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Part III

Juxtapositions of Historiography after the Hegemony of the National

LHP: EPPLE

RHP: THE GLOBAL, THE TRANSNATIONAL, AND THE SUBALTERN

8

The Global, the Transnational and the Subaltern:

The Limits of History beyond the National Paradigm

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Ever since history became an academic discipline, writing national history has been the most honorable task of a historian's career. However, for today's historians, writing national history has lost the high reputation it held for roughly 150 years. Of course, there are still ambitious projects such as series editions of European national histories. However, they do not see themselves as traditional national history, but either as histories that analyze the making of nations or as histories that place the history of a certain nation within an international (Herbert 2010) or even transnational setting (Trentmann 2008; Grant *et al.* 2007; Tyrell 2007a). They are mitigated versions of strong national history. Traditional national history has had its day. Why?

As globalization processes continue, it becomes difficult if not impossible to legitimize a presumably given entity – such as a singular nation-state – with fixed borders. Indeed, one of the main criticisms of the nation-centered approach to history has been that it rarely worried about its own limits and exclusions. Interactions, transfers, mutual influence and shared developments were ignored. A lack of reflexivity on its own limits does not just lead to an exclusion of transnational dynamics. It also hides exclusions *within* the very nations or societies analyzed. Nation-centered history also tends to focus on a limited understanding of policy and society. Often, it elaborates on a limited group of actors and excludes many topics such as everyday life, ordinary people and gender history.

To make a long story short, national history seems to be too limited to add to our understanding of today's questions in a globalizing world. Even though the significance and role of the nation-state in a globalizing world cannot, and should not, be underestimated, the unity of territoriality, culture and national identity has proved to be a fiction.¹ Today, it is broadly accepted that space is not a closed container of historical development. Instead, it is a relational and contextual category, created by and through social interactions and social practices (Massey 2006; Löw 2001). This short reflection on the concept of space illustrates that only an analysis of theoretical concepts can help us understand history beyond the national paradigm. At the end of the day, it is theoretical concepts that shape the way historians write their (hi)stories. A revised concept of space does not just focus attention on interactions instead of geographically defined territories, it simultaneously delivers new sources, new questions and thus new methodologies. The criticism of the national paradigm along with both its theory and methodology could be summarized in just one single phrase: National history excludes too much.

How did the discipline react to this criticism? I see at least three major reactions:

- Extending national history into world history (Manning 2003)
- Transforming national history into transnational history (Bungert and Wendt 2010; Gassert 2010; Núñez 2010; Rüger 2010; Conrad 2009; Jarausch 2006) and the history of entanglements (Schiel 2009; Werner and Zimmermann 2006; Randeria and Conrad 2002; Randeria 2000), an approach some call *global history* or even *new global history* (Sachsenmaier 2010; Mazlish 2006; O'Brien 2006) in contrast to *world history*
- Undermining national history through subaltern and postcolonial history²

Of course, these terms are not fixed, their application is confusing and their meanings often overlap. Generally speaking, however, world history tries to include the history of the whole world. It is influenced and mostly driven by a variation of modernization theory. Transnational and entangled history also include more than just one specific nation, but not necessarily the whole world. They reject the idea of fixed entities such as the nation-state, transcending the boundaries of the entities they analyze by stressing the interactions between them. Their basic assumption is that people have a shared history, though not the same history (Eckert 2009: 229; Conrad and Randeria 2002; Randeria 2002). Often they point to global asymmetries – one reason that this approach is also subsumed under the label of *global history*. Subaltern and postcolonial history, in contrast, reflect more on excluding processes (subaltern) and processes of asymmetric interferences (postcolonial). Without neglecting the differences between the two, I shall treat them as one reaction. They both share the main concern of uncovering forgotten or suppressed histories, in other words, histories beyond the pale of dominant narratives.

In the following, I shall sketch these three approaches and their internal differences before discussing the pros and cons of using each. I shall focus particularly on the issue of exclusion and inclusion, which is crucially important in the writing of history in that it sets “limits” for the

process that have to be understood (Guha 2002). In my final remarks, I shall start by arguing that the rejection of the world history approach leads to the conviction that the term *globalization*, if it is to be used at all, should only appear in the plural (Therborn 2000). Then I shall show that only a combination of the latter two approaches – of transnational/entangled/global history *and* subaltern/postcolonial studies – helps us to gain a better understanding of the globalizing world. Globalizations are both the effects and the bases for global–local entanglements. From there, I shall argue that the *microhistory approach* delivers a promising methodology that allows for a combination of global questions and local studies, a multiplicity of perspectives and a thorough contextualization of meanings. Microhistory also includes a reflection of its range of validity, which is, in other words, an explicit reflection on the limits of history. Such limits become all the more important when history goes beyond the national paradigm.

