

“Think Globally, Act Locally”? Horizons of Entangled Histories in the Historiography of Medieval and Early Modern Southeast Europe

Since this issue of the journal is dedicated to the discussion of entangled history from as many perspectives as possible, I will try to give a brief review of the development of scholarship in the historiographical and social sciences on this topic, and will intersperse some of my reflections and experience; these mostly concern the history of emotions and transfer history. Although I am not bound by any genre constraints, I will nevertheless try to stick to a small set of concepts such as: identities, entanglements, the epistemological unicity of knowledge. I favour cross-disciplinary entanglements and therefore strongly support also all historiographical approaches that analyse complex transfers without regard for national boundaries. The focus of my research was primarily Southeast Europe as a contact zone of the Mediterranean and Eurasian steppe worlds in a *longue durée* perspective. During millennial cross-cultural contacts, the exchange of people, goods, ideas, technologies, and emotions has shaped in parallel all the worlds involved in the process.

The Shaping of History

For most of our past, the interest in history was mostly about choosing our ancestors. In a nine-volume *Geburtsspiegel* (1518) the ancestral line of the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I of Habsburg runs across three parallel rows. The ‘Hebrew line’ starts with Boaz, great-grandfather of King David, often found in genealogies of Jesus; the Latin line with Aeneas, the founder of Rome; and the ‘Greek line’ with another famous Trojan, Hector. The first line descends from Boaz to the Nativity of Christ, followed by St Peter and the list of subsequent popes down to Leo X (1513-1521). Two other, ‘secular’ lines both lead to Maximilian and his grandson Charles V, first one through the list of Roman emperors, and then another through the Merovingian (Frankish) dynasty.¹ Multiple volumes of the same publication are dedicated to side lines of the dynasty, related royalty, as well as the saints and those recognised as ‘blessed’ who were ancestors or the relatives of the Habsburgs.

¹ SILVER 2008: 48.

Naturally, Maximilian, this grandmaster of splendid representation and visual ideologization left much more evidence of his (in some ways unprecedented) grandeur. Indeed, the Emperor invested much effort in creating his own public image in both text and visual arts, but he also envisaged other means of projecting grandeur for his ceremonies. As he did not reside in a permanent court, he commissioned portable prints and woodcut ensembles, two being quite spectacular. The Triumphal Procession (of Maximilian) is a 54-meter long composite image printed on 139 wood blocks which was pasted to the walls of a palace as a frieze celebrating Emperor's magnificence. Albrecht Dürer's masterpiece, Arch of Honour (1515) comprised 36 sheets of large folio paper on 195 wood blocks and represents the artistic summation of all Emperor's aspirations.

Anthropologists and sociologists have given various reasonable interpretations of all these representations and genres. Max Weber associated the process with the "routinization of charisma", while Clifford Geertz pointed out that much authority is consolidated, even engineered, through public manipulation of shared symbols and through appeals to common tradition.²

All this is minutely elaborated but as a construct is nothing new. There are many examples throughout history: in the Bible; foundations of Greek and Roman cities; medieval times also knew it all too well.³ Around the same time with Maximilian's aspirations, other proto-national ideas began brewing, and in the subsequent centuries the Poles imagined and referred to 'their' Sarmatians, the Croats discussed 'their' Illyrian and Slavic ancestors: for years these purported 'ancestors' were imagined and (re)imagined, as their 'descendants' argued about whether to accept or to reject a possible identification. These ideologemes lie waiting as in a huge antique chest, ready to be dusted off, embellished, (hyper) inflated, used, re-used, re-modelled – all according to the needs of the time.

After his family gained control of the city of Senj and two neighbouring counties in the 13th century, and, soon after, strengthened their position as a regional power, Nikola IV Count of Krk (1360-1432) managed to be elevated to the title of *ban* (viceroy) of Croatia and Dalmatia (1426). The political rise of Nikola IV was accompanied by a genealogical repositioning. In August 1422 for the first time in the charters issued by this noble family the signature reads: Counts of Krk, Senj, and Modruš, but with the addition *de Frangiapanibus*. From that date the addition became regular and integral to family identities, tracing their lineage back to medieval Roman nobility.⁴ In the early 16th century another Croatian nobleman, Ivan Karlović of the Kurjakovići, 'enriched' his identity with the name Torkvat (*Torquatus*). As he bravely defended Lika and Krbava from the ever-intensifying

² SILVER 2008: vii.

