

Conceptions of Space in Global History – A Brief Outlook on Research in the United States and China. A Widespread Research Field

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RESÜMEE

Raumkonzepte in der Globalgeschichte – Ein kurzer Überblick zur Forschung in den USA und in China

Der Aufsatz betrachtet neuere Entwicklungen in der Diskussion um Welt- und Globalgeschichte und verändert dabei gegenüber vielen westlichen Überblicken die Perspektive, indem er neben amerikanischen auch chinesische Beiträge zu dieser Debatte näher analysiert und zum Ausgangspunkt einer Erörterung der zugrunde liegenden Raumkonzepte macht, die nicht nur den historischen Gegenstand sondern auch die historiografische Praxis in einem neuen Licht erscheinen lassen.

In recent years, the term “global history” has spread across many different world regions and languages. For instance, in Chinese the rather recently coined term *quanqiu lishi* has become more common, and the same has been the case with the Japanese *gurobaru reikishi*, or the German *Globalgeschichte*. The growing significance of this term indicates a rather important development. In most branches of historiography, there has been a sharp increase in research, which seeks to reach beyond disciplinary boundaries and apply trans-local and border-crossing perspectives to the study of the past. For example, this has been the case for a wide spectrum of scholarship subsumable under “cultural history” as well as for the equally complex landscapes of “political history.” In fact, there is hardly any area of historical inquiry that has not been impacted by global history in

the widest sense. New spatial concepts, be they transnational, trans-regional, or trans-continental in nature, have been applied to both macroscopic and microscopic, central and marginal themes. Not all these border-crossing perspectives are “new” in the sense that they were completely unthought of a generation or more ago. But there has been a decisive change: what were once a few isolated trickles flowing through the landscapes of historiography have now grown into ever more visible currents.

It is important to note that during the past few years debates on how to internationalize or even globalize historiography have gained momentum not only in North America and Europe but also in East Asia, South America and other world regions. In many countries established scholars have contributed to the rapidly growing theoretical literature on the subject of writing history at a global level. In various parts of the world there has been a growing feeling of uneasiness with the fact that historiographical research is still operating mainly within national boundaries or single cultural realms. Even though discussions on related themes remain largely confined to single national or regional arenas, they in fact constitute a debate with similar core themes.

While our global academic system remains characterized by very problematic hierarchies, it would be far too simplistic to treat the Anglophone world as the main originator of the current trend towards transnational scholarship. In fact, the main forces behind the growing weight of translocal thought did not emanate from a clearly recognizable epicenter. Rather, the dynamics of the global historical trend need to be envisioned as a complicated interaction between local and global factors. In addition, there are good reasons to assume that, despite all international entanglements, global historical research is not undergoing a process of worldwide convergence. For instance, depending on the local setting, the dominant antithesis to “global history” can vary: while in some cases it is mainly the nation, in others it is the region, or some notion of cultural or ethnic belonging. As a general fact, very specific themes, methodologies, and public issues characterize global and transnational history in various societies.

Yet when assessing the the status quo of global history in different parts of the world, one should avoid exoticizing scholarship elsewhere and take into consideration that the historiographies around the globe have many elements in common. Such shared features include the heritage of the nation state paradigm and the primacy of detailed source work, both of which are manifest in the structure of history departments. These and other elements reflect themselves in the overall fact that almost all over the world historians tend to be experts in the history of single nation states or mono-cultural realms at best. No matter whether in China, in the United States or in Germany, for example, there are hardly any professorships in fields such as bi-cultural history, the history of cultural encounters or migrations.

After all, historical research at today’s academic institutions is to a large degree the result of global transformations which were typically tied to the worldwide emergence of the

nation-state¹. In addition, since the very beginnings of modern historiography, academic concepts and schools of thought have crossed political, linguistic, and other boundaries. Nevertheless, historiography never evolved into an academic discipline that would – analogous to the natural sciences – come to work with a largely identical spectrum of methodological schools all over the world. Like any other field in the social sciences and the humanities, historiography also became quite fragmented in terms of its methodological schools and research approaches. At the same time, the conceptual fabrics of historiography and historical consciousness remain seasoned by national or regional contingencies. These range from institutional settings and the availability of funding to political influences, modes of memory, the nature of publicly discussed themes, and the overall intellectual climate.