<A>WORLD HISTORY AS A FAILED ATTEMPT TO INCLUDE THE WHOLE WORLD

“World History” has been written from the very beginning of historiography in Europe. You only have to think of Herodotus and his history of the *oikumene* or of the chronicles during the middle ages (Otto of Freising 1912) to realize immediately that world history always had high aspirations: to include the whole world of the times. In the age of European exploration, this world grew tremendously. World history widened its scope to include more and more peoples and cultures. Interestingly, the expectations and also the function of historiography within European societies remained more or less the same: providing instructive information for rulers, acquainting readers with the hitherto unknown and collecting important events for Christian readers. During the 18th century, however, the expectations of historiography in Europe changed dramatically. History was no longer to be just the presenting of examples. Instead historiography

should *explain* why the world had become as it was. David Hume expressed this new challenge paradigmatically in his “Inquiry concerning human understanding” in 1748 (1826: 25). However, Hume had difficulties in handling this task in his *English History*. In his epistemology, every event was caused by a former event, but how could he then deliver a convincing explanation of the very first event and therefore the beginning of English history?³ If this was already unmanageable when writing the history of an island, it would be an impossible task for world history. Without negating the differences between the British enlightened history of David Hume and the German *Universalgeschichte*, one could say that world history during the Enlightenment did its best to find causes for progress in history. August Ludwig Schlözer, for instance, expressed his understanding of world history in his two volume *World History for Children* as follows: Learning world history is “to search for the causes why one people has remained stupid, strong, and black, whereas the other has become wise, fussy, and white” (1806: 127). For Schlözer, as for most of his colleagues at the time, the history of humanity was a development toward the better. Human progress included the transformation from stupidity to wisdom, which he equated with the transformation of black into white races. Schlözer’s text is a good example of what Jürgen Osterhammel has called the “inclusive Eurocentrism” (1998: 380) of Enlightenment intellectuals that was so widespread in 18th century Europe.

Around 1800, the writing of world history experienced another major shift in Hegel’s writing on history. Hegel inherited the term *world history* from Enlightenment philosophers, but he elaborated on it. World history came to be synonymous with *Reason* in history. World history, constructed transcendently into a providential design, took on a higher quality of moral sanctity, writes Ranajit Guha in his book *History at the Limit of World-History* (2002: 2). The state for Hegel, continues Guha, as a concrete manifestation of the ethical whole, became a key

link in the chain of supersessions of *Weltgeist* (“world spirit”). This is not the place to evaluate the role of the (nation) state in Hegel. A posthumously published article by Heinz Dieter Kittsteiner offers a new reading of Hegel’s philosophy of history, the crucial role of the state and Hegel’s Eurocentrism. Kittsteiner is of the opinion that the course of the Hegelian *Weltgeist* went from East to West, and, following Hegel’s dialectic, will go back again. Hegel’s Eurocentrism would then turn out to be a period in world history and not its hidden goal (Kittsteiner 2010: 62). Whatever Hegel’s diagnosis for the future, it is important to point out clearly the effects that it had on modern historiography. Due to the overrated role of the state, world history became the prehistory of European nation-states and the civilization that made them happen. World history encountered pitfalls similar to those affecting national history at the end of the 19th century. While being more inclusive than ever before, it simultaneously became quite limited: It left out whole continents and cultures, ordinary people, most women and everyday life (Wolf 1982). In contrast to earlier exclusions, they were no longer left out as a result of being literally unknown. In compliance with the explanatory claim of historiography, they were excluded for a reason: World history dealt only with history, and all the excluded were transformed into *people without history*.

It is important to highlight that this exclusion works in a completely different way from the *inclusive eurocentrism* of an August Ludwig Schlözer, who, of course, had also underlined European supremacy. From now on, Europe became the center from which modernity (or capitalism) originated, and from which it then spread out *over time*. Non-Europeans were banished to the “waiting room of history” (Chakrabarty 2000: 7–8). Some, like North Americans, were close to leaving the waiting room; others, like Africans, were never to leave. They had –

presumably – no positive impact on the course of world history (Kittsteiner 2010: 65). The epoch of *exclusive Eurocentrism* in historiography had begun (Osterhammel 1998: 380).

Over the next 200 years, this tradition of world history influenced Western historians, even when most of them simultaneously refuted Hegelian philosophy. Leopold von Ranke, for instance, being a historian,⁴ was a prominent opponent of Hegel's idealism. Ranke developed his concept of world history in discussions with – and in opposition to – his fellow professors at the Friedrich Wilhelms University of Berlin, one of whom was none other than Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel himself. Following Ranke, world history did not begin with the emergence of states, but with interactions between previously isolated people. This sounds as if Ranke had invented the transnational approach. Actually, however, Ranke is quite often misperceived – not only for his underestimated world history approach or his assumedly naive historical objectivism, but also for his broadly celebrated introduction of scientific standards into historiography that turned out to be characterized by hegemonic masculinity and Eurocentrism (Smith 2009, 1998, 1995).