³ REYNOLDS 1983.

⁴ ŠPOLJARIĆ 2016:124-125.

Ottoman incursions into Croatian territories, he saw fit to compare, even to identify, himself with Titus M. Torquatus who in 361 BC won a battle against the Gauls defeating their most prominent fighter, a warrior of gigantic size, in a duel. The 'Ottoman Goliath' nonetheless eventually prevailed and seized Knin, Skradin, and Karlović's possessions in Lika and Krbava during his lifetime.

There are two aspects of genealogies: natural and cultural. In the natural perspective, all our ancestors contributed to our existence, as without even just one of them, we would not have been who we are, biologically. In the cultural perspective, we all tend to highlight some particular members within our lineage, romanticising parts of our genealogies, downplaying or suppressing others; even expanding or compressing genealogical trees to accommodate personal or collective agendas.⁵ This construct can speak eloquently not just about our past, but equally about the present, and may even have a future perspective. That is because alongside the ancestors we choose from the ample repository of their traditions, values, allegiances, ideas, hopes, dreams.

European culture firmly rests on two pillars: the Greco-Roman, and the Christian heritage.⁶ The two became entangled in a common cultural fibre as early as late Antiquity. Both significantly rely on history-writing. More importantly, this worldview was appropriated and absorbed into European historiographical discourse which has remained a constant, to significant extent, till the present day.⁷ The past, especially that stemming from this cultural pool, has always provided the stamp of authority.

Naturally, this is just one end of the spectrum, as not all history, especially not modern historiography was identity oriented. Nonetheless, when more sophisticated epistemological and methodological tools were developed, it was generally Euro-American worldview that dominated over world historiography in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. It was not only that the study of history (alongside social sciences) observed and analysed the world through the lens of the West, implementing its own frameworks and norms, but also 19th-century genesis of these disciplines was tightly tied to the nation-state that evolved in the period. This resulted in a 'theft of history', as described by Jack Goody in his eponymous book.⁸ Goody argues that the West monopolized essential categories such as time, space, and periodization. Furthermore, it appropriated the invention of institutions (such as towns or universities), liberties, and values. Towards the end of the twentieth century reactions to this kind of western supremacy, as well as paths opposing national histories emerged.

⁵ ZERUBAVEL 2011: 10.

⁶ GOODY 2006: 26.

⁷ GOODY 2006: 5.

⁸ GOODY 2006.

One of such divergent paths is **world history** which takes the world as the framework for narrative and interpretations, i.e. the processes are analysed and compared on the widest level possible. On the other hand, **global history** starts with the premise that the world has globalized and therefore all the agents contributing to what is happening are interconnected.⁹ An important distinction is that ‘Global History’ written with capital letters denotes the academic discipline and its various discourses, while ‘global history’ its object of study.¹⁰

Jean-Paul Ghobrial was not the first one to notice that global history appears in many disguises: world history, transnational history, connected history, *histoire croisée*,¹¹ international history, and more.¹² Global history, transfer history, entangled history – all these are late 20th-century coins for academic processes that have had longer history, but were conceptualized at a moment when there was a need for opposition to what was taught and practiced before. “It [global history] constitutes an assault on many forms of container-based paradigms, chief among them national history”.¹³ In short, it is multi-perspectival, it is polemizing.

This ‘global turn’ is the name for one of these shifts of focus, shifts of perspective that characterized dynamic historical tendencies of the 20th century. Several important ‘turns’ were made in the historical and social sciences. The spatial turn, for example, opened up many perspectives and suggested, among others, that “social space contains a great diversity of objects, both natural and social, including the networks and pathways which facilitate the exchange of material things and information. Such ‘objects’ are thus not only things but also relations.”¹⁴ The linguistic turn has shown, among others, that particular languages produce complex semantic fields that make possible communication and dialogue,¹⁵ while the affective or emotional turn brought some revolutionary concepts as well, focusing on affects, emotions, and feelings.¹⁶ From the latter the history of emotions has

⁹ HANEDA 2015: 221; cf. DOUKI & MINARD 2007: 10; see also O’BRIEN 2006; EPPLE 2018.

¹⁰ OSTERHAMMEL 2016: 23.

