



# Introduction: Current Challenges of Global History in East Asian Historiographies

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The Global History Network (GHN) was recently founded by a group of scholars working on global history at prestigious universities and institutions in China, Japan, Mexico and Europe. This ambitious project began in 2011 when Professor Lucio de Sousa and I, working respectively in China and

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Japan, jointly identified the historiographical need to render the expanding field of global history that might be defined as truly relevant for the new century. Our current institutions, Shanghai Jiao Tong University and the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, serve as academic platforms to expand our network and research in China and Japan. Undertaking such endeavours in both countries represents an opportunity to expand global history in environments with diverse academic traditions. Regardless of current efforts to internationalize Chinese and Japanese universities and research institutions, nobody can ignore the fact that today they remain very far from embracing a truly international and global academic agenda. Such a challenge should be filled with the use of new empirical data and cross-referencing sources from European, Asian and American archives and texts. This enables us to refresh the field of global history via concrete case studies, especially when we confront meta narratives that aim to answer big-questions such as why the West (or, more specifically, Great Britain and the Netherlands) flourished economically before China during the first Industrial Revolution. As a result, our project crystalized with the award of the ERC-Starting Grant, *Global Encounters between China and Europe* (GECEM), by which this book is sponsored, as well as ongoing related projects.

We believe that by joining forces and harmonizing diverse theories, sources and methods of different academic traditions like those from China and Japan, the field of global history receives a new impulse through diverse case studies. The constant participation of specialists in this field is crucial, as they share their experiences and new ideas on how re-addressing new approaches and questions. The main partner institutions that take part of this network are the University Pablo de Olavide (Spain), Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, followed by Tsinghua University, Renmin University of China, Guangdong Academy of Social Sciences, the University of Tokyo, the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) and the École de Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (France).

Global history is in some instances a very sensitive field, challenging both traditional and sometimes obsolete national narratives. It is crucial for this project, through concrete case studies, to rethink the ways in which global history is envisioned and conceptualized in China and Japan, as well as European and American countries. When a historian constructs a meta narratives, this will always contain a subjective element borne out of ideological and national constraints. Therefore, we should formulate the following pertinent question: how do global events connect to our local and national communities, and, by extension, to our

academic environment? Global history is not a practice by which we can arbitrarily combine all type of histories, be it local, national, continental or transcontinental. It is rather an approach through which the historian seeks connections across space, chronologies and boundaries, combining local and global perspectives.<sup>1</sup> Challenging and going beyond obsolete patriotic narratives should be the ultimate goal of a global historian.

National narratives are still very present in Western historiographies. Though global history is very popular in Anglo-Saxon historiographies, it has been mainly focused on the history of Great Britain and its colonies due to primary attention to study the core economic areas of Europe, mainly Great Britain, that took off during the first Industrial Revolution. In the case of southern European historiographies—Spain, France, Italy or Portugal—the long-standing influence of Marxist ideology in the area of social sciences and humanities, the political and ideological conquests of May 1968 and the Annales School have for a long time held sway in the form and method of making history. This was also followed by the dependency theorists of Latin America that came about as a reaction to Anglo-American modernization theories. In such historiographies, it is no coincidence that, when debating the meaning and significance of global history, prejudices arise in the belief that it is a mindset inherited from Anglo-Saxon historiography. This has served as a justification not to give enough emphasis to global history. In southern European historiographies until the present day, only the magnum opus by Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism*, or Immanuel Wallerstein's *The Modern World System* are the classic works that such traditional scholarship uniquely identifies with global history. Yet, when mentioning the debate of the great divergence, the 'Needham question', the essential works by Pomeranz or the California School, among others, there is little understanding and knowledge of such vital debates and works. The lack of translation into Spanish or Portuguese of such works exacerbates a problem founded on an absence of sharing academic and analytical perspectives.

