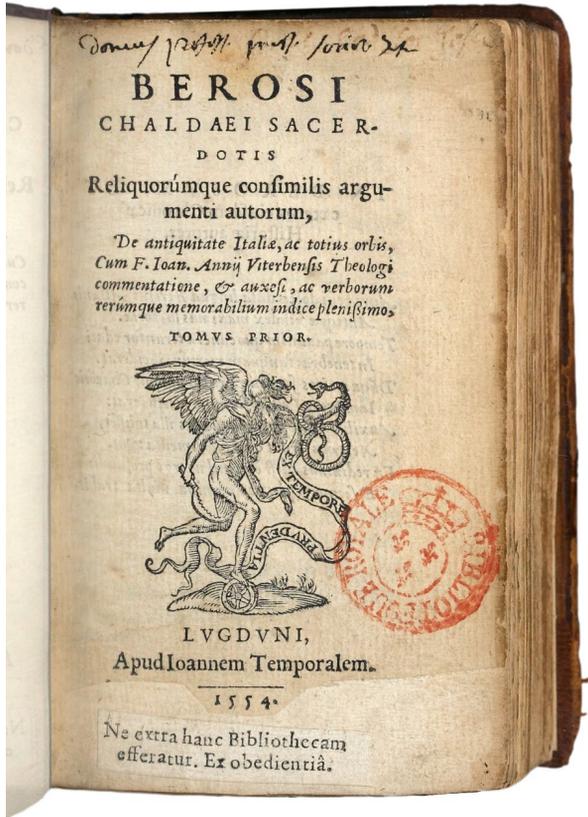


Figure 1 God Chronos in a sixteenth-century forgery by Giovanni Nanni.

In his left hand he holds the snake Uroboros. This snake—traditionally shown biting its own tail—stands for the cyclical concept of time as continual repetition. As an element in linear history, however, this circle remains open, and history as a narrative is based on a linear course of time. The wild loose hair on top of Father Time’s head symbolises chance (one has to be able to catch it). In his right hand Chronos holds a sickle. Originally, he was the God of Harvest, but the sickle’s meaning was reduced over time and now refers to his task of ‘cutting time’ into single moments, thus bringing about the fugacity of time.

The idea of a divine “Father Time” reappears frequently, throughout history and in different parts of the world. In ancient Egypt, for example, it is the god of

the theologian Giovanni Annio [i.e. Nanni] from Viterbo, enlarged and with a comprehensive index of names and noteworthy things) Lyon 1554, fol. 2r. Here, Nanni claims to have edited and commented (but really forged) lost texts by Berossus (4/3c BCE). The illustration appears and is discussed in Marion Kintzinger, *Chronos und Historia: Studien zur Titelblattikonographie historiographischer Werke vom 16. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1995), 272, fig. 53.

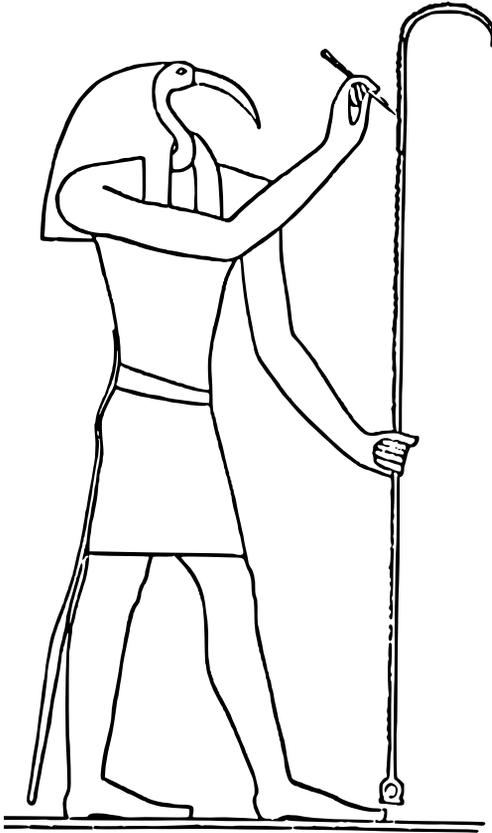


Figure 2 An Egyptian Father Time: Thot, the god of counting time and of the calendar.

the moon who dictates the phases of lunar time. The inscription to a typical image (Fig. 2) reads: “Thot writes for a king the year of his reign on the palm-leaf signifying ‘year.’” In a woodcut by Swiss artist Georg Sickinger (1558–1631), we see Father Time passing on his lore to his daughter, Truth (Fig. 3), an image which has been discussed for the epochal relativity involved in this visual metaphor.¹² A Frontispiece (Fig. 4) by Joseph-François Lafiteau (1681–1746), on the other hand, an anthropologist and missionary in French Canada, is informed by the *Mœurs des sauvages américains* whom he studied and inscribed: “Father time tells history about the beginning and end of human history as a frame of understanding the new world of America.”¹³

12 For the importance of this visual metaphor both for history and historicism, see Louis Roux, “Veritas Filia Temporis,” *XVII–XVIII: Revue de la Société d’études anglo-américaines des XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles* 68 (2011): 11–28.

13 See Joseph-François Lafiteau, *Mœurs des sauvages américains comparées aux mœurs des premiers temps* (Paris: 1724), fol. 2r, accessed January 10, 2022, <https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/lafiteau1724bd1/0005>



Figure 3 Father Time and his Daughter—Truth: Georg Sickingers' *Veritas Filia Temporis*, ca. 1600.

A modern allegory of history as a comprehensive time unit is contained in the mast-head of the *Herald Tribune* (1877–2013):¹⁴ in the center, it uses three symbols of time, the hourglass, Father Time, and a clock. Surrounding these, the premodern period is evoked by showing signs of agricultural work and Greek pillars on the left, while the modern period appears characterised by emblems of industry and technology (smokestacks, and large bridges) on the right. Modern about this allegory is the clear distinction between past, present and future—and the asymmetrical relationship of time dimensions in history.¹⁵

14 See e.g., the *International Herald Tribune*, Published with *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* (Paris: No. 26.509, April 6–7, 1968), 1, <https://www.closeupfilmcentre.com/files/2013/2898/7100/international-herald-tribune-martin-luther-king.pdf> or <https://seeklogo.com/vector-logo/66374/herald-tribune>

15 Reinhart Koselleck, “*Historia Vitae Magistra*,” in *Futures past*, Reinhart Koselleck (Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press, 1985), 21–38.



Figure 4 "Rethinking Barbarian Time": Frontispiece by Joseph-Francois Lafiteau's (1681-1746) *Mœurs des sauvages américains comparées aux mœurs des premiers temps*, 1724.

Four Types of Time Comprehension in History

The multitude and divergence of possible representations of time in history can be listed according to a general typology of meaning construction in history. I see four different types of strategies, developed elsewhere, that provide temporal change with historical meaning. These will be described in the typology below.¹⁶ The typology offered here does not concentrate on the literary or narrative form of historical writing. It focuses instead on systematically identifying those aspects that determine the interpretation of the human past in a specific *chronologies*. The four types suggested here are intended to cover a broad, if not the entire spectrum of historical representations of the past. They are conceived as *ideal types*, single components of meaning defining in history. They are deliberately abstracted from concrete phenomena and developed as ‘pure’ narrative structures of meaning. As logical components of the formation of historical meaning, they are effective and verifiable in concrete forms of historical culture. However, they seldom or never appear clearly or distinctly in concrete phenomena. The practical applicability of this typology lies, instead, in helping us recognise and discern specific structures of meaning and their guiding principles for historiographic narratives, and even for historical thinking or *chronologies* in general. Its analytical value lies in its clear logical difference and in the scope of possibilities in its complex system of relationships. The four typified ways to actualize the human past in the structural meaning of narrative for the sake of cultural orientation that will be described here, are the ‘traditional,’ the ‘exemplary,’ the ‘genetic’ and the ‘critical.’ A ‘traditional’ narrative represents history in such a way that its primary meaning (one that provides significance and practical orientation) is presented as staying the same over time. Historical meaning here attains the form of an intertemporal eternity: that which perseveres in the world and which continuously reappears in the shifting winds of time as perpetual meaning, an enduring concept for the ordering of human life.

Historical representations that follow this logic serve to confirm and reinforce this continuity—Özlem Çaykent, in her insightful contribution on Armenian and Turkish textbooks, shows how this *chronologies* is successfully used to build a cultural memory of nationhood and unity. The dominant notion of the course of time in ‘traditional narrative’ is that of continuity through the ages. Histories that follow this ‘traditional narrative’ are mediated by continually reproducing an agreement with the validity of its universalised origins. All the changes that might occur in the temporal happenings of the human world are fixed in the permanence of one normative and paradigmatic event.

16 Rösen, *Evidence and Meaning*, 161. I follow the text in an abridged form. See also: Jörn Rösen, “Narrative Competence: The Ontogeny of Historical and Moral Consciousness,” in *History: Narration—Interpretation—Orientation* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005), 21–39.

In contrast, the second type, the ‘exemplary’ formation of meaning in historical narrative, opens up the horizon of experience in historical thinking and turns all its accumulated experience and evidence into a pillar for orientation in the present. The ‘exemplary narrative’ of history which elsewhere in this volume has been described as *chronotype*—the tripartite division of historical time into Ancient-Medieval-Modern, for example, which is discussed in a number of contributions in this volume—approaches history as a plethora of events or situations that, despite their spatial and temporal diversity, present concrete cases that demonstrate the ‘general rules of human activity with timeless validity.’ Here, time is not immobilised in an inner-temporal fashion of eternity as is the case with ‘traditional’ narrative. Instead, each event (or series of events) acquires a model-like timeless quality. History functions as a teacher for life (*historia vitae magistra*).¹⁷ The contingent nature of time in actual historical events gains its meaning because these events reveal principles that drive action regardless of differences in time or place. In the framework of this exemplary form of narrative, historical thinking unfolds its power of judgement, where history teaches us to generate general principles regarding the human organisation of life from separate, isolated or individual events. We can apply these principles to concrete cases of actual events occurring around us in real time (which is what happens, for example, when one speaks of ‘the Medieval’ in India or in the Islamic world).¹⁸ In this type of *chronologics*, history facilitates a specific type of agency. From the perspective of timelessly valid rules of engagement, the events of the past span across space and time into diverse processes and activities. In a metaphorical sense, we could say that an ‘exemplary narrative spatialises time as meaning,’ in the case of a historical, event that leaves the narrowness of a predefined universal order and grounds human action in general rules through reflexive insights. As with the ‘traditional narrative,’ the ‘exemplary narrative’ immobilises time, but it does so at a higher level of ‘timeless and accepted insights.’

The logic behind the ‘genetic narrative,’ on the other hand, is based on the idea that ‘change creates or makes meaning.’ The events of the past in their temporal movement no longer appear within the confines of fixed practical principles of human interaction. Rather, they establish a dynamic process of transformation that takes the edge off change in the human world and shakes off the eternal value of accepted norms. Change itself becomes the proper human way of life. The past appears as change that relates our own way of life to previous ones in such a way that change can be seen as an opportunity. The relevant notion of the course of time here is one of ‘development,’ in which the changes occurring in human lives are understood as a dynamic by which continuity is achieved. Genetic historical narratives are based on

17 Cicero, *De oratore* II, 36.

18 See the contributions in this volume by Moshfegh and Maurya, for example.

the idea that differences in time that orientate human action towards future situations have not been predefined by the past. The relationship between the experience of the past and the expectations for the future, however, is asymmetrical. In summary, we can say that in the ‘genetic narrative, time is temporalised as meaning.’

The fourth type of historical narrative that I have identified here is the ‘critical narrative.’ It has a special status. It asserts itself as a negation of the other three narratives. Critical narrative deconstructs culturally predetermined ‘traditional,’ ‘exemplary’ and ‘genetic’ interpretive patterns (we see examples for this, clearly, in the subaltern historical discourses discussed in Milinda Banerjee’s chapter, as well as in the work of Marshall G. S. Hodgson discussed by Michael Geyer, for example). The ‘critical narrative’ focuses on events that challenge established historical orientations. Its relevant notion of the passing of time is one of ‘disruption, discontinuity’ and ‘contradiction.’ In this *chronologies*, the structure of meaning of a history is characterised through (negative) interpretation or assessment of the past (see Table 1).

Table 1 Four Types of Forming Historical Meaning

Type	Concept for the Passing of Time	Time as Meaning
Traditional	Continuity through change	Time is immortalised as meaning
Exemplary	Timeless validity of rules of human life that encompass temporally different ways of life	Time is spatialised as meaning
Genetic	Interested in developments in which ways of life change in order to remain dynamic	Time is temporalised as meaning
Critical	Focuses on disruptions, discontinuity, contradictions	Time is critically assessed as meaning

Why is the consideration of this philosophical issue of the temporal whole of history useful for the work of the professional historians? There are at least three arguments in favor of such a reflection:

1. Against an increasingly widespread fragmentation of historical knowledge, this kind of typology integrates the manifold fields and forms of experience of the human past.

2. Against the neglect of evidence in most parts of meta-history today, this typology is intended to bring back the importance of experience and evidence into historical thinking.
3. Against the domination of one or another type of *chronologies*, the narration of time, chronology itself, and the *chronotopes* it engenders, must be enriched by fundamental principles of the meaning of time, in order to avoid that the interrelation between the manifold, multifaceted and radically different representations of the past will not become (or remain) arbitrary.
4. Each of the types suggested here focuses on a specific idea of the meaning of time and accordingly a specific concept of the course of time in history.

All of these types are effective in historical thinking in very different constellations and interrelationships, as this volume illustrates. From a universal historical perspective, the 'traditional' type is the oldest and the most fundamental, while the 'genetical' type is the latest and most topical one, characterising modernity in historical thinking. It is an open question whether the radical changes we are witnessing today, in terms of global connectedness on the one hand and in terms of communication media ranging from holy scriptures to the new electronic media, on the other, will bring about a radically new type of logic in historical thinking, one that not only denies the idea of 'exemplary narratives' which, for the moment, are still more often than not *Eurochronologies*, but one which enables them to become critical narratives which will create a new *chronologies*. We will have to wait and see.

Problems of Periodisation Today

Currently, history writing is faced with a number of radical challenges which cast doubt on established chronologies and ideas of time. Time as such is only addressed in a criticism of the western concept of chronology, since it refers to a Christian measurement.¹⁹ But this criticism is not very convincing, since the original Christian meaning has faded away, and the meaningless counting of numbers has remained. Chronology is more useful when its contents lose meaning. Another problem is a growing post-ism, placing the work of the humanities into a post-position, i.e. the present is addressed only as a time after another time. This post-ism indicates a loss of confidence in the course of

19 See Masayuki Sato, "Comparative Ideas of Chronology," *History and Theory* 30 (1991): 275–301; Masayuki Sato, "Time, Chronology, and Periodisation in History," in *International Encyclopaedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences* 23, ed. Neil J. Smelser and Paul B. Baltes (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2001), 15686–15692.

history. Indeed, particularly for the western intelligentsia, the future is not a space for hope, but is, on the contrary, anticipated as a time of possible catastrophe. Finding no place for one's own presence in the course of time has consequences for historical thinking. The past is losing its meaning; meaning appears only as a construction, which is no longer rooted in evidence but only estimated as an invention of the historians.

This loss of an evidential basis for historians presents a challenge for the theory of history. It has to reflect the temporality of human life and its cultural output in a new way, looking for meaning in the anthropological and existential foundations of cultural orientation. Another challenge to historical thinking as it has developed in Europe and the 'West,' is the postcolonial criticism of traditional representations of non-western cultures. Facing the need for a new orientation vis-à-vis the power of globalisation, we need a new universal idea of time, which covers the multitude and diversity of human life forms in space and time. To develop such an idea we could use our knowledge of anthropological universals, existential dimensions of human life and the evolution of human culture in its various manifestations. The guideline in this new approach to the meaning of historical time could be our common understanding of what it means to be a human being. If we historicised this meaning, we may be led to 'the idea of time as a process of humanising humans.' This again would commit historical thinking to a new humanistic approach to historical experience and recognise it as a self-awareness of humanity.²⁰

20 See Jörn Rüsen, "Humanism: Anthropology—Axial Ages—Modernities," in *Shaping a Humane World: Civilizations—Axial Times—Humanisms*, ed. Oliver Kozlarek, Jörn Rüsen, and Ernst Wolff (Bielefeld: Transcript 2011), 55–79.

Figures

Fig. 1 Giovanni Nanni, *Berosi Chaldaei Sacerdotis Reliquorumque consimilis argumenti autorum, De antiquitate Italiae, ac totius orbis, cum F. Ioan, Anny Viterbensis Theologi commentatione, et auxesi, ac verborum rerumque memorabilium indice plenissimo, tomus prior* (The first volume on the antiquity of Italy and the whole world, from the pen of the Chaldean priest Berosus and other authors on the same subject and with the commentary of the theologian Giovanni Annio [i.e. Nanni] from Viterbo, enlarged and with a comprehensive index of names and noteworthy things), Lyon: 1554, fol. 2r, Bibliothèque nationale de France, NUMM-8702824.

Fig. 2 Günther Roeder, *Ägyptische Mythologie. Mythen und Legenden* (Egyptian Mythology: Myths and Legends), Düsseldorf, Zürich: Artemis & Winkler, 1998, 39, fig. 6.

Fig. 3 Georg Sickinger, *Veritas Filia Temporis* (Truth, Daughter of Time), ca. 1600, drawing, black chalk on paper, 19,3 × 31,4 cm, Universitätsbibliothek Erlangen, Graphische Sammlung, B 1032, <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:bvb:29-bvo41447158-9>

Fig. 4 Joseph-Francois Lafiteau, Frontispiece to *Mœurs des sauvages américains comparées aux mœurs des premiers temps* (The manners of the American savages as compared to those of the earliest times), Paris, 1724, fol. 2r, <https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/lafitau1724bdi/0005>

2. 'Islamic Civilisation' as a (Medieval) Problem

The Idea of Islamic Modernity in *Islamwissenschaft*

David Moshfegh 

Prologue: Historical versus Typological Approaches to Periodisation—in Response to Jörn Rüsen's *Zeitverlaufsvorstellung*

I often begin my history classes by telling students that they are, without being aware of it, already historians of a kind. They have some version, however unarticulated, of the story of their societies, picked up from their education, from movies and table talk. They have some sense of the story of their own families from received lore, family conversations and, at the tail end, their own direct experience. They are budding experts on the story of their own lives. They may even have some inchoate understanding as to the way all these stories connect to one another. My hope, beginning with this amateurish gambit, is to shake students out of the entrenched habit of viewing history as a forsaken land of alien dates and facts; to encourage them to approach its study as implicating their own stories and lives. In his opening essay in this volume, Jörn Rüsen asks historians to move in the opposite direction, to consider that the discrete, expertly researched histories they produce must be understood as part of a temporal whole, namely, as part of the total temporal experience of their societies and ultimately humanity. Historians must therefore consider their work as part of temporal experience as a totality, encompassing all the ways in which time and change acquire meaning, all the ways in which “chronology [is transformed] into history.”¹ Rüsen refers to this totality—interpreted as an existential and anthropological condition whereby temporal

1 See the chapter of Jörn Rüsen, “Making Periodisation Possible: The Concept of the Course of Time (*Zeitverlaufsvorstellung*) in Historical Thinking” in this volume, here 17.

experience is constituted as historical meaning—as the conception of the course of time (*Zeitverlaufsvorstellung*).²

In his brief sketch of this totality, Rüsén begins with an analytical outline of the different levels involved in the transition from temporal experience to historical meaning. At the first level, there is the “level of existential experience of time.” This most basic level refers to our threefold experience of time as contingency in the present, premised, on the one hand, on a sense of change (of before and after) in the past, and then on the opening, depending on how such change is understood, of a horizon of expectations for the future. At the next level, there are the concrete ways in which “temporal change in the past” is thematised, conceptualised and periodised; examples here would be medieval/modern (modernisation) or, in the Islamic context, *jahiliyyah* (ignorance)/Islam (prophetic revelation). Next, there are the distinct “temporal perspectives” which allow more generally for the movement of time as a whole to be thematised/conceptualised and so for change to become meaningful; examples of this would be the idea of time as cyclical, as decline or as progress.³ Finally, there is the level which encompasses all of the comprehensive ways in which temporal change can be made historically meaningful. Rüsén argues that these comprehensive modalities of constructing historical meaning together constitute the totality of *Zeitverlaufsvorstellung*, and that they can be captured, on the logical level, by way of a four-fold typology. According to this typology, history can be presented either as ‘traditional,’ ‘exemplary,’ ‘genetic’ or ‘critical’ types of narrative.⁴ In traditional narrative, time is immobilised by an eternal meaning transcending all change that plots history as a continuous flow from a universal, normative origin. In exemplary narrative, time is again immobilised, though now not through an original eternal meaning, but by being flattened into a uniform space in which a universal canon of rules or lessons of human behaviour, judiciously discerned from and applied to specific historical examples, plots history. In genetic narrative, temporal change assumes a dynamic force in which the past, driving beyond itself to an unprecedented future, the old, transformed into the new, plots history as development or progress. Finally, in critical narrative, existing historical narratives are disrupted, contradicted and re-evaluated so that the discontinuity comes to plot history as counter-history. According to Rüsén, given these four ideal types of historicising time, we are in a position to logically reconstruct how temporal change comes to be experienced as historically meaningful in any distinct or discrete historical phenomenon.

In this essay I will historically examine all that was intellectually involved in the attempts of European Orientalist scholars, who pioneered the new discipline of

2 See Rüsén, “Periodisation.”

3 See Rüsén, “Periodisation,” 16-17.

4 See Rüsén, “Periodisation,” 25.

Islamwissenschaft at the turn of the twentieth century, to periodise Islamic history. My aim is not only to show how these attempts at periodisation founded *Islamwissenschaft*. I will make clear that the Islamicist periodisation of Islamic history entailed contestations as to historical consciousness and temporal perspective between (modern) European Orientalists and the projected Muslim protagonists of (the medieval) 'Islamic civilisation' they studied. But I will also demonstrate that the periodisation (meaning, the modernisation) schema in *Islamwissenschaft* became itself the site of profound contestation and collision between Islamicist scholars, whose own historical experience drove them to conceive the character of the modern subject and of modernity as a whole in fundamentally divergent ways. In that sense, I can only applaud Professor Rösen's counsel to historians, that they not lose sight of the fact that their work can only be understood as part of the larger context in which their societies come to historicise and thus experience their time as meaningful. However, I begin with an extended treatment of Rösen's *Zeitverlaufsvorstellung*, his account of how chronology becomes history, because I find myself in fundamental disagreement with the typological analysis of how historicisation and periodisation become possible and how they should be studied. In contraposition to his typological account, I here propose an alternative, properly historical path to the study of historicisation and periodisation.

I am juxtaposing Rösen's typological approach with a properly historical one, because the idea of making history out of time, as an existential/anthropological condition that can be logically exhausted by four ideal types of history making, strikes me as altogether ahistorical. But why should we be worried about ahistorical accounts of history making? The usual method of criticising typological explanations is to highlight some trenchant example, in this case, a historical phenomenon, that would serve to undermine their analytic architectonic. Let's take, for instance, prophetic revelation. According to Rösen, it is *the* existential experience of time that a contingent present fixates on a given understanding of past change in order to open a horizon of expectations for the future. But, if we take the temporality of prophetic revelation seriously, we would have to admit that in it the future is not open; it is rather already determined (revealed) as a space of prophetic or apocalyptic judgment, the given understanding of which decides and thus makes clear the character of a contingent past while opening the present as a horizon of expectations as to the past it will become. I can now imagine a reader stopping to do the mental gymnastics necessary in order to be able to read prophetic revelation, all the same, in terms of Rösen's analytical typology. This is altogether unnecessary. This is because Rösen admits that the four ideal types of narrating history, in all their logical permutations and combinations, suffice to reconstruct all the extant comprehensive temporal perspectives in history that constitute the totality of *Zeitverlaufsvorstellung*. As such, he admits that these four types of narrative together

articulate the existential/anthropological condition, which makes it first possible for time to be periodised and experienced as historically meaningful. He must then also admit that the particular methods of narrating history (not to mention all the existing historical narratives to be reconstructed on their basis) cannot be considered veridical in their own terms.

Take the traditional and exemplary types of narrative: they are explicitly said to provide meaning by immobilising time, that is, by refusing the temporal change that is presumably at the heart of our existential experience of time. Traditional narratives are said to go so far as to eternalise time, that is, to deny that any fundamental change occurs. But the very existence of the other types of narrative, their various historical permutations and combinations, and not least the necessary proposition of temporal change in the existential experience of time as the sole means of explaining and reconstructing all such historical narration, make clear that fundamental historical change is real and has occurred. That in turn means that while traditional historical narratives may be existentially and anthropologically explained, their historical meaning cannot be taken seriously as they cannot be considered to be true. This situation is comparable to that of a typological account of religion that would explain how religious experience only becomes existentially and anthropologically possible by first articulating the ideal types of such experience. Such an account may explain the existence of traditional (or dogmatic) religions as an anthropological cum existential possibility, but the very plurality of such religions, not to mention the existence of other types of religious experience, would have to lead to the denial of their claims. In calling Rüsén's typological account of historicisation ahistorical, I am thus saying more than that it appeals to narratives that are admitted to be ideal types and so can only produce, to put it in his terms, a kind of second-order 'exemplary narrative.' So, to spell it out, it is not just that his typology deploys a universal canon of history making, abstracted from and applied to the totality of examples of historical meaning construction, thus constituting history as a uniform space. Rüsén's *Zeitverlaufsvorstellung* is ahistorical in a much more radical sense. For its ideal narrative types may explain how historical meaning is made possible only to the extent that they refuse to take any existing historical meaning or periodisation seriously on its own terms.

While the ontological stakes are different, the point I am making has some similarities with the distinction made between primary and secondary qualities in the Scientific Revolution. According to this distinction, sensory aspects of our everyday experience of objects, such as colour, odour, taste or sound are secondary qualities because they cannot be said to reside in the objects themselves. By contrast, the primary qualities, qualities like extension, size, weight and motion that were subject to mathematical measurement and formulation, were said to be factual aspects of objects themselves. Secondary qualities were accordingly explained in terms of the

interaction of the primary qualities of objects with our sense organs.⁵ In other words, the interaction of matter in motion with further matter in motion explained the possibility of our sensory experience of everyday objects, even as it 'discredited' this experience in its own terms. The seventeenth century distinction is made directly relevant and comparable to our case by the great anthropologist, Claude Lévi-Strauss, who argued in *The Savage Mind* that its two components—ordinary sensory experience of objects versus structural, mathematical formulation—encompass two altogether distinct modalities of scientific explanation. The first, our everyday sensory experience, he said, constituted a "science of the concrete" that was prevalent until the dawn of modern science: this mode of explanation, characteristic of the untrained human mind as such, registered the sensory language of objects as signs amongst the totality of which it sought to introduce coherence, a coherence that was mythological and produced meaning.⁶ The second, that of structural, analytic formulation, was the explanatory mode characteristic of the modern sciences: it made itself capable of the systematic reproduction of what it explained and thus produced results. According to Lévi-Strauss, the modern sciences, after having engaged primarily with the world of objects were now circling back to explain the human sensory experience of objects, that is, to explain the science of the concrete and so the human mind (which *was* the 'savage mind').⁷ This was to be the crucial role of anthropology. I have accordingly moved to Lévi-Strauss, because he too was concerned with the anthropological explanation of how meaning becomes possible; how the human experience of time and change is transformed into meaning.

But Lévi-Strauss provides for a cautionary tale. This is because his anthropological account of how the human mind creates meaning had as its primary target thinkers like Rüsén, who think there is something anthropologically (or for that matter existential-ly) primordial about history: that the translation of temporal experience and change into historical meaning is somehow an inherent aspect of the human condition.⁸ To counter such thinking, Lévi-Strauss highlighted the situation of pre-historical (so-called 'primitive') cultures, whose experience of time and change was certainly regulated

5 The distinction between primary versus secondary qualities was most famously articulated by John Locke, "An Essay Concerning Human Understanding," Book 2 "Of Ideas" (1690) in *The Works of John Locke in Nine Volumes*, vol.1 (London: Rivington, 1824), 109–121. But it can already be found in Galileo and Descartes. See the excerpts from Galileo's "The Assayer" (1623), in *Discoveries and Opinions of Galileo*, ed. Stillman Drake (New York: Doubleday, 1957), 274–279 and René Descartes, *Selections from 'The Principles of Philosophy'* (1644), trans. by John Veitch. Gutenberg Text, chap. LXVI–LXXIV, accessed September 1, 2021, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/4391/4391.txt>.

6 See Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966), 1–35.

7 See Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, 9–22.

8 *The Savage Mind* concluded with a heated critique of Jean-Paul Sartre's dialectical (historical) approach in these terms; see Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, 245–269, particularly 256–262.

to produce meaning, but without any need of history. Writing of such cultures of totemic classification and mythology, he described how they, like so-called traditional cultures, also eternalised time but went so much further in doing so that they did not even register change as events (history), which nonetheless were called on to preserve a primordial meaning. Instead, changes that might constitute events were visited on the totemic ancestors that mirrored and explained reality.⁹ Rather than acknowledge changes in the world as events that might accrue historical meaning, totemic cultures accommodated change by updating their totemic classifications and mythology, all the while maintaining an untroubled sense of them as primordial and eternal. So, one could make change meaningful by resetting language and mythology, without having to admit change as historical event and meaning.

Lévi-Strauss did not deny that historical cultures (like ours) experience change in terms of historical events and meaning. But he argued that the continuity, coherence and meaning we experience in the course of historical events is no less mythological than the totemic order of pre-historic cultures. For the historical meaning we assign to events is *always wrong* (in precisely the same sense that, from the perspective of modern science, our everyday sensory experience of objects is wrong).¹⁰ This, Lévi-Strauss said, is because there is no such thing as a continuous totality of time and history. Rather, what we call history is in fact composed of discrete *chronological* series, starting from sequences that can be tabulated at the level of events (hourly, daily, annual); then *chronological* series sequenced at the level of centuries, then of millennia. It is mere illusion then to think that these series might be collapsed into a totality, because they in fact constitute different orders and types of explanation. The information is richest at the level of events, but the capacity for systematic explanation the poorest. The higher up or lower down the *chronological* series one travels—up to human and biological development across millennia, down to the infra-transformations in brain, psyche and behaviour—the more one leaves the lived meaning of events to arrive at processes subject to the schematic explanations of modern science: anthropology and biology at the upper *chronological* series, psychology at the lower. History, Lévi-Strauss accordingly argued, demonstrated exactly how the sensory science of the concrete yielded to the systematic explanations of modern science; it proved that one had to put aside meaning (including historical meaning) in order to understand, on a scientific level, how it becomes possible.¹¹ As he notoriously put it, “As we say of certain careers, history may lead to anything, provided you get out of it.”¹²

9 See Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, 228–244.

10 See Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, 253–257.

11 See Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, 257–262.

12 Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, 262.

Again, why worry about ahistorical accounts of historicisation and periodisation? Because they generally end up trying to explain historical meaning by refusing to take this meaning seriously, that is, they rob history of the meaning that it has. And the more 'anthropological' they become, the more they will insist we abandon history altogether. I close this prologue by referring to another author and text, Nietzsche's "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life," that seems in rather ironic fashion to have been an inspiration for Rüsen's typology. Nietzsche's discussion of the three modes of history (actually the three *uses of history for life*), i.e. monumental, antiquarian and critical history, have their respective counterparts in Rüsen's elaboration of the exemplary, traditional and critical types of historical narrative.¹³ What Nietzsche says of the "historical men" of his time, who put their trust in history as a developmental process and of the Hegelian obsession with the world-historical process, mirrors Rüsen's description of the genetic type of narrative.¹⁴ However, Nietzsche's aim was something like the opposite of cataloguing all the logical types of narrating human experience that together exhausted how it might become historically meaningful. He talked instead of how the different styles of history, each in radically divergent manner, made history meaningful for life: how each fed its own desperate need; primed its own particular course of action; *took the meaning of its history dead serious*; created new experiences with it; created new life. Monumental history served the search for glory and greatness; antiquarian history made for the pious preservation of patrimony; critical history tore down the old to create the new. But each of these styles of history was equally dangerous for life when turned against its use for it: monumental history could dissimulate greatness to crush any new attempt at it; antiquarian history could crush its sacred roots by preventing the reinvention that kept them alive; critical history could become mere destruction by crushing the aura of illusion which all new life needs to live.

Nietzsche though, argued that history became above all a calamity for life when it lost its connection with it: when all histories were piled into a totality that allowed each only a relative meaning and none a living significance and seriousness; when all styles and manners of history were thrown together to define human experience as historical rather than thinking through the historical meaning of our time; when history became a science; when humanity became subject to a "historical education"; then history's meaning for life—its capacity to create a future—was lost.¹⁵ When the floodgates of history opened in a hypertrophy of memory, when distinct and incompatible cultures from all times became simultaneously present and so models

13 See Friedrich Nietzsche, "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life," in *Untimely Meditations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997 [1874]), 67–77.

14 See Nietzsche, "Uses and Disadvantages," 65–66, 104–108.

15 See Nietzsche, "Uses and Disadvantages," 77–87.

only (i.e. types), but not models for life, then any satisfying synthesis allowing for the creation of a coherent sense of self and style of life became impossible. With no convincing cultural identity on the horizon, a breach opened between the external sphere, now abused as artificial and conventional, and the internal sphere that turned into the inward site of the authentic self. But the endless search for the true self through all the relative meanings of history turned the self ultimately into at best an actor and dissimulator. In other words, authenticity becomes a value when it is no longer possible.¹⁶ The great irony of Rösen's typological account of *Zeitverlaufsvorstellung*, is that it too views itself as responding to a desperate present need. In the face of an increasingly post-historical culture that views history as meaningless and in the face of an increasingly global humanity, Rösen sees the cure in the existential realisation that human experience is inherently historical.¹⁷ But, if Nietzsche is to be believed, this is more of the disease than the cure, for the mere concession that humanity is historical robs us of the capacity to ask how our history is actually meaningful today.

In this essay on the Islamicist periodisation of Islamic history, I pursue accordingly a historical rather than a typological path to understanding the formation of historical periods and meaning. A historical approach to historicisation entails taking the historical periodisations one finds seriously, namely, as meaningful *because* they are veridical. Understood historically, historical periodisation becomes not a game played by historians, but a conceptual key to the experienced and practiced reality of the cultural context in which it is historically consolidated. Accordingly, fundamental contestations of historical periodisations and the meaning they encompass, the eruption of new periodisations, would signal broader shifts in historical experience and reality. Such contestations and shifts could be intra-cultural phenomena (as was the collapse of Christendom). Or, they could be the consequence of cultural encounters, which so often begin with trials of cultural consolidation and end with historical transformation. The periodisation of Islamic history in *Islamwissenschaft*, I will show, was a case in point that began with the assimilation (i.e. attempted modernisation) of Islam and ended with a contestation of 'modernity.' In all its facets, historicisation and periodisation, taken seriously, become the means of writing a history of reality, once it is accepted that reality is historical in character. Shifts in historical periodisation signal shifts in reality. We may understand the history of the modern world by thinking through all that was involved in the emergence of the periodisation, of the Medieval and the Modern, their universalisation and ongoing contestation and transformation. We will not arrive at a historical understanding of the modern world by weighing all the constellations of historical narrative types it may include. We might understand ourselves historically by thinking through the use of our own periodisations

16 See Nietzsche, "Uses and Disadvantages," 81–82, 84–86.

17 See Rösen, "Periodisation."

today (a project to which this volume is attempting to make a contribution). We will not understand ourselves historically by intoning that we are human because we are historical. It is often argued that a historical approach to historical meaning would inevitably end in the aporias of historical relativism. The opposite though is true. Not taking historical meaning seriously brings about historical relativism by treating all such meanings as simultaneously and relatively the same as, say, all types of an anthropological conditionality.

Islam as a Problem—Introduction

In 1910, Carl Heinrich Becker, a young pioneering scholar in the emergent field of *Islamwissenschaft*, founded the journal, *Der Islam*, the first organ committed to the discipline in Germany. Becker was himself the first Islamicist to achieve an academic chair within the *Kaiserreich* (at the newly founded Hamburg Kolonialinstitut in 1908). The gathering academic institutionalisation of the Islamicist field Becker represented, was not though a merely German phenomenon. *Der Islam*, still active today, was one of a flurry of such lasting 'Islam journals' that were founded in the decade before the Great War.¹⁸ The contemporary academic reader, conversant with the debates about Orientalism in the last decades, might quickly suspect that this moment of consolidation of a distinctly Islamicist focus in Orientalist scholarship constitutes one of the pivotal junctures for the birth of the theologocentric reduction of the history and culture of Muslims, to an essentialised 'Islam,' that would end in our own day in the idea of civilisational clash between the West and Islam. One could then read this moment as part of the rise of *The Idea of the Muslim World*, the title of Cemil Aydin's recent work, in which he argues that this essentialised idea was first created by Europeans, and then fatefully (and tragically) appropriated by Muslims themselves in fighting European imperialism.¹⁹ Such a reader though would do well to think through Becker's seminal essay, "Islam as a Problem," that programmatically introduced his journal

18 These were, first, *Revue du Monde Musulman* (1906), then Becker's *Der Islam* (1910), then *The Moslem World* (1911), then the Russian *Mir Islama* (1912) and then *Die Welt des Islams* (1913), the organ of the newly founded *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Islamkunde*. The phenomenon was well-noted at the time, and Georg Kampffmeyer (1864–1936) opened the pages of *Die Welt des Islams* by reviewing the development and pointing to what he took to be its larger meaning of a new discipline committed to engagement in the affairs of society. See G. Kampffmeyer, "Plane Perspicere," *Die Welt des Islams* 1 (1913): 1–6.

19 See Cemil Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World: A Global Intellectual History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017).

and the Islamicist discipline to the broader public.²⁰ Becker's essay speaks directly to the problem of essentialising diverse Muslim histories and cultures through 'Islam'; it speaks directly to contemporary sensitivities that drive people to speak of 'Muslim majority societies,' as opposed to the 'Muslim world.'²¹

Becker's essay began by making clear that his subject would be not the problems of the young Islamicist discipline, but rather "Islam as a Problem."²² The problem of Islam for the disciplinary study of it was namely the problem of essentialisation, by which I mean the reduction of a historical subject or phenomenon to some ahistorical or transcendent essence. Becker asked what could possibly justify referring to the massive diversity in the religious, intellectual, cultural and political life of Muslims across the world and history simply under the rubric of 'Islam'? No one would speak of Abyssinian Christians and Protestant Christianity in one breath under the rubric of 'Christianity,' and expect to be taken seriously. But this was somehow deemed legitimate in the case of Islam.²³ Here, the religious life of Turks and Negros (and Becker meant directly to juxtapose cultivated versus primitive religion in the juxtaposition), the intellectual height of al-Gazali and the Sudanese Mahdi, not to mention the historical fate of such distinct races as the Aryans, Semites and Negroes were all to be covered by the general concept of "Islam" and "Islamic civilisation."²⁴ Becker's aim in the essay was in fact to produce an anti-essentialist historical analysis of Islamic history that would unmask how 'Islam' had come to encompass an essentialised concept. The sources of the essentialisation of Islam that Becker addressed were threefold. First, there was the European philological essentialisation of Islam, which viewed it as simply the product of Arab culture and the Semitic monotheistic spirit. Becker made it repeatedly clear that a proper historical understanding of the advent of an "Islamic civilisation" would make clear that with all of the Arabic impact and variations, it had become a

20 C. H. Becker, "Der Islam als Problem" (1910), in *Islamstudien: Vom Werden und Wesen der Islamischen Welt*, vol. 1 (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1924), 1–23.

21 What I am calling 'essentialistion' could of course go in two different direction. On the one hand, one could essentialise Muslims by reducing them to their religious identity, namely, by assuming 'Islam' to be the total determinant of every aspect of their lives, of their diverse historical experience, of their highly varied social, cultural and political relations, all of which would thereby be reduced to some essence called 'Islamic society.' On the other hand, one could essentialise 'Islam' itself by assuming that it is exhausted by a given set of legal codes, authoritative practices or dogmatic pronouncements, namely, by depriving it, as a historical phenomenon, from the capacity for historical development.

22 See Becker, "Der Islam als Problem," 1.

23 See Becker, "Der Islam als Problem," 1.

24 See Becker, "Der Islam als Problem," 1–2. A general concept becomes essentialist, when it serves to deprive the concepts within it from their own distinct historical identity and trajectory. Hence, 'Islam' and 'Islamic civilisation' become essentialist if used to claim that Indonesians and Moroccans are bound as 'Muslim societies,' to have the same destiny. The 'German nation' points to a distinct German historical experience; the 'Germanic race' supersedes it.

reality precisely through the demise of Arab dominance over it.²⁵ Islamic civilisation, he said, was more the consolidation of Near Eastern Hellenistic civilisation than any Arab outgrowth. As he famously put it, "without Alexander the Great, no Islamic civilization."²⁶ The other two sources of the essentialisation of Islam, were though a good deal more paradigmatic. They focused rather on the fact that 'Islam' encompassed not only a religion that united all Muslims across the world, but also a state ideal according to which legitimate sovereignty emanated from Islamic leadership as well as a unified civilisation, a "cultural whole" in which Muslims, despite their differences, saw themselves primarily as Muslims.²⁷ It was now a simple step to move from this, via the trio of an Islamic religion, state ideal and unitary civilisation, to the theologocentric conclusion that Islam as a religion stood behind the idea of the Islamic state and Islamic civilisation. This essentialised and essentially medieval theologocentric view had been that of Christendom, and the self-identified Christian standpoint, that viewed 'Islam' as the monolith enemy and Other. In this reading, Arab Muslims had created the Islamic state and civilisation by spreading Islam through the sword. In contrast, Becker argued that the theologocentric essentialisation of Islam had not been merely a Christian invention. Rather, traditional Islamic Orthodoxy itself viewed 'Islam' as determinative of all aspects of the life, history and culture of Muslims. In other words, it was 'Medieval Islam' that had created and maintained, above all, the notion of a Muslim world and polity driven in all that occurred in it through Islam.²⁸ Consequently, in this modernist reading the Modern signified the era of critical historical consciousness, while the Medieval evoked one of self-essentialisation, which is to say, the traditionalisation of all changes and developments that made them appear in the guise of a religious origin projected as transcendent.

In seeking to proffer a critical historical, post-essentialist perspective on Islamic history and "Islamic civilisation," Becker argued that many of the Islamic sources had to be read against the grain. Namely, the Islamic ideal and theory propagated within them had not in fact conformed to the actual social and cultural praxis, so that the two had to be understood not in their identity, but in how one had served to shape the other.²⁹ Becker's essay provided an outline of Islamic history that did not take the orthodox definition of Islam to be definitive of the idea of Islamic polities and of Islamic civilisation. Instead, he tried to show how the Islamic religion, the Islamic state ideal and Islamic civilisation, represented distinct historical constructions that had ultimately coalesced into an ideal unity through the consolidation of Islamic law

25 See Becker, "Der Islam als Problem," 9–15, 22–23.

26 Becker, "Der Islam als Problem," 16.

27 See Becker, "Der Islam als Problem," 2–3.

28 See Becker, "Der Islam als Problem," 3–4.

29 See Becker, "Der Islam als Problem," 4–6, 21–23.

and orthodoxy, despite the cultural and political contradictions between them, as well as the cultural and political contradictions that this idealised Islamic unity continued to mask. For example, religious propagation, Becker argued, had played no significant role in the Arab conquests and the expansion of what was in fact at first an ‘Arab empire.’ Rather, in the growth of the Medinese state, under the prophet Muhammad and his successors, ‘Islam,’ which had been a matter of religious enthusiasm in Mecca, came to serve as a label allowing for the unity, albeit fractured, of the Arab nation. This unity allowed for the last and most stupendous Semitic migration out of the Arabian peninsula, due to the adverse climactic and economic circumstances prevailing within it.³⁰ The national Arab glossing of ‘Islam’ at this point, Becker argued, was made clear by the fact that the fiscal health of the Umayyad state was predicated on the existence of tribute-paying non-Muslim masses. The religious Islamicisation of the ‘Islamic empire’ took in fact two to three centuries to consolidate itself.³¹ “Islamic civilisation” was then neither an Arab phenomenon nor the creation of Islamic religious enthusiasm. Rather, it was in the de facto creation of a massive Islamic empire that encompassed the territories of the Near Eastern civilisations, formed under the aegis of Aramaic Hellenism and the Persian imperial heritage, that a new Islamic civilisation and synthesis emerged. As more and more of the culturally and intellectually more advanced non-Muslim subjects of the Caliphate converted to Islam and remade it in their own image; as the Abbasids adopted the practices of the religious bureaucratic empires of the Byzantines and Persians and so cultivated Islamicisation; and, as the economic unity and massive cultural mixing allowed by the united empire allowed the consolidation of a new Islamic heritage, which synthesised and put on a thoroughly new footing the Near Eastern heritage available to it, something called “Islamic civilisation” came into being.³²

Becker’s essay though argued that the unity of this “Islamic civilisation,” was in fact an ideal, theoretical unity that did not enjoin or capture socio-cultural practice. Rather, it was a medieval unity, which under the cover a sacred, Islamic law, theologised and reified all reality, making ‘Islam’ into a means either of rationalising pressing realities or of reading the latter backwards into Islam. Hence, Becker argued that the Islamic state ideal of unified Muslim sovereignty had also been consolidated precisely when its actual reality had dissipated, though it had remained the language of legitimate Islamic governance into the present of his own time. In sum, the idea at the heart of the notion of “Islamic civilisation,” that Islam is determinative of the social, cultural and political lives of Muslims, became normative with the consolidation of an Islamic Orthodoxy. However, the historical formation, development and

30 See Becker, “Der Islam als Problem,” 5–9.

31 See Becker, “Der Islam als Problem,” 6–7, 10.

32 See Becker, “Der Islam als Problem,” 12–21.

deployment of Islamic Orthodoxy itself proved that the religious strictures and laws it said constituted Islam functioned mostly as ideals that, acknowledged in the breach, served (in 'medieval' manner) ideologically to sanction social and political realities from which they diverged. So, the upshot of Becker's analysis of the 'problem of Islam,' namely of the essentialisation of Islam was the problematic survival of "Islamic civilisation" as a medieval reality. One could speak coherently of an "Islam" and "Islamic civilisation" as such, because Muslims themselves still harboured an essentialised view of its ideal unity. The problem of Islam, accordingly, captured the problematic 'medieval' self-understanding of Muslims, which, Becker argued was now in the process of being challenged through modern liberal and national cultural consciousness.³³ If one followed Becker's logic, the conclusion could only be that the problem of Islam was the problem of Islamic modernity. The logic of *Islamwissenschaft*, in this reading, could only be that of an auto-destruction. It would survive until an Islamic Modernity would dispel the medieval ideal unity of "Islamic civilisation" in Islamic Orthodoxy and allow Muslims to see themselves in their full cultural and national differences.

The task of this essay is to follow through on the complex ways in which the new discipline of *Islamwissenschaft* came, at the turn of the twentieth century, to apply the European historicist logic of 'Medieval and Modern' to the Islamic heritage. My argument will be that the globalisation of these categories was a good deal more interesting than has thus far been envisioned. I begin my analysis by way of the post-colonial critique of Orientalism and the debates on the character of European modernity and historicism to which they have led. In the second section, I argue that the terms of the Orientalism debates have served more to obfuscate than to illuminate the logic of early *Islamwissenschaft*, whose roots must rather be sought in the nineteenth century European 'science of religion,' *Religionswissenschaft*. It was in this nineteenth century European study of 'religion' that I argue the categories of the 'Medieval' and 'Modern' achieved a distinctly religious historicist rather than merely secular historicist meaning. In the third section, focusing on the work of Hungarian Jewish Orientalist, Ignaz Goldziher, who was already in his own time widely regarded as the founder of *Islamwissenschaft*, I demonstrate that his reformist application of the categories of the 'Medieval' and 'Modern' inaugurated the anti-essentialist, anti-philological and anti-theologocentric Islamicist discipline outlined in Becker's essay. In this guise, I argue that Goldziher's religious application of the European historicist categories of 'Medieval' and 'Modern' to Islam, was meant to show that it was a reformed Islamic monotheism that would be the telos of European cultural modernisation and the religious progress it made possible. Goldziher, thus, made of European historicism an Islamic historicism with Islam as the rightful telos of the universal history of humanity. In a final section, I argue that the ubiquitous "problem of Islam," namely, the question

33 See Becker, "Der Islam als Problem," 21–22.

in *Islamwissenschaft* of Islamic Modernity and how Modernity was to be globalised, led C. H. Becker, in the course of the Jihad debate in the field, during WWI, to the idea of an Ottoman *Sonderweg*. The idea of a distinct Ottoman Islamic modern path and of plural modern trajectories thus ultimately undermined the historicist idea of European progress as normative, and put all the plural modern paths on the same temporal path. Hence, this essay shows that while 'Modernity' began as a European project, its globalisation served to make it a contested site, both in terms of who could genuinely and fully represent it as well as in what it could ultimately be said to mean.

European Modernity, Orientalism, Islam

The notion of Modernity, of a 'New Age,' is a European historical schematisation, a *chronotype*, derived from European experience. However, in line with the universalist, globalising imperative of this schema, it has become a global condition that confronts all cultural trajectories across the world. From this contemporary transcultural perspective in turn, the idea of Modernity has itself become a highly contested site. Some say that we have never been modern, that Modernity has always been only rhetoric, not practice.³⁴ Others add that the rhetoric of Modernity has been the western and European imperial ideology, imposed on non-western peoples and civilisations in order to delegitimise and disinherit them of their distinct trajectories and cultural vocabularies.³⁵ An entirely different reaction has been to say that those non-western civilisations already carried the 'Modern' trajectory within themselves,

34 See, for instance, Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993 [1991]).

35 The most important representative of this line of argument, going so far as to posit the 'Orient' and 'Orientals' as the very creation of the invidious, racist historicism of modern Europe, is Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979); Afterword, in: Said, *Orientalism*, 2nd ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1994). A more eloquent and subtle assessment of modernist historicism as a European imperialist rhetoric of dispossession is Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000). Chakrabarty argues that the historicist schema, which made European developments into the markers of universal human progress served not only the colonial project by relegating the natives to the past and entrusting their future to European wards who knew the only path forward. The imperialist ethos of such modernist rhetoric impacted equally those on the left, and the natives who viewed, in the allegedly normative progress made by Europeans, a trajectory inexorably ending in universal equality and justice. As the European historicist frame only allowed the natives to view themselves in terms of lacking and inadequacy, they could only move forward and gain autonomy over themselves by becoming Europe, namely, by forsaking themselves, a perfect paradigm of dispossession. See Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe* (see this note, supra), 6–8, 30–42.

whether realized or not.³⁶ In this light, another move is to say that Modernity was not globalised by Europeans, but rather was from the start a global reality in which the Europeans were themselves participants.³⁷ As an intellectual historian of modern Europe, I would argue that the idea of 'Modernity' must be analysed in terms of the emergence of a specific historicist consciousness in seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe, and its consolidation within the European Enlightenment. It would be better to think through the contours and repercussions of this historicist consciousness than to deny its existence. On the other hand, it is equally useless to dispute that particularly in nineteenth century Europe, this modern historicist consciousness was not merely a periodisation schema that placed all human cultural experience on the same universal historical plane. Here Modernity was European; it identified and demarcated Europe from the backward non-European peoples that were judged in terms of their incapacity to embody modern historical consciousness and who were thus consigned to the past.

These are no doubt some of the considerations that drove Edward Said, in his critique of European Orientalism, to argue that Orientalist discourse was no mere exoticising pastime or recondite scholarly undertaking. The prevalent academic perspective remains Said's critique of Orientalist scholarship and of *Islamwissenschaft* in particular, as an essentialising, imperialist discourse that served to objectify and

36 This tendency is extremely widespread and varied. One can find it in the best scholarship of those seeking to bolster the prospects of peoples building a non-European future. Goitein, for example, in his famous book on the Arab/Jewish historical symbiosis, optimistically eyed a new, better beginning for both peoples by characterising their development as "primitive democracies." See Shlomo Dov Goitein, *Jews and Arabs: Their Contacts Through the Ages* (New York: Schocken, 1955), 27–34. One can see it in the great non-European thinkers and politicians that ushered in the post-colonial era, as in the case of the philosopher, later statesman and first vice-president of India, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, who assured his countrymen that republican self-rule was not for them a foreign import, but part of their founding patrimony and genius. See Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe* (see note 35), 10. But, the impulse has throughout also yielded easily to the risible and pathetic. Examples of this are legion, but to stay with one of the more recent cases in India; the government spokesmen of the ruling right-wing BJP, responsible for representing Indian science, have claimed that Indians had already created stem cell research, organ transplants and plastic surgery in Vedic times; and, if that wasn't enough of a coup, they had also engineered the first airplane, 7000 years ago. See Ananya Vajpeyi, "The Return of Sanskrit: How an Old Language Got Caught Up in India's New Culture Wars," in *World Policy Journal* 33, 3 (2016): 50. It may seem incongruous, on the one hand, to delegitimise the idea of Modernity and then to claim its characteristic features as having been always one's own. But the structural connection between the two is in the subaltern consciousness that persists in the shadow of the fight for equality—not merely in material and technical terms but, more importantly, culturally and intellectually—with 'Europe' and the 'West.' One can hope for the day when enough confidence is amassed to happily leave Modernity to Europe so as to fight for a better future.

37 See, for example, Sanjay Subramanian, "Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia," in *Modern Asian Studies* 31, 3 (1997): 735–762, especially 747–762.

dehumanise Muslims.³⁸ This Saidian critique has been broadened to argue that *Islamwissenschaft* has essentialised Muslims by way of anti-Semitic racism and/or Islamophobic theologocentrism, namely, the tendency, as I noted in discussing Becker, to make ‘Islam’ the totalising, essentialising determinant of every aspect of the historical experience of Muslims and the social, cultural and political practices in so-called ‘Muslim societies.’³⁹

Said himself positioned Orientalist discourse as a lynchpin of the modern historicist consciousness of the West, arguing that, from the nineteenth century onwards, this consciousness was founded on an invidious ethno-philological opposition between the Aryan subjects and Semitic objects of History.⁴⁰ Focusing particularly on the thinking of Ernest Renan, which he took to encompass all European Orientalism,⁴¹ Said argued that Orientalist scholarship was fundamentally driven by this philological/racial divide between the Semitic and the Aryan. This secularised, racialised historicism, which conflated language, race, religion and destiny, characterised the Semites as culturally and historically inert products of their desert environment and amorphous language, while touting the Aryan capacity to conceptualise and act upon nature to overcome themselves and develop as historical actors. Because the Semites philologically and culturally represented their desert environment, they could not appreciate difference, and for this reason were incapable of mythology and so were instinctively monotheists. Their indubitably great insight of monotheism was thus less an achievement than rather a reflection of their cultural emptiness and incapacity for further development.⁴² The

38 See Said, *Orientalism* (see note 35), 96–98, 208, 240–243; also, Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994). More measured, scholarly sourced statements of the position can be found in Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996). Vasudha Dalmia, *Oriental India: European Knowledge Production in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (New Delhi: Three Essays Collective, 2003). Zachary Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle-East: The History and Politics of Orientalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

39 On this “theologocentrism” of *Islamwissenschaft*, Maxime Rodinson claimed: “Those schools of thought that believe that almost all observable phenomena can be explained by reference to Islam, in societies where Muslims are the majority or where Islam is the official religion, suffer from what I will call theologocentrism. In the past, such a vision was held implicitly by all researchers in the [Islamicist] field.” Maxime Rodinson, *Europe and the Mystique of Islam* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2006 [1980]), 104. Said made the same claims about “Islamic Orientalism”; see Said, *Orientalism*, 305; also, Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997 [1981], xvi, xxxi–xxxiii, 10–11. That Rodinson, himself an offshoot of the Islamicist tradition that began with the *anti-theologocentric ethos* of Goldziher’s work, made such claims about its past, merely proves the evisceration the latter has suffered in the meantime.

40 See Said, *Orientalism* (see note 35), 130–148.

41 See Said, *Orientalism* (see note 35), 6.

42 See Ernest Renan, *Histoire général et système comparé des langues sémitiques* (Paris: Imprimerie impériale, 1855), 1–17. Renan’s subject headings said it all: “The role of the Semitic race in history:

Aryans, by contrast, first recognised nature and its diversity in myth and eventually developed the sophistication that led to scientific understanding and the formulation of this fundamental insight in modern scientific terms.

In the Saidian approach, the Orientalist tradition represented primarily a political phenomenon, a main branch of the nineteenth century European racism grounding imperial ambitions and rule.⁴³ It was a racialising and racist historicism in which the modern Aryan West spoke in the name of universal progressive humanity, while painting the Semites as caught in an immobile past from which they could not escape except through European imperial intervention. The Orientalist study of Islam—what Said always referred to as Islamic Orientalism—was no more than the most regressive rehashing of this racist, imperialist Orientalist discourse. In Islamic Orientalism, the Semites were allegedly the instinctively religious people and Islam was simply the Semitic religion, the other of modern secular sensibility. More recently, Gil Andijar has sought to complete the Saidian picture by arguing that Orientalist anti-Semitism and Islamophobic theologocentrism, namely, the essentialisation and demonisation of Semites/Muslims by way of reduction to race and religion, went hand in hand. First, he contends, the Semites were defined as 'the religious people' (as in Renan), then the Jews were reduced to a racial type, and the Arabs and Muslims to 'Islam.'⁴⁴

Said's critique of Orientalism led in fact to a trenchant debate, in which the divergent treatments of the Orientalist tradition sketched out fundamentally opposed standpoints on the nature of European Modernity itself. Namely, while Said clearly won the day within the 'Middle-East' field, the Area Studies reformulation of 'Islamic Studies' in the post-WWII American academy, he was vociferously opposed by stalwarts of the

this role is more religious than political... Monotheism summarizes and explains all the characteristics of the Semitic race... The Semites don't have mythology... The religious intolerance of Semitic peoples... The Semites have neither science nor philosophy; they lack curiosity: Arab philosophy is not a Semitic product... Semitic poetry, essentially subject, without variety... The Semitic spirit lacks sentiment for nuances... The lack of the plastic arts amongst the Semites... They don't have an epic... The Semitic languages only have one type..." Renan, *Langues sémitiques*, 479. See more generally, Maurice Olender, *The Languages of Paradise* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 51–79.

- 43 "My contention is that Orientalism is fundamentally a political doctrine willed over the Orient because the Orient was weaker than the West, which elided the Orient's difference with its weakness." This meant that "every European, in what he could say about the Orient, was consequently a racist, an imperialist, and almost totally ethnocentric. Said, *Orientalism* (see note 35), 204.
- 44 On this "Semitic hypothesis," see Gil Andijar, *Semites: Race, Religion, Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 13–38. As Said himself put it: "For Orientalism, Islam had a meaning which, if one were to look for its most succinct formulation, could be found in Renan's first treatise: in order best to be understood Islam had to be reduced to 'tent and tribe'." Said, *Orientalism* (see note 35), 105.

Orientalist tradition.⁴⁵ Foremost amongst them, the Islamicist Bernard Lewis, who, in his early heated exchange with Said, painted the trajectory of Orientalist scholarship by contrast in terms of disciplinary formation and the growing professionalisation of the European academy. Rather than representing imperialist interests, Lewis argued that the Islamicist discipline was characterised by the clear epistemic imperative to push beyond all such interested attitudes and biased motivations, towards genuine humanistic understanding.⁴⁶ For defenders of the Orientalist tradition like Lewis, it could only be judged by the yardstick of specialised *knowledge*, raising itself beyond the merely cultural and political; no other yardstick made sense. Few in the academic context today subscribe to such positivist presumptions of epistemic innocence and their ‘politics of truth.’ However, what has since made Lewis’s position risible is the fallout from his own incessant political interventionism: *he* was the founder of the ‘clash of civilisations’ model.⁴⁷

In the context of the war on terror, such heated debates about Orientalism seemed in themselves to play into the clash of civilisations mentality. To counter the accumulating polarisations and cross-demonisation, many scholars, most impressively represented by Suzanne Marchand’s work on German Orientalism, have sought to

45 Bernard Lewis championed Orientalist scholarship contra Said in terms of its growing academic professionalisation: Bernard Lewis, “The Question of Orientalism” in *Islam and the West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 99–118. Lewis, “Other People’s History” in *Islam and the West*, 119–130. The extended treatment of Orientalists in this guise, as lonely, ignored scholarly enthusiasts, is Robert Irwin, *Dangerous Knowledge: Orientalism and Its Discontents* (Woodstock: Overlook Press, 2006). Before Said, the thematic of growing academicisation and professionalisation had long driven the ‘internal histories’ of the field: Johann Fück, *Die arabischen Studien in Europa bis in den Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1955). Rudi Paret, *The Study of Arabic and Islam at German Universities: German Orientalists since Theodor Nöldeke* (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1968). Such professionalisation discourse has also dominated attempts to reassess Orientalist figures, like Goldziher, that clearly did not conform to Said’s presumptions: Lewis I. Conrad, “Ignaz Goldziher on Ernest Renan: From Orientalist Philology to the Study of Islam” in *The Jewish Discovery of Islam: Studies in Honor of Bernard Lewis*; ed. Martin Kramer (Tel Aviv: Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, Tel Aviv University, 1999), 137–180. The in fact highly political usage to which such professionalisation discourse was put by Lewis and those close to him is evident in Martin Kramer, *Ivory Towers on Sand: The Failure of Middle-Eastern Studies in America* (Washington, DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2001). For Kramer, ‘the failure of Middle-East Studies in America’ was that Middle-East scholars had become critical of rather than serving US foreign policy prerogatives; Kramer’s book was, in part, a primer on how to change the scholarly landscape so as to be able to recruit them once again.

46 This was the fundamental claim at the heart of Lewis’s two essays, “The Question of Orientalism” (see note 45), 99–118, and “Other People’s History” (see note 45), 119–130, that directly waded into the debates.

47 See, Lewis, “The Roots of Muslim Rage,” 56–58. See the telling article in this regard by Michael Hirsh, “Bernard Lewis Revisited,” in *The Washington Monthly* (Nov. 2004): 13–19.

replace the one-dimensional characterisations of the Orientalist legacy in the Orientalism debates.⁴⁸ The proponents of a 'third way' have, to this end, mostly focused on the Orientalist heritage as primarily a pregnant *cultural* phenomenon:⁴⁹ they have shown that one is bound to find in the academic Orientalism of the nineteenth century not simply the creation and ordering of 'Others,' but also a European search for cultural roots and origins.⁵⁰ This search for cultural identity came, of course, to involve all manner of self-projections, some with quite ambivalent and invidious consequences for 'internal outsiders,' like the Jews, who were accordingly pushed to the margins of this new story of western civilisation.⁵¹ By expanding the range of cultural identity and identification beyond the Christian and Classical canons, Orientalist scholarship also introduced the promise—if left to us to fulfill—of a more cosmopolitan, less 'Eurocentric' sense of self.⁵² Nonetheless, in this new scholarship too, 'Islamic Orientalism' has tended, no doubt with an eye to teleologies ending in contemporary conflicts,

48 See Suzanne L. Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race, and Scholarship* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009). Marchand's cultural reading of Orientalism as a western bid at civilisational origins and prospects beyond the Judaic and Hellenic goes back in spirit to the work of Raymond Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe's Rediscovery of India and the East, 1680–1880* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984 [1950]).

49 For Marchand's characterisation of a "third way," see Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire* (see note 48), xx–xxv. As she put it: "As I became more and more interested in finding out what German orientalism, as a cultural phenomenon was, I became less and less convinced that it was about European culture 'setting itself off against the Orient' or that its leading ideas were informed by the imperial experience." Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire*, xxiii.

50 This meant a focus on what it meant fundamentally to be 'Christian' and 'German' and so preoccupation with the Biblical Orient: see, for example, Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire* (see note 48), xvii–xxiv, 35–52, 105–113, 167–186, 212–227, 236–249.

51 See particularly Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire* (see note 48), 239–240, 244–245, 300–311, 267–270, 279–291.

52 Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire* (see note 48), 498. Marchand's ambivalence about German Orientalism—that its cultural self-projections on the basis of newfound roots beyond the Judaic and Hellenic were self-absorbed and invidious but also opened the path to a multi-cultural future, mirrored the ambivalence of what I take to be its spiritual model, namely, Raymond Schwab's ambivalence about what he called the 'Oriental Renaissance.' Schwab, however, associated the dangers of Orientalism—the self-obsessed search for cultural roots for the purposes of invidious cultural self-assertion—squarely with the Germans, calling it the "*furor teutonicus*." Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance* (see note 48), 446. But, he took the broader 'Oriental Renaissance' to have involved "the discovery that there had been other Europes" (XIII), opening the path to a multi-civilisational "integral" humanism (49), because the "ultimate meaning" of Orientalism was "the absolute equality of all races and ages." (403). See also Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance*, 473–478.

to remain on the margins as something like the imperialist, ‘politicised’ bad apple of the Orientalist canon.⁵³

The Orientalism debates, accordingly, were predicated on divergent verdicts on a Modernity that was distinctly European and historicist. In one reading, this European historicism, pitched in a universal human vocabulary, had been the means of divesting the ‘Orientals’ of their humanity, of portraying them as racially incapable of such universal human consciousness and progress. It had been a political tool for caging them in an eternal past and thereby robbing them of their future. European imperialism was thus not an accidental feature but rather the very meaning and telos of a European Modernity, that was fashioned as an Aryan prerogative against the ‘Medieval’ Semites. Those who defended European modernist historicism, against Said, continued to insist on the thematic of a universal human advance enabled by epistemic progress. In this version of the European modernist narrative, the ‘developed, democratic West’ served again as the model for the globalisation of its presumed universal values, its study and accumulating knowledge of non-Europeans, preparing the ground for their eventual realisation of what it had already achieved. Meanwhile, the proponents of a ‘third way’ beyond the knowledge/power polemics waged between ‘Europe’ and its Others, marked also a distinct trajectory for European Modernity. By interpreting the European study of the Orient in terms of a search for cultural identity and so of cultural self-fashioning, this stance constructed European Modernity as an unfinished project, one that beckoned a multi-civilisational, multi-cultural future, but which Europeans themselves, in their self-absorbed use of it for the purposes of cultural self-assertion, had been unable to achieve. Hence, the Orientalism debates dissolved themselves into directly opposed visions of the meaning and telos of European Modernity: 1) the political deployment of a universal humanist vocabulary to ideologically engineer its opposite, the imperialist dehumanisation of non-European Others; 2) The European achievement of universal values and knowledge that would act as a catalyst for their ultimate de facto globalisation and realisation; 3) the promise of a universal, multi-cultural future, which had not yet been achieved by Europe itself.

53 As Marchand put it, “I will argue that in some fields, such as Islamic Studies and Sinology, involvement in the imperialist projects of the Reich blunted or redirected passions that might otherwise have been turned inward.” Namely, the passions of the ‘core’ disciplines of German Orientalism had been focused on establishing German cultural identity. Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire* (see note 48), 216; see also 220, 356–367.

The Science of Religion, *Islamwissenschaft*, and Modern Religion

In the rest of this chapter, I would like to demonstrate the way in which Said's account of the Orientalist globalisation of European historical categories is complicated once we understand the context within which the European historicist schema of 'Medieval' and 'Modern' was applied to the Islamic heritage. I argue that it was this globalising application of 'Medieval' and 'Modern' to Islam that first led to the founding of *Islamwissenschaft*, or the disciplinary study of Islam, in the work of the Hungarian Jewish Orientalist, Ignaz Goldziher, in the closing decades of the nineteenth century. Not only did Goldziher not pit the modern secular West against the Medieval Semitic Islam, he also sought to displace Renan's racialisation of history with his own anti-racial universalised historicism. Goldziher's globalising application of 'Medieval' and 'Modern,' rather than imperialist imposition, represents one of the ways in which the idea of Modernity became the contested site it is today. Goldziher's conceptualization of Islamic history derived from his reformist Jewish background. In contrast to Renan's racialisation of Islam, it sought to position Modernity as the internal destiny and telos of Islamic history. To understand how Goldziher could come to associate not simply Europe but Islam and Judaism with Modernity, I suggest that we study the trajectory of *Islamwissenschaft*, not simply in the context of the Orientalism debates about whether Orientalism represents essentially racist, imperialist politics, or is primarily an epistemic process of professionalisation and disciplinary formation, or encompasses an episode in European cultural self-fashioning. Namely, it means moving beyond attempts to reduce *Islamwissenschaft* to 'politics,' 'knowledge' or 'culture,' to see how it was all these things at the same time.

Against such reductionist treatments of Orientalist scholarship, I propose studying *Islamwissenschaft* in the context of the nineteenth century European study of religion from which it emerged. Namely, I propose studying *Islamwissenschaft* through what was termed the 'science of religion,' or *Religionswissenschaft*. It may seem that turning to the modern European study of religion and its critical historical methodology, could only serve to repeat in a different key the invidious deployment of the idea of a European modernity pitted against non-Europeans. In fact, this seems to be at the heart of the Modern/Medieval distinction with the Medieval intimating the dark, dogmatic authority of religion over all areas of life. The very idea of religion as encompassing a transcultural, transhistorical aspect of human experience across all religious traditions and phenomena has, as in the work of Talal Asad, been analysed as itself a creation of secular Western Modernity. Asad has argued that the very notion of 'religion' as something that supposedly all putatively 'religious' traditions across human societies and history share, is no more than a product of

the modern anthropologisation of religion itself: ‘religion’ is a mirror figure of the secular and secularisation processes that analyse religious traditions through anthropological categories not their own and thus suggest that ‘religion,’ when unmasked as all too human, can act (legitimately) only as bulwark for the irrational areas of life not amenable to the secular. In this reading, ‘religion,’ as a category circumscribed within a specific area of life, particularly belief about its irrational aspects, represents a secular policing of the ‘Medieval’ pretensions of religious traditions to account and prescribe for all human experience and beyond. For Asad, European Modernity is secular, and ‘religion’ is a secular critique of the ‘Medieval.’ Again, a Modern Europe stands against a Medieval Islam.⁵⁴

In my work on the ‘science of religion’ tradition, I argue that neither the category of ‘religion’ it cultivated nor its critical historical methodology can be understood in terms of such a secularisation narrative. To understand the ‘science of religion’ tradition in nineteenth century European scholarship is to see the way in which Asad is *right* in arguing that the notion of ‘religion’ is a modern product of the anthropologisation of religious traditions, but *wrong* in thinking that it is an inherently secularist or reductionist product. The ‘science of religion’ tradition in nineteenth century scholarship emerged as an anthropological championing of religion that served to create the notion of ‘religion’ as an irreducible aspect of human experience. The proud products of nineteenth-century scholarship, the critical historicist and comparative study of religion (as well as mythology) long developed within its framework.⁵⁵

54 For such evaluation of the ‘anthropological construction of religion,’ see Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 27–54; Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 21–66.

55 Maurice Olender had already made clear that the “new religious sciences” of nineteenth century Europe with their critical philological methodology had not represented a secularist departure but, while pretending to “treat all religions in the same way,” had set about “to impose a Christian providential meaning on the new comparative order.” See Olender, *The Languages of Paradise* (see note 42), 136–138. Hence, Olender rightly corrected Edward Said’s argument that such Orientalist philology represented a secularist, historicist racialisation of what had previously been a religious animus. See Said, *Orientalism* (see note 35), 120–121, 82–86. Where Olender went wrong though was to discern only one racialised and predominantly racist stream within these new religious sciences: one that, like Said, viewed the new scholarship as riven by the Semitic/Aryan distinction, whereby Christianity came to be formulated as an Aryan historical achievement. Not surprisingly, like Said, Olender’s focus, in this vein, was on Renan. See Olender, *The Languages of Paradise* (see note 42), 68–74. My argument is that the philological racial branch of the new ‘science of religion’ was merely one such branch and that within the broader Christian historicism within which it emerged. Soon such Christian historicism had to vie a Jewish historicism and ultimately *Islamwissenschaft* emerged in the work of Ignaz Goldziher as an Islamic historicism. On the general question of secularism and the ‘new religious sciences,’ see also Suzanne Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire* (see note 48), xxvi–vii.

What the nineteenth-century scientists of religion offered were comparative and historicist accounts of the religious experience in its progress through the religions and the religious history of humanity, but thereby also the promise that their own critical historical study would fulfil this progress by reaching a proper understanding and realisation of pure 'religion,' allowing it to become what it was destined to be. Our category of 'religion' thus arose from this nineteenth-century liberal Protestant conception of 'religion' as a distinct sphere of human experience, more *and* less progressively represented in humanity's religions and religious history, whose Historical telos was its fulfilment in its purity. The 'science of religion' then, far from any secularist debunking of 'religion,' involved the historicist idealisation and production of it, that parsed religious traditions and canons against the history of their formation to argue that their promise lay not in any presumed immaculate origin, but in their end, as divulged critically. My argument, in laying out the trajectory of the 'science of religion' in nineteenth-century European scholarship, is that *Islamwissenschaft* arose in the work of Ignaz Goldziher in the closing decades of the century as a science of religion aimed at the teleological purification and idealisation of the Islamic heritage, namely, that Islamic monotheism, when critically reformed, can be viewed as the telos of the religious progress in human history.

The idea that there is an irreducible and autonomous realm of human experience that is distinctly religious in character, developed in Protestant thought, particularly in the work of Friedrich Schleiermacher, at the turn of the nineteenth century.⁵⁶ His notion of religious experience thus posited 'religion' as a transcultural, transhistorical aspect of all human experience and development over time. All positive religious phenomena that could be called such across cultures and history, from sacrificial rites to the most personal, mystical devotion, were to be referred to and judged by the standard of 'genuine' religious experience and its peculiar essence.⁵⁷ This idea of 'religion' as a transhistorical, transcultural aspect of human reality should remind us of those other such concepts posited in the nineteenth century as essentially natural human categories—namely, those of 'culture' and 'nation,'⁵⁸ against and through

56 The seminal text was Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988 [1799]).

57 For a historical critique of this modalisation of religious life as "religious experience," see, Martin Jay, *Songs of Experience: Modern American and European Variations on a Universal Theme* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 78–130.

58 On the advent of 'nationality' as a modular, naturalised transhistorical category, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 7, 80–81, 113, 163–165. On the modalised and modular construction of 'culture' as a transhistorical category, see Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 90; Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Continuum, 1994), 41. See also on 'aesthetic experience," Jay, *Songs of Experience* (see note 7), 131–169.

which the distinctly religious came to be defined.⁵⁹ Like ‘culture’ and ‘nation,’ what was called ‘religious experience’ did not simply capture all that was religion and its development over time. Rather, it was the idea of religious experience that for the first time created something called ‘religion,’ encompassing all humanity and history and thus the concept of religion still prevalent into our own time. After all, the so-called religious traditions in the pre-modern past did not generally conceive of themselves and their rivals in comparative, modular fashion, but rather hierarchically and polemically, through the proper understanding of, and relationship to, God or the cosmos.