There are good reasons to take a closer look here: Ranke did not agree with the speculative idea of history as a teleological process, but was convinced that the (European, scholarly-trained, male, white) historian could trace the course of history by analyzing the past. He was one of the most influential scholars in the establishment of academic historiography. His whole work was guided by the belief that every epoch has its own intrinsic value that makes it worth examining and describing. Nevertheless, he added to this the opinion that only certain people had an impact on the course of each epoch, and as a result, that only certain people were worth investigation. Most people, in contrast, were people without history and thus a subject of study for

anthropologists and not historians. At the time, Ranke's fundamental conviction was not at all exceptional, but simply common sense for European academics.

In short, a historiography of exclusion paved the way for 19th century imperialism. This changed during the first decades of the 20th century. Of course, the division of labor between history and anthropology still influenced the writing of world history, but after World War I it became clear that historiography had to change as well. Here is not the place to mention the many historians who have done world history since then. We shall also skip the revolutionary effects on methodology and historical thinking of the early French *Annales* School represented by Marc Bloch and Lucien Fèbvre (who were deeply influenced by the German universal historian Karl Lamprecht) and concentrate on the major changes in writing world history in the second half of the century. As early as the 1950s, Walter Markov, a communist resistance fighter during national socialism, built on Karl Lamprecht's non-Eurocentric approach to universal history when he became director of the Institute of Cultural and Universal History at Leipzig that had been founded by Lamprecht in 1909 (Brahm 2010: 112–18; Middell 2005: 846).

Marxism, to a different degree, also influenced prominent world historians. Fernand Braudel for instance, a significant member of the second *Annales* School generation, who were imbued with the ideas of Marx, also set the foundations for a new approach to world history (Wieviorka 2005). The understanding of the dynamics of capitalism was at the very center of his impressive oeuvre (Braudel 1985). Instead of small political entities as single actors, he concentrated on a region that had shaped the whole world in the 16th century. His approach to history allowed previously inconceivable inclusions. His masterpiece, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (1976a) deals not only with what he calls “traditional history” but also with structures of the *longue durée* that were almost “immobile,”

such as the influence of climate, landscape, mentalities and collective fates. In contrast to Neo-Rankeans and historians, who favored political individuals, Braudel also concentrated on economic conditions, processes and structures (1976b). As to the difference between world history and global history, Braudel – like Markov – seem to have been a forerunner in favor of the latter. His main interest was in analyzing interactions without constructing new fixed entities. Maybe he was able to avoid certain pitfalls because he dealt with early modern times. Thus, the seductive idea of the nation-state as a historical category did not seem to appeal to him. His influential concepts traveled not only throughout Europe but also across the Atlantic to the US, where they, of course, experienced major transformations.

During the 1960s and 1970s, the demand for courses covering world history grew tremendously at US universities. The hitherto general courses on Western Civilization, however, seemed to be too ethnocentric (Manning 2007; Bayly *et al.* 2006). One widespread answer at the time was courses in world history. Quite often, they just extended the history of Western Civilization to international history, and thus tried to go beyond the North American and European nation-states by also including Asian and Latin American nation-states. Africa at that time still did not seem to be of any interest (Eckert 2003). Another, more ambitious attempt picked up Braudel's concept. The sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein combined Braudel's understanding of history with an approach borrowed from dependency theory. In his three volume history of the modern world system he elaborated on the emergence and effects of asymmetric global interactions caused by capitalism (Wallerstein 1974–89). Wallerstein tried to show that world history is not about a growing inclusion of developing countries into Western modernity; world history is actually about the making of hierarchies by exclusion. Following Wallerstein, the creation of wealthy centers, midrange semiperipheries and poor peripheries

cannot be avoided in capitalism; it is the nature of capitalism to produce a global division of labor and other asymmetries.

Like Markov and Braudel, Wallerstein also broadened the range of historiography without repeating an inclusion or exclusion of Eurocentrism as practiced for such a long time in historiography. With the idea of an integrative world system, however, Wallerstein insisted – and this is one of many ways in which his work differs from that of Braudel – on one single mechanism to replace the master narrative of modernization as a development toward the better. Moreover, he did not even mention one of the major problems of historiography in general: the problem of perspective. Wallerstein located the first world system and the birth of capitalism in Europe. However, Janet Abu-Lughod, for instance, empirically illustrates the hidden Eurocentric perspective in the history of the world system by showing capitalistic entanglements in other world regions (1989), and other scholars also questioned his point of view.⁵ Nonetheless, Wallerstein influenced many subsequent discussions within history, sociology and other disciplines. Despite all criticism, his world system has become an important reference point when doing world history (see Comstock, Chapter 9 of this volume). His main idea was that before 1492, there had been a world system in Europe but not one covering the whole world, and that this subsequently (after 1492) spread over the whole world by entanglement. This was a first step toward decoupling world history and the history of the whole world. But it was only in the 1990s that the concept of world history was supplemented by an approach that, first, left any kind of centrism behind it and elaborated on the idea of interactions between changing entities: transnational history.