Scholarship in the United States

A brief comparative look at the trajectories of global historical research in the United States, and the People's Republic of China confirms the idea that, despite all global academic entanglements, the centers of gravity of global historical scholarship are situated around divergent core issues, agendas, and contested themes. In the United States, the more recent moves towards global history need to be understood from the context of earlier sociocultural transformations at university campuses. Around the time of the middle of the Cold War, attempts to democratize US universities in terms of their teaching and research agendas were at least entangled with the growing significance of academic currents such as the history from below movement². Propelled by wider transformations such as the civil rights movement and a growing pluralization of student and faculty bodies at universities, many scholars and educators grew extremely critical of the allegedly homogenous ways in which both national history and world history was being practiced in the United States. After all, even during the latter Cold War period many world historical interpretations still portrayed the extension of the American frontier as the culmination of Western history, which in turn was depicted as an unfolding of freedom³.

In the United States, the global historical trend has not only been closely connected to a growing reluctance to endorse monolithic visions of the nation and a concomitant pluralizing landscape of historical research but that it even built on its growing fragmentation⁴. An important precondition for the field's rising significance were the growing

1 For global historical perspectives of modern historiography see, for example, Daniel R. Woolf, *Historiography*, in: M. C. Horowitz (Hrsg.), *New Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, New York 2005, S. 35-85; G. Iggers / Q. E. Wang / S. Mukherjee, *A Global History of Modern Historiography*, Harlow 2008; and L. Raphael, *Geschichtswissenschaft im Zeitalter der Extreme. Theorien, Methoden, Tendenzen von 1900 bis zur Gegenwart*, Munich 2003.

2 See P. Novick, *That Noble Dream. The Objectivity Question and the American Historical Profession*, Cambridge 1988.

3 See W. McNeill, *The Changing Shape of World History*, in: *History and Theory*, 34-2 (1995), S. 8-26, S. 10 ff.

4 About the growing diversification of historiographical journals into specific research communities see M. Middell (Hrsg.), *Historische Zeitschriften im internationalen Vergleich*, Leipzig 1999.

doubts about historical objectivity, many of which have been related to the so-called “cultural turn.” Particularly during the 1980s, a rising number of scholars sought to add another layer of complexity to their studies, namely the ways in which reality was being perceived and constructed by historical groups and individuals.⁵ This implied that scholars grew increasingly reluctant to accept the notion of historical objectivity and began to regard many categories ranging from “society” to “culture” as made rather than given. As part of this spirit to deconstruct the tools and tables of the historian’s workshop, also spatial units such as nations, civilizations came to be doubted as given spatial parameters for their own research. Already before global history and related terms were articulated as an academic project, historians of gender, social milieus, religious groups, and many other fields of study increasingly came to criticize the idea of the nation as a container of historical contingency and the idea of universal standards in world history. Even though many movements turning against elite-centered visions of the past initially operated at a subnational level, their new emphasis on diverse historical spaces made it more acceptable to think in terms of more flexible geographies.

Despite the political discontent as a background factor, many profound changes within the field of historiography did not occur through dramatic revolutions in thinking but much rather as slow, subtle transformations⁶. During the 1970s and 1980s, an increasing number of scholars and public intellectual started arguing that the state of the art of historiography was not doing sufficiently justice to the diversity of the country⁷. There were growing doubts about the question whether the ways in which history was commonly studied in the United States adequately represented the experiences of society or whether they constituted by and large the tropes of some privileged elites. Many groups, which often identified themselves as social historians, were becoming more strongly represented within the fabrics of US universities by becoming organized around identity causes or political objectives⁸. Among other developments, growing research fields ranging from gender studies to African Americans studies started to challenge the unity of the American past by posing questions such as “whose history?.” They went against dominant research agendas by shedding lights on experiences and groups that didn’t easily fit into dominant tropes. Of course, ever since the late 19th century there had been several waves of movements striving to further democratize historiography and historical memory in the United States⁹. Yet particularly the transformations since the 1960s pluralized the fields of activity at US history departments to a hitherto unknown degree, raising the ob-

5 For more details see L. Hunt (Hrsg.), *The New Cultural History*, Berkeley 1989.

6 Much of academic research has focused on the history of conceptual revolutions, and the study of slow processes of changes has thus far received far less attention. The most prominent example for the former category is T. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*, Chicago 1962.

7 A very influential work was H. Zinn, *A People’s History of the United States*, New York 1980.

8 M. N. Bastedo, *Curriculum in Higher Education: The Historical Roots of Contemporary Issues*, in: P. G. Altbach / R. Berdahl / P. Gumpert (Hrsg.), *American Higher Education in the Twenty-First Century: Social, Political, and Economic Challenges*, Baltimore 2005, S. 462-485; and J. R. Searle, *Rationality and Realism. What is at Stake?*, in: J. Cole / E. Barber / S. Graubard (Hrsg.), *The Research University at a Time of Discontent*, Baltimore 1994, S. 55-83.