The idea of religious experience as a distinct, irreducible aspect of what it means to be human first emerged in the work of Schleiermacher precisely as the means of overcoming ongoing attempts in Enlightenment thought to reduce religious beliefs and practices to putatively more fundamental aspects of human life. Religious beliefs were thus reconfigured as encompassing more or less—and it was generally less—rational belief about the world, creation, the soul, the afterlife. Religious prescriptions were considered to encompass a more or less—and it was generally less—pure branch of moral action and ethics. Hence, many Enlightenment thinkers made a distinction between natural (or rational) religion as constituting proper belief or morality, as against the positive religions of human history. Schleiermacher went in the opposite direction: validating all actual human experience of religion in history, he preached the idea of religious experience against just this reduction of it into the dichotomy between belief and action, knowledge and morality. He did so by pitching ‘religious experience’ against this fact/value dichotomy itself. Schleiermacher defined religious experience in terms of humanity’s sense of dependence, of the holistic feeling of infinity and the infinite

59 Jonathan Sheehan, for example, argues that the Enlightenment Bible was, in the nineteenth century, to become the “cultural Bible” and the “national Bible.” See Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible: Translation, Scholarship, Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 219–240. As he put it, “The German Bible simultaneously created a German religion, a German culture, and a German nation.” Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible*, 227. That said, it is crucial to understand that the category of “religion” came to be defined *through* and also *against* that of “culture” and “nationality.” Hence, “religion” came to be defined in terms of its universality and individuality as against the cultural capacity to create, through such a universal perspective, an integral, public national synthesis. This dynamic, for example, was clear in Abraham Kuenen, *National Religions and Universal Religions* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1882). Kuenen did not only invidiously compare universal versus national religions; he argued that there was essentially only one true universal religion, Christianity, but that was because it was the only religion bound historically ever to have its message developed anew in diverse national contexts and at different stages of civilisation, providing impetus to the forward progress of both: Christianity is “the most universal of religions...because it is best qualified for its moral task—to inspire and consecrate the personal and the national life.” Kuenen, *National Religions*, 292. Of the two other religions he treated, Islam was said to be just national, Buddhism not national at all and Christianity the most universal religion because subject to ever renewed nationalisation; it was the religion of the future. See Kuenen, *National Religions*, 297–298.

connectedness of all being.⁶⁰ One is reminded of the 'oceanic feeling' that Freud discarded as the foundation of religious attitudes in *Civilization and Its Discontents*.⁶¹ The 'oceanic feeling' functioned as just this foundation for the scholars of what came to be known as the 'science of religion' in the nineteenth century. The immediate feeling of being part of an infinite, meaningful whole, Schleiermacher argued, was the means by which to redeem a world in which fact had become divided from value, knowledge from morality. Religious experience would save a world in which human experience had become increasingly depersonalised into empirical data, serving to secure the accumulation of objective, public knowledge, but no longer able to provide direction and meaning. The immediate, intuitive sense of being part of a meaningful whole was meant to congeal into just such a concrete sense of personal and cultural direction, animating equally belief and action.⁶² History, Schleiermacher thus read, as a scene of religious progress towards the realisation of the truly universal experience religion was meant to be, and the subject of this progress was to be Protestant Christianity, which he argued alone had the capacity for the full idealisation to become pure 'religion.'⁶³

The attraction of the idea of 'religious experience' for scholars of religion was that it began with actual human experiences of the sacred in order to understand the meaning and role of 'religion.' The problem for later critics was that beginning with human experiences to understand and define the sacred made it all too easy to move in the other direction. Religion, defined experientially, could thus be used to sacralise the most quotidian of human endeavours.⁶⁴ The celebrated theologian Albert Ritschl, for example, seemed to reduce being a good Christian to doing one's social and national duty. Many religious thinkers in this mould did not shrink from sacralising participation in WWI as a divine mission.⁶⁵ It was on this basis that Karl Barth condemned the idea of 'religious experience,' arguing that, as the key to understanding the divine, it was a component of the Enlightenment creation of a 'religion of man.'⁶⁶ When

60 See Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers* (New York: Harper & Row, 1958 [1821]), 39. Schleiermacher called it the feeling of the "One in All," to ward off reduction by stressing both the plurality and unity of consciousness. See Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, 101, 137. I cite from this third edition of the text.

61 See Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1939) in: Peter Gay (ed.), *The Freud Reader* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1989), 722-735.

62 See Schleiermacher, *On Religion* (see note 60), 27-33, 38-40, 46-50, 57-62.

63 See Schleiermacher, *On Religion* (see note 60), 108 n. 8, 214, 238-253.

64 Jay, *Songs of Experience* (see note 57), 101f., 127-129.

65 See for the case of Martin Buber, Jay, *Songs of Experience* (see note 57), 125-126.

66 "We can ask", he said, "whether the entire theological movement of the [nineteenth] century resulted not at all in an overcoming of the Enlightenment, of its decisive interest of man in himself, but in its fulfilment." Karl Barth, *Protestant Thought from Rousseau to Ritschl* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959 [1952]), 391-92.

Barth was finished with Ritschl, he looked little better than a televangelist.⁶⁷ God, he thundered, was the Absolute Other who judged humanity, not the other way around.

The critique of Barth and others in this vein is understandable. The ‘science of religion,’ grounded through the idea of ‘religious experience,’ involved, as I have argued, an anthropologisation and historicisation of religious life. In fact, the Left Hegelians, who began with Schleiermacher and Hegel, ended by making God into the alienated, reified self-consciousness of humanity, a self-consciousness that would become philosophically adequate with the realisation of human divinity.⁶⁸ Left Hegelian humanism therefore contended that the uncovering of ‘religion’ meant that it was not the ideal religion that was ‘covered’ by all-too human realities, but that ‘religion’ was in fact the cover for divine humanity, which would claim and fulfil its own sacral History by arriving ultimately at self-consciousness.⁶⁹ Moreover, the critical historical method, the ‘higher criticism’ of sacred texts that was the pride of nineteenth century scholarship, seemed to be playing a comparable destructive, secularising role. By examining sacred texts as historically conditioned human artifacts, by focusing on the life of Jesus instead of the salvation proffered by Christ, scholars of religion were allegedly turning religious traditions into little more than a cultural heritage, historical tales serving at best a pedagogy of moral uplift.⁷⁰

However, again, I argue that the science of religion tradition serves to displace this notion that it entailed merely a secularising narrative and telos. Yes, the Left Hegelian ‘religion of man’ represented one of the possibilities of this burgeoning tradition, but it was in fact not the one focused on critical historical examination of canonical texts and tradition. In contrast, F. C. Baur and the Tübingen school continued to follow Schleiermacher in conceiving of ‘religion’ in terms of the most universal consciousness possible, making it and its full realisation the subject and telos of History.⁷¹ The

67 See Barth, *Protestant Thought*, 390–397.

68 The seminal work in this regard was, D. F. Strauss, *Das Leben Jesu, kritisch bearbeitet*, vol. 1–2 (Tübingen: F. C. Osiander, 1835–1836); see esp. vol. 2: 734–735.

69 It is this trajectory of Left Hegelianism towards humanist apotheosis that is the subject of John Edward Toews, *Hegelianism: The Path Toward Dialectical Humanism, 1805–1841* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), esp. 175–199, 327–355. He concludes this course with Ludwig Feuerbach, *Das Wesen des Christentums* (Leipzig: Otto Wigand, 1841).

70 For this common reading of the significance of the “higher criticism,” see the résumé in Gordon A. Craig, *Germany, 1866–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 182–183. On the transformation of the Bible into a cultural heritage, see again Jonathan Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible*, xiv, 219–221.

71 See Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Die Tübinger Schule* (Tübingen: L. Fr. Fues, 1859), 15–16. Hence, treatments of Baur and the Tübinger Schule that focus on proving them to be closet versions of Strauss’s atheism essentially miss the point; see for example, Horton Harris, *The Tübingen School* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 3, 161. Baur himself, however, always contrasted the “positive” results of his own work and that of his Tübingen colleagues to Strauss’s “negative” results that sought to define the canon as mythology rather than history. See Baur, *Die Tübinger Schule*, 56–57;

teleological development and purification of religious consciousness towards its universal essence entailed as such the progress and end of History. This religious progress the Tübingen scholars characterised in terms of the dialectical struggle between a ritualistic, particularistic, aristocratic Jewish principle vying against a Pauline universalist, egalitarian, spiritual principle in the development of Christianity.⁷² The consolidated Christian canon, which, critically and historically examined, reflected and was riven by this dialectical conflict, in becoming canonical, represented a historical equilibrium between Jewish and Pauline Christianity, one which froze this conflict by reifying and traditionalising the Christian message in eternalised, simultaneous format. Accordingly, Tübingen scholars argued that the canonical corpus and tradition of Christianity, a homogenised whole assumed to be one in its transcendental unity and origin, had in fact evolved according to a dialectical process of historical formation and ongoing reception, and that the very internal telos of this process was aimed at its critical historicisation and reconstruction. Hence, in their own critical unraveling of the canon, the Tübingen scholars must be read as both demonstrating and operationalising its developmental teleology towards the perfection and purification of religion.⁷³ In other words, historical criticism of the canon was the highest religious act possible. It was with such religious rather than secularising tasks that the 'science of religion' and the historicising methodologies of the 'higher criticism' overtook the nineteenth-century academy. Religion was in this science not the other, but the telos of Modernity.

The historicist Christian supersessionism of the Tübingen school and other branches of the Christian science of religion, invariably couched the historical progress and purification of religion in terms of Christianity's overcoming of its Jewish foundations. The differences in the way in which this historicist supersession was envisioned, constituted the fundamental dividing line between the different schools of the Protestant science of religion. For example, Christianity's overcoming of Judaism could be seen in Renan's racialised schema in terms of the Aryan overcoming of the Semites. I will have more to say about this racist version of the Christian science of religion, but, as we have now seen, Christianity's supersession of Judaism could also be understood, à la Tübingen, in terms of Christian universalism overcoming Jewish particularism.

The Christian Protestant science of religion did not go unchallenged. By the middle of the nineteenth century, all of its branches were confronted by scholars of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, which sought to project the Jewish tradition as the

Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Geschichte der christlichen Kirche*, vol. 5, *Kirchengeschichte des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen, L. Fr. Fues, 1862), 394–399.

72 See Baur, *Die Tübinger Schule*, 72–75. This is of course a simplification. There were also stark differences in the ways in which various Tübingen scholars interpreted the dialectical history of the Christian canon. For Baur's own position in this regard, see Baur, *Die Tübinger Schule*, 21–27.

73 See Baur, *Die Tübinger Schule*, 17–21, 45.

one meant to fulfil the teleological task of ‘religion,’ namely, to become critically purified as the universal faith of humankind. Jewish scholars turned the tables on the Christian ‘science of religion,’ to reconfigure the history of religion to mean Judaism’s overcoming of Christianity, meaning monotheism’s ultimate triumph over paganism (i.e. Christianity). Rather than being particularistic or national, Jewish history was now read in terms of a universal mission to spread monotheism.⁷⁴ In addition, the Jews, in the process, were lauded for their universal capacity to engage with all cultures, to the extent that the latter proved themselves open to universal scientific and critical pursuits.⁷⁵ In this fashion, the great reformist Jewish thinker, Abraham Geiger, arrived at a Jewish supersessionism, making it the ultimate mission of the Jewish tradition, in critically reforming itself, to overcome the Christian descent into paganism and deliver humanity to a purified monotheism.⁷⁶

My argument is that *Islamwissenschaft* emerged in Goldziher’s work as yet another rival bid at the critical historicisation and idealisation of a religious tradition, this time of the Islamic tradition, as the one capable of the purification necessary to encompass the religion of all humanity. Viewing Islam as a sister monotheistic tradition to Judaism, and unable to secure an autonomous position in the Hungarian Jewish and academic context to fulfil his critical reformist mission with regards to Judaism, Goldziher shifted this mission to Islam and thereby founded *Islamwissenschaft*.⁷⁷ As I

74 For *Wissenschaft* scholars shifting the focus of the Jewish tradition from difference to universality, see Amos Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History* (Berkeley: Publisher 1993), 20. Ismar Schorsch characterised this shift in terms of a westernization of the Jewish tradition, namely, of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* reconfiguring it within the context of universal history. See Ismar Schorsch, *From Text to Context: The Turn to History in Modern Judaism* (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 1994), 154, 158. The most strident exponent of the prevalent motif of the Jewish monotheistic mission in *Wissenschaft* scholarship was the founder of Reform Judaism, Abraham Geiger. For his depiction of Christianity as a paganised Jewish offshoot and of Islam as Judaism’s world-historical answer to Christian regression, see Abraham Geiger, *Judaism and Its History* (New York: The Bloch Publishing Company, 1911 [1864–1871]), 1: 139–151, 167–172.

75 For Moritz Steinschneider’s universalised retelling of Jewish cum human history in terms of the three Jewish cultural encounters with the Hellenistic, Islamic and modern European civilisations, see Schorsch, *From Text to Context*, 87–88.; Franz Rosenthal, Steinschneider’s Contribution to the Study of Muslim Civilization, in: *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 27 (1958), 67–81, esp. 78–80.

76 See Abraham Geiger, Die Aufgabe der Gegenwart, in: *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift für jüdische Theologie* 5 (1844), 24, 28–29., 34, Geiger, *Judaism and Its History*, 2: 211–212. Susannah Heschel, *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 83–105, 167, 177.

77 See Ignaz Goldziher, *Tagebuch*, ed. Alexander Scheiber (Leiden: Brill, 1978), which encompassed a retrospective account of his life at age forty and a diary thereafter. This retrospective account, written in the immediate aftermath of his receipt of the Gold Medal of the VIII International Congress of Orientalists in Stockholm, was meant to mark his life as unremitting resistance against his “martyrdom,” namely, the fact that his life had been radically reshaped by both by

have noted, *Islamwissenschaft*, or Islamic Orientalism, still tends to be viewed through the prism of Edward Said's work as the most retrograde product of a racist, imperialist discourse bent on objectifying and dehumanising the Semites as the ur-monotheistic people incapable of scientific thought and historical development. Meanwhile, those who reject this characterisation seek to save the scientific status of the Islamicist discipline by denying that cultural or political motivations were instrumental in its formation and development. By tracing the actual development of *Islamwissenschaft* out of the 'science of religion,' my aim is not to downplay its political ramifications and agendas, nor its highly complex relationship with European imperialism. Quite the opposite. Rather, I argue that, in contrast to the convenient mythological equation of *Islamwissenschaft* and racist imperialism, the new Islamicist discipline and the science of religion tradition from which it emerged tabled still ongoing problems regarding the proper meaning and role of religion in the personal, political and cultural realms. As such, the discipline became embroiled in questions, not only as to whether there could be something that could be called modern religion or religiosity. More, it was the offshoot of debates as to whether true religion, more than any other experience, captured the modern spirit and, if so, then which religious tradition could lay claim to it. It was, in other words, the consequence of a competition between Christianity, Judaism and Islam for the mantle of 'religion' and Modernity. Just as the proletariat, in Marx's thought, were the true inheritors of bourgeois Modernity, in Goldziher's work, Islamic Modernity figured as the rightful legatee of the progress Europeans had made. In this light, he positioned 'Islamic Modernity' as ultimately proving more advanced than its European model. And, if the complications of the idea of a secular European Modernity were not enough, the ubiquitous problem of 'Islamic Modernity' in *Islamwissenschaft* came, in the 'Jihad debate' that broke out in the field during WWI, to undermine the modernist historicist logic of its discourse altogether. Hence, Carl Heinrich Becker, the pioneering Islamicist with which we began the paper, sought to explain the German backing of the Ottoman call to Jihad to his Islamicist colleagues, by arguing that being modern did not entail a normative process of progress, in line with which, non-Europeans would simply have to imitate what Europeans had already achieved. Rather, Modernity involved plural trajectories in which different countries and cultures would have to rethink and revive their own traditions, in order

anti-Semitism, despite his Hungarian nationalism, and by his rejection by fellow Hungarian Jews, despite his attempt to idealise the Jewish tradition. In these pages, Goldziher essentially sacralised his ongoing resistance, which had only been made possible by shifting his reformist scholarship on Judaism to a focus on the Islamic heritage. I argue that that this shift consisted of nothing less than a *conversion* of his reformist project from Judaism to Islam and thereby the founding of *Islamwissenschaft*. I thus see this retrospective account of the *Tagebuch* as the founding document of *Islamwissenschaft*. See esp. Goldziher, *Tagebuch*, 80–124. On Goldziher's conception of his life as a "martyrdom," see 33, 104, 136, 205, 206, 237.

to create a coherent identity that would allow them to withstand the challenges of the present. In other words, the ‘Islamic states’ of the East—namely, the ‘developing’ non-European countries—reformulating their own heritage in light of the European challenge, were no longer the confused students of Europe, but instead paradigms of the modern condition.

Islamwissenschaft and Islamic Modernity

Let us return now to the question of what is lost in reading the history of *Islamwissenschaft* through the dynamics of the Orientalism debate, namely, the imperative to brand it as either politics, knowledge or culture. My task now will be to demonstrate that when viewed within the trajectory of the ‘science of religion,’ the Islamicist discipline aimed precisely at the critical historicisation of the relationship of ‘religion’ with knowledge, culture and politics, in order thereby to project what these relationships meant and were bound to become. To understand the dynamics of this critical historicisation in Goldziher’s scholarship, let me begin by arguing that he founded *Islamwissenschaft* precisely by replacing the philological distinction between the Semitic (Medieval) and the Aryan (Modern), which was at the centre of the Orientalist scholarship of his time, with a universalist normative schema of human development, grounded on the presumed ‘religious progress’ made possible in the movement from the Medieval to the Modern. It is now widely understood that the starting point of Goldziher’s scholarship was his opposition to Renan’s anti-Semitic Philological Orientalism.⁷⁸ Pace Edward Said, Renan’s was not in fact a secular historicist racism, but a racially or philologically oriented branch of the ‘science of religion,’

78 We owe the renewed and growing interest in recent years in Goldziher’s life and work largely to the scholarship of Lawrence Conrad. See Lawrence I. Conrad, “The Near East Study Tour of Ignaz Goldziher,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 122/1 (1990): 105–126. Conrad, “The Dervish’s Disciple: On the Personality and Intellectual Milieu of the Young Ignaz Goldziher,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 122/2 (1990): 225–266. Conrad, “The Pilgrim from Pest: Goldziher’s Study Tour to the Near East (1873–1874),” in *Golden Roads; Migration, Pilgrimage and Travel in Medieval and Modern Islam*, ed. Ian Richard Netton (London: Curzon Press, 1993), 93–137. It was also Conrad, who made manifest the anti-Renan foundations of Goldziher’s early reformist Jewish scholarship in his widely read article: Conrad, “Ignaz Goldziher on Ernest Renan,” in *The Jewish Discovery of Islam*, 137–180. Unfortunately, however, the full force of Conrad’s analysis of the anti-Renan motivations of Goldziher’s early scholarship stopped short of discerning its implications for his founding of the Islamicist discipline. Here, Conrad’s conclusion as to ‘professionalisation’ (as against an anti-Renan universalist historicism focused on religious reform and progress) as the great upshot of Goldziher’s contribution to the Islamicist field, further show the deleterious impact of the Orientalism debates on understanding the latter’s history.

that defined the teleological trajectory of 'religion' in terms of the very different roles played by the Semites and Aryans within its progress. Semites were said to be more prone to monotheism because of the very nature of their language, allowing them to get 'religion' right at the beginning. However, the proper understanding and universalisation of 'religion' that was to be the culmination of Christianity, had been and was to be the work of the Aryans.⁷⁹ Goldziher worked throughout his scholarship to displace this philological by a universalist historicism moving towards a critically purified monotheism. In his initially reformist focus on the Jewish tradition, his primary aim was to show that the Jews were in no sense 'instinctive' monotheists. They had had mythology, like all other peoples, as this was the universal beginning of all human culture.⁸⁰ Monotheism was an achievement over time and its first full ideal potential had been announced in Prophetic Judaism, which Goldziher saw as the locus for the coming critical idealisation and fulfilment of Judaism as 'religion.'⁸¹

79 See again Maurice Olender, *The Languages of Paradise*, 68–74; also, Renan, *The Future of Science* (composed 1848–1849) (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1891), 263.

80 See Ignaz Goldziher, *Der Mythos bei den Hebräern und seine geschichtliche Entwicklung: Untersuchungen zur Mythologie und Religionswissenschaft* (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1876), 1–19. As Goldziher put it, in describing mythology as starting point of development for all peoples: "Mythology is something universal so that one cannot, as a starting point, deny the capacity to form it as such to any race." Goldziher, *Der Mythos bei den Hebräern*, x. Hence, he argued that "it is precisely the historical moment that is left out" in the "Renanian ethno-psychological schema." Namely, Renan's identification of 'polytheism' and 'monotheism' as racial markers missed that "polytheism and monotheism are two developmental stages in the history of religious thought and that the latter does not appear spontaneously without the first developmental stage having preceded it." Goldziher, *Der Mythos bei den Hebräern*, 6. Goldziher set out a universal history of religious progress moving from mythology to paganism to traditional(ising) monotheism to critical monotheism.

81 On the initially national and theocratic roots of monotheism, focused on the centralization of state power, see Goldziher, *Der Mythos bei den Hebräern*, 314–333. On Goldziher's highly reverential discussion of 'Prophetic Judaism' as the ideal high point of the Jewish tradition that projected the promise of a purified monotheism, see Goldziher, *Der Mythos bei den Hebräern*, 348–369. Like Baur and Geiger, Goldziher made it clear from the start that his critical scholarship on the sources of the Jewish tradition was to be the progressive pivot through which it would become purified towards its prophetic destiny: "It is our sacred (*heilige*) conviction, that not only the scientific interest demands that these studies gain their due place in the scholarly literature, but that this has in an extraordinary manner also meaning for the religious life of the present. For, anyone, who has come to grasp the true concept of religion, is bound to welcome in such studies a degree of progress towards the highest religious ideal, towards the pure, clouded by nothing gross and pagan **Monotheism**, that makes itself not dependent on tales and ethnic traditions (*Stammestraditionen*), but rather finds, in the climax towards the one living original source of all truth and morality, its centre and **exclusive** living element and the inspiration for restless research and self-perfection. We are also imbued by the sense that each stride we make in the correct understanding of the mythical brings us closer to that centre. The confusion of the Mythical with the Religious makes religious life centrifugal; it is the task of progress in this realm to empower a

However, the way in which Goldziher's rejection by both his Hungarian Jewish and national communities drove him to transfer his reformist project from the Jewish to the Islamic heritage, serves to demonstrate that his subject, in challenging the Aryan/Semitic distinction and Renan's philological historicism, was the universal history and telos of monotheism: a universal history in which the critical reform of the Jewish and Muslims traditions equally allowed for the religious idealisation by which pure monotheism could establish itself beyond Christian paganism.⁸² It was again in his reformist reading of the Islamic heritage that Goldziher definitively displaced the Semitic/Aryan distinction as the organising principle of the Orientalist scholarship of his time, with a universalist historicist division between the Medieval and Modern. Along the lines of the Tübingen school and Geiger, Goldziher envisioned the religious growth of Islam and Islamic history in terms of the canonical formation of an Islamic Orthodoxy that had proven capable of assimilating the ideal aspects of 'religion' within itself, but only in confused form with much that was not truly religious and less than ideal, namely, in a traditionalising, uncritical manner, that read all historical development back into an eternal, transcendental origin.⁸³ Geiger had already made clear that the ultimate

centripetal tendency. The insight into this relation of pure Monotheism to the pre-historical parts of the biblical literature is not of today or yesterday; the most ideal[istic] representative of Hebrew Monotheism [Deutero-Isaiah is meant], in whom Yahwism as a harmonious worldview achieved its most exalted florescence, already expressed this relationship clearly enough." Goldziher, *Der Mythos bei den Hebräern*, xxiii–xxiv.

- 82 For this conversion, as I call it, of his reformist project from the Jewish to the Islamic heritage, see Goldziher, *Tagebuch*, 107–108. Rather than this shift to Islamicist scholarship suggesting an abandonment of his critical reformist project, Goldziher claimed that it entailed a sharpening of his understanding of "the religious system and the historical conception of development" and of his commitment to the "Messianic Judaism" he taught his children. He claimed his house was "now Jewish in a higher sense." Goldziher, *Tagebuch*, 110–111. Moreover, Goldziher admitted that, the methodology of the Islamicist discipline he founded followed the great Jewish reformer "Geiger's guidelines" in judging "the documents of Islam," namely, setting them "in relation to the spiritual tendencies, to the forces struggling with one another, [from whose oppositions the documents themselves arose], whose result ultimately was the unified Church." Goldziher, *Tagebuch*, 122–123.
- 83 See Goldziher, "Die Fortschritte der Islam-Wissenschaft in den letzten drei Jahrzehnten," in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Joseph Desomogyi, vol. 4 (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1970), 449–453; Ignaz Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien*, vol. 1–2 (Halle a. S.: Max Niemeyer, 1889–1890), vol. 2: 131–152; Ignaz Goldziher, *Vorlesungen über den Islam* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1910), 41–42. For Goldziher, the high point of this traditionalist development in Islam was the Orthodox integration and consolidation of Islamic law, theology and mysticism in the ethical mystical devotion of al-Ghazali in the eleventh century, which would allow for its critical historical idealisation, just as the Jewish prophets constituted this high point in the Jewish heritage. Al-Ghazali was thus the hero of Goldziher's historical teleologies of Islam. See Goldziher, *Vorlesungen*, 176–185; Ignaz Goldziher, "Die Religion des Islams," in *Die Kultur der Gegenwart. Ihre Entwicklung und ihre Ziele*, ed. Paul Hinneberg, part 1, section 3: 1, *Die orientalischen Religionen* (Berlin: B. G. Teubner, 1906), 114–115.

universalisation of Jewish monotheism was to be achieved through a critique of the medieval character of Jewish law. According to this critique, the notion of a sacred, eternal law did not in fact prevent the development of the Jewish tradition, it did however confuse such development and render it unconscious, by reading changes back into an alleged immaculate origin, represented by Orthodoxy and the Orthodox canon. Such unconscious, medieval development meant the ideological rationalisation by way of theological sacralisation of extant cultural practices had hampered the ideal development of monotheism. Goldziher argued that this traditionalising attitude and unconscious mode of development had then led to the 'medieval' abuses he likewise associated with the function of Islamic law in 'traditionalist' Muslim societies. The critical historical spirit of Modernity was to unlock the true religious spirit of the Islamic and Jewish monotheistic traditions.

The new distinction between the Medieval and the Modern, on which Goldziher based the new Islamicist discipline, came to be formulated through a ubiquitous critique of Islamic law, focused on a projected gap between its theory and practice. In their critique, Goldziher and his Islamicist colleagues argued that Islamic law envisioned itself as a transcendental, all-encompassing ideal that did not and could not function as positive law.⁸⁴ Two prime historical vectors of this Islamicist critique were saint veneration: a practice so inimical to the monotheistic ideal that was, however, highly characteristic of popular worship in the Islamic world and as such accommodated by Islamic law;⁸⁵ and, 'Jihad,' which was portrayed as opportunistic rhetoric feeding an unsustainable 'fetish' of Muslim expansion and supremacy.⁸⁶ In this account, Islamic law, as against the allegedly inherent theologocentrism of *Islamwissenschaft*, did not rule Islamic societies but was rather an abstract ideal that masked social and cultural developments; that is, honoured in the breach, it functioned as an ideological language

84 He thus glossed Islamic law as in fact a "doctrine of duties," (*Pflichtenlehre*) in contrast to any kind of Napoleonic code. See Goldziher, „Die Fortschritte der Islam-Wissenschaft“ (see note 83), 456; Ignaz Goldziher, „Muhammedanisches Recht in Theorie und Wirklichkeit,“ in *Zeitschrift für Vergleichende Rechtswissenschaft* 8 (1889): 406–423, here at 407, 409–412, 414–416, 418–420; Goldziher, „Katholische Tendenz und Partikularismus im Islam (1913),“ in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 5 (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1970), 292–295, 303; Goldziher, „Fikh,“ in *First Encyclopedia of Islam 1913–1936*, vol. 3 (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 105.

85 See Goldziher, „Die Heiligenverehrung im Islam,“ in *Muhammedanische Studien* (see note 83), vol. 2: 277–378. Goldziher, „Die Fortschritte der Islam-Wissenschaft“ (see note 83), 461–467. Goldziher, *Vorlesungen über den Islam* (see note 83), 286–289.

86 See C. Snouck Hurgronje, *The Holy War "Made in Germany"* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1915), 6–29. This notorious pamphlet, which set off a very public, emotionally raw debate in *Islamwissenschaft* on Jihad in World War I, began with a history to show the rhetorical, opportunistic use and development of "holy war" and Pan-Islamism in Muslim societies. Snouck, whose official remit it was to deal with the questions of Jihad and Political Islam in the context of Dutch *Kolonialpolitik*, developed the early prevailing positions on such thematics in the field.

for rationalising them and, if they proved long lasting, for legitimating them by reading them retrospectively into the origin and ideal.⁸⁷ Modernist reform meant the critical, historicist rescue of the social and cultural as encompassing the positive realm of the nation;⁸⁸ it meant the equally critical, historicist demarcation of ‘religion’ as belonging to the universal personal and devotional realm. Only a critical reconstruction of the Islamic heritage and of the history of Muslim societies could serve to change Islam from ‘ideology’ to Islam as ‘religion.’⁸⁹

- 87 See Goldziher, *Vorlesungen über den Islam* (see note 83), 63–70; Goldziher, *Die Richtungen der islamischen Koranauslegung* (Leiden: Brill, 1920), 370. Hence, in most areas of life, Islamic law did not regulate practices so much as accommodate them ex post facto. See Goldziher, „Muhammedanisches Recht in Theorie und Wirklichkeit“ (see note 84), 418–420. He noted that “If a practice found general tolerance and acceptance over a long period of time, then it became through just this fact finally Sunna. For some generations the pious theologians rant and rave about the *bid’a* [innovation]; but over the course of time it becomes, as an element of *ijmā’* [juristic consensus], *tolerated* and ultimately even *required*. It is then viewed as *bid’a* to set oneself against it; whoever demands the old way is now abused as ‘innovator’ (*mubtadi*).” Goldziher, *Vorlesungen über den Islam*, 282.
- 88 Goldziher viewed the cult of saints as “national survivals” of the pagan past, which, properly understood, were not to be banished or destroyed, but recovered in their national/historical role. In this connection, see in particular his very enthusiastic review of a work of his friend, the great contemporary Egyptian intellectual Ali Mubarak: Goldziher, *Ali Mubārak’s al-Khitat al-Jadida* (1890), in: Goldziher, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 2 (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1968), 383–384.
- 89 Goldziher’s prescriptions for religious reform in Islam focused on the prospective critical transformation of the developmental capacities the Islamic heritage itself contained in the fundamental role he took *ijmā’* (the consensus of Muslim jurists), to play in Islamic jurisprudence. Considered one of the sources of the latter, Goldziher took *ijmā’* to be its heart, arguing that “in this principle [*ijmā’*] are contained for Islam the facultative seeds of free movement and developmental capacity.” Goldziher, *Vorlesungen über den Islam* (see note 83), 55. The consensus of jurists, deemed infallible, thus allowed each generation to reinterpret the Islamic heritage by reading engrained, ongoing social practices into it: saint veneration, already noted as a practice deviating far from Islamic monotheism, had been thus traditionalised, retrospectively accommodated and idealised. Goldziher and other Islamicists referred to this great accommodationist capacity of Islam as its “Catholic” tendency. See Ignaz Goldziher, “Katholische Tendenz und Partikularismus im Islam,” 285–312. Goldziher never tired of reiterating that *ijmā’* was “the key for the understanding of the developmental parameters (*Entwicklungserscheinungen*) of historical Islam.” Goldziher, “Die Fortschritte der Islam-Wissenschaft (see note 83),” 457–458. And, even when implicitly, he made clear what the critical progress and idealisation of Islam towards its destiny as the universal “religion” entailed: a “consistent” application of the principle of *ijmā’*, namely, the development of a consensus that would no longer traditionalise and develop unconsciously but become conscious and progress critically, historically. See Goldziher, „Katholische Tendenz und Partikularismus im Islam,” 312; Goldziher, *Vorlesungen über den Islam*, 56. And, as Goldziher generally reminded his hoped-for Muslim audience at the close of his texts, this meant a “scientific-historical examination of [Islam’s] sources.” Goldziher, *Vorlesungen über den Islam* (see note 83), 313; also, Goldziher, „Die Religion des Islams“ (see note 83), 131–132.

The links Goldziher made between religious experience and critical historical knowledge, his demarcation of the universal devotional sphere from the cultural, national and political, as well as the critique of the traditionalist consciousness of Islamic Orthodoxy as ideology, *ergo* the theory/practice gap in Islamic law that underlay his schema, had, to say it once more, a direct counterpart in his understanding of Jewish law.⁹⁰ All of these make clear that his reformist scholarship of monotheism embodied a reformist practice. Unlike the usual quip about Orientalists as philologists for whom ancient texts represented the only living Orient, Goldziher was deeply engaged with the religious, cultural and political movements of the Islamic world of his time, and was friends with some of the great protagonists of early Islamic modernism and reform.⁹¹ His attitude to the Islamic modernism he experienced was dialectical: he welcomed its embrace of modern cultural and political forms, but argued that the Islamic heritage (like the Jewish) had always been capable of historical development, if only by unconscious reading of fundamental changes into the supposedly immaculate origin. Rather than claim Islamic origins as the original Modern, Goldziher argued that true reform entailed a fully critical historicist reconstruction of the Islamic tradition and the ideal elements within it that could move it towards its purified destiny.⁹² On the other hand, he was adamantly in agreement with the anti-imperialist

90 In fact, he excoriated the Rabbinic Judaism of his own Neolog Conservative community in Budapest in virtually the same terms he applied to traditional Islamic jurisprudence: these 'jurists' were hypocrites who made a business out of a religion they themselves as such could not believe in. See Goldziher, *Tagebuch*, 84.

91 For Goldziher's description of his lasting friendship with Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh, starting from their meeting in Cairo, see Goldziher, *Tagebuch*, 68, 71, 108. After Afghani's death, Goldziher, who never forgot their common anti-Renan front, wrote the entry on him in *First Encyclopedia of Islam, 1913–1936*, vol. 2: 1008–1111. Here, Goldziher portrayed Afghani as a heroic, anti-imperialist agitator for liberty who had fought against exploitation by European foreigners and native autocrats alike. Acknowledging his Pan-Islamic call, he saw Afghani's influence as having actually encouraged a "nationalist revival and liberal constitutional institutions."

92 This dialectical engagement with Islamic modernism was quite clear in his treatment of Abduh: Goldziher concluded his last great work, which was on *Tafsir* (Quranic exegesis), by citing his friend's denunciation of the corrupting and debilitating impact of the casuistic, rationalising application of Islamic law. See Goldziher, *Die Richtungen der islamischen Koranauslegung*, 370. In an extensive treatment of the Quranic exegesis of Islamic modernism, Goldziher compared Abduh's Egyptian school, focused on the revival and renewal of *ijmāʿ*, with the Indian school's tendency to treat the entire tradition outside the Quran as fabrications and fairy tales. He called the Indian movement a mere "*Kulturbewegung*," focused on justifying Islam in European guise and thus lacking religious seriousness. He called Abduh's *Tafsir* a "*Kultur-Wahhabismus*," which understood that the Islamic tradition and consensus were the genuine means of Islamic development and so rightly focused on reviving and renewing them but did so by still seeking to read the ideal (present) back into the origin, whereas the true renewal of tradition and consensus was one that was historically conscious and critical. See Goldziher, *Die Richtungen der islamischen Koranauslegung*, 321, 311–370.

ethos of the Islamic reformists he most respected, because he believed that critical reform represented the internal telos of the Islamic heritage itself and thus required absolute national and cultural autonomy.⁹³ It was because he believed the critique of the medieval character of Islamic law to be the internal destiny of the Islamic heritage that he positioned Islamic monotheism, when properly reformed, to realise the ideal elements within it, as meant to become the universal religion of humanity. In other words, Goldziher's position suggested that reformed Islamic monotheism was, like reformed Jewish monotheism, the highest Modernity available. True religion, true Modernity was not simply European, it was Jewish, it was Muslim. Goldziher's application of the Medieval/Modern schema to Islam was meant to show that Islam, like Judaism, was capable of the normative progress of religion in a way Christianity simply was not. Hence, to put the matter programmatically, in terms of our discussion of modern European historicist consciousness, if Modernity began as European, then its globalisation rendered it a contested site. In Goldziher's scholarship, it turned out that, in the scheme of universal history, it was Jews and Muslims that were to be the true inheritors of the cultural progress Europeans had made. The highest Modernity was to be not secular European but Jewish and Muslim.

93 Arriving in Cairo during his 1873–1874 Oriental study trip at the age of twenty-four, Goldziher complained bitterly about how much he despised this “European Orient,” compared to his idyllic stay in Damascus; he particularly hated the Europeans in Egypt and blamed them for having de-racinated a great people. See Raphael Patai, ed., *Ignaz Goldziher and His Oriental Diary* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987), 140–149. Writing in 1890 about the same experience, he noted again how he hated this Cairo of Isma‘il Pasha, “where European civilisation was to be pasted on the Muhammadan state.” Goldziher, *Tagebuch*, 65–66. Despairing at first of learning anything about Islam in this environment, soon all changed, as he came into contact not only with the group around Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh, but also a nationalist group of Egyptian intellectuals who had been pushed out of government by “European reform swindlers, who took it upon themselves, without any understanding for the traditions of the people, to import at high ransom the foreign culture.” Despising “Europeanization” as much as them, he counted himself a member of this “national party” and advocated on its behalf in the bazaar. Goldziher, *Tagebuch*, 67. He added eventually: “During the celebrations put on by the Viceroy [Khedive] on the occasion of the marriage of his daughter, I agitated in the Bazaars against the privileges of the Europeans; in Sālih al-Magdi’s circle [the national party], I tabled *Kulturhistorische* theories on the neo-Mohammedan indigenous culture and its development in opposition to the ruling European contagion. What ‘Urābī and his colonels a decade later rattled with their sabers, with that I harangued the circles in which I moved. I refused to take part in festivities with Europeans. If they wanted to invite me with the Shaykhs [of Al-Azhar], that way I’d show up, and so on and so forth.” Goldziher, *Tagebuch*, 71.

(Islamic) Modernity Beyond 'Europe'—Conclusions

An anti-imperialist Orientalist who engaged with Islamic reform to idealise the Islamic heritage as the universal faith of humanity and, ipso facto, the highest Modernity, it is no wonder that while Goldziher has not been adequately understood in these terms, that the very intimations of this picture have driven scholars to view him as a thoroughly exceptional figure.⁹⁴ This is, on the one hand, to save Goldziher from his connections with imperialist colleagues, on the other, to save oneself from having to rethink the trajectory of Islamwissenschaft as a discipline. In this concluding section of my chapter, I argue that such Goldziher exceptionalism is untenable, and that his scholarship can only be understood within the context of the broader Islamicist scholarship his colleagues acknowledged he had founded. It is certainly true that no other Islamicist thought that Muslims had as much to teach Europeans (monotheism) as Europeans had to teach Muslims (critical consciousness). However, Goldziher's fashioning of a Judeo-Islamic modernist historicism that would culminate the European one, points the way to even more pregnant disruptions, in Islamwissenschaft, of triumphal accounts of secular European Modernity as the end of universal history. The question in the field that always led to these disruptions was, to come back to our starting point, the 'problem of Islam,' namely, the problem of 'Islamic modernity.' How was it to be achieved? Who would achieve it? What was the role of European

94 From every side of the Orientalism debates, Goldziher has come to be characterised as an exceptional figure: for one group, he should be viewed primarily as a Jewish Orientalist and even a philosemite, because he fought against the prevalent anti-Semitic commitments of his Christian Orientalist colleagues: see Olender, *The Languages of Paradise*, 115–135; Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire* (see note 48), 294–295, 321–332; and Susannah Heschel, *Die Wissenschaft des Judentums und der Islam: Ein Vorbild für Deutschland im 21. Jahrhundert?*, lecture delivered on July 6, 2009, for the opening of the Kollegium Jüdische Studien at the Humboldt University, Berlin. For others, Goldziher is exceptional because, à la Conrad, the relinquishing of his Jewish reformist project allowed him at least to found *Islamwissenschaft* as a professional academic pursuit. See Conrad, "Ignaz Goldziher on Ernest Renan," 161–163. And, naturally Hamid Dabashi then felt the need to reply from the Saidian side that if Goldziher's professionalism was exceptional, the fact that he did not have a personal stake in what he studied made him objectify it, which ultimately vindicated Said. See Hamid Dabashi's long introduction, "Ignaz Goldziher and the Question Concerning Orientalism," in *Muslim Studies*, Ignaz Goldziher, vol. 1 (New Brunswick NJ: Aldine Transaction, 2006), ix–xciii, esp. xix, lxi–lxv. It would be more fruitful, I argue, to let go of the "exceptional Goldziher" in order to think through how extant pictures of the history of *Islamwissenschaft* must be rethought in light of the fact that Goldziher was viewed, very much in his own time, as the founder of the field. As Carl Heinrich Becker put it in his memorial essay on him: C. H. Becker, "Ignaz Goldziher": "What we today call the Science of Islam (*Islamwissenschaft*) is the work of Goldziher and Snouck Hurgronje," in *Islamstudien: Vom Werden und Wesen der Islamischen Welt*, vol. 2: 499–500.

Islamicists in bringing it about? The answers to these questions marked the political divisions in the field.

Goldziher's anti-imperialist insistence on Muslim autonomy as key to the autonomous development of an Islamic 'modernist' historicism of universal religious significance for all humanity, led him to adopt what the Germans at the time called *Kulturpolitik* (cultural engagement with non-Europeans, precisely so as to strengthen their sovereignty against European imperial encroachment), as the only proper mode of cross-cultural engagement between Europeans and Muslims. However, his colleague and scholarly partner, the Dutch Orientalist and colonial administrator, Snouck Hurgronje (1857–1936), deployed the very same ideological critique of the gap between the theory and practice of Islamic law that Goldziher engaged in to invite religious reform, for the purposes of Dutch *Kolonialpolitik*. Snouck, who turned *Islamwissenschaft* into the 'policy science' it has remained since, focused on the gap between social practice and the all-encompassing claims of Islamic law to argue that the colonial state, by making the right social alliances, could have its sovereignty acknowledged by its Muslim subjects, despite its illegitimacy from an Islamic point of view.⁹⁵ In this way, however, it would merely conform to the pattern of the administration of most 'Islamic' polities in Islamic history that did not in fact abide by Islamic law, though they legitimated themselves through it.⁹⁶ Dutch colonialism, Snouck argued, could only secure its power if it went beyond such ideological subterfuge and made a commitment to overcoming itself through the modernising reform of Muslim natives. By imposing an embargo from the outside on the politically opportunistic use of the Islamic ideal (i.e. the ideological use of Jihad), it could aid in developing a positive cultural and national consciousness within its Muslim subjects⁹⁷ (as Snouck saw it, ultimately through union and miscegenation

95 See C. Snouck Hurgronje, *Politique musulmane de la Hollande* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1911), 86–92, but especially, Harry J. Benda, "Christian Snouck Hurgronje and the Foundations of Dutch Islamic Policy in Indonesia," in *Journal of Modern History* 30/4 (December 1958): 338–347, esp. 341–344.

96 See C. Snouck Hurgronje, *Mohammedanism: Lectures on Its Origin, Its Religious and Political Growth and Its Present State* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1916), 98–103, 109–111, 113–114.; Snouck, *Politique musulmane de la Hollande*, 48–54.

97 See Snouck, *Mohammedanism*, 104; Snouck, *Politique musulmane de la Hollande*, 75–76, 93–102, 106–107. Hence, Snouck was vehemently opposed to ongoing colonial attempts to codify Islamic law. He argued this would not only mar the character of its practice and be suspect as a project undertaken by non-Muslim, colonial governments, but above all, because either Islamic law did not represent actual customary practice, or, where it did, in areas such as personal status law, the point was to tolerate such practices while allowing them to change with modernising transformation. Codification of Islamic law meant reification of Muslims by implementing reified ideas that were not even practiced, or legitimating reified practices, thus delaying the modernist development that was both necessary and inevitable. See Snouck, *Politique musulmane de la Hollande*, 57–70, 85–86.

between the Dutch and Indonesian elite).⁹⁸ Snouck's colonialist version of *Islamwissenschaft* was—as the invocation of Dutch Indonesian national consciousness and the racial miscegenation required to achieve it should make clear—also committed to the achievement of 'Islamic Modernity' beyond European racism and the medieval theologocentrism of Islamic Orthodoxy. Yet, Snouck's was clearly a European modernist historicism, one in which the Dutch nation-state served as both the necessary model and agent for the Islamic Modernity that was to be realized.

The complexity of the political divides in *Islamwissenschaft*, namely, the radical divergence in political applications of much the same Islamicist disciplinary discourse to which they could lead, is well exemplified by the fact that the division between 'Kulturpolitik' and 'Kolonialpolitik' I have cited, to outline Goldziher's and Snouck's attitudes to engagement with the Muslim subjects of their study, comes from the German geopolitical context of the *Kaiserreich*. It reflects the standpoint amongst the pioneering German Islamicists of the time that *Kulturpolitik* was the appropriate stance of the German Empire towards the modernising, 'developing' states of the Islamic East (like the Ottoman Empire) while *Kolonialpolitik* was to be applied to black Africa.⁹⁹ The greatest confrontation between *Islamwissenschaft*'s divergent imperatives

98 Snouck himself was married successively to two indigenous women, the first the daughter of a Javanese nobleman. For Snouck's "educational" policy leading to an equalised "association" between the Dutch and Indonesians, see Benda, *Snouck and the Foundations of Dutch Islamic Policy*, 344–346. Benda criticised him for both not believing in the "growth of Islam" and for not realising that "the separation of religion and politics [...] [he advocated] was at best a temporary phenomenon of Islam in decline." For Snouck, of course, it was the other way around; the confusion of religion and politics was responsible for the decline of Muslim societies, and although Islam could not change this from the inside, it would "catch up" and become mere religion in the context of a modernised national politics. See C. Snouck Hurgronje, *Nederland en de Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1915), 79. On his deep collaboration with and reliance on native Muslim Indonesian elites in constructing his "association" policy and on the way he shifted Dutch policy away from combatting to containing Islam, see Jajat Barhanudin, "The Dutch Colonial Policy on Islam. Reading the Intellectual Journey of Snouck Hurgronje," in *Al-Jāmi'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 52/1 (2014): 25–58. On his dreams for Indonesia, see also Arnoud Vrolijk and Richard van Leeuwen, *Arabic Studies in the Netherlands: A Short History in Portraits, 1580–1950* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 142–143.

99 Martin Hartmann, for example, relied on a prevalent distinction between the "kulturlosen" Africans versus the "Völker alter Kultur" in the Muslim East; see Hartmann, *Islam, Mission, Politik* (Leipzig: Otto Wigand, 1912), 66. He justified German *Kolonialpolitik* in Africa with the reasoning that there the natives first had to be protected from threatening Islamicisation, which is why he begrudgingly accepted a pivotal role for the Christian missions in this context; see Hartmann, *Islam, Mission, Politik*, 67–68, 1–51. By contrast, he argued that despite the damage done by Islam, the cultural basis of western and Near Eastern societies was the same: a concept of the state, defense of the person, commitment to work. Hence, such societies were ready for national autonomy, meaning, the "peoples of ancient culture" in the East were the proper subjects of *Kulturpolitik*, a kind of *Kulturarbeit* Hartmann entrusted to German civil society in general

of *Kulturpolitik* and *Kolonialpolitik* came in the context of the Jihad debate that broke out within the field upon the German Islamicists' backing of the Ottoman declaration of Jihad against the Allies in WWI. In Snouck's view, the fact that the Ottomans, while allied with European Christian powers, could brand their war against the Allies a holy war against all infidels was a stark contradiction that perfectly demonstrated the ideological opportunism and accommodationism of Islamic law.¹⁰⁰ That his German friends and colleagues had allegedly instigated such a reactionary, culturally stultifying medieval fetish for short-term gains—Snouck dubbed the Jihad “made in Germany,” eliminating all Ottoman agency—was the epitome of German Islamicists' betrayal of their own scholarship as well as of the moral madness that had led to and sustained the war.¹⁰¹ Snouck notoriously counselled the Germans to help ensure the progress of their future ‘protectorate,’ rather than standing in its way.¹⁰²

and to groups representing it, like the *Deutsche Vorderasienkomitee*, of which he was a leading member. See Hartmann, “Deutschland und Islam,” in *Der Islam* 1 (1910): 72–92, esp. 75, 90–91. Meanwhile, Carl Heinrich Becker, the other great Islamicist of the *Kaiserreich*, made a comparable distinction, focusing on how German *Kolonialpolitik* should deal with Islam to solidify its colonial power in Africa. He argued that Islam, still struggling to emerge from the Medieval era, was closer to black Africans and so would be more effective in their civilisation. It would then depend on their historical development whether they proved themselves capable of advancing Islam further. Pace Hartmann, he said missionary activity had to be curtailed to tie Muslims more closely to the state; eventually, he acknowledged a limited role for missions in more pagan areas as a divide-and-conquer strategy in the interests of the motherland. See C. H. Becker, “Ist der Islam eine Gefahr für unsere Kolonien?” (1909), in Becker, *Islamstudien*, 2: 178–185; Becker, “Der Islam und die Kolonisierung Afrikas” (1910), in *Islamstudien*, Becker, vol. 2: 202–210. But, in the case of the Middle-East and the Ottoman Empire, he proffered rather *Kulturpolitik* and the German model of an autonomous cultural reconstitution (the Protestant Reformation) to argue for the prospect of an Islamic Renaissance: just as the Germans had remade Christianity through their “un-Christian” ideas, “the rebirth of the Orient can realise itself not only through the importation and imitation of European notions, but mainly through its own spiritual activity, also on the ground of religion.” See Becker, *Christentum und Islam* (Tübingen: Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1907), 49–50. Becker's conceptions of *Kulturpolitik* first became explicit in the course of World War I. See Becker, *Deutschland und der Islam*, vol. 3 of *Der deutsche Krieg*, ed. Ernst Jäckh (Berlin: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1914), 11–12, 18–24. This is the pamphlet, whose support of the Ottoman Jihad led to the public debate with Snouck. See Becker, “Die Türkei im Weltkriege” (1915), in *Islamstudien*, vol. 2: 253–254, 262–265, 271–276, 280; also Becker, “Die Kriegsdiskussion über den heiligen Krieg,” in *Islamstudien*, vol. 2: 297, 302. For the broader German notion of *Kulturpolitik* as the paradigmatic approach to “developing states” in the German *Kaiserreich* before World War I, see the pivotal work, Jürgen Kloosterhuis, “*Friedliche Imperialisten*”: *Deutsche Auslandsvereine und auswärtige Kulturpolitik*, 1906–1918, parts 1–2 (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1994).

100 See Snouck, *The Holy War “Made in Germany,”* 51, 57.

101 See Snouck, *The Holy War “Made in Germany,”* 58–80.

102 See Snouck, *The Holy War “Made in Germany,”* 58–59, 73–80 and Snouck's reply to Becker's reply: Snouck, “Deutschland und der Heilige Kriege,” in *Internationale Monatsschrift für Wissenschaft, Kunst und Technik* 9 (1915): 1025–1034, esp. 1028–1029.

C. H. Becker, who in fact viewed both Goldziher and Snouck as his great mentors, replied that what Snouck read as contradiction in the Ottoman Jihad, was in fact the long-sought conscious Islamic reform, an 'Islamic modernism' that critically appropriated and rethought traditional vocabularies to craft a coherent cultural identity that would enable survival in the face of present crisis.¹⁰³ Being modern, Becker argued, meant not copying others according to supposed normative historicist verities, but the conscious dynamism that could create a coherent cultural identity by innovating out of one's own heritage. Becker cited the German *Sonderweg* as the model for the kind of cultural modernisation being embarked on by what we would now call 'developing' states like the Ottoman Empire, and thereby toppled the whole normative conception of Modernity and religion's role within it, replacing it with a pluralist one.¹⁰⁴ If Germany's special path to Modernity was now an example, however, it was meant to demonstrate the opposite of a future the Ottomans and other Muslims could at best reach for but never achieve. The German example was meant rather to show that the non-European countries, cultures and civilisations would have to go and find their own way. It put them, in their search for a coherent cultural identity on the basis of the dynamic appropriation of their own heritage and traditions, within the same temporal field as Europeans themselves. They were now embodying, to use Chakrabarty's phrase about what European historicism denied its Others, the same coeval space.¹⁰⁵ Arguably, the notion of an Ottoman *Sonderweg*, encompassing a new and distinct 'Islamic Modernity' (now with a coeval capital M), went even further. For, it serves to demonstrate the ways in which the contours of Modernity were themselves redefined in the context of Islamicist scholars' intellectual and political engagement with Muslims and Muslim societies. Islamicists began with confident critiques of Islamic discourse and Muslim societies and took it upon themselves to advise Muslim modernists on how to achieve autonomy for their cultures and traditions in the contemporary world. But, as the Jihad debate and the world war showed, instead of Muslims being brought into the modern world, 'Modernity' itself seemed to be shifting in meaning, to encompass much more the problems faced by the modernising, 'developing' countries. Hence, 'Jihad' went from being read as the paradigmatic antipode of Modernity—the illegitimate intervention of 'religion' into politics, the private into the public—to being read as a cultural tradition dynamically appropriated by the Ottomans in order to form an effective identity to overcome crisis, i.e. as the very definition (or redefinition) of

103 See Becker, *Deutschland und der Islam*, 14–17; Becker, "Die Kriegsdiskussion über den heiligen Krieg," 288–293, 298–299, 303; Becker, "Die Türkei im Weltkriege," 258–261.

104 See Becker, "Der türkische Staatsgedanke" (1916), in *Islamstudien*, Becker, vol. 2: 361. See also in this vein, Becker, "Das türkische Bildungsproblem" (1916), in *Islamstudien*, Becker, vol. 2: 63–384, where he argued that Turkish cultural modernisation was bound to be an internal, holistic dynamic rather than an external imposition.

105 See Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe* (see note 35), 8.

Modernity. 'Islamic Modernity' could thus be viewed as the very paradigm of what it now meant to be modern.

I close with this programmatic glance at the Jihad debate, by reiterating that Goldziher founded *Islamwissenschaft* as a 'science of religion'; that he displaced the Semitic/Aryan distinction by focusing on the critical reform of traditionalist, 'Medieval' Islam, in order to project it as the modern purified monotheism that would fulfil 'religion'; that, rather than engage in theologocentrism, his scholarship was based on a reformist ideology critique that challenged what it read as the medieval theologocentrism of Islamic Orthodoxy. Goldziher's post-racial, post-theologocentric approach thus positioned a reformed Islam as the very telos of Modernity; it signaled that Jewish and Islamic monotheism, rather than secular Europe, were the universal subjects of modernist historicism. It displaced European modernist historicist with a Judeo-Islamic one. In this way, it already made clear that the historical categories of 'Medieval' and 'Modern,' while European in origin, would, in the very process of their globalisation as *chronotypes*, become contested sites in which different actors and cultural traditions could come to compete and fight for the future of what it means to be modern. Goldziher's founding of *Islamwissenschaft* on a post-racial, post-theologocentric basis though, went even further in the debates it inaugurated on the question of 'Islamic Modernity' and the political deployment of all manner of *Kolonialpolitik* and *Kulturpolitik* to achieve it. In the Jihad debate, the very normative modernist demarcation of religion from public life that supposedly defined Modernity, was challenged by a pluralist conception of cultural Modernities. Hence, in our preoccupation with 'religion,' we find ourselves also still within the same temporal horizon of the early history of *Islamwissenschaft*, of a Europe that began by teaching Muslims how to be modern and that, in the process, found itself, like the 'Muslim societies' it studied, struggling to define what it meant to be modern. Today, the conflation of Europe, Islam and Modernity is still envisioned by many as a desperate, perhaps utopian political pose. The reality is that this conflation has a deep history and encompasses our contemporary temporal and political horizon in a fundamental way, as societies across the globe continue to grapple with the problem of deciding the proper role of religion in public life, the proper character of cross-cultural engagement, the proper understanding of whether modern development should be understood in a normative or plural sense.

3. Temporalities, Historical Writing and the Meaning of Revolution

A Eurasian View

Alessandro Stanziani

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).

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 *chronologies* 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: Koselleck 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. Arguing 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 Surat, 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. Jás 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 Rubiés, “Race, Climate and Civilization in the Works of François Bernier,” in *L’Inde des Lumières: Discours, histoire, savoirs (XVII^e–XIX^e 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 envoyée 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 Clío: 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* (Seysel: 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 lois*, 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, Prévost 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 anthropologists, 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 Pléiade, 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 despotism⁶⁴ 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 *Cœuvres 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.

4. Periodisation as Dialectic in a Peasant Discourse from Late Colonial India

Milinda Banerjee 

A periodisation scheme, like any other kind of conceptual work, may bear either (or often, both) the traces of imposing mastery—through the stratification and government of time—or (as well as) the apparatus for fracturing and surpassing mastery.¹ Such dialectics often involve negotiations of force. Among recent reflections on concept work, Ann Stoler, for example, has highlighted the “relations of force” through which concepts gain traction and achieve stability and abstraction:

If stability is not an intrinsic feature of concepts, then one task must be to examine how their stability is achieved, how unequal things are abstracted into commensurabilities that fuel our confidence in those very concepts that then are relegated as common sense.²

Nowhere is this truer than in the construction of a periodisation scheme where vastly diverse forms of social relations, economic processes, legal and theological fields, ethical and political postures, and so on, are abstracted and rendered quasi-commensurable (as something shared and common), in order to define a certain ‘epoch,’ and further placed in relation and difference with other ‘epochs.’ Such abstraction is never politically neutral. There are several rich strands of scholarship which have highlighted the intimacy between periodisation schemes and, for example, the legitimization of colonial invasion, the justification of specific modes of dispossessing the colonised, the racialised subordination of indigenous cultures, and so on.³

- 1 I share some of the concerns of Vittorio Morfino and Peter D. Thomas, eds., *The Government of Time: Theories of Plural Temporality in the Marxist Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), though my work gives greater centrality to non-European subaltern actors.
- 2 Ann Laura Stoler, *Duress: Imperial Durabilities in Our Times* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 17–18.
- 3 It is impossible to summarise the massive and growing scholarship here. See, as typical examples: Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (1983; repr. New York: Columbia University Press, 2014); Ranajit Guha, *History at the Limit of World-History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); Prathama Banerjee, *Politics of Time: ‘Primitives’ and*

The conquest of time has often been a paradigmatic way of articulating conquest as such. With a regime change, whether in the form of an imperial conquest or a popular revolution (I am not synonymising the two, though there are often tragic convergences), time is forced to begin anew. The French Revolution offers a locus classicus, but it is hardly exceptional.⁴ The old regime is discredited and relegated into the hinterland epoch of history, leading to a rearrangement of the chronological landscape. If the assertion of sovereignty entails the construction of borders in spatial geography, periodisation embodies an analogue: the construction and policing of borders in the domain of time. Only slightly altering Walter Benjamin's reflections on law, violence, and myth, one could present a periodisation as a myth-making event that founds or preserves a regime of power.⁵ Periodisation, like a legal order, offers the mythic justification for a system of power. It is, often, a "founding act" that marks the coming into existence of a regime which sees itself as the culmination of the march of time, and keeps others at variegated distances from itself, the radiant centre. Classification of time has thus frequently been a tool for ruling elites to classify and hierarchise society, privileging the power of some actors over others, along lines of ethnicity/race, class, gender, religion, political affiliation, and so on.⁶

In this chapter I wish to query periodisation as conceptual work from a slightly different standpoint: less the perspective of the rulers, and more that of the ruled. I want to ask what happens when a subalternised community in revolt creates its own periodisation, its own abstractions, to steer a staged transition from heteronomy to freedom. Rather than re-narrating canonical thinkers who have imagined periodisation by centring exactly such a transition in their scheme of history—G.W.F. Hegel, Karl Marx, and so on—I will focus on a 'lower caste' peasant discourse, produced by the Rajavamshis of late colonial India. This chapter is of course hardly the first one to relate conceptual labour to the achievement of autonomy. In his celebrated reading of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Alexandre Kojève argued: "Understanding, abstract thought, science, technique, the arts—all these, then, have their origin in the forced work of the Slave. [...] Work will also open the way to Freedom or—more exactly—to liberation."⁷ Furthermore, the slave (here Hegel's Knecht; allowing for

History-Writing in a Colonial Society (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006); Kathleen Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty: How Ideas of Feudalism and Secularization Govern the Politics of Time* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

4 See, for example, Mona Ozouf, *Festivals and the French Revolution*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).

5 Walter Benjamin, "Critique of Violence," [1921] in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), 277–300.

6 On the founding act, see Ozouf, *Festivals*, 159, and, more recently, Serdar Tekin, *Founding Acts: Constitutional Origins in a Democratic Age* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

7 Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. James H. Nichols, Jr. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980 [1933–39, 1947]), 49.

some variation in translation),⁸ “by using the thought that arises from his Work, [...] forms the abstract notion of the Freedom that has been realized in him by this same Work.”⁹ The slave “possessing the idea of Freedom and not being free, [...] is led to transform the given (social) conditions of his existence—that is, to realize a historical progress.”¹⁰ It is impossible to do justice to Kojève’s rich argumentation here (or, for that matter, to Hegel). I will, nevertheless, use this reading to examine Rajavamshi conceptual work as being, very precisely, a work, rooted in Rajavamshi political and intellectual practices as well as agrarian and military labour. Further, this conceptual work produced an abstraction—a periodisation scheme entailing a phased transition from heteronomy to the cessation of all rule—which cannot be understood except in terms of the labour done by a Knecht, by someone in a condition of subalternity. In other words, I will argue that the Rajavamshi actors—who had no known familiarity with Hegel—produced a fascinating discourse about periodisation which can be read as a discourse produced from a position of suppression in order to achieve liberation. This entailed a dialectic where every epoch sowed the seeds of its own negation. History moved forward from a period of nature/non-rule to the rule of the master/king, to the rule of society, to self-rule, to ultimately, the end of all rule, allowing the self to find fulfilment. In every stage, an epoch (or rather, the nature of human social relations within that epoch), prepared the conditions for its erasure, to facilitate the forward movement of human life. In other words, periodisation was here inseparable from dialectical thinking. This discourse was, in very broad terms, a cosmological founding act: a justification, ambitiously sketched through a grand scheme of interpretation about how the universe functions, and how human social life progresses, to inaugurate and bolster the trajectory whereby Rajavamshi actors hoped to gain autonomy during the interwar years. This chapter will first empirically describe this discourse, and then turn to examine why and how this Rajavamshi periodisation assumed such a profound dialectical form.¹¹

Let me add a caveat. I am more interested in drawing out the political implications of this Rajavamshi periodisation, than in classifying it within some typology of

8 On this slippage, see Andrew Cole, *The Birth of Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014).

9 Kojève, *Introduction* (see note 7), 49.

10 Kojève, *Introduction* (see note 7), 50.

11 In what follows, I will heavily draw on and condense, while also relating to this chapter’s broader argument about periodisation, empirical materials and theoretical arguments discussed in Milinda Banerjee, *The Mortal God: Imagining the Sovereign in Colonial India* (Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2018), Chapter 4; and Milinda Banerjee, “How a Subject Negates Servitude: A Peasant Dialectic about Mastery and Self-Rule from Late Colonial Bengal,” in *HerStory: Historical Scholarship between South Asia and Europe: Festschrift in Honour of Gita Dharampal-Frick*, ed. Rafael Klöber and Manju Ludwig (Heidelberg: CrossAsia, 2018), 87–104, <https://doi.org/10.11588/xabooks.366.517>

temporality. One could certainly bring this periodisation into dialogue with scholarship about typologies: the Rajavamshi periodisation shares some features with Jörn Rüsen's notion of the genetic narrative, where "time is temporalised as meaning," for example, as well as with his idea of "actualising the past" in a critical narrative, which proceeds through negation and deconstruction. My approach however, fundamentally differs from Rüsen in questioning his faith in "anthropological universals" and his belief that "we need a new universal idea of time, which covers the multitude and diversity of human life forms in space and time." Rüsen (in this volume 26-27) sees such universalism as an antidote to "the postcolonial criticism of the traditional treatment of non-Western cultures." I do not think that such constructions of universalism constitute an effective response to the inequalities—material as much as epistemic—that postcolonial critiques seek to battle against. After all, universalistic ideas have historically often been merely the assertions of ruling classes seeking to transfigure their dominance into cultural hegemony. A study of the dialectics of power, as viscerally incarnated in every periodisation, may eventually open up variegated forms of unbounded selfhood. Such conceptualisation, to be politically radical, has to proceed from below, as I will show, from the vantage point of the subaltern seeking emancipation. It cannot be a universalism imagined from above. From this perspective, it is also unhelpful to analyse such a periodisation from a methodologically nationalist lens, that is, as a strand of some overarching 'Indian' way of conceptualizing time.¹² We need to understand the Rajavamshi periodisation as a historical expression of subaltern dialectics of power, rather than as an avatar of some transhistorical national consciousness.

The particular Rajavamshi periodisation I will discuss here stems from 1918. It is a record from the annual proceedings of the Kshatriya Samiti, the premier early-mid twentieth century association of the Rajavamshi community of sub-Himalayan northern Bengal, the princely state of Cooch Behar, and adjacent parts of Assam.¹³ The annual session of the Samiti that year was held in Dinajpur, a town in northern Bengal. We do not know the name of the author of the report. We cannot even assume that it had a single and singular author; it may well have been collectively written. What is important is that the report was produced, published,

12 For scholarship on various South Asian forms of temporal consciousness, see, for example, Ludo Rocher, "Concepts of Time in Classical India," in *Time and Temporality in the Ancient World*, ed. Ralph M. Rosen (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2004), 91–110; A. Azfar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014); Velcheru Narayana Rao, David Shulman, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Textures of Time: Writing History in South India 1600–1800* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003); Banerjee, *Politics of Time* (see note 3).

13 On the history of the Kshatriya Samiti, see Swaraj Basu, *Dynamics of a Caste Movement: The Rajbansis of North Bengal, 1910–1947* (Delhi: Manohar 2003); Sukhbilas Barma, *Indomitable Panchanan: An Objective Study on Rai Sabib Panchanan Barma* (Delhi: Global Vision Publishing House, 2017); Banerjee, *Mortal God* (see note 11).

and archived as part of the collective deliberations of the Kshatriya Samiti. I would see it as reflecting views widely shared by many Rajavamshi activists. The leading members of the Samiti had rural-peasant origins, but had acquired some education, through indigenous and/or Western institutions. Their main economic base lay in the agrarian sector, in landed property and related agrarian businesses. Some of them had also branched out into modern professions like law. Hence, we can surmise that the 1918 report, like other similar Rajavamshi sources of the time, bears some traces of general Indian as well as European thought. Since the 1918 report is written in an ambitiously abstract prose (without footnotes or even explicit empirical citations), it is difficult to pin-point exact intellectual roots, but I will offer some hypotheses about possible sources below. I would also underline here the polycentric nature of these discourses, many of which emerged out of large caste association meetings and peasant assemblies. While the vast majority of Rajavamshis were non-literate in the early twentieth century, the strength of oral culture and political communication would have ensured multilateral dialogues between the literate leaders and the non-literate publics during these annual assemblies, as well as in many other gatherings throughout the year.

The 1918 record began by describing an original state of nature (*prakriti*), to which the world (*jagat*) was subject. Nature was always active (*kriyashila*); in it, all things (*vastu*) were mobile (*chanchala*). Of these things, living creatures (*jiva*) were particularly active, as well as characterised, due to their sensations (*anubhava*) and knowledge (*jnana*), by feelings of attraction (*akarshana*) and repulsion (*vikarshana*) towards known objects (*jnata vastu*). Of living creatures, human beings had particularly well-developed faculties of knowledge and sensation. Hence, whenever there was a gathering (*samagama*) of human beings, the unrestrained actions (*uddama kriya*) of each human being came into conflict (*virodha*) with similar uncontrolled actions of others. Such a gathering of human beings was therefore reduced to a state of mutually antagonistic (*paraspara virodhi*) and pain-inflicting (*paraspara yantranadayaka*) mass of animals (*jantupunja*).¹⁴

As this pain (*yantrana*) became intolerable, human beings sought to escape from it. So they made attempts to tame/subdue (*damana*) or regulate (*niyaman*) their hitherto unregulated efforts. In the first effort (*prathama cheshta*), a single person (*ekjan*) or a group of people (*janasamuha*) was necessary (*avashyaka*), who would have the power (*kshamatashali*) to tame/subdue (*damana*) both the one who hurt (*ghati*; originally in Sanskrit, the term referred especially to a killer) and the one who retaliated (*pratighati*). By imposing laws (*vidhi*) or prohibitions (*nishedha*), backed by force (*balanusrita*), that person or group of persons was able to offer protection (*raksha*) to the antagonists

14 Kshatriya Samiti, *San 1324 Saler Ashtama Varsher Vritta-vivarana* (Rangpur[?]: Kshatriya Samiti, 1918), 27–28.

as well as to everyone related (*samsargi sakalke*), and could thus deliver people from a state of pain into a state of greater happiness (*sukhatara avastha*) and joy (*sphurti*). This was the rule of the master (*prabhushasana*).¹⁵

The master at the top (*uparistha prabhu*) thus subdued the antagonisms (*ghata-pratighata*; literally, blows and counter-blows) of the person below (*adhahstha vyakti*), and brought about a more peaceful state. Antagonisms were increasingly replaced by feelings of union (*milanabhava*), amicable feelings towards each other (*paraspara anukula bhava*), and happiness (*ananda*). This generated respect (*shraddha*) towards the master. Hence the name of the master (*prabhu*) was king (*raja*). The master also felt affection (*sneha*) towards the people (*janasamuha*)—as if the people were the son (*putra*) of the master. Hence they were named praja.¹⁶ In colonial Bengal, the term praja was used to refer both to the subjects of a state as well as to the tenants of (*quasi-kingly*) zamindar landlords. But, as this Rajavamshi discourse emphasises, the term bore an original sense of “offspring,” since the Sanskrit root, prajan, means “to be born or produced,” “to bring forth, generate, bear, procreate.”¹⁷

The report described how the king-subject-relation (*raja-praja-samvandha*) kept each connected to the other. The rule of the king (*rajar shasana*), by removing antagonisms, allowed the subjects (*prajavarga*) to come together and develop (*paraspara miliya unnati*). But the rule of the master was unable to achieve more than this. It was unable to properly regulate the relations between subjects or to bring under control feelings like affection and love (*sneha-mamatadi bhava*). However, these feelings were innate to human beings, and held people together in relation to each other. These relations (*samvandha*) could be seen as the root of society (*samaja-mula*), and the feelings of society (*samajabhavaguli*) could be called social feelings (*samajika bhava*). But, having developed unrestrained, these social feelings came into antagonism with each other, resulting in pain. To escape this pain, people developed rules and prohibitions through which society (*samaja*) was regulated. These were social customs or rules (*samajika achara ba niyama*). The rule of society (*samajer shasana*) was directed against the individual who went against these social rules and who hindered the social happiness (*samajika sukha*) of another or the happiness of society. The rule of society (*samajashasana*) could thus prohibit or regulate some social feelings, but it was often incapable of purifying (*shuddhi*) these feelings. Given an opportunity, one tried to advance one’s own aims and the harm of the other. Without self-rule (*atmashasana*) or self-control (*atma-samyama*), these feelings could never be purified.¹⁸

15 Samiti, *San 1324* (see note 14), 28.

16 Samiti, *San 1324* (see note 14), 28.

17 Monier Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960 [1899]), 658.

18 Samiti, *San 1324* (see note 14), 28–29.

The report underlined that “to achieve self-control one needs to rule oneself” (*atmasamyama karite haile nija nijake shasana karite haibe*). The rule of the outside (*bahirer shasana*) was unable to achieve influence here, so there was no alternative other than the rule which emerged from the self (*atma haite udbhuta shasana*). If one engaged in thinking with a calm mind, one heard a wonderful voice (*apurvavani*), which was magnified by its own grandeur (*nija mahimay mahimanvita*). The rule of the outside (*bahirer shasana*), was like a mere slave/servant (*kimkara matra*) of this voice. This voice, shining in the virtuous mind, was right or good precept (*sanniti*).¹⁹

Human life (*manavajivana*), or the life of human society (*manavasamaja-jivana*), moved through certain stages (*stara*) of expanding happiness. In the regulation of human behaviour, the application of exterior force bore the name of rule (*bahyashaktir prayoger nama shasana*), while the application of interior force bore the name of education (*abhyantarika shaktir prayoger nama shiksha*). In the course of human life or the life of human society, the influence of rule (*shasana*) was gradually reduced, while the influence of education (*shiksha*) grew. Ultimately, the operation of both rule and education came to an end. As a human being approached the ultimate goal (*charama lakshya*), both rule and education ceased to be. Human behaviour became stainless (*nirmala*); the self (*atma*) found its own blossoming. The human being achieved fullness of desire (*purvakama*), fullness of happiness (*purvananda*), fullness of satisfaction (*purvatripti*). The human being achieved fullness (*purvatva*).²⁰

The above report, dating from 1918, came during a pivotal period for Rajavamshi politics. The declaration in August 1917 by Edwin Montagu, British Secretary of State for India, promising “self-governing institutions” and “responsible government” in India, had intensified Rajavamshi desire for democratic self-rule within the framework of the British Empire.²¹ In November 1917, Panchanan Barma, the most important leader of the Rajavamshi movement, sent a letter (preserved in both English and Bengali variants) on behalf of the Samiti to the Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal, seeking to meet the visiting minister. Vernacularizing the British concept of “self-governing institutions” and juxtaposing it with Rajavamshi notions and structures of communitarian rule, Barma noted that the “Kshatriya Community”/kshatriyasamaja, as a part of “Hindu Society”/hindusamaja, had traditionally been

internally governed by small Samajas or Societies each with its controlling head and a Panchayat or a council composed by the Pramanikas [...]. These Samajas were in their respective spheres self-governing and representative,

19 Samiti, *San 1324* (see note 14), 29.

20 Samiti, *San 1324* (see note 14), 29–30.

21 House of Commons, Parliamentary Papers, East India (Constitutional Reforms), Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms (London, 1918), 5.

and worked by love [...], blending the people as if in one body, making them respect the order and law [...]. Their leaders as also the king himself were completely under the control of the law and order.²²

This enabled the Kshatriyas to be “loving confederates with all other similar Samajas as also the rest of mankind.” The letter urged the British to rekindle and strengthen this heritage of local governance, of which elements still existed, by fostering “self-governing and self-improving (in Bengali, *atmashasani o atmotkarshi*) Institutions,” and considering “village Communities and Panchayats” as “the basis of popular representation.” Barma stressed, without any ambiguity, that in government councils, “the representation must be thorough and every community high or low, and every interest,” especially “of the small communities or interests,” should be given due regard. Otherwise there would only be “a rule of one part of the people over the other.”²³ The Rajavamshis, like many other ‘lower caste’ as well as ‘minority’ (especially Indian Muslim) actors, justifiably wished to prevent a devolution of powers which would only benefit high-caste Hindu elites. Hence the emphasis on the “low” and the “small” in Barma’s letter, and they too, and not just the elites, in the Rajavamshi perspective, deserved self-rule. Otherwise, there could be no real autonomy for them, if representation implied only rule of one section of Indians over another. (This critique of representation has lost none of its relevance in postcolonial India, with its resilient structures of majoritarian and elitist dominance.)