Let me briefly summarize so far. Writing world history has a long tradition. The concept of *world history* has a history of its own. This makes it difficult to give strict definitions and

demarcation lines to related concepts. Bearing in mind that there are other usages of the term, I would suggest the following characterization: The world history approach tries to include the history of the whole world. From the Enlightenment through German Idealism up until the capitalist critical positions of the history of the world system, the world history approach has four major unsolved problems: It sticks to a teleological understanding of history, it is ethnocentric, it does not examine local processes and ordinary people and it fails to consider the heuristic problems arising from the historian's standpoint. In my opinion, the attempt to capture the history of the whole world has failed.

<A>TRANSNATIONAL, ENTANGLED AND (NEW) GLOBAL HISTORY AS ATTEMPTS TO OVERCOME ETHNOCENTRIC EXCLUSIONS

In the late 1980s, the nation-centered approach to history lost its explanatory power. Soon a new concept emerged and rapidly became a buzzword among historians: *transnational history* (Bayly *et al.* 2006: 1441; Thelen 1999; *American Historical Review* 1991). It first changed the way historians looked at nation-states and comparable entities, characterizing them as “invented traditions” (Anderson 1985) rather than a “container of society” (Beck 2000: 63). Transnational history even went on to question the concept of *world history*. The main issue was transcending the boundaries of the nation-state without neglecting its historical importance. Transnational history preferred previously neglected subjects such as the movements of people, ideas, technologies and institutions (Tyrell 2007b), as well as diaspora, border crossings, flows and circulation.⁶ Instead of the supposed container of a nation-state, transnational history went back to dealing with contact zones as Fernand Braudel had already done in his work on the

Mediterranean. Paul Gilroy, for example, wrote his influential book on *The Black Atlantic* (1993) as a counterculture of modernity. The Indian Ocean and the Pacific also became the subjects of important studies (Fernandez-Armesto 2002; Gilroy 1993).

It is important, indeed, to distinguish clearly between international and transnational history. International history analyzes the interactions between nation-states as sole agents – mostly with an emphasis on diplomatic and economic relations (Hopkins 2006: 4). Transnational history instead transcends politically defined and geographically fixed territories. If it deals with nation-states at all, then it analyzes the process of making them. Transnational history started with a strong emphasis on overcoming the ethnocentrism accompanying nation-centered history.

Noting that after the *trans* prefix, *nation* is still at the very center of *transnational history*, many historians specializing in earlier epochs rejected the term. This points to enduring and controversial issues. Is transnational history defined by its content or is it rather a perspective with which to look at and analyze history (Patel 2005)? Furthermore, what is the scope of transnational history? Different scholars have given different answers to these questions. Most agree with Sven Beckert's characterization that transnational history focuses on connections that are not necessarily global in scope. For him transnational history proves to be a perspective (Bayly *et al.* 2006: 1446), which, we could add, sheds light on contents invisible in any nation-centered approach. Christopher Bayly also insists on the heuristic definition, but includes the question of scope. Following Bayly, “‘transnational history’ stands in the same relationship to ‘international history’ as ‘global history’ does to ‘world history’” (Bayly *et al.* 2006: 1442). Global history in this understanding should replace world history. The adjective *global*, however, raises a problem that is not immediately apparent in *transnational*: the problem of defining the global (Cooper 2007). Let me elaborate on this briefly.

Bruce Mazlish, who has published broadly on the concepts of global and new global history, also feels uncomfortable with the concept of *world history*. Like Bayly, he wants to replace the term *world* by the term *global*. What does, according to Mazlish, *global* mean in contrast? In his words, *global* “points in the direction of space; its sense permits the notion of standing outside our planet and seeing ‘Spaceship Earth’. ... This new perspective is one of the keys to new global history, where, indeed, a new space/time orientation is observable” (2006: 18). For Mazlish, global history is about including the whole world. In contrast to world history, however, global history should prevent ethnocentrism by taking a neutral and literally universal standpoint. Mazlish’s metaphor makes it easy to understand why the meaning of *global* and the question of perspective cause such problems. As we all know, nobody – not even a global historian – can stand outside our planet and observe this spaceship *sine ira et studio*. It is important to underline that there is no theoretical position from which a global historian could speak for all people and individuals on Earth. To get to the point: The global in this view is more a geographical definition (without bothering about the spatial turn) than a historical category of analysis. Furthermore, Mazlish’s claim for a global historian outside our planet relies on a concept of scientific objectivity that goes back to Ranke’s concept of history mentioned above. This concept went on to be exported throughout the colonized world. Since then, it has dominated academic history writing worldwide. I shall back up this consideration later by discussing Chakrabarty’s criticism of Western historical thinking (2006).