9 See Novick, *That Noble Dream* (Anm. 2)

jectivity question in history in new and politically palpable ways. Directly or indirectly, such activities as the “cultural turn” and, more generally, the rise of skepticism about reductionist generalizations could be felt across many academic disciplines¹⁰.

Within this different setting, the more recent waves of global history in the United States built on a multitude of detailed research projects in all branches of historiography, ranging from economic history to cultural history and from gender history to environmental history¹¹. One of its main character traits is a critical reconsideration of those conceptions of space that had been foundational to modern academic historiography. This has great implications since attached to ideas of space are notions of contingency and autonomy, distance and closeness, as well as centrality and marginality. An increasing number of scholars have either become directly or indirectly involved in emancipating their field from the political and intellectual regimes of territoriality that have long dominated its professional structures, academic communities, and scholarly pursuits. However, this has not been a uniform process since not all of historiography was dominated by the same conceptions of space: the segmentation of territoriality tended to be field-specific. For an expert of the European Middle Ages, for example, it was hardly ever revolutionary to explore intra-European interactions but until recently it has been highly unusual to investigate historical dynamics across the lines of Islam and Christendom. Quite to the contrary, the action radius of many historians working on the modern period tended to be largely framed around the concept of the nation state¹².

The search for alternatives to methodological nationalism, culturalism, and similar paradigms has taken a multitude of directions, so it is certainly not the case that one new set of spatial categories has come to replace another one. Rather, experimenting with alternative conceptions of space, breaking through disciplinary boundaries and transgressing political or mental borders has become en vogue within the community of historians. Many case studies now focus on linkages which scholarship had long relegated to the background because it primarily studied single nations, world regions, or other spatial configurations rather independently from each other. Concepts like flows, webs, connections, entanglements, and mutual influences have now become part of the standard repertoire of historical scholarship. As a consequence, what was taken for granted as a rather coherent national or cultural realm, now starts looking much more disjointed and ideologically constructed, and much of what seemed to be distant and separate, now appears more as a dense zone of interactions.

Generally speaking, historiography as an academic field has become more immediately interested in its own disciplinary conceptions of space, both at macroscopic and micro-

10 V. Bonnelly/L. Hunt (Hrsg.), *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture*, Berkeley 1999.

11 For more details see D. Sachsenmaier, *Global Perspectives on Global History. Theories and Approaches in a Connected World*, Cambridge 2011, chapter 2.

12 See K. E. Wigen/M. E. Lewis, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography*, Berkeley 1997. The civilizational perspective of world history has experienced a certain public revival following the publication of S. Huntington's *The Clash of Civilization and the Remaking of World Order*, London 1998.

scopic levels. One aspect of this growing self-reflectivity is the surging research on constructions of national historiographies, myths of continents, and tropes of civilizations¹³. Another facet is formed by the newly appearing studies which look at the global spread of modern academic historiography and its conceptual worlds from a wide variety of angles. Together, such research raises awareness that the very spatial concepts with which historians operate are products of historical developments rather than the frames of past transformations. This certainly contributes to making the relationship between history and historiography more complex.

Yet while the growing critique of monolithic visions of national history in the United States has been tied to significant social changes at US universities and within American society at large, it is certainly not the case that it reflects a popular majority opinion. Also in academic circles, not all border-crossing thinking about the past has sought to reverse the spatial categories and normative lenses that had characterized much of academic history-writing for long. Some recent scholarship offering global interpretations of the past even sought to reaffirm ideas of Western exceptionalism and derivative claims for ethno-political superiority¹⁴. Still, the main currents in the recent discussions surrounding terms such as global history, trans-local history, and even world history have led into very different directions. An increasing willingness to deconstruct concepts like “Europe” as part of a search for alternatives to Western-centric worldviews and hegemonic storylines has become an important trait within today’s research community¹⁵. Attacking theories of convergence, narratives of Western-led progress, and challenge-response models has become common to a degree that the great contestations of global historical research are no longer situated along the linear trajectories of these theories. As an academic trend, global history is certainly very far from fostering deterministic and homogenizing interpretations of globalization which continue to enjoy a strong position in academic fields like economics. At the same time, large currents of global historical scholarship implicitly continue older centric visions by not taking academic literature produced in other languages duly into account.

13 For example, this has been the case with the trans-disciplinary literature pointing to the invented character of world regions. For example, Wigen/Lewis, *The Myth of Continents* (Anm. 12); L. Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*, Stanford 1994; W. D. Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America*, Oxford/Malden, MA 2005; and M. Bassin, *Imperial Visions: Nationalist Imagination and Geographical Expansion in the Russian Far East 1840–1865*, Cambridge/New York 1999.