If we juxtapose Barma’s 1917 letter with the Kshatriya Samiti report of 1918, we immediately perceive a connection. We can perhaps assert without too much exaggeration that, in the realm of periodisation and philosophy of temporality, the report of 1918 served as a founding act for the Rajavamshi drive for autonomy. Of course, the 1918 report displays a marked lack of reference, in that it offers no specific historical context, let alone any mention of the Rajavamshis themselves. It presents itself as a dialectic of world history: of how human life (*manavajivana*) or the life of human society (*manavasamaja-jivana*) progresses through certain stages (*stara*). The term dialectic is meaningful, given the weight it has now acquired, not only implying dialogue, but also opposition, confrontation, contradiction, and synthesis. Much of the report revolves around such intersections of opposites: attraction (*akarshana*) and repulsion (*vikarshana*), blow (*ghata*) and counter-blow (*pratighata*), conflict (*virodha*), and ways of resolving it. To return to our expropriation of Walter Benjamin, the periodisation of 1918 is mythic, it founds a new (vision of) political order, and is not only analogous to a legal order, but is in fact deeply embedded in it. Much of the periodisation hinges on the role of laws (*vidhi*) and prohibitions (*nishedha*), whether

22 Samiti, *San 1324* (see note 14), 50–55.

23 Samiti, *San 1324* (see note 14), 50–55.

imposed through force (*balanusrita*) by the master (*prabhu*) or king (*raja*), or by society (*samaja*) itself. Law is inexorably related to violence: violence gives force to law, but is also tamed/subdued (*damana*) and regulated (*niyaman*) by law. This foundational role of “law and order” (in the Bengali version, *vidhi o shasanashrinkhala*) is of course also evident in the earlier letter of 1917. The movement of time—the energy behind periodisation—is thus fuelled here in significant part by the dialectics of law. Top-down state law replaces the original anomie, and is subsequently phased out by social laws, which are in turn subordinated to self-government—*atmashasana*, the term that has an institutional-political sense in the 1917 letter, and a wider philosophical charge in the 1918 report—until all government finally withers away. The Rajavamshi periodisation is both law-creating and law-destroying (to re-invoke Benjamin); it begins with the inauguration of a legal-political order and ends with its anarchic demise.

Why is Rajavamshi periodisation so intimately linked to law and rule? One major clue is offered by the fact that, very much like Hobbes, the Rajavamshi discourse presents an original state of nature, which is so full of antagonism and mutual destructiveness, that the people—to transcend the condition of a bestial multitude (*jantupunja*)—resort to a first effort (*prathama cheshta*), leading to the establishment of the rule of the master/king. We might also say, to the birth of the state. The period of nature thus gives way to the period of rule (*shasana*), the beginning of history proper. This is a political myth in its grandest sense, and has many possible lineages. Across the 1910s and early 1920s, many Bengali/Indian historians read ancient Sanskrit and Pali texts from the late first millennium BCE/early first millennium CE—like the *Mahabharata*, Kautilya’s *Arthashastra*, the *Manusmriti*, the *Digha Nikaya*, and the *Mahavastu*—as offering variations of social contract theory, including ideas proximate to those of Hobbes. These historians often established equivalences between early modern European social contract theories and ancient Indian arguments about the origins and limits of rule. Their broad aim—in an age of rising anti-colonial mass militancy, as well as debates on devolution of powers to Indians—was to imagine the state as being rooted in the contractarian will of the people. State power was to be considered contingent upon its ability to pursue the protection and welfare of the people, rather than on the arbitrary and exploitative fiat of a foreign government. In this milieu, ancient Indian texts justified twentieth-century demands for democratising governance.²⁴ As is clearly visible from Kshatriya Samiti records and other Rajavamshi writings between the 1910s and 1930s, the Rajavamshi leadership was deeply engaged with reworking Sanskritic ideas to produce their own political thought. Some of these leaders also had the relevant academic training. For example, Panchanan Barma had acquired university degrees in Sanskrit and law in the 1890s, and practised as a lawyer

24 Banerjee, *Mortal God* (see note 11), 228–233.

in northern Bengal in the 1900s, before heading the Kshatriya Samiti.²⁵ The writers of the 1918 report may thus have been aware of ancient Indian texts about a transition from a period of anarchic antagonism to a period of hierarchic rule and kingship. They may also have had knowledge about the elite-Indian nationalist discussions of the 1910s about social contract theory, and perhaps even some knowledge of Hobbesian arguments. Finally, the Rajavamshis are also likely to have had knowledge of an indigenous Bengali tradition, embodied in the early modern *Chandimangal* genre (which remained popular in colonial Bengal). In the most famous example of this genre, by Mukunda (late sixteenth/early seventeenth century), a (literal) forest (*vana*) of mutually destructive animals gave way to a state, as the goddess Chandi responded to a petition by the animals to remove their fear (*sashanka*) of being killed, and to institute an order of non-fear (*niratanka*). In the state, clear prohibitions (*baran*) were laid down, in order to reduce warfare and create a measure of non-conflict (*avirodha*) among the animals.²⁶

It needs underlining that the Rajavamshi periodisation begins with the affirmation of the inevitability of the rule of the master/king. The discussion on the state of nature prepares the ground for this. This perspective differs from that of someone like Muhammad Ali, the celebrated anti-colonial Khilafat revolutionary, who, in the course of his trial in 1921 by the British, denounced the argument that the British had rescued Indians from a Hobbesian state of nature, an argument which purportedly justified colonial sovereignty as a neutral umpire between supposedly conflicting races, creeds, and castes.²⁷ In contrast, the Rajavamshis affirmed loyalty both to the British colonial state, and especially to King-Emperor George V—the *raja* who loomed most large in the Kshatriya Samiti's imagination in the 1910s—as well as to the ruler of the princely state of Cooch Behar. Like many similarly placed 'lower caste' movements in India at the time, they saw the British as an ally who would give them employment. For example, the Rajavamshis joined the colonial army in large numbers during the First World War, and many served in Mesopotamia, Egypt, France, and Belgium. They also wanted access to higher education (hitherto often monopolised by high-caste elites), and above all, political representation. Rajavamshis had constituted a dominant

25 Upendranath Barman, *Thakur Panchanan Barma Jivanacharita* (Calcutta: Panchanan Smaraka Samiti, 1980), 1–16; Barma, *Indomitable Panchanan* (see note 13).

26 Mukundarāma Cakrabart, *Chandimangal*, ed. Khudiram Das (Calcutta: Dey's Publishing, 2007); Milinda Banerjee, "State of Nature, Civilized Society, and Social Contract: Perspectives from Early Modern Bengal on the Origin and Limits of Government," *Calcutta Historical Journal* 28, no. 2, (2008 [back issue published in 2010]): 1–55; Milinda Banerjee, "Besitz, Widerstand und globale Geistesgeschichte im Spiegel des *Chandimangal* aus dem frühmodernen Bengalen," *Zeitschrift für Weltgeschichte* 17, no. 1 (2016): 71–90; Milinda Banerjee, "Gods in a Democracy: State of Nature, Postcolonial Politics, and Bengali Mangalkabyas," in *The Postcolonial World*, ed. Jyotsna Singh and David Kim (London: Routledge, 2016), 184–205.

27 Banerjee, *Mortal God* (see note 11), 359–360.

social group in precolonial sub-Himalayan northern Bengal. However, in the colonial era they had gradually lost control over land as well as political and administrative power in the face of immigrant Western-educated higher-caste (especially, Bengali) elites. Indeed, the very crystallisation of ‘high’ and ‘low’ in the caste hierarchy, here as elsewhere in British India, was shaped in part by colonial interventions. The loss by Rajavamshis of social, economic, and political-administrative power was due to structural transformations wrought by colonialism: revenue maximisation, demilitarisation of martial-peasant groups, administrative modernisation, growth of a strong and interventionist state, and the premium placed on Western education in the growing state apparatus. Nevertheless, the Kshatriya Samiti still saw the British as a possible ally who would rescue them from their current epoch of decline. By the 1930s, they were classified by the British as a Scheduled Caste (an official category) and they managed to wrest from the colonial state significant political representation at the provincial level, as well as some employment and educational benefits. They were also able to promote some pro-peasant measures through the colonial legislature. Moreover, the Rajavamshis ideologically positioned themselves as a kingly Kshatriya community with an aptitude for political authority. Indeed, the very name Rajavamshi means “of the royal lineage.” This name relates to the role which various martial-peasant groups played in precolonial state formation in sub-Himalayan Bengal and western Assam, and especially during the birth (at the end of the fifteenth, early sixteenth century), and consolidation of the Koch kingdom (the ancestor of the Cooch Behar princely state and of various other ruling lineages across northern Bengal and Assam).²⁸ Given this overall context, it is understandable why the Rajavamshi discourse of 1918 would see the rule of the master or king as a structural necessity in the forward movement of history.

As the archetypal voice of the state, law (*vidhi*) occupies a significant position in this periodisation scheme: by regulating human interactions, it is what allows people to come together without destroying each other. It is also what separates man from animals (*jantu*), and indeed lifts man out of nature (*prakriti*) into history, creating the very possibility of a periodisation scheme. The term *damana* offers a significant clue here. In the periodisation described above, it is closely associated with the order of law (*vidhi*) and prohibition (*nishedha*). In Sanskrit, *damana* and related terms imply processes of taming and subduing, and are not only used for human beings, but also in relation to taming horses, bullocks, and so on.²⁹ In a provocative recent book, James Scott has argued that the early historical state arose when human beings sought to domesticate other human beings in the same way as they had earlier domesticated

28 Banerjee, *Mortal God* (see note 11), 312–331.

29 Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (see note 17), 469.

various flora and fauna.³⁰ It is hardly a coincidence that the Rajavamshi discourse on *damana* is about converting the wild animals of nature into proper humans, and that the state should arise through a process of domestication, which is also about domination. While Scott takes examples from ancient states—especially in Mesopotamia—I would argue that this paradigm of domestication would also apply to later narratives of forest/nature-to-state transition, as in the *Chandimangal* or in the Kshatriya Samiti report of 1918.

For Rajavamshi peasant actors, to whom animal husbandry was crucial, such a narrative bore rich significance. Rajavamshi activists frequently associated the control, upkeep, and protection of animals, especially cattle, with leadership: mastery and protection of cattle justified the Rajavamshi claim to being herdsmen of the polity. Such a discourse about pastoral governance, which reminds us strongly of Michel Foucault's formulations on the theme³¹, had an appeal among other 'lower caste' communities in colonial Bengal too, including among the pastoral Gop-Yadavs.³² The metaphor of the rule of the master/king as an agent that transforms wild nature/beasts into tamed humanity had obvious traction among a social group who were engaged in daily work with domesticating animals. However, the narrative was double-edged. Rajavamshi activists also feared being transformed into animals. In Rajavamshi discourses, we find a recurring anxiety that the impoverished peasants were being exploited to such an extent—through expropriation of their land and labour, as well as their transformation into producers of raw materials and consumers of costly finished products—by "foreign" (*bhinna deshiyera*) dominant groups from afar, that they were being converted into an animal-like state (*pashubhava*, *pashur nyaya*).³³ A desire to resist such a transformation fuelled the drive for self-rule (*atmashasana*). Rajavamshi periodisation thus hinged on the discomfiting tension, indeed oscillation, between an epoch of animality and the epoch of being human. In this sense, the dialectic between animal and human was not a one-way transition. On the one hand, the process of becoming human, of leaving the animal-like state, entailed the rule of the master/king, and thus the birth of the state and of law. On the other hand, an excess of politico-economic domination from above would reduce human beings, especially impoverished peasants, to precisely the stage of animality which they had contrived to escape from in the first place. Hence, self-rule offered a way out: it was rule, but a rule of oneself by oneself. In transitioning to self-rule, the rule of society (*samajashasana*), presented

30 James C. Scott, *Against the Grain: A Deep History of the Earliest States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017).

31 Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). See also Anand Pandian, "Pastoral Power in the Postcolony: On the Biopolitics of the Criminal Animal in South India," *Cultural Anthropology* 23, no. 1 (2008): 85–117.

32 Banerjee, *Mortal God* (see note 11), 319–322, 411.

33 Banerjee, *Mortal God* (see note 11), 328–329, 410.

a mediation in the Rajavamshi periodisation. The term had polyvalent meanings in Rajavamshi discourse. First, it referred—as in the 1917 letter discussed previously—to the historical lineages of communitarian self-rule in precolonial South Asia. Like many other actors in colonial Bengal, Rajavamshis sought to revitalise the residues of these communitarian traditions of autonomy which had survived the ravages of colonial rule, in order to mould new structures and concepts of self-government.³⁴ Second, as again evidenced by the 1917 letter, the discourse on *samajashasana* linked itself to British colonial trajectories of devolving powers to Indians. Third, the Kshatriya Samiti presented itself as a miniature *samaja*: one through which Rajavamshis could unite (*milana*) as a community and seek to empower themselves.³⁵ Yet even the rule of society embodied *bahirer shasana* (literally, rule of the outside), that is, heteronomy. There is a tremendous complexity and contradiction at work here. In the 1917 letter, the term *atmashasani* was used as the Bengali equivalent of the British colonial language of “self-governing,” and mapped within a political cosmology where subaltern communities achieved adequate powers and capacities of political representation, self-rule, and self-improvement. In the 1918 discourse though, it was clearly not enough for a community or society to govern itself. Rather, every individual self, too, needed to become capable of self-government to truly eradicate heteronomy.

I would argue that this periodised transition from heteronomy to autonomy had, apart from obvious ethical and political implications, a deep grounding in labour as well. In various interwar Rajavamshi discourses, we find a strong emphasis on being *atmanirbhara* (self-reliant). These discourses sometimes had specific (male) authors, whereas at other times, no specific author is mentioned. In all cases, these discourses were part of bigger public deliberations, textualising discussions carried out in caste meetings and assemblies. While we see records of differences in opinion, we also witness certain shared perspectives. Rajavamshi activists in the interwar years frequently saw themselves as the true generators of wealth (*dhana*) in society. Drawing on precolonial South Asian traditions, they presented the act of ploughing the soil as a sacred act, which rendered peasants similar to gods and kings. Rajavamshis claimed that their agricultural activities supported society, and yet the elites did not give them due recognition. They resented the way in which they were being displaced from ownership and control of land, while their labour (*shrama*) was being robbed (*apaharana*) by the elites, such as big companies and moneylenders. A new discourse on exploitation (*nishpeshana*) developed in reaction to these processes. A novel class consciousness emerged as well, pitting the rich (*dhani loka*) against the poor (*garib, nirdhana*), with Rajavamshis identifying themselves as part of the latter category. Simultaneously,

34 For the discourse on *samaja* in colonial Bengal, see Swarupa Gupta, *Notions of Nationhood in Bengal: Perspectives on Samaj, c. 1867–1905* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

35 Banerjee, *Mortal God* (see note 11), 328.

sections of peasant elites sought to form their own companies, cooperatives, banks, and so on, in order to empower themselves economically against high-caste immigrant elites.³⁶ I have not yet detected any overt references to Marxism in these discourses. However, the Russian Revolution of 1917 generated enormous excitement in India, including in Bengal, in the interwar years; the Communist Party of India was founded in 1920. There is a high probability that the Rajavamshi discourse about exploitation of the poor drew on Marxist—or at least, broadly, socialist—debates.

Admittedly, the Kshatriya Samiti's interventions were marked by inequality: the concerns of peasant elites were often prioritised over those of lower class peasants, including sharecroppers and landless labourers.³⁷ Nevertheless, in a very fundamental sense, a new discourse on self-rule was generated which derived its material charge from the claim that Rajavamshi peasants ploughed the land, generated the true wealth of society, gave support (*avalambana*) and shelter (*ashraya*) to the whole of society, and therefore deserved economic empowerment, political representation, and social recognition. From the Rajavamshi perspective, the rich and the powerful also depended (*bharsa*) on the peasants. It was their labour (*shrama*), their work (*kaj*)—whether as peasants or as soldiers—which rendered Rajavamshis into divine and kingly beings, into those capable of *atmashasana*. The demand for political representation was rooted, in part, in the claim of labour. This is starkly visible, for example, in the Rajavamshi activist Upendranath Barman's poem 'Langaler Dabi' (The Claim of the Plough). This was a manifesto for the 1937 legislative elections, which marked the coming of age of 'lower caste' peasant politics in Bengal.³⁸ Re-reading the 1918 report through this long-term lens, we clearly see how the periodised progression from heteronomy to autonomy was necessarily mediated through labour. Through their agrarian and military labour, as well as through their political and conceptual work in self-organisation, Rajavamshi peasants achieved *atmashasana*. Labour, which was initially a marker of their servitude, of their low status, which allowed elites to denigrate them, turned through the dialectic into the marker of self-reliance and freedom.³⁹ There is a fascinating dialectic at work here, whereby the rule of the master becomes—through biting and unavoidable irony—a slave: a slave or servant (*kimkara*; indeed, nothing but a slave/servant, *kimkara matra*) of self-rule. In parallel, the subject (*praja*)—unambiguously described as the person who is at the bottom (*adhahstha vyakti*)—comes out on top. It is this subject who is the true hero, the narrative pivot, of the periodisation scheme, who drives forward the periodisation itself. If one wanted, one could compare this with Jean Hyppolite's famous description of Hegel's dialectic:

36 Banerjee, *Mortal God* (see note 11), 322–24, 328–329.

37 Basu, *Dynamics of a Caste Movement* (see note 13).

38 Banerjee, *Mortal God* (see note 11), 316–330, 410.

39 Banerjee, *Mortal God* (see note 11), 322–323.

The dialectic of domination and servitude [...] consists essentially in showing that the truth of the master reveals that he is the slave of the slave, and that the slave is revealed to be the master of the master.⁴⁰

When the 1917 letter is read together with the 1918 report, we realise that Rajavamshi periodisation in this era looked both backward and forward. It looked back to a past of self-government (the 1917 letter), or even of an extreme, albeit imperfect, freedom from rule (the 1918 report). Simultaneously, it looked forward to a future of freedom, which would remove the imperfections of the past. It is certainly possible to explain this Janus-faced nature of Rajavamshi periodisation in more than one way. Taking a cue from Andrew Sartori's discussions on Bengali Muslim concepts of labour-constituted property and autonomy, one might argue that there is a logic within the modern world of capitalism, which both looks back with nostalgia to a (constructed) pre-exploitative past, (in Sartori's words, "a natural and originary state in which labor is constitutive of, and the true measure of, property"), as well as forward, to a fantasised post-exploitative future.⁴¹ However, it is not only the capitalist mode of production which generates such a model of periodisation, which simultaneously looks backward and forward. After all, myths of a primitive golden age and a millenarian future can be found in more than one society or historical epoch.⁴² In the case of the Rajavamshi periodisation I have discussed, I would emphasise above all the condition of subalternity, which structured the Rajavamshi historical sensibility. As a heteronomous subject, Rajavamshi agrarian, military, political, and conceptual labour sought to break free from the suffocating grip of domination, without abjuring the joys of collective social life which had been seemingly enabled, in part, by the very conditions of domination (laws, prohibitions, coercive force, and so on). Hence the fascinatingly dialectical nature of Rajavamshi periodisation which sought not a simple overthrow of the apparatuses of rule (*shasana*), but aspired rather to work through those very apparatuses—through a series of negations of negations—to achieve freedom.

In practical terms, the Rajavamshi periodisation was part of a far bigger conceptual arsenal, which Rajavamshis successfully deployed across the interwar years to gain electoral rights and legislative representation in Bengal. As a 'Depressed Class'—from the 1930s, designated as a 'Scheduled Caste'—Rajavamshis have been beneficiaries of

40 Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Samuel Cherniak and John Heckman (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2000), 172.

41 Andrew Sartori, *Liberalism in Empire: An Alternative History* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2014), 207.

42 The literature is too extensive to be summarised here. Among the most influential examples of scholarship on these themes are: Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1957), and Norman Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come: The Ancient Roots of Apocalyptic Faith* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

reservations and other governmental benefits in areas like political representation, employment, and education. They have forged alliances with other lower-caste movements across Bengal and India. From the 1940s onwards, lower-class Rajavamshi peasants have led militant campaigns to fight against landlord power and for enhanced peasant rights. Through community self-organisation, Rajavamshis have created strong frameworks for achieving education, healthcare, financial autonomy, and improvement of agrarian and industrial technologies. From the 1940s until today, they have launched periodic campaigns for achieving territorial autonomy, in order to bolster the political power of indigenous ‘lower-caste’ and ‘tribal’ populations, and to reduce the dominance of high-caste Bengali elites. Their rise is part of an epic transformation in modern South Asia, embodied in the ascendancy of lower-caste/Dalit politics across India: what Christophe Jaffrelot has termed as “India’s silent revolution.”⁴³

While a certain antiquarian engagement with the regional-communitarian past was already evident in Rajavamshi discourses of the early to mid-twentieth century, later decades of the twentieth and early twenty-first century would see an intensified historicisation of this Janus-faced periodisation model.⁴⁴ In the postcolonial decades, in fact until today, Rajavamshi political actors have often simultaneously looked back to a period of autonomy—identified especially with the precolonial Kamata and Koch kingdoms and with princely Cooch Behar—as well as forward to a time when they will regain their rightful place in history. For many Rajavamshi activists, the present (the period of rule by the state of West Bengal and by Bengali elites, following the final dissolution of the princely state of Cooch Behar after India’s independence from British rule) marks the tragic dip in the U-shaped curve of history, between an ancient (if imperfect) age of power and a future of endless possibility.⁴⁵ The seeds of the structural preconditions for this U-shaped model of history are already visible in the Rajavamshi discourses of 1917–18.

In the Rajavamshi periodisation of 1918, the final stage of history was constituted by the cessation of all rule. Like every other previous phase of rule, self-rule (*atmashasana*) sowed the seeds for its own negation. The self became so stainless (*nirmala*), as it approached the ultimate goal (*charama lakshya*), that both exterior rule and interior rule withered away. All government simply ceased to be, like shackles that fell off. What was this ultimate goal? The 1918 report speaks in seemingly individualistic terms. The self realises its fullness, reaches plenitude (*purnatva*), of desire, of satisfaction, of joy. But Panchanan Barma’s 1917 letter to the Government of Bengal gives another elaboration more engaged with alterity. It noted that, for the Samiti, “final emancipation

43 Christophe Jaffrelot, *India’s Silent Revolution: The Rise of the Lower Castes in North India* (London: Hurst and Co., 2003).

44 See, for example, Barma, *Indomitable Panchanan* (see note 13), Chapter 3.

45 Banerjee, *Mortal God* (see note 11), 330–35.

of the souls (*jivatmar vimukti-sadhan*) by the finding of the great soul in all we see (*drishyaman jagat madhye paramatmar darshan*), is the goal (*charama uddeshya*).⁴⁶ Scholars have studied in minute detail the rise of Vedantic thinking in early modern and colonial India, and related this trajectory to the ideological imperatives of elite Indian actors.⁴⁷ But there is still a significant lack of research regarding the traction of Vedanta-inflected conceptual vocabularies in non-elite political thought. Here, one could mention the interwar Bengali poet Kazi Nazrul Islam, who related Vedantic and Islamic structures of thought in order to formulate a non-sectarian grammar of anti-colonial democratic revolution, geared especially towards the empowerment of peasants and other labouring classes as well as women.⁴⁸ The Rajavamshi actors I have analysed embody another strand of this Vedanta-inflected popular politics. Their vision of non-majoritarian subalternised democratisation was grounded in a metaphysics of seeing the divine in all, and of thus achieving emancipation (*vimukti*).

In “emancipation” or “*vimukti*”—to use the English and Bengali variants of the 1917 letter—Rajavamshi periodisation reached its climactic finale as well as its dissolution. History ceased to be as the self came into its own, and achieved fullness: the end of history was the beginning of freedom or salvation. The ultimate goal of periodisation—and here one notes the obvious similarities with other modes of dialectical thinking, including not only those in Hegel and Marx, but also with older forebears—was to surpass itself, negate periodisation, and transcend history. In fullness, there could be no more imperfection and domination, no more finitude, and hence no more forward movement of history. With the cessation of all rule, *purnatva* was, literally, anarchic: the self was now free of all government, and even from the stratification and government of time. This was the final step in the dialectic whereby periodisation, as dialectic, thus negated itself. The aim of this essay has been to historicise this trajectory—to explain why this periodisation necessarily took a dialectical form—in terms of the conditions of labour, social structure, and political aspirations of a subaltern community in a colonial agrarian society. It should be obvious, however, that to contextualise a dialectic is not to contain it. The structure of this dialectical periodisation still retains a majestic transhistorical force: an ability to arouse dissatisfaction with all forms of domination and rule (and imposed typologies and “universalisms” that subalternist and decolonial critiques seek to battle against), even under social conditions which may be vastly different from those within which the dialectic was first conceived.

46 Samiti, *San 1324* (see note 14), 51, 54.

47 For example, Andrew Sartori, *Bengal in Global Concept History: Culturalism in the Age of Capital* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Andrew J. Nicholson, *Unifying Hinduism: Philosophy and Identity in Indian Intellectual History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

48 Banerjee, *Mortal God* (see note 11), 239–240, 363–368, 371, 384.

5. The Pitfalls of Terminology

Uncovering the Paradoxical Roots of Early Modern History in American Historiography

Justus Nipperdey 

Some schemes of periodisation and their respective terminologies seem to be rather straightforward—to those who use them, to those who uphold them, but also to those who criticise them. This is certainly the case with the main periodisation of Western History: the division into Ancient, Medieval, and Modern History. This ordering of history is not only the most prominent periodisation scheme in today’s world, but also the most discussed, the best researched, and the most vigorously disproved. Many scholars have traced its origins either to the self-descriptions of living in a new age in the Italian Renaissance, or to the practice of textbook production at the turn of the eighteenth century.¹ Even more have commented on its deficiencies or even absurdities and on the ideological underpinnings of the whole system.² The widespread awareness that the concept of modern history does not only pertain to mere chronology, but rather to ideas about the essence of what it means to be modern and thus, by default, what is not modern has led to a “hesitation on the part of contemporary historians over using labels like ‘medieval,’ ‘modern,’ and ‘modernity’ ” as Dipesh Chakrabarty has observed.³ Despite the notorious difficulty in actually defining the ‘modern,’ historians seem to have a pretty clear notion of what is meant by it—or rather: what they think other historians mean or have meant by it when using the term. This tacit assumption, however, might not always correspond with a more complex reality.

- 1 See Horst Günther, “Neuzeit, Mittelalter, Altertum,” in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. 6 (Darmstadt: Wiss. Buchgesellschaft, 1984), 782–794.
- 2 See Kathleen Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty: How Ideas of Feudalism and Secularization Govern the Politics of Time* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); Constantin Fasolt, “Hegel’s Ghost: Europe, the Reformation, and the Middle Ages,” *Viator* 39 (2008): 345–386.
- 3 Dipesh Chakrabarty, “AHR Roundtable: The Muddle of Modernity,” *American Historical Review* (116): 663–675, 663. Cf. also the essay by Moshfeg in this volume.

In this paper I want to highlight the complexities behind what seems to be one of the basic aspects of Western historiography from the eighteenth to the twentieth century and beyond: distinguishing medieval from modern and pre-modern from modern. I will argue that even inside the Western tradition, these operations were far from uniform and that they were strongly conditioned by the differences in national historiographical and intellectual cultures. Furthermore, I will show how perplexing and counter-intuitive the terminology in periodisation can be—with historians using qualified versions of the term ‘modern’ when they actually meant ‘not-really-modern.’ These ambiguities are often overlooked by later interpreters (especially critics of established schemes of periodisation), who often presuppose a stability of meaning in epochal terminology over long time spans and neglect the historians’ capacity for constant reinterpretation of these terms. To illuminate these points, I will provide a case study: the hitherto overlooked emergence of early modern history as a distinct field of research in the United States in the first half of the twentieth century.

The field of early modern history is a particularly good example for studying the cultural determination of periodisation schemes and their variations even inside the Western tradition itself. During the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, two models existed side by side: the tripartite division into ancient, medieval, and modern history prevalent in the English-speaking world, as well as in Central and Northern Europe; and the French tradition of dividing history into four parts, thus splitting modern history into *histoire moderne* and *histoire contemporaine* with the French Revolution as the dividing line. This scheme was adopted by Italian, Spanish and other romance-language historians. For a long time, the curious fact that French ‘modern history’ actually ended in 1789 was not remarked upon. When homogenization was attempted, however, the two traditions clashed. In 1964, the European Council commissioned a book on European history with the goal of ‘denationalising’ historiography. In the German version, the entry on contemporary history by the Belgian medievalist Emile Lousse (1905–1986) and the Italian modernist Mario Bendiscioli (1903–1998) started with the following definition: “In der traditionellen vierteiligen Aufgliederung der Geschichte bezeichnet der Ausdruck die ‘Neueste Zeit’ die Periode, die der Neuzeit folgt.”⁴ In English this would read as: “In the traditional quadripartite division of history the term ‘contemporary times’ (literally: newest time/era) denominates the period that follows the modern era (literally: new time/era).” While this assertion was

4 Mario Bendiscioli, and Emile Lousse, “Neueste Zeit,” in: *Grundbegriffe der Geschichte* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1964), 267; they did, in fact, reflect on the terminological and conceptual problem of ‘modern’ in their contribution on “età moderna.” See the Italian version Mario Bendiscioli, and Emile Lousse, “Età moderna,” *Internationales Jahrbuch für Geschichtsunterricht* 7 (1959/60): 254–262.

obvious for French- and Italian-speaking historians, its translation into German or English renders it almost incomprehensible, if not bordering on the absurd: neither had there ever been a traditional division of history into four parts in German- or English-language historiography, nor was there any notion that the *Neuzeit* or the 'modern era' had ended and been followed by an even newer and different historical epoch. A translator more knowledgeable about recent developments in the field might have solved the linguistic and substantive conundrum by using the term *Frühe Neuzeit* or 'early modern history.' That the translator and the dictionary's editors did not use these terms clearly shows that they had not gained general currency in German historiography in the early 1960s.

The emergence of 'early modern history' as a concept, especially in German, British, and American historiography, is traditionally situated in the second half of the twentieth century.⁵ The first two post-war decades are seen as a time of gestation, of isolated usage of the term and rare attempts at defining early modern as a historical period. The 1970s, then, serve as a pivotal decade initiating widespread usage, first book series such as the *Cambridge Studies in Early Modern History* (the first volume of the series was published in 1970), or, in Germany, university chairs officially denominated for *Geschichte der Frühen Neuzeit*. In addition, a number of book titles from the 1970s were extremely influential for the perception of the label 'early modern' in the English-speaking world: Peter Burke's *Economy and Society in Early Modern Europe* (1972), his *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (1978), and Natalie Zemon Davis' *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (1975) linked the label both to the questions and methods of the French Annales School and to the emerging new cultural history. During the last decades of the twentieth century, this had the effect of attaching a certain meaning to 'early modern' that transcended the basic *chronological* operation of denoting the time from around 1500 to around 1800. Instead, it became a watchword for a methodological choice. Especially in the United States scholars in history and other humanities used the term as a battle cry against the Renaissance or rather, against the research agenda associated with the term Renaissance. In this

5 See generally and critically Wolfgang Reinhard, "The Idea of Early Modern History," in *Companion to Historiography*, ed. Michael Bentley (London: Routledge, 2002), 281–292; Randolph Starn, "The Early Modern Muddle," *Journal of Early Modern History* 6 (2002): 296–307. For Germany Winfried Schulze, "Von den großen Anfängen des neuen Welttheaters: Entwicklung, neuere Ansätze und Aufgaben der Frühneuzeitforschung," *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 44 (1993): 3–18; Thomas Maissen, "Seit wann und zu welchem Zweck gibt es die Frühe Neuzeit," in *Neue Wege der Forschung: Antrittsvorlesungen am Historischen Seminar Heidelberg, 2000–2006*, ed. Stefan Weinfurter (Heidelberg: Winter, 2009), 129–153. A much longer view is taken by Phil Withington, *Society in Early Modern England: The Vernacular Origins of some Powerful Ideas* (Cambridge: Polity 2010).

understanding, ‘early modern’ was to signify an interest in popular instead of elite culture, approaches to history informed by anthropology, constructivism and scepticism towards linear development.⁶

While Renaissance scholars fought a losing battle against the fashionable term, it was not until the turn of the millennium that the slightly postmodern reading of ‘early modern’ was challenged from a postmodernist position. Focusing on the presence of the word ‘modern’ in ‘early modern,’ cultural historians now began to question the term, its meaning and its usage.⁷ This question had not bothered historians before, even though it lay hidden in plain sight. With some irony Peter Burke had already alluded to it in 1978, in the introduction to his *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*: “The period with which this book is concerned runs from about 1500 to about 1800. In other words, it corresponds to what historians often call the ‘early modern’ period, even when they deny its modernity.”⁸ But it was not until the late 1990s that the charge emerged, that ‘early modern’ not only meant modernity in disguise, but that the term and concept had originally been framed to refer to modernity and the process of modernisation.⁹ This reading seemed to be underpinned by chronology: ‘early modern’ as a terminology emerged almost in tandem with modernisation theory and its impact on the writing of history. Even though the term and concept do not feature prominently among the major authorities of modernisation theory proper, it is not hard to find it in use among historians from the 1960s onwards, who stressed the ‘already modern’ features of early modern Europe or even the early modern world.

In the following pages, I want to present a different chronology. I contend that ‘early modern’—as a term and concept—was actually already well established in the United States by 1950 as its actual widespread usage can be found in and traced back to the 1920s and 1930s, and that its meaning at the time was akin to ‘pre-modern,’ or

- 6 See Starn, “Early Modern Muddle” (see note 5), and Leah S. Marcus, “Renaissance/Early Modern Studies,” in: *Redrawing the Boundaries: The Transformation of English and American Literary Studies*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt, Giles Gunn (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1992), 41–63.
- 7 James A. Parr, “A Modest Proposal: That We Use Alternatives to Borrowing (Renaissance, Baroque, Golden Age) and Leveling (Early Modern) in Periodization,” *Hispania* 84 (2001): 406–416; Terence Cave, “Locating the Early Modern,” *Paragraph* 29 (2006): 12–26; Moshe Sluhovskiy, “Discernment of Difference, the Introspective Subject, and the Birth of Modernity,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 36 (2006): 169–199. For Germany see Arndt Brendecke, “Eine tiefe, frühe, neue Zeit: Anmerkungen zur *hidden agenda* der Frühneuzeitforschung,” in *Die Frühe Neuzeit: Revisionen einer Epoche*, ed. Andreas Höfele, Jan-Dirk Müller, and Wulf Oesterreicher (Göttingen: de Gruyter, 2013), 29–45.
- 8 Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London: Smith 1978), Prologue.
- 9 Starn: “Early Modern Muddle” (see note 5), 299; Sebastian Conrad, “Doppelte Marginalisierung: Plädoyer für eine transnationale Perspektive auf die deutsche Geschichte,” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 28 (2002): 145–169, 149.

‘not-modern,’ rather than being used to denote an early phase of Modernity. Some of the post-World War II comments about the modernity of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries have to be understood as a reaction to this view. This was only rarely acknowledged at the time. An exception was the 1972 textbook *Early Modern Europe 1500/1789* that appeared in William McNeill’s *World Civilization Series*. The author, historian of France John B. Wolf (1907–1996), had started his teaching career in 1934 and had thus experienced the historiographical developments of almost four decades: “Until 1945,” he began his overview, “American texts customarily presented the history of early modern Europe as a dismal era of absolutism, marked by tyranny, social injustice, and senseless war fought for the personal glory or dynastic interests of princes. This was in nice contrast to the Renaissance, presented as a period of individualism, or the French Revolution, seen as the opening of modern times.” His own book, in contrast, was “intended as an introduction to the three centuries after 1500, a period vital in the formation of institutions of western society.”¹⁰

When historical scholarship began at American universities in the nineteenth century, it was generally based on the classic tripartite division of history. In the practice of teaching history and of hiring academic historians, however, the main division was the one between Americanists, working on colonial and United States history, and Europeanists, working on European history, regardless of the period they were specialising in. Ideologically, the Teutonic Germ theory and, after its demise, the continuity of English constitutional history bound both camps together, until the growth of the field of American history and the influence of Frederick Jackson Turner’s frontier thesis severed the ties between them. At the turn of the century, ideas about historical continuity overrode the idea of strict epochal divisions among the Europeanists; furthermore, their small number at any given institution and the need for undergraduate survey courses led to strong overlaps between medievalists and modernists. Until World War I, the single general session on European history at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association indiscriminately featured papers on both periods.

This changed in the second decade of the twentieth century. The differentiation of medieval and modern history culminated in the founding of the journals *Speculum* (1926) and the *Journal of Modern History* (1929). The latter’s scope was the entirety of the ‘modern period’ in its traditional sense: “the history of Europe and its expansion from the Renaissance to the close of the World War,” as the first issue declared. At that point, however, the meaning of ‘modern history’ itself had already come under scrutiny. Was it just a random name for the time since 1500, or did ‘modern’ here indicate a specific affinity to the present, delineating a time of special significance for the modern, i.e. the contemporary world? And if so: when did it actually start?

10 John B. Wolf, *Early Modern Europe 1500/1789* (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman, 1972), Preface.

The redefinition of modern history in American historiography can largely be attributed to the movement of ‘New’ or ‘Progressive History’ and its concept of presentism—that is, seeing the sense of any engagement with history in understanding the present or even in helping to solve the problems of the present.¹¹ In 1907, James Harvey Robinson (1863–1936) and Charles Beard (1874–1948), both at Columbia University at the time, published a co-authored textbook titled *The Development of Modern Europe. An Introduction to the Study of Current History*. While it appeared five years before James Harvey Robinson’s famous *New History*,¹² which gave the movement one of its names, the joint textbook can be seen as its first major manifestation. The subtitle already contains the clue. Not only does this book merge modern and current history, it already hints at the Progressive Historians’ conception of the utility of history (both in the sense of *res gestae* and historiography): fostering a better understanding of the current world. “It has been a common defect of our historical manuals,” the authors state at the start their own manual, “that, however satisfactorily they have dealt with more or less remote periods, they have ordinarily failed to connect the past with the present.” Their solution was simple: “In preparing the volume in hand, the writers have consistently subordinated the past to the present. It has been their ever-conscious aim to enable the reader to catch up with his own times.”¹³

What did this mean for the temporal scope of the history to be studied? “Obviously no special date can be fixed as the starting point of our story, for in some instances it will be necessary to go farther back than in others in seeking light on the present. ... In general, however, Europe of to-day can be quite well understood if the wonderful achievements since the opening of the eighteenth century are properly grasped.”¹⁴ The early eighteenth century seems to be a compromise between the two authors: while Beard saw the beginning of modernity mainly in the economic changes generated by the Industrial Revolution, the intellectual historian Robinson emphasised the scientific achievements of the seventeenth century.

At any rate, a number of differing timelines existed, even among the New Historians. What united them was their common understanding of the momentous shift in world history that had occurred around or since 1800. They even tried to outdo each other in finding the most evocative illustrations for this. The maverick Harry Elmer Barnes (1889–1968) posited in 1924: “George Washington [would] be far more at home on an Egyptian estate in the days of Tut-ankh-amen than in Richmond,

11 See Ernst Breisach, *American Progressive History: An Experiment in Modernization* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1993).

12 James Harvey Robinson, *The New History: Essays Illustrating the Modern Historical Outlook* (New York: Macmillan, 1912).

13 James Harvey Robinson, Charles A. Beard, *The Development of Modern Europe: An Introduction to the Study of Current History* (Boston: Ginn, 1908), iii.

14 Robinson, *The Development of Modern Europe*, 2–3.

Virginia, today.”¹⁵ The great sceptic Carl Becker (1873–1945) used a similar image in his *Modern History* (1932): “If Socrates could have come to life in Paris in 1776, many things would have seemed strange to him; but he would not have had much trouble in making himself at home there. If Benjamin Franklin should enter Philadelphia today, with or without a loaf of bread under his arm, he would be less at home in his old home town after two hundred years than Socrates would have been in Paris after two thousand years.”¹⁶ A year later Becker rephrased the thought in intellectually more challenging terms in his *Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-century Philosophers*—which was to become the most important American text on the Enlightenment for three decades and the main opponent of Peter Gay’s project of resurrecting the value of the Enlightenment. “We are accustomed,” Becker declared, “to think of the eighteenth century as essentially modern in its temper.” After listing a number of commonly offered arguments for this view, he acknowledged: “All very true. . . . And yet, I think the philosophers were nearer the Middle Ages, less emancipated from the preconceptions of medieval Christian thought, than they quite realized or we have commonly supposed.”¹⁷

The gist of these quotations is obvious: from the first decade of the twentieth century onwards, American historians of Europe started to disavow the classic definition of modern history as our own era that had begun around 1500. Instead, they posited that the contemporary world had only come into being in any recognisable form much more recently, be it in the seventeenth century or the early or even late eighteenth century. The preceding history was relegated to an almost perennial pre-modernity encompassing the millennia from Tutankhamun or Socrates to the birth of modernity. Mirroring the zenith of Progressive History, this historiographic development reached its first height in the 1920s and the 1930s.

Incidentally, however, these were the same decades that witnessed the breakthrough of the terms ‘early modern age,’ ‘early modern times’ or ‘early modern history.’ While they had existed since the 1880s, and had been used with increasing frequency since the turn of the century, it was not until the interwar years that they came to be widely employed in academic texts, in titles of articles, in university course descriptions, and even in professional job descriptions.¹⁸ In certain instances, the very same

15 Harry Elmer Barnes, History and Social Intelligence, *Journal of Social Forces* 2 (1924): 121–164, 154–155.

16 Carl Becker, *Modern History: The Rise of a Democratic, Scientific, and Industrialised Civilization* (New York: Silver, Burett, 1931), 3.

17 Carl Becker, *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-century Philosophers* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1932), 29.

18 The instances of usage are actually so many to make a full itemisation impossible. A few examples will suffice: Lynn Thorndike, “The Blight of Pestilence on Early Modern Civilization,” *American Historical Review* 32 (1927): 455–474, and his “The Survival of Mediaeval Intellectual Interests into

people who argued for the relatively recent onset of modern times, used the term ‘early modern’ endemically in their writing. The most striking example is the aforementioned Harry Elmer Barnes, who is now either forgotten or only remembered for his role in revisionist history concerning the World Wars, eventually becoming the main intellectual sponsor of Holocaust denial in post-war America. Before 1940, however, he had been a major figure in American historiography publishing widely in journals and with prestigious publishing houses.¹⁹ As a student of James Harvey Robinson at Columbia, and a teacher at the New School for Social Research, formed by Robinson and some of his colleagues when they walked out of Columbia, Barnes had taken the gospel of Progressive History to heart. In fact, he was the self-appointed attack-dog of Progressive History, taking the polemics against established history and for the inclusion of the social sciences in the 1920s and 1930s to such extremes that it embarrassed even most of his ideological allies.

Barnes was able to combine a fervent belief in the novelty of modern civilisation with a concept of development in the preceding centuries: “the supplanting of medieval civilization by early modern culture and institutions between 1500 and 1800.”²⁰ Always the deliberate iconoclast, however, Barnes disparaged the well-established narrative of the transforming nature of the Renaissance and the Reformation. Taking his cue from his teacher Robinson, he painted them instead as reactionary movements. The truly progressive development in early modern times could not be grasped without understanding the “overwhelming importance of the expansion of Europe” and the colonial reverberations on European civilisation, he argued.²¹ In this way, Barnes created and fervently proclaimed the existence of an ‘early modern period’ that was a necessary step from medieval times to modernity—but unmistakably distinct from Modernity proper.

Early Modern Times”, *Speculum* 2 (1927): 147–159 were the first articles with this title in major American historical journals. When Thorndike came back to Columbia in 1924 he immediately offered a course on “Intellectual History of Early Modern Times” (*Isis* 7 [1925], 109); in the same year R. Packard started a “Seminar in Early Modern History” at Smith College (*Catalogue of Smith College, 1924–1915*, 115). In 1933 Bernadotte Schmitt, Professor at Chicago and editor of the *Journal of Modern History*, complained to a colleague that “we have been searching for years for a man in the early modern field without much success.” (Bernadotte Schmitt to Conyers Read, 31. January 1933, Univ. of Chicago Archive, Department of History Records 1910–1963, Box 5, F. 4.)

19 See Justus D. Doenecke, “The New History and the New Sociology: Harry Elmer Barnes,” *Social Science* 53 (1978): 67–77. Leonard Krieger, “European History in America,” in: *History: The Development of Historical Studies in the United States*, ed. John Higham, with Leonard Krieger and Felix Gilbert (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1965), 261, 271.

20 Harry Elmer Barnes, “The Historical and Institutional Setting of the Second World War,” *Social Science* 16 (1941), 230–236, 231.

21 Harry Elmer Barnes, “Economic Science and Dynamic History,” *Journal of Social Forces* 3 (1924), 37–56, 56.

Other Progressive Historians interested in this period of European history were even less sanguine about the modernity of early modern times. Pride of place must be given to the views of James Harvey Robinson, godfather of the New History and prolific teacher of cohorts of Progressive Historians at Columbia. Trained as a medievalist, he came to emphasise the retarding elements in the religious and institutional life of sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe. Only in the realm of science did he finally glimpse the emergence of a 'modern way' from the late seventeenth century onwards. This argument was further pursued by Lynn Thorndike, his former student and quasi-successor at Columbia. Thorndike led the 'revolt of the medievalists' (W. K. Ferguson) in the history of science, asserting the long continuity of scientific development and vigorously refuting any claims of an intellectual breakthrough in the Renaissance and Reformation periods.²² In fact, this man who first used 'early modern' in a title in the *American Historical Review*, spent most of his working life disproving the modernity of his chosen field of interest. His 1927 AHR-article began with the sobering observation: "The period that we have been too apt to glorify as an age of renaissance, of reformation, of discovery, was in many ways—for we must also remember the insane wars of religion and of ambitious monarchs—a time of setback, stagnation, distress, and abject misery."²³

Surveying the views of the Progressive Historians in the 1920s and 1930s, it becomes obvious that there are two models in conceiving the 'early modern.' The first one asserts the continuity of European developments, in institutions, in habits, in modes of thought—until the cataclysmic eruption of modernity that occurred at some point between the middle of the seventeenth and the end of the eighteenth century, depending on the historian's preferences. This, basically, is the concept that later came to be known as "Old Europe" (Dietrich Gerhard) or the "long Moyen Âge" (Jacques Le Goff).²⁴ The other model was based on the construction of an early modern period from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, perceived as a necessary stepping stone to the genuine modern world. This, of course, is the model that has largely become established in international historiography. Looking at the interwar period, however, it would be misleading to emphasise the disagreements between the exponents of both models and the competition between the two. Rather, they were united in proposing a totally new framing of modern history that was more akin to the French *histoire contemporaine* than to a traditional modern history/*Geschichte der Neuzeit*.

This affinity is mirrored in terminology: Historians of both persuasions would use 'early modern' to describe the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, regardless of

22 Lynn Thorndike, "Renaissance or Prenaissance," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 4 (1943), 65–74.

23 Thorndike, "Blight of Pestilence" (see note 18), 455.

24 Dietrich Gerhard, *Old Europe: A Study of Continuity, 1000–1800* (New York: Academic Press, 1981); Jacques Le Goff, *Un long Moyen Âge* (Paris: Tallandier, 2004).

whether they believed them to be inherently pre-modern or at least in some ways proto-modern. Apparently, the almost innocuous word ‘early’ sufficed to categorically differentiate these centuries from the ‘proper’ modern age. During the interwar years, this mode of shortening the modern age was specifically American; no comparable development took place in British or German historiography. It was, in fact, a result of the general impact of American political and intellectual culture on the nation’s historiography. The valorisation of industrial society and of democracy led the Progressive Historians to challenge the traditional view of modern history. Conversely, in the more state-centred European societies historians defined modernity primarily in terms of state-building and the modern state system. On that basis they perpetuated the concept of a long modern age/*Neuzeit*.²⁵

As indicated at the beginning, the object of this chapter is not merely to chart the periodisation choices of American historians of Europe in the interwar period, but also to generate lessons from this case study about the terminology and the intricacies of historiographical periodisation more generally. In my view, four salient observations emerge from this example:

1. The first observation must be phrased as a warning (and a call for critical periodisation models as demanded by Jörn Rüsen²⁶): one must beware of seemingly self-evident terminology. For many critics and interpreters of the label ‘early modern’, it seemed so obvious that it had been coined in the context of modernisation theory that they did not deem it necessary to verify this claim by thoroughly examining the term’s actual usage. Such an analysis would have uncovered the rich and varied early history of usages of ‘early modern’ as historical terminology. The counter-intuitive realisation that the historians who coined the term ‘early modern’ were actually convinced of the lack of modernity in these centuries and wanted to convey this reading, does not disprove any possible *later* association of ‘early modern’ and modernisation. It does, however, contradict the assumption that this association is intrinsically attached to the term itself.
2. The second observation pertains to the question of why these interwar historians chose to silently introduce a rather bland qualification of ‘modern history,’ instead of generating a more definitive term. Apparently, the reason is the immense staying power of established *chronological* terminology, in this case ‘modern history.’ For many of the protagonists in this chapter, it would

25 The reasons for this divergence will be discussed in detail in my forthcoming book *Die Frühe Neuzeit der Moderne: die Entstehung einer Epoche in Deutschland, Großbritannien und den USA*.

26 See his chapter in this volume.

have made sense to drop the label ‘modern’ altogether. They did not do it, nor did they ever consider it, neither in their publications nor, as far as we know, in their private correspondence. They were content with splitting off the ‘early modern’ from the ‘modern’ and did not ruminate about the residual meaning of the word they were using. Applying the established label and just qualifying it, made its propagation and professional communication much easier. The validity of this assumption can be proven best by invoking the later unsuccessful attempts to introduce new periods that would have broken up the established ones. The aforementioned case of ‘Old Europe,’ put forward by Dietrich Gerhard in Germany and the United States, testifies both to the sheer difficulty of establishing a new label and to the path-dependency of periodisation schemes, once they are ingrained institutionally.

Because of its seamless connection to established periodisation, the label ‘early modern’ generated no antipathy. Its very vagueness and ostensive familiarity opened the field for everyone to use it, in genetic variation, so to speak,²⁷ as they pleased. So, from the 1930s onwards, the economic historian John U. Nef (1899–1988) would use the term consistently to stress the modernity of these centuries without ever commenting on the profound differences between his and e.g. Lynn Thorndike’s understanding of the term.²⁸

3. This example leads directly to the third observation: chronological terminology has—if it is not totally unambiguous—a remarkable capacity for reinterpretation. It can gradually change both the time frame it is supposed to delineate and its ideological underpinnings. This observation does beg the question whether a total detachment of a term from its semantic origin is actually possible.²⁹ In the case of early modern history, this is hotly debated between practicing historians who claim to be using ‘early modern’ without any residues of the term ‘modern,’ and critics of the term who deem just that impossible. The historical evidence seems to suggest that historians are actually quite capable of using terms of periodisation (or certain *chronotypes*) in idiosyncratic and therefore even distorting ways.³⁰
4. The fourth observation concerns cultural differences in periodisation and the value in exploring them, not only on a global scale, but also inside the Western tradition. As with any other historiographical operation, periodisation choices reflect contemporary ideas, pre-occupations, or ideologies. Looking closely

27 See chapter 2 by Jörn Rüsen.

28 See John U. Nef, *The Rise of the British Coal Industry*, 2 vols. (London: Routledge, 1932).

29 On this topic cf. Thomas Maissen and Barbara Mittler, *Why China did not have a Renaissance and why that matters* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2018).

30 See Justus Nipperdey, “Die Terminologie von Epochen: Überlegungen am Beispiel Frühe Neuzeit/early modern,” *Berichte zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte* 38 (2015): 170–185.

at the practice, therefore, offers a lens into these wider intellectual traits of specific societies. This circumstance has been put to use to analyse western periodisation as a whole, or to trace the chronological development of certain time-concepts—e.g. the Renaissance or the Enlightenment—in relation to the respective intellectual *Zeitgeist*. Rarely, however, have the subtle differences in periodisation between the national historiographies of Europe and the Americas—or other parts of the world—been used to understand their respective conceptions of past and present.³¹ The contrast between the contested nature of modern history in interwar American historiography and its hardly questioned prevalence in Europe, reveals much more about these societies than the mundane business of splitting up time may suggest. Disentangling the multiple histories of periodisation, as suggested here, need therefore not be denigrated as an instance of historiographical navel-gazing, but rather sheds light on the differing self-perceptions of specific societies and their respective cultures of narrating history.

31 One example for an attempt in this direction is Maissen and Mittler, *Why China did not have a Renaissance* (see note 29).

6. Historical Timeframes for Stateless Nations

Analysing the Colonised Periodisation Paradox of Palestinian History

Susynne McElrone 

Introduction

Paths of historical progression and the ordering of historiography with the perceived absence of progression are the subjects of this chapter. Specifically, I will explore periodisation and temporalities of history in the context of histories with arguably non-linear progressions—some would say a history without progression—historiographies of stateless nations.¹ Every student of history is familiar with the adage that those who

* This essay is dedicated to my father, who witnessed its genesis and discussed with me its development but lives to see its fruition only in blessed, blessed memory; and to my mother, a woman of incredible fortitude. Acknowledgements are also gratefully given to the American National Endowment of the Humanities and the Palestinian-American Research Center, for a postdoctoral research fellowship during which the idea for this paper was conceived and initial research undertaken; to the American Center of Oriental Research in Amman, where, during a postdoctoral fellowship residency an initial draft of the ideas presented here was written as a presentation for the Chronologies conference; to the organisers and participants of the Chronologies conference and especially Thomas Maissen, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, and Barbara Mittler, for thought-provoking discussion and insightful feedback on my presentation that has helped strengthen this version of it; to the volume editors for their patient understanding as my family has dealt with tragedy; and to Nadia Villafuerte, who welcomed me into her warm and sunny NYC apartment, where the present version of this paper took its final form.

1 A distinction is made between ‘the stateless’ and ‘stateless nation.’ The stateless refers to individuals as defined in Article 1, Chapter 1 of the UNGA Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons of 28 September 1954: a person “who is not considered as a national by any State under operation of its law.” UNHCR, “Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons,” https://www.unhcr.org/ibelong/wp-content/uploads/1954-Convention-relating-to-the-Status-of-Stateless-Persons_ENG.pdf. A member of a stateless nation may or may not have citizenship in a state. However, the national group to which this individual feels their belonging actively seeks to form its own state-based polity.

do not study and learn from the past are condemned to repeat it. At the heart of this statement is an idea that time is cyclical. More commonly, historians view time as linear. We may think of the past as a place. The metaphor is powerful. Once localised, we can ‘visit,’ and ‘revisit’ the past. We can ‘map’ it, two-dimensionally, along a line of time that stretches from the past through the present and into the future. Doing so, we can ‘locate’ past events at a measurable ‘distance’ from our lived present. Distance and detachment facilitate perspective, and perspective allows for the construction of insightful, analytical, rational explanatory narratives of the past, namely histories. Temporal distance allows us to measure and chart progression, endowing time with the quality of space.

However, as researchers in the interdisciplinary fields of postcolonial and memory studies attest anew, there is a disparity of distance between some pasts and the present where human experience is concerned. From above, and over the past century more vociferously from below, the importance of the past in the present has broadened. The retrospective demands upon the heirs of dominant histories for morality, culpability, and redress, which followed logically from the introduction of the banners of equality of all peoples and the principle of humanitarianism into international political discourse, prompted by the dissolution of empires and the rise of a world of nations, have irrevocably intertwined unsettled pasts consciously with the present, at least for now. The European Parliament acknowledged this entanglement in 2009, in its resolution on European conscience and totalitarianism, stating that “misinterpretations of history can fuel exclusivist policies and thereby incite hatred and racism [...] the memories of Europe’s tragic past must be kept alive in order to honour the victims, condemn the perpetrators and lay the foundations for reconciliation based on truth and remembrance.”²

Arguably, periodising history facilitates the entanglement of the past with the present. In essence, it is an act of folding time back on itself. Periodisation highlights stretches of cohesion and points of rupture in narratives of the past that we mould by grouping selections of past historical events, and modes of thought and action, into a time-bound framework that reveals a logic of development we perceive retrospectively. In this way, periodisation conflates the then and the now by organising the past in a way which, ultimately, makes sense best in the present.

2 European Parliament, “European Conscience and Totalitarianism,” resolution P6_TA(2009)0213, April 2, 2009, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2009-0213+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>, accessed July 31, 2022. Political uses of history should also be considered, of course. For an overview of historical politics in the eastern European context, see Alexei Miller, “Historical Politics: Eastern European Convolutions in the 21st century,” in *The Convolutions of Historical Politics*, ed. Alexei Miller and Maria Lipman (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2012), 1–20.

Moreover, periodisation is temporal and temporary and in function is impermanent. All periodisations will be subjected to re-evaluation and likely reorganisation in the future, as a result of, or sometimes in order to engender, a paradigmatic turn in our interpretation of the significances of the pasts they have ordered. We may ask, for instance, but not yet answer, whether the Cold War will be a period, a chapter, or merely a subheading in a larger chapter of world history, one hundred, two hundred, or three hundred years from now. The future restructuring of periodisations may be catalysed by uncovered aspects of the past that had remained hidden, future pasts that will have occurred in the interim, or the development of an innovative mode of thought that shifts perceptions about existent interpretations of the past.

Neither of these observations is an argument against periodisation. As a tool of historiography, periodisation is as useful to the historian as is a chapter to a novelist and their readers. By demarcating subjects or themes and following them from a beginning to an end, periodisation orders the past into a cohesive narrative of progression—and thus creates a specific *chronologies* of progress. The alternative, stagnation—what we define historically as such—would most logically be a singular period, typically demarcated by periods of descent and ascent, in either order. The question I wish to consider in this chapter is how to periodise unresolved histories which, I would argue, although not stagnant, are often viewed as lacking progression.

Alongside the Palestinians, on whom this chapter will focus, many stateless nations today—Tibetan, Tatar, Taiwanese, Tamil, Kashmiri, Kurd, Catalanian, and Uyghur, to name a few—live outside their homeland and/or in it under non-indigenous rule and have histories, varying in length, of aspiring to but not achieving and sustaining their sought autonomy or statehood. Many stateless nations lack broad political recognition and frequently face vigorous contestation of their legitimacy. This has less to do with the past than with the present and perceived future practical and political implications for other, established states and nations upon granting legitimation to stateless nations and witnessing their realisation as states.

Histories of many stateless nations share a common fate of censure and erasure. I examine the periodisation of Palestinian history as an exploration of how stateless nations periodise the history of their struggle for a still-unrealised state, and the significance of chosen schemes of periodisation. Before critically examining the periodisation of Palestinian history, a curiously neglected topic, and exploring possibilities for future alternatives to it, I begin with three observations on critical temporal aspects of Palestinian history that complicate the nation's historical time.³

3 On the concept of historical time/s, see Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004). Originally published as *Vergangene Zukunft, Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979).

Snags in the Fabric of Palestinian Historical Time

Firstly, Palestinian national history is transnational. The 1947–48 war that broke out upon announcement of British withdrawal from its League of Nations’ Mandate over Palestine, resulted in the geographical fragmentation of the Palestinian population and the unravelling of the unilinear thread of historical time for the nation. Multiple, significantly distinct trajectories of Palestinian national experience sprung forth—in the Jordanian West Bank, Egyptian Gaza, for Palestinians newly made citizens of Israel, and for refugees. Each trajectory has its own history and has experienced historical time at different speeds.

About 750,000 Palestinians became refugees as a result of the war.⁴ United Nations’ sponsored camps established in Gaza, Lebanon, Jordan (including the West Bank), and Syria still house refugee inhabitants today, a situation Lucas Oesch has characterised as “lasting temporariness.”⁵ Sizeable Palestinian populations also moved to Egypt, Kuwait, and further abroad. By the beginning of 2017, the registered refugee population had swollen to 5,869,733 individuals, more than the Palestinian population of the West Bank and Gaza.⁶ The approximately 160,000 Palestinians who did remain in 1948 in lands that became the State of Israel, were absorbed by the Jewish state, although this population was geographically circumscribed, with relatively few permitted to live in their pre-war homes, villages, or towns. Officially citizens, Palestinians were ruled over by an Israeli military government until 1966. They were effectively cut off from most interaction with the Arab world until 1967, when Israel conquered the West Bank, Gaza, and the Golan Heights in the June war. Today, Palestinian citizens of Israel number almost two million, comprising one-fifth of the Israeli population.⁷ Still feared by mainstream Israeli society to be a fifth column within the country, Palestinian citizens of Israel have only gradually come to express their

- 4 United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), accessed September 21, 2020, <https://www.unrwa.org/palestine-refugees>.
- 5 Lucas Oesch, “Materiality of Refugee Camps,” in *Arrival Infrastructures: Migration and Urban Social Mobilities*, ed. Bruno Meeus, Karel Arnaut, and Bas van Heur (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 229–248.
- 6 United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), data as of January 1, 2017, accessed December 7, 2018, www.unrwa.org/resources/about-unrwa/unrwa-figures-2017. The Palestinian census of 2017 counted 4,780,978 Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza, many of these refugees registered with UNRWA. Al-Natā’ij al-awliyya lil-t’adād al-‘ām lil-sukkān wa-l-masākin wa-l-munshāt 2017 (Primary results of the General Census of residents, residences, and facilities, 2017), accessed December 7, 2018, www.pcbs.gov.ps/Downloads/book2364.pdf.
- 7 At the end of 2018 Jewish citizens of Israel numbered approximately 6,668,000, comprising 74.3 percent of the population, and there were 1,878,000 citizens identified as Arab, comprising 20.9 percent of the population. Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, accessed July 31, 2022, https://www.cbs.gov.il/he/mediarelease/DocLib/2018/394/11_18_394b.pdf.

Palestinian identity publicly. While supporting the Palestinian freedom struggle, they also continue to work actively within Israel for the transformation of the Jewish state into a state of all its citizens.⁸ Mainstream Israelis and official parlance refer to Palestinian citizens of the country as Israeli Arabs, denying their Palestinian identity, or as Arab citizens of Israel, distinguishing them from citizens without qualifying adjectives. In the West Bank and Gaza, these Palestinians are referred to as *‘arab thamāniyya wa-‘arba’in*, the Arabs of [19]48. In Palestinian historiography, Palestinian citizens of Israel are treated as a separate chapter, reflecting their experiences removed from the post-1948 mainstream of Palestinian national society and history.⁹

Refugees as a group have also been written out of the mainstream of the national narrative which—since the Oslo peace agreements signed 25 years ago between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO)—has become circumscribed to the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem. The refugees have not been historicised. That is, while the refugee ‘problem’ is a significant part of Palestinian history, the experiences of the refugees as a group—or groups—are not periodised *within* the historical national narrative, conveying a sense of objectification and of stagnation.

- 8 The debate whether a self-declared Jewish and democratic state can truly be—or is—democratic is long-standing. Most recently “The Basic Law: Israel—the nation state of the Jewish people,” passed into law in July 2018. Text of the law in English: <https://knesset.gov.il/laws/special/eng/BasicLawNationState.pdf>. The Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* extensively covered the stormy debate about this law. See, for example: Allison Kaplan Sommer, “Explained: The controversial law that would allow Jewish-only communities in Israel,” *Haaretz*, July 10, 2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-explained-the-bill-that-would-allow-jewish-only-towns-in-israel-1.6265091> and, by the same writer, “Basic Law or Basically a Disaster? Israel’s Nation-state Law Controversy Explained,” *Haaretz*, August 10, 2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-israel-s-nation-state-law-controversy-explained-1.6344237>. All sources accessed July 31, 2022.
- 9 For recent research on the history of Palestinian citizens of Israel, see, for example: Dan Rabinowitz and Khawla Abu-Baker, *Coffins on Our Shoulders: The Experience of the Palestinian Citizens of Israel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Shira Robinson, *Citizen Strangers: Palestinians and the Birth of Israel’s liberal Settler State* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013); Nadim N. Rouhana and Areej Sabbagh-Khoury, eds. *Palestinim ba-Israel: ‘Iyunim ba-historia, ba-politika ve-ba-hevra*, Palestinians in Israel: Studies in History, Politics and Society, vol. 2 (Haifa: Mada al-Carmel, 2015) (Hebrew); Maha Nassar, *Brothers Apart: Palestinian Citizens of Israel and the Arab World* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017). Additionally, a large corpus of poetry and literature by Palestinian citizens of Israel poignantly, passionately, and realistically expresses the complexities of life and identity of this national minority. The 2016 “Strategic Report: Palestinian Citizens in the State of Israel: Future Scenarios” by I’lam—Arab Center for Media Freedom Development and Research, headquartered in Nazareth, addresses the current and possible future situation of this minority, <http://www.ilam-center.org/en/files/userfiles/Strategic%20Report%20-%20English%20-%20I%27lam%20I%202016.pdf>. See also the 2018, Israeli Institute for National Security Studies study, “Integrating the Arab-Palestinian Minority in Israeli Society: Time for a Strategic Change,” ed. Ephraim Lavie, https://www.inss.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/INSS_EphraimLavi.pdf. All sources accessed July 31, 2022.

Generation after generation remain refugees, even though their numbers are substantial and growing, and some form of a right of return remains a Palestinian requirement for a peace settlement with Israel.¹⁰ Finally, the West Bank and Gaza populations are also separate societies. Passage between the two regions for Palestinians, when permitted at all, is a circuitous route through Egypt and Jordan.¹¹ It stems from these actualities that a singular periodisation of Palestinian history cannot realistically encompass these distinct orbits of the nation.

Secondly, for Palestinians, the defining moment of national history is a tragedy that erases divisions between memory and history. Any Palestinian, asked where they are from, irrelevant of the location of their residence or birthplace, will answer with the name of the town or village in which their parents, grandparents, great grandparents, or great-great grandparents lived in 1947/8. The Nakba (Arabic, catastrophe), as the tragedy of these years is called—massacres, expulsions, transfers, the physical obliteration and erasure of villages—affected and continues to affect every Palestinian.¹² Since the 1980s, many Palestinian village histories have been published about these destroyed Palestinian locales. With subtitles such as “our Palestine in the story of a village,” “a homeland that refuses to be forgotten,” “my village,” “from memory of the elders to the hearts of the youth,” and “a flower on the bosom of the Galilee,” the simultaneously personal, local, and national dimensions of this history are undeniable.¹³ Unresolved tragedies of nations, such as the Nakba for Palestinians, the Armenian genocide for the Armenian nation and state, and the 1944 *sürgün* (deportation) for

- 10 There is a wealth of human-rights and anthropological literature on Palestinian refugees. Badil publishes book-length biannual reports on Palestinian refugees and displaced persons. These are accessible in English at <http://badil.org/en/publication/survey-of-refugees.html>, accessed October 26, 2020. Artwork, novels, poetry, and both artistic and documentary film have also poignantly dealt with the refugee experience. A notable and commendable project in this regard is the documentary series *Chronicles of a Refugee* (2008). Project directors and filmmakers Adam Shapiro, Perla Issa, and Aseel Mansour interviewed and filmed in more than 15 countries to make this approximately five-hour, six-part film.
- 11 See, for example, Elisha Efrat, *The West Bank and Gaza Strip: A Geography of Occupation and Disengagement* (New York: Routledge, 2006).
- 12 A number of comprehensive documentary projects have catalogued in great detail the events of the Nakba. See Walid Khalidi, *All That Remains: the Palestinian Villages occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992); the massive visual, written, and oral-history video documentary project <https://www.palestineremembered.com>, founded in 1999; and at the American University of Beirut, the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs has conducted and recorded more than 1,000 hours of testimonies from Palestinians in Lebanon, in its Palestinian Oral History Archive.
- 13 I have used a number of these books in my research on the late-Ottoman district of Hebron. Village books have been the subject of research by Rochelle Davis, *Palestinian Village Histories: Geographies of the Displaced* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010). Titles are taken from her bibliography.

Crimean Tatars, are simultaneously experienced today as both afterlives of tragedy, that is, a remembered tragedy, and as an ongoing tragedy.¹⁴ Pierre Nora developed his concept of *lieux de mémoire* through reflection on “hopelessly forgetful modern societies” which “inherently value the new over the ancient, the young over the old, the future over the past.”¹⁵ For stateless nations, these sites of memory exist, too,¹⁶ but within a larger *milieu* of memory that has not dissipated. The past is not a cornerstone but, rather, the steel frame of the edifice of their present legitimacy as nations. The continued repercussions and reverberations of these present-versus-past defining moments engender a temporal complexity that suggests the suitability of multiple, overlapping historical times, a plurality of temporalities, with the period of the defining tragedy’s long life layered over other, shorter periods that *have* come and gone.¹⁷

Thirdly, there is no disinterested Palestinian or Israeli history. This is not to make a claim about an absence of rigorousness in the scholarship. Rather, it affirms the obvious: the Israeli-Palestinian conflict ignites passions around the world, including those of academics—on both ‘sides.’ Tensions in Israel/Palestine are incessant. Crisis after crisis fuel a 24-hour local news cycle, and long ago created a relentless sense of urgency regarding the future among all who follow these events. This urgency is part of the *chronologics* of writing this history, it is often expressed in the prefaces and afterwords of histories of the conflict, of Israel, and of Palestine, by drawing direct comparisons between the historical subject of study and present-day events—what Ilan Pappé has characterised as “the inevitable link”—and by offering prescriptions for the future.¹⁸

Palestinian studies, as a subject, seems at times to only be circling round and round, struggling not to drown in the whirlpool of denial in which it is compelled to

14 See, for example, Greta Lynn Uehling, *Beyond Memory: The Crimean Tatars’ Deportation and Return* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); chapters 6 and 7 in Brian Glyn Williams’ *The Crimean Tatars: From Soviet Genocide to Putin’s Conquest* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); Sergey Minasyan, “Armenia’s Attitude towards its Past: History and Politics,” *Caucasus Analytical Digest* 8, no. 9 (2013): 10–13; and Ihab Saloul, *Catastrophe and Exile in Modern Palestinian Imagination: Telling Memories* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

15 Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire,” trans. Marc Roudebush, *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 8, 12.

16 The most recent *lieu*, the Yasser Arafat Museum, opened in Ramallah in late 2016. On its “About” page, the museum characterises itself as “a museum of the Palestinian contemporary national memory,” accessed September 21, 2020, <https://yam.ps/page-12178-en.html>. Visitors wind through a long, ascending and descending pathway of photos, sound, and artifacts that relate national history from the late-Ottoman era to the recent past, ending in the government *muqata’a* (headquarters) besieged by Israel in 2002.

17 This complexity was artfully expressed by Anton Shammas in his Hebrew-language novel, *Arabesque* translated into English under the title *Arabesques* in 1988.

18 Ilan Pappé, “Introduction: New historiographical orientations in the research on the Palestine Question,” in *The Israel/Palestine Question: Rewriting Histories*, ed. Ilan Pappé (New York: Routledge, 1999), 4.

keep swimming, fighting for its voice to be listened to thoughtfully by mainstream Israel and Zionists. It is their listening that is the primary benchmark for acceptance. The United Nations and 137 of its member states—71 percent of the world’s recognised countries—have recognised Palestine as a state. That said, this recognition has been powerless to help realise actual statehood. Dina Matar asked in the opening line of her 2011 book, *What it means to be Palestinian*,

How do you write a book on Palestine and the Palestinians when the very act of writing about, giving voice to, or representing the Palestinians is beset by two larger, interrelated problems: first that Palestinian history tends to be viewed solely in relation to Israeli history or narrative; and second that the story of the Palestinians, as ordinary human beings subjected to violent forms of power, remains a largely hidden one?¹⁹

In 2017, Columbia University’s Edward Said Professor of Modern Arab Studies and editor of the *Journal of Palestine Studies* Rashid Khalidi opened his essay introducing a special issue of the journal on commemoration, by expressing a similar frustration, noting its longstanding quality: “the Palestinians continue to be elided from the historical record; in the words of Edward Said [in 1984], they have been denied ‘permission to narrate.’”²⁰

Historically speaking it is only recently, with the signing of the Oslo accords, that doors began to open to legitimisation of Palestinians, their nationhood, and their history. Beshara Doumani’s now-classic *Rediscovering Palestine: Merchants and Peasants in Jabal Nablus, 1700–1900*, published in 1995, was representative of this new legitimacy. Doumani explicitly characterised one of his book’s main goals as writing Palestinians into history.²¹ Since then, this project has met with spectacular success, overcoming obstacles such as the scattering, destruction, or inaccessibility of much documentary evidence of the past. Nonetheless, the politically motivated denial of Palestinian nationhood and history, in the academy and outside it, continues vociferously and acerbically and flames tensions worldwide. One popular illustration is the publication and rise to best-seller status on Amazon in 2017 of *A History of the Palestinian People*:

19 Dina Matar, *What it Means to be Palestinian: Stories of Palestinian Peoplehood* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2011), xi. Matar’s assessment reverberates that of Rashid Khalidi in his 2006 book, *The Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood* (Boston: Beacon Press), xxix: “It is a hidden history, one that is obscured, at least in the West, by the riveting and tragic narrative of modern Jewish history.”

20 Rashid Khalidi, “Introduction: Historical Landmarks in the Hundred Years’ War on Palestine,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 47, no.1 (Autumn 2017): 6.

21 Beshara Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine: Merchants and Peasants in Jabal Nablus, 1700–1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), xi.

from ancient Times to the modern Era by the Israeli Assaf Voll. The book was purposely comprised solely of hundreds of blank pages.²² All this suggests, alongside other evidence, an undeniable immediacy of both the past and the future in the present—a *chronologics* of denial?

Coupled with a sense of non-progression politically by and for Palestinians—overall, stagnation and powerlessness—this has prompted a view that a long twentieth century that has not yet ended may best be characterised as one period of Palestinian history. Louis A. Pérez has described the decades of Cubans' long independence struggle as “a state of continual becoming” in which “[t]he past had never really passed because it had never really ended.”²³ In essence, Khalidi argues the same has occurred with Palestinians, characterising the nation's history since the Balfour declaration of 1917 as a hundred years' siege.²⁴

These snags in the fabric of Palestinian historical time reveal that the nation's history is spatially diverse and progresses along multiple, overlapping temporal tracks, each experiencing the passage of time at different speeds, from fleeting to frozen. It encompasses at any given historical moment the past, the present, and the future in a non-linear manner. These co-existing temporalities are all, simultaneously, present-day political battlegrounds. All this may be said to confound any periodisation or *chronologics* of Palestinian history as well as to suggest a dizzying array of historical periods. In the following sections, I will first examine the existent periodisation scheme of Palestinian history, which I characterise as principally colonised, and analyse its uses and its usefulness. The final section of this chapter will explore alternative periodisations.

Historiography of Palestinian History

There have been fewer long-range studies of Palestinian modern history written since the Oslo accords than one may have assumed. Edward Said opined in 1999,

the fate of Palestinian history has been a sad one, since not only was independence not gained, but there was little collective understanding of the importance of constructing a collective history as a part of trying to gain independence. [...] because of the collective Palestinian inability as

22 “Empty Book on Palestinian History Becomes Instant Best-seller on Amazon,” *Haaretz*, June 22, 2017, <https://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/palestinians/empty-book-on-palestinian-history-is-amazon-best-seller-1.5487473>, accessed July 31, 2022.

23 Louis A. Pérez, *The Structure of Cuban History: Meanings and Purpose of the Past* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 15, 19.

24 Khalidi, “Introduction” (see note 20).

a people to produce a convincing narrative story with a beginning, middle, and end (we were always too disorganized, our leaders were always interested in maintaining their power, most of our intellectuals refused to commit themselves as a group to a common goal and we too often changed our goals) Palestinians have remained scattered and politically ineffective victims of Zionism, as it continues to take more and more land and history.²⁵

The corpus of long-range studies is heavily weighted instead toward histories of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and histories of historical Palestine, which is both a broader and at the same time a more circumscribed subject than the history of the Palestinian nation. There are also many long-range national histories of modern Israel.²⁶ The first long-range modern history of the Palestinian nation appeared in 1993, a research synthesis authored by Israeli sociologist Baruch Kimmerling and American professor of international relations Joel Migdal.

Palestinians: the Making of a People was updated, expanded, and renamed in 2003.²⁷ In 1997, Palestinian sociologist Samih Farsoun's *Palestine and the Palestinians* was published, authored with Christina E. Zacharia. An Arabic translation is used as a textbook in some Palestinian universities today.²⁸ The English version was revised and expanded in 2006.²⁹ Also in 2006, the Palestinian Authority's Education Ministry introduced a *History of modern and contemporary Palestine* as a textbook for upper-level high-school students on the humanities track, one of seven educational paths students can choose to follow as juniors and seniors.³⁰ In the Palestinian Authority's educational system, history is taught from the fifth grade onwards, but national history is not the

25 Edward Said, "Palestine: Memory, Invention and Space," in *The Landscape of Palestine: Equivocal Poetry*, ed. Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, Roger Heacock, and Khaled Nashef (al-Bireh: Birzeit University Publications, 1999), 12, 13.