The illusionary assumption of a neutral and omniscient reader did not escape profound criticism. In, for instance, Jürgen Osterhammel’s latest book on the transformation of the world in the 19th century, he underlines that only a conscious play with the relativity of perspectives may convincingly help to overcome Eurocentrism (Osterhammel 2010: 19). Likewise, Sven

Beckert's understanding of global history as transnational history with a global scope seems to offer some promise (Bayly *et al.* 2006). If *global* points to scope, it is not necessarily connected to presumably given spaces such as the whole world, but to a special perspective. Actually, the adjective *transnational* also has the problem of a spatial definition. However, it is considerably less risky to define the transnational within geographic terms (and without reflecting on the spatial shift). The key term in any transnational approach, says Isabel Hofmeyr, is "its central concern with movements, flows, and circulation, not simply as a theme or motif but as an analytic set of methods which defines the endeavor itself" (Bayly *et al.* 2006: 1444).

Nevertheless, transnational history in practice did not always realize that interactions between entities lead to a new understanding of space in general. I believe this is the main reason that another term closely connected to the transnational approach also came into play: *entangled history* (Conrad and Randeria 2002).⁷ Without repeating the scholarly subtleties, the term *entangled history* liberates transnational history from its national background. It highlights the fact that interactions can take place between any entities. From there, I believe the term *entangled history* expresses even more clearly mutual influences, responses and effects. In my concluding remarks, I shall push this thought a bit further still and argue that the concept of entangled history also helps to dissolve the dichotomy of macro and micro levels of analysis.⁸

I would like to summarize that in this perspective so far, the focus turns toward interactions between entities and thus transcends the boundaries between them. Of course, this also has an impact on how we define the objects of our analyses. Entities such as nation-states are no longer perceived as fixed but as fluid. Their importance, however, is not to be denied. The emphasis is not on the loss of significance of nation-states, but on their connectedness to each other and their mutual influences on different levels. Thus, this approach opens mental spaces that allow a new

way of thinking about all dichotomies. The *other* and the *own*, for instance, become interwoven but not dissolved. Both the new understanding of historical entities and the stress on interactions make ethnocentrism difficult.⁹

In a nutshell, transnational, entangled and global history analyze shared histories by focusing on interactions. Abandoning fixed entities should also help to overcome ethnocentrism, because with such a perspective all entities turn out to be of hybrid origin. If practiced with a global scope, this approach seems to be all inclusive. But is it?

<A>SUBALTERN AND POSTCOLONIAL HISTORY AS AN ATTEMPT TO EXPLORE THE LIMITS OF HISTORY

A completely different solution for dealing with nation-centered history was taken by the Subaltern Studies Group in the 1980s, which wanted to not only rewrite Indian history but also question the categories of historiography imposed by Western scholars within the colonial system (Kaltmeier *et al.* 2011). Under the leadership of the aforementioned Ranajit Guha, the group combined the critique of Eurocentrism with Gramsci's concept of the subaltern and of hegemony. Moreover, the role of intellectuals in creating this very hegemony remained an important point of reference. Most relevant articles by the Subaltern Studies Group members have been published in the journal of the same name that first appeared in 1982. At the beginning, their main aim was to democratize historiography and include as many groups into history as possible. Peasants and people of the lower castes such as Dalits became subjects of research (Guha 1983). With Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who was the first female member of the editorial board, the project changed profoundly. Her influential essay "Can the subaltern

“speak?” refused the conditions of possibility that the subaltern as such could contribute to a hegemonic discourse (Spivak 1988). On the one hand, Spivak was influenced profoundly by the understanding of productive power and governmentality developed in the works of Michel Foucault (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983). On the other hand, however, she questioned fundamentally the critical position from which theorists like Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze spoke and made the limits of their historical analyses a subject of discussion. My reading of her arguments leads to a paradoxical conclusion: Subaltern subjects neither have positions to be heard nor do they even exist – not even as a subaltern consciousness as Guha had hoped in the early 1980s. Spivak underlines instead, “One must nevertheless insist that the colonized subaltern *subject* is irretrievably heterogeneous” (1988: 284).

Spivak’s argument is also a barb in the flesh of the transnational approach. Transnational history points to the interactions between entities that transform these very entities at any given time. Applying the transnational approach to subaltern subjects causes (at least) two major problems. First, we need to identify these subaltern subjects and thus run the risk of denying their heterogeneity, and, second, by reconstructing their voices through the historian’s dependence on proof, we raise the question of who defines what counts as a proof.