This is the case for the presence or, to put it better, marginal existence of global history in European historiographies. The chapter by Anne McCants in this volume truly illustrates the marginal position of global history in Europe, not only in the countries mentioned above, but also in Germany and France. In the former, world history has had a greater presence than global history, and for the latter, when we find global history books, such works are more closely related to the history of commerce and consumption somehow following the Braudelian tradition of the *longue durée* and markets in the Mediterranean area. As McCants mentions, the World History Association (WHA), as well as the

three major refereed academic journals in global history—the *Journal of World History* (begun in 1990), the *Journal of Global History* (begun in 2006) and the *New Global Studies Journal* (begun in 2007)—has exerted a notable role in expanding the field, mainly in the last 10 years.

When turning to Chinese historiography, we should notice that global history has been recently introduced. Until the present day, the main contribution of Chinese scholars in this field has been translations of main western works such as *The Great Divergence* (K. Pomeranz 2000) into Chinese by Shǐ Jiànyún 史建云 in 2003 and when the World History Association (WHA) organized its 20th annual meeting at Capital Normal University (Beijing, China) in 2011. From that moment, Capital Normal University (Shǒudū Shīfān Dàxué 首都师范大学), Nankai University (Nánkāi Dàxué 南开大学) and latter in 2014 Beijing Foreign Studies University (Běijīng Wàiguóyǔ Dàxué 北京外国语大学) respectively started to embrace global history by founding research centres, as well as journals related to this field. The first publishes the *Global History Review*, the *Translation of Global History Series* and the *Global History Reader*. Nevertheless, the missions and goals of such centres and journals have an orientation of China's history that is separate from the rest of the world. Any research centre in China must be within the parameters of the Chinese government, by following the 一帯一路 yīdài yīlù ('One Belt, One Road') policy whose goal is to present a new national history of China. Therefore, the focus is utterly Sinocentric observing global history or, to put it better, world history as the history of nations and territories outside China, i.e. the history of Japan, Russia or Germany, among others. The objective and result is to build a very patriotic narrative.

The use and meaning of concepts to understand global history and distinguish it from world history appears to be of great importance. Although they might have similar labels and terms, they are used differently according to academic traditions and principles which are regularly jumbled together. There is a lack of a clear distinction between global history (quánqiú shǐ 全球史) or world history (shìjiè lìshǐ 世界历史), both of which have different meanings and connotations relating to the political context that dominates the academic environment in China. This is not only a problem of the current moment. A long-standing trope for conceptualizing world history in China is through the concept of cóngshū (丛书), which specifically refers to big encyclopaedic volumes that categorize and compile history in separate geographical units. This form and narrative was profoundly rooted in Song and Ming Dynasty historiographies, and spread through the then-new networks of knowledge and the literati in China. However, this practice remains present in Chinese historiography until

today, existing alongside contemporary attitudes towards history writing. The search for interconnections, use of new approaches considering both local and macro scales, is practically absent in Chinese narratives. An explanation or clue for such a lack might be that global history in the last few decades in China has merely been linked with a decided sub-field of international history. Likewise, another reason for such a vacuum is related to the concept of collecting and transcribing national narratives by doing encyclopaedic series on the history of Russia, Japan or other neighbouring nations that had important political links with China during the Cold War period. Furthermore, it is also important to consider that international history, mainly after the foundation of People's Republic of China (PRC), had as its main goal the study of how Marxism was interpreted in other nations, with history itself playing a secondary role.

The same case and use of concepts can be found in Japanese historiography, as presented in the chapter by Suzuki Hideaki on *kaiiki-shi* 海域史 (according to the Japanese translation, it means maritime history) and world/global history, or the Japanized pronunciation of global history (global history = グローバル・ヒストリー) 'gurobaru hisutori'<sup>2</sup> (Haneda 2015). Both Chinese and Japanese scholars find themselves at a crossroads in an attempt to accommodate the current fashion of global history with their national peculiarities and academic traditions. In the case of Japan, as Haneda (2015) refers to 'new world history', the Japanese translation is 'atarashii sekaishi' (新しい世界史).<sup>3</sup> Regarding the case of China, Liang Zhan-Jun (2006) makes an effort to distinguish the terms global history (quánqiú shǐ 全球史) and world history (shìjiè lìshǐ 世界历史) mentioned above. Nevertheless, the main academic trend in China is to embrace global history with 'Chinese characteristics' (zhōngguó tèsè 中国特色) (Qian C. 2001; Yu P. 2006). In other words, we could observe a ne-nationalization of historical narratives with the 'global' fashionable label.