26 In the past decade alone: Martin Gilbert, *Israel: A History* (New York: Morrow, 1998, 2nd, expanded ed. 2008); Anita Shapira, *Israel: A History*, trans. Anthony Berris (Lebanon, NH: Brandeis University Press, 2012); Colin Schindler, *A History of Modern Israel* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1st ed. 2008, 2nd ed. 2013); Daniel Gordis, *Israel: A Concise History of a Nation Reborn* (New York: HarperCollins, 2016).

27 Baruch Kimmerling and Joel S. Migdal, *Palestinians: the Making of a People* (New York: Free Press, 1993) and (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994). The 2003 edition was published under the title *Palestinian People: a History*, also by Harvard University Press.

28 At Hebron University, for example. *Filastīn w'al-filastīniyyūn* was published in 2003 by *Markaz dirasāt al-wahḍa al-'arabiyya* in Beirut.

29 Samih K. Farsoun with Christina E. Zacharia, *Palestine and the Palestinians* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997). The revised and expanded edition was written with Naseer H. Aruri and published one year following Farsoun's death, under the title *Palestine and the Palestinians: a social and political history*, also with Westview Press.

30 The other six are agriculture, commerce, industrial, hotellery, Islamic law, and academic.

focus. Fifth graders study ancient civilisations. The sixth graders' textbook is *History of the Arabs and Muslims*. In seventh grade, the Middle Ages are taught, primarily from a Middle Eastern point of view, followed by *History of the Arab and Islamic civilization* in eighth grade, and modern and contemporary Arab history in ninth grade. Tenth graders study a history of the modern and contemporary world. From the first grade, however, students annually study aspects of Muslim and Christian history in Palestine, as well as Palestinian culture, heritage, and history, in national and civics classes (*tarbiyya waṭaniyya* and *tarbiyya madaniyya*).³¹

Instead of the modern *longue durée*, the field of Palestinian history has developed primarily as a burgeoning conglomeration of microhistories focused on subsets of the population or regions of Palestine, or of particular events and short-term phenomena. Most research has not straddled political regimes, which changed rapidly in historical Palestine over the course of the twentieth century, from the Ottoman Empire to the British Mandate, to Israeli, Egyptian, and Jordanian rules, then to Israeli and, finally, Israeli and Palestinian governments. Long-term research requires polyglotism: knowledge of Arabic, Ottoman and modern Turkish, English, and Hebrew.³² Additionally, research in the main repositories of remaining documents requires multi-country travel to Turkey, England, Israel, the Palestinian Authority territories, and Jordan, which creates budget strains, logistical difficulties, and right-of-access issues for researchers.³³ These difficulties of researching modern Palestine history have made it difficult to trace continuities across regime change and have likely contributed to the according periodisation of Palestinian history.

31 In 2017, digital versions of all Palestinian-school textbooks were still downloadable from the Palestinian Education Ministry website at pcdc.edu.ps. As of this writing, the textbook webpage is defunct.

32 Modern Turkish is prerequisite to understanding Ottoman Turkish. It is also necessary to navigate Ottoman archives in Turkey; document catalogues are available only in Turkish.

33 For recent researches documenting newly uncovered Palestinian records housed by Israeli institutions, and the difficulties of accessing them, are Rona Sela, *Le-'iyun ha-tsibur: tatlume Palestīnim be-arkhiyonim tseva'iyim be-Yisra'el, minshar le-omanut* (Made Public: Palestinian photos in military archives in Israel) (Tel Aviv: Helena, 2009), an updated and expanded version of which was published in Ramallah in 2018 by Madār; Sela, "The Genealogy of Colonial Plunder and Erasure—Israel's control over Palestinian Archives," *Social Semiotics* 28, no. 2 (2018): 201–229; and Gish 'Amit, *Eḳs libris: hiṣṭoryah shel gezel, shimur ve-nikhsh be-sifriyah ha-le'umit bi-Yerushalayim* (Ex libris: a history of looting, conservation, and appropriation at the National Library in Jerusalem) (Jerusalem: Mekhon Yan Lir bi-Yerushalayim: ha-Ḳibuts ha-me'uhad, 2014). While Amit was still a PhD student, Benny Brunner made in 2012 a documentary film based on Amit's research. The English version of this film, *The Great Book Robbery*, is available online on al-Jazeera's YouTube channel at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=myvobIkWkNM>, accessed 31 July, 2022. Access difficulties are not limited to Israeli archives; they are also encountered in archives in Jordan and the West Bank, revealing the ongoing political sensitivity of the past.

The Periodisation of Palestinian Modern History

Although the periodisation scheme of modern Palestinian history has not been the subject of sustained discourse, a study of relevant historical literature permits the observation that it has coalesced into the following recognised periods: the Ottoman period, until 1917;³⁴ the British Mandate period from 1918–1948; the Nakba—generally, the events of 1947 to 1949, also sometimes viewed as an ongoing period since 1947/8; dispersal and chaos 1948–1967; geographical reunification of historical Palestine under Israeli rule and the coalescence of a Palestinian political and armed liberation movement outside historical Palestine, 1967–87; the first Intifada and Oslo years, during which the focus of Palestinian history returned to the territories of historical Palestine occupied by Israel in 1967 and to Palestinians living there, 1987–2000; and, since the collapse of the Oslo peace process, what has come to be called the post-Oslo period, for lack of a coherent theme or emerging direction. The official Palestinian position has remained committed to the idea of negotiations with Israel for its recognition of a Palestinian state based on the principle of an exchange of land for peace.

In evaluating the usefulness of this periodisation we must analyse the narrative that emerges from these building blocks. What *Zeitgeist* do these periods reveal, and what do they say about the nature of change from one period to the next? How does this scheme reflect Palestinian agency, priorities, and values? What does it define as important in Palestinian history? Analysing the accepted periodisation, one notes firstly that these many short historical periods reflect, from the vantage point of the present, a long century of frequent, significant ruptures, highlighting regime change following wars and uprisings—World War I, the 1948 war, the 1967 war, and the first Intifada. Secondly, while, this periodisation highlights the primacy of politics and non-indigenous governance in Palestinian history, it does not, for example, distinguish qualitatively between the Ottomans and the British, or name, in what would be a parallel fashion, the Israelis. The common theme is foreign domination. Similarly, while the characterisation of the years 1947–1967 expresses what happened to Palestinians, the characterisations of the preceding periods and “the post-Oslo period” exclude Palestinians as either subjects or objects of history. Thirdly, and related to this, Palestinian helplessness and victimhood is implicit in this framework through the absence of their agency as defining factors during periods of their history for most of the twentieth century and into the current one.

One central historiographical discussion of Palestinian studies in past decades has been a debate on the most suitable framework for analysing Zionism, Israel, and the character of Israel’s past and present relationship with the indigenous Palestinian population. The suggestion of a colonial-settler paradigm is not new, and it is not relevant

34 The Ottomans conquered *Bilad al-Sham*, including Palestine, in 1516/17, but this date is considered irrelevant to Palestinian national history because it predates national consciousness.

to discuss its appropriateness here. That has been done elsewhere.³⁵ Rather, I wish to remark upon the significant attention given to this debate in order to draw attention to the significant neglect of an equally reported, related framework question—what is the most suitable periodisation scheme for studying Palestinian history? Before addressing the possibility of alternatives to accepted periodisation, it is pertinent to first address the matter of why this question has been widely neglected. I will do so by pointing to the periodisation scheme's utility. First, the current periodisation is not historically inaccurate; war and regime change are often used as markers of historical periods. Secondly, the obstacles mentioned above to conducting historical research on Palestine lend themselves to the temporal divisions in place. Thirdly, we may consider the underlying message of the current periodisation. It is commonplace that periodisation is teleological; it needs to explain how we arrived at the present, but where have the Palestinians arrived at? Until recently, independence was the only foreseeable national outcome sought for and by Palestinians. With progress toward statehood the measuring stick by which historians have retrospectively analysed the overall trajectory of Palestinian history, the theme of that trajectory necessarily appears either as failure and incapability or, at best, the naïve, powerless fighting of an impossible struggle against the powerful, colonial settler and their allies. As such, paradoxically, the current, colonised historical periodisation ignores Palestinian agency across much of Palestinian history. This is distinct from the historiography, which does not do this, and which is appropriately both appreciative and critical. In contrast, the periodisation scheme builds the framework of a narrative that one may argue highlights—in the absence of agency—Palestinian patience and steadfastness in a struggle against a series of all-powerful occupying aggressors. These themes of *ṣabr* and *ṣumūd* continue to be important cultural motifs. I do not intend to suggest with this observation that the promotion of these values is conscious in the periodisation. Generally, however, one may surmise that these three, broad efficacious qualities of the current periodisation have probably contributed to the lack of attention the temporal divisioning of Palestinian history has received.

35 To begin with, Faye A. Sayegh, *Zionist Colonialism in Palestine*, Palestine Monographs 1 (Beirut: Palestine Liberation Organization Research Center, 1965) and Maxime Rodinson, "Israël, fait colonial?," *Les Temps modernes* 253 (1967): 17–88. This extended essay was translated into English several years later as: *Israel: A Colonial-Settler State?*, trans. David Thorstad (New York: Monad Press, 1973). Lorenzo Veracini has written extensively on this subject, beginning with his *Israel and Settler Society* (Ann Arbor: Pluto Press, 2006) and, most recently, "Israel-Palestine through a settler-colonial studies lens," *Interventions* (2018), <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369801X.2018.1547213>. Many articles in *Settler Colonial Studies*, founded in 2011 and quarterly publishing peer-reviewed academic research, focus on Palestine/Israel. Reflective of the widespread nature of the controversy this paradigm has prompted see, for example, Arnon Degani, "Israel is a Settler Colonial State—and that's OK," *Haaretz*, September 13, 2016, <https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-israel-is-a-settler-colonial-state-and-that-s-ok-1.5433405>, accessed July 31, 2022.

By Way of Conclusion: New-Old Thoughts on Time and Periodisation

Time has its own history. Firstly, one may recall that in the Ottoman Empire, to which Palestine belonged, from at least the late-fifteenth through the late-nineteenth centuries, that the day was divided into two periods of twelve hours, with the length of each 'hour' varying in length with the season.³⁶ Globally, time was universalised only at the beginning of the long twentieth century.³⁷ Universal adoption of the Gregorian calendar for secular affairs took decades longer, and its efficacy for dividing and regulating the passage of time remains contested today.³⁸ Furthermore, we can consider that some physicists now believe that time has two dimensions, a theory that appears to be able to resolve the paradox of existent phenomena, such as dark matter and dark energy, which one-dimensional models of time cannot explain.³⁹ A century ago, Hermann Minkowski's *chronotopical* four-dimension model was revolutionary. Minkowski recognised time, "spacetime," as a degree of freedom of direction like the three widely accepted spatial dimensions.⁴⁰ "The present," of course, is all that exists

36 Avner Wishnitzer, *Reading Clocks, Alla Turca: Time and Society in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 32. This method was also current in Europe. Ogle, "One Calendar for All," 10.

37 The International Meridian Conference was convened in Washington, DC on October 1, 1884.

38 On adoption of the Gregorian calendar, see Edward L. Cohen, "Adoption and Reform of the Gregorian Calendar," *Math Horizons* 7, no. 3 (Feb. 2000): 5–11. In 1930, Elisabeth Achelis established the World Calendar Association, which remains active today, to replace this calendar. On Achelis and her organization, see Dr. Richard McCarty, "The World Calendar," accessed September 21, 2020, <http://myweb.ecu.edu/mccartyr/world-calendar.html>; "Miss Elisabeth Achelis," accessed September 21, 2020, <http://myweb.ecu.edu/mccartyr/achelis.html>; and Vanessa Ogle, "One Calendar for All", chap. 7 in *The Global Transformation of Time* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015). Other efforts are also under way. On a proposal by Johns Hopkins University physics and astronomy professor Richard Henry and his colleague, economics professor Steve Hanke, see, "The case for an Entirely New Calendar: Why the Gregorian Calendar is so Last Year" by Renuka Rayasam, December 30, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20151222-the-case-for-an-entirely-new-calendar>, accessed July 31, 2022.

39 Itzhak Bars explains this dimension in layman's terms through the analogy of shadow. We cannot experience the second dimension of time but, rather, we can perceive it through its shadows in the same way a two-dimensional creature on a wall could perceive a three-dimensional object in a room by studying the patterns of the shadows of it that lights from variously placed sources cast on its two-dimensional space. Itzhak Bars and John Terning, *Extra Dimensions in Space and Time* (New York: Springer, 2010), 56–58.

40 Hermann Minkowski, "Space and Time," chap. 2 in *Space and Time: Minkowski's Papers on Relativity*, ed. Vesselin Petkov, trans. Fritz Lewertoff and Vesselin Petkov (Montreal: Minkowski Institute Press, 2012), text of a lecture given at the 80th Meeting of the Natural Scientists, Köln, September 21, 1908. See also, Paul S. Wesson, "Time as an Illusion," in *Minkowski Spacetime: A Hundred Years Later*, ed. Vesselin Petkov (New York: Springer, 2010), 307–317.

in simultaneity, irrespective of the space it occupies or one's ability to perceive it. This simultaneity is, however, relative. Any object or point in three dimensions of space will appear differently to an observer depending upon their position along the fourth dimension, "spacetime." This experience of space relative to time posits time as curved, not straight. Metaphorically, historians may infer from these premises that time—as well as our experience of it—bends to history, not history to time. Minkowski's turn-of-the-century theory may have influenced historian Joseph Ward Swain's inquiry into "What is history?," also published almost a century ago, in *The Journal of Philosophy*:

History, then, is not a science as physics and chemistry are; except in a few superficial details, the historian is a scientist neither in purpose nor method: his purpose is to make a certain view of the world prevail, his method is to tell history in such a way that this philosophy will seem to be immanent in it.⁴¹

If this is a profound and fruitful philosophy, much of value will surely result. This is what is meant by the statement that while he deals with the past, the historian is creating the future. Finally, it would also follow, that from these considerations no history will ever be final, that, as was said, history will never 'stay put.' Each age requires a philosophy of its own ... Each age must create its own past as it creates its own present and future.⁴²

With an acute, 'general' awareness today of the constructed and intertwined, collective and simultaneously personal natures of not only identity and history but also of memory and time, it is appropriate that historians critically re-evaluate the meaningfulness of the fairly harmonious marriage between historiography and a rigidly constructed notion of chronological time, that carried us through most of the twentieth century. In no case is this more essential than with the case of unsettled histories, many themselves the result of twentieth-century events. Unsettled histories may be said to have discernible beginnings and subsequent stages, but no perceptible ending, and thus no obvious middle. One may ask, how can Palestinian national history—or that of any stateless nation—be said to have transitioned from one historical period to a next if each period ends with the same failure to achieve the goal of statehood that drives national history? We may attempt to examine, as Khalidi did in *The Iron Cage*, the various circumstances and reasons in each period that may have contributed uniquely

41 Joseph W. Swain, "What is history?—V," *The Journal of Philosophy* 20, no.13 (June 21, 1923): 348.

42 Swain, "What is history?" (see note 41), 349.

to renewal of this failure.⁴³ But any measure of ‘progress,’ the grander meaning of any one political failure-victory or the cumulative effect of them all, will remain elusive until the goal of statehood is either renounced or achieved. The ultimate outcome and, thus, the significance of present and past national action for effecting that outcome, a national political solution, is still speculative. This is a conundrum of the historiography of stateless nations.

On the other hand, history is not only or always about progress. It explains development, which is not unidirectional. Swain reminds us that history, like the experience of time and like periodisation, is relative. So how, from the point of view of today, is it most meaningful to periodise Palestinian national history? What is clear or, hopefully, what has become clear in this chapter is that the current periodisation scheme—or *chronologies*—has outlived its usefulness. It accounts only partially for the breadth of national history and ascribes negligible agency to its supposed subjects of history. I argue that logically, since periodisation is a construct, it is merely a convention of convenience to order it linearly. With events of the Palestinian past continuing to be experienced consciously as present, notably among them the Nakba, suitable periodisation might reflect their long lives. Further, Palestinian history is transnational. It cannot easily be confined within one narrative thread. A comprehensive periodisation of the nation’s history conceivably could comprise multiple, overlapping periods of various lengths of nationally experienced time: the apparent glacial slowness of refugee times; the ongoing and also changing nature of a long Nakba; the evolvment of the Palestinian community with Israeli citizenship; and, more universally, generational spirits and trajectories. In sum, if the main function of periodization is to sensibly order historical narrative, then it is not calendar time but, rather, historical events and phenomena and our understanding of them and their enduring significance across time to which periodization owes its primary allegiance. These are not revelatory arguments about the nature of time; it is an observation that the periodization of history has thus far followed a convention of time which, we generally acknowledge today, the human experience of time and history does not and, therefore, this is a suggestion that it need not.

Beshara Doumani and Alex Winder have recently noted, discussing the structure of Palestinian commemorative politics, that a history that highlights “destruction, loss, and colonial machinations” incarcerates that history in a discursive iron cage.⁴⁴ I believe the same can be said of its periodisation. More broadly, I would argue that the histories of stateless nations cannot be periodised effectively with the same methodology

43 Khalidi is explicit that his project is as much about past as present (ix) and posits the question whether it is best, or if “are we perhaps too obsessed” with the idea of state at the center of the national historical narrative of the nation (xiii).

44 Beshara Doumani and Alex Winder, “1948 and Its Shadows,” *Introduction to a special issue of the Journal of Palestine Studies*, 48, no. 1 (Autumn 2018): 8.

of periodisation utilised for histories of states. While states rely on their histories to instill identity and bolster allegiance, history books and their teaching in state schools are just two of the tools at a state's disposal to teach the nation and reinforce its existence and belonging to it. Stateless nations lack many institutions and props of state and often lack geographical unity. Their national identity and legitimacy are rooted in the past. History is the primary weapon of the weak, nevertheless. The telling of it as well as its organisation and ordering needs to unify its many trajectories under an umbrella of inclusion, one wide enough to encompass the nation and, as Swain said, to convincingly write its future.

Section II

CHRONOLOGICS

Contested Ways
of Thinking Time

Chronologics

An Introduction

Barbara Mittler , Thomas Maissen , Pierre Monnet

This section of the book presents contrasting approaches to world history, beginning with Michael Geyer's analysis of the unknown and prescient work of Marshall G. S. Hodgson who, since the 1940s, had attempted to “recast, quite literally, the sense or ‘experience’ of space and time,” thus to create a “post-Western,” and truly “global timescale.”¹ This section illustrates how different actors at different times developed and advocated their specific ways of conceiving space-time, the *chronotope*, or, to put it another way, how they formed and formulated their individual *chronologics*. It upholds, with Heather Ferguson and Özen N. Dolcerocca, an awareness of the internal logics of periodisations, following Sanjay Subrahmanyam in reflecting on periodisation as a problem of investigation, not just *about* the past, but *in* the past.²

These essays argue that conflicting logics of revelation and history, sacred and secular, the anecdotal local and the generalisable global, born out of shifting sociospatial identities, in turn shape different types of *chronotopes* (i.e. specific narratives of time-space). Investigating these, including variant projects of meaning-making that construct or reinforce particular power formations through the manipulation of time, we can avoid discourses that both oppose and exclude Other times and histories. Instead of simply assuming that Jack Goody's “Theft of History” is a given, this section makes visible the often heated negotiations accompanying attempts to define time through relationality.

The authors in this section consider emblematic moments and their historicised narration: zooming in and out on specific *chronoscales*—from the planetary world, to nation, to the minority (religious) group; also considering different *chronoscapes* (bringing to the fore multiple temporalities and their technologies of power)—in Europe, the Middle East and India. They contemplate how, each and individually, specific emblematic moments and their epochal force is recounted, while sometimes grappling with given *chronotypes* and/or (*Euro*)*chronologies*. The individual chapters cover a variety of sources, from school textbooks to literature, to journalistic, historical and religious writings, encyclopedias and universal histories.

1 See the chapter by Michael Geyer in this volume, 146, 148.

2 See his Conclusion to this book.

7. The Time of World History

Essaying Marshall G. S. Hodgson's Work on Islamicate Societies and Afro-Eurasian World History

Michael Geyer 

Working with time, indeed moulding time, is key to all narratives that link the past with the present and future, but for world history, time is of the essence. It imposes a sequential order on a field of study that transcends any single (experienced) past. For the same reason, moulding world-historical time is a uniquely difficult task. Curiously, globalisation, the quickly tightening imbrication of the world's societies, governments, and economies, and their increasing interaction, has only increased that difficulty.

On the surface, we might expect globalising processes to make it easier to develop a unified timescale, in which all the world's histories are neatly lined up. Social scientific theories of 'modernisation,' which bend time in the prism of world empires, have advanced this concept, but they have come and gone along with these empires' expectations and pretensions. World historians have chosen a different course. In the first half of the twentieth century, a new generation of 'global' world historians followed neither the European tradition of universalist "world pictures" (Heidegger) nor social science theories of modernisation.¹ They conceived the time of world history not as linear time, progressing toward a wholly modern world (Hegel or Spencer), but as the cyclical time of the rise, flowering and decline of ever multiplying civilisations (Spengler, Toynbee, Sorokin). They discovered time as a spatial and temporal discontinuum and, as a result, were confronted with a surfeit of times (*chronoscapes*) and an ungodly scramble to order them. How many civilisations can you fit onto a

1 Paul Costello, *World Historians and Their Goals: Twentieth-Century Answers to Modernism* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1993), 41–55.

global timescale? Would something like ‘Quantum History’ be necessary, perhaps not to solve the riddle but to ask the right questions about time?²

The diversification and subjectivisation of the study of history with its relentless multiplication of world-wide subjects did the rest. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, both linear and cyclical conceptions of world-time have been not so much debunked (though that has happened as well), as dismissed as imperial anachronisms or examples of the dead end of historicism. The study of time has emerged as a sub-discipline in history, while historical time has become something of a do-it-yourself kit for the historian in every corner of the world. What is left is the empty time of chronology that imposes order and may even create a “climate of history,” but has yet to structure world-historical narratives.³ Of course, such narratives may no longer matter, if on the one hand we believe the *collapsologues*, who hold that human time will disappear soon enough, together with the entire species,⁴ or if on the other hand we believe evolutionists like Yuval Harari, that *Homo sapiens* are mutating into *Homo deus*, who have infinite time at their fingertips and, hence, live in past, present and future simultaneously.⁵ Science fiction has developed some rather intriguing narratives for what happens when human beings have time at their disposal.⁶

In the meantime, though, we ordinary historians face the conundrum of world history in a global age with its standard global time and its surfeit of the world’s narratives, which articulate the manifold human experiences of time and the diverse ways of shaping it within the limits of space-bound societies and cultures.⁷ This is the condition of world history in a global age and has been so for well over a century. Marshall G. S. Hodgson (1922–1968) stands out among twentieth-century world historians for making this “global condition” (his words), the starting point for his inquiries into world history.⁸ He argued that global times necessitated a radical reconceptualisation of all world history and, indeed, a re-orientation of the craft of the historian. It is the

- 2 Lee Smolin, *Einstein’s Unfinished Revolution: The Search for What Lies Beyond the Quantum* (New York: Penguin Press, 2019). See the review by Samuel Graydon, “Spin Doctors: Guessing at the Game God is Playing,” *Times Literary Supplement*, 3 January 2020.
- 3 Dipesh Chakrabarty, “The Climate of History: Four Theses,” *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 2 (2009): 197–222.
- 4 Pablo Servigne, Stevens Raphaël, and Yves Cochet, *Comment tout peut s’effondrer: Petit manuel de collapsologie à l’usage des générations présentes* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2015).
- 5 Yuval N. Harari, *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow* (London: Harvill Secker, 2016).
- 6 William Gibson, *The Peripheral* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 2014).
- 7 François Hartog, *Régimes d’historicité: Présentisme et expériences du temps*, La Librairie du XXI^e siècle (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2003). On “bending” time, see Christopher M. Clark, *Time and Power: Visions of History in German Politics, from the Thirty Years’ War to the Third Reich*, The Lawrence Stone Lectures 11 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019).
- 8 On context, see Or Rosenboim, *The Emergence of Globalism: Visions of World Order in Britain and the United States 1939–1950* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017).

former, his reordering of world history, the study of world time and its narrative(s), that is the subject of this essay.

The fact that Hodgson is not well known among European and Western historians reflects the conundrum of world history that he attempted to solve. He is still, even half a century after his death, a highly regarded historian of Islam and the Islamicate world. His posthumously published three-volume *The Venture of Islam* is only now being replaced by a new generation of studies.⁹ But he is not known beyond his field, and in his field he is not known as a historian of Islam in world history, because that's not the way *The Venture of Islam* is read.¹⁰ If he is not well known as a world and global historian, this is due, in part, to the forgetfulness of historians who overlook the fact that he staked his career on developing the concept of interregional history as world history with a spatial focus on Afro-Eurasia.¹¹ Academics prefer to reinvent the wheel rather than using their internet skills to access what is readily accessible.¹²

It is true that Hodgson's main work on world and global history is not well served in the one anthology that presents him as a world historian.¹³ This is less the fault of the anthology than of the fact that much of Hodgson's world historical work was left in an unfinished state when he died unexpectedly in 1968. However, while the work is unfinished, there exist two complete manuscripts that deserve more than cursory attention. Hodgson reworked an astoundingly rebellious early text from 1946, titled "The Problems of Interregional History," into a mature, though unedited and, in some sections, repetitive manuscript, "The Unity of World History: An Essay on Medieval and Modern Eurasia," which he picked up again twenty years later, in 1966/68, when he thought that *The Venture of Islam* was finally done.¹⁴ As a text, "The Unity of World

9 Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974).

10 This is also reflected in Hodgson's difficulties getting published. He had a lot more to say than two brief essays on the subject, one of them published posthumously, suggest. "Islam in World History," *UNESCO Courier* 11, no. 2 (1958): 18–21; "The Role of Islam in World History," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 1, no. 2 (1970): 99–123.

11 Marshall G. S. Hodgson, "World History and a World Outlook," *Social Studies* [Washington, D. C.] 35 (1944): 297–301; Marshall G. S. Hodgson, "Hemispheric Inter-regional History as an Approach to World History," *Cahiers d'histoire mondiale* 1 (1954): 715–723; "The Interrelations of Societies in History," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 5, no. 2 (1963): 227–250.

12 Chris Hann, "Long Live Eurasian Civ! Towards a new confluence of anthropology and world history," *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 142, no. 2 (2017): 225–244.

13 A selection of his essays has been published as Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *Rethinking World History: Essays on Europe, Islam, and World History*, ed. Edmund Burke III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

14 Marshall G. S. Hodgson, "The Problems of Interregional History," Typescript, Chicago 1946, 175 pages, Marshall G. S. Hodgson Papers, Box 11, Folder 2, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library (hereafter cited as Hodgson Papers, Box #, Folder #); Marshall

History” emerged in tandem with *The Venture of Islam*.¹⁵ In fact, Hodgson worried that his treatment of Islam would be misunderstood if “The Unity of World History” were not published first.¹⁶

It may well be, as William McNeill generously acknowledged at Hodgson’s Memorial in 1968, that Hodgson could have become the world historian of record if he had not died prematurely, and we might want to think of McNeill’s conversion from a European to a global world historian as being affected by Hodgson’s work.¹⁷ It might also have been easier for Hodgson if he had not had to struggle, as chair of the illustrious Committee on Social Thought (1965–1968) at the University of Chicago, with died-in-the-wool eurocentrics like the sociologist Edward Shils, the writer Saul Bellow or the philosopher Hannah Arendt, or with the new turn in anthropology away from human anthropology (civilisation studies), as articulated by Clifford Geertz and his Committee for the Comparative Study of New Nations.¹⁸ There was quite a cast of characters to contend with at the University of Chicago.

But I have come to a different, ironic, though not at all amusing conclusion. Despite auspicious starts, Hodgson’s studies in world history remained unfinished, because he saw the need for a radically new world history for a global, yet distinctly post-imperial and post-colonial age—a history dedicated to the deep past of human histories starting with the recognition of the global present and its surfeit of historical times—and he was never able to fully come to terms with this idea. Hodgson nevertheless attempted to solve key questions of world history that we still have not solved, despite considerable advances, and his insights remain startlingly innovative

G. S. Hodgson, “The Unity of World History: An Essay on Medieval and Modern Eurasia,” n.d., 388 pages, Hodgson Papers, Box 14, Folder 14 and Box 15, Folders 1–6.

- 15 The project, entitled “The Structure of World History: An Essay on Medieval and Modern Eurasia,” was already in the making in 1960. Letter Hodgson to [Dean] Chauncey Harris, 5 October 1960, University of Chicago, Committee on Social Thought, Records, Box 3, Folder 11 (hereafter cited as CST Records, Box #, Folder #).
- 16 E-mail message from Reuben Smith, 16 February 2017.
- 17 In literary scholarship the phenomenon is called “anxiety of influence” (Harold Bloom). Both McNeill and Hodgson were part of an inter-civilisational working group, which Hodgson put together in 1956/57. See Michael Geyer, “The Invention of World History from the Spirit of Nonviolent Resistance,” in *Islam and World History: The Ventures of Marshall Hodgson*, ed. Edmund Burke III and Robert J. Mankin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 55–81. Although McNeill appears in the Hodgson Papers, the reverse is not the case in the McNeill Papers, which also can be found in the University of Chicago Library’s Special Collections. McNeill’s testimony at the Hodgson memorial, “a good man ... a strange man,” appears in the pamphlet, “Memorial for Marshall Hodgson,” December 9, 1968, CST Records, Box 5, Folder 5.
- 18 Hodgson planned to resign as Chair of the Committee, Hodgson to President Edward Hirsch Levi, 27 March 1968, CST Records, Box 5, Folder 2. The Records of the Committee for the Comparative Study of New Nations (1958–1975) form a neat contrast with the records of the Robert Redfield, Ford Foundation Cultural Studies Program (1951–1961).

(and uniquely rebellious), even where they are incomplete or lead to dead ends. One of these problems was the time of world history.

* * *

The starting point for Hodgson's world historical considerations was his furious rejection of "the westward distortion in history,"¹⁹ a stance that is typically associated with the much later work of Edward Said or Dipesh Chakrabarty.²⁰ Perhaps the reason for the neglect of Hodgson's contribution is that he thought that in order to provincialise the West, Europeans and Americans would have to learn more world history rather than less. They (and everyone else) would have to confront and come to terms with the world's pasts, in which "Europe was never essentially at the center of world history before 1700 AD" and was rapidly moving out of the centre once again in the present time.²¹ Provincialising Europe's world-historical imagination entailed a double movement: the liberation of world histories held captive by Europe's imperial imagination, and the expansion of the horizon of a hopelessly parochial United States that had adopted the European imagination while remaining provincial at heart.

Hodgson's missionary zeal emerged from the entry into war by the United States in 1941. At the time, he was an undergraduate at the University of Colorado, majoring in Economics, but within a year he had developed his first program for world history, conceived as an antidote to war.²² As a radical Quaker and civil rights activist, he fought for non-discrimination in student housing at Colorado. As a conscientious objector and anti-war activist, he was interned from 1943 to 1945 in Civilian Public Service Camp #59 in Elkton in Oregon.²³ In 1945–46, he completed his service as an orderly in a mental health hospital in Concord, NH, before entering the University of Chicago as a graduate student. These internment camps for conscientious objectors

19 Hodgson, "Hemispheric Inter-regional History" (see note 11), 715–723, here 21–22. See also Hodgson, "World History: Toning Down its 'Western Accent,'" *UNESCO Courier* 7, no. 7 (1954): 24–25.

20 Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978); Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

21 Outline for a "Handbook of World Citizenship," 16–26 January 1945. Hodgson Papers, Box 15, Folder 6.

22 "Letter to George" [instructor at the University of Colorado], Outlines of World History, 6 June 1942, Hodgson Papers, Box 6, Folder 21.

23 Jeremy Kessler, "A War for Liberty: On the Law of Conscientious Objection," in *The Cambridge History of the Second World War*, vol. 3, *Total War: Economy, Society and Culture*, ed. Michael Geyer and Adam Tooze (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 447–474.

were hothouses for all kinds of radical theory, direct action, and nonviolent resistance.²⁴ They were also the source of religious and poetic revivals. For Hodgson, his time as internee was a period of unique creativity, in which he developed the outlines of a world history that he hoped would develop in tandem with the mobilisation of worldwide nonviolent resistance against war and oppression, racism, colonialism, and “white supremacy.”²⁵ The latter term stands out, but it appears less surprising if we consider that Hodgson was born and raised in Richmond, Indiana, the home of a sizeable Quaker Community, but also of the largest Ku Klux Klan organisation in the United States.²⁶ Like many pacifists and civil rights advocates in the United States at the time, Hodgson was inspired by Mahatma Gandhi’s writings and in Gandhi’s spirit he set out to write world history, not as an academic exercise, but as an act of nonviolent resistance.²⁷

World history, Hodgson, argued was less the answer to the calamity of the present war than to the prospect of future wars. To that end, world history had to recast, quite literally, the sense or experience of space and time—the *chronotope*.²⁸ Thus, in an outline for a potential book, in 1945 Hodgson fiercely insisted “THERE IS NO ORIENT.”²⁹ The Eurasian world is not divided into two halves. The fiction of an Orient, he wrote, was part of a vast deception by the Western mind that had permeated all academic disciplines. It had infected world history, which did not deserve its name (“because the books are essentially still only histories of the West”),³⁰ geography, Oriental Studies, cultural values (literature and art), world politics, and (Christian) religion. In order

24 Compared to Camp #56 in Waldport, OR, which was a centre for literati and poets, Camp Elkton was a relatively quiet camp. Materials can be found in the University of Oregon Libraries, Special Collections and University Archives, Eugene, OR. James Tracy, *Direct Action: Radical Pacifism from the Union Eight to the Chicago Seven* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996); Scott H. Bennett, *Radical Pacifism: the War Resisters League and Gandhian Nonviolence in America, 1915–1963*, Syracuse Studies on Peace and Conflict Resolution (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2003).

25 “1905 marks the launching of that struggle against White Supremacy, which has played an increasing part since—even in Western politics.” “The Problems of Interregional History” (henceforth, PIH, in notes), p. 61.

26 It is also the home of Gennett Records, which featured the early Louis Armstrong, Earl Hines, Duke Ellington, and others, as well as precursors of country music such as Gene Autry.

27 “On Discipline, Action and the Immediate Future,” 24 December 1942. “I believe that such actions as Gandhi’s are to be looked to as fundamental in the pattern of the next 500 years.” Hodgson Papers, Box 11, Folder 1. Geyer, “The Invention of World History from the Spirit of Nonviolent Resistance,” 55–81.

28 Hartog, *Régimes d’historicité* (see note 7).

29 “Outline for a book combatting Western provincialism,” 23 June 1945. MGSHP Box 15, Folder 6. See also Edmund Burke, “There is no Orient: Hodgson and Said,” *Review of Middle East Studies* 44, no. 1 (2010): 13–18.

30 “Outline for a book combatting Western provincialism,” 23 June 1945. MGSHP Box 15, Folder 6.

to write a world history appropriate for the age, a radical transformation of “outlook” was needed—that is, an epistemic revolution, or as he put it in 1942, a “revolution in mental health.”³¹ World history needed a revolution in the way the world’s pasts were seen and experienced (viewed through the prism of the global presence) that would have the same lifeworld-transforming, experiential impact as the industrial revolution. Therefore, the goal of world history was to re-order the sense of space and time in the present world. World history was the tool with which to initiate an epistemic revolution. It became, for Hodgson, in itself an act of nonviolent resistance.

A first general argument about the necessity of changing the “world outlook” was published in 1944 in a Quaker journal for social studies teachers, with the dateline “Camp Elkton.”³² It advised the teachers to start by changing words and phrases, which even if used with critical intent left the wrong mental map. Thus, it was wrong to elevate the European peninsula into a continent, if the same was not done for India as well. It was wrong to juxtapose East and West as complementary halves of world civilisation, because for one thing there was much more East than West, and for another the East was not a single entity, but a plurality of civilisations. Most importantly, it was wrong to say that Europe was at centre stage of history, not only because most people lived east of the Indus, but because most of world history had happened there. “It is more reasonable to say that Europe ‘was isolated from the main stream of history’ than to say that *India* was.”³³ His particular ire was directed against the idea of the Roman Empire as the centre of the world (which finds an intriguing parallel in his downgrading of the British Empire in his later writing). “Stop talking” about the “known world,” he enjoins, in reference to Europe; “stop talking” about Rome’s being “mistress of the civilized world”; “stop talking” about the fall of the Roman Empire, because only the western provinces had collapsed; stop talking about the “dark ages,” when there was light in Alexandria, Constantinople, and Baghdad, not to speak of India and China.³⁴ We see here the inchoate sense of another (world) history, but Hodgson had as yet no conception of what kind of history that might be.

History for Hodgson was not the only battleground against Occidentalism as an epistemic regime. Because the distorting “outlook” was entrenched in all aspects of life, his proselytising temper could flare up over large and small things. Thus, he fought mightily against the use of the Mercator projection as “spiritual poison.”³⁵ By the same token, he engaged with great brio in a correspondence with the national Esperanto organisation to change the spelling and phonetics of Esperanto in order

31 Note, 22 December 1942: “The next revolution is a revolution in mental health fully comparable to the industrial revolution.” Hodgson Papers, Box 11, Folder 1.

32 Hodgson, “World History and a World Outlook” (see note 11).

33 Hodgson, “World History and a World Outlook” (see note 11), 301.

34 Hodgson, “World History and a World Outlook” (see note 11), 301.

35 Letter to Wilfred Cantwell Smith, 7 September 1963, Hodgson Papers, Box 10, Folder 9.

to accommodate non-European usage.³⁶ He also had some rather heated altercations with fellow Arabic teachers, because he thought (Western) grammarians had made the Arabic grammar used for teaching unnecessarily difficult.³⁷ He remained a fierce and frequently cantankerous critic of Occidentalism and Orientalism in all spheres of life, believing the professional, the political and the religious spheres intersected. In any case, advancing an understanding and an appreciation of Islam among his (Christian) co-religionists was as important as his civic engagement in the fight against housing segregation and a part and parcel of his general “life-orientation.”³⁸ Life-orientation was Hodgson’s own preferred term for religion.

In the same spirit, Hodgson rejected the Christian calendar as a measure of time and experimented with replacing the Julian and Gregorian calendars.³⁹ Rather than settle with merely replacing the nomenclature (BCE/CE), he wanted the impossible, that is, to erase the year zero and develop an entirely new “stereoscopic numerical system” in its stead.⁴⁰ The details of his scheme are difficult to fathom, but the intent is clear. As world historian, he hoped to develop a post-Western, global timescale. The question then was what scale it should use. That is, should it be a decimal scale, or should it be a scale based on twelve?⁴¹ What measure should be used? Should it be a human, anthropocentric scale or, more narrowly, a civilisation scale (using the advent of agriculture, cities, and literate society as points of departure)? Or should it be a natural history scale (the equivalent of what would become the Anthropocene)? Nothing came of this endeavour. Hodgson eventually settled on the Common Era notation. But his exertions go to show that his quest to undo the “Western outlook” was thorough and comprehensive.

* * *

None of these efforts, however, provided answers to the question of what kind of world history might replace centered world histories, either Orientalist or, in reverse, Occidentalist. Indeed, was History the right approach to making sense of the past, present and future of the world? Although by 1946 he had chosen History as his field of study, there always remained a glimmer of doubt, as to whether it was the right means of overcoming “the spiritual poison” of both Orientalism and Occidentalism. Two alternatives are worth our attention, because they impinge on the question of time in world history.

36 Notes on Esperanto, 1961–1967, Hodgson Papers, Box 10, Folder 11.

37 Notes and correspondence on teaching Arabic, 1960s, Hodgson Papers, Box 10, Folder 18.

38 See the folder on “Quakerism and Islam, public talks, notes correspondence,” 1954–1966, Hodgson Papers, Box 2, Folder 12.

39 The last of these initiatives dates to March 1967. See Hodgson Papers, Box 10, Folder 22.

40 Hodgson Papers, Box 10, Folder 22.

41 On “dozening,” Hodgson Papers, Box 10, Folder 15.

The first one emerged as a result of Hodgson's confrontation with the vastness of the human past, which took the form of elaborate chronologies. These may appear to serve a purely auxiliary function in orienting the uninformed reader, as for example, in *The Venture of Islam*, but Hodgson persisted throughout his academic career in marking events by time and place, recording timelines, and establishing the chronologies of regional cultures and entire civilisations. Hodgson's chronologies acquired meaning in 1943 when he discovered the *History of the Prophets and Kings*, by the Persian scholar (Muhammad Ibn Jarir) al-Tabari (839–923 CE).⁴² Other interpreters considered the work rather tedious, but Hodgson admired its thoroughness and epic quality. Like al-Tabari, he came to think of the (world) historian as an annalist, as the recorder of great deeds (and great suffering), which in this case meant world-defining deeds. He called such an exploration of world-defining human action "epic history."⁴³ The Atlantic slave trade, he thought, was among the events that ought to be written as "epic history."⁴⁴

As an annalist, he used space-based regional timescales to challenge and ultimately reject the cyclical scheme used by Toynbee.⁴⁵ He used them also to avoid the trap of Western universalists, who saw world history as a line of progression ending in a global West with the larger part of the world peeling off into darkness, their civilisational timelines cut off, as if they had ceased to exist. Hodgson, as an annalist, asked why it was that the Far East and the Middle East, as well as Indian Ocean Islamic societies, although humiliated and prostrate at present, remained discrete cultural regions with their own distinct life-orientations. In a way, Hodgson here sounds like Fernand Braudel (whom he eventually read in 1964).⁴⁶ However, Hodgson's environmental space was far deeper than the one conceived by Braudel and his Mediterranean Sea was the Indian Ocean. Space, moreover, was for him not a geographic, but a geo-cultural formation. But these implications emerged later. His initial, annalist impulse was to give each geo-cultural region its chronology.

The question of History as prose narrative was the crux of the second alternative. Off in the internment camp, thrown together with poets and literati, reading his way through a good bit of world literature, cultural anthropology, and the canonical

42 "Books read in 1943," MGSHP Box 9, Folder 9. On al-Tabari see folder on "Tabari's historical method, 1952–1968," Hodgson Papers, Box 4, Folder 6. *The History of al-Ṭabarī = Ta'rikh al-rusul wa'l mulūk*, 39 vols. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985–2007). Vol. 2 is titled "Prophets and Patriarchs," vol 4 "The Ancient Kingdoms."

43 The key folder is "World History and Epic History, 1942–1959 and undated," Hodgson Papers, Box 6, Folder 21.

44 Note, 15. January 1956, Hodgson Papers, Box 6, Folder 21.

45 On Toynbee (1950), Hodgson Papers, Box 7, Folder 1.

46 Hodgson's dated summary of Braudel's *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* (1949) is in Hodgson Papers, Box 7, Folder 12. He was more receptive to Henri Pirenne.

texts of the world's major religions, Hodgson wondered whether world history, and certainly world history in a global age, should be a time-based narrative at all. Wasn't the very insistence on a historical *chronologics* just another "westward distortion"? Was History the right genre for narrating the world's pasts in a global present? Was it the right medium for breaking the Western epistemic mould? Most of the world had not written 'world history' to explain the world's pasts. As it happens, graduate school sobered up Hodgson, and the academic environment, into which he entered only reluctantly, did the rest. But his "dream" of composing a very different, untimely and timeless story of the world remained.⁴⁷ The world's pasts, he concluded, deserved poetry. The proper mediator was not the historian, but the prophet. To shatter the Western episteme, a prophetic voice was needed. This was indeed "wild historical theorizing"—far beyond the work of thinkers he listed under this rubric.⁴⁸

While working on a first outline of world history, his *chronotopical* "Problems of Interregional History," he also penned what he called Puranas, imitating the substance and the verse structure of the Sanskrit originals and transposing these ancient texts into his own creation history of the world's civilisations.⁴⁹ These constituted a record of the world's pasts as *res gestae* of the founders of civilisations. The fact that they were written in verse signalled the elevated nature of the text (as well as his juvenile fascination with the sublime). At their core, these were creation stories that presented the genealogies, the lives and the works of eminent civilisation bearers—foremost prophets, less so kings—from the Eurasian-African hemisphere. "The most impressive genre in visual writing is the world myth."⁵⁰

Where Hodgson got all of this from is unclear, but his reasoning, while for the most part implicit, is transparent. A new world, a global world and a world at war, needed a new world myth as a foundation suitable for a global age—and this foundation was to be made from the texts and textures of the world's traditions. His choice of Puranas was a juvenile fixation, but it made clear that he felt compelled to step out of familiar worlds into unfamiliar ones. If the in-gathering of the world's traditions was the purpose of world history, the goal was to create a founding narrative for a global world, in which these traditions were to be preserved and yet transcended in

47 "The Valley of Vision—my 'dream book'; ... this is the big work planned since 1944; a visual interpretation of historical humanity ..." Statement of my publications as foreseen as of now, 16 February 1968. University of Chicago, Committee on Social Thought, Records, Box 5, Folder 4. Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

48 "Wild Historical Theorizing" is Hodgson's file heading for notes, among others on C. H. Becker, A. L. Kroeber, Augustine, Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, Daniel Halévy, Karl August Wittvogel, André Varagnac, and Vico, as well as Toynbee, Sorokin, and Hegel. Hodgson Papers, Box 6, Folder 12.

49 "Epic History and Verse, 1944–1945." Hodgson Papers, Box 9, Folder 12. Hodgson was influenced by Alfred L. Kroeber, *Configurations of Culture Growth* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1944).

50 Handwritten note, n.d., Hodgson Papers, Box 10, Folder 12.

creation stories that emerged from a worldwide (nonviolent) mobilisation for a global age—against the oppressive reality of the prevailing “Western outlook.”⁵¹

Hodgson’s dream of a narrative of the world beyond *chronologics* matters in our context, even though Hodgson himself realised that he was striving for the impossible. Two points are worth making. First, chronological histories and prose narratives were the Western standard for writing history and world history. It follows that to provincialise Europe would entail considering other genres of writing, narrating, and experiencing the world’s pasts. In this sense, the turn against chronological prose history was part and parcel of Hodgson’s anti-Orientalist project. That this effort may well be considered Orientalising in itself and, perhaps more to the point, sacrilegious, is no small matter, but this debate, which would have to explore Hodgson’s religiosity and his sense of the sacred, will have to wait for another occasion. What matters is the imaginative drive that recognised the time- and space-bound nature of prose-chronological narratives. Second, for Hodgson myth-history, wisdom literature, and epic poetry were viable, if untimely alternative genres for world history.⁵² He recognised that the *Zeitgeist* in general and academic thought in particular were not amenable to time-transcendent epic poetry and wisdom literature. But contrary to his colleague William McNeill, whose anti-myth-history looks suspiciously like a response to Hodgson,⁵³ he firmly believed that these histories, while in abeyance in his time, would by necessity return. They would not have to take the form of Puranas, but they would have to be foundational thought for a global world.

* * *

Hodgson became a historian rather than an epic poet. As mentioned, his world historical oeuvre consists of two manuscripts, “The Problems of Interregional History” (1946) and “The Unity of World History: An Essay on Medieval and Modern Eurasia” (1968). The earlier text is the more breathtaking and groundbreaking, but also the more juvenile. It is a think-piece, essaying world history, with the architecture of thought just barely worked out. The later text, by contrast, is more circumspect and

51 He abandoned his visionary project in 1956 at the very moment when, after an offer from Harvard to pursue postdoctoral work on Shi’a history, he was appointed assistant professor in the (undergraduate) College and the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago, in order to develop a general education course on Islamic Civilisation. This is the starting point for his work on *The Venture of Islam* and, in conjunction with Gustav von Grunebaum, for a Reader in Islamic History, which was far advanced in the early 1960s, but is missing. His final text in the epic genre is “We are Men: A Seeker’s History of the Human World, epic history,” Hodgson Papers, Box 6, Folder 21.

52 “World History and Epic History,” Hodgson Papers, Box 6, Folder 21.

53 William H. McNeill, *Mythistory and Other Essays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

comprehensive. But it is also a preliminary first draft, whose published, theoretical appendix (part D), confuses readers even more charitable than Chris Bayly.⁵⁴ The manuscript also exhibits weaknesses in interpreting modern times, which scholars of Islam have noted and mostly attribute to the *déformation professionnelle* of a premodern historian. Despite its many infelicities that make it unsuitable for publication, the text nevertheless suggests significant advances in thinking about world history. It also points glaringly to the difficulties Hodgson faced, and historians still face today, in approaching world history in a global age. Hodgson defines these difficulties perceptively, even if he cannot find more than tentative ways out of them.

In a nutshell, Hodgson argues: the problem of world history in a global age is that “globality” as a dynamic, worldwide force destroys the very foundations of time and space, on which “world history”—in actual fact: the world picture(s) of all cultures, including the (pre-modern and modern) Western world picture—have been built. Globality obliterates an Afro-Eurasian interregional configuration, which created geo-cultural (world-)histories as a written tradition long before the modern Europeans took hold of them. It is the very makeup of human society, its life-orientations and life-worlds and their epistemic certainties which are being undone by the conditions of the global age. Hence, world history—creating meaningful narratives of time and space—is both an episteme-breaking and an episteme-building exercise, inasmuch as the human pasts within a natural world continue to be the source and the anchor of life-orientation.

“The Problems of Interregional History” is both a manifesto for a nonviolent revolution of the mind and a blueprint for a world history, in which all regions of the world find their world-historical place and time. Its main goal is to shake off the “westward distortion” of world history. It does so in part by making sense of how modern Occidentalism came about and how it differs from other parochial worldviews (and histories) and in part by developing a framework that could replace it—and, perhaps, even point to a future beyond Western hegemony and white supremacy. This future took shape in World War II, which Hodgson saw less as a war over the division of the world between competing great powers, than as a war of liberation of Eurasia’s civilisations. Where others saw Empire, he saw the end of Western hegemony within a rapidly globalising world of regions in the process of becoming their own modern selves. Indeed, the West, in order to keep pace, was also transforming itself into yet another post-European West.

54 The published last section of the 1968 manuscript, apart from containing unnoted emendations, is also the most obscure section of a four-part, book-length study. Hodgson, *Rethinking World History* (see note 13); Christopher A. Bayly, “Hodgson, Islam, and World History in the Modern Age,” in *Islam and World History*, ed. Burke and Mankin, 38–52.

Hodgson concluded that to understand this process world history was needed, but it would have to be a world history that accounted for and reverberated with the voices of the worldwide multitudes directly and indirectly entrapped by the war. If the present provided the heuristic jolt for thinking of the world as an interlinked configuration, his religious commitments gave this present a lived historicity that stretched over millennia. This was historicity, though not quite what François Hartog meant by the term.⁵⁵ It was the deep past as (re-)experienced past that is “not yet dead,” or so he surmised.⁵⁶

Hodgson’s contribution to world history in “The Problems of Interregional History” consisted mainly of two interventions. First, he posited the world of world history as an “interregional field.” For world history to make sense as ‘history’ (as opposed to epic poetry or the annals of kings and prophets), he posited that it be understood as the history of an “interregional field.” He gave this field a spatial dimension, defining it as the Afro-Eurasian Oikoumene,⁵⁷ or “Ecumenical Zone,” which he somewhat confusingly also called the “eastern hemisphere,” in contradistinction to the “western hemisphere” of the Americas.⁵⁸ His notion of the Afro-Eurasian Oikoumene was never quite fixed. Indeed, the Oikoumene, as “interregional field,” was meant to be a dynamic, mobile, and evolving spatial entity. Especially in these earliest versions, he used the concept of “civilisations” sparingly and more loosely than his superiors at Chicago (Robert Redfield, Milton Singer) and world historians such as Toynbee or Sorokin.⁵⁹ He thought of them as multitudes of small and large societies clustered within the penumbra of common life-orientation(s) with at least a certain familiarity among them. Even in the presence of an imperial core, Hodgson privileged expansive bonds of belief and literacy, as well as commerce, over city walls and boundaries. In a perspective suggested in 1946 and more fully developed in the 1968 “Unity of World History,” his main actors were not kings and courts, but urban literate society (against the background of rural toiling masses). The study of bounded existence was the proper subject of local and regional histories.

55 Hartog, *Régimes d'historicité* (see note 7).

56 PIH, p. 4.

57 The term was borrowed from A. L. Kroeber, but exceeded by far the “inhabited space” that Kroeber has in mind: PIH, p. 52. Alfred L. Kroeber, *The Ancient Oikoumenê as an Historic Culture Aggregate*, Huxley memorial lecture for 1945 (London: Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, 1945).

58 He used “eastern hemisphere” against the advice of Guy S. Metraux (General Secretary of the International Committee for a Scientific and Cultural History of Mankind). On the insistence of Lucien Febvre, Metraux accepted the essay “Hemispheric Inter-regional History” (1954), but suggested that Hodgson use the term Eurasia (which Hodgson did not do at the time). Letter, dated 23 November 1953, Hodgson Papers, Box 17, Folder 2.

59 Katja Naumann, *Laboratorien der Weltgeschichtsschreibung: Lehre und Forschung an den Universitäten Chicago, Columbia und Harvard 1918 bis 1968*, *Transnationale Geschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2018).

In as much as power gained interregional significance, it was a “social power,” that is, the technologies/capacities for the mobilisation of people and resources. *Techne* proved adaptable across interregional space.

Hodgson’s civilisations were both spatial (regional) and mobile and, hence, always open-ended. As in the *Annales*, here interregional space provided a deep continuum in fluctuating life-worlds and power-assemblies. Space, however, was not a telluric substrate, or *Raum*, in the sense of German geopolitics. Much as geography and geology mattered, the space of world history was the Ecumenical Zone, defined as an “interregional configuration.” This term referred, first of all, to the assemblage of regional clusters of (urban, literate) societies; and, second, to their linkages, mutual interactions and reciprocal influences. At the time he wrote, such terms (which have resurfaced today) were commonly associated with the concept of ‘diffusion’ in social anthropology (but also in Toynbee), and later adapted by William McNeill.⁶⁰ Hodgson, however, was what we might call a systems-thinker. He thought of the “interregional configuration” as a lived totality, in which there was ample room for regional and local development and turnover, but in which over time, the entire hemisphere—what he later called the “oikoumenic configuration”—evolved. The evolution of this hemispheric configuration—how it was shaped by its parts and in turn shaped them—was the proper subject of world history. Much later, in 1965, he would write to the comparative religion scholar Wilfred Cantwell Smith:

I am convinced of the importance of seeing not only various particular interrelationships at different places in world history, but the effect of the total historical context of the hemisphere at any given time. The diffusionists have gradually been helping historians to see interrelations within “historical” times, and this is all to the good. But historians themselves need to see how the historical complex, which was the cited zone of the eastern hemisphere, had its own continuous evolution as a whole, to determine the character of the several sorts of cultural diffusion which went on within that historical complex.⁶¹

There was a price to pay for this emphasis on lived and connected time/space. Hodgson readily acknowledged that there were non-ecumenical civilisations, as in the Americas (the western hemisphere) or in Sub-Saharan Africa, but he judged them not sufficiently

60 Hodgson letter to William McNeill about his “Rise of the West,” May 9, 1964: “I find it too diffusionistic; my own approach would be more contextualistic.” Hodgson Papers, Box 2, Folder 5.

61 Hodgson Letter to Cantwell Smith, December 27, 1965, Hodgson Papers, Box 6, Folder 5.

connected to the Ecumenical Zone as the site of world-historical development.⁶² He recognised that these non-ecumenical civilisations were settled, urban, and literate communities, and as such subjects of and for a history of humankind. But due to their disconnectedness they were not an intrinsic part of the Oikoumene as the main site of world history before the dawn of the global age. It must also be said, however, that he never quite knew what to do with them.

If his first *chronotopical* intervention defined the space of world history as an inter-related field of regions, his second intervention defined the time of world history (a new *chronologies*). Hodgson, like Gellner and Polanyi and others, was a ‘trinitarian.’⁶³ He followed a scheme favored by cultural anthropologists, which distinguished a pre-ecumenical (pre-agrarian, hunter and gatherer) world from an ecumenical (urban, literate, statist, resource-extracting and maximising) time lasting some three to four thousand years before collapsing in the age of global modernity (or rather, global modernities), which remade time and place and life-orientations in all parts of the world.

Hodgson argued that the long Eurasian Middle Age did not begin and end simply with local or regional events but with wholesale, worldwide structural transformations affecting all aspects of life:⁶⁴ the way material, social, and spiritual life is organised and articulated; the way human society mobilises human capacities (physical and intellectual) and uses natural resources; and the way (clusters of) human societies form and interact. The evolution of agriculture-based, urban, literate, state-centric life and its eventual articulation in universal religions created an enduring “interregional configuration,” extending from China to the Mediterranean, which was only disrupted in the collapse and remaking of time, space, and life-worlds under conditions of globality. These conditions are relatively recent and their formation is still fully in progress. While he contended that globality was a worldwide event, in which multiple modernities arose simultaneously, he was unequivocal that it was not simply a more intense, expansive, and complex interregional configuration, but spelled the end of the more than three thousand years of the Oikoumene. “[T]he individual regions [of the Ecumenical Zone] have ceased to be the semi-autonomous groupings they were; and have at once disintegrated internally, such unity among their component nations as existed tending to disappear.”⁶⁵ The regional configuration of middle-period Eurasia

62 PIH, pp. 46–54. He clearly underestimated the contacts with Africa, but then this was an equal-opportunity bias, because he downplayed the connections with Russia, Eastern Europe and Scandinavia as well. Kathleen Bickford Berzock, ed., *Caravans of Gold, Fragments in Time: Art, Culture, and Exchange across Medieval Saharan Africa* (Evanston, IL: Block Museum of Art, Northwestern University, 2019). On the marginality of Europe, see below.

63 Chris Hann, ed., *Realizing Eurasia: Empire and Connectivity during Three Millennia, Comparativ* 28, no. 4 (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2018).

64 The initial title for “The Unity of World History” was “Structure of World History.”

65 PIH, p. 117.

had broken down, and previous regions (like East Asia, the West) were giving way to a mix of smaller contiguous areas (clusters of nation states) and transregional “global conditions.”⁶⁶

In “The Unity of World History,” to which we will turn momentarily, Hodgson expanded and elaborated these initial insights regarding the Eurasian Middle Age and the transformation of the world in a global age. The most striking contribution in the earlier text, however, consisted in locating the entire syndrome of the West and its distortions within the configuration of the Ecumenical Zone. This move pierced the notion of Western Civilisation as the universalising civilisation (“the scheme of Orient-Greece-Rome-Dark Ages-Crusades-Renaissance-Modern Times”) and dismissed the “Ancient-Medieval-Modern scheme” of Western world-historical time.⁶⁷ More than that, it made the West’s self-interpretation as world historical actor, setting the time of world history, into an integral aspect of the world-historical time and space of the entire Afro-Eurasian Oikoumene. In a nutshell, Hodgson saw Western bluster as revenge for more than three thousand years of marginality at the far-western edge of the Ecumenical Zone of urban cultured life.

The crux of Europe’s place in world history, according to Hodgson, was its exocentric geopolitical and geo-cultural position in the Ecumenical Zone. Europe—not unlike China—had come to see itself as the centre of the world. Neither was in fact in the centre. Instead, they were at the outer edges of the Eurasian configuration, though with a crucial difference. Subsequent Chinas—in shorthand: Chinese civilisation—were the core of an expanding territorial and maritime region and as such an energetic, configuration-defining part of the Ecumenical Zone, while Europe, by contrast, came into being as the far-western “frontier” both of the Near East and North Africa and thus of the Ecumenical Zone as a whole. The far-western frontier was literally exocentric, in that it had no head. Greece, in this rendition, was looking eastward, reaching the height of its power in Anatolia/Persia, the Near East and Egypt in the Hellenistic Age and under early (Anatolian) Christendom.⁶⁸ Rome was a westward leap at the edge of this world and the wider Ecumenical Zone. It established a far western (along with a northern) frontier, but Rome’s site of social power was the East. The choice of Constantinople as the seat of power was a late realisation of this

66 PIH, pp. 117 and passim.

67 PIH, pp. 14 and 96, respectively.

68 Philippe Clancier et al., *Les mondes hellénistiques: Du Nil à l’Indus*, Carré histoire 71 (Vanves: Hachette, 2017); Angelos Chaniotis, *Age of Conquests: the Greek World from Alexander to Hadrian* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018). The German title is more evocative: *Die Öffnung der Welt: Eine Globalgeschichte des Hellenismus*, trans. Martin Hallmansecker (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft—Theiss, 2019).

reality. Hodgson followed Gibbon in this respect, but went even further.⁶⁹ “Byzantine Greeks should [be seen as] a continuation of Periclean Greeks [but] for us it is rather the Merovingians who are the heirs of Pericles.” Constantinople partook in the Eurasian oikoumene, but Europe did so only marginally and in developmental leaps, which were typical for frontier zones. The far-western development into Europe coincided with the “shifting frontiers” of the Far West and “the special accidents of this frontier.”⁷⁰

European periodisation reflected the accidents of this shifting frontier, first to Rome, then to Gaul and the Germanic Empires, with the Crusades (and the discovery of the splendors of the Ecumenical Zone) being the springboard for the (European) High Middle Ages and finally the impetus for the formation of Europe into a full-fledged expansive region. As Hodgson wrote in 1946: “The Ancient-Medieval-Modern scheme [of European history] simply symbolizes the westward pattern of history based on the following of a shifting frontier. Especially before we get west of the Adriatic it is confusing enough for local history, but applied to world history, and made the basis of our theories of historical development, it is ... pseudo-history.”⁷¹ According to him, the classic-medieval-modern schema” is a temporal fiction of continuity at a moving and discontinuous frontier. It also is a spatial fiction in that it evokes a regional self-sufficiency that was only achieved in modern times.

Western history, then, is frontier history and its periodisation, with its ruptures and renewals, reflects frontier existence at the margins of the Afro-Eurasian Ecumenical Zone. This observation led to three conclusions, which were to shape Hodgson’s world history. First, a more appropriate periodisation would have to come from within core regions of the Ecumenical Zone rather than the European margin. Second, although humbling and even humiliating to the European mind, Europe as a frontier in ecumenical times resembled other frontiers, such as Southeast Asia, Central Asia, Russia and the Balkans, the Sudan, and the Horn of Africa, although not China, India, or the Middle East.⁷²

69 Hodgson wrote a graduate paper on Gibbon with none other than Daniel Boorstin, whose comments on the paper are a hilarious send-up of a self-important graduate student. Hodgson Papers, Box 6, Folder 25. A recent addition to the Hodgson Papers is his written PhD exam, which features—in addition to papers on Herodotus, Imperialism and Military Strategy, and the German phenomenologist Heinrich Rickert—a paper on “Gibbon’s Concept of Historical Causation with Reference to Christianity and the Fall of Rome,” Hodgson Papers, Box 1, Folder 9.

70 PIH, p. 93.

71 PIH, p. 98.

72 This would also suggest that recent counterfactual histories are really a reflection of the absence of a world historical framing. Thus, the counterfactual of Islamic forces overrunning Europe repeats an old Western distortion. Europe would still have been an Islamic frontier, because wealth, power, and knowledge were found not in westward, but in eastward expansion. The Indian Ocean, not the Mediterranean, was the world-historical ocean of the Middle Period and

Third, these pointed suggestions led inexorably to the question of why this margin made it and others did not. The frontier position of the Far West, Hodgson's argument continued, was a disadvantage that nevertheless created unique opportunities. Its exocentric position made it possible to invent the flexible, mobile, and transformative society Europe was to become (Christian, to be sure, but breaking apart the Nice-no-Constantinopolitan unity of Christendom) and shaped the self-image it would choose.⁷³ Its exocentric position, while making Europe a marginal actor in the Ecumenical Zone, had its developmental advantages. The nature of this privilege and its eventual advantage enabled Europeans to benefit from Ecumenical Zone development (as an effect of the Crusades, among other things), while escaping the ossification of civilisational traditions. In addition, Europe was propelled forward and outward by the internal fragmentation—itsself an indication of frontier existence—ultimately expressed in its nationalism. Moreover, the need to reinvent itself with continually shifting foci enabled the leap beyond the ecumenical configuration and, ultimately, beyond its own previous, geo-cultural identity. Finally, while expansion was typical for all civilisational clusters, Europe had an open sea and an entire new hemisphere into which to expand. All ecumenical regions expanded, but Europe in the end proved to be the most mobile force, and interregional mobility proved to be the crucial social power in world history.

Hodgson's approach encourages historians to separate three crucial turning points in European history: the evolution from a dependent (and, in terms of the Far West, marginal) frontier to a self-sustaining region; the insertion of the region into the core areas of the Ecumenical Zone (in the Indian Ocean); and the overthrow of the Ecumenical Zone by supplanting the geo-culture of multiple regions. He thus marks the outlines of European periodisation on a world-historical timescale, which allows for meaningful comparisons across the Eurasian field. He had long held that comparison had to be liberated from the Western hubris that compared the incomparable, such as France and India, a nation and a (sub-)continent, a frontier and a core region.⁷⁴

In order to conceptualise his world history, Hodgson had to resolve two problems. First, how to capture regional, temporal, and overall development within the Oikoumene as a three-thousand-year configuration and how to deal with the intangible reality of the

it came to be dominated by Islamic societies (but only at the cost of the self-transformation of Islam, a much-contested argument). Walter Scheidel, *Escape from Rome: The Failure of Empire and the Road to Prosperity*, Princeton Economic History of the Western World (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019).

73 PIH, p. 98.

74 See "Interregional Relationships and Comparisons, 1957" and "Comparison of Cultures and Civilizations, 1957–1964," Hodgson Papers, Box 1, Folders 3 and 4, respectively.

ecumenical configuration as totality. (By contrast, Toynbee and later McNeill rejected such Germanic intangibles.) Second, how to approach the two great metamorphoses, the one that ushered in and the other that came to replace the Oikoumene. The issue here was to explain the separate yet connected emergence of literate urban societies across Afro-Eurasia on the one hand, and on the other Europe's emergence from its frontier position to become a revolutionising global force.

Hodgson was able to articulate, but never quite to resolve these issues. He did, however, put them on the table in his published work (for which he should be recognized), and he pursued them in his unpublished work. He published on interregional history in a series of (somewhat repetitive) essays, working off his programmatic 1954 essay, "Hemispheric Inter-regional History as an Approach to World History," which caught the attention of Lucien Febvre.⁷⁵ He started a working group on "Problems in the Development and Interrelations of the Eurasian Civilizations," in the context of a Ford Foundation-funded seminar on "Comparison of Cultures and Civilizations" (1957–1964).⁷⁶ This moment coincided with his abandoning his "dream" of world history as epic poem. But then he turned to Islam and sharpened his ideas on the Oikoumene in his work on Islam in World History.⁷⁷ It was probably between 1966 and 1968 that he turned his full attention back to world history, while still struggling with *The Venture of Islam* and starting a new teaching project on the history of world religions.⁷⁸ Shortly before his untimely death, an application for a Guggenheim Foundation fellowship offered an opportunity to consolidate his life-long notetaking on world history.⁷⁹

The Guggenheim essay was based on the preliminary draft of the manuscript entitled, "The Unity of World History."⁸⁰ Divided into four parts that convey an overall idea of his intent, it begins with a discussion of "The World as an Interregional Field: Problems in Envisaging Mankind as a Historical Whole" (Part A), in which he defends his focus

75 "World History as an independent field of investigation has been much appreciated by Professor Febvre." Handwritten letter, François Crouzet to Hodgson, December 16, 1953, Hodgson Papers, Box 17, Folder 2.

76 Preliminary note and outline of "Interregional Structure for World History," 3 July 1957, Hodgson Papers, Box 1, Folder 3.

77 Hodgson, "Islam in World History" (see note 10), 18–21; "Modernity and the Islamic Heritage," *Islamic Studies* [Karachi] 1, no. 2 (1962): 89–129; "The Role of Islam in World History" (see note 10), 99–123.

78 "Tentative Outline for a Course on World History of Religion," November 30, 1965. Hodgson Papers, Box 5, Folder 18.

79 Fellowship Application to the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation. Received March 27, 1968. Courtesy of the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation.

80 The manuscript of "The Unity of World History" (henceforth UWH, in notes) is deposited quite awkwardly. Part A (labelled Part 1) is in Hodgson Papers, Box 14, Folder 14; Part B (labelled 2) in Box 15, Folder 1; Part C (labelled 3) in Box 15, Folder 2; and Part D (labelled 4) in Box 15, Folder 3. They are cited as UWH, Parts A/B/C/D.

on the Eurasian Oikoumene. The second and main part, on “The Common History of Eurasia: In What Ways Ancient and Medieval Times Form a Historical Unity” (Part B), explores the rise and fall as well as the internal dynamics of the Eurasian Oikoumene. The third part, on “The Division of the Modern World” (Part C), concerns the shift “from oikoumenic to global times.” The fourth part (Part D), minus two sub-chapters and its programmatic title, “The Unity of Historical Study: Interregional Studies as the Core of Historical Studies,” has been published.⁸¹ In this last part, Hodgson sets out his methodology and argues that to be relevant in the modern world the discipline of history had to reinvent itself as the study of interregional contacts and contexts. As a free-standing theory piece, this published section makes little sense, although it occasionally serves as a useful quarry for citations and as a source for the appreciation and critique of a somewhat mysterious scholar. It is only, however, in the context of the entire manuscript, that is, the unfinished, unpublished parts, that it can suggest the direction in which his grand project of world history in a global age might have developed.

The theme of this world history, and the reason world history also holds the key to Hodgson’s history of Islamic civilisation, is most concisely set down in his application to the Guggenheim Foundation, in March 1968, shortly before his death:

I plan to do a study of the unity of world history [...] . More than with abstract principles of historical development or with parallelisms among the great civilizations or even with their mutual influences (though on these matters I shall have something to say), I will be concerned with *the developing interregional configuration of interrelated events, especially in the last three millennia* in the eastern hemisphere: that is, how developments within the several major cultural regions, given the particular position and role of those regions in the Afro-Eurasian historical complex at any given time, affected overall Afro-Eurasian and world historical circumstances; and how these overall circumstances in turn affected the development of the several regions [...]. [T]he heart of my study will be the *Afro-Eurasian historical configuration of pre-Modern citted time* among the primary regions of the Afro-Eurasian citted zone: the zone of citted life from Europe to China. *A constitutive theme will be the common level of social power that held, at any given time, among the primary regions of the Afro-Eurasian citted zone*; how these regions were always roughly on par with each other despite *the persistent and substantial rise of that common level over the millennia*. In this light then I will assess the role of the various frontier areas, north, south, east and west (such as the Occident proper was for most of the period).⁸²

81 It is part III in Hodgson, *Rethinking World History* (see note 13).

82 *My italics*. Guggenheim Application. The citations are on pp. 1 and 3 of the project description.

Hodgson always understood that this was a narrow-gauge world history and not a study of humankind, *Homo sapiens*, and surely not natural history, which happens on a yet grander scale.⁸³ Hodgson was fascinated by the possibility of these histories but thought of them as beyond his reach.⁸⁴ He settled on oikoumenic times: “The whole history of urban literate peoples in the Eastern Hemisphere, down at least till modern times, appears as a single episode within a much vaster [human] context, which is to be thought of as equally historical and episodic.”⁸⁵

Oikoumenic times were also beyond the conceptual scope of what he considered the unity of world history proper. For world history to come into existence it needed the invention of narrated time, that is, histories in the widest sense. Hodgson made this invention one of the key features of urban, literate life. These histories developed from much older chronological technologies, a development that amounted to the invention of time itself. The crucial cultural advance was the articulation of a sense of historicity, the human place in time, which is to say, a narrated past and a projected future (as observed from the vantage point of the present at any particular moment in time). If the work of the Deuteronomist in the Hebrew Bible was a good example of the narrated past (though not the only one, and in view of Chinese and Indian developments, not the most significant), the kerygmatic message of Islam was the most powerful case for the projected future. These new narratives of time were linked to state-formation. Hodgson used the second century BCE Chinese scholar, Sima Qian, as a key witness for this connection.⁸⁶ In order for societies to enter world history, that is, the oikoumenic age, they needed techniques of space/time and narrative (i.e., the *chronotope*), as well as scripted time. In short, they literally needed *chronologies*, that is, a science of time, institutions to record it, narratives to articulate and make sense of it, and genres of writing and telling. These were the constitutive “social power” of what Hodgson called the Classical Age, which made the world imaginable and communicable.⁸⁷ Having dismissed the European scheme of classic antiquity (see above: Hodgson’s frontier thesis), he was now free to reset his periodisation. This Classic Age resembles Karl Jaspers’s notion of the axial age, but it differs in two respects: first, in terms of what Hodgson sees as a thousand-year evolutionary pattern, in its impact on the formation of distinct clusters of regional cultures; and second, more importantly, in the rise of religion—or “life-orientation,” as Hodgson preferred to call it—the

83 “Requirements for and outlines of a History of the Human World,” 3 July 1955, Hodgson Papers. Box 6, Folder 17. See also “Notes on role of historical and critical studies, environmental studies,” n.d., Hodgson Papers, Box 10, Folder 19.

84 “History of the Human World,” 1954–1955, Hodgson Papers, Box 6, Folder 17.

85 UWH, Part A, p. 25.

86 Craig Benjamin, “‘But from this time forth history becomes a connected whole’: State Expansion and the Origins of Universal History,” *Journal of Global History* 9, no. 3 (2014): 357–378.

87 UWH, Part A, p. 29: the goal is “to put the whole field of ‘written’ history onto perspective.”

popular, trans-ethnic force that superseded empire. The sense of narrated, reflexive time was the cultural artifact of all urban, lettered societies.

In addition to the onset of narrated time, a second feature defined this *chronotope* of some three thousand years. World history proper took shape with the emergence of the shared, because communicable, space and time of Afro-Eurasian citted and lettered societies. The emergence of an African-Eurasian space of interaction and mutual influence, and the acts involved in stitching it together, created the world of oikoumenic world history. Geography separated, human activity integrated. Creativity and connectivity in evolving civilisational clusters or life-orientations, together with their self-representations and communication as narrated time, generated and shaped an oikoumenic *chronologic*. Space contained time (with differing chronologies from locality to locality and region to region), but innovative “social powers”—“technologies” of social advancement in the widest sense, from ascetic techniques or mathematics, or the compass and gun powder, to improvements in agriculture and metallurgy—were adapted across the spatial barriers imposed by land and sea. There was no innovation in any part of the Oikoumene that would not eventually find its way into all other parts and adapt to local and regional circumstances. The task of modern world historians was to record, narrate, and explain the effect of this interregionality.

As we have seen, Hodgson argued that it would not suffice to historicise regional clusters of societies and explore their interconnection. He did not dismiss this kind of history but thought of it as a cosmopolitan history that, as such, was local and regional (and not world-historical). There was a dire need for a “history beyond the nation state,” as Jürgen Osterhammel would eventually call it, but world history it was not.⁸⁸ The most prominent model for interregional history at the time was provided by social anthropologists, who by insisting on multiple centres of diffusion had made possible the “recognition of the independent historical dignity of other societies than the Occidental.”⁸⁹ This was an advance over previous world histories, but diffusion and mimesis did not, in Hodgson’s view, suffice in a world of interregional connection, in which each cluster of societies integrated impulses from outside. Although cultural regions developed separately as recognisable “civilisations,” such interregionality meant that all clusters of urban, literate societies developed in tandem over time. It was wrong to argue that civilisations came and went, if in fact civilisational clusters, while fluid in time and space, persisted throughout the oikoumenic age.