To answer this question, we have to go back to the history of our discipline. Western historiography modeled after the German 19th century historian Leopold von Ranke introduced a scholarly methodology that gave the historian an extraordinary role. He became the only person who could ascertain professionally whether a narration of bygone events was true or ill-conceived. How is that? Due to his scholarly methodology, the historian now gave evidence through his documentary studies, he gathered evidence through his critique of the sources, and he had to prove the truth of his narration by referring exclusively to written sources and by

degrading contemporary oral traditions (Epple 2010b). This shift in giving evidence had far-reaching consequences: The way historians proved the truth became the most important marker for highlighting the difference between popular and professional historians. According to Ranke, the explicit aim of the professional historian was to fight political partiality, and in this struggle “objectivity” seemed to be the best weapon. Scientific methodology should guarantee the erasure of the historian’s subjective personality, his individual interests and most importantly, his political convictions. These would no longer influence the “objective” proofs of his narration. What Hume had begun a hundred years earlier was completed by Ranke: Historical impartiality became the main concern of professional history writing. Whereas Hume stressed causal explanation as the historian’s instrument, Ranke established written sources as the very center of historiography. Popular historical narrations were degraded and excluded from national canons of historiography. These exclusionary and degrading factors of Western historiography were exported to India and other societies in the 19th century when colonial governments introduced their models of universities (Shils and Robert 2004).

This new kind of history was only possible due to a “crucial shift in the institutional site for the production of history” (Chakrabarty 2006: 106). The university became the only place for doing valid and genuine history. Masayuki Sato, a contributor to a volume on Western historical thinking, points out this development for China, and Dipesh Chakrabarty backs up his findings for India. Professional historiography conquered history writing across the whole world. This expansion simultaneously narrowed the field of historiography. Popular authors and, even more importantly, popular subjects beyond political or economic history, along with women historians in general, were excluded from academic history writing for many years. This was not only true for China and India, but also for Europe. It is only recently that historians have started to go back

to these excluded traditions, to analyze how this exclusion worked and also to show its deeply gendered basis.¹⁰

The introduction of the Western version of history writing to non-Western societies such as India generated an “asymmetric ignorance.” “Europe,” says Chakrabarty, “remains the sovereign, theoretical subject of all histories, including the ones we call ‘Indian.’” (1992: 337) Europe is always a “silent referent.” This leads to a basic asymmetry in historiography: Whereas a European historian might ignore non-European history, a historian of another world region cannot return this gesture.

In a review essay on the aforementioned volume about Western historical thinking, Chakrabarty illustrates the paradoxical situation of asymmetric ignorance with a historical example: The European academic discipline of history gained a hegemonic position in 19th century India and presumably also in other non-European societies. Before the encounter with the Western version of history writing, Chakrabarty explains, all societies had of course their own traditions of thinking and of narrating past events. Chakrabarty puzzles, “Why did we end up with broadly the same global culture of professional historians all over the world?” (2006: 104). His rhetorical question is easy to answer: We did so because these excluded traditions did not influence academic history writing. Chakrabarty hopes that traces of an Indian tradition before the introduction of the scientific style might be found in marginalized popular narratives. He concludes by referring to the volume’s editor, Jörn Rüsen: “Historical matters,” writes Rüsen, “come back with a vengeance through mass media” (2006: 109).

It is definitely true that in Western societies, the global mass media are currently challenging the dominance gained by academic history two hundred years ago. Indeed, it is no coincidence that the question of historical truth and objectivity has been put back on the agenda

with heated controversies throughout the academic discipline (*American Historical Review* 2009; Chakrabarty 2007). The assumed historical impartiality introduced by Ranke as the main marker of professional historians did not just turn out to be a Eurocentric perspective of Protestant, White, middle-class men. Impartiality lost its high reputation when it became obvious that the construction of history influences the making of identities, creates groups such as subalterns and shapes our world as a whole. As Elazar Barkan concludes in a forum in the *American Historical Review* on “Truth and Reconciliation,” “Therefore it [the construction of history] often has to be treated as an explicit, direct political activity, operating within specific scientific methodological and rhetorical rules” (Barkan 2009).

If historiography is treated as a direct political activity, does our academic discipline then fall behind Ranke’s or even behind Hume’s standards for doing history professionally? Does history only legitimize certain political positions in the way that the Whig interpretation of history did? Is this the aim of subaltern or postcolonial history? Definitely not. But the example of Elazar Barkan, professor of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University, shows that the criticism of methodology has already influenced central disciplinary discussions.¹¹ As to the academic discipline of history, subaltern studies and postcolonial theory have made many important objections: their criticism of Western historical concepts that put some people in the “waiting room of history,” their criticism of the power of concepts and the plea that subalterns are not a homogeneous subject, their considerations on Western historical thinking – these all make historians aware of the fact that they should not view written proof as the only valid documents for professional histories. This convincing criticism, however, also applies to the Subaltern Studies Group itself, which tends to apply the same professional methodology and to homogenize the Western discourse. Nira Wickramasinghe supports this remark with the

argument that the Subaltern Studies Group (when working historically) mostly referred to written documents and as a consequence overestimated the “essentiality” of colonial government (2011). Neither is there such a thing as *the* Western historical thinking, nor is the hegemonic discourse omnipotent.