The same problem in Japanese historiography might be found in the case of Chinese historiography in relation to the confusion of world and global history, which tends to be a universal one, as it also appears in Western historiographies. Likewise, global history is regarded in Japan as a Western, more clearly Anglo-Saxon form and narrative, and therefore as a non-indigenous one. Thus, historians and new practitioners of global history feel more comfortable using the form of world history, which separates nation-states as geographical units for the historical analysis using national narratives and jointly embracing sub-disciplines such as maritime history in the case of Japanese historiography. The sea in China and Japan has historically been conceptualized as the main space through

which foreigners or invaders arrived. As such, the concept of ‘sea’ in Chinese, *hǎi* (海), is closely linked to the concept of foreigner, *hǎiwài rén* (海外人). Similarly, we find the same in Japanese, *gaikokujin* (外国人) or *gaijin* (外人), which denotes people who entered the country from overseas.

It appears natural that world and global history are interconnected with maritime history. The same is the case in other East Asian historical traditions. Likewise, the case of maritime history, in East Asian historiographies, the aforementioned Chinese and Japanese historical traditions, as well as those from South Korea, the Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau, have a clear tendency, due to their geographical nature, to develop maritime studies. Consequently, global history in these areas is quite concentrated on the study of trans-Pacific trade, maritime networks and inner local economic development, such as the area of the lower Yangzi Delta in China (Li Qingxin 2010; Antony 2014; Kee-long So 2011; Li Bozhong 2000; Hamashita 1997).

In this sense, global history, even though it is a substantially new and fashionable field in Chinese historiography, has not sympathized with traditional scholars. This issue also appears in some European areas. Here the traditional school is essentially defined as the Marxist school. Scholars belonging to this tradition reject global history and argue that it “is not a compact, uniform normative narrative”. Global history might be a form of a “neo-colonialist strategy” that can potentially contaminate the meaning, concept and narrative of Chinese history and civilization (Wu Xiaoqun 2005; Li Qiang 2011; Wang Lincong 2002; Wang Yunlong 2002; Qian Chengdan 2001; Yu Pei 2006). Therefore, it is envisaged as a Western form and product of the conquest of capitalism used to diminish China’s national history and its cultural uniqueness.

In order to accommodate global history within the peculiar political and social features of the academic system and environment in China, the discipline has even been embraced by the group of critics in the form of using global history with national imperatives and the neo-Confucian policies applied to academic life. Such policies seek the internationalization of the academic community, while maintaining the national essence. Therefore, we might find a new distorted form of global history in China masked as scientific internationalization and diversity, but with a profoundly nationalist spirit. This could be defined as global history with ‘Chinese characteristics’ (*zhōngguó tèsè* 中国特色). However, several groups of scholars in China embrace the discipline of global history and capture the real

meaning of it. This is the so-called group of ‘neo-colonialists’—in terms of the Marxist school—as they have been influenced by Western historiographies (Liang Zhan-Jun 2006; Liu Xincheng 2012; Li Longqing 2000; Liu Beicheng 2000). A paramount example is the translation of the book *Re-Orient* (Gunder Frank) by Liu Beicheng, the Chinese title being Báiyín Zībēn 白银资本 (*Silver Capital*). From the moment that *Re-Orient* and *The Great Divergence* were translated into Chinese, global history, the California School and the great divergence debate progressively spread in Chinese scholarship (Liu Beicheng 2000).