88 Jürgen Osterhammel, *Geschichtswissenschaft jenseits des Nationalstaates: Studien zu Beziehungsgeschichte und Zivilisationsvergleich* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001).

89 UWH, Part A, p. 25. This strand is picked up by Chris Hann, “After Ideocracy and Civil Society: Gellner, Polanyi and the New Peripheralization of Central Europe,” *Thesis Eleven* 128, no. 1 (2015): 41–55; Hann, “Long Live Eurasian Civ!” (see note 12); Jóhann Páll Árnason and C. M. Hann, eds., *Anthropology and Civilizational Analysis: Eurasian Explorations*, SUNY series, Pangaea II (Albany: State University of New York, 2018).

Therefore, civilisational separateness and longevity, as well as interregional diffusion, made sense only in the context of an overall unity of space and time, which he called a “configuration.” Contrary to social anthropologists (and more recently, evolutionists), this unity was not some academic abstraction. As a totality, it was intangible for contemporaries, but its effects across space made it real and thus legible to historians. Hodgson’s main contention was that Eurasia-Africa is best understood as an overarching, world-history-defining, inhabited zone of literate, urban clusters of societies. He conceived of the zone, as a whole, as a configuration that developed together with its clustered parts, though was at no time subsumed under any one of them. In terms of technique, this is easy enough to understand. Exchange would ultimately transport any kind of innovation (mechanical, spiritual, social, or economic) across the entire space. What was carried across regions encompassed a wide variety of tangibles and intangibles that affected all aspects of life. Hodgson quite conventionally pointed to the “trade routes of the Southern Seas” (Indian Ocean) and the “trade routes of Mid-Eurasia” (the Silk Road) as “highway[s] for the passage of religious and political ideas as well as goods.”⁹⁰ But while much was unknown about exchange, for Hodgson this was known and knowable history, even if it broke through Western distortions and allowed for the reconstruction of a “historical world radically different from the Occidental image.”⁹¹ Hodgson’s problems started when he asked what to do with all this connectivity—what kind of world history this radically different world image would produce. And how he would deal with the “oikoumenic configuration” as a totality.

His solution, modelled on the 1946 essay, emerged tentatively and was published first in his 1954 essay, “Hemispheric Inter-regional History as an Approach to World History,” and vetted in the 1957 faculty seminar. Regional civilisational clusters were connected in a history of separate, but interconnected habitations; so far so good. But regional/civilisational developments were also inseparable from the overall development of the entire hemisphere. It is the overall, ‘configurational’ development of the Oikoumene at large that concerned Hodgson, because it is in this overall development that the chronologic of world history could be found. That is, the “eastern hemisphere,” although divided into separate clusters of settled urban and literate habitations, formed a single, dynamically evolving *chronotope*.⁹² The basic proposition was as follows:

90 UWH, Part A, p. 63.

91 UWH, Part A, p. 26.

92 Chapter II: “The Eurasian Oikoumene as a Historical Complex: Its Evolution as Heart of the Interregional Historical Framework,” UWH, Part A, 32–69. In this case *chronotope* does not refer to the space/time invoked by a given narrative (typically associated with Mikhail Bakhtin), but to the unit of space/time that has the power to explain social development on a world scale.

[T]he major Eurasian civilizations can be considered as regions within a single historical configuration. Seen from this angle, the societies studied in the civilizational courses and by the specialists in the various areas tend to lose their independent, self-contained characters and become, rather, interrelated and interdependent parts of a single, inclusive region [Eurasian-African zone] with an overall pattern of historical development.⁹³

Cities and lettered societies were not, in other words, “a multiplicity of essentially discrete societies” at the mercy of historians who squeezed them into a world historical schema. They were connected, but connectivity as such, as recognized by Toynbee, as well as McNeill, was only part of the story. What world history studied is “how developments within the several major cultural regions, given the particular position and role of those regions in the Afro-Eurasian historical complex at any given time, affected overall Afro-Eurasian and world-historical circumstances; and how these circumstances in turn affected the development of the several regions.”⁹⁴ This formulation became the core contention of Hodgson’s world history and the key presupposition for his thinking about world historical time and world historical narrative. Hodgson was a contextualist rather than a diffusionist.

The specific task of the world historian was “to trace those developments which proceeded on a stage too wide for any more local history to cover other than fragmentarily, and which determined the cultural possibilities of mankind as a whole, or the greater part of it.”⁹⁵ That is, whatever transcends any one local or regional frame and thus affects the “whole” (connected) world (of Africa-Eurasia), and therefore can only be captured incompletely with reference to any one locale, is the subject of world history. This concept is less complicated than it may at first appear. The spread of military technology is one of the best-known examples. Innovations typically originated in a specific place and time conditioned by the wider world, but genuine innovations were, if not imposed, then adapted and appropriated across the entire space. The act of invention (in pride of place) and the acts of adaptation (the less cherished, often violent cultural labour of mimesis) needed to be studied carefully and in detail, but world history as such concerned itself with the effects of invention and adaptation that moved the world historical “configuration” in its entirety onto a new plane. For example, one might ask: what did the stirrup do to evolve the entire configuration?⁹⁶ Similarly: What did Indian

93 “Invitation to a Seminar on Problems in the Development and Interrelations of the Eurasian Civilizations,” fall term 1957, MGSHP Box 1, Folder 3. William McNeill was the only member of the History Department among the participants.

94 Hodgson, Guggenheim Application, Project Proposal, p. 1.

95 “Invitation to a Seminar ...”

96 See, for example, Tonio Andrade, *The Gunpowder Age: China, Military Innovation, and the Rise of the West in World History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016).

ascetic traditions do to lift the “social power” of the entire Oikoumene? In each case, they did more than simply give a certain region or society/empire an advantage. The genuine subject of the “interregional aspects of historical study” as world history was not the succession of civilisations or of societies and empires within civilisations. Neither was it the connection between parts (the Silk Road, e.g.). The subject was rather the regime of conscious and unconscious influences, what Hodgson felicitously called the “cultural climate,” that connected them all.⁹⁷

Hodgson created a capacious, common space—the Eurasian-North-African oikoumene (formerly also called the Ecumenical Zone; alternatively, the “eastern hemisphere”) that reached from the Atlantic Far West to the Pacific Far East. The Indian Ocean was the interior lake of this geographic expanse, which petered out towards the north, the west and the south and less visibly to the east (the Pacific). The people who inhabited this expanse shared a naturally and culturally striated space of habitation, bound together in a shared “cultural climate,” which in turn was subject to something like cultural climate change. There was an enormous difference in terms of social power between fully developed post-axial societies and the world, all worlds, at the beginning, middle, and end of the oikoumenic age.⁹⁸ And this difference manifested itself across the hemisphere; it was never the privilege of one regional cluster alone. The common space evolved over a long time, some three thousand years, and although there were dramatic disruptions, the deep time of the Oikoumene developed in a geo-cultural continuum that frayed only at the margins (as in the Far West).

Narrating and historicising the time of oikoumenic history was the crux of world history. In a way, the insouciance of youth in 1946 produced better results than the advances of the middle-aged scholar. Accepting periodisation as artificial, Hodgson developed a surprisingly effective schema in “Problems of Interregional History,” which divided the period between 2,000 BCE and 2,000 BC into three- to four-hundred-year blocks of time, which he gave “mnemonic tag-names,” exchangeable memory-tags that labelled each block.⁹⁹ He avoided cycles; the tags were evocative but not freighted with any *chronologic*.¹⁰⁰ The entire scheme nonetheless suggests sequential temporalities.

97 Hodgson, “Hemispheric Inter-regional History” (see note 11), 718.

98 “The Great Western Transmutation,” *Chicago Today* 4, no. 3 (1967): 40–50.

99 Starting with 2000 BC: Repression, Renovation, Subversion, Consolidation, Liberation, Unification (first Imperial period, 200 BC–200 CE), Revision, Integration (600–1000 CE), Disruption (1000–1300 CE), Reconstruction (1300–1600 CE), Transformation (1600–2000 CE). PIH, p. 120–121.

100 The tag “Revision” (200 AD–600 AD), which Hodgson would later consider crucial, simply states: “Revision—of classical cultures by scriptural religions and new peoples (Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism vs. Taoism and Hinduism; Germans; Turks in China). ‘Six Dynasties Period.’” PIH, p. 121.

The serial chronology offered the potential for a narrative, or rather narratives, of each region and of the Oikoumene as a whole.

The serial time-blocks did not, however, explain the temporal dynamic, the *chronologic*, of the oikoumenic age. While the Afro-Eurasian oikoumene evolved slowly and over a very long duration, it was anything but static, either as a whole or in its parts. Oikoumenic societies between, say 600 BCE and 600 BC, and again between 600 CE and 1,600 CE, changed profoundly, both in their capacity to act (“social power”) and in how they apperceived the world. Hodgson attempted to capture this evolution by citing the growing complexity of social organisation (internal differentiation, level of philosophical, spiritual and scientific knowledge, technologies of resource mobilisation), as well as the unremitting extension of urban lettered societies, an “expansion [which] became a basic determinant in the fate of them all by shaping the sort of world they were to exist in.”¹⁰¹ There were regional spurts (“efflorescences”), and regional declines and catastrophes, and there was an indubitable, overall acceleration of the entire hemisphere after 1,300 BCE, but internal differentiation and external expansion shaped the entire Oikoumene.

The idea of complexity in an oikoumenic setting was never fully articulated. Hodgson linked advances in oikoumenic evolution crucially with the capacity of people to settle (as urban, literate societies with an accumulating power to mobilise social and natural resources) and simultaneously to spread and multiply. Making knowledge, the apperception of the world, counted more importantly than making war. This process of “cumulative development,” Hodgson argued, was slow enough for marginal societies (as in the Far West), to be integrated, but dynamic enough to remake all civilisations. This is about as far as Hodgson got. He was at a loss to explain the *chronologic* of this cumulative development, because he never dug systematically and analytically into the notion of “social power.”

He nevertheless suggested a millennial periodisation that is more than mere chronology, and, without being explicit about it, suggested a (chrono-)logic of overall development that exceeded regional affairs. His crucial benchmarks for world-historical development were all tied to mastering and harnessing the social power of mobility.

Like many of his contemporaries—and later William McNeill¹⁰²—Hodgson was fascinated by the enduring struggle between settled (“civilised”) and mobile (“barbaric”) peoples. The balance between the two established a first set of benchmarks. If the earliest urban societies, anywhere in the Afro-Eurasian space, were repeatedly overwhelmed by nomadic peoples, the last and most devastating expansion of nomadic peoples, the Mongols, was, in his view, the world-historical effect of the expansion of

101 UWH, Part A, 65.

102 William H. McNeill, *Europe's Steppe Frontier, 1500–1800* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

urban life (“social power”) and the encroachment on their nomadic existence. While devastating the most highly developed urban cultures in the Oikoumene (China, the Middle East, Northern India), the Mongol expansion also demonstrated that the balance of social power between urban societies and nomadic peoples had shifted decisively.¹⁰³ It was now that nomadic peoples came under relentless pressure everywhere, due to the expansion of metropolitan, urban civilisations: European expansion into the western hemisphere, Chinese expansion into Inner and Southeast Asia, Islamic expansion into East Africa.

The changing balance between nomadic peoples and urban societies established one set of benchmarks, which is now quite commonly accepted.¹⁰⁴ The other set is more difficult to grasp, because it is obscured by the discussion about the axial age and by the appropriation of the ancient Greeks as founders of European civilisation.¹⁰⁵ Hodgson marked the “eastern” (Middle Eastern) military and cultural exploits of Hellenism—as well as similar expansive drives emerging from India and China—as a first benchmark of “universalist” expansion, in that they marked the capacity of settled societies (as opposed to nomadic ones) to reach far beyond their horizons. These expansive technologies and their lasting impact effectively only constituted the Oikoumene as an interconnected configuration of discrete cultural regions. They firmly entrenched urban, literate society across the hemisphere and set in motion a process of urban-imperial empire-formation. These developments not only affected the balance between nomadic and settled societies but generated above all a new kind of mobility of interconnected networks of commerce, kerygmatic (missionary) spirituality, and (scientific, mathematical, philosophical) knowledge, as well as social and natural technologies, among urban societies.

It is typical for Hodgson that he acknowledged the rise of telluric imperial power (Rome, Mauryas, Han) as an effect of this development, but considered the emergence of proselytising, universal religions emerging from the shadow of empire to be far more relevant for oikoumenic development overall. It is the latter that served as the other benchmark in harnessing the powers of mobility and that established an oikoumenic configuration he now came to call the “Middle Age”:

103 UWH, Part A, p. 69: “urban-dominated areas of Greater Eurasia had come to present a solid belt of territories across the hemisphere equivalent in mass to the remaining [nomadic] areas in the North.”

104 There is now an abundant literature on the subject. For world historians it all started with Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System A. D. 1250–1350* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

105 Jóhann Páll Árnason, S. N. Eisenstadt, and Björn Wittrock, *Axial Civilizations and World History*, Jerusalem Studies in Religion and Culture (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

Into this cultural setting erupted Islam, claiming to be the culmination of universal religion, and immediately transforming the balance of political power in the Mediterranean, the Indian ocean, and the Eurasian steppe, where it set bounds to Chinese influence. It created a powerful social and spiritual ideal, which within not many centuries began to penetrate into almost every part of the hemisphere, and which presented ... a permanent cultural and political challenge to each of the great civilizations.¹⁰⁶

Hodgson's "Middle Age" as a world-historical formation was an age of expanding Islam and it was in the "middle," because it challenged, overran, and converted earlier imperial formations and pressed against competing universal religions from one edge of the Oikoumene to the other.¹⁰⁷ Islam was a superbly successful, expansive, universalist life-orientation. Its peculiar mobility came with its remarkable ability for conversion—less of rural communities than of urban, commercial, literate elites. Islam's capacity to create "Islamicate societies" by way of mimetic adaptation is much debated among scholars. What matters here is that the "Middle Age" is not defined by medieval Europe, but by Islam and its ability to harness mobility (in religion as much as in commerce and finance).¹⁰⁸ Islamicate societies were in the middle also in the sense that they preserved the cultural memory of the entire oikoumenic (Greek, Egyptian, Persian, Judaic, Indic, East African, Chinese) past and served as the catalytic connector throughout the hemisphere. This Islamic Middle Age had its own temporal and spatial infrastructure, some of it gaining world-historical significance. In any case, *The Venture of Islam* provides only a partial answer. What matters world-historically is the fact that the oikoumenic Middle Age was shaped by "the Islamic bid for world dominance."¹⁰⁹ More generally, bids for world dominance were the signature of the oikoumenic Middle Age and were also visible in China.¹¹⁰ Europe entered this game rather late, but to great effect. The idea that any one civilisation could achieve world dominance was itself a product of the expansiveness and complexity of the Oikoumene.¹¹¹

106 UWH, Part A, II, p.70.

107 UWH, Part B, chapter 4: Islamic Bid for World Dominance.

108 At least in principle, Hodgson might even have agreed with Thomas Bauer, *Warum es kein islamisches Mittelalter gab: Das Erbe der Antike und der Orient* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2018). The reception of the Greek Classics was indeed different in Islamic high culture and in medieval European frontier culture, quite apart from the issue that the Islam of Islamicate societies incorporated many ancient traditions from the Mediterranean to Southwest and Southeast Asia.

109 UWH, Part B, pp. 98–140.

110 The theme has recently been advanced by Timothy Brook, *Great State: China and the World* (London: Profile Books, 2019).

111 This would invite comparison with medieval and early modern Europe. Anthony Pagden, *Lords of All the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France c.1500–c.1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

The transition to “Modernity” could then (wrongly) be interpreted as the “mere” replacement of an “Islamic” by a “Modern” (European) quest for universal empire. Europe was the unencumbered, latecomer region, which mastered the social powers of mobility (as well as technology) more effectively than the Islamicate societies. However, Hodgson thought of European-dominated “Modernity” not as just another period-marker (a shift and reordering of the oikoumenic configuration), but as a revolution in time and space that superseded three thousand years of oikoumenic history.¹¹² What changed and how?

Hodgson’s axial definition of the global age remained tentative and inconclusive but nevertheless bold. It came in two parts. The first had to do with the difference between the world-historical role of Islam and that of the West, a subject he approached in a much revised and contested essay on Islam and Christianity.¹¹³ Pivotal as Islamicate societies were in shaping the “general disposition of the [Afro-Eurasian] hemisphere,” the power of Islam over the entire sphere was limited. Islam did not overpower the world. However, in the late phase of the Middle Era of Islam, Europe’s *Sonderweg* (in tandem with Far Eastern developments), was conditioned by an oikoumene in which societies in all regions began to stretch to their limits. This was partly a result of the entire Oikoumene overcoming the Mongol invasion (and Black Death) in a further push outward, partly as a response to the tightening of interregional competition and exchange, and partly as a response to the rapidly increasing social complexity throughout the Oikoumene. The Islamic geopolitical middle of the Middle Era gave way and disappeared into a rigid conservatism in the face of these limit-conditions. The Far West, by contrast, set out to drastically reconfigure the entire architecture of the “oikoumenic configuration.” Again, a more detailed discussion would be needed to distinguish the good, the bad, and the ugly in Hodgson’s evolving argument. The crux of the matter is that he saw the Western development as conditioned by the state of the entire Oikoumene, yet maintained that the West set in motion a “transmutation.”¹¹⁴ The European bid for world dominance gave the previously mimetic configuration an entirely new material *Gestalt* and physical presence, which Hodgson called the “global

112 UWH, Part C, chapter 7, p. 220: “[The transition to Modernity] is on the order of the shift from pre-agricultural-urban to agricultural-urban, i.e., civilized, social and cultural conditions: analysis which leaves it analogous merely to one of the great florescences within pre-Modern urban-literate society clearly falls short.”

113 Marshall G. S. Hodgson, “A Comparison of Islam and Christianity as Framework for Religious Life,” *Diogenes* 8, no. 32 (1960): 49–79. Hodgson felt rightly that “the English text was mangled in edition.” “Publications of Marshall G. S. Hodgson,” 15 March 1968, CST Box 5, Folder 4. He added a lengthy introduction to correct the editorial mistreatment. See *A Comparison of Islâm and Christianity as Framework for Religious Life*, Reprint series (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1960). This is not the only time that translators or editors mangled Hodgson’s work, because they simply couldn’t believe what he argued.

114 “The Great Western Transmutation.” Preparatory notes in Hodgson Papers, Box 16, Folder 3.

constellation.”¹¹⁵ In turn, the western bid for global dominance at least temporarily thwarted the emergence of simultaneous modernities across the world, opening up a “development gap.” However, in contrast to (under-)development theorists, he saw the world-wide challenge not in catching up (to the West), but in societies and cultures effectively catching up with themselves in processes of self-transformation. They thus harnessed their own potentialities, which as a result of the evolution of the entire oikoumenic configuration had existed in all regions of the Oikoumene.

A second definitional clarification concerned the sources of the capacity to reshape the oikoumenic world. Hodgson wondered: “Is the [technical transmutation] so much more massive that the place of man in nature must be rethought?”¹¹⁶ In “The Unity of World History” he stated unequivocally:

Just as the introduction of “civilization” meant a shift in the relation between humans and nature and therefore between humans and history, so has the advent of Modernity. And the change in relation to nature lies above all in the realm of technicality: which characterizes not only our Modern economy, but our science, our administration, all our intellectual and practical life. ... producing a radically new set of moral problems, just as [oikoumenic] civilization produced a new set of problems.¹¹⁷

Hodgson worked out none of the implications of this Western “transmutation,” but two basic arguments are worth our attention. Hodgson’s “great divergence” is not or not primarily between Europe and other geo-cultural regions of the world (with the western hemisphere now being part of world history), but between modern Europe and its previous oikoumenic self and all others. The modern West emerged from its medieval European predecessor but could become ‘modern’ only by revolutionising itself. Modern Europe made an evolutionary leap beyond itself. Its mutation was prepared by the overall development of the entire Oikoumene and, hence, there were modernity “stubs” (to borrow from William Gibson) everywhere, but literate, urban, scientific European elites leaped across the threshold and, in doing so, set in motion a global (and unequal) battle between retrogression and the formation of “global conditions.” This battle was global, because it affected Europe as much as any other

115 The most extensive comments and notes on the global condition can be found in the drafts for the twentieth-century chapters of *The Venture of Islam*, MGSHP Box 14, Folder 10 (with notes on the problem of Islamic nationalism) and Folder 11 (with notes on the epilogue). These chapters were still in flux when Hodgson died.

116 Marginalia on a lecture by Marsh Stone on “Man’s Place in Nature,” April 1968, MGSHP Box 10, Folder 20.

117 UWH, Part C, p. 220.

region of the world and therefore it was entirely open-ended. The question was a moral one: Who would be capable of forming life-orientations suitable for the global age?

The Western transmutation was a watershed, not unprecedented and not beyond history, though what kind of history this might be was beyond his grasp and only students of the Anthropocene have begun to grapple with the issue.¹¹⁸ It was nevertheless unlike the temporal benchmarks that had given structure to the oikoumenic age. World historians would have to turn to the wide angles of human and natural history to grasp this moment—truly the transformation of the human world. Ultimately, Hodgson's vision amounted to saying that humans had become masters of time and space, acquiring an unprecedented "social power." This, he argued, was the challenge of world history in a global age and why History (as the science of human time) would have to take on a leading, indeed a "kerygmatic" role.¹¹⁹ It is this reminder that makes Hodgson's unfinished world history relevant for our time.

118 Julia Adeney Thomas, "History and Biology in the Anthropocene: Problems of Scale, Problems of Value," *American Historical Review* 119, no. 5 (2014): 1587–1607.

119 Hodgson distinguished three modes of history: work among specialists; public history; and "history as expression of vision, as effective as poetry, but with impeccable scholarship." Note on "Prophetic History," August 8, 1952, Hodgson Papers, Box 6, Folder 13.

8. Time and Its Others

Contesting *Telos* through a Sociospatial Analysis of Islamicate Chronotopes

Heather Ferguson

The fields of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies remain engulfed in the politics of encounter configured between the metageographies of ‘East’ and ‘West’ that animate Edward Said’s *Orientalism*.¹ Despite nearly forty years of vigorous debate, partial amendments, and counter-proposals, ‘orientalism’ remains a totalising discourse that eclipses a more purposeful effort to interrogate how spatial regimes of power also entail periodisation schemata defined by the purportedly progressive telos of modernity.² The historiography of Islamicate societies³ produced within the emergent imperial

- 1 Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 1978). Martin W. Lewis and Kären Wigen provide a prescient analysis of the linkages between space and power in the configuration of ‘Eurocentricism’ in *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).
- 2 Zachary Lockman reflects on the entrenched nature of these debates as they continue to shape these fields in *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). Robert Irwin and Alexander Bevilacqua, by contrast, muster an assault on Said’s thesis, either directly or indirectly, by assuming an inherent neutrality in intellectual histories of encounter in, respectively, *For Lust of Knowing: The Orientalists and Their Enemies* (London: Penguin, 2007), and *The Republic of Arabic Letters: Islam and the European Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018). The resurgence of Eurocentric culturalist assumptions in contemporary scholarship thus demands new methodologies to avoid approaching ‘Islam’ as a discrete, trans-historical phenomenon juxtaposed with an evolving ‘Europe.’
- 3 Like many who embrace the vision of Marshall Hodgson (discussed in his views of world history in the chapter by Michael Geyer), I use ‘Islamicate’ to differentiate cultures and histories informed by the structures and lifecycles of Islam, but are not themselves reducible to its religious principles and modes of sociopolitical organisation. The term gestures toward the doctrinal and ethical import of Islam, but also invokes the communities, practices, and aesthetic motifs that overflow the boundedness of creedal definitions and so avoids reductive generalisations. Hodgson’s brilliance enables precision in efforts to distinguish broader processes from those moments in which religion *does* pointedly serve as an activating force or explanatory mechanism. Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974). Srinivas Aravamudan suggests that ‘Islamicate’ equals “the hybrid trace

metropolises of the nineteenth century, particularly in the form of *Islamwissenschaft*,⁴ continues to shape how scholars investigate and students consume knowledge about Islam as a late antique phenomenon and its evolution into a disparate geopolitical terrain. However, defaulting to an oppositional discourse that pits the ‘inauthentic’ Eurocentric misrepresentation against the ‘authentic’ affectivity of historical actors and agents reinforces several problematic assumptions. First, this oppositional discourse assumes that nineteenth century contexts were inherently ‘European’ rather than precisely produced as such within a transregional imperial field wherein participants deployed the alterity of time and culture so as to refine a civilising discourse of superiority.⁵ Entrenched binaries further render incomprehensible the methods by which actors from Islamicate contexts within this trans-regional imperial field *also* produced visions of a holistic past that masked complexity so as to assert unity. Second, the totalising images invoked in the nineteenth century reified Islam as a monolithic category that persists today even in scholarship attentive to diversity. And finally, a meta-geography that purposefully conflates ‘West’ with ‘European’ and ‘East’ with ‘Islamic’ entails a politics of incommensurability dependent in turn on a politics of time: the ‘modern’ and the ‘unmodern.’⁶

Scholars of Eurasia have purportedly triumphed over the nineteenth-century masters of this progressive *telos*, who explicitly deployed the Ottoman Empire as an index of the ‘un-modern.’ Max Weber’s ‘sultanism’⁷ characterised a patrimonial model of rule leading to despotism rather than bureaucratisation, and Karl Marx’s ‘Asiatic mode of production,’ linked despotism to the political economy of an amorphous

rather than pure presence or absence of Islam” in “East-West Fiction as World Literature: The Hayy Problem Reconfigured,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 47, no. 2 (2014): 198. See also “Islamicate Cosmopolitan: A Past Without a Future, Or a Future Still Unfolding?,” *Franklin Humanities Institute*, accessed May 2, 2017, <https://humanitiesfutures.org/papers/islamicate-cosmopolitan-past-without-future-future-still-unfolding/>. In contrast, I use the term ‘Islamicist’ to identify scholars from variable contexts who objectify the past via the lens of Islam.

- 4 For this development of *Islamwissenschaft*, see the chapter by David Moshfeg in this volume.
- 5 Cemil Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World: A Global Intellectual History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017).
- 6 For ‘un-modern’ or ‘non-modern,’ see Greg Anderson’s usage in his argument for a new ethical ontology that arguably reasserts difference as a necessary angle for analysis: “Retrieving the Lost Worlds of the Past: The Case for an Ontological Turn,” *The American Historical Review* 120, no. 3 (2015): 787–810. See also the chapter by Özen Dolcerocca in this volume.
- 7 Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, trans. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, 2 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978). On patrimonialism as “one of the most important elements of communal action,” see, 1: 322–324 and 336. For the Ottoman Empire as a despotic example of patrimonial rule, one that unites spiritual and political power in the personage of the sultan and thus precludes rational intervention in coercive power, see vol. 1: 231–232, 237 and vol. 2: 1017 and 1031.

east.⁸ Each generated schemata of ‘West’ and ‘non-West’ that reappear in debates concerning the nature of power in contexts as diverse as the seventh-century Arabian Peninsula and seventeenth-century Istanbul. Yet most efforts to rebut these theories do so through arguments of specificity: identifying distinctive features of varied contexts so as to demonstrate the erroneous nature of these conceptual schemata.⁹ Specificity, however, has not unseated the triumph of *telos* and reinforces the oppositional discourses and comparative models on which this *telos* depends. More recently, intrepid scholars have sought to link conceptual models—or ideal types, in Weberian terminology—to a politics of time (the invention of ‘medieval’ as antithesis to ‘modern’) that masks the constitutive linkages between emergent colonial power and histories of slavery and enslavement.¹⁰ This linkage between technologies of power and the historicisation of time posits a global chronoscape.¹¹ In so doing, scholars attentive to sovereignty as well as a temporal hegemony, allow us to move beyond the language of commensurability or difference.

The theory of commensurability, initially proffered as an alternative to careless comparative histories, correctly identified the comparative instinct as complicit in analyses that reproduced discrete civilisational units. Commensurability was also intended as a move beyond ‘encounter’ as comparative praxis, recognising in turn that narratives of contact also fortified engagement with the ‘West,’ as the moment in which history was realised.¹² Arguably these problems also afflict the work of scholars who adopt ‘commensurability’ as a means to assess most prominently ‘Eurasian’

8 The outlines of what would become the “Asiatic mode of production” appeared in correspondence between Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels between 1857 and 1861 and then in Marx’s article “The British Rule in India,” see volumes 28 and 13 of *Collected Works* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1986).

9 Scholarship in this vein also tends to reinforce the historical uniqueness of the movements they follow: Robert G. Hoyland, *In God’s Path: The Arab Conquests and the Creation of an Islamic Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); and, Karen Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State Centralization* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994).

10 The invention of the ‘medieval’ in the Renaissance humanist enterprise and its revitalisation within Michel Foucault’s narrative of an emergent disciplinary order demonstrates the early conflation of periodisation and hegemonic power. Anthony Grafton provides an example of this mode within the Renaissance moment in *Defenders of the Text: The Traditions of Scholarship in an Age of Science, 1450–1800* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991). Anne Clark Bartlett highlights some of the problematic aspects of Foucault’s approach in “Foucault’s ‘Medievalism,’” *Mystics Quarterly* 20, no. 1 (1994): 10–18.

11 Kathleen Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty: How Ideas of Feudalism and Secularization Govern the Politics of Time* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); and, Sarah Davis-Secord, review of *Arabic-Islamic Views of the Latin West: Tracing the Emergence of Medieval Europe*, by Daniel G. König, *Mediterranean Historical Review* 32, no. 1 (January 2, 2017): 111–114.

12 Jerry H. Bentley, “Cross-Cultural Interaction and Periodization in World History,” *The American Historical Review* 101, no. 3 (1996): 749–770.

centralising regimes of the fifteenth through to the eighteenth centuries.¹³ Global historian Sanjay Subrahmanyam's commitment to questioning hidden assumptions of connected histories charts one significant way out of the morass of both civilisational units and encounter as inherently inflected by Eurocentrism.¹⁴ Originally the 'connected' was, for Subrahmanyam, expressive of the designation 'early modern' and employed to track parallel strategies of centralising courts and mobile circuits across sovereign terrains from the fifteenth through to the early eighteenth centuries. Increasingly disenchanted with the *telos* of the 'early modern' designation, Subrahmanyam led a new charge against 'commensurability' and its tendentious erasure of difference—a difference understood as constructed rather than innate. More recently, he turned to theories of scale and suggested that the 'commensurable' emerges at the imperial or national level and masks the microhistories of the regional—the town, village, shrine, or law court (and his Conclusion to this volume elaborates these ideas). This masking was deliberate rather than casual and signals courtly establishments' efforts to territorialise sovereign power across composite and disparate realms. Subrahmanyam cautions that if we base our narratives of the past unreflectively on those commissioned to sustain the fiction of imperial invulnerability, then we are caught *within* a politics of time rather than tracing its emergent practices.

Challenging the 'Islamic' and the 'Historical' via Conflicting Rubrics of Time

Together, these cautionary tales of a troubled analytic conflation between cultural and temporal categorisations and the erasure of difference invite a new frame for "thinking" time in the past. In the following pages I embrace Subrahmanyam's call to reflect on periodisation as a problem *in* the past and not just a problem of investigation *about* the past.¹⁵ Here, then, I seek to explore how temporal distinctions became fields of

13 For more recent examples of this approach, see the work of Kaya Şahin in, *Empire and Power in the Reign of Süleyman: Narrating the Sixteenth-Century Ottoman World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013); and, Kaya Şahin and Julia Schleck, "Courtly Connections: Anthony Sherley's Relation of His Travels (1613) in a Global Context," *Renaissance Quarterly* 69, no. 1 (2016): 80–115.

14 His resounding clarion call for a connected past appears in "Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia," *Modern Asian Studies* 31, no. 3 (1997): 735–762. For one of the many examples of later work that embraces this analytic mode, see *Courtly Encounters Translating Courtliness and Violence in Early Modern Eurasia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012).

15 See the Conclusion to this volume.

knowledge production within the Islamicate context and, within these fields, attempt to reveal how the evolution of conflicting rubrics of time embody, or are linked to conflicting visions of social and spatial order. While I identify several examples of how organisational rubrics for time capture or produce distinct sociopolitical formations between the eighth and the seventeenth centuries these are intended to illuminate but certainly do not exhaust possibilities for future inquiries. Instead, my examples represent three general interventions. First, that there is no all-encompassing ‘Islamic’ notion of time and history. This should be obvious, but the case is revelatory, as even when assessing sacred scripture and sacral time the sobriquet ‘Islamic’ obscures the conflicted rubrics and power play *through* time that this essay seeks to reveal. Second, while generating rubrics of time indeed includes the field of ‘history-writing’ as such, our exploration should not be limited to linear treatments of the past. Further, the actions of annalists and chroniclers *themselves* become purveyors of conflicted visions of temporal order and, more pointedly, often did so by inserting into their narratives other types of textual and material artifacts and forged temporal visions that were often in conflict with each other. Modes of marking time and thus of making time cross generic boundaries of bureaucratic record-keeping practices, biographies of the Prophet and the bibliographic dictionary, encyclopedic compilations, philosophical treatises, jurisprudence manuals, court records, illuminated manuscripts, and memoirs of travel and pilgrimage.

I thus hope to demonstrate that producers of texts constructed hybrid narratives and combined both the moral and the operative norms of seemingly discrete practices: the sacred quote enhancing the didactic manual of advice; the elegy for a ruler’s legacy prefacing a legal code; a court decision ratified through both the normative judgment of sacred law and the diverse customary practices in regional contexts; the biography of the Prophet deployed as an interpretive device for the annals of dynasties. Such attention to hybridity as *in itself* a form of history-making resists modular or typological approaches to temporal logics (as suggested by Jörn Rüsen in this volume). Instead, I suggest that the ‘historical’ marks both temporal conflicts (the effort to shape circumstance into meaning) and sociospatial processes (the re-use and re-articulation of genres in new contexts of meaning-making) and thus that neither ‘Islamic’ nor ‘historical’ serve as fixed referents but rather represent generative practices of many different *chronotopes* (i.e. narratives of time-space).¹⁶

Finally, this effort to exemplify the inherently conflicted and sociospatial elements of temporal distinctions within Islamicate contexts posits the *chronotope* as a means to emphasise that the rhetoric of time-making alerts us to the *use* of time as a means to

16 For the notion of the *chronotope* as time-space, see Mikhail Bakhtin, “Forms of time and of the chronotope in the novel,” in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 84–258.

position actors within a competitive field of power. In other words, time sanctions the *right* to historical agency. The question posed here, then, is not “how do we correct the imposition of Eurocentric historical frameworks on an Islamicate past” but rather, “how do we foreground the ways in which deploying time as an organizational method is inherently an act of power in the history-making formations of both scholarship *about* this past and textual practices *in* that past?” Scholars and actors within both formations deploy the past, and methods for differentiating periods of time, to shape their present into a legible universe, at the same time masking conflicts that disrupt this unity of vision, and thus asserting their own right to agentic power.

Crafting Revelatory Time

While I argue that there is no such thing as an ‘Islamic’ conception of time, and instead, identify varying sociabilities and spaces wherein the creation of time-marked identities, or identities shaped by the marking of time, emerged, it is important to note that a first *chronotope* did appear in early efforts to inscribe as communal history the movement of Muhammad in the early seventh century Arabian Peninsula.¹⁷ Early narratives of this emergence wrestled with the relationship between a divine time of creation, the Prophetic time of revelation, and a human time conceived as the embodiment of the two. Thus, the emergent chronicle tradition incorporates the Qur’an into an unfolding of history, posits the revelatory moment as the intervention of the divine into the human world, and defines revelation as itself a ‘reminder’ to the world of the radical oneness of god. This revelatory moment, and the Prophetic mission of Muhammad, heralded both a ‘reminder’ of that which had been ‘forgotten’ by previous monotheistic communities, and the harbinger of a future day of judgment when all individuals and communities would be evaluated against this standard of ‘remembrance’ of a reclaimed truth. This ‘truth,’ of the radical oneness of god, was thus immediately established as a “historical” truth, one that marked human time by groups who either remembered or forgot the monotheistic message of a god then deployed to define a path of daily practice, a path that would ultimately lead back to a reunion of the divine and human worlds, i.e., divine and human times, in the advent of a cosmic day of judgment.

This particular *chronotope*, which highlighted the interaction between divine, prophetic, and human history, thus appeared in the earliest histories and biographies

17 Fred McGraw Donner’s book maps this itinerary with attention to the misattribution of religious sentiment and Muslim unity in the early formation of a political identity in *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

of the Prophet Muhammad.¹⁸ Although no extant text exists of one of the earliest example of these, by ibn Ishaq (d. 767), it was widely circulated, copied, and redacted into later works of history writing such as those composed by ibn Hisham (d. 833) and al-Tabari (d. 923).¹⁹ Ibn Ishaq's work, ultimately reproduced under the auspices of the 'Abbasid Caliph al-Mansur (r. 754–75), founder of Baghdad and patron of diverse forms of speculative inquiry, interwove several itineraries of time: the beginning of time, i.e., the moment of creation and the story of Adam and Eve; the time of the Prophet; and the time of the conquests and expansion of the Muslim community (*umma*) out from the Arabian Peninsula and into the former imperial strongholds of the Byzantines and Sassanians (i.e. Iraq, Palestine, Egypt, and beyond). Ibn Ishaq thus identified a new rubric for interweaving divine/prophetic/human time—creation, the emergence of monotheistic voices, the perversion of a monotheistic truth, Muhammad as the clarion call for its reinstatement, and then a narrative depiction of the events that followed his death. The *chronotope* thus introduced *epochal* time, with the Prophet Muhammad dividing an age of ignorance (*jahiliyya*) from an age of awareness or awakened knowledge. But it was also a *political* time, as the time marker that became year 0 for chronicle writing in the decades and centuries that followed was not of Muhammad's birth, but rather of the immigration of his movement/community of followers from Mecca to Yathrib in 622 CE (later re-named Medina, or city of the Prophet). Thus, time was marked or born from a point of embarkation, a departure from a past way of *being in time* and the commencement of a distinct political and economic identity that took full form only after the Prophet Muhammad's death.²⁰ Efforts to sustain a revelatory vision necessitated a new kind of time, that of the political body that *administered* the message of the Qur'an as the formation of an ethico-political apparatus for rule and expansion.

The Qur'an, when it emerged as a codified scripture, resists its use as an administrative apparatus, however, because it in itself disrupts the narrativisation of time. By the third successor to the Prophet Muhammad, 'Uthman ibn 'Affan (644–56), codices circulated across the expanding zones of conquest and assimilation that extended

18 Fred M. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writings* (Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1998), 125–146 and 275–290.

19 See Mustafa al-Suqa, Ibrahim al-Abyari and Abdul Hafidh Shalabi, eds. *Tahqiq Sira an-Nabawiyyah li Ibn Hisham* (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath, 1979) and *The History of Al-Tabari*, trans. Franz Rosenthal, 28 vols. (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1985–89). On Ibn Ishaq and the biographical tradition as an act of history-making, see Gordon Darnell Newby, *The Making of the Last Prophet: A Reconstruction of the Earliest Biography of Muhammad* (Columbia, S. C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1989).

20 See Stephen J. Shoemaker for a careful assessment of how the early movement that developed around the prophetic revelations of Muhammad only crystallised into a distinct creedal body in its sociopolitical formation after his death: *The Death of a Prophet: The End of Muhammad's Life and the Beginnings of Islam* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

the reach of this nascent political community beyond the frontiers of the Byzantine and Sassanian empires. Robert Hoyland defines the Qur'an as the epitome of a "late antique" text, given that it threads together the diverse religious, discursive, philosophical, and apocalyptic trends that epitomised the era.²¹ This diversity is sustained as an organisational and animating principle within the archetypal codex. The orality of revelation, a speech act, became narrativised into a canonical codex sanctioned by 'Uthman and intentionally formed to resist counter authoritative communal claims. But, as is commonly known, the Qur'an defies chronology, organised instead from the longest to the shortest revelatory moment. The time of revelation, then, becomes captured in the oratorical/recitational (or reading/perusal) length of a chapter (*sura*) that sustains the eternal now of revelation.²² The *suras* of "The Pen" and "The Poets," amongst others, further distinguish and elevate the *word* of revelation from the poetic fetes of rivalry common to the Arabian Peninsula, as well as from judgments of evil-doing that are not premised on revealed scripture.²³ The *now* of revelation supersedes all preceding instances of textual authority.

Social Chaos and the Integration of Revelatory Time into Narrative

The epoch gestated by the political birth of the believers' movement was recorded and narrated through a chronographic itinerary of expansionary movements, battles, personages, cities, and geographies folded into the embrace of this new political identity.²⁴ But it was also a narrative of contestation—one born out of conflicting conceptions of leadership—and later chroniclers explicitly addressed how political

21 Robert Hoyland, "Early Islam as a Late Antique Religion," in *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity*, ed. Scott Fitzgerald Johnson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 1053–1068.

22 For a truly remarkable effort to capture the 'soundscape' of the Qur'an and its inherent orality, along with an introduction to how to 'read' the text, see Michael Sells, *Approaching the Qur'an: The Early Revelations* (Ashland: White Cloud Press, 1999).

23 The *suras* with accompanying commentary illuminate the triumph of the revelatory word over all other authoritative statements. For a translation that includes a detailed mapping of the interpretive tradition as one that extends the sacred into the historical, see Seyyed Hossein Nasr, ed., *The Study Qur'an: A New Translation and Commentary* (New York: HarperOne, 2015), 906–927 and 1400–1407.

24 The most important collection of these narratives can be found in Ahmad ibn al-Baladhuri, *The Origins of the Islamic State Being a Translation from the Arabic: Accompanied with Annotations, Geographic and Historic Notes*, trans. Philip Khuri Hitti and Francis C. Murgotten (New York: Longmans and Green, 1924).

fragmentation also disrupted a vision of epochal time (a time of awakened knowledge) and descried the dangers of internal divisions. They thus introduced a new *chronotope*, that of social chaos (*fitna*) and the dispersive consequences of rival political claims. This *chronotope* was initially fashioned by ‘Abbasid-era chroniclers, such as al-Tabari, working to cement a consensus concerning the emergence of Islam, a consensus that would gradually be defined as the way, the Sunna, or later the Sunni, thus inventing along with it a vision of narrative and communal purity, one that began with the leadership of the Prophet Muhammad and continued through his first four successors termed the “rightly guided,” despite the contentious nature of each.²⁵ Even annalistic narratives of later dynasties were disrupted by the “time of the Prophet,” as evidentiary reports composed by his companions were privileged as records of the community’s emergence, expansion, and re-definition.

However, the ‘evidentiary report’ of the eyewitness was fashioned as the historical standard *not* by the authors of chronicles, but rather by jurists and theologians. Intent on creating manuals to guide the proper ritual observance of the community, they too dealt with divine/prophetic/ human time as they sought for the means to legislate contemporary affairs through the auspices of a revealed text and law. The bridge between text and law, in all its intricacies, cannot be dealt with here. Suffice it to say, especially through the work of the jurist and founder of the Maliki legal school Malik ibn ‘Anas (d. 795), that the practice of the Prophet became a lodestone for the practice of law, and gradually, the practice of the community became its own guiding principle (a mode of legal interpretation known as *maslaha*).²⁶ The jurist and then those who adopted orthopraxic modes of knowledge, sought a standard of verifiability, one that moralised time and affixed truth to distance—proximity to the prophet became explicitly linked to veracity and foregrounded the speech act as

25 The ‘rashidun’ or rightly guided successors to the Prophet Muhammad represents its own *chronotope*, referenced but not fully explored here. These four leaders sustained the movement after the Prophet Muhammad’s death in 632: Abu Bakr (632–634); ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab (634–644); ‘Uthman ibn ‘Affan (644–656); and ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib (656–661). Each successor contended with rival claimants and sociopolitical unrest both internal to the believer’s movement and generated by resistance to its expansion. Thus ‘Umar was assassinated by a slave likely of Persian origin, and ‘Uthman by a contingent from the garrison city of Fustat in Egypt disgruntled by favoritism to Meccan personages and likely encouraged by ‘Ali, son-in-law and cousin to the Prophet Muhammad. This assassination led to the first of three violent civil wars that convulsed the community until the stratagems of the house of ‘Abbas united discontent under the banner of the ‘Abbasid caliphate in 750. Hugh Kennedy provides an excellent overview of these dynamics in Hugh Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates: The Islamic Near East from the Sixth to the Eleventh Century* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2004).

26 *Al-Muwatta’ of Imam Malik Ibn Anas*, ed. Abdalhaqq Belwey, trans. Aisha Abdurrahman Bewley (London: Diwan Press, 2014); and Gibril F. Haddad, *The Four Imams and Their Schools* (London: Muslim Academic Trust, 2007).

the lodestone of evidentiary proof. Tracing proximity through a chain of speech acts, known as a system of *isnad* (sound proof of authenticity) and a *silsila* (chain) of connectivity, constitutes the legal and communal apparatus of the *hadith*—the collected deeds and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad.²⁷ The systematic nature of proof was not universal but led instead to variable collections of *hadith*, with their own organised contents derived from differing, and often conflicting, assessments of the veracity of both the chain and the individuals who embodied it. *Hadith* then, as an instantiated speech act inscribing the past time of the Prophet Muhammad into the unfolding of the present, would become a tropic form in itself, manipulated at will by those who sought to critique what they deemed present corruptions via past forms of purity.²⁸ The *hadith* created an eternal now or *nunc*. This moralised timescape appeared in diverse forms during periods of political crisis from ninth-century Baghdad to twenty-first century digitised forms of legal pronouncements.²⁹

Thus, the reported speech acts of the Prophet's deeds and sayings (*hadith*) were parsed into texts, be they of the jurist, the philosopher, the chronicler, or the theologian, as both the epitome of a normative past and a projection for future action. Each, in various ways, inserted a frame of judgment, the judgment of time understood in terms of a past purity and a present corruption, into their various fields of knowledge production. In this way, reported deeds and sayings were also de-sacralised and defined as simply “reported speech or news,” threads of which served as both the expository and evidentiary basis, first of chronicle writing and then of an evolving literary corpus (*adab* in the languages of the region), and finally even in administrative reporting for tax collection purposes in various dynastic and regional polities.³⁰

27 Wael B. Hallaq provides a general overview of this process and its use as the basis of a legal system in *A History of Islamic Legal Theories: An Introduction to Sunni Usul al-fiqh* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

28 Jonathan A. C. Brown, “Did the Prophet Say It or Not? The Literal, Historical, and Effective Truth of *Ḥadīths* in Early Sunnism,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 192: 2 (2009): 259–285.

29 Jonathan Brown traces the interpretive tradition as contested history across various timescapes, from debates over the Prophet's wife, 'A'isha and her purported infidelity to the treatment of slavery and domestic violence in *Misquoting Muhammad: The Challenge and Choice of Interpreting the Prophet's Legacy* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2014).

30 For the formation and circulation of a literary sensibility in the period consult Barbara Daly Metcalf, ed., *Moral Conduct and Authority: The Place of Adab in South Asian Islam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984). Patricia Crone provides a synoptic overview of the links between legal, political, and religious authoritative modes in *From Kavād to Al-Ghazālī: Religion, Law, and Political Thought in the Near East, c. 600–c. 1100* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005). And for a general approach to the hybrid nature of history-making in the Islamicate textual tradition, see Snjezana Buzov, “History,” in *Key Themes for the Study of Islam*, ed. Jamal J. Elias (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2010), 182–199.

Crafting Unification from Conflicted Histories of Truth

For one example of the admixture of truth, time, and variant moral *chronotopes*, we can turn to the genre-bending treatises of al-Shahrastani (d. 1153).³¹ I have elected to focus on the corpus of al-Shahrastani for three reasons: to depart from the customary use of well-known philosophers and theologians such as al-Farabi (d. 950), ibn Sina (d. 1037), and al-Ghazali (d. 1111); to highlight the import of the Khurasani zone (the region that extends to the northeast past the borders of contemporary Iran into Central Asia and Afghanistan), for the complex interweaving of geographic and chronographic realities in the expanding Islamicate universe; and, as I will show, for the innovations specific to making and marking time that appear in his various treatises. Al-Shahrastani's itinerant learning exemplifies Islamicate geographies of knowledge production. His name, like many, derives from the town of his birth (1086) in Shahrstan, but he studied with theological masters in Nishapur and then Baghdad where he taught in the al-Nizamiyya, an institution dedicated to the Ash'ari school of interpretive inquiry that guided much of al-Shahrastani's career and speculations.³² It is worth pausing on his position as a disciple of the Ash'ari school, as contained within this allegiance to a tradition of knowledge is a chronotopic discourse that definitively shapes the intellectual universe of the period. Abu al-Hasan 'Ali ibn Isma'il ibn Ishaq al-Ash'ari (874–936), established an interpretive theological school now referenced as the epitome of Sunni orthodoxy. Yet he had also charted an intermediary path within the volatile debates concerning the nature of the interpretive act within a community shaped by revelation. As the revelatory universe of the believers became increasingly entangled with the philosophical traditions translated from Greek, these debates escalated and became the site of claims to both political and religious authority.³³ Al-Ash'ari embraced the importance of debate and discourse, even as he resisted schools of thought, such as the Mu'tazilite, that prioritised speculative inquiry above and against the "source

31 His full name is Taj al-Din Abu al-Fath Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Karim al-Shahrastani. For a translation of one of his most significant treatises "The End of Steps in the Science of Theology," see *The Summa Philosophia of al-Shahrastani Kitāb nihāyatul-iqdam fī 'ilmi 'l-kalām*, trans. Alfred Guillaume (London: Oxford University Press, 1934).

32 For an excellent summary of the evolution of these traditions, see Jonathan A. C. Brown, *Misquoting Muhammad*, 15–68. His *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World*, 2nd ed. (London: Oneworld Publications, 2018) provides a more detailed investigation of these broader debates.

33 Elizabeth Key Fowden and Garth Fowden, *Contextualizing Late Greek Philosophy* (Athens: Diffusion de Boccard, 2008). See also Garth Fowden, "Pseudo-Aristotelian Politics and Theology in Islam," in *Universal Empire: A Comparative Approach to Imperial Culture and Representation in Eurasian History*, ed. Peter F. Bang and Dariusz Kołodziejczyk (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 130–148.

texts” of the Qur’an and *hadith*.³⁴ It should be noted that theological interpretation (*kalam*), was inherently an interpretive enterprise, thus despite al-Ash‘ari’s orthopraxy, he also departed from legal schools that insisted on the *hadith* as the only true realm into which the Qur’anic principle could be extended, to fit contemporary contexts (known as the *ahl al-hadith*, or people of the hadith, and best epitomised by the legal school of Malik ibn ‘Anas, d. 795). Thus, the Ash‘ari model transforms the universalist time of the philosopher into a *method* for yoking revelation to the unfolding of human practice in a post-prophetic world. Conflicting orientations yielded a chronotopic interpretive discourse.

Al-Shahrastani, writing from within a world of proliferating versions of truth and rival claims to caliphal succession from the courts of Cordoba, Cairo, and Baghdad, sought to demonstrate the means by which plurality might be enfolded into singularity, the singularity of a timescape defined by the Qur’an as the word of God capable of reshaping difference into a unified conceptual framework. Revelation, in his conception, was the ordered presentation of words, and these words contained within them their own timescape, word made time and thus the time of others (other traditions or interpretations) could be integrated back into the word of revelation. He further transformed the sociopolitical chaos (*fitna*) of multiplicity into a *history* of difference in his monumental work that traced the evolution of philosophical and religious schools of thought across the bounded limits of Qur’anic history.³⁵ In other words, he folded the Qur’anic moment into a genealogy that began before Islam and then developed in disparate ways after the prophetic moment of Muhammad. More pointedly, his primary rubric for assessing religious phenomena was textual—the presence or absence of written scriptures. In part, of course, here he follows the Qur’anic dictate that privileges “peoples of the book” for their presumably monotheistic tendencies. But he removes this privilege in a synoptic glance at the diversity of religious belief and practice that identifies recorded texts as a marker of difference without moral attribution.

34 For a general introduction to the theological tradition, see Tilman Nagel, *The History of Islamic Theology from Muhammad to the Present*, trans. by Thomas Thronton (Princeton, NJ: Marcus Wiener, 2000). J. R. Peters provides an excellent reading of the early speculative movements that wrestled with the relationship between divine acts and human history in *God’s Created Speech: A Study in the Speculative Theology of the Mu‘tazili Qadi al-Qudat Abu al-Hasan ‘Abd al-Jabbar ibn Ahmad al-Hamdani* (Leiden: Brill, 1976).

35 *Kitāb al-milal wa ‘l-nihāl*, William Cureton, ed. (Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1923). The section on the Muslim religious communities was translated into English by A. K. Kazi and J. G. Flynn, *Muslim Sects and Divisions: The Section on Muslim Sects in Kitāb al-Milal wa ‘l-nihāl* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013).

A New Universalism: Time as Globalised History

However, plurality into singularity was only one strategy for addressing diversity. In the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, the Islamicate worlds were politically fragmented by conquest and plague that convulsed the region from the Iberian Peninsula to Central Asia. The Chinggisid invasions (1219–1260) that reconfigured the geography of rule, and the plagues and famines that disrupted the timescapes of the harvest, also led to a new chronographical imagination. Despite the fissures of political control from internal rebellions and cycles of nomadic invasions, the Islamicate terrains re-emerged into a world defined by shared commercial and conceptual zones that encompassed both land and sea routes. The invasions themselves became “swallowed” by the rhythms of an intellectual, institutional, and administrative system within a sovereign space inflected by the dictates of Islam. New foundations of colleges, monasteries, caravansaries, and saintly shrines cloaked the invaders in the clothing of legitimacy modelled by self-professed Muslim rulers. Accompanying these experiences of cyclical travails were new models of universalist time. As two preeminent yet distinctively variant examples, the universal histories of Rashid al-Din (d. 1318) and ibn Khaldun (d. 1406) expanded the time of Islam to include the time of the Other, and reconceptualised epochal history, now divorced from the truths of Islam and intent instead on incorporating or assessing the volatility of political sovereignty.³⁶ Both relied on epochal conceptions, but these epochs foregrounded human rather than divine time, creating a *chronotope* that fit pre- and post-Qur’anic history into a shared timescape.

Rashid al-Din personally embodied the period’s contrapuntal dynamics. Born Jewish and trained as a physician, he converted to Islam and then served Sultan Ghazan’s court (r. 1295–1304), ultimately becoming the most powerful vizier of the Ilkhanid empire.³⁷ Commissioned to write a history of the Mongols and thereby insert them into the revelatory history of Islam, Rashid al-Din shifted scale and departed from the localised political configuration of the Mongols to adopt an encyclopaedic “history” of lives, geographies, dynasties, legends, myths, systems of organisation, feats of military victory and scientific exploration, and much more. Notably, he sought to inscribe a comprehensive portrait of both synchronic and diachronic scales, and in so doing unseated both the Mongols and Islam from positions of primacy. This ‘history’ was more compendium than chronology, however, and despite the dynastic

36 The two narrative histories referenced here are Rashid al-Din Hamadani’s *Jāmi‘ al-Tawāriḥ* (Compendium of Chronicles) and Abu Zayd ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Muhammad ibn Khaldun al-Hadrami’s *Muqaddimah*.

37 Mahmud Ghazan is best known for professing the truth of Islam and then turning Mongol rule into an Islamicate empire under the Ilkhans (subordinate khanate of the Chinggisid empire that includes the modern territories of Iran, Azerbaijan and central and eastern parts of Turkey).

itineraries inserted within the volumes posited a universalist and globalised vision of human time extending across space.

Rashid al-Din thus presented *not* a unified chronicle, but rather a multivocal “compendium of chronicles,” as the title clearly indicates. This compendium, however, was commissioned as a monumental text of the court, with monies and resources lavished on an artisanal workshop housing the calligraphers, illustrators, and scribes that produced a text then copied and emulated as the preeminent model of text as ornament. The illustrated manuscript ‘ornamented’ the dynastic court, and thus reinforced a vision of imperial power. Even if its contents were multivocal, it still served as a monument—and thus an instantiated event—that of the Ghazan court.

By contrast, the wave of encyclopaedic knowledge that engulfed the region during this period displaced the court and the court historian with the knowledge accumulated through the trades of the street and the scribe. Perhaps most vividly captured in the *Ultimate Ambition of the Arts of Erudition*, by the Mamluk accountant and scribe Shihab al-Din al-Nuwayri (d. 1333).³⁸ Al-Nuwayri delightfully shifted in and out of reported speech, philosophical conceptions of cosmic and human homologies, folkloric knowledge, remedies for bodily and sexual ailments, in addition to incorporating dynastic and bureaucratic histories. He also de-sacralised the *hadith*, deployed here haphazardly along with the poetic fragment, the anecdote, and inserted text from other scholars, bibliographers and jurists. The encyclopaedia, therefore, adopts the *chronotope* of universalism but does so with an eye for the everyday rather than that of either the sacral history of religious emergence or the dynastic chronicle. Yet, the encyclopaedic compendia indeed lends itself to the imperial gaze, as it adopts an expansive eye and therefore maps in its textual itinerary the geography of composite empires.³⁹ Still, these compendia linked together timescapes that had once been opposed: the eternal, the historical, the prophetic, and the everyday.

Ibn Khaldun, by contrast, insisted on a “science” of investigation and named history as a field of knowledge unto itself, distinct from the embrace of religious traditions and its pantheon of interpreters. Born in Tunis (1332) to an elite Andalusian family that fled Seville after its reconquest in 1248, he then lost his parents to the so-called Black Death and served various regional rulers of the Maghreb (western Islamicate lands),

38 Shihab al-Din al-Nuwayri, *The Ultimate Ambition in the Arts of Erudition*, trans. and ed. Elias Muhanna (London: Penguin, 2015). See also *World in a Book: Al-Nuwayri and the Islamic Encyclopedic Tradition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017).

39 Jason König and Tim Whitmarsh, *Ordering Knowledge in the Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 3–39 and, Elias Muhanna, “Why Was the Fourteenth Century a Century of Arabic Encyclopaedism,” in *Encyclopaedism from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, ed. Jason König and Greg Woolf (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 343–356.

amidst an ever fragmenting political landscape.⁴⁰ His bravado and scholarly acumen equipped him well in a constant quest for patrons (periods of imprisonment aside), and he set about composing a multivolume “Book of Lessons” that remained incomplete. Ibn Khaldun’s intent, however, is palpable within the introduction, or *Muqaddimah*. Notably, he embraced the Galenic concept of the “body politic” to inscribe the lifecycle of the individual into a schema for assessing intra-group dynamics.⁴¹ This cyclical vision of historical order, or disorder, was defined by sociopolitics rather than revelation, and represented a radical departure. Dismissing the theologians and jurists as ensnared by tradition, he turned his gaze to the horizontal and embraced observational methods as a disciplinary act. Ibn Khaldun thereby disrupted the *chronotope* of revelation with that of cyclical history.

All of these visionaries of the universal emerged out of expanding networks of scholarship that knit together disparate courts and patrons from Qayrawan, to Cairo, Tunis to Tabriz and Samarkand. Together, the universal history-writer and the encyclopaedist pivoted between the normative and the descriptive, but also purported to present globalising rather than sacral or regional histories. Thus, while characterised as *universal* histories, they are born precisely out of a concern to fit multiple, competing *chronoscapes* into a synthetic, all-encompassing historical narrative.

The Time of the Empire

These all-encompassing and totalising urges were in turn co-opted to form an imperial narrative space, as the scholars *cum* bureaucrats in the courtly establishments of the Timurids, Ottomans, Mughals, and Safavids fit visions of dynastic legitimacy into universalist conceptions of time—time that their imperial houses both enfolded and abrogated, like the early narrative chroniclers of Islam’s emergence.⁴² This imperialisation of time also

40 There are many excellent introductions to ibn Khaldun’s life and conceptual innovations, for some recent summaries, see Muhsin Mahdi, *Ibn Khaldūn’s Philosophy of History: A Study in the Philosophic Foundation of the Science of Culture* (London: Routledge, 2015); and, Stephen Frederic Dale, *The Orange Trees of Marrakesh: Ibn Khaldun and the Science of Man* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015).

41 Glen Cooper, “Medicine and the Political Body: A Metaphor at the Crossroads of Four Civilizations” (Presentation given at the symposium *The Healing Arts across the Mediterranean: Communities, Knowledge and Practices*, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ, March 28, 2014).

42 Patricia Blessing, “Introduction: Reframing the Lands of Rūm,” in *Rebuilding Anatolia after the Mongol Conquest: Islamic Architecture in the Lands of Rūm, 1240–1330* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Variorum, 2014), 1–20; Abdurrahman Atçıl, *Scholars and Sultans in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Stephen P. Blake, *Time in Early*

yoked the cosmic to temporal power in novel ways, with the astrological conjunctions of Jupiter and Saturn and millenarian apocalypticism harnessed to proclamations of universalism precisely amidst a field populated by competitive claims to sovereignty.⁴³ Here I will focus on the Ottomans, and the multiple mechanisms by which actors within these courtly establishments produced a time of the empire. The displacement of regional customs by an imperial law and the transitory post of the court historian established under Sultan Süleyman (r. 1520–66), briefly illustrate an imperial effort to displace rival timescapes. Both also represent the inherently conflicted processes by which disparate territories and rival histories were subsumed into a vision of invulnerable imperial order.

The regulatory framework of the Ottoman bureaucratic establishment depended on a legal vocabulary that generated, even as it fixed, the circulation of goods, services, and subjects into a clearly defined space of imperial provision. It thus depended on record-keeping practices that affixed the realm into the timely ordering of command and supply, a ‘seasons of empire’ if you will. The legal regulations (*kanunname*) dispersed from the palace enfolded regional ‘custom’ into an imperial category in itself—a sleight of hand that became a framework for legal interpolation.⁴⁴ References to “what went before” (*mā hadath min qabl*), “from the old days (*min ayām-ul qadīm*), and “according to formerly established methods” (*üslüb-i sâbika üzere*) transferred “scattered” (*perakende*) practices into “new defters” (*deFTERler-i cedid*) of recorded knowledge. This mobile and evolving archive of administrative practice invoked the terminology of customary law (Ottoman Turkish, *örf*; Arabic, *‘urf*), but displaced it so as to assert a customary time of the empire. The legal terrain, and thus the temporal order of previous rulers, became part instead of a legal *chronologies* of imperial sovereignty.⁴⁵

Parallel to this effort to create a legible legal order, the Ottoman establishment under Süleyman sought, through language, monumental architecture, and further legal reform, to replace the heteroglossia of the realm with a unified sovereignty of empire.

Modern Islam: Calendar, Ceremony, and Chronology in the Safavid, Mughal and Ottoman Empires (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

43 Cornell H. Fleischer, “Mahdi and Millennium: Messianic Dimensions in the Development of Ottoman Imperial Ideology,” in *The Great Ottoman-Turkish Civilization*, ed. Kemal Çiçek, Nejat Göyünc, İlber Ortaylı, and Güler Eren, no. 3, *Philosophy, Science and Institutions* (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye, 2000), 42–54; Muzaffar Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam: India, 1200–1800* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Sheldon Pollock, “India in the Vernacular Millennium: Literary Culture and Polity, 1000–1500,” *Daedalus* 127, no. 3 (1998): 41–74.

44 Guy Burak, “Between the *Ḳānūn* of Qāyṭbāy and Ottoman *Yasaq*: A Note on the Ottomans’ Dynastic Law,” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 26, no. 1 (2015): 1–23, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jis/etu038>

45 For an extensive treatment of this subject, see chapter two in Heather Ferguson, *The Proper Order of Things: Language, Power, and Law in Ottoman Administrative Discourses* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018). Guy Burak argues that law and sovereignty are linked in *The Second Formation of Islamic Law: The Hanafi School in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

This effort is visible within the scroll and codices of Seyyid Lokman, who composed his *Quintessence of Histories* from the position of court historian, the *şehnâmeçi*.⁴⁶ Both the scroll and the codices position the dynastic house of Osman within a genealogical history that begins with a cosmological chart of the world's origins, and then draws parallel connections to the prophets and kings of ancient Persian and other pre-Islamic dynasties emanating out from the first humans, Adam and Eve. Although this genealogical map inserts the Ottomans within a diverse lineage, with the arrival of the Ottoman dynasty all contemporary rivals disappear. The suggestion that the Ottoman dynasty possesses no parallels (imagistic or textual) reinforces Lokman's presentation of the Ottoman dynastic genealogy as a "final world order."⁴⁷ These efforts result in an imperial golden ageism, where the 'golden' meant centralised, well-administered, equitably distributed resources, and a lack of sociopolitical upheaval. Despite efforts to produce a legible and invulnerable imperial time, what emerges instead is a sense of fragility—of the always present possibility of upheaval mustered via either the sword or the pen, and wresting imperial time away from its conquerors.

Conclusion: Chronotope as Method

This tour of Islamicate *chronotopes* ideally demonstrates that remaining fixed within the oppositions of the 'Islamic' with the 'Eurocentric,' or the 'medieval' with 'modern,' misses not complexity, but rather the mechanisms by which timescales always contain within them contradictions of differing logics. In this case, the conflicting logics of revelation and history, sacral and human, the anecdote and the global. Born out of shifting sociospatial identities, these logics in turn shape categories of being by marking and making the temporal legible. This chronotopic analysis of conflicting logics and hybrid texts reveals variant projects of meaning-making and suggests that these projects actively construct or reinforce particular power formations through the manipulation of time. As a method and praxis, the *chronotope* as a shifting sociospatial phenomenon avoids oppositional and exclusionary discourses of 'Other' times and histories.

46 Christine Woodhead's scholarship remains the standard treatment in the field: "An Experiment in Official Historiography: The Post of Şehnâmeçi in the Ottoman Empire, c. 1555–1605," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 75 (1983): 157–182; and, "Reading Ottoman 'Şehnames': Official Historiography in the Late Sixteenth Century," *Studia Islamica*, no. 104/105 (January 1, 2007): 67–80. On the *Quintessence* as both scroll and codice, see Emine Fetvaci, "From Print to Trace: An Ottoman Imperial Portrait Book and Its Western European Models," *The Art Bulletin* 95, no. 2 (June 2013): 243–268.

47 Fetvaci, "Print," 174.

9. Transnational Modernism and the Problem of Eurochronology

Özen Nergis Dolcerocca 

James Joyce's vision of hell, in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, is a "great hall," dark and silent, with a "great clock" ticking unceasingly;¹ Marcel Proust's memorable narrator in *In Search of Lost Time* complains of "the insolent indifference of the clock chattering loudly as though [he] were not there";² Virginia Woolf in *Orlando* points out "the extraordinary discrepancy between time on the clock and time in the mind."³ These three fragments by canonical figures of modernism show a pronounced preference for time of the mind over time on the clock. Clock time is viewed as an empty and uniform resource that lends itself to exploitation by rational and calculative behaviour, utterly detached from the particular and from subjective experience. Periodisation schemes, like the clocks of these modernists, are convenient tools for time measurement. They are retrospective temporal concepts that we use to understand and interpret past events. *Chronotypes* are insolent and indifferent to the histories of different regions, "chattering loudly" as though those histories are not there. Some are "visions of hell" for historical thought, imagined as one big clock ticking nonstop, marching towards a universal telos. The discrepancy outlined by Woolf between clock time and perceived time might also be imagined as the chasm between periodisation schemes and the multiplicity of the lived experiences. The modernists' concern for temporal calibration is thus not far removed from the problem of periodisation in Historiography.

Modernism is a critical term that is, and has always been, subjected to a number of descriptions and definitions. While the term refers to a body of innovative works produced during a period of extraordinary cultural, social, economic, and political transformation, critics disagree about almost every aspect of its definition, including its nature as an artistic phenomenon, its cartography and chronology. Hence, we now refer

- 1 James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man and Dubliners*, ed. Kevin J. H. Dettmar (New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2004), 116.
- 2 Marcel Proust, *Swann's Way: In Search of Lost Time*, ed. Christopher Prendergast, trans. Lydia Davis, vol. 1 (New York: Penguin, 2004), 8.
- 3 Virginia Woolf, *Orlando: A Biography* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1995), 47.

to modernisms in the plural.⁴ The engagement with time, however, is an established characteristic of literary modernisms more generally. It is a dominant concern, if not a signature aspect, of modernist fiction on many levels. Modernists are attentive to the time of history that surrounds and permeates their works, as they problematise the representation of time and temporality, and finally, as they experiment with narrative time in their fiction. The Proustian oeuvre, in addition to its trademark device of *mémoire involontaire*, is usually taken as an extensive menagerie of different temporal devices. Furthermore, stream-of-consciousness, the celebrated narrative device of modernist authors, lets time flow through subjective experience, simultaneously slowing it down to arrest the present. Joyce, in *Ulysses*, introduces the epic enlargement of a single day with an overwhelming sense of temporal density, while Woolf in *Orlando* slows time down by interweaving the present with the recent past and the immediate future, with constant recollections and anticipations. The world of experience is now suffused with perception and with the task of recovering lost time. Modernity's own temporal logic, that is, modernity as always new, as a break with the past and as an experience of accelerating time, contrasts with the time of subjective consciousness in modernist narrative. The literary modernist reacts to the ruptured chronologies of Modernity by deliberately confusing (and breaking) the teleological progress of the narrative, thus resisting the linear temporal regime that Modernity would impose. This signature characteristic of the modernist aesthetic begs the question: what are the historical periodisations and *chronotypes* attributed to the history of a literary and artistic movement that is so engaged with time?

Let us consider the periodisation of modernism in literary history. When does modernism start? When does it end? Where does it end? Or, does it refuse to die, casting a long shadow over post-modernism in a linear succession? If the 'post' in question is a temporal marker, then what is late modernism? 'Early' modernism? 'High' and 'low' modernism? The answers to these questions regarding the periodisation of this artistic movement are generally debated and contested, much like the term modernism itself. In this chapter, I would like to revisit these historiographical questions, particularly that of periodisation and geographic scope, regarding the history of literary modernism, and offer a transnational perspective that, I argue, would enable us to critically reassess literary historiography.

Modernism constitutes a unique movement where philosophy, art, literature and historiography come together around the question of time, be it historical, narrative, phenomenological or mnemonic. Many modernists were burdened by an extreme consciousness of time while sharing a common skepticism of modernity's temporal ideology that values newness, a break with the past and a linear and teleological

4 For transnational approaches initiated by the new modernist studies, see the September 2006 special issue of *Modernism/modernity* 13, no. 3 (2006) 'Modernism and Transnationalisms.'

development. Yet, for this literary movement that problematises historical time, such problematisation is not afforded to it in literary history. In other words, modernists who critically engaged with time are contingent on arbitrary periodisation in literary history. Modernism remains first and foremost a Euro-American endeavour, generally squeezed in the inter-war period, characterised by what some critics have called *Eurochronology*. Bringing history, literary studies and, to some extent, also art history together, this chapter asks cross-disciplinary questions regarding modernism and its contested chronologies and cartographies. In the same manner as a number of other chapters in this volume that apply terms of literary formalism to historiography—such as Bakhtinian polyphony and dialogic heteroglossia—I argue for an approach to research in the humanities that includes, without appropriation, a number of different voices which may well remain in conflict, and I advocate multi-lingual and translational research practices.⁵

I argue that the discipline of Comparative Literature has much to offer when rethinking historical periodisations, and when reworking historical categories that go beyond nation-centric interpretive paradigms. It is in many ways a meta-discipline, always in search of new identities and self-definitions, of new methodologies, genealogies and typologies. Initially, the field was (and it partially still is) defined by Eurocentric assumptions, a concerted effort to consolidate European universal literary and cultural values, assimilating, appropriating or directly marginalising other societies and their literary and cultural creativity. It now attempts to define a more transnational and interdisciplinary literary sphere beyond the nation-state and center-periphery models, with remarkable studies that cross chronological, cartographic, and linguistic boundaries. Edward Said, who himself was first and foremost a comparatist, once said of the field: “To speak of comparative literature therefore was to speak of the interaction of world literatures with one another, but the field was epistemologically organized as a sort of hierarchy, with Europe and its Latin Christian literatures as its center and top.”⁶ He thus highlights and questions the conflict within the discipline of Comparative Literature (and comparative humanities more generally). The discipline tries to keep western European histories at the center, while, on the other hand, it also spreads out its limits, finding other cores, thus building transnational geo-histories. This chapter argues for this second movement in the study of modernism, expanding periods and

5 Mikhail Bakhtin introduces the concepts of polyphony and dialogism in his seminal analysis of Dostoevsky’s main characters. He later extends his idea of the dialogical principle through the concept of heteroglossia in his essay “Discourse in the Novel.” Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s poetics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984); Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *The dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1988).

6 Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 45.

cartographies not epistemologically organised around a European core, but around the formal, stylistic and historical aspects of the literary movement.

The question of periodisation has recently taken on a new urgency for the discipline of Comparative Literature around the question of world literature. Chris Prendergast, in his edited volume on world literature, borrows the term *Eurochronology* from Appadurai's *Modernity at Large*, to describe the "ethnocentrism of literary-historical periodisation."⁷ He is concerned with the adaptation of the long temporal and spatial reach of world history to the idea of world literature, since the parameters of inquiry are not identical. As an example of the prominence of *Eurochronology* in the study of world literature, he cites the prioritisation of printed literature, particularly modern cosmopolitan literatures, over oral and traditional literatures. He argues that the study of world literature in practice has been concerned with printed literatures that, by some mechanism or other, have entered into relations with others, whose historical point of departure was usually the European Renaissance and the development of national literary traditions, and whose terminus was the literary world 'marketplace' of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Prendergast is here referring to Pascal Casanova's *La République Mondiale des Lettres*, a book that has many merits although its *Eurochronologic* assumptions have incited fierce debates on global literary comparativism—much like Patrick Boucheron's *L'Histoire Mondiale de la France*, discussed in the introduction to this volume.⁸ Hence, the 'world' in world literature does not encompass the global (in the sense of including all literatures in the world), but rather reflects specific international structures and transactions with their inbuilt *chronologic* disorders. Building on the concept of *Eurochronology*, Emily Apter has recently drawn attention to the Eurocentric assumptions inherent in literary categories, and to overcome these has proposed a transcultural approach to world literature that would rely on the 'untranslatable'—a conscious mapping and mining of conceptual difference across languages.⁹

Despite recent efforts to broaden its scope, the humanities in Europe have largely remained invested in *Eurochronology*, which implies the idea that diverse literary traditions and historical practices unfold on a single predestined course, following the western European calendar that serves as a universal measurement of time, its hereditary disorders, that is, its inborn categories and typologies, like 'Renaissance,' 'world literature,' or genre histories, such as the European genealogy of the novel. *Eurochronology* is useful as it displays a time-space continuum in literary history,

7 Christopher Prendergast, ed., *Debating World Literature* (London: Verso, 2004), 6; Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Public Worlds 1 (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 30.

8 Pascale Casanova, *La République mondiale des Lettres* (Paris: Seuil, 2008); Patrick Boucheron, *Histoire mondiale de la France* (Paris: Seuil, 2017).

9 Emily Apter, *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability* (London: Verso, 2013).

uncovering the Eurocentric in its chronologies, and illustrating how certain ideological and political cartographies determine certain periods. A Eurocentric geography also leads to a Eurocentric understanding of literary periodisation. Therefore, a literary movement like modernism, defined by its extreme consciousness of time, remains essentially a European category, while its chronology depends entirely on European history. In the *Eurochronology* of modernism, the geography contains British and French literatures, it may include some token authors writing in German or North American, but anything West or East of these literatures features only marginally, if at all. The treatment of Spanish modernism in literary history as a marginal or aberrant case is a good example for this exclusionary logic.¹⁰ Once modernism is periodised as such, the non-western-European, or any literary agencies outside of that cartography, inevitably and necessarily figure as ‘deviations,’ ‘failures’ or ‘late emulations.’