¹¹ Werner and Zimmermann (2006: 31-32) start with a premise that *histoire croisée* belongs to the family of “relational” approaches that, in the manner of comparative approaches and studies of transfers (most recently of “connected” and “shared history”) examine the links between various historically constituted formations. They differ inasmuch as *histoire croisée* emphasizes multiplicity of possible viewpoints.

¹² GHOBRIAL 2019: 5-6. More on these methodological approaches see in: BLAŽEVIĆ & KUŠTER: *Historija isprepletanja danas: teorijska polazišta i istraživačke perspektive*, in this volume.

¹³ CONRAD 2016: 4.

¹⁴ LEFEVBRE 1991: 77. On the relation between global history and spatial turn see: MIDELELL & NAUMANN 2010.

¹⁵ SURKIS 2012.

¹⁶ LEMMINGS & BROOKS 2014.

developed over the last couple of decades, anticipated by Febvre who knew all too well how important psychology entanglements were for historical research.¹⁷ The resulting linguistic, cultural, emotional, and poststructuralist 'turns' provoked what Gabriele Spiegel describes as a "massive change in our understanding of the nature of historical reality."¹⁸

Towards the end of the twentieth century several important issues came up to the focus of historiography: concepts, identities, translations, transfers.¹⁹ **Transfer studies** focus on the flux (exchange) of ideas, knowledge, technologies, concepts, images (...) from one cultural milieu to another and how the transfer affects the recipient. The exchange can be a slow, systematic process, or an explosive, uncontrolled spread. The media of the exchange can be emigrants (forced or voluntary), books, machines etc.

Lynn Hunt was quite confident to state in *Writing History in the Global Era* (2014) that a more global approach to the past would do for the 21st century what national history did in the heyday of nation-building. Just several years ago there was hope that global history would produce tolerant and cosmopolitan global citizens. Today one can feel, with superpowers each competing for dominance and resurgent ethno-nationalism worldwide, that there is less enthusiasm about the idea.²⁰ I doubt that there is a problem with the discipline(s) themselves, I would rather say it is the mechanisms for coping with changes in quite fragile balance of global entanglements. Writing global history comes with serious doubts and difficulties though. First of all, is the "nationally organized scholarly community" capable for or suitable for developing global agendas?²¹ It is easy to agree with both Conrad and Ghobrial that "not every research project requires a global perspective".²²

It seems that global history comes with more than one *caveat*. Coincidentally as I was half way through with this essay, Fleischer, Kafadar, and Subrahmanyam published a swift reaction to Alan Mikhail's new book *God's Shadow: Sultan Selim, His Ottoman Empire, and the Making of the Modern World* (Liveright, 2020).²³ Their paper 'How to Write Fake World History' addresses a number of important academic questions such as historiographic competence, peer-reviews, methods, and thin ice of global history.²⁴

¹⁷ FEVBRE 1973: 1-26.

¹⁸ Quotation from SURKIS 2012.

¹⁹ PERNAU 2012: 5-7.

²⁰ ADELMAN 2017.

²¹ SACHSENMAIER 2007: 465; GHOBRIAL 2019: 1-2.

²² CONRAD 2016: 15-16; cited by GHOBRIAL 2019:3.

²³ FLEISCHER, KAFADAR & SUBRAHMANYAM 2020.

²⁴ Neither is this the place, nor I feel competent enough to add additional comments on the book or the subsequent paper, so I ask the readers to read for themselves. The paper was downloaded more than 5,000 times in the first week, which suggest it has caught quite a big attention of scholars in the field.

Identity and History Entangled

The two notions already come with the entanglement, as the construction of collective identity needs a reference which is historical.²⁵ There is a repository of traditions that consists of the events, symbols, objects, figures (etc.) of national importance. The social imaginary is that common understanding that makes common practices possible and a widely shared sense of legitimacy. “It incorporates a sense of the normal expectations that we have of one another, the kind of common understanding which enables us to carry out the collective practices that make up our social life.”²⁶ In short, the ideas that human groups form about themselves, their neighbours, and enemies are certainly products of creative social imaginaries.²⁷

National history can easily be explained with the need of nation states. I believe that both approaches – national and entangled histories – make sense, especially when ‘properly dosed’. (By ‘national’ I here refer to the focus of historical research, not the burden of mythological constructs and other set of attachments that national history develops just too quickly and greedily.) At least for now there is certainly need for both: without micro-histories – let us say the local or national level – there is no substance for macro- or entangled histories. On the other hand, macro- or global spheres and entanglements provide a much accurate framework to deal with microhistories. I argue that the task (and intellectual challenge) of a historian is to renegotiate levels constantly. Simply speaking: to zoom in and zoom out with their scrutinizing lens. In other words, as Subrahmanyam already put it in a metaphor: “This means in turn that we cannot attempt a ‘macro-history’ of the problem without muddying our boots in the bogs of ‘micro-history’”.²⁸