To be sure, recent openings in China have created new ground for other related fields, such as international relations (IR) and international political economy (IPE), whose aim is to analyse the political system in the era of globalisation and the impact of political factors of the world economy respectively. This clearly shows the interdisciplinary scope of global history and the dialogue with other disciplines and sub-disciplines. Still, misuses and misunderstandings remain in the practice and concept of global history. The field did not make its debut in Chinese historiography until the translation of *Re-Orient* (Frank, A.G. 1998), and, as mentioned above, *The Great Divergence* (Pomeranz, K. 2000) into Chinese at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The works of such scholars just started to make an influence approximately seven years ago in Chinese academic circles. This beginning of the discipline coincided with the rapid development of the Chinese economy and the rise of its gross domestic product (GDP) (Deng and O’Brien 2016). And, of course, finding the roots of the uniqueness of the Chinese economy in its long-lasting civilization was very tempting for Chinese scholars, some of whom had strong ideological and political motivations to legitimate the current uniqueness of the history and the economy of the nation. Therefore, in the case of Chinese historiography, global history is often confusingly interwoven with the modern use of globalization and new foreign policies for business, trade and the import-export market. Global history in Japanese historiography also faces similar obstacles to Chinese historiography. National issues, political implications and the resistance in Japanese academia to embracing other historiographical traditions can equally explain such a vacuum. In addition, one of the major contributions in the field, *The Great Divergence*, has not been translated into Japanese. When making global history in Japan, as was mentioned above, maritime history and the role of port cities such as Nagasaki are crucial in understanding the process of modernization in Japan and how its

economy was integrated into the Pacific region. The galleons that travelled westwards from Acapulco (New Spain) to Manila (the Philippines), connecting south-east Asian, south Chinese and Japanese ports stands out as a key factor in terms of analysing such global market integration in the Pacific.

Thus, the case of the Americas and their historical and geostrategic position needs to be given greater emphasis. In this particular case, the classic analysis by A. Gunder Frank's *Latin America: Underdevelopment or Revolution* (1969) and Wallerstein's (1974) world-system theories that identify core and peripheral economic areas, i.e., those that supply raw materials and those that provide manufactures, should be refreshed with new empirical work and case studies. This could be made by applying social networks analysis and spatial analysis using a Geographic Information System (GIS), identifying social actors and commodities, and observing through the movement of people, goods and technologies how markets were progressively integrated. Such integration is and was prompted not only by the economic stimulus of modern institutions on local economies, but also by a dynamic transcultural interaction (Gipouloux 2011) of merchants and consumers through economic exchanges and trade routes. A very good instance of such a process of transculturation can be found in the Manila–Acapulco route, also called the Nao of China. This trans-Pacific route is an excellent 'laboratory' for a global historian. Traditionally, it has been studied as a round-trade route connecting Manila (the Philippines) and Acapulco (New Spain). In other words, it has been commonly defined, though inaccurately, as an exclusive market of the Spanish Empire. Such a misinterpretation could be also linked to national narratives which ignore that such a route corresponded with global networks of trade and people that integrated Western and Eastern markets. Manila and Acapulco were just one more link in the Pacific area that connected China with the West.

Across continental units, somehow global history has been 'haunted' by national narratives. The practice of global history requires making cross-geographical sections going beyond European, American and Asian nations, as well as disciplines. There is a tendency to observe and/or identify global history with economic history, whereas it is a very interdisciplinary field which requires a constant dialogue with other areas of history and social sciences. This view historiographically opens up a wider perspective for connections on historical phenomena across



boundaries, spatialities and temporalities for the understanding of a more complex historical process. Global history is not simply a field or subject—it should also be defined as an approach that complements and challenges other forms of historical analysis. Historical comparisons are undoubtedly attached to the methodological package of global historians to analyse the economic development in the long term and how regions were interconnected. The analysis of the global movement of people, technology and goods is a must in the agenda of the global historian, intertwining socio-economic, political and cultural features. The process of the circulation of human, material and technological capital, which could be defined as ‘strange’, ‘exotic’ or ‘foreign’ and might confront or challenge local traditions and cultures, has been of great importance in the analysis of global historians.