14 For example, N. Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World*, London 2003; D. S. Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations: Why Some are So Rich and Some So Poor*, New York 1998; and J. M. Headley, *The Europeanization of the World: on the Origins of Human Rights and Democracy*, Princeton 2008.

15 As Michael Geyer and Charles Bright point out, even many critical world histories tended to depict constructs such as, most notably, “the West” as the sole active centers in global contexts: C. Bright/M. Geyer, *Regimes of World Order: Global Integration and the Production of Difference in Twentieth-Century World History*, in: J. H. Bentley et al (Hrsg.), *Interactions: Transregional Perspectives on World History*, Honolulu 2005, S. 202–238.

Approaches in China

Rather different have been the trajectories of global historical research in Mainland China. Here global and world historical literature need to be seen from the background of the significant semantic, institutional, and conceptual changes involved in the genesis of university-based scholarship. From its very beginnings, modern academic historiography was embedded in forms of global consciousness such as the idea that it was study Japan and several Western countries as key reference societies. Throughout most of the twentieth century, world history or Western history have enjoyed a significant institutional presence but at the same time these fields were rather strictly separated from the study of Chinese history. Particularly during the past two decades, there have been a plethora of developments seeking to overcome this divide between national history and world history, for example by exploring the global entanglements of single Chinese cities and regions¹⁶.

Generally speaking, while there have been significant counter-movements, linear perspectives such as notions of modernization, and firm spatial perspectives such as the nation state remained very influential in Chinese global and world historical scholarship. In fact, some prominent and politically influential scholars like Yu Pei, the director of the World History Institute at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, who have come to operate with terms such as “global history,”¹⁷ even sought to actively defend nation-centered perspectives of world history against trends that could – in their eyes – challenge the idea of a contingent, largely autochthonous Chinese past¹⁸. Based on a solid assumption of nationhood, scholars like Yu Pei argue that the conceptual turns of world historical thinking in China should finally overcome the student-teacher relationship that had long characterized much of Chinese intellectual outlooks towards the West¹⁹. While China, Yu argues, would need to further open itself to flows and ideas from abroad, its world historians also ought to strengthen their efforts to overcome Eurocentric inclinations. In many cases, such demands for new world historical perspectives have been tied to the idea of a changing world order and China’s rising status in the international system²⁰. The notion that historical studies needed to return from the cosmopolitan interests of the 1980s to the service of the nation state has also been promoted heavily

16 For more details see D. Sachsenmaier, *Global Perspectives on Global History* (Anm. 11), chapter 4.

17 Yu Pei (ed.), *Quanqiuhua yu quanqiu shi* (Globalization and Global History), Beijing 2007.

18 Yu Pei, *Hongyang zhongguo shijieshi yanjiu de minzu jingshen* (Uphold the National Spirit in World Historical Research), in: *Shijie lishi* (World History), 5 (2004), S. 4-11.

19 Yu Pei, *Quanqiuhua yu ‘quanqiu lishiguan’* (Globalization and Global Conceptions of History), in: *Shixue jikan* (Collected Papers of History Studies), 2 (2001), S. 1-12.

20 See for example, Hou Jianxin, “Xin shiji woguo de shijieshi yanjiu yao shang xinshuiping” (In the New Century World Historical Research in Our Country Should Reach a New Level), in: *Shijie lishi* (World History), 1 (2000), S. 13-14. A summary of further recent debates is provided by He Fangchuan and Yu Pei, *Shijie lishi yanjiusuo jiansuo 40 zhounian xueshu yantaohui zongshu* (A Summary of the Symposium on the 40th Anniversary of the Institute of World History [at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences]), in: *Shijie lishi* (World History), 1 (2005), S. 129-133.

by the National Education Commission and the patriotic education (*aiguozhuyi jiaoyu*) campaigns starting from the early 1990s²¹.

While Europe is often depicted as the epicenter of global modernization processes, there is now more support for scholars in China who no longer accept the view of Europe as the sole creator of the modern world²². In addition, most works at least tacitly endorse the view that modernization, as it becomes global, does not equal Westernization. Nevertheless, there is a continued popularity of linear or even teleological theories of development within Chinese intellectual circles. This needs to be understood from the specific contexts of Chinese academia and society at large. Not too far removed from the predictions US modernization theorists made during the 1960s, many parts of China quickly developed from pre-industrial economies into consumer societies. Other changes could also be grasped rather well when resorting to the critical branches of modernization theory – for example, in the Chinese case the gap between the rich and the poor was widening at the same time as the urban skylines were being changed by skyscrapers.