I would like to briefly summarize my considerations on the subaltern and postcolonial approach. Most importantly, subaltern history points to the limits of history, which is, in other words, the exclusions drawn by historiography. At the same time, it underlines the productive power of these exclusions. Like gender history, subaltern and postcolonial history also show that a criticism of nation-centered and ethnocentric history is not only about excluded subjects. It is the historical thinking itself, the concepts historians use, their academic methodology and their way of proving the truth and of narrating the past that are at stake.

<A>CONCLUSION: GLOBAL–LOCAL ENTANGLEMENTS – A MICROHISTORY APPROACH TO GLOBAL HISTORY

By suggesting a microhistory approach to global history, I wish to combine the two latter approaches, that is, to suggest a combination of entangled and subaltern history. Before doing so, let me first sum up this fragmentary overview of the three most interesting disciplinary reactions to the end of the national paradigm.

The first reaction was no reaction in the strict sense, because world history was already there several hundred years before the question of nation-states and national history arose. In any case, world history – as defined in this chapter – seems to have the same problems as the nation-centered approach to history: It relies on a teleological and Eurocentric understanding of history.

World history cannot convincingly explain the standpoint from which the historian is speaking, and, as a result, does not reflect explicitly on its exclusions. Within the second group of reactions – the transnational, the entangled and the global history approach – entangled history seems to be the most promising. All three refuse teleology in history. They assume that there is such a thing as a shared history and that history consists in interactions between entities. Furthermore, they underline that these interactions transform the entities themselves. This leads to the conviction that entities are not fixed but fluid, that they cannot only be defined geographically and that theoretically all world regions should be included in historiography (though not in every historical study). Depending on the chosen definition, there are also some slight differences between these approaches. Transnational history is still tied to the nation-centered approach – which is useful in some cases, but makes it difficult to apply the term to historical epochs without nation-states. Moreover, transnational history implies that the nation-state is always of significance. The notion of entangled history instead allows us to focus easily on other entities. It stresses that history is not only about the interactions of nation-states, but about mutual influences of any given entity. Finally, global history – if contrasted with world history – does not refer to a geographically all-inclusive history but to a certain perspective in which there is an awareness that global questions matter most. The global history approach, however, most often tends to neglect the importance of local affairs, singular actors, ordinary people and everyday practices.

The debate with subaltern and postcolonial theory has shown that transnational, entangled and global history should also reflect on their limits. Eurocentrism does not just exclude certain subjects, but also these subjects' own vocabulary and own concepts of historical thinking. This requires us to go back to the times when different local traditions all over the world were being

excluded from scholarly historiography. Privileging written sources leads to a repetition of the exclusion of subaltern voices. The division of labor between history, anthropology and ethnology introduced by the historical discipline in Europe during the 19th century came to an end in the 1980s when both microhistory and the history-from-below approach came to the fore. The Subaltern Studies Group and postcolonial theory carry the history-from-below arguments to a global level and show the crucial importance of connecting global processes to local affairs. Apart from the criticism of subaltern and postcolonial approaches, they point to the trivial fact that interactions studied by transnational, entangled and global history are interactions within a system of power relations. This recognition should not lead, however, to an overestimation of colonial rule. If global history is linked to local affairs, if it shows how local affairs, ordinary people and singular actors have an impact on global structures, then it focuses on global–local entanglements and reestablishes the history-from-below approach on a new basis. In “A brief history of Subaltern Studies,” Partha Chatterjee stresses not only the similarities between Subaltern Studies and the history-from-below approach but also the differences. He insists that “history from below” never “persuasively challenged the existence, stability or indeed the historical legitimacy of capitalist modernity itself” (Chatterjee 2006: 98). This might be true for the history-from-below approach as popularized by British Marxist historians such as E.-P. Thompson and Eric Hobsbawm. However, the history-from-below approach I would like to suggest here is not influenced by the Marxist theory of capitalism or similar teleological and Eurocentric ideologies. Instead, it is derived from the methodological approach of microhistory (Putnam 2006; Ginzburg 1993, 1992; Ginzburg and Poni 1985).

Microhistory or history-from-below – when contrasted with global history – means starting the analysis with an actor-centered approach on a local level. Global purposes and local actors

seem to be contradictory only at first glance. A closer look at the relation between the global and the local reveals that both are in fact tied inseparably together. I believe we can only understand the global while studying the local. This is particularly important, and brings me back to my opening remarks concerning the concept of space. Let me very briefly elaborate on this.