Humanity’s history has been one of constant movement, from the nomad tribes of the Near and Middle East to the early modern explorers and expeditioners of the Americas and Asia. For this reason, I argue against the use of unidirectional applications of global history as a concept. Scholars normally identify the first globalization with the overseas ventures of the Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (V.O.C.), East India Company (E.I.C.), or the Western settlement in China after the Opium Wars. Globalization is a very modern concept which emerged after the Second World War and developed increasingly during the Cold War. The aim of the developed world during this era was to spread new technologies to ‘globalize’ the farthest corners of the world. These processes began long before the post-modern form of globalization of the twentieth century. This search of prosperity is what Vere Gordon Childe called “the drama of hunger”, which set humankind in constant movement:

the inadequacy of the soil to maintain its occupants, partly owing to their ignorance of the art of renewing the exhausted energies of the earth by the agency of manure, and partly to the constant increase in population. This much truth certainly lay in the assertion, which used to be accepted without demur, that these waves moved westward from some region beyond the banks of the Euphrates and Tigris. The vast tract of territory which extends along the breadth of Asia, running between the 40th and 50th degrees of latitude, as far as the Rhine, and even the Bay of Biscay, has been from immemorial the highway of roving barbarians in search of home. (Childe 1950: 28)

The naïve epitome that global history is a consequence of the modern process of globalization is challenged in this book. Thus, our aim is to contribute to the revitalization of the field of global history in East Asian historiographies, mainly in China and Japan, which has remained 'haunted' by national narratives, as well as its connections moving westwards via the Pacific and Atlantic regions. On the European side, global history has mainly focused on the study of the main economic powers of Europe (core areas) and its colonies, without taking into consideration comparisons among European, American and/or Asian parts, either Chinese or Japanese, which were importantly positioned in larger and continental units fostering the economic links of cores to their hinterlands. Hence, the goal of this project is to escape from locating 'centres', either in European, American or Asian areas. On the contrary, it will observe the world economy as a polycentric system with no dominant place through well-defined case studies using both Asian and Western sources.

The parts and sections of this book are drawn in such polycentric scheme analyzing the importance of the continental and sub-continental units without emphasizing in one dominant area. The big questions and narratives of global history in the chapters of this book not only present the commonly theoretical debates on global history and models of economic growth between East and West, but also present a thorough analysis with historical evidence of concrete regions, whether Asian, European or American, to compare on a global scale the role of peripheral areas in East Asia and Europe in the process of modernization. Why the West (in particular Great Britain and the Netherlands) took off in the eighteenth century and China's economy stagnated or why modern science and capitalism did not emerge in China could be tackled in a more profound fashion. Such big questions and theories on global history are supported and complemented in this book with empirical evidence and new archival findings.

The case studies presented by Richard Von Glahn, Manuel Perez Garcia, Colin Mackerras and Suzuki Hideaki draw attention to the impact of global history in China and Japan. Richard Von Glahn, through the 'silver question', makes a thorough analysis with empirical data (i.e., population, prices, wages and income, standards of living, silver flows and money supply for the first half of the nineteenth century). This scholarship also aims to further explore Sino-Portuguese relations during the Ming period beyond the general binary analysis (West and

East or China and Europe), paying more attention to how European settlers fitted in and dealt with local communities. Manuel Perez Garcia gives some insights into how global history is penetrating in Chinese academic circles, analysing the case of the introduction of crops of American origin, such as the sweet potato, in China during the Ming period. The chapters by Colin Mackerras and Suzuki Hideaki present a detailed picture on global history in Chinese and Japanese historiographies. Mackerras' rethinking and refreshing of the 'Needham question' explores global history through the development of scientific discoveries in China, making a final reflection as to whether such question is worth asking. Suzuki Hideaki presents the evolution of global history in Japan, which has been linked to maritime studies, in Japanese (as mentioned above) *Kaiiki-shi* (海城史). In a similar manner to that in Chinese academia, in Japanese scholarship, global history confronts, as a main obstacle, new national narratives.