Yet while a strong part of the Chinese intellectual community continues to operate with linear perspectives of history, there have been significant changes pertaining to the conceptions of space within which linear visions of time are being embedded. Particularly from the 1990s onwards, Chinese specificities were seen less as a hindrance but rather as an enabling framework of modernization²³. In other words, conceptions of space started becoming more relevant for linear notions of time. For instance, the idea of an “Asiatic Mode of Production” was now often treated more favorably and no longer primarily portrayed as a disadvantageous deviation from Western norms²⁴. In addition, theoretical frameworks that were centered on concepts such as multiple modernities or alternative modernities received some attention in China²⁵. In general, there have been growing

21 See Zhao Suisheng, *A Nation-State by Construction. Dynamics of Modern Chinese Nationalism*, Stanford 2004, chapter 6; and N. Spakowski, *Between Normative and Individualizing Didactics: Suzhi Jiaoyu as a New Term in Chinese Theories of History Teaching*, in: H. Schmidt-Glintzer / A. Mittag / J. Rüsen (Hrsg.), *Historical Truth, Historical Criticism, and Ideology. Chinese Historiography and Historical Culture from a New Comparative Perspective*, Leiden 2005, S. 465-481.

22 See for example Ruan Wei, *Wenming de Biaoxian (Performances of Civilizations)*, Beijing 2001. See also Xu Luo, *Reconstructing World History in the People's Republic of China Since the 1980s*, in: *Journal of World History*, 18-3 (2007), S. 325-350, particularly S. 342-345.

23 See for example Xie Xialing, *Shehui kexue yanjiu guannian bixu gexin (The Perspectives of Social Scientific Research Must Be Reformed)*, in: *Xueshu yuekan (Academic Monthly)*, 4 (1994), S. 4-6. There was also a rising interest in the so-called Qinghua School around thinkers like Feng Youlan and Zhang Dainian. See Hu Weixi, *Chuantong yu xiandaixing – zailun 'qinghua xuepai' de wenhuaguan (Tradition and Modernity – Again on the Cultural View of the 'Qinghua School')*, in: *Xueshu yuekan (Academic Monthly)*, 8 (1994), S. 3-10.

24 See R. Karl, *The Asiatic Mode of Production: National and Imperial Formations*, in: *Historien*, 5 (2005), S. 58-75; and Xiang Xiang, Song Faqing, Wang Jiafeng and Li Hongtu, *Ershi shiji zhongguo de shijieshi yanjiu (World Historical Research in 20th Century China)*, in: *Xueshu yuekan (Academic Monthly)*, 7&8 (1999), S. 93-96; S. 99-109.

25 For example, Li Qiang, *Aisensidate dui xiandaihua lilun he zhongguo wenhua de zai jiantao (Eisenstadt's Re-analysis of Modernization Theory and Chinese Culture)*, in: *Ershiyi shiji (Twenty-first Century)*, 1 (1990), S. 60-6; and Huang Ruiqi, *“Xiandai yu houxiandai – jidengsi lun xiandaixing” (Modernity and Post-Modernism – on Anthony Giddens' Theory of Modernity)*, in: *Dongwu shehuixue bao*, 86-6 (1997), pp. 281-387. See also D. Sachsenmaier / J. Riedel / S. Eisenstadt (Hrsg.), *Duoyuan xiandaihua de fansi. Ouzhou, Zhongguo ji qitade chanshi (Reflections on Multiple Modernities: European, Chinese and other interpretations)*, Hong Kong 2009.

levels of support for the idea that China's recent experiences constitute a special, successful path to modernization and development – a path supposedly unique enough to defy any attempt to understand it through theories derived from the West. Also the challenges and constraints that China has to face, a related argument goes, are locally specific to such a degree that Western or other foreign models can only be of limited use.

As a general tendency, many world historical accounts are now primarily written from the perspective of a country that has supposedly now found an adequate way of combining modernity and tradition, the self and the West, as well as the global and the local. In world historical texts one increasingly encounters the idea that, after the decolonization period, the world reached a stage in which the cultures of modernity arrived at formerly subdued parts of the world, leading to emerging multipolar patterns of global power and the world economy. Due to intellectual developments and changing political expectations of this kind, there is now a rising interest in the history of China's entanglements with other world regions outside of the West. Some leading scholars argue that since modernity is no longer primarily conceptualized as a universal transformation but rather as a complex pattern of global and local interactions, it no longer makes sense to categorically separate the history of the "advanced world" from the study of China²⁶.