National history is central to national identity.²⁹ There are other sound reasons behind national histories: national universities, national museums, national archives are keepers of national heritage – even as they frequently project a constructed image of cultural heritage, territorial integrity, and civic identity.³⁰ But even discussing national identities is impossible “without reflecting the ways in

²⁵ BERGER 2009: 21.

²⁶ TAYLOR 2002: 106.

²⁷ OSTERHAMMEL 2016: 37.

²⁸ See SUBRAHMANYAM 1997: 745-750. Quotation on p. 750. Speaking of micro-history, several weeks ago I had a discussion with a colleague and we both swiftly agreed that biography has somewhat been a forgotten subdiscipline in Croatian historiography. At least since the time of Plutarch it has potential to be a micro-historical treasure box, with so many entanglements to be explored: public, personal, social, emotional (...)

²⁹ BERGER et al. 2008: 20. Historians were the nation builders in Modern Europe: BERGER & LORENZ 2010.

³⁰ BHABHA 2018: 1.

which the national is defined through ethnic, religious and class identities".³¹ In other words, more complex entanglements.

It is no wonder that Alessandro Stanziani³² starts his book with a paragraph dedicated to the statements of three highly influential heads of states, namely of France, Russia, and the United States (François Fillon, Vladimir Putin, and Donald Trump respectively). All three in the period from November 2014 till February 2017 urged that much more attention was to be directed towards national history and values. As all these appeals come from the realm of politics and not from the scholars themselves, they call for extra caution.

Since the 1990s the academic space has been (over)saturated with identity. The identities so widely studied nowadays are linguistic, national, sexual (...) which can also be contested, fluid, hybrid, or shifting identities, to mention just a fraction of the concepts that dominate(d) the intellectual activity of the time.³³ It has not disappeared, but just like a creature of mythical dimensions, it has submersed to allow scholars to discuss other phenomena. On this occasion I would just turn my readers' attention towards narrative identities. Individuals construct and internalize an evolving and integrative story for life.³⁴ This story is carefully woven from reconstructions of memories, goals, values, expectations, hopes, projections. That provides persons with unity, purpose, and meaning. The narrative identity of groups, ('imagined') communities, nations is not much different from this.

Narrative constructs, or discourses are crucial for constituting social reality.³⁵ A nation is a narrative. If we go a step further, we come to this very special construct of Europe which is thought to extend to the present from the Antiquity (another famous European chronological construct). It comes with a specially constructed space, a continent mentally divided from Asia with which it shares the landmass and arguably the most competing dichotomy.³⁶ Asia, since the invention of the division more than 2500 years ago, has been the most significant of Europe's Others.³⁷

More than a half century ago, Barbara Hardy has put it in an encompassing way: "We dream in narrative, daydream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticize, construct, gossip, learn, hate and love by narrative".³⁸ Towards the end of the twentieth century a branch of psychology evolved to do research on the narrative.³⁹

³¹ BERGER 2009: 21.

³² STANZIANI 2018: 1.

³³ ERIKSEN & SCHOBBER 2016: 1.

³⁴ MCADAMS & MCLEAN 2013: 233.

³⁵ HANN 2017: 16.

³⁶ HANN 2017: 16; cf. GOODY 2006.

³⁷ There is no need to say how complex a construct Asia is. Cf. SUBRAHMANYAM 2016.

³⁸ HARDY 1968: 5.

³⁹ E.g. see: LÁSZLÓ 2008.

My grandfather was born in Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. His wife, my grandmother, in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenians. My parents were born in Yugoslavia, as I was, however my sister was born in the Republic of Croatia. One of my nieces was born before Croatia became a part of the European Union in July 2013, while the other was born as already as a citizen of the EU. We are talking about four generations of the same family, all born in the very same city, across just a bit over a hundred years, and five quite different polities. Even more, this is more a regular occurrence rather than exception across Southeast and East Europe. That is one of the main reasons why historiographies of the region were overloaded with national history rather than focusing on and exploring the innumerable entanglements the region is criss-crossed with.