The national paradigm came under fire when a relational concept of space questioned the unity of territoriality, culture and identity (Berking 2006b; Massey 2006; Löw 2001). However, this new concept of space was applied mainly to the traditional understanding of the nation as a closed container. The new concept of space led to the aforementioned three disciplinary reactions to the end of the national paradigm. But the concept at the time caused a paradoxical situation: A global history of all reactions provoked a dichotomy between the global and the local in which the first was connected to fluidity and changes, whereas the latter, in contrast, was again tied to a geographically defined small-scale space. The talk of “placeless, borderless and unbounded space of flows,” as underlined by Helmuth Berking (2006a: 6), or also of an abstract and anonymous world society, as Martin Albrow would have it (1996), might suggest that space is a socially constructed category. Eventually, the limits of national history will be dissolved and space will be “deterritorialized.” A closer look reveals, however, that the local reintroduces the notion of a fixed container. The local becomes the last refuge of traditionally defined space. The global space of flows becomes the opposite of a geographically determined space of place.

As part of these concluding remarks, I would like to cast doubt on this binary opposition of the local and the global. If we understand space as a relative category or, as Arjun Appadurai has put it, as a contextually defined space (Appadurai 1996: 178), we then also have to reformulate our understanding of both the global and the local. The local is no longer the last refuge for authenticity, autochthony or traditional identity. The local stands in relation to other localities,

and it is defined by and through these relations. In their recently published anthology, Ulrike Freitag and Achim van Oppen have pointed out convincingly that the concept of locality should be broadened by the concept of translocality (Freitag and von Oppen 2010). Derived from entangled history, translocality focuses on the multiple relations between different localities. Theoretically speaking, translocalities also imply a multiperspective, due to the fact that translocalities might differ for different observers.

I would like to even push their thoughts a bit further: Translocality can also grant us a better understanding of the global after the spatial turn. Translocality works as a transition between the local and the global. If we study the local by studying translocal relations with a microhistorical approach, we get to global history through the sum of all translocalities. Whereas this sum is actually always in motion, the global itself becomes dynamic and historically changeable. The global then turns out to be an entity in constant flux that cannot be studied as a whole by one single scholar. On the one hand, this understanding of global–local entanglements dissolves the binary dichotomy that has been established between the local and the global. On the other hand, it ties in with Doreen Massey’s observation that places are not “victims” of globalizing processes; on the contrary, it is the places/localities that make the global (Massey 2006).

In conclusion, the study of global–local entanglements is inspired by the Subaltern Studies Group, by the history-from-below discussions and the methodology of microhistory. It centers on (individual) actors. It is important to underline, however, that it should neither concentrate on the social history of the working class¹² nor limit its fields of research to investigating the history of subalterns or everyday life. “Below” should designate only the micro level in contrast to global structures, insofar as global history-from-below borrows methodological tools from microhistory

(Ginzburg 1993) and combines these with a new understanding of the global as the sum of translocal relations and an entity in constant flux.¹³

<A>NOTES

¹For an overview of the 1990s debate on the significance and role of the nation-state in a globalizing world, see McGrew (1998) and Berking (2006b).

²Interestingly, the Subaltern and the Postcolonial Studies approach did not influence the discipline of history as a whole. It has been far more important for the study of literature and cultural studies. For an overview of the latest literature on postcolonial history, see Lindner *et al.* (2011).

³In another article, I have elaborated more profoundly on the relationship between epistemology and history writing. See Epple (2010a).

⁴*Historist* is a German word that is difficult to translate into English. It designates a historian influenced by “Historism,” a special attitude to history dominant in Germany and other European countries during the 19th and 20th centuries. Ranke was not a historicist in the way that Popper used the word *historicism*. See Berger (1997). Dipesh Chakrabarty, for instance, uses the term *historicism* without clarifying how this differs from Popper’s understanding – a source of several misunderstandings. See Chakrabarty (2000: 6–16).

⁵Wolfgang Knöbl presents a concise summary of the debates between Immanuel Wallerstein and historians such as Janet L. Abu-Lughod or Andre G. Frank (Knöbl 2007: 118–28). Frank, however, even though liberating the world system from its Eurocentric bases, finally backs up Wallerstein by assuming the existence of such a world system.

⁶For a good overview on this debate see Patel (2008).

⁷A related concept is *histoire croisée* – a combination of the history of transfer and the history of comparisons. For further reading see Werner and Zimmermann (2002).

⁸A characteristic that could also be ascribed to transnational history; see Bayly *et al.* (2006: 1451).

⁹Even the terms *ethnicity* or *ethnic identity* become questionable because they rely on a fixed definition of the respective ethnicity. See Çağlar *et al.* (2006).

¹⁰For European historiography, see also O’Dowd and Porciani (2004), Davis (1980), Melman (1993), and Epple and Schaser (2009).

¹¹Barkan (1994) already dealt with postcolonial theory in the 1990s. If transnational and postcolonial history have an impact on scientific concepts and on methodology – and, as I have tried to show, they do – then they should be measured by them (Siegrist 2005).

¹²The history-from-below approach was developed as a result of the French *Annales* School in the 1960s. It is closely connected to E.P. Thompson’s book *The Making of the English Working Class*, which first appeared in 1963.

¹³Some results have already been presented or are forthcoming; see, for instance, Putnam (2006).

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