Likewise, specifically within world history as a research and teaching field, social and cultural historical topics have grown at the expense of political history²⁷. Within the official echelons of the field there is a certain consensus that these and other developments have started to greatly change and diversify the landscapes of world history in China²⁸. Many voices have called for world history to leave its well-trodden tracks and enter new territories that ultimately may prove to be relevant for the future²⁹. For example, there have been suggestions that, in the future, at least some world historical research should be structured around the study of key problems rather than certain periods or world regions³⁰. Furthermore, there is a growing sense that Chinese world historiography needs to continue to closely follow scholarship in the West but no longer remain fixated upon it³¹. Many scholars and institution builders have come to argue that in the face of a rap-

26 A rather early articulation of similar viewpoints: Luo, Rongqu, *Xiandaihua xinlun – shijie yu zhongguo de xiandaihua jincheng* (New Theories of Modernity – Modernization Processes in the World and China), Beijing 2004.

27 See Xu, Luo, *The Rise of World History Studies in Twentieth-Century China*, in: *History Compass* (2010).

28 Compare Yu Pei, *Shijieshi yanjiu* (World History Studies), Xiamen 2006; Jiang Dachun, *Ershiyi shiji shixue lilun yanjiu duanxiang* ("New Thoughts on Historiographical Theory in the 21st Century"), in: *Shixue lilun yanjiu* (Historiography Quarterly), 1 (2000), S. 101-102; and He Ping, *Ershi shiji bashi niandai zhongguo shixue fazhan ruogan qushi* (Some Trends in the Development of 20th Century Chinese Historiography during the 1980s), in: *Shixue lilun yanjiu* (Historiography Quarterly), 1 (2000), S. 67-79.

29 For example, Li Anshan, *Shijieshi yanjiu de guifanhua wenti – jianlun zhuzhong zhushi de zuoyong* (The Problem of the Standardization of World Historical Research – also on The Function of Foot-Notes), in: *Shixue lilun yanjiu* (Historiography Quarterly), 1 (2001), S. 57-60; and Xiang Xiang, Song Faqing, Wang Jiafeng and Li Hongtu, *Ershi shiji zhongguo de shijieshi yanjiu* (wie Anm. 24)

30 For example, Liu Peng, 'Quangiu lishiguan' yu 'duxiang zhongxin lun' – 'shijie lishi' guannian de hongguan he weiguan tixi ("Global Historical Views" and "Object-Centered Ideologies"- Macro- and Micro-systemic Ideas of "World History"), in: *Tianshui shifanxueyuan xuebao* (Journal of Tianshui Normal University), 3 (2004), S. 43-46.

31 For example, Lin Zhenjiang / Liang Yunxiang, (Hrsg.), *Quanguohua yu zhongguo, riben* (Globalization and China, Japan), Beijing 2000. Looking at allegedly successful and unsuccessful experiences of modernization: Qian

idly changing and pluralizing world, China will need to broaden its ties with universities on other parts of the globe³². Such a vision, which certainly has an eye on China's growing global roles and involvements, necessarily entails strengthening academic expertise in different parts of the world outside areas such as Western Europe, North America, and East Asia, which long have dominated the global awareness institutionally represented at Chinese universities³³. In a certain way, the idea of connecting with world regions outside of the West may be understood as a continuation of the decentering efforts during the Mao period, though today's guiding principles are no longer closely related to the idea of an alliance of underdeveloped societies against an exploitative Global North. Much rather, the objective of reaching out to the world is often quite openly tied to the rising international power status of China. Publication titles like *World History in Our Country Needs to Reach a New Level in the New Century* are an indication of the future-oriented climate within which some of the ideas about new directions for this branch of research are being developed³⁴. But they also serve as a reminder that despite the diversification of theories and acclaimed internationalization of scholarship, national identities remain a strong element within the landscapes of world historical research in China. In fact, the two are often seen as two sides of the same coin, for instance, analogous to the debates on modernization and the future of the country, many leading representatives of world history argue that, through its growing entanglements with the world, China needs to further accentuate a specific approach to world history³⁵. In that manner, the suggestion that Chinese historiography should more carefully scrutinize Western theories in terms of their applicability to local perspectives is often at least tacitly related to the idea of the primacy of national interests in a changing global environment³⁶. For

Chengdan / Liu Jinyuan (Hrsg.), *Huangju toudi: xiandaihua de mitu* (The Road to Modernization Went Astray: A Global Perspective), Hangzhou 1999.

