

Thoughts on global history and Human DHS (December 2009)

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Global History today is a field in-the-making: it is about developing, exploring and testing methodologies that affirm this new field's basic assumption: the interconnectedness of the human past. There are no common or standard textbooks but rather an increasing number of excellent and exemplary books and articles that actually *do* the history and deepen understandings of the many patterns of human and ecological interconnections. Furthermore, there is no normative scale or scope to the field. It can be a large-scale, long-term study that is literally global in extent (à la Immanuel Wallerstein's world systems analysis), an interregional study (trans-Atlantic history or the Indian ocean rim, for example) or a local study, illustrating the larger global forces impinging on community life. It is inherently interdisciplinary and often non-linear, exploring the unexpected and contingent events that do away with any teleology such as the 'rise of the West.' In addition, global historians are critical of the old standard unit of historical analysis: the nation-state or bounded territory or empire and seek new methodologies that promote cross-national, inter-regional and international analysis. These methodologies include training in transnational and diasporic approaches to research, transfer theory, new comparative (non-normative) history, gender analysis, literary and visual theory, economic theory as well as demography and ecology. The relevant insights from social psychology should become part of the historians' intellectual arsenals as well. As seen at the recent 2009 Workshop on Humiliation and Violent Conflict, global historians have a lot to contribute to precise understandings of historical moments of violent conflict and the possibilities of social and interpersonal change within a larger framework of societal and structural transformation.

As there is no shared text, the following suggestions offer a short introduction to the field's questions, methods and promises, which is approached effectively through its empirical studies:

Theoretical and methodological considerations: American Historical Review
 Conversation: "On Transnational History," *AHR*, 111, 5 (December 2006), pp. 1441-1464

A study global in scale: C.A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914, Global Connections and Comparisons*, Blackwell, 2004

Illustrating transnational history: Jean H. Quataert, *Advocating Dignity: Human Rights Mobilizations in Global Politics*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009.

Illustrating interregional history: Sugata Bose, *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2006)

Illustrating local/global connections and 'event' history in gender history: Mrinalini Sinha, *Specters of Mother India: The Global Restructuring of an Empire*, Duke University Press, 2006

Illustrating new comparative non-normative history (reciprocal comparisons): Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe and the Making of the Modern World Economy*, Princeton University Press, 2000