Modernism, in this regard, is a strongly contested typology: from the debate about when and where it begins and ends, to its less known Latin American etymology, it has become a literary category where *Eurochronology* is practiced most frequently—as is evident from the commonly used terminology such as “Late Modernism,” “Inter-War Literature” or “Men of 1914”—and simultaneously most contested, as in geo-modernisms and planetary modernisms.¹¹ Susan Friedman, who coined the term ‘planetary modernism,’ details the spatial politics that periodise modernism in her essay “Periodizing Modernism.”¹² She shows that whether conceived as a loose affiliation of aesthetic styles, or as a literary/artistic historical period with at least debatable beginning and end points, inherent in modernism is always the presence of an unacknowledged spatial politics that suppresses its global dimensions through time, and the interplay of space and time in all modernisms. Friedman therefore calls for spatialising the literary history of modernism, and reminds us of the agencies of those writers, artists, philosophers, and other producers of culture in the postcolonial world, who are cut off

10 For a compelling collection of essays that address this question, see Anthony L. Geist and José B. Monleón, eds., *Modernism and its Margins: Reinscribing Cultural Modernity from Spain and Latin America* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999).

11 See Laura Doyle and Laura A. Winkiel, *Geomodernisms: Race, Modernism, Modernity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005); Susan Stanford Friedman, *Planetary Modernisms: Provocations on Modernity Across Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).

12 Susan Stanford Friedman, “Periodizing Modernism: Postcolonial Modernities and the Space/Time Borders of Modernist Studies,” *Modernism/Modernity* 13, no. 3 (2006): 425–443. For a similar analysis on periodisation of modernism, see Eric Hayot, “Chinese Modernism, Mimetic Desire, and European Time,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 149–170.

from the mainstream by way of unproblematised periodisations. Although Friedman's main concern here is the interplay of cultural differences in postcolonial contexts, other studies have followed in complicating histories and maps of modernisms.

Despite the plethora of attempts at defining modernism under different agendas, literary critics and cultural historians seem to agree on three aspects: a period, a cultural response to modernity and a particular style. The first defines modernism as the literature of a particular chronology, which is again inflected with a specific geography. While the British genealogy, which constitutes the early scholarship on the movement, sets 1910 as its birthdate, later studies emphasise cultural production in France dating it back to nineteenth-century Paris. The movement is considered to have declined after the Second World War, although some critics argue that it still continues, especially outside of Euro-America. It is particularly important to re-consider this last point: the continuing legacy of modernism into the present is reserved for the global south, thus confirming the 'late emulation' *chronotype* mentioned earlier. My re-consideration should in no way be seen as an attempt at delegitimising these chronologies, as each works within their particular cartography, and any definition or history inevitably includes implicit or explicit exclusions. But what is proposed here is a heightened awareness of the internal logics of periodisations.

Modernism is also defined as a reaction and response to modernity and the changing conditions of modern life. Literature that is concerned with mechanisation, urbanisation, impending wars and conflicts, and that responds to new ideas in philosophy, psychology and science, is considered modernist. Finally, modernism is considered to be a particular style: the new literature that employs experimental styles and techniques, such as stream-of-consciousness, fragmentation of narrative time and a multiplicity of perspectives. If we consider these last two definitions, many works outside of the initial chronological definition can be considered modernist. However, few of these make it to acclaimed anthologies, curricula or critical works. As Sanjay Subrahmanyam demonstrates in the Conclusion to this volume, moving scales creates an awareness for multiple periodisations. If we scale modernisms according to the last two categories (i.e. modernism as a response to modernity and modernism as a particular style), we will see that the particular chronology of modernism, too, would have to change. National and local modernisms have tried to limit the scale to a particular geography while extending modernism to outside of Europe-America. National frameworks, such as studies on Brazilian or Chinese modernism, have developed their own canon. These studies, however, do not necessarily challenge *Eurochronology*. For instance, as long as the non-European claim to modernism is inflected with select few locations or authors, even a Swiss-German modernist like Robert Walser at the heart of European cartography will only figure marginally within modernism in the German language, which is reserved for Franz Kafka and Thomas Mann, based on an albeit problematic logic of resemblance. Aijaz Ahmad, in "Show me the Zulu Proust," demonstrates this point with

sarcasm.¹³ Ahmad argues here for the re-invention of ‘World Literature’ from a South-South perspective rather than from a periphery-center one. The formula criticised here is clear: show me the Zulu Proust, so that I can appreciate, and appropriate, the Zulu author, through his or her resemblance to the ‘authentic’ modernist. This understanding demonstrates a kind of illogical periodisation which re-writes the literary history of the non-West through *Eurochronologies*. There are many other examples of this rationale in critical studies: the Balzac of the Arabic novel is deemed to be Naguib Mahfouz, which is an effortless translation of the nineteenth-century French realism *chronotope* into the twentieth century Arabic novel—which is in itself a problematic cartography. In the *Eurochronology* of modernism, Tanizaki figures as Japan’s Kafka, and Tanpınar as the Turkish Proust. This is not a comparative methodology, but rather, in Aamir Mufti’s terms, the logic of orientalism re-packaged as world literature,¹⁴ which produces narratives of European ‘diffusionism’ and ‘influence studies.’

Jörn Rüsen’s typology of historical forms, presented in the first section of this volume and elsewhere, provides a useful model with which to approach the treatment of modernism in literary history, particularly given the historical baggage of the term ‘modern.’¹⁵ According to this model, there are four types of narrative construction of history—traditional, exemplary, critical and genetic—as projected in a progressive framework, from the oldest to the newest, co-existing in different historical narratives. The first one is the “traditional” narrative, in which historical meaning stays the same over time. It confirms and reinforces continuity between past and present and history becomes one normative and pragmatic event. According to this narrative logic, quite prevalent in nineteenth-century literary historiography, the origins of the ‘modern’ would be in Europe, they would be considered a pre-given cultural pattern affirmed by antiquity. Not only literary historians but also some modernists themselves, such as T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and James Joyce, clearly adapted this traditional *chronotype* in their search for organic unity in art, by making references to ancient mythology in a highly idiosyncratic and personalised manner.

The second typology in Rüsen’s categorisation is the “exemplary” formation of historical meaning, in which history is used to generate general principles and thus becomes a teacher of life. In this exemplary form, modernist literature from the

13 Aijaz Ahmad, “‘Show Me the Zulu Proust’: Some Thoughts on World Literature,” *Revista Brasileira de Literatura Comparada* 17 (2010): 11–45.

14 Aamir R. Mufti, *Forget English!: Orientalisms and World Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).

15 Jörn Rüsen, “Making periodisation possible. The concept of the course of time (Zeitverlaufsvorstellung) in historical thinking,” in this volume; Jörn Rüsen, *Evidence and Meaning: A Theory of Historical Studies* (New York: Berghahn, 2017). I would like to thank Barbara Mittler for her response to a draft of this essay and for bringing to my attention the parallels between Rüsen’s typology and this particular periodisation of modernism in literary history.

European core becomes *the chronotype*. Similarly, in Ahmad's "Zulu Proust," texts from western Europe are examined as to their suitability for the formulation of a "universal law" of the modernist form, which is then applied to other texts from elsewhere, based on this exemplary logic.

The third and fourth typologies suggested by Rüsen develop a critical approach to the deep structure of existing historical narratives. The "critical" narrative takes into account counter-evidence and counter-narratives that contest the present meaning of historical phenomena, while the "genetic" type asserts the inevitability of historical change in the making of historical time. Although it is now quite evident to the twenty-first century historian that the first two narrative types, i.e. the "traditional" and the "exemplary," are untenable today, it seems that mainstream literary criticism reproduces these narratives, paradoxically, in an effort to promote the last two. One such example is the scholarly and pedagogical practice concerning world literature, which has virtually dominated the field of comparative literature over recent decades. Its primary aim, to build a canon of key works of literature from diverse historical, aesthetic and cultural perspectives—evidently an attempt at a "critical" narrative of literary history that challenges established orientations—is driven by a predisposition to universal origins and exemplary forms. This proclivity of world literature scholars for establishing what Aamir Mufti has called "the European universal library," excludes many diverse literary practices and traditions.¹⁶ Literary history, therefore, needs to develop more "genetic" and "critical" narratives without necessarily abandoning entirely the lower levels. Finally, following this critical approach even further, one might add that Rüsen's own typology of historiographic forms in fact also tends towards this proclivity for carving out universal origins and general principles. Relying on notions of "anthropological universals" and "a new universal idea of time," his four-tier categorisation of historical consciousness presumes the translatability of these narrative models across particular cultural and linguistic experiences. Emily Apter's critique of the idea of a "transnationally translatable monoculture," and her subsequent argument for untranslatability as "a deflationary gesture" toward such a comparative principle grounded in universals, might be one way to approach Rüsen's otherwise effective typology.¹⁷

But let us go back to the literary modernists and their clocks. The question of time and temporality is a fundamental aspect of modernist fiction, in particular the dialectic between past and present. While staying informed by this modernist legacy, which seems to have dominated the critical work on the relation between the philosophy of time and literature, we need to draw a polycentric and pluralist map of modernist

16 Mufti, *Forget English!* (see note 14).

17 Emily Apter, *Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Apter, *Against World Literature* (see note 9).

temporality. These two signature topoi of the modernist aesthetic are not the only examples early-twentieth century literature provides of the diversity and fragmentation of temporal experience. Other works have produced parodies of managed existence, deriding any stable form of time-keeping, or *chronometry*, including the cardinal modernist mode of recovering lost time and streaming it back to consciousness. One such figure is the Turkish modernist Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar. While Joyce's vision of hell, Proust's insolent clock and Woolf's time of the mind are part of modernism's key tropes, Tanpınar's narrative experiments in diversity and fragmentation of temporal experience point towards unexplored directions in modernist studies. Through parody, pathos, satire, narrative instability and mutually cancelling ambiguities, temporal disorders, irregularities and *chronopathologies*, are epitomised as state-sponsored frenzy in his 1961 novel *The Time Regulation Institute* (TRI).¹⁸

Ahmed Hamdi Tanpınar, born in 1901, bore witness to a series of momentous historical events including the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the British invasion of Istanbul, the Independence War, the replacement of the monarchy by the Turkish Republic, as well as an exhaustive series of reforms ranging from government structures to everyday life practices, and two World Wars. He became a professor of nineteenth-century Turkish literature at Istanbul University, where he remained until his death in 1962. Two years before his death, Tanpınar wrote "Letter to the Youth from Antalya" addressed to a high school student, which he considered to be his literary manifesto. In this letter he lists his two main influences: the prominent poet (and Tanpınar's mentor) Yahya Kemal, who taught him to "appreciate the old poetry," and who developed the idea of "perfection" and "sublime language" in modern poetry, and, secondly and most importantly, French symbolism. Tanpınar names Baudelaire, Mallarmé and Valéry, as well as Hoffman, Poe, Goethe, Bergson and Proust as the main inspirations for his writing.¹⁹ Standing at the crossroads of the Ottoman literary tradition, modern Turkish poetry and European modernism, Tanpınar incorporates this multiplicity in his writing and considers this condition of in-between-ness with an "exilic consciousness" (*daiüssıla*) as an essential component of Turkish literary modernity.

While the modernist canon sustains the idea that fragments of lost time can be retrieved and streamed back into consciousness, Tanpınar produces a parody of managed existence, questioning any stable form of *chronometry*. TRI presents a chaotic multiplicity of temporalities. In contrast to the heroic model of recovering lost time, as in stream-of-consciousness novels, his work produces and functions with an

18 Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, *The Time Regulation Institute*, trans. by Alexander Dawe, Maureen Freely (New York: Penguin Classics, 2014). For a detailed analysis of the novel, see Özen Nergis Dolcerocca, "'Free Spirited Clocks': Modernism, Temporality and The Time Regulation Institute," *Middle Eastern Literatures* 20, no. 2 (May 4, 2017): 177–197.

19 Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, *Yaşadığım Gibi* (İstanbul: Dergâh, 2000), 350.

untypical hero, Hayri İrdal, who has an inexhaustible list of professions, including fabulist, alchemist, spiritualist, mental patient and finally bureaucrat. Born and raised during the fall of the Empire, overwhelmed by chaotic and ceaseless social, political and cultural transformation, Hayri is an anti-hero with an anxiety-driven compulsion for stability. Trapped in a cycle of infernal repetition, he inhabits this series of roles and eventually exhausts himself in the effort to stand still and survive in the face of his rapidly changing world.

In *TRI*, questions regarding time, change and rupture are displayed in the symbolic and metaphorical characterisation of clocks. Time machines gain multiple meanings: they are personified, turned into objects of desire; they both submit to and subdue the human. Here, watches reflect the inner flow of time. They are stripped of their actual, objective and spatial existence and become reflections of the autonomous and non-spatial temporality of their specific wearers. They also reflect their owners' unconventional political persuasions, concealments and idiosyncrasies, embodying multiple temporalities. Their rhythms change according to the prudence or rashness of their owners, to their private life and "political creeds," which here refers to the authoritarian regime of Sultan Abdülhamit II (1876–1909). Assuming the essence of its owner, a watch "thinks and lives" as the owner does, until "they are as one." In this view, time is not a neutral abstraction that exists independently of lived experience. Time here is a function of something other than itself: every event, process, revolution or "fate" (*talih*) has its own particular time. Time is not one time, but an infinite number of times. In the image of anthropomorphised watches, Tanpınar recognises this temporal diversity and their simultaneity in order to reimagine the process of change itself.

Staying within the bounds of *Eurochronology* that still defines the field of literary history, results in the calculated or inadvertent exclusion of many authors. Their works are either subsumed within a national framework, e.g. 'Turkish modernism,' or they appear in transnational studies along with other works both from the center and the periphery. In both cases, the ill-logic of resemblance and of orientalism accompany these mostly well-intentioned projects. Much like the arms of the "West" in Perjovschi's drawing entitled "Radical Museology" from 2013 (Fig. 1), the West embraces, surrounds and absorbs the "non-West," which is always defined with respect to what it is not. In the case of Tanpınar, for instance, we can see his evolution into a national cultural product of exportation: he resembles the center just enough to become the 'Turkish Proust,' and he is local enough to be branded within a national framework. As he gradually becomes the second token Turkish author of world literature (after Orhan Pamuk), with recent international interest in his work, there is a need to contextualise and critically examine such local and global appropriations. Modernist studies still rely on the metropole-periphery distinction and the criteria of cultural legitimation generated in Europe. The double bind of this view is this: eventually, both local and global reception end up celebrating "nationally and ethnically branded differences,

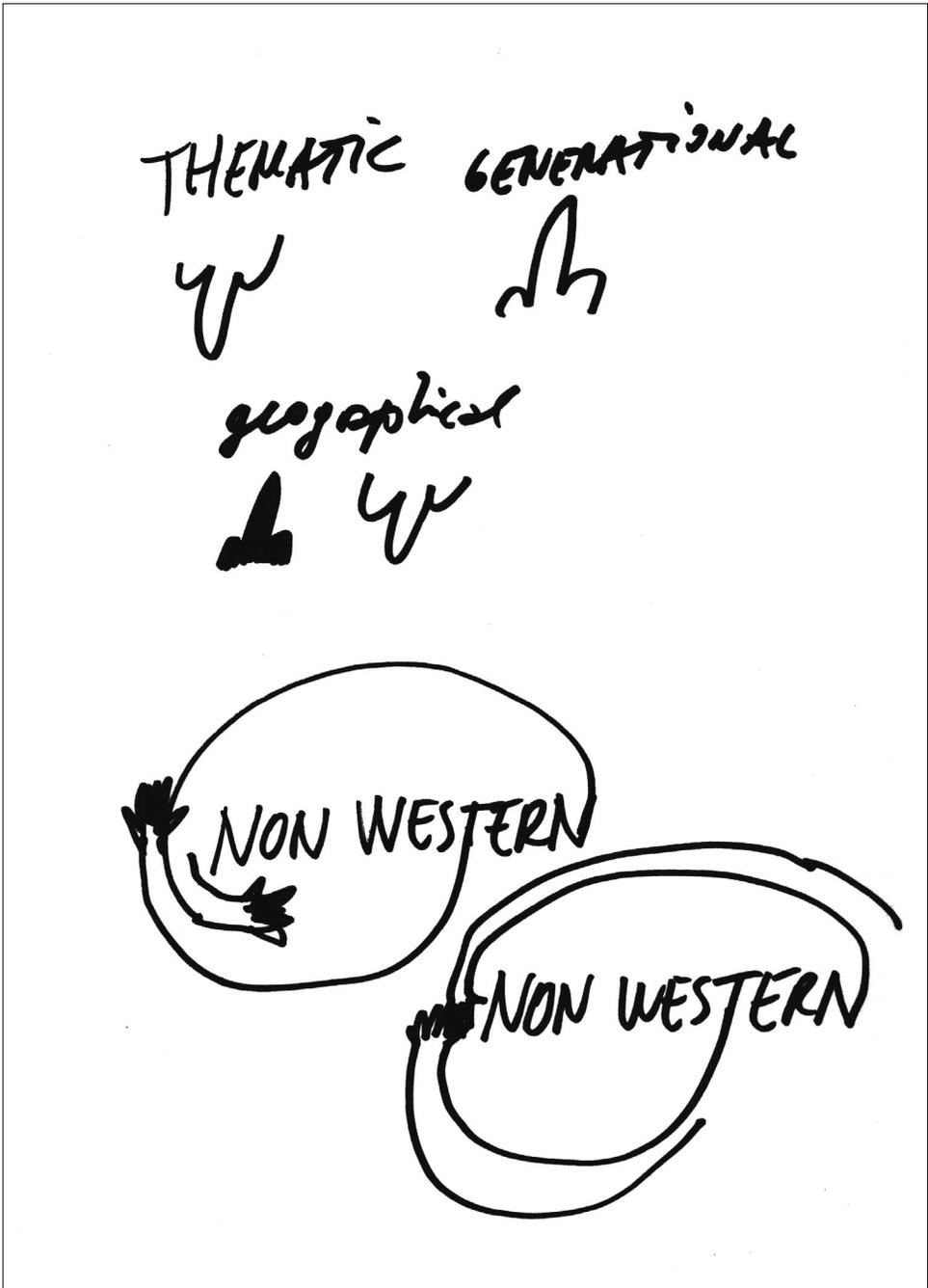


Figure 1 Dan Perjovschi, Drawing from *Radical Museology*, 2013, black marker on paper, 30.5 × 22.8 cm.

niche-marketed as commercialized identities.”²⁰ The image of the Bosphorus as the effortless metaphor for the composite of East and West, has, similarly, become a commercialised identity for Turkish literature. It has become a literary property that is culturally unique, nationally branding and self-defining. Tanpınar, however, offers more than such a synthesis of East and West; he understands the novel as a chronicle of political instability and crisis, with a compositional heterogeneity, and even linguistic pluralism. We thus need to avoid making claims about ‘authentic’ ‘local’ literary categories, neither should we hold his work up to the ‘global’ standards of readability.

I would like to end with Joyce, whose exilic literary career has drawn considerable attention from comparative and transnational literary studies. His somewhat voluntary exile from Ireland has been interpreted as part of the transnational and cosmopolitan roots of modernism.²¹ He spent many years working and writing in Trieste, Rome, Paris and Zurich. One of Joyce’s visits was to Pula, Croatia, where he spent a year in 1905, writing parts of *Dubliners* and *Stephen Hero*. Even if I try to think about that moment, to envision Joyce in Pula which functioned as a transnational or transregional contact zone for Joyce—some scholars have talked about the ‘global Joyce’—I cannot. A local scholar, Ivo Vidan, who studied Joyce’s stay in Croatia, notes with disappointment and a hint of nationalist pride that Joyce, a “new-fledged language teacher,” did not even know what the spoken language was in Pula: “They speak Italian, German and Slav,” Joyce wrote in a letter.²² Vidan sarcastically remarks that “he could have said just as well: ‘Romance, Teutonic and Slav,’ since a language called Slav does not exist.” In this cosmopolitan port city, where *Mittleuropa* and the Mediterranean meet, Croatian, Italian, Ottoman, German and Serbian would have been among the languages spoken at the time. Joyce was not part of this picture. The relationship between the exiled Irish author and the Croatian (or then, Austrian) cultural scene of Pula was a non-encounter, a non-contact zone, a non-relation. And yet, there are other encounters to uncover in the history of modernism, missed encounters, marginal or regional ones, through which we can think about transnational modernism, removed from diffusionist stories, theories of influence and center-periphery dichotomies.²³ My aim here, unlike that of

20 Apter, *Against World Literature* (see note 9), 2.

21 For a critique of this understanding of modernism, see Raymond Williams, *Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists* (London: Verso, 2007), 31–36.

22 Ivo Vidan, “Joyce and the South Slavs,” *Studia Romanica et Anglica Zagabiensia: Revue publiée par les Sections romane, italienne et anglaise de la Faculté des Lettres de l’Université de Zagreb* 33–36 (1972): 265–277, here at 266.

23 For recent examples of this scholarship, see Nergis Ertürk, “Modernity and Its Fallen Languages: Tanpınar’s Hasret, Benjamin’s Melancholy,” *PMLA* 123, no.1 (2006): 41–56; Harsha Ram, “The Scale of Global Modernisms: Imperial, National, Regional, Local,” *PMLA* 131, no. 5 (2016): 1372–1385.

Vidan, is not to reproach Joyce for his lack of interest in the local culture, it is rather to critique the type of comparative history that draws cursory connections between cultures and their periodisation of modernism.

This chapter has explored the case of literary modernism in terms of its problematic periodisation and geographic scope in certain practices of literary historiography. It has discussed the paradox that time is a dominant theme in modernist fiction whereas this concern is fairly absent in its periodisation, for instance, in histories which squeeze the movement in the interwar period or draw a genealogy dating its origins to French symbolism in the nineteenth century. All these histories are of course well-grounded within their particular historiographic framework, but once we move the geographic scale outside of western Europe and take up a transnational and transcultural perspective, as we have seen in the case of Tanpınar, periods inevitably vary. This chapter has therefore argued for a heightened awareness of the internal logic of periodisation in literary history. Establishing a cross-disciplinary conversation on methodology, between history and literature, the chapter has discussed the advantages of multi-lingual and transnational approaches, for example, and the shortcomings—inherent in Eurocentric categories—of the contemporary practices in comparative literature. It has shown the limits of national frameworks, and how these frameworks are challenged by a problematic and yet quite popular category called ‘world literature,’ which has become an umbrella term to include non-European works in a new canon. In order to overcome such methodological limitations, on the one hand, and in order to avoid a comparatism that is reduced to questions of originality and mimicry, on the other, this chapter has suggested, instead, to examine specific problems, taking into account specific temporal ideologies in order to rewrite the history of literary modernism as a history of “modernism-in-common” as an analogy to what Carol Gluck has called ‘modernity-in-common.’²⁴

Figure

Fig. 1 Courtesy by the artist and Gregor Podnar, Berlin.

24 For a lengthy discussion, see Thomas Maissen and Barbara Mittler, *Why China did not have a Renaissance and why that matters—An Interdisciplinary Dialogue* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2018).

10. The Mythical Medieval Periodisation, Historical Memory and the Imagination of the Indian Nation

Anubhuti Maurya

Introduction

This discussion is based on my experience of teaching medieval Indian history to undergraduates at the University of Delhi.¹ The classroom is a contested space, between a narrative produced by the discipline of history, i.e. by us, the historians, on the one hand, and an intuitive historical sensibility which the undergraduate students carry with them, on the other. This sensibility is inculcated by the history they study in school, hear from their families, see on TV and in cinema, read in literature, and interact with on social media. It draws upon diverse sources—the story of their own family, the devotion to a specific deity, the admiration for a historical figure, political propaganda, or their participation in community activities and collective experiences etc.

History has been at the heart of the making of the independent nation state of India. History writing, as the modern discipline that emerged in the European academies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, was practised in colonial institutions and by colonial actors.² The first nationalist histories emerged in response to colonial historiography. They sought to recover both the glories and ignominies of the past for inspiration and as lessons. The nationalist histories were integral to the anti-colonial struggle and drew upon a spectrum of political imagination of the future of India. At the same time, the nationalist historiography was fundamentally shaped by the methodology, archives and taxonomies of the discipline of history, as it had emerged in Europe.³ These histories, of the “traditional” model, as typified by Rüsen, followed

- 1 The Undergraduate History syllabus of Delhi University can be found here: http://www.du.ac.in/du/uploads/Syllabus2016/20092016_Revi_BA_H.pdf, accessed October 27, 2018.
- 2 Dipesh Chakrabarty, *The Calling of History: Sir Jadunath Sarkar and His Empire of Truth* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2015).
- 3 Cynthia Talbot, *The Last Hindu Emperor: Prithviraj Chauhan and the Indian Past, 1200–2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), see the discussion by Justus Nipperdey in this volume.

the teleology of civilisational progress, which was, as the introduction to this volume notes, framed as the formation of the modern nation.⁴ The *Eurochronological* schema of Ancient—Medieval—Modern was universally applied. In this schema, the ‘Medieval’ remained a fraught period.

‘The Medieval’ in India is a deeply contested historical period in the public imagination and in the politics of the country. In the schema of periodisation drawn up by colonial and nationalist historians, ‘The Medieval’ was seen to begin with the march of the armies of Mahmud of Ghazni and Mohammad Ghori into South Asia in the tenth century. In these histories, these military expeditions were identified with Muslim conquest of the region. This was both a historiographic device as well as characterisation in popular imagination, where the medieval is marked by the advent of Islam in the form of the Muslim conqueror.⁵

In the modern and contemporary politics of the Indian nation-state, this imagination of ‘the Medieval’ has emerged as a significant focus of mobilisation.⁶ It has been characterised as a history of conflict between different communities, as a contest between the ancient Hindu civilisation and the Muslim invader/conqueror.⁷ The debates between different political imaginations of ‘the Medieval’ play out in arenas including classrooms, on social media, on Twitter, to WhatsApp and beyond. They play out when *#RemoveMughalsfromHistory*⁸ trends on Twitter, when new citizenship laws are introduced, and when the Taj Mahal is threatened with demolition.⁹ This threat would be laughable if it did not evoke the actual demolition of the Babri Masjid—a mosque in Ayodhya, India, at a site believed by many Hindus to be the birthplace of Hindu deity Rama—in 1992.¹⁰

4 Cf. the introduction by Thomas Maissen, Barbara Mittler, and Pierre Monnet and the essay by Jörn Rüsen in this volume.

5 There are different dates for this. Sindh’s conquest by Muhammad bin Qasim in the eighth century is one historical moment. See the discussion in M. A. Asif, “Advent of Islam in South Asia: History of Pakistan,” in *A History of Pakistan*, ed. Roger D. Long (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2015), 135–166 for a discussion on this. The other significant moments are the tenth- and eleventh-century military campaigns of Mahmud of Ghazni and the twelfth- and thirteenth-century military campaigns of Muhammad Ghori. See Finbarr Barry Flood, *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval ‘Hindu-Muslim’ Encounter* (Princeton: Oxford University Press, 2009).

6 Romila Thapar, “Politics and the rewriting of history in India,” *Critical Quarterly* 47, no. 1–2 (2005): 195–203.

7 Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, *Six Glorious Epochs of Indian History* (N. p., Independently Published, 2019).

8 <https://twitter.com/search?q=%23removemughalsfromhistory&src=typd>, accessed October 12, 2018.

9 <https://indianexpress.com/article/what-is/what-is-tejo-mahalaya-controversy-taj-mahal-vinayakatiyar-bjp-4896716/>, accessed October 12, 2018.

10 The demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992 was a significant moment in India’s contemporary politics. There is a lot of literature, both in terms of reporting, political pamphlets as well as

The discussions in my classroom reflect these contesting imaginations of the Indian nation. In contemporary India, the public sphere has become increasingly *communalised*, marking the Muslim as the *Other*. In such times, contests over history no longer remain didactic or academic, but have acquired urgency and have real life implications.

Historians have made significant interventions in this political discourse. They have engaged with, critiqued, and challenged the communal discourse about history.¹¹ There is a large body of scholarship that ranges from presenting ‘the Medieval’ as a period of harmonious co-existence, to seeing it as a period of the formation of communities and community memories, and as a period of pluralities.¹²

There is a seeming contradiction between the history of ‘the Medieval’ produced by the academy and that which circulates in the popular domain. However, both of these are part of “the politics of time,”¹³ where ‘the Medieval’ is more than just a term of chronological taxonomy. The question I want to tackle in this chapter is the following: does the history produced in the academia lend itself to the divisive discourse on ‘the Medieval’ in India?

In doing so, I want to highlight two aspects of Indian historiography: first, the place of conquest and violence in the delineation of ‘the Medieval’ and second, the visualisation of the ‘Medieval’ state. I will discuss the issue of violence only briefly and engage more extensively with the question of the state in historiographies of the medieval.

Nationalist history writing constructs India, as a historical entity, in two ways. One was temporal, reading India deep into the ancient past (as we discuss later in the chapter). The other was geographical: histories of diverse and different regions which constitute the modern nation-state, were subsumed within the history of India. Concomitantly, the categories of time—Ancient (up till the eighth century CE), Medieval (eighth to eighteenth century) and Modern (eight to twentieth century)—were used as pan-Indian periodisation. These histories of India, privileged empires based in the Indo-Gangetic plain as pan-Indian formations, and saw historical change from the vantage point of imperial centres. As a result, regions within the

academic work on this event. I am here referring to only two works, which offer both information and a perspective on this event. Abdul G. Noorani, *The Babri Masjid Question, 1528–2003*, 2 vols. (New Delhi: Tulika, 2018); Sarvepalli Gopal, ed., *Anatomy of a Confrontation: Ayodhya and the Rise of Communal Politics in India* (London: Zed Books, 1993).

11 Romila Thapar, Bipan Chandra, and Harbans Mukhia, *Communalism and the Writing of Indian History* (New Delhi: People’s Publishing House, 1969), Gyanendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990).

12 For a critical discussion on the emergence of secular histories see Neeladri Bhattacharya, “Precipitament of Secular Histories,” *Public Culture* 20, no. 1 (2007): 57–73.

13 I borrow this phrase from Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other*, (2002): x, 97–104.

nation have negotiated local memory and history with the wider frames of national histories. In this chapter, I examine the conflicts in historical memory by looking at the Mughal conquest of Kashmir in 1586 as a moment of change.

The Problem of 'the Medieval'

Most discussions around periodisation in Indian history begin with James Mill's tripartite division of Hindu—Muslim—British periods.¹⁴ This classification was based on the nature of kingship. In this schema, the early historical past of the Indian subcontinent was declared to be Hindu. The Muslim period began with the establishment of the Sultanate in Delhi in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. Through this presentation, Mill characterised India's pre-modern past in terms of religion. By contrast, British rule in the eighteenth century was presented in secular terms. The thrust of this periodisation was accompanied by the heft of colonial government—not just in how the administrators interacted with or administered the colony, but in terms of the organisation of the archives, the work of colonial departments like the Archaeological Survey, or other departments with the task of survey.

Nationalist historians of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries challenged Mill in particular, and colonial historiography in general.¹⁵ The nationalist historiography was closely aligned with the project of the anti-imperialist struggle in India. It rejected the colonial tropes of India as a land with an unchanging past. Its quest for the glorious epochs in India's history was part of the project of creating a national identity. Over time, in the Nationalist and subsequently the Nationalist Marxist historiography,¹⁶ the Hindu—Muslim—British schema was replaced by a new tripartite division of Ancient—Medieval—Modern. However, the new terminology did not fundamentally challenge the colonial delineation of periods in Indian history. Partha Chatterjee pointed out that while the nationalist historians challenged the Orientalist/colonial historiography, they framed their opposition and wrote their histories

14 James Mill, *The History of British India*, 6 vols. (London: Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, 1826).

15 The nationalist historiography was closely aligned to the project of the anti-imperialist struggle to recover the history of India, it looked for glorious epochs as well as dark periods of its history. It rejected the colonial tropes of India as a land of unchanging past and a land with no sense of recording history. See, for example, Mohammad Habib's Presidential Address to the Indian History Congress, 1947.

16 From the 1930s, there were further shifts in history writing with the emergence of the Nationalist-Marxist school of historiography. It was not a homogenous group of historians. This history writing was marked by the influence of Marxist conception of history and a greater interest in the economic and social processes of change. However, the frame of reference remained the nation.

within the same categories and discourse of colonial modernity and Enlightenment rationality.¹⁷ In this historiography, up till the 1960s, the start of the medieval period was considered to be 1200, with the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate.

From about the 1970s, there was a shift and greater emphasis was placed on the study of socio-economic transformations as the basis of marking change in historical periods. The eighth to the thirteenth centuries were designated the 'feudal age.' The debates around 'feudalism' in Indian history were couched in the specifically Marxist terms of historical materialism.¹⁸ At the same time, the period was seen as one of decline and its descriptions drew upon the terms of European historiography which saw socio-economic stagnation as a consequence of feudalism. This element was then included in the category of 'The Medieval.'¹⁹ Since the 1980s, there has been a shift in the study of this period. It has emerged as a site of nuanced historiographical debates and, accordingly, has been termed the 'Early Medieval.'²⁰

The periodisation debates in Indian history were closely tied to the making and imagining of the nation. In multiple discussions, Romila Thapar has pointed out, that in colonial and Orientalist writings, the 'Hindu' period represented the 'autochthonous ancient' stretching eternally into the past.²¹ This understanding established the 'Hindu' as the original inhabitant of India.²² It implied that the Indian nation, with a set of original inhabitants, was constituted in this ancient past.²³ Gyan Prakash argued that the nationalist historians established India as an *active subject*, as opposed to the passivity attributed to it by Orientalist writings. But they "[...] assumed that India was

17 Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

18 Harbans Mukhia, 'Was There Feudalism in Indian History?', in *State in India, 1000–1700*, ed. Hermann Kulke (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995).

19 Ram S. Sharma, *Indian Feudalism* (New Delhi: Macmillan Publishers, 1965); Dwijendra N. Jha, ed., *The Feudal Order* (Delhi: Manohar, 2003).

20 Brajadulal D. Chattopadhyaya, *The Making of Early Medieval India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996); Jha, *Feudal Order* (see note 19); Upinder Singh, ed., *Rethinking Early Medieval India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011).

21 The use of the term 'Hindu' itself is misleading. In modern and contemporary India, especially after the exercise of the census began in the late nineteenth century, it has emerged as a signifier of religious identity. However, there is considerable debate among historians about whether there ever was a single 'Hinduism.' Even today, the term does not stand for a monolithic or uniform religious identity, with a clear set of doctrines or practices. For a brief survey see David Lorenzen, "Who Invented Hinduism?" *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 41, no. 4 (1999), 630–659; Kunal Chakrabarti, *Religious process: The Puranas and the Making of a Regional Tradition* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001).

22 Romila Thapar, "Imagined Religious Communities? Ancient History and the Modern Search for a Hindu Identity," *Modern Asian Studies* 23, no. 2 (1989): 209–231; Bhattacharya, "Predicament" (see note 12).

23 Thapar, "Imagined Religious Communities?" (see note 22).

an undivided entity, which had held a sovereign and unitary will that was expressed in history... India was given an ontological presence prior to and independent of its representations.”²⁴ This schema of periodisation reinforced the idea of ancient/Hindu India as a coherent temporal, spatial and social entity.

So, how was the historical transition from the Ancient to the Medieval or from the Early Medieval into the Medieval envisioned? The answer is that there was, and still is, no concept for a transition; there isn't really a shift into 'The Medieval.'²⁵ Instead, it arrives in India's written history as a watershed moment, heralded by invasions and military conquests: Muhammad bin Qasim's conquest of Sindh in the eighth century,²⁶ the Ghaznavid invasions of the eleventh century, the Ghorid campaigns of the twelfth century, culminating in the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate in the thirteenth century.²⁷ The history of over two centuries is collapsed into one historical moment of invasion and violence and with it the Muslim presence in South Asia is woven into one inextricable strand.²⁸ The foundations of 'The Medieval,' in historiography, were to be seen in the act of conquest and the resulting violence.

Further, this intertwining remained deeply embedded in nationalist imagination and history writing, replaying the same tropes in the discussions of subsequent conquests. As Shahid Amin points out, "Medieval Muslim warfare and rule, c. 1000 onwards, has understandably been the object of considerable narrative anxiety from the nineteenth century to the present... for at its heart is the issue of the pre-colonial conquest of the subcontinent—and of its consequences. How different was this medieval 'Muslim' India of Turkish Sultans and Mughal padshahs from the conquest and colonisation of India by industrial Britain?"²⁹

There is an old debate around *Muslim conquest/Turkish Invasions* in Indian history. Recent historiography, notably the works of Romila Thapar, Brajadul Chattopadhyaya, Finbarr Flood, Manan Ahmed Asif and Shahid Amin have critiqued the

24 Gyan Prakash, "Writing Post Orientalist Histories of the Third World: Perspectives from Indian Historiography," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 32, no. 2 (1990), 390–391.

25 See, for example, Hemchandra Raychaudhuri, *Political History of Ancient India* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1927) which brings ancient India to an end with the Gupta empire. Also see the discussion in Ram Sharan Sharma, *Early Medieval Indian Society: A Study in Feudalisation* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2001): 15–17.

26 Manan Ahmed Asif, *The Book of Conquest* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).

27 ABM Habibullah, *The Foundation of Muslim Rule in India*, 2nd. ed. (Allahabad: Central Book Depot, 1967); Ramesh Chandra Majumdar, ed., *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, vol. 5–7 (Bombay: Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, 1957).

28 I am glossing over many of the critiques of this periodisation, notably on the use of the terms Hindu, Muslim, India as terms signifying a unitary or homogenous identity.

29 Shahid Amin, *Conquest and Community: The Afterlife of Warrior Saint Ghazi Miyan* (New Delhi: Orient Blackswan Private Limited, 2015), 3.

older historiography and have opened up the period, as well as history writing, to newer questions.³⁰

While there is a large body of rich scholarship on the relationship between history writing, community identities, communalism and the question of violence, I will not discuss this in detail in this chapter, but instead will focus on the second major characteristic of the historiography of ‘The Medieval,’ the question of ‘state.’ Much of the history writing on South Asia is focused on the study of state structures. The medieval states are imagined as centralized, hegemonic structures, where power flows out from the person of the king and the court. The historiography around these states highlights the bureaucratic and military organisation. It identifies revenue collection—a system for the collection and redistribution, primarily of surplus agrarian production—as central to the nature and character of these states. Beyond the structures of administration, there is a discussion on the political cultures of these states, articulated in different *theories of sovereignty*. The historiography of the centralized state, as Farhat Hasan has noted, is emphatically nationalist, conflating ‘The Medieval’ and early modern structures with the modern nation.³¹

In the remainder of this chapter, I will look at the conceptualization of the centralized empires from their margins, specifically from Kashmir. I will explore how the historiography of this region on the frontier—of the medieval north Indian states as well as the modern Indian nation—engaged with periodisation in history in relation and in response to the centralized state model.

The Medieval State as a Behemoth

The history of medieval north India is primarily told through two major state formations of the Indo Gangetic plain: the Delhi Sultanate [1200–1526 CE] and the Mughal Empire [1526–1857 CE]. The dominant historiography on these states has focussed on institutions and structures of governance. Pouchepadass characterised the historiography as “[...] old perspective of classical political geography which dealt with rather

30 Romila Thapar, Somnatha: *Many Voices of History* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2004); Brajadulal D. Chattopadhyaya, *Representing the other? Sanskrit sources and the Muslims* (eighth to fourteenth century) (Delhi: Manohar, 1998); Finbarr B. Flood, *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval ‘Hindu—Muslim’ Encounter* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2010); Amin, *Conquest* (see note 29); Asif, *Book* (see note 26).

31 See Farhat Hasan *Paper, Performance, and the State: Social Change and Political Culture in Mughal India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022)

simply defined categories of state, population, territory and resources [...].”³² In this historiography, these states were described as structures where absolute power rested in the hands of the *Sultan/Padshah* and the nobility,³³ with complex bureaucratic structures, even though the Mughal state developed a more sophisticated administration.³⁴ These states collected surplus agrarian production from the peasantry, through a set of intermediaries. In both these states, the court was the locus of political culture, which was articulated through urban construction, public works and literary production. History writing about these states outlined these institutional structures as well as different theories of kingship. In this historiography, the theories of kingship were a functional part of the state structure, rather like revenue administration, which served to create legitimacy of rule.³⁵ Pouchepadass pointed out that, “[...] the crucial factor is the extent to which it [the territorial state] has been able to transmute a power

- 32 Jacques Pouchepadass, “Itinerant Kings and Touring Officials,” in *Society and Circulation, Mobile People and Itinerant Cultures in South Asia, 1750–1950*, eds. Claude Markovits, Jacques Pouchepadass, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam (Delhi: Anthem Press, 2006), 240–274, here at 241.
- 33 The word nobility is used interchangeably for the ruling classes/groups in these states. Sunil Kumar discusses the implications of such usage in “Bandagi and Naukri: Studying Transitions in Political Culture and Service in North Indian Sultanates, Thirteenth to Sixteenth Centuries,” in *After Timur Left: Culture and Circulation in Fifteenth Century North India*, eds. Francesca Orsini and Samira Sheikh (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014): 60–110.
- 34 William H. Moreland, *Agrarian System of Moslem India*, repr. (Delhi: Kanti Publications, 1988, first published 1929).
- 35 Major works on the history of the Delhi Sultanate are, for example: Mohammad Habib and Khaliq A. Nizami, *Comprehensive History of India*, vol. 5 (New Delhi: People’s Publishing House, 1970); a large part of Mohammad Habib’s body of work; Peter Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate: A Political and Military History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); a number of articles by Irfan Habib; Sunil Kumar, *The Emergence of Delhi Sultanate* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2007); Sunil Kumar, *The Present in Delhi’s Past* (New Delhi: Three Essays Press, 2002). Historiography on the Mughal state is vast so I will selectively name the major works: Jadunath Sarkar’s corpus of work; Ibn Hasan, *The Central Structure of the Mughal Empire* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1970, first published 1936); Parmatma Saran, *The Provincial Government of the Mughals* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1973); Ram P. Tripathi, *Rise and Fall of Mughal Empire* (Allahabad: Central Book Depot, 1956); Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999); Iqtidar A. Khan, *Gunpowder and Firearms: Warfare in Medieval India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004); Harbans Mukhia, *Historians and Historiography During the Reign of Akbar* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1976); Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, eds., *The Mughal State, 1526–1750* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998); Shireen Moosvi, *The Economy of the Mughal Empire c. 1595: A Statistical Study* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2016); John F. Richards, *Mughals in Golconda* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975); Muzaffar Alam, *Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India: Awadh and Punjab* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2013, first published 2001); Stephen Blake, *Shahjahanabad: The Sovereign City of Mughal India, 1639–1739* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); M. Athar Ali, *Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001); M. Athar Ali, *Apparatus of the Empire: Awards, Ranks, Offices and Titles of Mughal Nobility, 1574–1768* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985).

initially exercised through the use (or effective threat) of physical force into an authority rooted in the dominant ideology, a legal right to enforce obedience based on the inner consent of the subjects [...] whose norms have been widely internalized.”³⁶

Much of the medieval historiography remains focused on imperial formations, with an emphasis on the person of the emperor and the court. This perspective assumes the empire to be a cohesive whole, where the will of the centre is implemented through the institutions of governance. For example, historians of the Mughal Empire have been engaged in a long-running debate on the nature of the state.³⁷ Though they viewed the Mughal state from a multiplicity of perspectives, these historians were all united in their concern with a state as defined by its imperial centre and characterised through the political structures of administration and of the imperial court. It built an identity for a historical period through a political formation. However, it did not address the diversity, of peoples, regions and historical processes which were part of these imperial formations. This preoccupation with the ruling elite has wider consequences for the popular understanding of the medieval period of Indian history.

The state-centred historiography of medieval north India segues from the Delhi Sultanate to the Mughal empire, stretching from the twelfth to the eighteenth century, almost presenting the two as stages in the development of the same political structure, it establishes structural continuities and traces the evolution of administrative institutions from the Sultanate to the Mughal state. These institutions are presented as normative structures and their evolution through the practice of governance and participation of different groups of people—the administrators, local power holders, peasants etc.—is seen as peripheral to the practice of governance.

The historiographical preoccupation with imperial centres also dictates the nature of the archive for writing the histories of the medieval state. These histories ascribe a privileged status to the courtly Persianate texts as the primary archival material for the study of the medieval. For the study of the Mughal empire historians primarily use courtly texts in Persian—*Tawarikh* (histories), *Insha* (epistles), *Tabaqat* (biographical literature), *Tazkirat* (biographical literature), *Akhlaq* (moral norms and code of ethics), *Adab* (literature)—alongside literary productions, *safarnama* (travel literature), and documents from the Mughal chancellery as the primary archives. The visual archives of the courtly arts and architecture are seen as the supplementary archive. This textual corpus was produced largely in the court or in conjunction with it and reinforced the state-centric preoccupation of the histories of the period. Further, by focussing

36 Pouchepadass, “Itinerant,” (see note 32), 241.

37 See Kulke, 1995; Farhat Hasan, *State and Locality in Mughal India: Power Relations in Western India, c. 1572–1730* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Alam and Subrahmanyam, Introduction to the *Mughal State* (see note 35); Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “The Mughal state—Structure or process? Reflections on recent western historiography,” *Indian Economic & Social History Review* 29, no. 3 (1992), 291–321.

on Persianate archival material, they under-represent the polyglot nature and diverse social character of the medieval states. While new work has now started to break this hold, the medieval historiography of North India has favoured Indo-Persianate literary material.

The conflation of the Sultanate and the Mughal state flows from, or allows for, another kind of conflation. Both of these states were ruled by Muslim kings. In treating the Sultanate and the Mughal empire as a continuous entity, historians have favoured the origins of the ruling groups of the Sultanate and the Mughal empire—as conquerors, central Asians, Muslims. An equivalence is thus drawn between the origins of the lineages of these kings in central and West Asia and their Muslimness. In this, academic histories and popular politics come together. As Asif argues, while looking at conquest and origins in South Asian historiography: “what remained unexamined was the centrality of the origins narrative—naturalness with which ‘Muslims’ remained outsiders.”³⁸ As a result, the engagement of these states with their spatial location and historical contexts is overlooked. In the history writing, states like the Mughal empire bore, “[...] very little relationship to their Indic predecessors.”³⁹ This is inscribed into historiography by use of the term ‘Indo–Islamic states’ to refer to the Delhi Sultanates and the Mughal Empire.

Since the late 1990s, there has been a regional turn in the historiography of India, which has allowed for a decentring of the historian’s gaze and has broadened the focus from purely political to socio-economic themes. This emergent trend has also placed the shifts in languages, literature, religion, cultural forms at the centre of history writing.⁴⁰ However, the imperial centre still dominates the historical imagination.

38 Asif, *Book* (see note 26), 5.

39 Asif, *Book* (see note 26), 5.

40 This is now a rich corpus of historiography. A really small selection on new kinds of work: Brajadul Chattopadhyaya, *The Making of Early Medieval India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996); Bhairabi Prasad Sahu, *The Changing Gaze: Regions and the Constructions of Early India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2013); Carla Sinopoli, ‘From the Lion Throne: Political and Social Dynamics of the Vijayanagar Empire,’ *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient* 43, no. 3 (2000), 364–398, Philip Wagoner and Richard Eaton, *Power, Memory, Architecture: Contested Sites on India’s Deccan Plateau, 1300–1600* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014); Samira Sheikh, *Forging a Region: Sultans, Traders, and Pilgrims in Gujarat, 1200–1500* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010); Aditya Behl and Wendy Doniger, *Love’s subtle magic: An Indian Islamic literary tradition, 1379–1545* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), Pankaj Jha, *A Political History of Literature* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2019).

The Region in the Meta-Schemes of Periodisation

The historiography focused on the imperial centre has determined how histories are written in, and about, different regions of South Asia. In this section I will look at issues of periodisation in the regions and the relationship between the imperial centre and regional history from the vantage point of the region of Kashmir in the sixteenth century.

In modern Kashmiri historiography, the question of periodisation is quite complicated. Until the 1970s, the histories of Kashmir were divided into the Hindu-Muslim and the Dogra period.⁴¹ It is during the 1980s that the terms of periodisation in Kashmiri history writing shifted to the Ancient, Medieval and Modern. In these changing terminologies, the Kashmiri historians followed the wider trends in Indian academies. But this change did not suggest a rethinking of these categories. In Kashmiri historiography, the ancient, sanskritic and the Hindu remain interlinked. For example, Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*, a Sanskrit text, remains the most important source for the ancient history of Kashmir. However, the text was compiled in the twelfth century and was deeply embedded in its temporal location.⁴²

In contemporary Kashmiri histories, the medieval begins with the accession of Rinchin in 1320 CE. A seventeenth century history from Kashmir, *Baharistan i Shahi*, narrates the story of Rinchin. Rinchin was a Bhautta prince, an immigrant from Tibet, who converted to Islam and adopted the title of Sultan.⁴³ Though the fourteenth century saw many significant changes in the polity of Kashmir, histories from the period do not suggest that Rinchin's accession represent anything more than a dynastic shift. However, in modern histories of Kashmir, the medieval in Kashmir continued to be coeval with Muslim kingship, beginning with Rinchin's accession to the throne, and with his conversion to Islam. The Medieval in Kashmiri history began when the king assumed the title of Sultan.

In Kashmiri historiography, the Sultanates [1320–1540, 1540–1586] and the Mughal rule [1586–1752] comprised the medieval centuries. The Afghan [1752–1819] and the Sikh rule [1819–1846] are presented as a period of transition. Dogra rule [1846–1948] marked the beginning of the modern. In writing the histories of the region, Kashmiri historians conformed to the wider schema of periodisation across Indian history, even if they did not correspond to significant moments of historical change in the region.

41 For a discussion on the Dogra period with the political and intellectual history of Kashmir see Mridu Rai, *Hindu rulers, Muslim subjects: Islam, rights, and the history of Kashmir* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 2004); Chitralkha Zutshi, *Kashmir's Contested Pasts* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2013).

42 Whitney Cox, "Literary register and historical consciousness in Kalhana: A hypothesis," *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 50, no. 2 (2013): 131–160; Shonaleeka Kaul, *The Making of Early Kashmir: Landscape and Identity in the Rajatarangini* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2018).

43 Anonymous, *Baharistan i Shahi*, British Library MS OR 16,706.

A discordant note on the issue of periodisation was struck by Ishaq Khan, who pointed out that, “any generalisation [in demarcating phases in Indian history] covering the entire subcontinent or even its greater part is bound to be misleading and arbitrary.”⁴⁴

He asked,

[...] although scholars have very ably tried to clarify the concept and content of medievalism, the problem remains as to when, why and how the medieval period ends in Indian history. True that the advent of the British in Bengal is generally seen as marking the beginning of the modern period in Indian history [...] the British rule on the sub-continent did not come into being concurrently [...] the fact that the British conquests of Bengal did not ‘atomise’ India is amply borne out by Kashmir which remained medieval as late as the beginning of the present century.⁴⁵

Ishaq Khan made the argument that the period beginning in 1846, marked by the accession of the Dogras as the kings of Kashmir, saw the beginning of an age of ‘Feudalism’ in Kashmir. The Dogra rulers had established a new system of agrarian exploitation, where the new polity combined political authority with economic power more fully. In this period, through the practice of *begar*, or forced labour, the peasants were reduced to the status of serfs.

Ishaq Khan pointed out that though in other parts of the subcontinent, “the forces of change were moving towards modernity, Kashmir had taken a step back and feudal relations were becoming stronger.”⁴⁶ In turn, he argued, that since feudalism was a characteristic of ‘The Medieval,’ in the nineteenth century, Kashmir was still in a ‘medieval’ period.

Ishaq Khan’s characterisation of the nineteenth century in Kashmir as ‘medieval’ drew an equivalence between feudal and backward, and between medieval and feudal. While critically engaging with the practices of periodisation in Indian history, he was drawing conclusions from what Kathleen Davis called the “globalised history of the medieval.”⁴⁷ This was not just a description of a period, Ishaq Khan was also making a political claim.

Ishaq Khan’s argument about periodisation was a politically transformative one. It was also an argument made from the very specific position in the politics of Kashmir in the 1980s. He placed the ‘modern’ in Kashmir’s history well into the first half of

44 Muhammad I. Khan, *Perspectives on Kashmir: Historical Dimensions* (Srinagar: Gulshan Publishers, 1983), 67.

45 Khan, *Perspectives* (see note 44), 67.

46 Khan, *Perspectives* (see note 44), 67–68.

47 Kathleen Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty: How Ideas of Feudalism and Secularization Govern the Politics of Time* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008): 5.

the twentieth century, with the emergence of a commercialised middle class, of political movements like the shawl merchants' protest and the secularised politics of the National Conference. In Ishaq Khan's narrative of the 1980s, Sheikh Abdullah was the figure of emergent modernity in Kashmir. But in doing so, Ishaq Khan smoothed out the complex relationships between the local historical personages, processes, on the one hand and colonial modernity on the other.

As we can see from the foregoing discussion, three different schemata of dividing historical time co-exist in Kashmiri history writing. One marks historical change through influential events, most often through military conquest. The second follows the tripartite schema of Hindu—Muslim—Modern or Ancient—Medieval—Modern. The third schema, espoused by Mohammad Ishaq Khan, identifies different epochs through a set of characteristics. Khan goes against the general norms of history writing, and suggests that history does not always chronicle a forward or a linear movement, or the teleology of 'the' civilisational progress. He uses the terms 'feudal' or 'dark age' as a political condemnation. In doing so, he borrows from a pre-given notion of backwardness associated with the feudal and its characterisation as a dark age.

Kashmir and the Mughal Empire

The historian of medieval or early modern Kashmir writes the history of the region, all the while negotiating with a wider history of the Indian nation. Kashmir was conquered by the Mughal armies in the closing years of the 1580s. With its conquest, the region became a province of the Mughal Empire. In the historiography which highlights the imperial centre, the historical processes of the local and the regional are rendered invisible. Concomitantly, the history of the sixteenth century in Kashmir is bound up with the teleology of Mughal conquest.

Abul Fazl, the chronicler of Akbar's reign [1556–1605] and the author of the *Akbarnama* and the *Ain i Akbari*, wrote that the victorious standards of the Mughal army were planted in Srinagar, Kashmir in 1586, and with it Mughal rule was established in the region.⁴⁸ In the historiography of the Mughal Empire, this event usually merits only a brief mention, if at all. In Kashmiri historiography, on the other hand, this becomes a watershed moment. And like that other watershed moment of South Asian history, that is, the Ghaznavid and Ghorid invasions, it is heralded by the march of armies and military conquest.

48 Abul Fazl Allami, *The Akbarnama of Abul Fazl*, vol. 3, trans. Henry Beveridge (Delhi: Low Price Publication, 1988, first published 1902–1939).

The narrative of Mughal conquest marks it as the foundation of a fundamental shift in Kashmir's history. It erases all other histories of Kashmir in the sixteenth century—the political processes, the shifting social equations, the new political spheres that were emerging out of strife etc. To reference my earlier discussion, this narrative takes the agency for their history out of Kashmiri hands.

Further, for the historians of Kashmir, since the 1920s, the Mughal conquest has posed a dilemma. While the Mughal armies came to Kashmir as foreign conquerors, and brought the region under their yoke, Mughal rule brought with it peace and prosperity, the shawl industry and wondrous gardens.⁴⁹

The sixteenth century chronicles and other texts from the Mughal court carried descriptions of the provinces of the empire. They narrated the processes of conquest and establishment of imperial authority in the newly conquered regions and brought them within the imperial ecumene. In the texts from the Mughal court, Kashmir was presented as passive recipient of imperial authority.⁵⁰

It is testimony to the hegemonic character of the imperial state that even today, it is difficult to move away from the frames of reference created within imperial textual traditions. As a result, the history of Kashmir in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was completely subsumed within the history of the Mughal empire. Its history was told through the actions of the reigning Mughal emperors and provincial governors. It was represented as a site of imperial action and intervention: it was conquered, its land was assessed for revenue, its landscape was shaped into gardens. It was the recipient of royal charity, royal justice and royal grace. Kashmir became the object of the royal gaze, a destination for royal sojourns.

The discussion on Kashmir's conquest by the Mughal armies and its annexation into the Mughal empire replicate the dominant historiography on 'The Medieval.' It maps historical change through the movement of the armies and measures it in the terms of the imperial formations. In doing so, it reduces the history of the period to the actions of a 'foreign' empire and places it at a distance from the history of the people of the region. 'The Medieval' becomes the period of rule by forces that are always 'outsiders.'

In South Asia, the trope of the loss of independence thus invokes the entire history of colonial subjugation. In Kashmir, the historical sensibility of loss of independence is a powerful political statement. But what the Kashmiri historians are lamenting is not just the loss of independence, but even more so, the loss of their history.

49 Prem N. Bazaz, *Kashmir in the Crucible* (Delhi: Pamposh Publication, 1967); Prithivi M. K. Bamzai, *Cultural and Political History of Kashmir* (New Delhi: MD Publications, 1994); Ghulam M. D. Sufi, *Kashir: Being a History of Kashmir from the Earliest Times to Our Own*, 2 vols. (Srinagar: Light & Life Publishers, 1949).

50 See, for example, discussions in Abul Fazl's *Akbarnama* on the province of Kashmir.

Conclusion

Periodisation is not “[...] simply the drawing of an arbitrary line through time.”⁵¹ It is, as Davis says, “a fundamental political technique”⁵². The majoritarian politics of India today asks who is an Indian, seeking a continuity between Hindu identity and the early history of the subcontinent.⁵³ It identifies ‘the Muslim’ as a foreigner, descendant of those who rode into India as a part of invading armies and who never became one with the soil. ‘The Medieval,’ in this imagination, is a dark age in Indian history. It is seen as a period of violence and oppression.

In this chapter, I have set out to discuss two main features of medieval historiography of India: first, the characterisation of ‘The Medieval’ in history writing, especially the emphasis on centralized state structures and warfare, dovetails into the popular imagination of the period. The emphasis on war assigns violence the position of a force of historical change. Second, the preoccupation with centralized state formations, where the past is defined through the lives of kings, the ruling elite or bureaucratic structures. This accentuates the distance between rulers and ruled. This example has shown how the histories of empires sit uneasily over popularly constituted national histories and collective memories. As long as periodisation, as a heuristics practice, continues to be directed by our location, viz. what constitutes the modern, ‘The Medieval’ in Indian history will continue to be defined by the politics of the nation.

51 Davis, *Periodization* (see note 47), 3.

52 Davis, *Periodization* (see note 47), 3.

53 “130 crore Indians are Hindu society: Mohan Bhagwat,” *Hindu today*, December 25, 2019, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/130-crore-indians-are-hindu-society-mohan-bhagwat/article30397898.ece>, accessed April 26, 2020; Ashish Pandey, “For Sangh, all 130 crore Indians are Hindus, says RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat,” *India Today*, December 26, 2019, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/for-rss-all-130-crore-indians-are-hindus-says-mohan-bhagwat-1631485-2019-12-26>, accessed April 26, 2020.

11. Reframing Time to Save the Nation

The Jewish Historian as Cultural Trickster

Bernard D. Cooperman

Introduction

The call for papers that brought us together and led to the present volume emphasised the problematics of periodisation (*Periodisierung*), the historiographic process of chopping up the temporal continuum by assigning start and end points to eras and then, most important, assigning hierarchical (often teleological) values to each era.* The conference call associated this practice especially with the rhetoric of the nation state and described categories drawn from European experience imposed onto other societies in relationships characterised by colonial dominance and radical power imbalance. Jack Goody had famously decried the West's *Theft of History*: not only had it imposed Eurocentric, Christian-derived, conceptions of time and space upon the rest of the world through military and economic power. It had also come to believe that western periodisations were not socially constructed but necessary, and that western patterns of development were not contingent but of its essence. The West had “monopolized” historical periods, insisting that everyone else had “gotten it wrong.”¹ It was the ambition of the conference organisers to go beyond such “nation-bound” and

* My thanks to the editors of this volume as well as to Professors Benjamin Gampel, Steven Zipperstein, Adam Teller and the members of the Jewish Studies seminar at Brown University, who have all provided provocative comments. Special thanks to Professor Jonathan Karp who went above and beyond the call of friendship, saving me from glaring errors and suggesting many further lines of inquiry. Regrettably, I have not always been able to follow up on these suggestions, and all errors and infelicities remain, of course, my own.

1 Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Goody's treatment, a somewhat impressionistic survey of highlights of western historical approaches to broad themes salted with his own experiences as an anthropologist (rather than an in-depth analysis of any specific local historiographical systems) is very much in tune with scholarly calls for caution after the initial enthusiasm for global or world history. See for example W. H. McNeill, “The Rise of the West after Twenty-Five Years,” *Journal of World History* 1, no. 1 (1990): 1–21. On the issue with particular regard to Jewish history see my “Global History & Jewish Studies: Paradoxical Agendas, Contradictory Implications,”

Eurocentric interpretive patterns and to treat the confrontation between periodisations as a synecdoche for negotiations between cultural constructs and hierarchical systems.

In this chapter I would like to rethink Goody's image of the violent imposition of one society's values on those of another by focusing rather on the individuals who cross over and back between the worlds of the colonised and the coloniser, the hegemonic and the subaltern. These figures—we may call them go-betweens or, in recognition of their agile balancing act, cultural tricksters—carry messages back and forth in both directions.² They must constantly sell their claims of original authenticity to one, and of new knowledge to the other. These are the translators and converts and students and teachers who themselves undergo the disorienting experience of transition, who constantly shape and reshape the truths they bear to fit the context and audience of the moment, and who re-present themselves as the situation demands. Such figures may be rare pioneers, explorers, and travelers in foreign lands or everyday migrants in a mobile world.³ Viewed through the lens of their experience, the “theft of history” becomes an ongoing negotiation, a social and psychological process of narration and intellectualisation which is never complete.

European Jews provide an interesting case study through which to explore the dynamics of such cultural negotiation, for the purpose of this chapter focusing specifically on their changing constructions of historical time. For centuries Jews had lived in the gradually Christianizing European West. They participated in, and depended upon, Christian European culture while locked always in a more or less intense competition with it. Because they formed only a small minority in Christian lands, Jews had had no choice but to familiarise themselves with their neighbours' calendars, even while stubbornly maintaining their own separate calendrical system. There were inevitable conflicts—and workarounds—when Jews sought to avoid

Giornale di storia (2015): accessed June 13, 2016, <https://www.giornaledistoria.net/monografica/saggi/global-history-jewish-studies>

- 2 Isaac Bashevis Singer portrayed the Jewish go-between as literally a tight-rope walker balancing on a rope stretched between traditional Jewish, and outside gentile, societies in his *The Magician of Lublin* (New York: 1960; Yiddish: *Der Kuntsnmakher fun Lublin*, 1971). This book, with its probing analysis of the cultural nuances of shifting Jewish cultures, deserves far more attention than it has received so far. On the use of the term “trickster” here, see below note 69.
- 3 I cannot resist mentioning, even if only in passing in a footnote, my conversations with Maurice Weiss, the photographer, on the first two days of our Berlin conference. Mr. Weiss asked me about the topic of our deliberations. When I told him, he laughed and spoke about his own sense of chronological dislocation, having grown up in a tiny village in southern France near Perpignan where the rhythms of rural life seemed timeless. All of this had changed for him when he moved to Berlin where, as he put it, the food was horrible, and the air smelled bad. Weiss' family had come to the Catalan village in the first place because his own father had fled there from Gdansk (I assume at the start of World War II), yet a further temporal dislocation. We make a mistake, it seems to me, if we restrict our discussions of chronology to elitist and intellectualist theories and forget the biographical realities in which they are grounded.

desecrating their own holy days or, what was more challenging, when they sought to avoid any appearance of participating in the holy days of their neighbours.⁴ The conflict became especially fraught when each community sought to give meaning to the flow of time by identifying and interpreting major turning points in human history. Both agreed that the Jewish present was a period of exile and punishment, but they differed fundamentally over the reasons for that situation. For Christians who divided human history around the birth, career, and crucifixion of Jesus, the Jews were being punished because they had rejected Jesus' message and played a major role in his death. Jews, on the other hand, saw their condition as rooted in dissension and animosity within their own community. Their decline had begun with the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple (they believed, in 68 CE) and it would end only when they were able to earn God's forgiveness through religious self-perfection.⁵ In the modern era, these medieval debates, with their emphasis on religious categories of chosenness, perfidy, and repentance, would give way to a totally new rhetoric. As we shall see, citizenship in the nation state demanded new legal categories that in turn implied a new periodisation of Jewish history. The flow of time would have to change its direction to include the possibility of Jewish progress and improvement.

- 4 On this see the commentary of the Tosafists to BT, *Avoda Zara*, f. 2a, s. v. "Asur la-Set" and Jacob Katz, *Exclusiveness and Tolerance* (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1961), 27–36.
- 5 Elisheva Carlebach, *Palaces of Time: Jewish Calendar and Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011). We get a sense of how early modern Jews remembered time from *Yad She'arim* (published by Samuel Tsarfati in Rome, 1546–1547). A Hebrew perpetual calendar and a guide for Jews to the Christian calendar, the book ends with a timeline of Jewish history structured around a list of the biblical "kings of Israel and kings of Judah." The chronology takes on an elegiac tone as it locates the present in the flow of time and pinpoints the current year within the ordered course of astronomical cycles, literary works, and Jewish disasters:

The year 5307 since the Creation is the sixth year...of the 280th (lesser) lunar cycle, the fifteenth of the 190th (greater) solar cycle, 3358 years since the birth of Abraham our Father, ...1832 years according to the count of contracts [*li-shtarot*] and the end of prophecy, 1681 years since the beginning of the Hasmonean kingdom, 1388 since the completion of the Mishna, 1042 since the completion of the Babylonian Talmud, 371 since the completion of Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*, 152 years since the expulsion of the Jews from France, fifty-five since the expulsion from Spain, 953 according to the Muslim calendar, 1547...according to the Christian calendar, thirty-two [years] since the plundering of the Kingdom of Naples, six years since the second expulsion from Naples, and 1479 since the destruction of the Second Temple, may it be rebuilt soon in our days, Amen.

On this book and its publishing context see Bernard D. Cooperman, "Organizing Knowledge for the Jewish Market: an Editor/Printer in Sixteenth-Century Rome," in *Perspectives on the Hebraic Book: The Myron M. Weinstein Memorial Lectures at the Library of Congress*, ed. Peggy Pearlstein (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 2012), 78–129, 103–106.

This new periodisation of the Jewish past begins to be voiced at the end of the eighteenth century, but even at the risk of confusing the reader by taking things out of order, I would like to begin my exploration with an article published in 1928 that would describe this historiographical equation of modernity with progress only to reject it. It was in that year that Salo Baron, a young Galician-born and Vienna-educated historian just beginning his career in New York City published “Ghetto and Emancipation: Shall We Revise the Traditional View?”⁶ The article’s title was in the interrogative, but Baron’s own position was boldly assertive. He rejected the positive view of modernisation and especially of the political integration of Jews into the nation state that had been a central assumption of western Jewish cultural life over the previous century and a half. Rather than attributing it to liberal doctrines of tolerance Baron argued that Jewish emancipation derived from the state’s insistence on, and need for, uniform control over all its subjects. He called for an end to the “lachrymose” view of Jewish history that had emphasised the persecutions Jews had suffered in the pre-modern period. Neither had modernity been an unalloyed improvement for Jews. To the contrary, emancipation had come at a great cost for it had meant that Jews lost their long-established right of autonomous self-direction.

Baron’s short essay would prove foundational to the developing field of Jewish Studies; indeed, it is difficult to overstate its impact. The article is frequently referenced and debated even today, almost a century after its initial appearance.⁷ For Baron himself it was the starting point of the magnificent scholarly project to which he devoted his

6 *The Menorah Journal* 14 (June, 1928): 515–526.

7 Recent attempts to reconsider the article and its thesis include *From Ghetto to Emancipation: Historical and Contemporary Reconsiderations of the Jewish Community*, ed. David N. Myers and William V. Rowe (Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 1997); David Engel, “Crisis and Lachrymosity: On Salo Baron, Neobarionism, and the Study of Modern European Jewish History,” *Jewish History* 20 (2006): 243–264; Elsa Marmursztejn, “La raison dans l’histoire de la persécution: Observations sur l’historiographie des relations entre juifs et chrétiens sous l’angle des baptêmes forcés,” *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 67 (2012/1): 7–40; and Adam Teller, “Revisiting Baron’s ‘Lachrymose Conception’: The Meanings of Violence in Jewish History,” *AJS Review* 38, no. 2 (November 2014): 431–439. Ismar Schorsch precisely reconstructed the historiographical context in which the phrase appeared in “The Lachrymose Conception of Jewish History,” in *From Text to Context: The Turn to History in Modern Judaism* (Hanover/London: Brandeis University Press, 1994), 376–388. The shooting of congregants in Pittsburgh’s Congregation Tree of Life in October 2018 prompted Professor Zachary Braiterman of Syracuse University to post a lengthy consideration of Baron’s article (<https://jewishphilosophyplace.com/2018/12/26/anti-lachrymose-jewish-history-a-lachrymose-theological-reactionary-object-salo-baron/>). Accessed July 31, 2022. Citing Engel and Teller extensively, Braiterman announces he was always “a little confused” by Baron’s article, and takes what he calls its “howlers” as an indication that “Jewish Studies and the study of Jewish History in America [are] begin[ning] to show their age. The older they get the weirder they look in retrospect.”

life. In 1937 he published the first edition of his *Social and Religious History*⁸ where we can see many of the themes of the original article fleshed out and documented. In 1942 his multi-volume history of *The Jewish Community: Its History and Structure to the American Revolution*⁹ continued the celebration of Jewish autonomy. And of course there were the eighteen volumes of the expanded edition of the *Social and Religious History*, a work that remained incomplete at the author's death but that succeeded in bringing together a vast bibliography to back up the Baronian approach at least down to the end of the Early Modern era.¹⁰

"Ghetto and Emancipation" was never intended to be a detailed survey of Jewish history in every place and at every time. Its eleven pages were a programmatic statement by a young man giving voice to a vision of his own mission as a Jewish historian. There is little point in challenging this almost century-old article for what we may now see as Baron's overstatements about Jewish self-governance or for what he omitted concerning the Jewish historical experience generally. What remains fascinating was the task he set for the academic study of Jewish history, only then about to enter the American secular academy and gain its imprimatur of institutionalised legitimacy. For Baron it was important to highlight Jewish group agency, arguing that this had been especially evident in the past and had been largely lost in the transition to modernity. We can speculate on possible links between this emphasis on community agency and Baron's own Zionist views.¹¹ Even more important, I suspect, was Baron's personal drive to carve out a field of discourse appropriate to teaching and research in a university history department.

The research plan Baron laid out was built upon a radically reframed periodisation of Jewish history. To do so, he took the term "ghetto"—a restricted space of Jewish residence, especially in Italy—and turned it into a universal category of Jewish time. The 'ghetto era' became a capacious designation for that period when, Baron insisted, Jewish community life had flourished. On the other hand, 'emancipation' was the term with which

8 Salo Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*. 3 vols., (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937).

9 Salo Baron, *The Jewish Community: Its History and Structure to the American Revolution*, 3 vols., (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society).

10 Salo Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 2nd edition, 18 vols., (New York: Columbia University Press and Jewish Publication Society, 1952–1983). At his death, Baron had managed to complete only eighteen of the twenty-two announced volumes of the project. From all accounts Baron dominated the world of Jewish historical scholarship in New York City and by extension in the United States for many decades. His position at Columbia University gave his opinion considerable weight, as did his prolific output. Sadly, his attempt at bibliographical comprehensiveness and his style of writing have been overtaken especially by new information technologies, and his multi-volume history-cum-bibliography has today lost much of its academic influence.

11 Marsha L. Rozenblit, "A Zionist Who Spoke Hebrew: Salo Baron in Vienna," in *The Enduring Legacy*, ed. Hava Tirosh-Samuelson and Edward Dąbrowa (Cracow: Jagiellonian University Press, 2017), 99–114.

he would label ‘modernity.’ In light of his own doctorate in law from the University of Vienna, we need not be surprised that he used Jews’ legal status to label his periods. But more important, in doing so Baron was rejecting other, well-established periodisation schemes that had been offered by earlier scholars. He would not limit himself to the study of persecutions and rabbis (*Leidens- und Gelehrten-geschichte*). He would not, as had Isaac M. Jost a century earlier, date ‘modernity’ to the accession of Frederick the Great onto the throne of Prussia (1740) on the grounds that that monarch’s enlightenment would eventually lead to greater tolerance. Nor would Baron accept Heinrich Graetz’ framework which had emphasised the role of the enlightened Jewish individual (for example, Moses Mendelssohn) as the mark of that Modernity.¹² Modernity, Baron insisted, was that period when Jews became citizens but lost control of their own collective destiny. And if Modernity was legal emancipation, it followed that pre-Modernity was the ghetto. During the ‘ghetto era,’ Baron insisted, Jewish community life had flourished. On the other hand, because Modernity was shaped by the logic of the nation state Jews had been granted citizenship but at the price of losing collective autonomy.¹³

In writing as he did Baron was reacting to the view of Jewish history that had been regnant for over a hundred years. From the later part of the eighteenth century European Jews had begun to cope culturally with the possibility, and then the realities, of ‘emancipation’—that is, their legal and political integration into the nation state.¹⁴ The enthusiasm with which at least some Jews had greeted their changed political status cannot be overstated. When the French National Assembly granted his coreligionists citizenship in 1791, the Nancy tobacco manufacturer and activist, Berr Isaac Berr, declared that a new era had begun in Jewish history: “At length the day has come when the veil, by which

12 Still useful is the historiographical overview by Michael A. Meyer, “When Does the Modern Period of Jewish History Begin?” *Judaism* 24, no. 3 (1975): 329–338.

13 On the history of the ghetto as an institution and as a historiographical category in Jewish history see Bernard D. Cooperman, “The Early Modern Ghetto: A Study in Urban Real Estate,” in *The Ghetto in Global History*, ed. Wendy Goldman and Joe Trotter (Oxon: Routledge, 2018), 57–73 and Cooperman, “Suppose the Ghetto Had Never Been Constructed.... Putting a Term into Its Contexts,” in *What If of Jewish History*, ed. Gavriel Rosenfeld (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 81–102.