In the last several centuries histories were always to a certain extent burdened with some kind of a national or ethnic narrative. The identity I keep mentioning throughout the essay needed to be (re)negotiated, supported, strengthened, which not rarely can get out of hand and become overinflated. Nonetheless, once these processes are placed within their frameworks, it is the professional historiographers who need to distinguish between the profession – i.e. the search for most suitable models of understanding the past – and all the mythological ‘demons’ lurking in national narratives.⁴⁰

Afro-Eurasian Complex; Southeast Europe⁴¹ as a Contact Zone

In the previous several pages I have tried to show why has national history lingered for so long, especially in times of crises or conflict, and the reason is that it is closely tied to identity. Now I feel it is the time to make an argument why national histories are deeply inadequate for the study of Southeast Europe (one among many such regions of contact and exchange), given the number and intensity of cross-cultural entanglements.

I was mostly preoccupied with the urban history of Dalmatian cities in the 13th century when I was commissioned to translate from Latin a quotation from a contemporary account that reads: “(...) and when the Mongols left Croatia (...)”. This incited more than a few questions, the central one being: What were they [the Mongols] doing in Hungary and Croatia in the first place? The question inspired

⁴⁰ Always good to remind oneself of a classic treatise on European myths, such as GEARY 2002. As a view of the relationship between collective memory and historiography, between historiography and nationalism in Croatia, see: ANČIĆ 2008.

⁴¹ As to identify the term: by Southeast Europe I here mean the geographical space surrounded by the Mediterranean Sea and the Danube basin. If I were to use an exonym, I would have probably used: the Balkans. Nonetheless that relatively recent construct comes with much more connotations, so it better be avoided at this place. For a view on methodological approach to liminal spaces, such as this one, see: BLAŽEVIĆ 2018.

me to translate several contemporary accounts of the Mongol invasion of Central Europe in 1241/42. What struck me then was the way in which the European imaginary of Eurasian pastoral nomads remained so powerful, so emotionally charged, and so entangled with crucial pillars of culture and identity.⁴² This was the first time I seriously started to think about social, emotional, and diachronic entanglements, just to mention some.

It takes but a glance at the physical map of the world to establish that there is a single continental mass stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. The dwellers of this continental mass have exchanged goods, technologies, and ideas since the period known as the Bronze Age (ca 3000-1000 BCE). The geographic division into Europe and Asia, from the Western perspective, was probably created in the 6th century BCE, and it was emphasised especially during the wars between the Greeks and the Persians in the subsequent century. Due to the developments that happened after 1500 CE the Eurocentric view of the world became dominant, although by the 1960s Hodgson was arguing that from a world historical point of view the history of civilization is necessarily an Asia-centred history.⁴³ It is the same author who has shown how all these -centrisms shifted our historical focus from the unitary Afro-Eurasian landmass and the agents, human and non-human, material and non-material that contributed to the changes that took place there.

Let us just swiftly remind ourselves of some of the agents of development. In the first place, there were the horses that shrank the otherwise unimaginable distances, and the space became manageable. Horse-chariots and mounted horsemen gave rise to empires throughout at least three millennia. The ground-breaking Chinese inventions gunpowder and the compass changed warfare and made the oceans more navigable. It was the circulation and the transfer of these technologies throughout the Eurasian zone that had the greatest impact, worldwide. Paper and printing simplified the circulation of ideas and increased their reach. Artisans spread their knowledge either voluntarily or by force. Merchants had their networks for the exchange of goods, people, and technologies. Particularly for Christian and Buddhist societies the invention of the monastic life was of major importance. An order of men detached from quotidian social connections, eminently mobile, dedicated their life to specialization in the highest intellectual or spiritual discoveries that contributed significantly to their societies. "Throughout the millennia, resources of information and technique accumulated in each region and sooner or later found their way throughout the Afro-Eurasian zone."⁴⁴

During the Middle Ages, the unifying element that connected otherwise quite fragmented population of West, Southwest, and Central Europe was *Christianitas*,

⁴² SARDELIĆ 2019.

⁴³ HODGSON 1963.

⁴⁴ HODGSON 1963: 240-241.

not Europe, and at that time the pagans of the north and the east of Europe were considered as more significant Others than the ones from what is later to become labelled as Orient.⁴⁵ Another important religious affiliation that connected a high variety of ethnic groups from Morocco to Indian Ocean archipelagos, and Turkic ethnicities of Eurasian steppe was Islam. Although there were many examples of rivalries between the two, even more important is the fact that so many cultural artifacts would not have developed without the constant exchange of intellectual, mercantile, technological, and many other activities.