Suzuki Hideaki's chapter links with section two, focusing on networks and maritime expansion in the region of East Asia in which the works on Japan and China give a full picture from the local to the macro-scale of the big nodes and network systems that connected and integrated China and Japan with South-East Asia, as well as the Pacific and Atlantic regions through the Manila-Acapulco galleon. It is paramount to analyse such trade networks and the role of port cities that fostered such market integration. Gakusho Nakajima, Mihoko Oka and Lucio de Sousa explore in an in-depth manner such big nodes, also paying attention to social and economic agents. Gakusho Nakajima analyses the tributary trade system of the Ming period and proposes that we should talk of a 'tribute and trade system' rather than a 'mutual trade system', *hushi* (互市), to observe the interactions between private Chinese and foreign merchants. Mihoko Oka explores the maritime trade networks between Japan and South China (mainly Macau) through the role of merchants as main mediators. Oka mentions an important concept in understanding trade relations in Japan with foreigners (mainly Portuguese): (1) *nanban* (南蛮) trade, which means trade with uncivilized peoples of the South of China; and (2) *shuinsen* (朱印船), which means 'red seal ships' or officially approved ships. With an analysis of socioeconomic agents and networks, Lucio de Sousa examines the role and presence of the Jews in China and Japan and their participation in trade networks that connected Nagasaki with Macau. The role of the *judeo-conversos* in the Atlantic trade accounts is supported by an abundance of material from Spanish and

Portuguese scholarship, but in the case of China and Japan, we still need more studies combining both Western and Eastern sources. This is what Lucio de Sousa provides in his chapter. This part concludes with Agnes Kneitz's chapter, embracing the accounts in previous chapters through Rennell's theories, models of maritime worlds and networks, as well as practices of collecting data and measuring the world navigation system.

Finally, in Part III we move from the Pacific to the Atlantic region, in which the main European powers (chiefly Great Britain and the Netherlands) from the moment of the discovery of the Americas established colonies for the extraction of raw materials and energy resources as one of the main factors of the first Industrial Revolution. The well-known theories on dependency as well as the world-systems theory applied by Wallerstein contributed to set core and peripheral economic areas, in which scholars made a strong division between developed and underdeveloped countries, fostering the idea and focus on Eurocentric approaches. Following this idea, Part III begins with a very illustrative chapter by Anne McCants in which she shows in different academic traditions—the Anglo-Saxon, French and German historiographies—the evolution of global history during the twentieth century, which is linked to research on global trade and consumption. Thus, the development of sub-fields such as the history of consumption, maritime history or material culture shows the robustness of global history over the last 30 years. In this case, we might observe such evolution in European historiographies as French historiography developing the sub-fields of *Société de consommation*, *histoire mondiale* and *histoire du monde*; in the case of German historiography, *Alltagsgeschichte* and *Weltsgeschichte*; and in the case of Anglo-Saxon historiography, *global trade*, *global history* and the *consumer revolution*. Likewise, adding the above-mentioned cases of 'Kaiiki-shi' (maritime history) in Japan or agricultural and economic history (the introduction of crops of American origin) in China, we can truly observe and corroborate McCants' suggestions that the development of global history has in recent decades hinged on such sub-fields.

In order to explore the circulation of new commodities, changes in consumer behaviour and the transfer of new technologies, the chapters by Carlos Marichal, Bartolome Yun and Nadia Fernandez stand out as good case studies for a better understanding of the role of the Spanish Empire in the Atlantic and Pacific regions. Carlos Marichal in his chapter analyses both Mexican cochineal, as an essential dye that transformed the textile sector in the early modern period, and local technologies as

crucial elements that fostered the rise of global trade. He suggests the importance of further studies on silk commodity chains from China with cochineal commodity chains, originally from colonial Mexico, which over centuries connected Asian with European markets through the Indian Ocean, but also through crossing the Pacific and reaching the Atlantic via the Manila-Acapulco galleons.

It is very important to conceptualize such circulation of goods and technologies according to the geographical delimitation and space. Bartolome Yun outlines the importance of the role of the Spanish Empire in the circulation of technology and technological knowledge during the early modern period, as well as the importance of informal institutions and social networks that regulated the political power and control of knowledge. Such networks and the circulation of books, imprints, engravings and maps were crucial in the circulation of knowledge. Therefore, the institutional framework that regulated such circulation and the political and intellectual elites, which controlled the main institutions, were crucial in efficiently applying such knowledge in order to develop new technologies and foster local economies.