- 32 See for example Yi Zhaoyin (Hrsg.), *Shijie Wenhua Lishi* (History of World Culture), o. O. 2000; Yi Mu, *Shijie wenhua de duoyuan yitihua bulü* (The Path of Pluralistic Integration of World Culture), in: *Shixue lilun yanjiu* (Historiography Quarterly), 2 (2001), S. 158-159. Advocating more expertise in foreign history and more exchanges with different countries: Zhang Chunnian, *Zhongguo shixue ying zouxiang shijie* (Chinese Historiography Should Walk towards the World), in: *Shijie lishi* (World History), 5 (1994), S. 113-114; and Yu Pei, *Zhuanxing zhong de lishi kexue* (Historical Sciences in Transition), in: *Shijie Lishi* (World History), 5 (1994), S. 11-18.
- 33 Suggesting that single universities should cluster expertise in one particular world region: Qi Shirong, *Youguan shijie shixue jianshe de liangge wenti* (Two Problems of Establishing the Discipline of World History), in: *Shijie lishi* (World History), 4 (2000), S.71-73; Wu Yin, *Shijieshi de xueke dingwei yu fazhan fangxiang - zai 'xinshiji shijieshi xueke jianshe' xueshu yantaohui shang de jianghua* (The Position and Developmental Directions for World Historical Science – Speech on the Symposium 'Establishing World Historical Sciences for the New Century'), in: *Shijie lishi* (World History), 12 (2003), S. 6-7; and Zhang Haipeng, *2000 nian zhongguo jindaishi yanjiu xueshu dongtai gaishu* (Research Report on Modern Chinese History in the Year 2000), in: *Jindaishi yanjiu* (Modern Chinese History Studies), 1 (2002), S. 200-244.
- 34 Hou Jianxin, *Xinshiji woguo de shijieshi yanjiu yao shang xin shuiping*, in: *Shijie lishi* (World History), 1 (2000), S. 13-14.
- 35 For example, He Fangchuan, *Yingjie zhongguo de shijieshi yanjiu xin jiyuan* (Welcoming a New Era of World History Studies in China), in: *Shijie Lishi* (World History), 4 (2004), S. 74-82; Qi Shirong, *Youguan shijie shixue jianshe de liangge wenti* (Two Problems of Establishing the Discipline of World History), in: *Shijie lishi* (World History), 4 (2000), S. 71-73.
- 36 For example, Zhang Guangzhi, *Ershiji zhongguo de xifang shixue lilun yanjiu chuyi* (Thoughts on Western Historical Theory Studies in 21st Century China), in: *Shixue lilun yanjiu* (Historiography Quarterly), 4 (2000), S. 59-62.

now, however, the main thrust of attempts to develop specifically Chinese forms of world history is primarily directed at the various facets of Eurocentrism that have become internalized in the sense of becoming woven deeply into the fabrics of China's intellectual worlds. In that sense the search for supposedly Chinese visions is often decisively driven by the sense of a loss of epistemological agency.

What a distinctly Chinese perspective of world history may look like, however, often remains ill-defined. As discussed, a fair number of articles present Marxist perspectives as one of the main elements distinguishing world historical research in the People's Republic from scholarship in most other parts of the world³⁷. Yet the idea of Marxism as the main angle of potential Chinese perspectives is often presented in a very principled, if not even dogmatic manner, and only a fraction of this literature seeks to actively engage with Neo-Marxist approaches from China, the United States, Latin America, or other parts of the world. This is a missed opportunity since rejuvenated Marxist outlooks on world history would have synergy potentials with many developments in other fields such as social and cultural history³⁸. Actually, as a general trend, Marxist and Leninist interpretations have come to stand somewhat apart from the dynamic environments of research in the social sciences and humanities in China. Since the acclamation of Marxist approaches to world history remains guarded by the government, they have not been subject to many controversial debates.

This may also be one of the main reasons why most of the literature postulating decidedly Chinese outlooks of world history has not turned to critically discuss the Chinese model as it has recently evolved. For instance, critiques emerging from intellectual movements such as the New Left, which point to a progressive erosion of Marxist and communitarian values from the Chinese system, have not played a prominent role in the literature revolving around the idea of a Chinese voice in world history. Yet this would be important if the assertion of locally specific approaches to global and world historical thinking is to be based on the claim for an alternative, lived social, cultural, and political experience in the offing. A closer rapprochement between the theoretical literature on topics such as Chinese modernity and Chinese approaches to world history could potentially lead to very important topics ranging from new, historically informed critiques of hegemony to visions of world order.

37 For example, Zhang Yiping/Hu Suping, *Lun makesizhuyi de shijie lishi zhengti guan* (On the Systemic Perspectives of Marxist Views of World History), in: *Shixue lilun yanjiu* (Historiography Quarterly), 4 (1999), S. 5-13; Kong Lingdong, *Maksi de 'shijie lishi' sixiang he jingji quanqiuhua jincheng* (Marx's Thoughts on "World History" and the Processes of Economical Globalization), in: *Shixue lilun yanjiu* (Historiography Quarterly), 4 (2002), S. 88-93; and Li Shikun, *Lun shijie lishi lilun yu quanqiuhua* (On Theories of World History and Globalization), in: *Beijing daxue xuebao* (Zhexue shehui kexue ban) (Journal of Peking University [Philosophy and Social Sciences]), 2 (2001), S. 5-12.