14 The term “emancipation” is used in Jewish historiography not to indicate that Jews were previously enslaved and were now free, but in parallel to the terminology used about the legal enfranchisement of Catholics in England. Jacob Katz, “The Term ‘Emancipation’: its Origin and Historical Impact,” in *Studies in Nineteenth-Century Jewish Intellectual History*, ed. Alexander Altmann (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), 1–25, reprinted in Katz’ *Emancipation and Assimilation: Studies in Modern Jewish History* (Farnborough: Westmead Gregg, 1972), 21–45. On the process from a comparative point of view, see Rainer Liedtke and Stephan Wendehorst, eds., *The Emancipation of Catholics, Jews and Protestants: Minorities and the Nation-State in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999); Michael Brenner, Vicki Caron, and Uri R. Kaufmann, eds., *Jewish Emancipation Reconsidered: The French and German Models* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

we were kept in a state of humiliation, is rent; at length we recover those rights which have been taken from us more than eighteen centuries ago. How can we not recognise in this moment the marvelous mercy of the God of our ancestors!” So, in a single sentence, Berr reformulated the traditional Jewish concept of *galut* or exile, transferring the term (and the unfolding of divine providence) from the ethereal sphere of religious discourse to the down-to-earth realities of contemporary French politics and law.¹⁵

Berr’s radical reevaluation of the Jewish present in the wake of political emancipation is typical of the cultural challenges that face ‘post-colonials’ and other recently emancipated populations generally. If it seems strange nowadays to see that Berr and his contemporaries were so eager to bind themselves to existing nationalist periodisations and to abandon the chronologies of their own “imagined community,” we should remember that for them the nation state appeared a liberal and intellectual endeavor, a remarkable and positive organisational development that, by exchanging local identities for centralizing loyalties, would harness the energies of millions of citizens to huge projects for the improvement of society on a scale that had never before been possible. For more than two centuries, the idea of the nation would continue to inspire hope, give a sense of shared humanity, and hold out the promise of social progress to those otherwise excluded. As scholars and citizens, we are nowadays painfully aware of the fictive artifice of national historical constructions, of the fragility of the national promise, and of nationalism’s potential for cruel exclusion and even genocidal elimination of the ‘Other.’ Since at least the horrors of the First World War, nationalism has fallen into disrepute, especially in academic and liberal discourse, and we live in an era when nationalist

15 A copy of Berr’s *Lettre d’un citoyen, membre de la ci-devant communauté des juifs de Lorraine (B.-I. Berr), à ses confrères, à l’occasion du droit de citoyen actif rendu aux Juifs par le décret du 28 septembre 1791* (Nancy: H. Haener, 1791) is preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, <https://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb30093284c> (last modified August 28, 1996). It was reprinted by Diogène (Isaac) Tama in *Collection des actes de l’Assemblée des Israélites de France et du Royaume d’Italie* (Paris: 1807), 21–39, <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=zUNDAAAAcAAJ&hl=en&pg=GBS.PP1>, accessed July 31, 2022, from where it was translated as “Letter of M. Berr-Isaac-Berr to his Brethren” in *Transactions of the Parisian Sanhedrin or Acts of the Assembly of Israelitish Deputies of France and Italy, Convoked at Paris by an Imperial and Royal Decree, Dated May 30, 1806*, (London: 1807), 11–29, <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=hOp9llmImsoC&hl=en&pg=GBS.PA8>. I have emended that English translation slightly in order to recapture the confrontation of religious and secular terminologies in the French original. That both Berr and Tama had strong Hebrew/rabbinic educations is relevant to the argument made in this paper about the intellectual who transitions back and forth between multiple cultural spheres. For some details about Berr, his education and family, see “Berr-Isaac Berr (1744–1828),” https://data.bnf.fr/fr/12524489/berr-isaac_berr/; and “Lettre de M. Berr-Isaac-Berr: A ses frères, en 1791, à l’occasion du droit de Citoyen actif accordé aux Juifs“, accessed September 30, 2020. See also <http://judaisme.sdv.fr/histoire/document/ecoles/beer/beer.htm>. On Tama see Valérie Assan, “Isaac, alias Diogène, Tama, rabbin, négociant, armateur, (Hébron, vers 1758—Alger, 12 juillet 1842),” *Archives juives* 39, no. 2 (2006): 128–132.

rhetoric is often marked by populist, racist, militarist, and imperialist overtones.¹⁶ But none of this should blind us to the genuine, optimistic, and generous spirit implicit in the nation's rhetoric of origin, and it was to this promise that Jews were attracted.¹⁷

But first Jews would have to overcome a major cultural hurdle. To join the nation, they would have to redefine themselves and their culture in terms of the dominant society. Paradoxically emancipation had made such self-definition far more difficult since it had taken away a long-established defense mechanism. In the past, when the Jewish religion was attacked and Jews' history reviled, they had had a quick response. If Christians labeled Jews as blind to the true interpretation of Scripture, and willfully ignorant of the obvious logic of history (that is, to Christian supersession) Jews had been able to respond forcefully *in the same religious registers*. They had argued in apologetic and polemic works for the ongoing validity, and primacy, of their own textual tradition and religious interpretations. But now, insofar as the Enlightenment had marginalised institutionalised religion and weakened its role in directing state policy, it simultaneously undercut the very basis of Jews' religious self-defense.¹⁸ Calls for Jewish civic rights like the famous letter by Christian Wilhelm [von] Dohm, began with the assumption of Jewish cultural and moral inferiority but argued that good treatment might lead to the "civic improvement" of the Jews.¹⁹ Thus the same hand that offered membership in the national community also tore down the traditional Jewish claims to religious legitimacy. As was the case for other 'post-colonials,' therefore, the Jews' sense of themselves and their past was now challenged by the opportunity (and demand) that

16 The role of the European Enlightenment's claim to rationalism as the justification for imperialism is central to much work in colonial studies. See, among many other works, Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986) and *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

17 Even a brief overview of the vast literature on nationalism (for example, Peter Alter, *Nationalism* [1989; 1994]) quickly reveals the shifting meanings and connotations of nationalism, a term that changes its valence depending on political context, writers' perspective, and disciplinary terminologies. I do not, of course, intend to dismiss important questions of conservative and liberal, constitutional theory, and ethnic or economic justice that have led us to challenge the primacy of the nation state. My intent is only to remind the reader that past advocates of various forms of national identity (including the Jews who will be my subject) did in fact believe that they were advocating for a better world for all.

18 Admittedly, the once widely accepted view of the European Enlightenment as exclusively secular has now been substantially revised by a range of scholars; for an overview, see David Sorkin's "Introduction" to his *The Religious Enlightenment: Protestants, Jews, and Catholics from London to Vienna* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008). Even so, the Enlightenment unquestionably challenged traditional Jewish identity by legitimising a common human identity based on a universal set of rational categories.

19 Christian Wilhelm von Dohm, *Ueber die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden* (Berlin and Stettin: 1781). The deplorable present condition of the Jews and their religion was attributed to the persecution they had suffered at Christian hands, but it was never questioned.

they join the nation around them and adopt its self-image as their own. “To the Jews as a nation,” famously thundered the Count de Clermont-Tonnère before the French National Assembly in 1791, “nothing. To the Jews as individuals, everything.”²⁰ The opportunity to define themselves as citizens was enormously attractive, though at least some of the community were hesitant about its practical implications. But the cultural fallout of becoming ‘modern’ would continue to confound Jews to the present day.

Among Jewish intellectuals, there were some who seemed especially eager to internalise the European sense of the modern as crucial to their own construction of self. These *maskilim* (the Hebrew has the double connotation of ‘enlightened ones’ and ‘enlighteners’) understood the future as that golden age when Jews would have acquired western knowledge and thus earned their place as worthy members of society. The past, by contrast, was an era of darkness when Jews had abandoned the sciences and lost their appreciation for aesthetic concerns such as linguistic purity and literary form. To achieve the desired future, the *maskilim* advocated educational reform through a curriculum for Jewish youth that would train them to be “human” and acceptable to their fellow man even before they were introduced to the divine obligations that were the particular mark of being a Jew. The best-known statement of this agenda is the pamphlet, *Words of Peace and Truth*, by Naphthali Herz Wessely or Weisel (1725–1805).²¹ Wessely called for training in academic subjects (arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy) and the natural sciences (biology, geology, chemistry, anatomy and medicine). He also advocated the study of history and geography, a point to

20 Achille-Edmond Halphen, ed., *Recueil des lois: décrets, ordonnances, avis du conseil d'état, arrêtés et règlements concernant les israélites depuis la Révolution de 1789* (Paris: Bureaux des archives israélites, 1851), 185, partially translated in Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, eds., *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*, 3rd edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 124.

21 The Hebrew pamphlet, *Divre Shalom ve-Emet*, written in response to the famous *Toleranzpatent* issued by Austrian Emperor Joseph II, immediately became the focus of a firestorm within the Jewish community. Over the next several years Wessely would defend his positions in a series of four pamphlets (1782–85), and the entire collection was subsequently republished several times over the next century with various added texts (Vienna: 1827; Warsaw: 1886). Translations quickly appeared into Italian (*Traduzione di Elia Morpurgo de' Discorsi ebraici di tolleranza e felicità diretti da Naftali Herz Weisel agli ebrei dimoranti ne' domini dell'Augustissimo Imperadore Giuseppe II, il Giusto* [Gorizia: 1783]), German (by David Friedländer), and Dutch. The French translation, it may come as no surprise, was by Berr Isaac Berr, the same activist whom we mentioned already (see note 15). The French Bibliothèque Nationale holds, and has digitised, the second, augmented edition: “Instruction salutaire adressée aux communautés juives de l'Empire, par le célèbre Hartwic Weisly, juif de Berlin, traduite en françois en l'année 1782: Nouvelle édition augmentée de notes, d'une lettre à M. l'abbé Maury, député à l'Assemblée nationale, par l'éditeur, et de la réponse de M. l'abbé Maury,” (Berlin: 1790), <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k72916r/>. A complete annotated English translation remains a scholarly desideratum; a brief excerpt is available in Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz, eds., *The Jew in the Modern World*, 74–77.

which we shall return below. But he began his list by demanding that young Jews be trained in the norms of polite, civil life—ethics, manners and correct speech. Wessely was unhesitant in his advocacy of what we today would label as ‘Eurocentric’ norms of behavior; it was these that would make Jews tolerable to other people.²²

Not surprisingly Wessely’s pedagogic program met with strong opposition in many quarters of the Jewish community. Although he himself insisted that the knowledge of ritual law (what he called *torat ha-elohim* or divine teachings) was the ultimate level of perfection incumbent upon Jews, his emphasis on rational and universally accessible knowledge (*torat ha-adam*; human teachings) was nevertheless seen as an heretical abandonment of Jewish traditional learning. This polarised, black-and-white characterization of Wessely’s program has made its way into much later historiography. Haskalah has been presented as an abandonment of Jewish ‘authenticity,’ an internalization of ‘alien wisdom,’ and ultimately a succumbing to the age-old effort by Christians to eliminate Jewish civilisation, carried out now in the name of secularisation rather than religious conversion.²³ But is this a fair criticism of Haskalah?

I would argue that such a characterisation is far too simplistic. Wessely and his fellows were in fact continuing a long-standing Jewish program of participating in the elite cultures of surrounding societies through constant hermeneutic, translation, and reinterpretation of *both* Jewish and non-Jewish bodies of knowledge.²⁴ True, the emerging nation-state and the contemporary expansion of the capitalist economy

22 Wessely uses the term *nimosiyot* [from Greek *nomos*] to describe these social norms. The term is used in rabbinic literature to refer specifically to non-Jewish laws, while in medieval philosophical literature it takes on the added sense of norms which are specifically human and conventional as opposed to divine in origin. Cf. Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, *Milon ha-Lashon ha-Ivrit* (Berlin: 1908) as well as Jacob Klatzkin, *Otzar ha-Munahim ha-Pilosofiyim* III (New York: Philipp Feldheim, 1968), s. v. In modern Hebrew, the term has come to refer to “politeness” *tout court*, indicating perhaps the success of Wessely’s ambition to naturalise European bourgeois mores among Jews.

23 Isaac Eisenstein-Barzilay articulated the long-standing view of radical opposition between modernisers and traditionalists in “The Treatment of the Jewish Religion in the Literature of the Berlin Haskalah,” *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research [PAAJR]* 24 (1955): 39–68 and Eisenstein-Barzilay, “The Ideology of the Berlin Haskalah,” *PAAJR* 25 (1956): 1–37, especially from page 33. For a recent overview of the broader process see Shmuel Feiner, *The Origins of Jewish Secularization in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2011 [Hebrew original 2010]). On the literary circles of the modernisers see the important contributions in Shmuel Feiner, Zohar Shavit, Natalie Naimark-Goldberg, and Tal Kogman, eds., *The Library of the Haskalah: The Creation of a Modern Republic of Letters in Jewish Society in the German-Speaking Sphere* [Hebrew] (Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 2014).

24 I intentionally restrict my comments to interaction with “elite” culture, knowing full well that my statement begs all sorts of important questions about broader contacts with what is often called “popular” culture. For that matter, it is also difficult to define what we might mean by “elite” in this comparative context since for Jews, a relatively small and widely dispersed group without powerful institutions of church and state, we cannot use the usual, institution-based, definitions. I use the term here to refer to those highly literate strata among Jews and non-Jews—we might

were now offering new social opportunities to individual Jews, and these in turn threatened to destabilise the existing structures and internal norms of the traditional Jewish community. But such sociological considerations are a separate matter. In and of itself, Wessely's maskilic educational program was neither new nor especially radical. Rather it was very much part of that long tradition stretching back to the Jews of the Hellenised era in Palestine and Egypt, the medieval philosophers in Arabic- and Latin-speaking countries, and early modern Jewish writers in Italy. Wessely himself was deeply embedded in that tradition and identified with it. No more striking proof is needed than the language of his pamphlet. Not only did he write it in Hebrew rather than German; he used that register of the Hebrew language developed by and for the medieval philosophical writers.²⁵ His title and phrasing come from biblical and rabbinic literature. Even his seemingly radical suggestion of two Torahs—that of God and that of man—with emphasis on the latter—was a well-established trope that had appeared, for example, in the popular ethical work, *Sefer ha-Hayim* by Rabbi Hayim ben Bezalel of Friedburg.²⁶ Approaching Haskalah as a radical break from Jewish tradition misses the movement's decisive emphasis on continuity and its intensive involvement with repurposing the Jewish intellectual legacy.

call them intellectuals—whose discourse sometimes intersected over sets of common vocabularies, texts, objectives and standards.

- 25 See note 22 for one specific example. The development of Hebrew language usage in the early modern period can serve as an important—and so far underexplored—key to Jewish intellectualism not only of maskilim in central Europe but also in the Sephardic diaspora stretching from Palestine to Amsterdam and beyond. See, for example, my comments on the language of Raphael Meldola of Livorno in Bernard D. Cooperman, “Defining Deviance, Negotiating Norms: Raphael Meldola in Livorno, Pisa, and Bayonne,” in *Religious Communities and Cultural Transformations in the Early Modern Western Sephardic Communities*, ed. Joseph Kaplan, (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 157–194 and especially 167.
- 26 Rabbi Hayim ben Bezalel (1520–1588), often referred to as simply the brother of the more famous MaHaRaL (Rabbi Loew of Prague), was a distinguished scholar in his own right. His moralistic *Sefer ha-Hayim*, (written in 1573 but first published in Cracow, 1592–93; reprinted in Amsterdam, 1712–13), also opted for the Torah of Man over the elitist Torah of God. Of course, the sixteenth-century rabbi was using the terms quite differently than was Wessely, understanding the Torah of Man as the rules of daily conduct incumbent on the pious Jew while reserving the Torah of God for more abstract, theological, concepts contained in kabbala and philosophy. One might imagine Wessely picking up this phrase from pietistic discourse with a bit of a twinkle in his eye. Nevertheless, what is significant is that the phrase was well established in rabbinic literature as was its implicit hierarchical division of Jewish education and practice. Wessely was intentionally building on firm foundations. The phrase “torat ha-adam” occurs biblically in 2 Samuel 7; its meaning there is not at all clear and is debated among the classical commentators. The phrase recurs as part of the Jewish discussions about curriculum and the relative weight of gentile and Jewish knowledge systems; see for example the commentary to Proverbs 1 in Rabbi Hayim ben Atar, *Rishon le-Tsiyon* (Istanbul: 1750; fol. 132a; expanded reprint ed. Moses Schwarz, Bnei Brak: 2018, III, 160).

The Ambivalence of Traditional Jewish Periodisation

These Jewish intellectuals of the eighteenth century and later could draw upon well-established building blocks as they began to construct (or reconstruct) the Jewish past in modern terms. To use the terminology of our book: there were already traditional *chronologies* upon which they could draw to divide and rank periods of past Jewish time, thus to anchor their conception of the ‘modern’ present. These inherited Jewish periodisations had been expressed in religious terminologies. History was structured around crucial turning points in the relation between God and the Jewish people.²⁷ Biblical events such as the revelation at Sinai, the entry into the Land of Israel, the establishment of the First Temple, the First Exile and Return, the Second Temple and the Second Exile were selected out and woven into a narrative whose significance was the evolving binding authority of the Law. The political changes that lie at the heart of much of the biblical narrative—the shift from tribal confederation to centralised monarchy, from dual kingdoms to a single surviving Jewish state based in Jerusalem, and then eventually to a theocracy under foreign imperial surveillance—these shifts in government structure were less important to the emerging rabbinic leadership as it gradually shaped the Jewish historical narrative. The rabbis had few, if any, political institutions to defend. Rather, their periodisation schemes were aimed at projecting themselves back into the past as legal interpreters and normative arbiters; they anachronistically leveled differences and minimised change so as to foreground their own historical role.²⁸

The rabbis went carefully about the task of establishing their own claim to an unbroken chain of tradition and authority, framing a hierarchical chronology of more or less formal institutions that had promulgated religious norms. They subsumed any element of deviance or innovation within this single continuous line of homogenous, received tradition (*kabbala*). The succession of eras stretched from Sinai to the end of the Second Temple period: “Moses received the Torah at Sinai and passed it on to Joshua, Joshua to the elders, the elders to the prophets, and the prophets gave it to

27 I take here as a given the generally accepted Jewish “rabbinic calendar” that was stabilised by the tenth century CE, and dated the world as created in 3761 BCE. There were other Jewish solar and lunar calendar systems. For their relation to other calendars of the surrounding societies see Mark E. Cohen, *Festivals and Calendars of the Ancient Near East* (Bethesda: CDL Press, 2018). For a convenient overview of Jewish calendars see Sacha Stern, *Calendar and Community: A History of the Jewish Calendar, Second Century BCE—Tenth Century CE* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

28 On the concern for history and historical periodisation in the literature of the classical rabbis see M. D. Herr, “The Conception of History among the Sages,” in *Proceedings of the Sixth World Congress of Jewish Studies III* (Jerusalem: 1977), 129–142; Chaim Milikowsky, ed. and trans., *Seder Olam* (Ph. D. thesis, Yale University, 1981).

the Men of the Great Assembly”²⁹ Subsequent eras were ordered chronologically, named after a series of authoritative books such as the Mishna and its subsequent expansion, the Gemara, or simply listed in order (*Rishonim* or Early Ones; *Aharonim* or Later Ones). And here we encounter a crucial challenge: Judaism, like other revealed religions, saw each subsequent generation as further removed from the original inspiration and therefore necessarily less authoritative within the tradition. “If the earlier ones were as angels, then we are as men,” intoned the Babylonian Talmud. “And if the earlier ones were as men, then we are as asses.”³⁰ But how then to accommodate change or adjust to the needs of a new era? Unlike Christian and Muslim communities that could legitimise change through the authority of religious institutions supported by powerful mechanisms of state, Jews had difficulty in articulating theories through which to justify, much less promote, new ideas and spiritual innovations.³¹ The solution they found is expressed in the aphorisms with which they neutralised any challenge to the authority of hegemonic discourse—for example, in the metaphor that we are “dwarfs perched on the shoulders of giants [who can therefore] see more and farther than our predecessors.” It is not surprising that these useful maxims were shared widely among medieval and early modern Christian, Muslim and Jewish writers. The metaphor of dwarfs and giants, for example, is attributed to Bernard of Chartres.³²

But however much they had to explain away its implications, the concept of spiritual decline was itself extremely useful to the rabbis. For the Jewish minority, under constant cultural challenge from its surroundings and without strong institutional

29 This is the opening statement of tractate *Avot*, part of the Third-Century legal summary known as the Mishna which has served as the basis of Jewish practice down through the ages.

30 BT, *Sabbath*, 112b.

31 The legitimacy of successive interpretation, innovation, and legislation is the focus of much complex discussion in rabbinic literature, and it has become even more prominent in recent times when the fundamentalist claims of an ever-growing *haredi* (ultra-Orthodox) rabbinate compete for authority against other systems of Jewish knowledge in and out of Israel. On the institutional power of the medieval *geonic* academies in the Middle East and the twelfth-century Maimonidean arguments against that authority, see G. J. Blidstein, “The License to Teach and its Social Implications in Maimonides” [Hebrew], *Tarbiz* 51 (5742): 577–587, reprinted in *Likutei Tarbiz V: Mikra’a be-Heker ha-RaMBaM* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1985), 416–426. In general, however, the conditions of the diaspora have not easily tolerated any all-encompassing claim to authority within the Jewish world.

32 The issue arose most acutely when whole bodies of “foreign” or “alien” knowledge were imported together with their own timelines of authority. In such cases, not only specific concepts but the entire structure of received wisdom was challenged. For the Islamic world, see Dimitri Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early Abbasid Society (2nd–4th / 8th–10th Centuries)* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998). For Jewish texts, see Abraham Melamed, *On the Shoulders of Giants: The Debate between Moderns and Ancients in Medieval and Renaissance Jewish Thought* [Hebrew] (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2004). See also Robert Merton, *On the Shoulders of Giants: A Shandean Postscript* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1985).

support for its intellectual, literary and religious autonomy, spiritual decline could itself justify innovation within the formal tradition. For example, one of rabbinic Judaism's core ideas was that Revelation was actually binate: a written Torah dictated to Moses and remaining unchanged over time, and an 'oral' Torah which was to be passed on carefully from generation to generation but never committed to writing. This Oral Law was to remain unwritten specifically in order to provide a measure of flexibility in response to changing needs. And yet, it *had* been committed to writing in the various texts associated with the Mishna and Talmud! How to explain this forbidden change? The rabbis found an answer: there had been a crisis generated by times of trouble and the people had begun to forget. Innovation had been permitted *because* of decline; writing down the 'oral law' was actually a way of preserving rather than changing. As further effort produced ever more texts—whether explanatory, codificatory, or even legislative—these were again justified as necessary by the fact that we are never quite equal to our ancestors. Exactly the same logic was applied when mystical works, theoretically the esoteric prerogative of only a few *cognoscenti*, began to appear in public during the High Middle Ages and even more so when these books were printed in the sixteenth century. The break with tradition was 'allowed' on the grounds that in the present sad state of affairs, one could no longer be sure the works would be preserved. Jewish traditionalism thus argued consistently that any innovation was in fact not an innovation at all but rather a necessary compromise with orality and practice in the face of the looming danger of even greater decline and loss. The claim to unbroken tradition could be defended even in the face of acknowledged change.

At least as central—and as multivalent—as the notion of decline was the concept of exile [Hebrew: *galut*]: specifically, the Jewish exile from the Land of Israel.³³ Modern historians have pointed out that the term 'exile' can be applied only conditionally to the two moments that Jewish tradition famously labeled as such. The First Exile, dated 586 BCE, is actually made up of several events stretching over decades, and according to various biblical sources, it seems to have affected only a small part of the elite population of Judea. The Second Exile, associated with the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in 70 CE, is actually a misnomer. First, at that point the majority of Jews already lived outside the Land of Israel in a diaspora that stretched from Persia to Egypt and throughout the Mediterranean basin.³⁴ Second, Jewish life

33 For a still useful overview of this concept in the Jewish narration of the vicissitudes of historical experience, see Jizchak Fritz Baer, *Galut* (Berlin: 1936); English (New York: Schocken Library, 1947). The book was written as a response to German Jewry's despair over the rise of Nazi anti-Semitism and was reprinted as a survey of the Jewish "Zionist" response to history throughout the ages. Written in a different tone but using a similar framework is David Biale, *Power and Powerlessness in Jewish History* (New York: Schocken, 1986).

34 Erich S. Gruen, *Diaspora: Jews Amidst Greeks and Romans* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

continued to flourish in what would come to be called Palestine for centuries to come. But if therefore the term ‘exile’ is inaccurate when applied to the Jewish diasporas of the First Century, C. E., it was nevertheless central to the rabbinic narrative. *Galut* became the label, the cause, and the very definition of that era when Jews could only partially fulfill their religious obligations. As Jews declared regularly in their synagogue liturgy:

On account of our sins, we were exiled from our country and driven away from our land, and we are not able to go up [on pilgrimage to Jerusalem] and [perform the commandment] to appear [in the Temple] and to bow down before You, nor to perform our obligatory [sacrifices] in the house that You chose, that great and sacred house named for You....³⁵

The exile was a punishment even if, as the years and centuries went by, the original sin that had merited such ongoing suffering was not easy to define.³⁶ With time, mystics gave the exile further importance. The divine presence itself was in exile, accompanying the Jews on their enforced wanderings. Indeed, it was the task of the Jewish people, through proper observance of the commandments, to redeem the Holy One and lead it back to its home.

Just as we saw with the concept of decline, however, the *chronotope* of exile could become a powerful tool with which to explain, and neutralise, cultural threats from the surrounding societies.³⁷ In the Middle Ages and the Early Modern era, Jewish scholars could attribute any perceived sense of intellectual or cultural inferiority to the sufferings of exile. They could, moreover, use exile to justify the acceptance and internalisation of what were clearly borrowings from surrounding societies. Generation after generation of Jewish philosophers and scientists made the claim that “alien wisdom” was in fact originally Jewish and had been taught to the gentiles by the greatest past sages of Judaism. Jews had lost this knowledge only because of exile, and it was now permissible to “reacquire” these teachings and skills.

35 This phrasing, taken from the additional service for the festivals, is echoed over and over in many parts of the Jewish liturgy.

36 Christians—who called themselves the “true Israel” and claimed supersession for the New Testament and Church vis-à-vis the “old covenant”—could associate the Jewish punishment with the great crime of deicide. For their part, Jews told a rather cumbersome tale of a mis-directed dinner invitation to demonstrate that the punishment was over a lack of brotherly love and common courtesy among Jews. They similarly rejected the Muslim doctrine of *tabrif* which argued that the Koran was the truest and purest version of Scripture and that Jews had falsified their scriptures.

37 I take the term ‘chronotope’ (time-space) from Mikhail Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982). On its use to define “invokable chunks of history that organize the indexical order of discourse,” see Jan Blommaert, “Chronotopes, Scales, and Complexity in the Study of Language in Society,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 44 (2015): 105–116.

Let me illustrate this with just one example taken from seventeenth-century Venice. Rabbi Leone Modena was well versed in critical historical reasoning and in the methods of textual dating and analysis that characterised humanist historiography in his day. His *The Lion Roars (Ari Nohem)*, a devastating attack on kabbalistic claims to religious authority, remains a fine piece of critical scholarship comparable, I think, to Lorenzo Valla on the Donation of Constantine.³⁸ Still, when trying to make the case for the permissibility of introducing contemporary (non-Jewish) styles of polyphonic music into the synagogue service, Modena asserted without hesitation that this was in fact the type of music sung by the Levites in the ancient Temple in Jerusalem. Jews, he argued, had forgotten it only because of the sufferings of the exile. For all his fine historical and critical sensitivity, in other words, Leone Modena chose to resort to the same powerful and well-established argument that Jewish philosophers had used for centuries in order to validate imitation of the outside, no matter how revolutionary, on the grounds that this was actually “ours” in the first place.³⁹ So also in the eighteenth century, these tried and true ideas served Wessely and his contemporaries well. The *maskilim* could, as before, blame Jewish backwardness on persecution, and they could use images of dwarfs on giants’ shoulders to justify however tentatively absorbing new knowledge.⁴⁰

But something had changed in the cultural challenge, and the *maskilim* knew it. The Renaissance, as its name implied, had sought a ‘rebirth’—that is, a reacquisition of a glorious past, and the Jews had responded accordingly by evoking (and inventing) their own glorious past. The Enlightenment, on the other hand, sought to shape new ideas

38 On Modena see Howard Adelman, “Success and Failure in the Seventeenth century Ghetto of Venice: The Life and Thought of Leon Modena (1571–1648)” (Brandeis University, Ph. D. thesis, 1985); *The Autobiography of a Seventeenth-Century Venetian Rabbi: Leon Modena’s Life of Judah*, translated and edited by Mark R. Cohen (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988). On his criticism of Jewish tradition generally see Talya Fishman, *Shaking the Pillars of Exile: ‘Voice of a Fool,’ an Early Modern Jewish Critique of Rabbinic Culture* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997). On Modena’s acute criticism specifically of kabbalistic claims to historical authenticity see Yaacob Dweck, *The Scandal of Kabbalah. Leon Modena, Jewish Mysticism, Early Modern Venice* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011). In my review of that work (*Religion and Literature* 47, no. 3 [Spring, 2014]), I suggested that the substantive, anti-kabbalistic thrust of Modena’s work was even more aggressive than Dweck had proposed.

39 It may be helpful to add here that this argument was accompanied by a parallel claim to the value of independent reason and a proud assertion of each man’s ability to know the truth. Jewish philosophers often justified “borrowing” foreign wisdom on the grounds that “one must [or may] accept the truth from whomever speaks it,” implying that there are standards for truth that stand outside the received tradition. Moses ben Maimon, for example, uses this argument to justify citing the works of the non-Jewish philosophers.

40 On the use of this image by two east European reformers of the Haskalah era see Hillel Levine, “Dwarfs on the Shoulders of Giants”: A Case Study in the Impact of Modernization on the Social Epistemology of Judaism,” *Jewish Social Studies* 40, no. 1 (Winter, 1978): 63–72.

and foster new discoveries. It was progress, and not mere recovery, that would be the mark of all things desirable. This was an era of discovery and invention. The assertion that human history was a record of decline seemed palpably nonsensical. Jews' sufferings in exile had not merely resulted in a loss of knowledge; it had eroded their cognitive skills. The new age demanded that Jews change themselves in order to keep up. Truth was no longer contained within a fixed body of knowledge, revealed or known already in the distant past. It was therefore no longer enough for maskilim to lay out a claim that those unchanging ancient verities had originally been Jewish. It was now necessary for Jews actively to take part in the excitement of scientific and moral progress. There was a growing sense of shame at Jews' failure to keep up with this dynamic present—not only with regard to the natural sciences but even with regard to religion itself.

We can hear this change in the angry tones of the Berlin banker and *maskilic* leader, David Friedländer, in a letter to his friend, Meir Eiger in 1792. Friedländer pictures contemporary Christians engaged in a mission to inspect their faith, to purify its moral message, and to separate out the wheat from the chaff. Jewish rabbis, on the other hand, were still preoccupied with trivial rules. Citing recent books by leading rabbis in Altona and Prague, Friedländer cries out against their dismissive treatment of reason and rails against their assertion that translating the Bible into the vernacular had been a tragedy for the Jewish people that had brought darkness to the world.⁴¹ A few years later (1799), Friedländer followed up with an open letter (*Sendschreiben*) to the prominent Berlin Protestant leader, Wilhelm Teller. In it, he reiterated his assumption of progressive change in Christian circles and even envisioned some form of ultimate accommodation between the two religious denominations. Perhaps to his surprise, Friedländer discovered almost immediately that he had seriously misjudged the extent of change and flexibility in contemporary Christian circles—at least when it came to basic dogmas like the divinity of Christ or a willingness to recognise equal status for Judaism. A flurry of rejectionist pamphlets came from Christian writers. Jewish writers were even more vociferous in their condemnations, dismissing the proposal as a request for “dry baptism” and the author himself as a “dummy.”⁴² We need not go so

41 Joseph Meisl, “David Friedländer’s Letters,” *Historische Schriften* II (Vilna: 1937), 390–412, 403–406. The abbreviated translation of Friedländer’s letter provided in Reinhartz and Mendes-Flohr, *The Jew in the Modern World*, 96–97, misunderstands several passages and does not, I think, give a full sense of the author’s concerns. Friedländer’s criticism is directed at R. Raphael Cohen, *Marpe Lashon* (Altona: 1790) and Ezekiel Landau, *Ziyon le-Nefesh Haya* (Prague: 1783). The tradition that translating the Torah into Greek (the legendary account of the origin of the Septuagint) had been a source of tragedy and mourning is mentioned, for example, in Joseph Caro’s authoritative code of Jewish law, *Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim*, § 580.5.

42 Friedländer has been the subject of several recent studies; see especially Uta Lohmann, *David Friedländer: Reformpolitik im Zeichen von Aufklärung und Emanzipation. Kontexte des preußischen Judenedikts vom 11. März 1812* (Hannover: Wierhahn Verlag, 2013). For criticism by Jewish authors see for example Heinrich Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, Fourth period, chap. 4: “Die Measim

far. Though stillborn, Friedländer's proposal is a fascinating exploration of the possibilities for toleration based not on secularisation or a radical division of church and state but on conscious and principled religious syncretism. In the present context, what is most significant is the author's implicit challenge to the traditional Jewish *chronotope* and its emphasis on the immutable glory of the past. Jews, he believed, would have to internalise the new teleology: the past was antiquated and the present was modern.

And it is specifically here that we catch the characteristic, and in a sense paradoxical, result of the new *maskilic* periodisation. We might have expected Friedländer simply to abandon the Jewish past. He did not. Rather, like his fellow *maskilim*, he committed himself to its preservation and re-interpretation. What was needed first was a reform of education. The rabbis' obsession with trivia had led to a situation in which most Jews could no longer articulate the meaning of their faith, their God, or their truth. If the inner truth of Judaism were to be protected and promoted, Jews had to gain access to it through a new kind of Jewish school and new textbooks. Jewish youth, he had complained to Eiger, would no longer undertake the rigors of traditional learning and they could no longer read the Hebrew texts. Friedländer therefore founded and directed a new kind of Jewish community school. He continued Mendelssohn's work of translating the Bible into German. He composed a textbook for his students. Equally striking, he and his fellow *maskilim* slowly began the work of redefining Jewish knowledge, shifting it from memorisation of biblical and rabbinic texts to appreciation of their historical context. It was this historical approach, he believed, that would give Jewish doctrines renewed significance.⁴³

The Call for a Turn to History

We are so used to thinking of the Enlightenment as a future-directed call for progress that it is startling to realise how central in the Haskalah's response to crisis was its call for a turn to the past, and to the study of history. From the very start, Wessely and his fellows included history in their agenda for curricular change. Already in *Nahal Besor*, the 1783 prospectus for their new periodical, *Ha-Measef*, they announced their intention to publish

und der judenchristliche Salon," <http://www.zeno.org/nid/200027452224>, accessed July 31, 2022: "Wenn der Verfasser nicht ein solcher Flachkopf gewesen wäre, hätte man das *Sendschreiben* für eine Satire auf das lieblose Christentum halten können."

43 "The Emergence of Historical Consciousness in Modern Judaism" has been explored and emphasised for the nineteenth century by Ismar Schorsch, *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, vol. 28 (1983): 413–437, reprinted in Schorsch, *From Text to Context*, 177–204. See more recently Shmuel Feiner, *Haskalah and History* (Portland, OR: Littman Library, 2002).

biographies of great men of Israel (*Biografie der Grossen undzer Natzion*), rabbis and great scholars of the land, leaders and those famous for knowledge, from among the honored merchants and the wealthy among the people who maintain the house of Israel with pediments of silver, and who stand before kings to speak well of their people. [We will relate] the place and date of their birth and the events that befell them, and the good they did among their brethren. The enlightened reader will understand the great value of this to enlightened youth over and above the pleasure one gets from [learning about] what happened to famous people as times change and events evolve.⁴⁴

Apparently, such an interest in human history was totally novel, so much so that the publishers were worried that their interest in it might not be understood. They found it necessary to transliterate the German phrase (which I have tried to spell out here) and insert it parenthetically into their Hebrew call for biographical treatments to make sure readers would grasp an idea so innovative in Hebrew circles. They assured their readers that these reports about great men who helped their people would not be trivial obituaries like those in the popular press. In the first issue of their journal they even took pains to include what they represented to be a letter from an anonymous subscriber applauding their proposal and reiterating the value of historical accounts.

The call for Jewish historical knowledge was not entirely innovative. Obviously, much of biblical literature was historical, but it has been generally asserted that medieval Jews had abandoned the writing of history. Scholars have pointed, for example, to Maimonides who famously dismissed chronicles as a waste of precious time.⁴⁵ It is nevertheless clear that individual Jews had certainly continued to pen historical

44 The prospectus as well as 130 issues of the periodical *Ha-Meassef* (Königsberg and elsewhere: 1783–1811) are available through the National Library of Israel online collection of historical Jewish newspapers at jpress.org.il; unfortunately, it is difficult to direct the non-Hebrew reader to the URL for a specific page. On the site, the prospectus is included with the first issue of the journal (1783 though the title page refers to 1784); the call for historical content appears on fol. 2–3 of the prospectus. The anonymous letter is on pages 9–10 of the first issue, October 2, 1783. The literary history of biography and autobiography in Hebrew literature is itself quite complicated; see Marcus Moseley, *Being for Myself Alone* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006); Alan Mintz, *Banished from Their Father's Table: Loss of Faith and Hebrew Autobiography* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989).

45 See Salo Baron, “The Historical Outlook of Maimonides,” in *History and Jewish Historians* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1964), 113–114; Kenneth Seeskin, “Maimonides’ Sense of History,” *Jewish History* 18 (2004): 129–145. The idea that medieval Jews abandoned the study of history, emphasised by Yosef H. Yerushalmi in his influential *Zakhor* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982), depends very much, of course, on a rather narrow definition of what constitutes ‘history.’ As a portrayal of pre-modern Jewish historiography this approach has been increasingly rejected by historians.

accounts of greater or narrower focus. They had written chronicles, they had thought it important to recount their people's fate, and they had even grappled with the radical implications of Renaissance humanist historicism.⁴⁶ This trend will now be picked up in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

What must be stressed is that the Haskalah did not aim at familiarising Jews with the "secular" past shared with the surrounding society. By calling for historical study, it meant, both implicitly and explicitly, the "scientific" or secular study of Jewish texts and Jewish history as a way of reframing the Jewish historical narrative, arriving at a better understanding of Judaism, and reconceptualising the Jewish group experience. This interest in the Jewish past and in its textual and linguistic tradition was not, as has sometimes been suggested, merely an initial moderation that would soon be abandoned in favor of more radical positions. It would remain central to the intellectual and cultural effort that called for a return to the basic forms of textual study that had long characterised Jewish knowledge, albeit with new critical and comparative tools.⁴⁷ The demand to learn *about* the outside society was also a call to learn *from* it, to use its rapidly developing historiographical tools to retrieve lost texts and fashion a new, internal Jewish narrative. Jewish historical studies would soon multiply, aiming at various markets: school textbooks,⁴⁸ the popular reader, and a growing group of scholarly historians who would gradually come together to shape the academic field of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* (Science of Judaism) and its contemporary articulation in academic Jewish Studies.⁴⁹ As each author selected the events, persona, or texts

46 See for example Azariah de' Rossi, *The Light of the Eyes*, translated and annotated by Joanna Weinberg (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001).

47 See, for example, Charles Manekin "Steinschneider's 'Decent Burial': A Reappraisal," in ed. Howard Kreisel, *Study and Knowledge in Jewish Thought*, I (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 2006), 239–251; Reimund Licht, "Moritz Steinschneider's Concept of a History of Jewish Literature," in *Studies on Steinschneider: Moritz Steinschneider and the Emergence of the Science of Judaism in Nineteenth-Century Germany*, ed. Reimund Licht and Gad Freudenthal (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012), 151–174.

48 For example, in 1808 David Fränkel, director of the Jewish school in Dessau, published *Geschichte der Juden von ihrer Rückkehr aus der babylonischen Gefangenschaft bis zur Zerstörung des zweyten Tempels: nach Flavius Josephus. Zunächst für die jüdische Jugend bearbeitet und mit erläuternden Anmerkungen begleitet* (Vienna: Carl Ferdinand Beck). For more on Jewish textbooks, see Annegret Völpel and Zohar Shavit, *Deutsch-jüdische Kinder- und Jugendliteratur. Ein literaturgeschichtlicher Grundriß* (Stuttgart: 2002).

49 The fascinating story of this intellectual movement that would grow from the studies of individuals to Jewishly funded academies specialising in the training of rabbis, Jewish teachers, and other communal functionaries, is gradually being told. See, for example, David N. Myers and David B. Ruderman, eds., *The Jewish Past Revisited: Reflections on Modern Jewish Historians* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), and Andrew Bush, *Jewish Studies: A Theoretical Introduction* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2011.) For a participant's view of the American transition to, and professionalisation of, Jewish Studies, see Michael Meyer's plenary address to the Association for Jewish Studies (2013), published in that organisation's bulletin, *Perspectives on Jewish History*

through which to mark off successive eras, through which to construct his periodisation of Jewish history, he inevitably kept one eye on the demands of the challenge from external, ‘non-Jewish’ conceptions of knowledge while trying to reconstruct the ‘authentic’ Jewish experience. Discovering the Jewish past was not just, as one author put it, a substitute “faith of fallen Jews.”⁵⁰ But the Jewish past was now being constructed in a negotiated space.

An interest in history and in the categorisation of time was, I am arguing, essential to the modernising project itself, and modernising Jews took it up from the start. Indeed, for Jews recovery of their past has been an especially crucial undertaking, one that was, and remains to this day, also highly fraught and freighted with consequences though these may vary with time and place.⁵¹ The claims to having a history and to not being a historical ‘fossil’ return over and over.⁵² At the end of the nineteenth century the polyhistor Simon Dubnow would declare the Jews “the historical nation

(Spring 2014). Meyer emphasised the plural form used in the Association’s name as an intentional choice reflecting the growing multiplicity of approaches within the field.

- 50 In *Zakhor* (see note 45), Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi famously defined the function of historical study as “the faith of fallen Jews.” David N. Myers and Alexander Kaye used the phrase to title the collection of Yerushalmi’s essays they edited (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2014). Yerushalmi’s book had, and continues to have, an impact far beyond what the author could have expected from a brief set of semi-popular lectures, a point that itself deserves further research. Suffice it to say here that the book and its periodisation of Jewish historiography was itself very much a product of its own time and of the particular circumstances of the author’s career. I hope to deal with this further in another context.
- 51 As just one example of the close interplay between academic, political, and personal views of the Jewish historical narrative, see Anita Shapira, “The Jewish People Deniers,” *The Journal of Israeli History* 28, no.1 (March 2009): 63–71, her lengthy review of Shlomo Sand’s Hebrew *When and How Was the Jewish People Invented* (Tel-Aviv: Resling, 2008), pre-printed by the Israeli Democracy Institute, an Israeli “non-partisan think-and-do tank” that “works to bolster the values and institutions of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state,” accessed May 20, 2009, <https://en.idi.org.il/articles/11776>. Rejecting Sand’s French model of the nation, Shapira puts the emphasis on the fact that Jews everywhere “retained *the common consciousness of a community with a shared destiny, which found expression in moments of crisis* such as the ransom of hostages or the Damascus Blood Libel.” [Emphasis my own—BDC]. Jewish feelings of community are assumed to be tied to the possibility of political action, and the centrality of anti-Semitism as the target of national identity is for her a given.
- 52 The reference is to Arnold Toynbee’s controversial label of present-day Jews. For a Jewish response, see Maurice Samuel, *The Professor and the Fossil: Confusion, Prejudices, and Anti-Intellectual Distortions in Arnold J. Toynbee’s A Study of History* (New York: Knopf, 1956). Toynbee’s references to the Jews as fossil are brought up in an interesting 1961 debate between Yaakov Herzog (then Israeli Ambassador to Canada) and Professor Toynbee over morality in the Israeli-Palestinian struggle: https://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/collections/archival-recordings/fbr-462_4461/herzog-toynbee-debate-yaakov-herzog-arnold-toynbee, accessed July 31, 2022.

of all times”—indeed “the most historical” nation, *historicissimus*.⁵³ Some decades later Salo Baron, of whom we have already spoken, would begin his *Social and Religious History of the Jews*, by arguing for the uniqueness of the Jews’ historical experience lived “in spite of nature,” and “emancipated from state and territory.”⁵⁴ Following the Holocaust, the philosopher Emil L. Fackenheim would write of the Jewish Return into History⁵⁵ giving existential significance to the Zionist insistence on an activist “Return to History.”⁵⁶ In different contexts and with different connotations, these authors and many others sought to fashion a modern history for Jews and to claim magisterial significance for the chronological description of the Jews’ past.⁵⁷

Benedict Anderson famously pointed out that co-optation of the past is a central aspect of the self-definition of modern nation states. For Jews, we might say the process worked in the opposite direction. Acquiring a past led to the demand for national identity. Historical narrative was intended to demonstrate that Jews belonged in the modern world. This vision would be popularised across denominational, political, and geographical lines and it would in turn become basic to Zionist political rhetoric where it would be instrumentalised for a wide variety of social, political, and even military purposes. But politicised or not, the call for chronologically ordered study of the Jewish past was, and remains, the fundamental Jewish cultural response to the challenge of the Jews’ metaphoric equivalent to decolonisation—an attempt to restore to Jewish individuals a sense of inner dignity by demonstrating Jewish agency, aesthetic sophistication, and participation in the shared values of the dominant society.

53 The phrases are taken from Simon Dubnow’s “Jewish History: Essay in the Philosophy of History,” (1893; translated into English in 1903 and reprinted in *Nationalism and History*, ed. Koppel S. Pinson [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1958], 251–324, here at 259). Note the stridency of Dubnow’s insistence on historical status and significance.

54 Salo Baron, *Social and Religious History of the Jews* (above nn. 8 and 10). Baron’s opening chapter, largely unchanged between the two editions, goes into great detail about the defining nature of history for Jews and for Judaism.

55 Emil L. Fackenheim, *The Jewish Return into History: Reflections in the Age of Auschwitz and a New Jerusalem* (New York: Schocken, 1980).

56 See David N. Myers, *Re-Inventing the Jewish Past: European Jewish Intellectuals and the Zionist Return to History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

57 To put this in context, none of these writers expected an ‘end to history,’ whether in traditional messianic terms or in the Hegelian sense. For them, history was and would be a constant and presumably never-ending struggle of good and evil. Their speculations centered in one way or another around the Jews’ participation in that process, and thus around Jews’ historical agency. This is linked to their conception of the nation as the agent of history and thus to their understanding of Jewish national identity.

Translatio Scientiae as Biography

Jews' turn to historical thinking was more than an abstract intellectual exercise. It was shaped by the real-world experiences of individuals who were seeking to make their way into the new contexts of cultural activity and professionalisation that the modern era gradually offered. The rhetoric of history and the terminology of periodisation, they discovered, was the "coin of the realm" with which they could buy status—both in the surrounding world and within their own communities. To forget this very personal and biographical aspect of historical periodisation is to miss an important aspect of the periodisation process.⁵⁸

I would argue that when cultural worlds interact, confrontation and compromise are experienced not just in the abstract but on a very personal level by the people involved. *Translatio scientiae* involves the translation—literally, the relocation—of not just ideas but also of intellectuals who move from one culture to another, from one system of associations and hierarchies of significance to another. Personal disruption and disorder are inherent and inevitable in such border crossing, and stories of failure deserve as much attention and prestige as the few extraordinary success stories to whom their coreligionists proudly point as "the Jewish contribution to civilization."⁵⁹ Cultural middle men, by default often what we today call "public intellectuals," are tasked with carrying ideas back and forth. To accomplish their task, they must be able to claim status for themselves in both worlds, a status which in each case paradoxically relies on their self-presentation as representative of the "Other." To the outside society they must represent the 'authenticity' of their roots; but to their community of origin, should they decide to return, they may seem suspect and contaminated unless they can demonstrate the power of the new knowledge. The challenge, to phrase the matter in a modern terminology, is how to refashion their 'image' in order to 'sell' themselves and the knowledge they bring with them in each environment. How do they create their own identity and the identity of the world(s) they represent? There is inevitably personal instability. And the search for a new balance point, if it does not overwhelm them, can become a remarkable source of ongoing anxiety as well as creativity.

The trauma of dislocation is not unique to modernity nor are the maskilim the first Jewish cultural middlemen to suffer its anxieties. It is hard to imagine a more desperate statement of intellectual isolation than the letter of the early fourteenth-century Provençal Jewish philosopher and translator Kalonymos ben Kalonymos who had left his family behind for years of study of the Arabic language and philosophy in

58 Compare note 3.

59 On the history of this 'keyword' in Jewish history see Jeremy Cohen and Richard I. Cohen, eds., *The Jewish Contribution to Civilization: Reassessing an Idea* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2008).

Catalonia and then went on to a position as a philosophical translator at the court of Robert of Anjou in Naples. In a letter to his young son back in Provence this itinerant intellectual bemoans his personal and cultural isolation:

My heart is hollow within me when I remember you, and my body will not rest easy until I am with you Would that I could leave this land and these places. There is not one of our [Jewish] people here. The city is full of people crossing [literally: sanctifying] themselves and occupying themselves constantly with their religion. On every street they erect tapestried altars⁶⁰ for themselves. There are male statues [that is, representations of Christ] and forms of men and women [the Christian saints]. You can see nothing but people bowing down and genuflecting. May God extract me from this confusion into which I have fallen. I will not rest nor sleep, my food will have no taste, until I am among Jews, may it happen quickly and soon.⁶¹

Certainly the most detailed Jewish narrative of personal isolation and shame associated with being an outsider is the famous *Lebensgeschichte* of Salomon Maimon, the brilliant eighteenth-century Jewish intellectual who went from the poverty of a Lithuanian Jewish village to the worlds of German and German-Jewish high culture and ended living off the patronage of a Silesian minor noble.⁶² Maimon has been declared the most important Jewish philosopher of the Haskalah era; Immanuel Kant called him “one of my sharpest critics.” But what is significant to us is the enthusiasm with which Maimon told self-deprecatory stories about himself and his mis-adventures as a beggar and thief, a social misfit and the object of derision even within the Jewish community.

60 The reference to Ezekiel 16:16 is bitterly disparaging since the biblical phrase refers to platforms covered by multi-colored cloths that are beds used by prostitutes, and this interpretation of the somewhat unclear text is adopted by all the medieval Hebrew commentators.

61 The quote comes at the very end of Kalonymos’ *Ethical Epistle (Igeret Musar)* published by Isaiah Sonne in *Kovets al Yad*, n. s. 1 (XI), (Jerusalem: 1936): 92–110. See also Joseph Shatzmiller, “Minor Epistle of Apology of Rabbi Kalonymos ben Kalonymos” [Hebrew], *Sefunot: Studies and Sources on the History of the Jewish Communities in the East* 10 (1966): 7–52. For another perspective on the alienation of this fascinating medieval Jewish intellectual see Tova Rosen, “Circumcised Cinderella: The Fantasies of a Fourteenth-Century Jewish Author,” *Prooftexts* 20 (2000): 87–110. For a recent review of his contributions as well as the editing and dating of his work see Theodor Dunkelgrün, “Dating the *Even Bohan* of Qalonymos ben Qalonymos of Arles: a Microhistory of Scholarship,” *European Journal of Jewish Studies* 7, no. 1 (2013): 39–72.

62 Volume one of Maimon’s *Gesammelte Werke* (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1965–76) edited by Valerio Verra is the most recent edition of the German text. The most recent (and only complete) translation into English is by Paul Reitter, *The Autobiography of Solomon Maimon: The Complete Translation*, ed. Yitzhak Y. Melamed and Abraham Socher (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019).

That he sought to present himself as a modern-day Maimonides is well known.⁶³ But it is important to note as well how his memoir inverted the call to a history of great men that was so essential to the Haskalah. In his work, rabbis are ignorant or fools who can be manipulated, rich men are boors who don't appreciate genius, and even the leading maskilim are too "established" to accommodate the needs of a truly enlightened seeker after truth. Only Maimon himself stands outside the daily fray, and he, of course, keeps reminding the reader that, in the eyes of most of his Jewish contemporaries, he was a failure.

Maimon modeled his *Lebensgeschichte* (1792) on Rousseau's *Confessions*, the highly original autobiographical account of the search for individual identity that had appeared a decade before. But to read Maimon's account as a forward-moving tale of self-discovery like Rousseau's is to miss his purpose. Maimon's narrative is best understood, rather, if we compare it to the parodic self-presentations that these days we associate with some of our most successful ethnic comedians—entertainers and writers who serve the delicate role of apparently mocking themselves and their community of origin in order to humanise it in the eyes of the host society and moderate some of the overt hostility directed towards the former by the latter. Paradoxically, by emphasising the differences, the comic legitimises the shared humanity of the two sides. By giving humorous voice to stereotypes, the comic mutes intolerance. And by telling tales of origin, the comic gives comfort to other immigrants like himself who live in the threatening isolation of a new world. To be a comedian is of course not the only professional role available to such intermediary figures. They can serve as interlocutors and go-betweens bridging the two worlds as translators, negotiators, or tourist guides.⁶⁴ If they have the ability, they can use the ostensibly more elevated new language to demand recognition for the values of their heritage. In his wonderful short story "Odessa," for example, the Soviet-Jewish writer Isaac Babel highlighted the universal significance of the Jews of that Black Sea Port (and thus legitimated writing about them in Russian) on the ironic grounds that "they murder the Russian language there."⁶⁵ The middleman may become a story-teller, accepting the responsibility to preserve and retell the cultural patrimony.⁶⁶ But such a story-teller inevitably

63 Born Solomon ben Joshua, the author adopted the surname Maimon when he was close to thirty years old in an attempt to identify with Moses Maimonides, the medieval hero of rationalist Jews. On this and his sense of how he must appear to his readers, see Reitter, *Autobiography*, especially xv and 123–128.

64 Compare the opening remarks of Peter Burke, "Cultures of Translation in Early Modern Europe," in *Cultural Translation in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Peter Burke and R. Po-Chia Hsia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 7–38, 7.

65 Isaac Babel, "Odessa," in *You Must Know Everything: Stories 1915–1937*, trans. Max Hayward (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1966), 26–30.

66 This, I would argue, is clearly the agenda of Paulina Wengerova in writing her *Memoiren einer Grossmutter: Bilder aus der Kulturgeschichte der Juden Russlands im 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: 1913–1919).

recasts the tradition in new terms, reformulating its essence and its implications to appeal to a new audience.⁶⁷ The middleman may eventually break under the strain of a constantly negotiated identity, and even try to return home in search of the elusive safety of childhood memories. There he can claim some authority for his acquired knowledge.⁶⁸ But wherever the middleman ends up, he takes on the attributes of the trickster, constantly utilising sleight of hand to fascinate audiences and thus redefine old social norms.⁶⁹ All of these elements, I would suggest, help us understand the modern Jewish historian who reframes his people's history in the context of the modern academy.

See "A Life Unresolved," my afterword to Pauline Wengeroff, *Rememberings: The World of a Russian-Jewish Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, tr. Henny Epstein (Bethesda, MD: University Press of Maryland, 2000).

- 67 American Jewish writers have often equated their literary vocation with a moral or religious duty to recount and elevate the Jewish every-day, even if only in order to challenge its values. Thus, for example, the young American Jewish writer and poet Delmore Schwartz commissioned himself on reaching metaphorical adulthood to tell the agonising tales of his own Jewish family while, prophetic-like, he announces the coming doom. Schwartz took this sense of mission, as well as the title of his first and greatest story, "In Dreams Begin Responsibilities" (1935), from the epigraph to William Butler Yeats' *Responsibilities* (1914), itself a lyrical retelling of Irish tales. A generation later, Philip Roth would reframe Judaism into a social mission by imagining his character Noel Klugman (sic!) fulfilling the holy duties of the Jewish New Year not by praying in the synagogue but by working in a library that serves the needs of Newark, New Jersey's indigent black population; "Goodbye Columbus" the title story of *Goodbye Columbus* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1959), 97.
- 68 Whether it is possible to return is another matter. The gloomy forebodings of the American southern novelist Thomas Wolfe that *You Can't Go Home Again* (1940) are already to be found clearly expressed in the stories of the American Jewish journalist, activist, and novelist Abraham Cahan. See, for example his "The Imported Bridegroom" (1898).
- 69 I use the term "trickster" in the sense adopted by Natalie Zemon Davis, *Trickster Travels: A Sixteenth-Century Muslim Between Worlds* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006). The model of the protean cultural trickster is taken from the world of Native American mythologies described by anthropologists including Franz Boas and Paul Radin, and then taken up by psychologists like Carl Jung. For a summary see Mac Linscott Ricketts, *The Structure and Religious Significance of the Trickster-Transformer-Culture Hero in the Mythology of the North American Indians* (Ph. D. thesis, University of Chicago, 1964), summarised in "The North American Indian Trickster," *History of Religions* 5 (1966): 327–350. Jung's short essay, "On the Psychology of the Trickster-Figure" is available in English, among other places, in his *Four Archetypes* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), 135–152. Jung reminds us of analogies to the medieval carnival with its reversal of hierarchical order and to the alchemical figure of Mercurius. The trickster as daring subverter of social norms has also been found in Spanish Golden Age drama (e.g., Tirso de Molina, "El burlador de Sevilla y el convidado de piedra," [1630]). More recently, the trickster has become an important tool for literary scholars interested in examining the heroic roles of subaltern characters. For its importance in the interpretation of African American culture, see Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). It is my argument that the topos can be usefully applied also to Jewish historians operating in the language and framework of western universities.

The Ghetto as Jewish Time: Inventing the Ghetto to Create an Audience

With all this in mind, let us now return to Salo Baron and his article on “Ghetto and Emancipation,” an article which I suggested intentionally reframed the periodisation of Jewish history by challenging the narrative of progress that had been regnant for over a century. That long-established narrative had seen the present and future in positive terms. It had rooted Jewish progress in political liberalism and equated it with the admission of the Jews into the body politic of various nation states. Baron had argued instead that the modern era had cost the Jews their communal autonomy and cultural creativity. In this last section of this paper I would like to suggest that one way for us to appreciate and understand Baron’s argument is to view him as a cultural middle-man who, caught in his own personal dislocation, seeks to carry a message back and forth between multiple worlds. In order to flesh out this claim let me try then, albeit briefly, to give you a sense of the journalistic and personal context of the article and thus to outline the role of cultural go-between that its author was playing.

Baron’s article had appeared in *The Menorah Journal*, a magazine that has been called “one of the most exciting episodes in the history of the American-Jewish intellectual community.”⁷⁰ This journal was the brainchild of an undergraduate student organisation, The Menorah Society, established at Harvard University in 1906 and dedicated to fostering a humanistic interpretation of Judaism appropriate to the academic environment in which these first-generation American Jewish students found themselves. The Society soon found a ready audience among Jewish students on other American campuses. By 1913 chapters at various universities were loosely linked into the Intercollegiate Menorah Association, itself the institutionalised expression of what the founders proudly declared as “The Menorah Movement.” In 1915, there would be some thirty-five chapters, and this would eventually increase to eighty. And by 1915 the organisation had also begun publishing *The Menorah Journal*, a vehicle “For the Study and Advancement of Jewish Culture and Ideals.” The journal was intended to “supply important material for study and discussion, as well as stimulate thinking and active effort in behalf of Menorah ideals...the advancement of American Jewry and the spread of Hebraic culture.” The authors aspired to a general audience and dedicated themselves “to be absolutely non-partisan, an expression of all that is best in Judaism and not merely of some particular sect or school or locality or group of special interests... harking back to the past that we may deal more wisely with the present and the future.”⁷¹ In his “Greetings” published in the first issue of the journal,

70 Robert Alter, “Epitaph for a Jewish Magazine: Notes on the Menorah Journal,” *Commentary* 39, no. 5 (1965): 51–55.

71 “Editorial Statement” opening the first issue of *The Menorah Journal* (January 1915): 1–2.

the prominent educator Cyrus Adler made it clear that he saw the Association and the journal as a way of continuing the high tradition of Jewish learning and combating the ignorance of the three million American Jews who might otherwise be lost to Judaism or “maintain a Judaism ignorant of its language, its literature or its traditions.” He warned that “conditions abroad” might soon relocate the center of gravity of Judaism and the Jewish people to the American continent and saw the Association as part of the effort to create an American generation of leadership equal to the coming task.⁷² Louis Brandeis, in the same issue, wrote of the first Menorah Society as “a landmark in the Jewish Renaissance” which he confidently linked to the great promise of American brotherhood—something which itself “became the Jews’ fundamental law more than twenty-five hundred years ago.”⁷³ In a separate article, Brandeis idealised “the educated Jew.”⁷⁴ But the most telling remark, for our purposes, came from Stephen Wise, then rabbi of New York’s Free Synagogue. Wise quoted the goal articulated by Theodore Herzl (a “truly great Jew”) to transform “arme Judenjungen” [poor Jew boys] into “stolze junge Juden” [proud young Jews]. He hoped the Menorah Association marked a “sea-change” from the self-pitying Jewish youth of the past into self-knowing, self-revering, and self-respecting Jews who no longer judged themselves by the opinions of others.⁷⁵ “No Jew can be truly cultured who Jewishly uproots himself,” Wise declared. “The man who rejects the birthright of inheritance of the traditions of the earliest and virilest of the cultured peoples of earth is impoverishing his very being.”⁷⁶ From the very start, in other words, the publishers of *The Menorah Journal* and their supporters saw the task of Jewish education as more than merely pedagogy; it was a cultural war to preserve tradition *and* to create an aggressively self-confident generation of Jews comfortable in their own identity. The journal would prepare them to take on the challenge of participating in the world around them *as Jews*.

Though there are significant differences in content and context, it is not irrelevant to notice the similarities between the activities and publications of the Menorah Society and those of another Jewish association of university students and recent graduates, the *Verein für Cultur and Wissenschaft der Juden* established in Berlin in 1819.⁷⁷ Like that organisation, the young activists in Boston sought to find a place for Jewish topics in

72 Cyrus Adler, “Greetings” opening the first issue of *The Menorah Journal* (January 1915): 3–4

73 Louis D. Brandeis, “Greetings” opening the first issue of *The Menorah Journal* (January 1915): 4

74 Louis D. Brandeis, “A Call to the Educated Jew,” *The Menorah Journal* (January, 1915), 13–19.

75 Theodore Herzl, *Gesammelte zionistische Werke*, V, 463 as cited by Michael Brenner, *Geschichte des Zionismus*, 2nd edition (Munich: CH Beck, 2005), 33. Wise’s greetings are on p. 12 of the first issue of the *Journal*.

76 Stephen Wise “Greetings” opening the first issue of *The Menorah Journal* (January 1915): 12.

77 On this organisation, its program and its publications see Ismar Schorsch, “Breakthrough into the Past: The *Verein für Cultur und Wissenschaft der Juden*,” reprinted from *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* (1988) in the author’s *From Text to Context*, 205–232.

the university curriculum and to redefine Jewish knowledge to fit academic categories. Just like the young German scholars (who included the poet Heinrich Heine, the legal historian Edouard Gans, and the brilliant Hebraist Leopold Zunz), “the founders of the [Menorah Society] embarked on a bold project to remake Jewish life by fashioning Jewish culture in the image of the scholarly world they had come to admire.”⁷⁸ Both associations were made up of first-generation university students who sought to establish a place for themselves and their learning in the Jewish world of their origins. Indeed, they were claiming the right to lead the Jewish world by teaching it to see itself properly. And in both cases, the young men armed themselves specifically with the tools of historical study. By publishing his paper in *The Menorah Journal* Baron was declaring himself part of this project to create a culturally sophisticated American Jewish youth—a project which, moreover, had a distinguished pedigree in the annals of Jewish scholarship. But unlike his German predecessors who wished to use history to overcome particularism and discover the universalist essence of Judaism, Baron made the remarkable and revolutionary argument that it was exactly in the particularist life of the Jewish group in pre-modern times that its significance and power was concentrated. The reason for the change is not hard to find. The German scholars were reacting to a society that still restricted Jewish membership in both political society and the academy, and the young intellectuals were seeking a way to formulate their identity in terms that would overcome their isolation. Baron and *The Menorah Journal*, on the other hand, were writing for an already emancipated, American Jewish society. They therefore had the luxury to look back on isolation in positive terms. That is why Baron could totally reverse the direction of the Jewish historical narrative and describe modernity and emancipation as defining a period of loss. He idealised pre-modern isolation in an effort to ‘create a market’ for what he had to sell.

But Baron was not the first to use *The Menorah Journal* to spread a vision of the difference between pre-modern and modern Jewish history, nor was he the first to base his distinction on a revised image of the ghetto. Cecil Roth’s essay, “In the Italian Ghetto,” had already appeared there two years earlier.⁷⁹ Roth’s paper was an odd combination of high vocabulary and sly jokes about cross-religious sexual dalliance. He presented the Italian Jewish ghetto through the eyes of an imagined American tourist, an eighteenth-century well-off American Christian making the Grand Tour of Italy. This outsider’s vantage point allowed Roth (who was himself British) to address his audience of young American Jewish readers—college-age and perhaps a little

78 Daniel Greene, *The Jewish Origins of Cultural Pluralism: The Menorah Association and American Diversity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 4. Greene argues that the Americans were consciously modelling themselves on the German *Verein*; see especially chapter 4.

79 Cecil Roth, “In the Italian Ghetto,” *The Menorah Journal* 12, no. 6 (December, 1926): 577–588. Roth had actually written the article in 1925, as he notes in “The Origin of *ghetto*: a final word,” *Romania* 60 (1934): 67–76, 68, n. 2, <https://doi.org/10.3406/roma.1934.4174>

older—with a wink and a smile. He could show off his own erudition and serve up considerable historical knowledge without appearing pedantic. He could adopt the enthusiastic astonishment of the tourist—the ‘shaking of the head’ that had made Burckhardt's *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* so delightful to read.

Roth was well aware of the negative aspects of ghetto life, but he went out of his way to minimise these. The Jews of Italy were not, he insisted, foreigners in their country. Indeed, they looked so much like Italians that a special badge had been necessary to identify them, a badge which Roth assures the readers Jews accepted as a sign of their own proud separateness. The Jewish synagogue had been endlessly fascinating, and non-Jewish elites came regularly to hear stimulating Jewish preachers. Crowding meant that ghetto houses became very tall, and Roth emphasised that overcrowding was allayed by internal Jewish legislation that protected poor Jews from rapacious landlords in the manner of contemporary New York City rent control. Jewish culture was rich and varied, shared in the Italian appreciation for music and art, and was even sprinkled with a degree of religious skepticism.

Roth's goal was necessarily a mixed message: he decried the invention of the restrictive ghetto institution while denying its worst possible implications. The result was a rather awkward periodisation; he twists himself into a rather odd chronological pretzel, making the Renaissance the birthplace of the Jewish Dark Ages, but only because Renaissance humanism was followed by Protestant Reform which in turn led to Catholic Counter-Reform that had oppressed the Jews. His desire to assure his readers of joyous Jewish participation in Renaissance Italy may explain also why Roth makes the rather odd mistake of assuming that the ghetto in Rome was the model for the one in Venice when in fact the opposite was true.⁸⁰ Although at various points the article seems to suggest that he was aware of the truth, in general he needed the ghetto to be the invention of Paul IV's fanaticism.

It is of course quite easy to point out the illogical self-contradictions, inaccuracies and elisions in Roth's view of Italian Jewish history. And we can forgive him. The young man was, after all, only 27, and although he had completed a Ph.D. on the history of Florence, he was still a relative tyro when it came to the Jews. But no matter how tendentious, Roth's effort here deserves our attention. Roth was using this particular publishing platform to legitimise the study of Jewish history for a young American audience, an audience which he felt was woefully undereducated in matters Jewish. He was shaping an alternative vision of the Jewish past, if you will a ‘usable’ Jewish past

80 “... At the middle of the sixteenth century, Italy, the ancient paradise of Jewish life in Europe, began for the first time to teach the lessons of persecution; and the Popes, hitherto the patrons and protectors of the Jew, entered upon the role of oppressor.” Roth begins the process with Paul IV and the bull *Cum nimis absurdum*. “Venice followed suit early in order to vindicate her disputed orthodoxy.” In fact, the ghetto in Venice dates from 1515/16; the one in Rome only from 1555.

for them, by focusing on Italian Jewry in specific contrast to the eastern European, Ashkenazi communities from which his readers or their parents hailed.⁸¹ We can hear this clearly in the exhortation with which he ends the article. He calls on his readers to “turn back...and to study, not without some sense of pride, how the storm-tossed Jewish soul could evolve its own characteristic life even at the darkest hour and adapt itself, indomitably and successfully, to the most adverse circumstances in its history.”⁸²

There can be little doubt that Baron had Roth’s essay before him as he sat down to write “Ghetto and Emancipation.” Like Roth, he used the Italian ghetto to represent the Jewish past and insisted on turning that much vilified institution into a locus of positive Jewish identity and communal life. Indeed, he even followed Roth’s error in stating that the ghetto began in papal Rome, thus blaming segregation of Jews on the Catholic Reformation. There may well have been a measure of personal rivalry or resentment between the two men. Baron had been appointed to his position at the Jewish Institute of Religion after Roth had tried out and been rejected for it.⁸³ Although the details are not completely clear, the incident left Roth angry and dismissive of the institution, the emerging field of Jewish history in America, and of Baron himself. In his programmatic article, “Jewish History for Our Own Needs,” published in *The Menorah Journal* in May of 1928, that is one month before Baron’s “Ghetto and Emancipation,” Roth complained about the low quality of academic Jewish historical studies, especially in Jewish-sponsored institutions:

Under Jewish patronage the right hand of Clio knoweth not what the left is doing. Works in English, French and above all German come to the general knowledge of the world of Jewish scholarship; those in other languages, or on more out-of-the-way subjects, generally do not....A recent German monograph by the newly-appointed Professor of History in one of the New York theological seminaries upon the Jewish Question at the Congress of Vienna failed to take account of a detailed study of the same question which appeared in the Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society!⁸⁴

81 Roth would maintain and develop this approach further in semi-popular books like *The Jews in the Italian Renaissance* and *History of the Jews of Italy*. For a critique see Robert Bonfil, “How Golden Was the Age of the Renaissance in Jewish Historiography?” *History and Theory*, Beiheft 27: *Essays in Jewish Historiography* (1988): 78–102; for a defense see David B. Ruderman, “Cecil Roth: Historian of Italian Jewry: A Reassessment,” in *The Jewish Past Revisited: Reflections on Modern Jewish Historians*, ed. David N. Myers and David B. Ruderman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 128–142.

82 Cecil Roth “In the Italian Ghetto” *The Menorah Journal* 12, no. 6 (December, 1926): 577–588, here at 588.

83 See Frederic Krome, “Creating ‘Jewish History for Our Own Needs’: The Evolution of Cecil Roth’s Historical Vision, 1925–1935,” *Modern Judaism* 21, no. 3 (October, 2001): 216–237.

84 Cecil Roth “Jewish History for Our Own Needs,” *The Menorah Journal* 14, no. 5 (May, 1928), 419–434.

Roth was referring to Baron's dissertation, published in Vienna and Berlin in 1920, where he had not cited the slightly earlier study on the same topic by Maxwell Kohler.⁸⁵

Whatever their personal animosities, Roth and Baron had adopted very similar tactics in their periodisation of Jewish time. The reason, I would suggest, is because both faced the same challenge: to tell the story of the Jews in a manner that would attract the interest of their American students and would earn them legitimacy in the newly opening secular university. Each man stood at the beginning of his career nervously trying to define himself as a scholar.⁸⁶ Both were anxious also about their American students who lacked traditional training and seemed to demand a different kind of pedagogy, a new historical narrative.⁸⁷ Like all cultural go-betweens, these Jewish historians had to create their audience(s) and their subject at the same time. They needed to develop an appropriate terminology, construct a convincing narrative, and disseminate a new teleology—in short, they had to popularise a new periodisation of Jewish history. They were, as is often true for such 'cultural tricksters,' simultaneously trying to reinvent their (multiple) audiences, to redefine their subjects, and to reimagine themselves. I know how they felt because, as a professor of Jewish Studies in American universities, I have faced the challenge my entire academic life.

85 In his review of Baron's work in *JQR* n. s. 11, no. 3 (January 1921): 405–408, Kohler himself was more generous, assuming Baron had not seen his publication because of the war.

86 Baron's appointment to the Miller Chair in Jewish History at Columbia University in 1930 is often noted as the first such professorship at a secular western university; e.g. Michael Stanislawski, "Salo Wittmayer Baron: Demystifying Jewish History," *Columbia University Alumni Magazine*, Winter 2005, <https://magazine.columbia.edu/article/salo-wittmayer-baron-demystifying-jewish-history>. Of course, Harvard similarly claims the honor of primogeniture: "Harvard was the first university in America to establish a Chair in Jewish Studies, the Nathan Littauer Professorship of Hebrew Literature and Philosophy (1925)," from the web site of the University's Center for Jewish Studies, <https://cjs.fas.harvard.edu/history/>, accessed October 2, 2020. The debate is more about semantics than reality since Jews already held such positions in departments of Orientalist/Semitic Studies decades earlier. Nevertheless, the repeated assertion reflects both an awareness of disciplinary shift and a claim to status within the academy, points that deserve further investigation.

87 See Frederic Krome, "Between the Diaspora and Zion: Cecil Roth and his American Friends," *Jewish History* 20 (2006): 283–297.

12. Nationhood and Imposing Power over Historical Time and Chronology

Özlem Çaykent 

The spine of history is chronology. Although it is almost impossible to think of history without chronology, this in itself can constitute serious problems. Clearly, the choice of events and which of these are to be included or excluded from a chronology can change our perspective of the past—its *chronologies*. Past events are, for example, sometimes arranged in such an order that they form an inevitable teleological progress of history in a certain direction. In other words, what appears to be merely a temporal perspective is in fact presented as a default framework to understand the past.¹ Another problem with chronology is that questions can also be raised about how accurate chronologies are in terms of the actual human experience in the past. Although in the academic world—in the humanities and social sciences in general—we have been thinking about the effects of highlighting progress, the psychological aspects of time, and how we

- * Some of the ideas elaborated in this paper emerged in a workshop in Istanbul with a group of teachers from Turkey and Armenia where discussions were held about similarities and differences between teaching of history and textbooks in both countries. The full report of the workshop is published in Turkish, English and recently also Armenian. Alişan Akpınar, Sos Avetisyan, Hayk Balasanyan, Fırat Güllü, Işıl Kandolu, Maria Karapetyan, Nvard V. Manasian, Lilit Mkrtychyan, Elif Aköz Özkaya, Garine Palandjian, Ararat Şekeryan and Ömer Turan, *History Education in Schools in Turkey and Armenia: a critique and alternatives*, ed. Bülent Bilmez, Kenan Çayır, Özlem Çaykent et. al. (Istanbul, Yerevan: History Foundation and Imagine Centre for Conflict Transformation, 2017).

I am indebted to my colleagues both from Armenia (translations from Armenian) and Turkey in this joint project between the History Foundation and Imagine Center for Conflict Transformation. The project was funded “Politics of Memory and Forgetting: Network and Capacity-Building for Historians Committed to Combatting Hate Speech in the Field of Education in the Context of Armenia-Turkey Relations.” Funded by Hrant Dink Foundation the Programme *Support to the Armenia-Turkey Normalisation Process: Stage Two*, financed by the European Union and the Heinrich Böll Stiftung in Istanbul.

1 See the chapter by Jörn Rüsen in this volume.

narrate time and the problem of periodisation,² the implications of these discussions are yet to be seen in secondary school history textbooks. To demonstrate this, I will be looking at the organisation of time and periodisation in history textbooks in use during the 2016–17 academic year in Armenia and Turkey. I argue that these texts provide a *chronologics* that constructs essentialist nationhood. They intrinsically encourage ideas of everlasting, static and state-driven nationhoods.

During the last three decades great efforts have been put into analysing, improving and changing the content, display and language of these textbooks. Besides the more general effort in reforming educational tools all over the world, more specific work is being done as part of a reconciliation or peace building effort in places such as Ireland or Cyprus. The success of these “reforms” is still being assessed.³ It is certain that the issue of *chronologics* in these textbooks is still an aspect that needs to be scrutinised.