Reducing the scale from the global framework of the Spanish Empire presented by Bartolome Yun to a local perspective—the case of the city of Madrid—we find the contribution of Nadia Fernandez analysing consumer behaviour in this urban area. The tastes and desires for goods that came from afar and colonial trade, involving such items as sugar, Chinese porcelain or other luxury goods, changed over time consumer behaviour in the city of Madrid, one of the largest cities of southern Europe. The transnational dimension of such commodities and the way and form they were accepted and consumed either by a noble from Madrid or a landowner from La Havana was not the same and clearly shows the different connotations of these commodities in the diverse territories of the Spanish Empire.

Part III concludes in a similar fashion to Part II, having as a corollary the chapter by David Pickus, who presents the acceptance, knowledge and degree of implementation of European research and global history in Chinese academia as a sort of new ‘commodity’ for the new generation of scholars in Chinese universities.

This book seeks to develop the awareness of new approaches in East Asian and Western historiographies by reviewing concepts which commonly have predominated in Western historiography. Such concepts are the different revolutions (industrial, intellectual, social or political

revolutions), colonial system, enlightenment or post-modernism, which are quite divergent if we apply them to analyse the process of modernization in the East. However, a ‘common global historical project’ could be defined through the application of a methodology that compares cross-cultural areas (either Western or Eastern), using a synchronic or diachronic time series, as well as employing and ultimately comparing empirical data.

Applying our energy to this common project among research institutions is a genuine historiographical need—to mediate between the long-lasting confrontation between the hegemonic powers of the West and East. We do not naïvely expect to arrive at a single scholarly consensus or establish a common worldwide model on how to approach global history. But it is more pertinent to promote a debate to open new venues in which important features for implementing and institutionalizing global history, such as scholarly mobility, diversity and internationalization, are firmly rooted, putting aside national characteristics.

Therefore, this volume aims to create a new forum of discussion on how global history has penetrated in Western and Eastern historiographies, provoking an intensive debate among scholars on how to theorize and write history. In addition, it mainly deals with new approaches on the use of empirical data by framing the proper questions and hypotheses, ones that connect both Western and Eastern sources, while building up global narratives within particular case studies. Recent scholarship is reviewing how the field of global history is taking new positions by escaping controversial ‘isms’, whether Eurocentrism or Sinocentrism, when analysing the diverse models of economic growth of the West and the East. Such a historiographical review also considers that global history is a domain that is not solely related to economic history, as it is an interdisciplinary field, which is related to other historical fields such as social or cultural history, international relations, sociology or economics.

The series of conferences on global history organized by the GHN in China, the first of which was held in Beijing in 2012 at Tsinghua University, followed by another hosted in Beijing at Beihang University and the latest organized at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies in April and June 2015 respectively, is proof of the new historiographical effort to renew the field of global history. The aim is to move the pivotal axis of analysis from national perspectives to a polycentric perspective. Such joint effort in bringing together researchers from different countries has been the milestone of departure to establish and open new venues

of global history. The use of Western and Eastern sources in new case studies within a comparative approach enables us to better observe divergences and/or convergences between the East and the West.

## NOTES

1. The latest works on global history explore and analyse such interconnectivities and the range of comparisons. See Manning 2003; McNeill and McNeill 2004; Northrop 2012; Berg 2013; O'Brien 2013; Perez Garcia 2014; Olstein 2015; Belich et al. 2016; Conrad 2016.
2. The term itself expresses the foreign form, as it does not exist in the Japanese historical tradition. Therefore, instead of using the traditional writing with kanji for global history, the katakana is used to adapt and translate words and terminology, such as global history, from other countries.
3. For this term, we find the same case as for 'gurobaru hisutori' (global history). 'Atarashii sekaishi' (new world history) is a mixed word with kanji (世界史, world history) and hiragana (in Japanese *atarashii* means new).

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