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

Michael Geyer [ID]

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

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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-your-self 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

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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 XXIe 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

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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.

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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

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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.

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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

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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 = Taʾrīkh al-rusul waʾl 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 visional 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

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47   "The Valley of Vision—my 'dream book'; … this is the big work planned since 1944; a visional 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.

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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

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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 professionelle* 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.

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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.

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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 citied 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

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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 *chronologics*). 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 mo-dernities), 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 dis-rupted 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

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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

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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]

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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 Niceno-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—itself 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]

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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

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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

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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 cited time* among the primary regions of the Afro-Eurasian cited zone: the zone of cited 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 cited 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]

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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 *chronologics*, 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

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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 citied 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 Beziehungs-geschichte und Zivilisationsvergleich* (Göttingen: Vandehoeck & 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]

Citied 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

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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 "mnemic 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 *chrono-logic*, 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 hemi-sphere 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 McNeill[102]—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

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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":

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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]

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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

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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

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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, MGSH 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.

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[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.