Before proceeding to examples from textbooks, we will take a short look into how time is narrated and how it is compartmentalised in history writing. Human beings experience time in a variety of ways. Its real experience and its representation in a narration, whether this is telling a story to friends or writing a piece of academic research, is profoundly different. Conveying historical phenomena through specific historical sources just adds further layers to these constraints.⁴ Historical phenomena can only be encountered and recognized when they appear in historical sources, but these are always already narrations of other narratives of historical encounters. On top of these multiple layers of re-narrations, another is added through the efforts made by historians to understand the historical fact/phenomenon through contextualisation or sometimes de-contextualisation of the narrated event. Narrated events always somehow freeze time into a specific scene. On the other hand, in contrast to narratives of events, real-time happenings have synchronic elements in multiple locations which witness experience through their senses. Capturing these is mostly impossible, but even if information is so captured, for the sake of narrative, historians arrange this multiple dynamic information in a certain order of time of occurrence. Here, the historian puts things into a certain order, chooses what is important, what

- 2 A few examples are David Carr, *Time, Narrative and History* (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1981); Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1 (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1990); Robert Levine, *A Geography of Time* (New York: Basic Books, 1997); Ari Helo, “Breaking Away from Progressive History: The Past and Politics in American Studies,” *European Journal of American studies* [online], 9, no. 1 (2014), <https://doi.org/10.4000/ejas.10263>; Elizabeth A. R. Brown, “The Tyranny of a Construct: Feudalism and Historians of Medieval Europe,” *The American Historical Review* 79, no. 4 (Oct. 1974): 1063–1088.
- 3 Akpınar et al., *History Education in Schools* (see note 1); Philip Gamaghelyan, “Armenia,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Conflict and History Education in the Post-Cold War Era*, ed. Luigi Cajani, Simone Lässig, and Maria Repoussi (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 69–80.
- 4 Carr, *Time, Narrative and History* (see note 2), 3. In this volume, Jörn Rüsen is also proposing a list of typologies for ordering time that are used in historical thinking.

is worth mentioning, and thus decides on how this might have revealed itself to historical actors and thus composes a specific *chronologies*. Nowadays, research and thought on the organisation, conceptualization and perception of time shows that it may be intrinsically related to anthropological, psychological and ideological meanings as well as narrative compounds.⁵ Therefore, if closely inspected, *chronologies* can disclose cultural and ideological leanings and thus produce progressive, nationalistic, Eurocentric or simply state-oriented histories. One problem of the understanding of time in historical narratives is that it only appears to be an ‘objective’ measurement.

Fernand Braudel had already pointed out that there are multiple historical times that flow at different velocities and generate concurrent multiple layers of time. One of these is the *longue durée*, seen on a geographical level, then there is the social level of conjuncture—the *moyenne durée*—and lastly, there is the political level of time, the *événement*, and the *courte durée*.⁶ Can there actually be something like a “natural” understanding of chronology or time or is it always knowledge *a posteriori*? What is the role of education in this learning process? To recognise the plurality of temporalities is a complex understanding and a relatively recent one, too. In this understanding, the experience of time and its conceptualization is shown to be culturally, locally and even individually shaped and determined. Nevertheless, however culturally bounded these historical narratives may be, they create an idea of ‘objective chronology’: the ideas of time and periodisation used by early and medieval Christian scholars like St Paul, St. Augustine (354–430), or the Islamic historian Muhammed bin Cerîr Taberi (839–923), are good examples.⁷ In their works, we find ‘universal and objective’ descriptions as embedded in religious books. Taberi (839–923) starts his universal history with the description of time in accordance with the narrative of God’s creation of the universe. Interestingly, however, he conceptualises time as the creation of light and space. According to him, God first created light and then the universe as space came into being. As a consequence, Taberi’s introduction of time, commonly accepted by all believers, offers an objective and universal foundation to temporality and thus prescribes its own historical storyline.⁸ Although historical data are quite weak in such a

5 See Robert Levine, *A Geography of Time: The Temporal Misadventures of a Social psychologist, or How Every Culture Keeps Time Just a Little Bit Differently* (New York: Basic Books, 1997). Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1, 3, 14, 65.

6 F. Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*. 2 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996). For *longue durée* and *moyenne durée* see vol. 1, 25–276, and vol. 2, part 2, 657–903; *événement*, vol 2, 904–1237.

7 In the Islamic tradition the problematisation of time is complicated as it includes different concepts for different types of time as in the distinction between *dahr* (time from the beginning to its end) and *asr* (a span of time). Gerhard Böwering, “The Concept of Time in Islam.” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 141, no. 1 (1997): 58–59.

8 Tarik Al-Rusul Wa-l Muluk Al Taberi, *The History of Al-Taberi: An Annotated Translation*, vol. 1 (New York: State University of New York), 172–187; for further Islamic examples of periodisation,

metanarrative, religious literature gives us understandable answers to very complicated phenomenon. It is evident that human beings may have had one or another kind of awareness of the historical past, as David Carr explains, “in a naïve and prescientific way the historical past is there for all of us, ... it figures in our ordinary view of things whether we are historians or not.”⁹

In addition, the idea that time has a specific purpose is an idea that persists from ancient times to modernity. The development towards this purpose is expounded in an uninterrupted process of chronologies interrelated by cause and effect. The tenacity in writing a history unfolding God’s plan, or the ending of history in Hegelian or Marxist interpretations are not the only examples. Likewise, nationalist history writing provides a wide-ranging exemplar. As a matter of fact, national histories with chronologies that emphasise an evolution “from nations to statehood” play a key part. Regarding their scientific stance, a great deal of such histories is accompanied by an emphasis on archival precision and objectivity. The middle and high school textbooks in Turkey and Armenia provide many such examples.

Although there might be other courses in which historical topics come up, generally the study of history as a separate discipline-based course begins, both in Armenia and Turkey with secondary education (grades 6–12). In Turkey there are two different types of history courses; the first is a general “History” course, of which only 1/3 deals with non-Turkish/Ottoman History; the second is focused on “the Revolutions of the Republic of Turkey and Atatürkism,” dealing with the formation of the modern Turkish Republic and the ensuing social and political reforms. Only in 11th grade are students offered some elective courses such as “Contemporary Turkish and World History.” In Armenia, however, the courses are devised as “World History” and “Armenian History.” To facilitate a comparative approach, in the following discussion I will deal only with “Turkish History” and its corresponding textbook (2016–2017) on “Armenian History.”¹⁰

One of the striking issues in these textbooks is the problem of periodisation. There is a general partition of periods relating to ancient, medieval, modern, and contemporary, and then the more specific periods are named after states and rulers of the relevant nation which is founded on a *chronologics*, which will be addressed below. The major

see Abu Rayhan Al-Biruni, *The Chronology of Ancient Nations*, trans. Eduard Sachau (London: Oriental Translations Fund, 1879), 16.

9 Carr, *Time, Narrative and History* (see note 2), 3.

10 These textbooks were in use in schools during the academic year 2016–17, in which this research was undertaken. These are state-sponsored books used at public schools. Both in Armenia and Turkey there are general rules and standards published by the government regulating textbook contents. In Turkey, book production is mostly monitored and approved by the Ministry of Education. Likewise, in Armenia, there is an approval necessary, but the production of textbooks is left to local private publishing companies. See for further details Akpınar et al., *History Education in Schools* (see note 1), 16–22 and 46–51.

period divisions are partitioned in accordance with specific school grades. In Armenian textbooks (published in 2013), the oldest and old periods correspond to sixth grade history courses, the middle ages to the seventh grade, the ‘new’ (equivalent of early modern) period to eighth grade, and the modern period to ninth grade which then are periodised alternatively according to emerging states or rulers in Armenian lands such as the Period of Tigranes the Great (95–55 BC) [Տիգրանի Մեծ], an important period for the Armenian state as it had expanded to its largest land borders.¹¹ However, upon closer scrutiny, it is also apparent that the textbooks in Armenia have been for decades mostly shaped by the Marxist theory of history in stages that starts with slavery and feudalism evolving to modern society over time. In the sixth grade textbook (2013), the stages include the emergence of the nation a transformation from slavery to feudalism described as a “natural development of the Armenian feudalism.”¹² In a summary work on History Education in Armenia, we find this statement: “Even though there has been a gradual ousting of Marxist ideology from the system of education after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the syllabi and textbooks still largely use that conceptualization of human time adding to it a layer of nationalism.”¹³

Turkish textbooks use similar periodisation schemes, resting on state names. The ninth grade history textbook (2016) that covers the period from early civilisations until the fourteenth century starts with an introduction to the rise of civilisation that introduces the terms “pre-historical age” and “historical age” (Tarih Öncesi Çağlar ve Tarih Çağları).¹⁴ These are followed by periods that are titled after the various early Turkic states [İlk Türk Devletleri].¹⁵ The tenth grade textbook (2016) follows the chronological order of successive Turkic states, starting with the transformation of Ottoman rule from a principality to a state [Beylikten Devlete] until its demise in the early twentieth century. Although this set of textbooks is not using the word “period” and uses centuries as titles as in “The Ottoman State at the Beginning of the twentieth century” [20. Yüzyıl Başında Osmanlı Devleti], an underlying attempt to periodise, based on particular states and rulers can still be seen.¹⁶ For instance, in the tenth grade textbook (2016) there are several periods labelled in accordance with the Ottoman Sultans such as the I. Selim [I. Selim (Yavuz) Dönemi (1512–1520)]¹⁷ of the Kanuni Period [Kanuni Dönemi (1520–1566)].¹⁸

11 Section “Tigranes the Great” [Տիգրանի Մեծ] in Babken Harutyunyan, Vladimir Barkhudaryan, Igit Gharibyan, and Petros Hovhannisyanyan, *Armenian History: Ancient and Old Period: Grade 6 Textbook* [Հայոց պատմություն. 6-րդ դասարան / Hayots’ patmut’yun. 6-rd dasaran] (Yerevan: Manmar, 2013), 146–147 and 85–92.

12 Harutyunyan et al. *Armenian History: Grade 6* (see note 11).

13 Akpınar et al. *History Education in Schools* (see note 1), 90.

14 Behçet Önder, *History: Grade 9 [Tarih 9]* (Ankara: Biryay, 2016), 51–81.

15 Önder, *History, 9* (see note 14), 82–117.

16 Sami Tüysüz, *Tarih 10 [History 10]* (Ankara: Tuna Matbaacılık, 2016), 196.

17 Tüysüz, *Tarih 10* (see note 16), 68–77.

18 Tüysüz, *Tarih 10* (see note 16), 78–92.

The analysis of the general content of these textbooks reveals a great deal about contemporary political conceptions of what the history of great nations should be. Here, the focus will be on the chronological aspects of these contents. The Armenian history textbooks do not have a full section on chronology. Only at the end of the sixth grade *World History* textbook (2013), there is a timeline of the development of “Civilizations [քաղաքակրթություններ / k'aghak'akrt'ut'yunner].”¹⁹ In the Turkish ninth grade textbook (2016), on the other hand, there is a “First Unit: The Science of History” [I. Ünite Tarih Bilimi] with a section on “The Introduction to Science of History,” and on “Time and Calendars in History” [Tarih Bilimine Giriş, Tarihte Zaman ve Takvim]. Here “objectivity” as well as techniques of historical thinking are discussed within the confines of classical historicism. It is explained that historical science is based on historical sources and causality through which social facts and relations are revealed.²⁰ It singles out causality and points that “the most important requirement of the science of history,” is “to investigate the cause and effect relationship within a certain place and timespan.”²¹ The students are encouraged to think about continuities between the past and present. While tracing these, it is pointed out that every historical fact has to be dealt with within its own context and period. The textbook makes use of problematisations of ‘historical fact’ and the ‘nature of historical inquiry’ and there is also a paragraph on the relationship between the historian and objectivity. However, when historical method is explained, a certain stress on ‘objectivity’ still persists.²² A definition of chronology is given within this first section on the tools of history. Accordingly, chronology “is also called the science of time, it assists history by sorting events correctly by time.”²³

As can be seen, these are very generic definitions of chronology, time and history, they mostly do not mention possible difficulties or discrepancies. Questions of diachronicity and synchronicity are not raised. The idea that periodisations are locally and culturally determined is not addressed, instead, the textbooks simply confirm that chronological sequencing must be accepted as a default. An explanation such as “In order to understand the concept of time we have to know the meaning of the words ‘before’ (*önce*), ‘after’ (*sonra*) and ‘now’ (*şimdi*) and use them correctly within a sentence,”²⁴ refers to the *logos* of cause and effect as well as a linearity of historical narrative that evolves in a sequence. In general, one can say that although the textbooks

19 Harutyunyan et al. *Armenian History: Grade 6* (see note 11), 152–53.

20 Önder, *History: 9* (see note 14), 12. “History is a science that examines the past activities of human societies (religious, political, commercial, social, etc.) and their relations with each other based on documents in a cause-effect relationship, showing place and time.”

21 Önder, *History: 9* (see note 14), 14.

22 Önder, *History: 9* (see note 14), 17–18.

23 Önder, *History: 9* (see note 14), 20.

24 Önder, *History: 9* (see note 14), 20.

have been repeatedly revised within the last decade, they still communicate quite a nominalist as well as a positivist understanding of history.

To gain a more general grasp and a comparative perspective about widespread patterns in the *chronologies* of history teaching at secondary school level – though not specifically for Armenia and Turkey – a short glance at the abundance of history course materials for teachers on the internet may be sufficient. The internet is indeed a rich domain where educational aids can be found, and detailed general lesson plans are given for the “Introduction to history” lessons.²⁵ Evidently, the lessons start with the idea of time, chronology, and what history is. They start with explaining chronology: “the word chronology is made from two Greek words—*chronos* meaning time and *logos* (discourse or reasoning/working out).”²⁶ Furthermore, it is explained that giving a *logos* to time is like giving an order to time. This is accompanied with activities where students learn about the linear flow of time and how to construct chronological timelines. The aim is to amplify the understanding of chronological reasoning, causes and effects. The basic learning outcomes of this lesson are listed as:

- To understand the meaning of the historical term—chronology.
- To understand that the word chronology as derived from the Greek words *chronos* and *logos*.
- To be able to put times and dates into chronological order.
- To see that a timeline is a chronology of dates and events.
- To understand that a timeline is useful to give an overview of a historical period.²⁷

Clearly, courses consist not only of textbooks or online teaching materials. In the attempt to understand secondary school education, one must keep in mind that in-class lectures, internet sources and the social environment are important parts of learning.²⁸ Thus, even though there is not a detailed section given for the definition of chronology, history teachers both from Armenia and Turkey affirm that they spend some time in class explaining what chronology and history is, in a very similar fashion

25 Most of these lesson plans are in English and are not specifically addressed to a specific national history course. “Chronology—Lesson Plan.” Last modified November 2000, <https://www.historyonthenet.com/chronology-lesson-plan/>

26 “Chronology—Lesson Plan” (see note 25).

27 “Chronology—Lesson Plan” (see note 25).

28 Anahit Hakobyan, “State Propaganda Through Public Education: Armenia and Azerbaijan,” *Journal of Conflict Transformation Caucasus Edition* (April 2016): 3. Accessed December 4, 2019, <https://caucasusedition.net/analysis/state-propaganda-through-public-education-armenia-and-azerbaijan/>; Garine Palandjian, “The ABCs of Being Armenian: (Re)Turning to the National Identity in Post-Soviet Textbooks,” in *Reconstructing Memory: School Textbooks and the Imagination of the Nation*, ed. James Williams (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2014), 247–267.

to the example given above. When teachers were asked whether this was necessary, they answered in the affirmative: according to them, “students do not have a sense of chronology.”²⁹ The short survey affirmed the scholarship on the development of the notion of time among children.³⁰ Namely, there is a problem of vagueness and relativeness of the concept of time or simply the lack of understanding of historical time as a concept for these students. The teachers were referring to the fact that the development of *chronological* and historical understanding is a process of learning. Their point was to deepen notions of the temporal and the understanding of historic time. They referred to the lack of knowledge of the timeline of civilisations, or even that of the history of their own nation. In fact, theirs is a classical pedagogic stance: an understanding of chronology is the foundation for comprehending historical time.³¹ This understanding of teaching students about chronology and “development,” thus establishing “a sense of sequence, of the order in which events occur and of their relation one to another,” is perceived as essential among pedagogists and teachers.³² More recent research, on the other hand, shows that children develop a sense of time, more specifically historic time, at a much earlier age.³³ If this is right, this leaves us with the question of how high school history courses remodel students’ understanding of historical time.

- 29 The following observations are based on a short interview with Turkish teachers in Istanbul, about how chronology is taught in class. Maria Karapetyan and Lilit Mkrtchyan assisted me with the same survey in Armenia. The questions were addressed to teachers (12) who participated in a joint project between the History Foundation and Imagine Center for Conflict Transformation on Turkish and Armenian textbooks funded by Hrant Dink Foundation the Programme *Support to the Armenia-Turkey Normalisation Process: Stage Two*, financed by the European Union and the Heinrich Böll Stiftung in Istanbul. Maria Karapetyan and Lilit Mkrtchyan “Chronology,” email, November 9, 2017.
- 30 There has been a great deal of research done on the development of the notion of time among children. The approaches vary from a more normative standpoint to a more pluralistic methodology. Just to mention a few: Jean Piaget, *Le développement de la notion de temps chez l'enfant* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1946); Marjan J. De Groot-Reuvekamp, Carla Van Boxtel, Anje Ros, and Penelope Harnett, “The Understanding of Historical Time in the Primary History Curriculum in England and the Netherlands,” *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 46, no. 4 (2014): 487–514; Stephen J. Thornton and Ronald Vukelich, “Effects of Children’s Understanding of Time Concepts on Historical Understanding: Theory & Research in Social Education,” 16, no. 1 (1988): 69–82.
- 31 Jean Piaget’s *Développement de la Notion de Temps* (see note 30) can be given as an example of such a classical stance.
- 32 Ralph A. Brown and Marian R. Brown, “Time and Chronology in the Social Studies,” *The School Review* 62, no. 6 (1954): 341–345, here at 341.
- 33 For studies on children’s understanding of time, see Thornton and Vukelich, “Effects of Children’s Understanding of Time,” (see note 30), 69–82. Elizabeth R. Hinde and Nancy Perry, “Elementary Teachers’ Application of Jean Piaget’s Theories of Cognitive Development during Social Studies Curriculum Debates in Arizona,” *The Elementary School Journal* 108, no. 1 (2007): 63–79.

Concurrently, students gain little critical skills in relation to what *chronologics* is or how perceptions of historical time are embedded within specific narrative structures. In particular, the textbooks under scrutiny here are great examples of how—through the method of emplotment—a ‘simple’ chronological factual display of events can be turned into a highly opinionated and nationalist discourse.³⁴ There is a strong dramatic arc within the narrative presented as a relationship between cause and effect: within a simple storytelling sequence of a beginning, a middle, and an end. Consequently, the presentation of an ‘objective history’ in a certain chronological order deploys a tale with the basics of a plot with a main character, namely the people and their state, which is presented as their natural equivalent. The progressive line reveals itself through the state’s increasing sophistication over time, which is supported with some hero-like leaders. The next essential part of the plot is the dialectic between tension and release with an escalating problem (like riots, wars, and conquests), that leads to either victory or the loss of the state. The decline of states or of a nation is almost always caused by treachery, corruption or spoilage of the good classical institutions, or by enemy conquest. It is noteworthy, then, that these histories are almost exclusively focused on the state.

In the following, I will deliberate in more detail on how the use of a specific chronology, contributes to this particular reading of history. I will show first, that the textbooks provide a single diachronic chronology of a single nation, either Turkish or Armenian, where groups or ethnicities other than the majority of the nation are hardly mentioned. This, in particular, creates a single-voiced narrative where other groups within the same territory or geography are either excluded or silenced. For instance, in one Turkish ninth grade textbook (2016) the main themes are a general short introduction to concepts of history, a short “History of Civilizations” followed by the history of the Turkish state from mid-Asia to their arrival in Anatolia, the “Rise of Islam,” finishing with the rise of the Ottoman state.³⁵ However, the peoples living in Anatolia before the Turks arrive are either not mentioned or they are just described generally as Byzantines or Christians.³⁶ Likewise, in the tenth grade history book (2016) which deals with the Ottoman Period, there is no mention of Kurds, Alevi, the Assyrian Community or other non-orthodox Muslims. Certainly, there is little distinction made between the various non-Muslim communities.³⁷ The co-existence of

34 Sedat Çalıřkan, “10. Sınıf Tarih Ders Kitabında Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nun Kuruluşuna Eleştirel Bir Bakıř Denemesi / [A Critical Perspective on the Foundation of the Ottoman Empire in Tenth Grade History Textbooks], *KÜLLİYAT Osmanlı Arařtırmaları Dergisi* (2018): 46–54.

35 Chapters such as “History of Science” [Tarih Bilimi], “Birth of Civilization and First Civilizations” [Uygarlıđın Doğulu ve İlk Uygarlıklar], “First Turkic States” [İlk Türk Devletleri] in Önder, *History: Grade 9* (see note 14).

36 Önder, *History: Grade 9* (see note 14), 19, 103, 112, 113.

37 Tüysüz, *Tarih 10 [History 10]* (see note 16).

non-Muslims with Muslim Ottomans is a “Convivencia,” that is, within the Ottoman system of tolerance different religious, ethnic and cultural groups lived in harmonious peace. Accordingly, although the state had the power to diminish and convert each subject in the newly conquered regions, it continued the policy of toleration. In a short reading box entitled “The Ottoman Empire: the fortress of justice and tolerance” the textbook explains:

Even during its most powerful period when the Ottoman Empire ruled three continents, the state was far from a missionary or even colonial mentality and has never interfered in issues of faith and religion. In fact, there was no need to pretend to be well-intentioned or for any clandestine activity. Since, for this most magnificent state on earth it would have sufficed to simply say “you have to convert to Islam, or you will die” to win the whole non-Muslims subjects over.³⁸

Instead, after the Battle of Manzikert (1071) when the Turks started their conquests in Anatolia, the Byzantines, who had been suffering under the heavy taxes of the state, had been looking forward to a new and just administration. It is told that they were content under the tolerant and just system of the Turkish state, as a consequence they showed complete loyalty and served the new state (Anatolian Seljukite State [1075–1308]).³⁹ Likewise, during the Seljukite era, the textbook explains, the Armenians were happy when the Turks conquered the Edessa/Urfa region (1086–1087) since the Turks respected their property, religion and let them live peacefully under their administration.⁴⁰ Thus, tolerance is a major leitmotif that assists in creating, as Jörn Rüsen would put it, a “meaningful sequence”⁴¹ throughout the ages, for the Ottomans and concurrently it is the unchanging nature of Turkish culture, a type of narrative that he has categorised as “traditional.”⁴²

In this tenth grade book (2016) narrative, the perfect tolerance system breaks down only after the non-orthodox Muslims, or non-Muslim Ottomans, start to disturb the

38 This short reading box quotes a *scholarly* history article. Tüysüz, *Tarih 10 [History 10]* (see note 16), 27.

39 Önder, *History: Grade 9* (see note 14), 188, quoted in Akpınar et al., *History Education in Schools* (see note 1), 23.

40 Önder, *History: Grade 9* (see note 14), 205, quoted in Akpınar et al., *History Education in Schools* (see note 1), 24.

41 Cf. the typology provided in the essay by Rüsen in this volume.

42 Tüysüz, *Tarih 10 [History 10]* (see note 16), 27. Besides being an underlying sign of continuity in the chronology of Turkish History, this same aspect can also be read as setting a contrast to what the “enemy” is not. See on “enemy” constructions in textbooks and media for example Hakobyan, “State Propaganda,” (see note 29),” and Katalin Morgan, “Stereotypes, Prejudices, Self and ‘the Other’ in History Textbooks,” *Yesterday & Today* 7 (July, 2012): 85–100.

balance, or challenge the status quo and collaborate with enemies, against the Turkish/Ottoman state. In the nineteenth century the Armenian and the Greek-Orthodox Ottomans, for instance, so the narrative goes, were influenced by western propaganda, and especially the infusion of nationalist ideas to the individual ethnic and religious groups in the Ottoman Empire. They established secret societies and “separatist gangs,” *traitorously* allying with the enemies against the Ottoman Empire, like the Greek and Armenians cooperating with the Russians.⁴³ On the other hand, the Ottomans are assumed to be only Sunni from the beginning. The adapted linear chronology imposes a narrative where synchronic existences, such as the parallel occurrence of the Shia and Sunni Muslim worlds in the Ottoman Empire, or the growth of Sunni emphasis after the sixteenth century conquests in the Arab lands are not explained. If there is any mention of the Shiites, then it is because of the political rivalries between the Safavids and the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century. Shia is mentioned here just as a means of Shah Ismail’s (1501–1524) intrigue to infiltrate into the Ottoman Empire.⁴⁴ They appear only as peripheral matters. As a result, other people’s voices are either barely heard or they are instrumentalised to show the superiority of the Turks or the debauched intentions of the Other. Also, in the Armenian textbooks, the distinction between the nation, states and the region these dwell on are distinguished. As a result, although there is not a distinctive hostile rhetoric in the Armenian textbooks, non-Armenian groups such as Muslim populations or even non-Gregorian Armenians within Armenian states are not present.

This state-oriented chronology is an important characteristic in both Turkish and Armenian textbooks, along with a notion of an ever-existing nation. For instance, in the section on the “Science of History” of the *History Grade 10* (2016), the Turkish textbook explains how history is a continuum of events. The emphasis on continuity naturally connects to the topic of the nation as unchanging, homogenous and state-oriented.⁴⁵ In the textbooks, this continuum begins with the ethno-genesis of the Turkic and Armenian nations in Asia and the Armenian highlands of Anatolia respectively and continues throughout the various states built by these nations.⁴⁶ This narrative

43 For the Greek riots before the First World War, see Tüysüz, *Tarih 10 [History 10]* (see note 16), 163. For Armenian committees causing upheaval and killing innocents from 1890 until 1909 see Tüysüz, *Tarih 10 [History 10]*, (see note 16), 178, quoted in Akpınar et al., *History Education in Schools* (see note 1), 24.

44 Tüysüz, *Tarih 10 [History 10]* (see note 16), 68.

45 Although there have been reforms in 2009 regarding equal rights, like the use of mother tongues, for ethnic and religious groups like the Romans, Assyrians, Armenians or Alevi there has not been any change introduced into the textbooks. The discourse in them are still that Turkey is homogenous, its language is Turkish, and its religion seem to be single. 2014. Kenan Çayır, *Who Are We? Identity, Citizenship and Rights in Turkey’s Textbooks* (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı 2015), 114–115.

46 See ninth grade history chapter on “The meaning of the name Turk and its Importance” (Türk Adının Anlamı ve Önemi) in Önder, *History: Grade 9* (see note 14), 83–84 and see The

envisions events as part of a single temporal continuum with causal connections and history as a development through a unified and logical process. The conceptualization of the nation in these textbooks is based on an essentialist and historicist narrative that links the ancient past immediately and directly to the present. It offers a line along which the ancient and perpetual Turkish or Armenian nation exists, unchanged in time—the only changing elements here are the institutions in which these nations exist.

Typically, the notion of the chronology of Armenian history starts with the legendary foundation of the Armenians with Hayk the Great, thus with a semi-legendary beginning the first Armenian state/city and the self-designation (*hay*) of the Armenians as a nation was established. This aspect is amplified by statements like “Armenians are the only indigenous Indo-European people who are formed in their pre-patria, never left it and have survived till nowadays,” as found in a textbook of Armenian History published in 2013.⁴⁷ Similarly, in a tenth grade textbook published a year later, it states that characteristics like “love of freedom” [ազատության սերը/*azatut'yan sery*] is tantamount to a timeless description of the Armenian nation. Again, the persistent continuity in the chronology of the Armenian nation is underlined: “The absolute understanding of the freedom of the nation that was established in times immemorial is perpetual among our ancestors and reaches our days transmitted through blood.”⁴⁸

Whether the nation is made of tolerance or love for freedom, the use of the concept of nation in both of these textbook sets is clearly following a modernist trajectory. While the emphasis on these two characteristics is greatly relevant to the construction of nation building memories, both for Turkish and for Armenian identities, in the Armenian textbook we sense an ongoing strife for national liberation, comparable to other nineteenth and twentieth century nation-state-building processes. One could say, then, that the modern idea of *nation* travels freely back and forth in time along this chronological line.⁴⁹ Both in the Turkish and Armenian textbooks, a great many examples of uprisings and wars are given, highlighting the perpetual existence of a national consciousness and a strong sense of freedom or the struggle for national liberation. The shift between a tribe and a state happens quickly, never questioning this transformation. Chronological evolution leads naturally from tribe to states and finally to the desired end, namely the nation-state. In short, the narrative

Grade 10 chapter on “The Genealogy of Armenians” in *Armenian History: Grade 10 Textbook* [ՀԱՅՈՑ ՊԱՏՄՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ 10–րդ դասարան/ Hayots' Patmut'yun 10 rd Dasaran], ed. Ashot Melkonyan, Hayk Avetsiyan, Artak Movsisyan, Petros Hovhannisyan and Eduard Danielyan (Yerevan: Zangak, 2014), 27.

47 Harutyunyan et al., *Armenian History: Grade 6*, 32 quoted in Akpınar et al., *History Education in Schools* (see note 1), 53.

48 Melkonyan et al., *Armenian History: Grade 10 Textbook* (see note 47), 161, quoted in Akpınar et al., *History Education in Schools* (see note 1), 53.

49 Akpınar et al., *History Education in Schools* (see note 1), 51.

always evolves around the plot of state building. Even at times when a state does not exist, one has the feeling that this is but a preparatory era before a new evolution into another statehood.⁵⁰

As a result, the important historical data chosen in the textbooks are generally those from political history, such as wars. In the Turkish example, where there is no geographical continuity between the first states in Asia and the final Turkish Republic in Anatolia, the shift from one location/geography to the other is explained with continuous heroic wars or stories of conquest from Central Asia to Anatolia. The bulk of the history of the Turks starts, however, after the conversion to Islam.⁵¹ The chronology simply follows the Turks travelling in different geographies and establishing their new states. Thus, the whole story starts with the nation/tribe. As it grows, it forms states, enemies emerge, and uprisings start, these are subverted, or the Turkish state declines and the cycle starts anew and so on, until the final formation of the independent nation-state. Interestingly, all the different regions inhabited throughout this process are mentioned as father/motherlands.

The history, chronology and periodisation of the Armenian nation in these textbooks is built on a single linear chronology, lacking any synchronic elements. At the same time, Armenian history is viewed through the lens of state-building as a sequence which links historical states with the modern Republic of Armenia. An example of such sequencing is the case where the establishment of a local authority in Van, established near the eastern borders of the Ottoman Empire in 1915, is described as a “precursor of the restored Armenian independence three years later” in the territory of modern-day Armenia.⁵² Although the geographical shifts in Armenian history are not as dispersed as in the Turkish example, there is a sequencing of events revealing what Jörn Rüsen calls a “temporal orientation”⁵³ in narrating the history of the Armenian people on their way to becoming an independent modern nation state. Lastly, it is also remarkable, that, although this empire was a distinctly multi-ethnic one, there is little mention of any of the other peoples.

50 See how this becomes a safeguard of identity in Marc Ferro, *The Use and Abuse of History: Or How the Past is Taught to Children* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 217, 209–244.

51 In a recent syllabus, half of the term is assigned for discussions on history and time; first the era of human civilisations and the Middle Ages, the next half of the course is allocated to the history of Turks: *Ortaöğretim Tarih Dersi (9,10, 11 Sınıflar), Öğretim Programı*, Ministry of Education, 2018, accessed January 2, 2020, <http://mufredat.meb.gov.tr/Dosyalar/201822142524139-Tarih%20döp.pdf>.

52 Ashot Melkonyan, Vladimir Barkhudaryan, Gagik Harutyunyan, Pavel Chobanyan, Aram Simonyan, and Aram Nazaryan, ed., *Armenian History: Grade 11 Textbook* [ՀԱՅՈՑ ՊԱՏՄՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ 11-րդ դասարանի չափագր / Hayots' Patmut'yun 11 rd Dasarani Hamar] (Yerevan: Zangak, 2015), 261, quoted in Akpınar et al., *History Education in Schools* (see note 1), 52.

53 Cf. Jörn Rüsen in this volume, 17.

History and chronology thus provide nationalism with a certain notion of Self and Other, one that the textbook projects discussed here exploit freely. Whether constructed with a Marxist theory of the stages of history, or linear progressive interpretations, the main actor of history, i.e. the Self/nation—in its modern shape and definition—is represented as an eternal entity. It penetrates all epochs, even those when statehood as such did not exist and it often reduces an Empire to a single nation. The organisation of time in this reductionist manner creates an essentialist image in students' memories, stigmatising and thus omitting the fact that some of the social formations in the past, that are now described as statist or national, had indeed different historical grounds of identity formation, sometimes based on religion and at other times based on other patrimonial ties. David Carr argues that “our only real connection to the historical past is the result of ‘historical inquiry,’ whether it is ours or by others.”⁵⁴ Understanding historical facts always entails contextualisation or de-contextualisation which in turn freezes time to an assigned logical frame. Whereas real-time events have many synchronic elements in multiple locations, for the sake of creating a chronological narrative, the textbook historians we have seen at work in this chapter put this multiple dynamic information into an order where most of these synchronic elements are lost. The organisation of time itself fails to acknowledge that there are many ways of conceptualising time, and that there is nothing universal about it.

Revisions in the textbooks are almost always on the table, both in Armenia and Turkey. In Armenia discussions started in July 2020 as part of the education reform focused on the revision of the state guidelines for textbook production. In Turkey revisions were made in 2017. In the Turkish case, the textbook writers, and Textbook Committee at the Ministry of National Education at work in recent years have seen the antidote to a single-linear chronological narrative in a thematic approach. Fırat Güllü, a history teacher in Turkey, in a short essay assesses the 2017 revisions in Textbooks analysing the thematic approach and their stance towards Atatürkism. According to him, the revised textbooks introduce, next to a shift to a more thematic approach, a new epochal label, the *kadim*. *Kadim* is a vague term that could mean ‘old,’ ‘ancient’ but also ‘immemorial.’ As an epochal label, it is separated into a Turkish, a Muslim, and a global section for humanity in general. It appears that this is an attempt to avoid Eurocentric periodisation schemes. Reminding the readers that the history program dwells mostly on Turkish-Muslim topics, Güllü warns that the shift to a thematic approach will only deepen anachronistic ways of thinking and thus will end up with a very localised understanding of history. And indeed, after the first draft of this revised textbook came out, the discussions in fact revealed an unquestioned and

54 Carr, *Time, Narrative and History* (see note 2), 2.

fixed narrative based on “Turkish-Islamic values.”⁵⁵ While the revisions to history textbooks will continue, even the move away from the use of *Eurochronologies* can, as Güllü’s warning indicates, lead to the production of parochial and narrowly localised versions of history.

Conclusions

The Ministries of Education in Turkey and Armenia are the institutions that define the aims of history courses as they approve the textbooks in use. Both institutions have similar aims related to the “making of a nation”: textbooks should teach and reinforce unity and harmony, as well as national and state interests.⁵⁶ The most recent “standard history syllabus” published by the Turkish Ministry of Education for the academic year of 2019–20, states, for example, that the ninth grade history course dwell on “The role of common memory in identity formation and socialization.”⁵⁷ These aims themselves should be sufficient to question again history courses and their teachings, both in Armenia and Turkey. This “again” needs to be underlined: there is, indeed, a continuous endeavour to amend, revise and change school textbooks in terms of method, content and language.⁵⁸ While both students and teachers want these books to become more creative in the ways they present historical data and encourage critical approaches, this remains a sensitive issue.

This short overview has illustrated how the linear chronological presentation of historical data, by narrating in a sequence of constructed continuity and progress, the history of nations and their states, fail to provide insights into some of the more dynamic, multifaceted, and transnationally connected aspects of history. While both Turkish and Armenian history curricula recently point out that one of the aims of history course is to make students analyse sources, to increase their ability for critical thinking and to train their problem-solving skills,⁵⁹ these textbooks in fact achieve

55 Firat Güllü, “Yeni Tarih Müfredatı Üzerine bir Değerlendirme,” [An Assessment of the New History Curriculum] *Toplumsal Tarih* 278 (2017), 32–35.

56 For detailed descriptions and state standards both in Turkey and Armenia see Akpınar et al., *History Education in Schools* (see note 1), 16–22 and 46–51.

57 *Ortaöğretim Tarih Dersi* (see note 51).

58 İbrahim H. Öztürk, “Curriculum Reform and Teacher Autonomy in Turkey: The Case of the History Teaching,” *International Journal of Instruction* 4 (2011): 113–128; Hercules Millas, “History Textbooks in Greece and Turkey,” *History Workshop*, no. 31 (1991): 21–33; Ali Yıldırım, “High School Textbooks in Turkey from Teachers’ and Student’s Perspectives: The Case of History Textbooks,” *Asia Pacific Education Review* 7 (2006): 218–228.

59 Firat Güllü, “Yeni Tarih Müfredatı Üzerine bir Değerlendirme,” [An Assessment of the New History Curriculum] *Toplumsal Tarih* 278 (2017), 32.

only very little of all this. While in 2006, research on high school textbooks would have indicated that there was an imminent demand for “adapting an appropriate scope and sequence, in-depth exploration of important events and challenging activities and questions for students to develop higher order cognitive processes and skills like critical thinking and decision making,” unfortunately this demand continues to be relevant.⁶⁰

In our contemporary world the understanding of history is shifting towards an approach that is wide in scope, transcultural and relational, one that does not prescribe fixed chronologies, periodisation schemes or courses of time (*Zeitverlaufsvorstellungen*), as Jörn Rüsen has called them. Unfortunately, in places like Turkey and Armenia, the field of history is still not free of past ridden taboos and a hidden pressure on historians persists. As Ronald Grigor Suny pointed out in 1993 “Criticism has been avoided as if it might aid ever-present enemies, and certain kinds of inquiry have been shunned as potential betrayals of the national cause.”⁶¹ Unfortunately, this situation continues. It is important to remember and remind students that history is a constant movement, a dynamic flux where the direction or the texture cannot be confined or essentialised within a few traits like tolerance or love of freedom in an eternalised nation-state.

Besides the difficulty of defining these terms and tracing them throughout history, the multiplicity of time/historical layers disappears in such simplified and unilinear chronological formations in these textbooks. We need to think about how the chronologies in textbooks can be altered, so that they do reflect some of the dynamics of historical development, and we need to make students ask questions rather than provide them with monolithic answers. The horizontal and diachronic design of chronology needs to be reassessed. The normative objectives in pedagogical strategies that hinder the development of students’ critical competence also need to be reassessed. More importantly, education needs to be re-aligned with the needs of new generations and technologies with regard to learning of and about time.⁶² We need to integrate vertical or synchronic narratives, thus offering students a hint of different layers of time in history. Regarding Turkish and Armenian history textbook, they would need to break with the idea of history as a temporal orientation toward a nation-state. The state-centred periodisation and underlying *chronologies* create insulated historical narratives downplaying or displacing “cross-cultural” interactions and perspectives. As Sebouh David Aslanian explains focusing also on a vertical system will emphasise the existence of synchronic events and phenomena and will make students think about the differences in flows of

60 Yıldırım, “High School Textbooks in Turkey” (see note 58), 226.

61 Ronald Grigor Suny, *Looking toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 2.

62 There is new research into how the employment of hyper-media timelines, virtual reality and 3D systems can improve the learning of time. See Jose Gómez Galán, “Learning Historical and Chronological Time: Practical Applications,” *European Journal of Science and Theology* 12, no.1 (2016): 5–16.

time in different regions and cultures, opening their minds to “connected histories of cultures and regions and the circulation of elites, capital, and cultural forms across vast areas.”⁶³ Conceptualising time in multiple layers and thinking about synchronicity will facilitate attempts to break away from history as single linear, temporal whole and an open space for multiple orientations in human life.

63 Sebouh David Aslanian, “From ‘Autonomous’ to ‘Interactive’ Histories: World History’s Challenge to Armenian Studies,” in *An Armenian Mediterranean: Words and Worlds in Motion*, ed. Kathryn Babayan and Michael Pifer (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 83. On ‘connected histories’ see Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Islamic Eurasia,” *Modern Asian Studies* 31, no. 3, Special Issue: The Eurasian Context of the Early Modern History of Mainland South East Asia, 1400–1800. (Jul., 1997): 735–762.

Conclusion

Region, Nation, World

Remarks on Scale and the Problem of Periodisation

Sanjay Subrahmanyam 

In the 1620s, Henry Lord, a Protestant chaplain employed by the English East India Company, found himself in the great port of Surat in western India. Here, in the space of the urban trading establishment (or ‘factory’), he had regular occasion to come into contact with Indian traders, whom he describes as men “cloathed in linen garments, somewhat low descending, of a gesture and garbe as I may say, maidenly and well-nigh effeminate; of a countenance shy and somewhat estranged: yet smiling out a glosed and bashfull familiarity.”¹ Enquiries revealed that these men were known as “Banians” [*baniyās*], and that they belonged to “a people forraigne to the knowledge of the Christian world.” Encouraged in his curiosity by the head of the English trading establishment, a certain Thomas Kerridge, Lord then decided to look more closely into the beliefs and world-view of these men, despite his firm prior conviction that they were engaged in “rebelliously and schismatically violating the divine law of the dread Majesty of Heaven, and with notably forgery coyning Religion according to the Minte of their owne Tradition.”² He apparently questioned them on their views of cosmogony, that is regarding “the Creation of the World,” as well as “the first Man and Woman, and the Progeny from them descending.” From their conversations, it emerged that the *baniyās* believed that all of time since the very beginning could be

* I am grateful to Perry Anderson and Carlo Ginzburg for helpful suggestions. Neither is responsible in any way for the views expressed here.

- 1 Henry Lord, *A display of two forraigne sects in the East Indies: vizt: the sect of the Banians the ancient natives of India and the sect of the Persees the ancient inhabitants of Persia together with the religion and manners of each sect collected into two bookes by Henry Lord sometimes resident in East India and preacher to the Ho[noura]ble Company of Merchants trading thether* (London: Francis Constable, 1630).
- 2 *Ibid*; for a discussion, see Will Sweetman, *Mapping Hinduism: ‘Hinduism’ and the Study of Indian Religions, 1600–1776* (Halle: Franckeschen Stiftungen, 2003), 64–88.

divided into a series of “Ages” (*yugas*), each conceived of as a complete cycle of emergence, consolidation and destruction: “These Ages they call by four names: the first Curtain [*krta*]; the second, Duaper [*dvāpara*]; the third Tetraioo [*treta*]; the fourth Kolee [*kali*].”³ The first of these Ages had ended on account of “a Flood, that covered all Nations in the depths,” the second because of a powerful tempest, and the third as the result of a great earthquake. As for the fourth and current one, Lord notes (quite incorrectly, as it happens) that “they suppose this Age shall be longer than any of the rest,” but that it too would eventually come to an end through fire. The fact that this conception could not be reconciled with the standard Biblical chronology to which a Protestant like Lord adhered, naturally meant that he considered it to be a mere tissue of superstitious beliefs, or a curiosity, rather than as a proper intellectual challenge.

As Lord’s experience nevertheless suggests—and as this book has amply shown—periodisation, namely the division of historical time into a well-defined sequence of periods, is not only an ancient and widespread intellectual activity, but also a highly contested one. Wherever inter-cultural encounters have occurred, periodisation schemes have regularly come into conflict with one another. By the seventeenth century, the tradition of the four-*yuga* cycle, going back perhaps as far as the *purānas*, or the epics like the *Mahābhārata*, was well-entrenched in many parts of India. Only a decade or two before Lord, a well-known Muslim intellectual of Iranian origin, Muhammad Qasim Astarabadi (usually called by his pen-name ‘Firishta’), was also confronted in western India by views that he found not merely strange but downright abhorrent. He wrote in turn: “Turning on its pivot, the changes in Time—according to the blind beliefs of the people of Hind—make up four periods: the first is Sat-jug, the second [Treta]-jug, the third Dvapara-jug, and the fourth Kal-jug.” Since these periods were taken to have lasted over four million years, Firishta naturally found the whole concoction to be absurd. He then adds:

The infidels [*kāfirs*] of India like those of China say that Noah’s tempest did not reach their country, and instead reject it [...]. They attribute strange and bizarre deeds to Ram, Lakhan et cetera, which do not correspond to the human condition [*hāl-i bashar nīst*] [...]. All this is words and sound which has no weight in the scale of reason [...]. The Hindus say that from the time of Adam more than 100,000 years have passed. This is totally false, and the fact is that the country of Hind, like the other countries of the inhabited quarter of the world, was settled through the descendants of Adam.⁴

3 The order of *yugas* given here is wrong, as *treta* should appear before *dvāpara*. Further each *yuga* is shorter than the previous one, which Lord misstates.

4 Muhammad Qasim Hindu Shah Astarabadi, *Tārīkh-i Firishta*, ed. Muhammad Riza Nasiri, vol. 1, *Az āgāz tā Bābur* (Tehran: Anjuman-i Asar va Mafakhir-i Farhangi, 2008–09), 28–29. Translation by Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam.

Both the chronology and the periodisation proposed to him by his Indian interlocutors thus displeased and unsettled Firishta as much as they did Henry Lord. Eventually, while writing his elaborate history entitled *Gulshan-i Ibrāhīmī*, Firishta thus settled on a form of political periodisation based on dynastic history, for here at least, he and his Indian informants could find some sort of a common ground.

* * *

We have seen it already in the introduction: even today, while some historians consider periodisation to be central to their profession, others tend to disdain it as of little epistemological value. Further, its use is by no means confined to historians, since periodisation can also be a significant tool employed by literary scholars, or analysts of art or architecture, to name only two examples. From a professional viewpoint, employment in all these activities in the last century or more, could be strongly defined by period: an old-fashioned job description in a history department might ask for someone who could teach British history in the ‘Tudor and Stuart period,’ or Italian history during the ‘later Renaissance,’ or Indian history in the ‘Mughal era.’ George Orwell, who in his youth was apparently not a great fan of history as it was taught in British public schools, recalled the following:

History was a series of unrelated, unintelligible but—in some way that was never explained to us—important facts with resounding phrases tied to them. Disraeli brought peace with honour. Clive was astonished at his moderation. Pitt called in the New World to redress the balance of the Old. And the dates, and the mnemonic devices [...]. I recall positive orgies of dates, with the keener boys leaping up and down in their places in their eagerness to shout out the right answers, and at the same time not feeling the faintest interest in the meaning of the mysterious events they were naming.⁵

In turn, these dates apparently marked dramatic changes, by transforming one “period” into another. Here is Orwell again, now in an even more sarcastic vein:

When I was a small boy and was taught history—very badly, of course, as nearly everyone in England is—I used to think of history as a sort of long scroll with thick black lines ruled across it at intervals. Each of these lines marked the end of what was called a ‘period’, and you were given to

5 George Orwell, *In Front of Your Nose, 1946–50*, ed. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus (Boston: Nonpareil Books, 2000), 337.

understand that what came afterwards was completely different from what had gone before. It was almost like a clock striking.

For instance, in 1499 you were still in the Middle Ages, with knights in plate armour riding at one another with long lances, and then suddenly the clock struck 1500, and you were in something called the Renaissance, and everyone wore ruffs and doublets and was busy robbing treasure ships on the Spanish Main. There was another very thick black line drawn at the year 1700. After that it was the Eighteenth Century, and people suddenly stopped being Cavaliers and Roundheads and became extraordinarily elegant gentlemen in knee breeches and three-cornered hats. They all powdered their hair, took snuff and talked in exactly balanced sentences, which seemed all the more stilted because for some reason I didn't understand they pronounced most of their S's as F's. The whole of history was like that in my mind—a series of completely different periods changing abruptly at the end of a century, or at any rate at some sharply defined date.⁶

He then added:

Now in fact these abrupt transitions don't happen, either in politics, manners or literature. Each age lives on into the next—it must do so, because there are innumerable human lives spanning every gap.⁷

The existence of such continuity, on the other hand, was not enough to do away with the problem of periods altogether. It may merely have required those who did the periodisation to be subtler than Orwell's purveyors of "thick black lines."

A well-known recent reflection on the question comes to us from the great French historian Jacques Le Goff, in a late and brief essay provocatively entitled *Faut-il vraiment découper l'histoire en tranches?* ("Should we really slice up history?").⁸ Le Goff begins by noting the existence of ancient schemes of periodisation in the Judaeo-Christian world, such as that in the Book of Daniel, with its four successive kingdoms, or the six periods proposed by Saint Augustine of Hippo (354–430 CE) in his *City of God*. These schemata were marked by a broad declinist narrative, with each period being inferior to that which had preceded it, leaving aside the final possibility

6 George Orwell, *My Country Right or Left, 1940–1943*, ed. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus (Boston: Nonpareil Books, 2000), 197.

7 George Orwell, *My Country* (see note 6), 197.

8 Jacques Le Goff, *Faut-il vraiment découper l'histoire en tranches?* (Paris: Le Seuil, 2014); there is an English translation, *Must We Divide History into Periods?*, trans. Malcolm DeBevoise (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), but I have preferred to use the French original.

of redemption as a closure to the whole cycle. As we know, the Book of Daniel continued to play a significant political and cultural role well into the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and not only for Jews and Christians (as Le Goff suggests), but also for Muslims, usually in the context of millenarian and apocalyptic visions of history. However, Le Goff argues that in the fourteenth century, a new tripartite conception of periodisation arose, with a somewhat different logic than those that had preceded it. Abandoning the declinist conception, this was a view of a first period of glory, followed by a second one of darkness, and eventually a revival or return to a positive trajectory. Associated by him with a figure such as Petrarch (1304–74), this view wished to “define, in a pejorative manner, the period from which they were all too happy to escape,” and this led ineluctably to the conception of the “Middle Ages” [*Moyen Âge*]. Le Goff thus makes it clear that those who lived in the alleged “Middle Ages” never had any awareness that they lived in an epoch distinct from “Antiquity.” This was instead a view that was imposed retrospectively on this period by intellectuals from the fourteenth century on, and especially after the seventeenth century, as a purely negative characterisation.

Unfortunately, the remainder of Le Goff’s essay—which he terms its “essential object”—is concerned with a rather petty and somewhat sectarian quarrel, notably his desire to downplay the importance of the Renaissance as a period in history, and to suggest instead that “in fact, it is only a late sub-period of the long Middle Ages.” This simply dusts off and revisits the position of critics of Jacob Burckhardt, writing already in the 1920s and 1930s, such as William T. Waugh.⁹ Denying all real significance to the transformations wrought by the Mongol unification of large parts of Eurasia in the thirteenth century (including the Black Death and its aftermath), or to the Columbian Exchange of the sixteenth century, Le Goff wishes to insist that the only epochal change of significance since the (largely unspecified) beginning of the Middle Ages was produced by the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century. The “history” of the essay’s title turns out to be a very narrow version of western European history, and much of the rest of Eurasia barely features in the discussion, to say nothing of the other continents. To summarise, Le Goff is happy to embrace the schematic and inherited tripartite periodisation, so long as the three parts are Antiquity, the Middle Ages (beginning, let us say, at some time between the third and the seventh century of the Common Era), and a Modern Period that, for him, only begins with the Enlightenment. The reader may finally rest assured: it is alright to slice up history, so long as one has the ‘right’ slices.

By the time of the publication of Le Goff’s work in 2014, the debate elsewhere on periodisation had moved on to quite different ground, of which he seemed to be largely unaware. A first important move had been made by the American historian

9 William T. Waugh, *A History of Europe: From 1378 to 1494* (London: Methuen, 1932).

of early modern Europe, Jerry Bentley, who in fact began his career by working on Renaissance Italy before terming himself a “world historian.” In an influential and frequently cited essay published in the *American Historical Review* in 1996, entitled “Cross-Cultural Interaction and Periodization in World History,” the gauntlet was thrown down from the very outset. Bentley wrote:

Historians have long realized that periodisation schemes based on the experiences of Western or any other particular civilization do a poor job of explaining the trajectories of other societies. To cite a single notorious example, the categories of ancient, medieval, and modern history, derived from European experience, apply awkwardly at best to the histories of China, India, Africa, the Islamic world, or the Western hemisphere—quite apart from the increasingly recognized fact that they do not even apply very well to European history.¹⁰

He therefore proposed a new set of periods, that would be applied to world history as a whole and would derive from the rhythms of interactions between different part of the world. The forms of interaction that he chose to focus on were above all three in number: mass migration, imperial expansion, and long-distance trade. Based on this, Bentley proposed a six-part periodisation, which ran as follows: (1) an age of early complex societies (3500–2000 BCE); (2) an age of ancient civilisations (2000–500 BCE); (3) an age of classical civilisations (500 BCE–500 CE); (4) a post-classical age (500–1000 CE); (5) an age of transregional nomadic empires (1000–1500 CE); and finally (6) the modern age (1500 CE to the present). Several criticisms could immediately be made of this set of divisions, beginning with their dependence on overly neat dates to mark transitions. An example of this is the use of 500 CE to demarcate the ‘classical’ from the ‘post-classical,’ which is justified very loosely on the basis of “cross-cultural interaction [between] the Tang empire in China, the Abbasid empire in Southwest Asia, and the Byzantine empire in the eastern Mediterranean basin,” when in reality the Tang dynasty was founded after 600 CE, and the Abbasid revolution only dates to 750 CE. It could also be suggested that this exercise largely consisted of splitting the traditional categories of ‘ancient’ and ‘medieval’ into two halves, respectively periods (2) and (3), and periods (4) and (5). The major innovations seem to be limited to adding the first period of “early complex societies” to the list, and collapsing what would conventionally be termed the ‘early modern’ and ‘modern’ into a single period.

Nevertheless, Bentley’s scheme has had quite considerable influence in many quarters, especially among writers of books on world history, whose emphasis in

10 Jerry H. Bentley, “Cross-Cultural Interaction and Periodization in World History,” *American Historical Review* 101, no. 3 (1996): 749–770.

recent times lies not so much in juxtaposing the biographies of ‘civilisations’ in the manner of a Toynbee, but rather in emphasising processes of large-scale exchange and interaction.¹¹ However, Bentley still leaves himself open to the charge of beginning his periodisation far too late, as a result of still being in the “grip of sacred history.” The European medievalist Daniel Smail, in a polemical essay from 2005, demanded to know what the real justification was for separating ‘history’ from ‘pre-history,’ and proposed that histories should at least begin with the origins of *homo sapiens*, and fully take into account the Middle and Upper Palaeolithic periods beginning some 200,000 years ago. The research of several generations justified this, he wrote: “archaeological research has demonstrated the existence of late Paleolithic villages and towns numbering in the hundreds, even thousands, of people, proving that complex political organization owes nothing to agriculture, still less to the invention of writing.”¹² Less extreme than the proposal of ‘big history,’ which suggests abolishing the distinction not just between history and evolutionary biology, but also between history and an account of the universe since its origins (usually seen as the task of astronomers or cosmogonists), Smail’s proposal is now accepted in many circles. The European Research Council’s panel on history is entitled “The Study of the Human Past,” and takes both the Middle and Upper Palaeolithic fully into consideration. The recent multi-volume *Cambridge World History* (of which I was one of the editors), also accepts this longer chronology (and its resulting periodisation), and is no longer beset by postdiluvian anxiety.¹³ At the same time, it must be admitted that ‘world history’ accounts for only a fraction of the historical discipline and its practitioners. Furthermore, by claiming to be everyone’s history, it is in effect no-one’s history, and there is little by way of political or emotional investment in it, as there might be in an object such as ‘Germany,’

- 11 For examples, see Robert Tignor, Jeremy Adelman, Stephen Aron, Stephen Kotkin, Suzanne Marchand, Gyan Prakash, and Michael Tsing, *Worlds Together, Worlds Apart*, 5th ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2017); Bonnie G. Smith, Marc van de Mieroop, Richard von Glahn, and Kris Lane, *Crossroads and Cultures: A History of the World’s Peoples* (Boston: Bedford-St. Martin’s, 2012).
- 12 Daniel Smail, “In the Grip of Sacred History,” *American Historical Review* 110, no. 5 (2005): 1337–1361. Smail appears somewhat naïve in proposing the integration of prehistory (and archaeological evidence) into history as a panacea; for a counter-view, see Nathalie Richard, “Archaeological arguments in national debates in late 19th-century France: Gabriel de Mortillet’s ‘La formation de la nation française’ (1897),” *Antiquity* 76 (2002): 177–184, and more generally Jean-Claude Gardin, *Archaeological constructs: An Aspect of Theoretical Archeology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).
- 13 Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, gen. ed., *The Cambridge World History*, 7 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015). The periodisation adopted there is as follows: vol. 1: *Introducing World History, to 10,000 BCE*; vol. 2: *A World with Agriculture, 12,000 BCE–500 CE*; vol. 3: *Early Cities in Comparative Perspective, 4000 BCE–1200 CE*; vol. 4: *A World with States, Empires and Networks, 1200 BCE–900 CE*; vol. 5: *Expanding Webs of Exchange and Conflict, 500 CE–1500 CE*; vol. 6: *The Construction of a Global World, 1400–1800 CE*; and vol. 7: *Production, Destruction and Connection, 1750–Present*.

‘Mexico’ or even ‘Europe.’¹⁴ The question therefore arises as to what happens when we turn to a smaller scale. What are the debates on periodisation when one looks to national history instead?

* * *

Today’s history-writing still carries in its structure and logic strong traces of national history as it came to be practised in the course of the nineteenth century, in Europe, as well as in the Americas, and eventually in other nations such as Japan, China, or Iran. Contemporary French historiography, to take one example, still seems incapable of exorcising the ghost of Jules Michelet (1798–1874), whose works were characterised by a combination of republican nationalism, anti-clericalism, and hostility to regional traditions.¹⁵ Le Goff, in his book cited earlier, continues to employ Michelet as his foil, seeing him as more important than Burckhardt and a host of others. However, the difficulty faced by national historians in the nineteenth century was that they did not exactly plough virgin soil. Rather, layer upon layer of earlier histories existed, often conceived within the framework of the monarchical state and its dynastic logic. Such earlier histories obviously had a simple device for periodisation, namely the transition from one dynasty to another. Seen from this perspective, one could neatly produce a sequence for France as follows (on the assumption that a true “national” history could only be traced to the post-Roman world): Merovingians, Carolingians, Capetians, Valois and Bourbons. Of course, as the medievalist Patrick Geary has pointed out, many of these dynasties hardly fit neatly into the “national space” of France, while at the same time, such a sequence requires us to consciously ignore many divergent regional political histories in the interests of the unique national narrative.¹⁶ On the other hand, dynastic history was hardly the preferred mode of republican nationalist historians in France. Rather, they preferred more neutral terminology, referring to such notions as the ‘medieval’ and the ‘modern,’ but also insisting on an important caesura with the French Revolution in 1789, which separated the *moderne* from *l’Époque contemporaine*. While the significance of 1789 has been repeatedly challenged in the last three decades or more, by ‘revisionists,’ both in France and elsewhere, the use of that date as a fixed marker of periodisation still seems to be quite unshakeable, separating the *Ancien Régime* from what came afterwards.

14 Cf. debates on textbooks to propose ‘national histories’ in Özlüm Caykent’s chapter in this volume.

15 On Michelet, see Tzvetan Todorov, *Nous et les autres: La réflexion française sur la diversité humaine* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1989), 235–246; also see, the less critical view in John R. Williams, *Jules Michelet: Historian as Critic of French Literature* (Birmingham, AL: Summa Publications, 1987).

16 Patrick J. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The medieval origins of Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

Therefore, no matter what the methodological and other divides that separate historians within France—say, those of the Sorbonne from the heirs of the erstwhile *Annales*—we can still discern a relatively high level of coherence to the schemes of periodisation employed by the majority, which are in turn the consequence of a high degree of homogeneity in terms of historians' social origins and forms of training.

Matters are far more complex when one turns from a national space such as that of France, to one as diverse and complex as that of India, where—to further complicate matters—we must also contend with the difficult inheritance of British colonisation, also aptly discussed in this book in the chapters by Milinda Banerjee and Anubhuti Maurya. Let me offer a schematic view here of the contending versions of periodisation in Indian history. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, prior to the British conquest, many forms of history writing flourished in India, from local and regional histories to grand imperial chronicles written for the Mughals. These often chose the dynastic route to periodisation, although there are a few exceptions to this rule. However, in the early nineteenth century, these historical traditions were progressively discredited and set aside, even if they never completely disappeared. Instead, the British wrote their own version of Indian history, and generations of Indian historians who received a colonial education followed the template set by them, although some (such as Sayyid Ahmad Khan), did still look back to elements of the earlier historiography.¹⁷ One of the most important and influential texts was that written by the Scottish utilitarian philosopher, James Mill (1773–1836), and titled *The History of British India* (1817). Mill had no real knowledge of Indian languages and was broadly hostile to the intellectual current known as 'Orientalism,' even though he used the works of the Orientalists themselves quite opportunistically.¹⁸ Nevertheless, he produced a tripartite division of Indian history, separating the periods dominated by the Hindus, the Muslims, and the British. This was the classic tripartite scheme we have seen above (discussed by Le Goff), which has been discussed at several points in this book (e.g. in the chapters by Nipperdey and Moshfegh), but with the categories named differently and given an explicitly religious colouring. We can then observe, from the table below, how this has formed the basis for most subsequent discussions of periodisation used in India, including by semi-official organisations such as the Indian History Congress (founded in 1935). Mill also was not concerned with the question of change or movement within the 'Hindu' period. His chapters regarding it are thematic, on subjects such as caste, religion, literature, and so on,

17 See C. M. Naim, "Syed Ahmad and His Two Books Called 'Asar al-Sanadid'," *Modern Asian Studies* 45, no. 3 (2011): 669–708.

18 James Mill, *The History of British India*, 3 vols. (London: Baldwin, Cradock and Joy, 1817). For a useful analysis of Mill's context (but which does not engage in a close reading of his text), see Javed Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings: James Mill's 'The History of British India' and Orientalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

and draw indifferently from materials in translation, caring little whether they belong to the same epoch or from widely separated periods. While he has little to say that is positive about the Hindus, the period of Muslim rule that succeeded is portrayed as being even worse. Naturally, this provided a crude alibi for British colonial rule. But this work also laid aside the claim—common in East India Company circles in the 1770s or 1780s—that the British were inheritors of the Mughals, engaged in the “redeployment of Mughal constitution.”¹⁹ As a depiction of the course of history, we may say that it employed the familiar U-shaped pattern, known to us from Petrarch or Giorgio Vasari. Little wonder that colonial intellectuals in eastern India began to speak of something called the ‘Bengal Renaissance,’ referring to the revival of an ancient ‘Golden Age.’²⁰ (Tab. 1)

A century after the publication of Mill’s work, a number of concrete criticisms of it had emerged, even from colonial administrators such as H. H. Wilson. However, its structure proved far harder to dislodge than its specific contents. As Indian nationalist historians began to be professionalised, they certainly debated whether the Muslim conquest of northern India (around 1200), had produced positive or negative effects, but they did not deny its role as a decisive break. The progressive discovery through archaeology of a pre-Vedic past in northern and north-western India (the so-called Indus Valley culture), also was integrated quietly into the tripartite structure. The growing influence of Marxist historiography after 1950 eventually introduced some more complexity into this picture, but this largely took the form of arguing that the ‘ancient’ period itself needed to be sub-divided into several internal phases: that of the Indus valley, that of the ancient chiefdoms that became empires, and finally a phase that was termed ‘Indian feudalism,’ running from roughly 300 to 1200 CE. It was argued that this last phase was the product of a process of de-urbanisation, the reduced use of money, and a return to a rural society of limited horizons. This was effectively a Marxist redeployment of Henri Pirenne’s posthumously published explanation for the emergence of the politico-economic structure of Carolingian rule in Europe.²¹

19 Robert Travers, *Ideology and Empire in Eighteenth-Century India: The British in Bengal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). Cf. the discussions in Anubhuti Maurya’s chapter in this volume.

20 David Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance: The dynamics of Indian modernization, 1773–1835* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969); Samira Sheikh, “A Makeshift Renaissance: North India in the ‘long’ fifteenth century,” in *The Routledge History of the Renaissance*, ed. William Caferro (New York: Routledge, 2017), 30–45.

21 R. S. Sharma, *Indian Feudalism: c. 300–1200* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1965); Henri Pirenne, *Mahomet et Charlemagne*, ed. Jacques Pirenne and F. Vercauteren (Paris: F. Alcan, 1937). For a survey of the debate in Asia, see Harbans Mukhia, ed., *The Feudalism Debate* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1999).

Table 1 Periodisation Schemes in Indian History

James Mill	'Nationalists' (1930s–50s)	Nationalist-Marxists (ca. 1970)	Subaltern (R. Guha et al.)	Post-1980 'revision'	Language-based periodisation (S. Pollock)
Hindus (beginning with the 'Institutes of Manu' etc)	Ancient (extended chronology to Indus Valley)	Ancient, beginning with Indus Valley	No concrete interest in 'ancient'	New category of 'early medieval'	Emergence of pre-cosmopolitan Sanskrit (to 300 CE)
Mahomedan or Mussulman (after 1200 CE)	Medieval (starting 1200 CE)	Ancient chiefdoms	Use of 'Feudalism,' to include early Sanskrit texts	New category of 'early modern'	'Sanskrit cosmopolis' (300–1300 CE)
British (after 1757)	Modern (colonial period, starting 1757)	Ancient kingdoms and empires to 300 CE; followed by 'Feudalism,' 300–1200 CE	'Feudalism' still runs to 1757		'Vernacular millennium' emerges (1000–1500 CE)
		Medieval (Sultanate and Mughal)			'Death of Sanskrit'; End of 'pre-modernity'
		Modern (or colonial, starting 1757)	Modern (or colonial)		Colonial modernity

Somewhat surprisingly, the emergence in the late 1970s and early 1980s of 'Subaltern Studies' changed none of these conceptions, largely because of the indifference shown by historians of this area to history before 1800. In the view of Ranajit Guha, for long its dominant theorist, the long centuries of pre-1800 India could be covered by the blanket term 'feudalism,' and discussed using normative texts in Sanskrit

drawn indifferently across many centuries.²² At much the same time though, other historians began to tentatively try out some new terms: the ‘early medieval,’ used by B. D. Chattopadhyaya and others, for the period from the seventh to the thirteenth centuries; the ‘early modern’ to refer to the period after 1600, or in some instances after 1500.²³ These were not concerted efforts and may even have been contradictory in some instances. Part of the tension arose however from a specific problem.

The schemes of periodisation shown above, while all deriving from the experience of northern India, assumed that they could be applied equally all over the sub-continent. But historians of southern India had, for most of the twentieth century, refused to use these schemes. Their alternatives may be found below (Tab. 2), beginning from the time when K. A. Nilakantha Sastri (1892–1975), was the dominant figure on the South Indian scene. As we see, even the Marxist and neo-Marxist historiography on South India failed to agree with the template given as a general framework for all of India. This was so for at least four reasons: (1) a divergence regarding the early period (the so-called Cankam in South India); (2) the consolidation of important state structures in South India in the seventh to thirteenth centuries; (3) the distinct chronology of Islamic influence in southern India; and (4) the limited impact of the Mughal empire in the region.

Recent research has shown how a received framework heavily influenced some of these conceptions and periodisations, notably in respect of the ‘Kalabhra Dark Age,’ which Sastri and others clearly conceived of as the direct counterpart of the relationship of the Salian Franks, or the Visigoths, to Roman power. As it turns out, this ‘Dark Age’ is little more than a myth resting on some tenuous fragments of unconvincing evidence.²⁴

What rendered matters even more complex was the fact that historians of one part of South India—the south-western strip of Kerala—refused to conform to the

22 Ranajit Guha, *Dominance without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); and for a critique of such loose uses of ‘feudalism,’ Kathleen Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty: How Ideas of Feudalism and Secularization Govern the Politics of Time* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008). See also the discussion in the chapters by Milinda Banerjee and Anubhuti Maurya in this volume.

23 On the ‘early medieval,’ see B. D. Chattopadhyaya, *The Making of Early Medieval India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994); and Kesavan Veluthat, *The Early Medieval in South India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009). On the uses of ‘early modern,’ see John F. Richards, “Early Modern India and World History”, *Journal of World History* 8, no. 2 (1997): 197–209. For a general reflection on these periodisation questions, see Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “Waiting for the Simorgh: Comparisons, Connections, and the ‘Early Modern,’” in *Delimiting Modernities: Conceptual Challenges and Regional Responses*, ed. Sven Trakulhun, Ralph Weber (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015), 99–121. The chapter by Anubhuti Maurya in this volume also addresses the topic.

24 See Valérie Gillet, “The Dark Period: Myth or Reality?,” *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 51, no. 3 (2014): 283–302.

Table 2 Periodisations for South India

Nilakantha Sastri (1950s–1960s)	Nationalist-Marxist	Other Marxist (Japanese school)	Revisionist neo-Marxist (Burton Stein)	Kerala
Cankam	Early South India, pre 3rd century BCE			Late emergence of state society from chiefdoms
Kalabhra Dark Age (3rd–6th century CE)	Ancient society, with chiefdoms (3rd century BCE to 3rd century CE)		Kalabhra Dark Age	Ceras of Mahodayapuram (9th–12th century CE)
Pallava and Cola, bureaucratic empires (7th–13th century)	Long transition	State society, based on slavery (10th–13th century)	Emergence and consolidation of 'segmentary state' (7th–13th century)	Fragmentation of power; militarised society (12th–17th century)
Vijayanagara military confederation (14th–16th century)	Early medieval, emergence of state society (7th century CE on)	Military feudalism (14th–17th century)	'Military fiscalism' under Vijayanagara (15th–17th century)	Centralisation of power under Tiruvankod (18th century)
Chaotic decentralisation (17th–18th century)	Consolidation of medieval state society under Colas (10th–13th century)	Unspecified leading to colonial period	'Early modern Sultanism' in Mysore, 18th century	
Colonial rule, post 1800	Unspecified, leading to colonial period		Colonial rule, post 1800	Colonial rule, post 1800

general periodisation for the region. Thus, what appeared at first to be opening a Matryoshka, was more akin to throwing open Pandora's Box. Changes in scale had a major destabilising effect on schemes of periodisation, as one moved from 'nation' to 'region,' and the other way around.²⁵

* * *

"We cannot not periodize," wrote the Marxist literary critic Fredric Jameson in a celebrated and controversial phrase from 2002.²⁶ This seems hardly to be a credible description of the current state of either literary or historical studies. Another way of presenting matters would be to suggest that periodisation is no more than an orientation device (among others), used by some, but not all historians. This standpoint is discussed in detail in this volume by Özlem Caykent and Heather Ferguson. On this basis, one could even suggest that periodisation has more of an effect on the form of the presentation of history, than on the real content of research problems. But the unfortunate fact is that periodisation often serves to reify, and to lead the historian to reason in a circular fashion, finding those traits that they are looking for anyway—this is very clearly the case in Turkish textbooks as discussed by Özlem Caykent, but also in Histories of Islam as discussed by David Moshfegh. The launching of the idea of 'Indian feudalism' led to a spate of studies which were determined to show the prevalence of barter, and the disappearance of urban life. On the other hand, the unpopularity of even the idea of the 'medieval' among historians of China led historical studies to be conceived quite differently there than in India.²⁷ In the context of the divide between the medieval and the modern in Europe, it has even been claimed that "it works less as a historical marker than a massive value judgment, determining what matters and what does not."²⁸ This point has been widely discussed, also for the application of *Eurochronologies* or *chronotypes* in other parts of the world throughout this volume, and especially pertinently in the chapters by David Moshfegh, Heather Ferguson and Özen Dolcerocca. To the extent that periodisation is almost always accompanied by specific labelling, it thus has consequences. This is possibly why one

25 For similar observations, see the chapters by Milinda Banerjee and Anubhuti Maurya in this volume.

26 Fredric Jameson, *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of the Present* (New York: Verso, 2002), 29. For a critical discussion, see Jennifer Summit and David Wallace, "Rethinking Periodization," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 37, no. 3 (2007): 447–451.

27 See Timothy Brook, "Medievality and the Chinese Sense of History," *The Medieval History Journal* 1, no. 1 (1998): 145–164. A rather different view regarding the universality of the medieval is put forward by the editors of a recently founded Vienna-based journal: "Introduction," *Medieval Worlds* 1 (2015): 2–4.

28 See Margreta de Grazia, "The Modern Divide: From Either Side," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 37, no. 3 (2007): 453–467.

prominent group of late twentieth and early twenty-first century historians—those associated with Italian *microstoria* like Carlo Ginzburg—have shown a marked distaste for periodisation as an exercise, as part of a larger argument regarding nominalism.²⁹ More surprisingly, some epistemologists have argued that even the influential work of Reinhart Koselleck should be read as an exercise “against periodisation,” and that what is often termed ‘periodisation’ in his work is the result of the mistranslation of his notion of a *Theorie der geschichtlichen Zeiten*. Thus, Helge Jordheim argues that for Koselleck, “the multiplicity of historical temporalities, represents one of the most viable alternatives to periodisation as a way of organising historical knowledge and knowledge production.”³⁰ We are enjoined to recall that even the periodising concept of *Sattelzeit* was more or less abandoned by Koselleck himself, who apparently admitted: “Initially conceived as a catchword in a grant application, this concept has come to obscure rather than to advance the project.”³¹

Less radical in my views of periodisation than Ginzburg, I am nonetheless inclined to treat it as little more than a fragile tool, open to disingenuous manipulation, and often a way of introducing claims that cannot in fact be openly defended.³² At the same time, it is difficult to see how it can be avoided in certain contexts: for instance, when dealing with long periods of time without assuming stasis or structural stability; or while organising history in certain didactic situations, and so on. Here, the reflections of the Islamic historian Fred Donner appear to me rather helpful. In a recent essay, Donner notes:

Periodization and spatialization, as two aspects of a single problem of managing the unmanageable interconnectedness of everything, are of course often intimately related. A periodization may seem perfectly obvious or sensible within a given spatial framework, but if we change that spatial framework, our periodization may no longer seem appropriate.³³

29 This may also have to do with the initial opposition between serial history and *microstoria*, though Ginzburg’s reticence seems to run far deeper. (My observations are based on private conversations with Carlo Ginzburg, since he appears to have published nothing on the subject.)

30 Helge Jordheim, “Against Periodisation: Koselleck’s Theory of Multiple Temporalities,” *History and Theory* 51 (2012): 171.

31 Jordheim, “Against Periodization” (see note 30), 156.

32 From the viewpoint of literary history, see the comparable observations of David Matthews, “Periodization,” in *A Handbook of Middle English Studies*, ed. Marion Turner (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 253–266.

33 Fred M. Donner, “Periodization as a Tool of the Historian with Special Reference to Islamic History,” *Der Islam* 91, no. 1 (2014): 21. Donner’s essay seems intended in part as a belated response to another proposal (in his words), “with marked overtones of ethnic-nationalist conceptualizations”: this is Shelomo Dov Goitein, “A Plea for the Periodization of Islamic History,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 88, no. 2 (1968): 224–228.

Here, the question seems principally to concern the transportability of periodisation schemes, but as I have tried to show above, the same problem can occur with shifts in scale. Donner further adds:

[...] various periodisations are tools used by historians to highlight the particular themes or developments in which they are interested. They may [...] have a strongly polemical intent, but in any case, they are designed to focus attention on a particular issue. It is thus futile to expect a single periodisation to be comprehensively satisfactory, to be in some sense an 'idea' or 'absolute' periodisation that is equally relevant for all aspects of history, although, obviously, some periodisations may be more narrowly conceived than others.³⁴

And he concludes: "As with any tool, the secret to using periodisations is to choose the right tool for the particular job at hand and to remain flexible and creative in using it."³⁵

This to my mind approximates a combination of scepticism and flexibility that resonates with my own pragmatic understanding. Let periodisation not become one of those idols that we first create, and then either fear or worship.

34 Donner, "Periodization as a Tool" (see note 33), 32.

35 Donner, "Periodization as a Tool" (see note 33), 36.

Many contemporary periodisation schemes have their roots in Europe, reflecting particular national religious or historiographical traditions and teleologies. As part of the colonial encounter they have been translated into new temporal authenticities in the Americas, Asia and Africa. Culturally determined as they are, these periodisation schemes are begging for systematic comparison in order to identify their contextual specificity and contingency. An interdisciplinary and transregional approach allows to work out categories of historical analysis that go beyond nation-bound interpretative patterns. In considering case studies from different parts of the world, the aim of this volume is to uncover some of the dynamics behind particular uses of periodisation schemes, as concepts for ordering the past.



**UNIVERSITÄT
HEIDELBERG**
ZUKUNFT
SEIT 1386

ISBN 978-3-96822-138-0



9 783968 221380