Southeast Europe is a millennial contact zone between the Mediterranean Sea and the Eurasian steppe. If one studies its history in the late Antiquity, the region is within the Roman imperial framework, but it was the Huns and the Goths whose appearance in Europe can be considered a catalyst for a range of political and social changes. In the Early Middle ages (ca 500-1000 CE) the region was populated with several new ethnic groups of South Slavic origin, but also with an important role played by the Avars, a confederation of Turkic peoples. In the ninth century another nomadic group from the East made huge impact on Central and Southeast Europe, the Magyars, who then settled in the Pannonian plain, and converted to Christianity by the early eleventh century.

Cumans, also known as Kipčak and by other names, were a confederation of Turkic peoples who never created a larger political unit, but eventually integrated into other ethnic groups ranging from Pannonian plain to Egypt, Siberia, and the Indian subcontinent.⁴⁶ From the eleventh till the fourteenth centuries these nomads were not only a significant factor in the cross-continental trade through the Eurasian steppe, but also a powerful military ally all the contemporary sedentary powers wanted to have on their side when fighting against external or internal opposition. In the thirteenth century there is rarely a battlefield in Central, Southeast Europe, Near East or Inner Asia where the service of the swift Cuman cavalry was not used. Cuman allies were used in the battles for the Holy Roman (German) throne between Philip of Swabia and Otto IV; Byzantine Emperor Michael VIII Paleologos used them in multiple campaigns; and arguably in one of the most decisive moments for the history of Central Europe, the battle of the Moravia Fields in 1278. This conflict between Rudolf of Habsburg and the Bohemian king Otakar II Přemisl, in which Rudolf's allies, Cuman horse archers of King Ladislav of Hungary, proved to be decisive, established the Habsburgs as a regional power, on their way to becoming one of the most notable imperial dynasties, not just in Europe.

None of the migrations to and incursions of nomadic peoples from the East to Europe can be understood from the European perspective alone. Even more, all

⁴⁵ HANN 2012: 90.

⁴⁶ SARDELIC 2015.

those processes had started in Inner Asia and only then reached Europe as a seismic wave which had an epicentre several thousand miles to the east. The Huns, the Göktürks, and the Mongols formed nomadic empires that were not long-lasting but had significant impact on migrations and formation of new polities on both sides of Eurasian continent.

Fully to understand the processes of nomadic migrations, their relationship with adjacent sedentary cultures, and their occasional groupings in large confederations even nomadic empires, is a difficult task for any scholar. In the first instance, there is an interdisciplinary difficulty, as the steppe is a vast and unforgiving space to begin with; the climate or even seasonal changes can disrupt existing ecological equilibria: pasture and animals are the treasures of pastoral societies. Then it is the trade Eurasian nomads heavily rely on, being short of many things produced in agricultural societies. Religious entanglements already existed in this nomadic world: some prayed to Nature for the wellbeing of their animals while for other (more spiritual) affairs they prayed to other god(s). As for intercultural relations: how can one treat the 'traditional distrust' between nomadic and sedentary societies? Or the 'special charisma of the leader' who emerges, when the favourable conjuncture of elements, networks, people (...) occurs, and who can propel the nomads into the formation of formidable steppe empires, every three to four centuries? How much fear does one need to instil in one's enemies for them to despair and surrender, believing the opposition is futile? How much hope does the apocalyptic literature bring to the defenders?

What were the reasons these nomadic peoples became 'Other Europe'?⁴⁷ We must again return to those basic pillars of commonly accepted 'European identity' again: the Greco-Roman legacy and Christianity. Nomads belonged to neither. Secondly, nomadic features immediately evoked othering, distrust, even disgust – natural and sociomoral. In medieval Christian imagery the nomads from the East were everything but good news. Many of the basic features of a nomadic culture are not too popular even with modern countries where governments prefer to know where to send the bills, how the taxes will be collected, where the children will go to school etc. It is highly likely that the romanticised image of a free-spirited nomad was generated as a contrast to all these useful but occasionally boring tangling roots that anchor many of us to our social framework.