38 For example, calling for a dialogue with Neo-Marxist Currents in the West ranging from Jameson to Giddens: Sun Hui, *Zhongguo dangqian makesi zhuyi zhexue yanjiu de jiben qushi* (Basic Trends in Current Marxist Philosophical Studies in China), in: *Zhongguo shehui kexue* (Social Science in China), English edition, 3 (2002), S. 117-126.

Implications for Future Research

This rather brief comparison between global historical scholarship in China and the United States suggests that mainstream conceptions of space can vary significantly between different scholarly communities. Factors ranging from political climates, methodologies, department structures and modes of historical memory have an influence on the directions from which global history is pursued. This points to problem zones which call for more dialogical approaches and can hardly be tackled on the grounds of a disciplinary tradition which prioritized individual research over collective endeavors. In fact, some aspects of the global prototype of historical scholarship as it emerged during the 19th and 20th centuries, may be ill-equipped to support at least some of the intellectual tasks that global and transnational historians may choose to accept.

If historiography wants to further at least some forums to grasp worldwide disciplinary constellations and opinion climate, it should try to further experiment with group work. For example, it is possible to imagine that different experts who are based in different parts of the world jointly develop a shared set of questions and a common methodological framework. Each group member can then use such a concerted approach as guidance, as a methodological thread for his or her detailed source work and background research. Needless to say, like any individual author, a research group needs to slowly concoct its overall approach, refine a set of core questions and attune itself to previously unconsidered problematics as well. It is necessary to create a dynamic process in which the methodological framework is constantly developed along with the new insights gained from specific research. Such a process can only be imagined if the group is in a position to meet on a regular basis in order to negotiate the directions to be taken. This is particularly challenging for international collaborations, for which new funding must be made available.

What definitely should be avoided in collaborative research are task assignments carried out by subordinate researchers because this tends to impose a certain conceptual framework of one historical context onto other ones. By contrast, negotiated methodologies may lead to promising new insights, particularly since different regional studies still apply rather divergent methodologies to related historical phenomena. Historians in the United States and China, for example, tend to apply different sets of questions to 20th century transformations of political cultures in both world regions. However, both in Europe and East Asia certain developments such as the advent of mass media, mass mobilization, and political radicalism were indeed related to similar structural transformations and influences. A closer methodological encounter can thus produce more than a critical dialogue for a global analysis – it can lead to cross-fertilizations between area-specific research approaches.

Even more important than cooperation between researchers from different academic

disciplines is the idea of international collaboration in the field of global history³⁹. For example, studies on the transformation of identities, on triumph and trauma during the 20th century or on the problem of nationalism are bound to lead to intensive dialogues between international researchers. The current intellectual positions on such issues continue to be rather diverse, so that a methodological dialogue on these questions will necessarily entail a wider debate on values and world-views. It may be particularly promising to experiment with matrix-style collaborations – for example by setting up a research group that includes European historians of East Asia and East Asian historians of Europe.

Yet even though prospects for research in global history may sound enticing there is a price to pay for experiments with genuine group-research. For example, there is the question of historical narrative and especially the problem of authorship. A derivative issue, which may even be of central concern for younger scholars that have not established themselves yet, is the fact that the academic reward system does not truly acknowledge collective efforts. In that way, internationally co-authored publications are likely to remain only remain a by-product of some personal research project. But they carry a significant potential. While we should not naively regard the deepening of transnational academic contacts as a panacea, it is almost inconceivable that without expanding current forms of transnational academic cooperation and developing new ones will it be possible to tackle some essential challenges that global historical scholarship must face in the future.

39 Worth mentioning are, for instance, the growth of global scholarly networks in which participants collaborate over a period of several years. On examples for economic and cultural historians have come together in studies using new spatial approaches. See A. G. Hopkins, Introduction: Globalization - An Agenda for Historians, in: ders. (Hrsg.), *Globalization in World History*, New York 2002, S. 4 ff. Projects such as the Flying University based in Korea (<http://www.h-net.org/announce/show.cgi?ID=174403>) or the Global Economic History Network (<http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/economicHistory/GEHN.htm>) are examples for efforts to transform the mental maps of history in conjunction with the underlying structures of scholarship. Important has also been the rising number of transnational graduate programs in which students are enrolled in networks or consortiums of universities and get their education at different participating locations. As a consequence, one can expect the number of historians who have been trained in different parts of the world to continue growing in the future.