It would be rash to state that the formation of the Mongol Empire was the first step towards globalization, but it has certainly contributed to major changes in political, social, religious, commercial structure of Eurasia. Nonetheless, the fact that in the 13th century 'Asia' quite swiftly became accessible to European merchants, changed 'both worlds'. As the Mongol realm expanded, a new elite was

⁴⁷ CURTA 2007.

formed that was willing to pay for commodities normally unavailable in steppe economies. This gave rise to merchant communities which were prepared to betray their own compatriots in exchange for privileges. According to the contemporary chronicler Juzjani, one of the most prosperous Islamic cities, Lahore, fell to Mongols mostly because local merchants sabotaged the defences of the city. They were attracted by permits to trade beyond the Indus and the Hindu Kush, in the much bigger market. The Mongols did not just support trade within their empire, they assiduously promoted the diffusion of goods, craftsmen, and techniques.⁴⁸

When the Mongols incorporated the Black sea region, this not only enhanced the commercial activity in the region, but also gave importance to the outposts that Italian merchants, primarily Genoese, Venetian, and Pisan, had in the region. The importance of Tabriz in Persia for Italian merchants rose and in the 14th century it was populated by the Genoese and Venetian traders. By 1320 European voyages to India and China became less an adventure and more of a routine journey for Genoese and Venetian businessmen. It all coincides with the beginnings of the industrial production of textiles which, as Goody remarked, “certainly did not begin with the English cotton industry in the mid-eighteenth century. It had already started in Italy in the fourteenth with the reeling of silk, which gave the country’s industry a very considerable comparative advantage.”⁴⁹

From the 14th and 15th centuries Southeast Europe become the place where two Mediterranean giants, the Ottoman and the Venetian maritime empires put a recognizable mark on so many cultural features through their exchange during repeated cycles of periods of warlike and peaceful relations. In geography, the famous admiral Piri Reis managed to compile a spectacularly detailed and precise world map in 1513. It is a compilation of dozens of continental and regional maps ranging from Columbus’ map of the New World, Arabic maps, the maps used by Javanese and Chinese merchants and many others. Knowing the world and mapping it would not have been possible if there had not been exchange of knowledge, transfer of cartography techniques and ideas all the way back to Ptolemy, in a millennial exchange between east and west. And the map is just one of millions of embodiments of entangled ideas, transferred knowledge, roaming merchants and explorers.

Networks and Entanglements

The world we live in changes at a pace which hardly anyone can follow, let alone systematize. *Longue durée* research of transfer processes or complex socio-historical issues that require multidisciplinary scope were always best tackled in

⁴⁸ JACKSON 2005: 290-291.

⁴⁹ GOODY 2010: 44, 6.

international collaborations. I was quite fortunate to be an honorary researcher at the ARC Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions (Europe 1100-1800) that produced a whole array of tangible and intangible scholarly outcomes; and equally important, transferred experience to scholars from a range of disciplines, from all corners of the globe. Around the same time (2013-2017), Professor Michal Biran was successfully running her ERC-funded project *Mobility, Empire and Cross-Cultural Contacts in Mongol Eurasia* conducted at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Professor Biran's team provided some ideas how a relatively small group of scholars of diverse backgrounds can address such an intimidating topic.

Networks of researchers from various countries and scholarly backgrounds have always been useful. Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST) is the longest-running European framework for research and innovation. It has started in the 1970s and, as the name suggests, attracted academics and engineers working in science and technology. There were many actions created around complex issues in physics, medicine, chemistry, biodiversity, computer science, neuroscience, transport, and others. During the last decade it attracted also social sciences dealing with issues such as social constructions of threats, gender and well-being, intergenerational family solidarity, submerged archaeology, women writers in history, and more. Over the last two decades, among more than a thousand actions, there were just two from the field of history. Then, in the spring batch of approved actions, two appeared simultaneously; both dealing with the Mediterranean world and multi-perspective, one in entangled histories, the other comparative history with entanglements.

I have had a privilege to be a part of the proposing team of international scholars lead by Giovanni Tarantino and Katrina O'Loughlin. The COST Action CA18140 'People in Motion: Entangled Histories of Displacement across the Mediterranean (1492-1923)' (PIMo) is based on a theoretical framework mostly from the history of emotions. "By tracing the entangled movement of Mediterranean people in several periods of acute upheaval – and the objects, writing, emotions, and ideas that accompany them – the Action understands displacement and dislocation as a shared human experience, while remaining attentive to its geographical, political, and historical specificities."⁵⁰ PIMo's core research investigates how entangled people related to place from the medieval through to the modern period, and how, once transplanted, they shaped their new places and lives, culturally, physically, and emotionally. The research focuses mostly on four agents/media of entanglements: people, paper, things, and ideas.

COST Action CA18129 'Islamic Legacy: Narratives East, West, South, North of the Mediterranean (1350-1750)' (IS-LE), chaired by Antonio Urquizar-Herrera,

⁵⁰ This paragraph is mostly based on the Proposal of the Action, included in the Memorandum of Understanding, and available on the COST Action website: <https://www.cost.eu/actions/CA18140/>.

was created to provide a transnational and interdisciplinary approach capable of overcoming the segmentation that currently characterises the study of relations between Christianity and Islam in late medieval and early modern Mediterranean world and beyond. Art historians, cultural historians, and historians of religion focus on three main dynamic spaces of research: otherness, migration, and borders, through which comparisons are drawn and entanglements identified.⁵¹ Similarly as the PIMo Action, IS-LE proposes the articulation of a trans-Mediterranean debate around selected historiographical problems that bring together different traditions and disciplines as a methodological novelty.

Entangled history arguably owes its name to the opposition to a quite limited practice common in national histories which consists in studying almost exclusively just the events, territory, and constructed identities of the nation in focus. In the 21st century historians are well-aware not only how important historical entanglements are, but how important **cross-disciplinary entanglements** have always been. Renaissance and Enlightenment scholars exercised their knowledge irrespectively of disciplinary boundaries; they did this naturally because the division is of a later date. The subsequent disentanglement was not a product of a superior methodology, but rather of sheer need: it was practically impossible to be expert in several disciplines due to their rapid development and accumulated experience. Therefore, what Immanuel Wallerstein calls the epistemological unicuity of knowledge⁵² occasionally needs to be employed to address more complex issues of human history.

More than a half a century ago Febvre stated that “history is a way of organizing the past so that it does not weigh too heavily on the shoulders of men”.⁵³ With new developments it is capable of doing even more, but it is hard to expect that new methodologies and entanglements will swiftly ‘disarm’ the unwanted aspects of national history. These kinds of processes last for years and it takes a critical mass of scholars, students, and wider audience to be acquainted and exposed to them for the effect to take place. They also require the relatively frequent discussions and reassessments of academic curricula and teaching methods.⁵⁴

There is no doubt that national histories served their purpose in amalgamating peoples of different ethnical, religious, social backgrounds into a rather sensi-

⁵¹ Same as above, the Memorandum of Understanding of the Action can be found on the website: <https://www.cost.eu/actions/CA18129/>. Both mentioned actions, active in the period from 2019 till 2023, are networks of ca 150 scholars from more than 30 countries. Both offer several grants each year for short scientific missions and conferences for doctoral students and early career researchers.

⁵² WALLERSTEIN 2019: 20.

⁵³ FEBVRE 1973: 41.

⁵⁴ For some experience from the US higher education over the last three decades see: HARE & WELLS 2015.

tive construct called a nation. It was, after all one of the tools in the evolution of the organization of human life. Nonetheless, it seems that the challenges of the 21st century, the most important of which will undoubtedly be global such as the climate, food, and health issues, should require a holistic approach in addressing them. It has become clear that life depends on a sensitive balance of the whole eco-system, with all its entanglements. The study of history is, as shown on the issues of identities, a contemplation of our future as well, of who we want to be, what values shall we stand for. With all due respect to the study of one's own (national) identity, there is so much more even within them, all the connections we had, all the contacts that has formed us.

After all, the changes are happening more rapidly and effecting more living creatures and their relationships than ever before. Global and entangled history have certainly acquired a significant ally in digital infrastructure and the way and speed ideas have come to circulate in the world today.⁵⁵ "The human world could no longer be imagined as an archipelago of cultures; it was rather an intricate meshwork of partial connections, creolisation processes, cultural hybridity, social differentiation and their counter-reactions in the shape of identity politics attempting to reinstate boundaries and purity."⁵⁶ In other words, although histories were national just over a relatively short period of time, the answers to the challenges of the future certainly lie beyond national frameworks.

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⁵⁵ GHOBRIAL 2019: 5.

⁵⁶ ERIKSEN & SHOBER 2016: viii.

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“Misli globalno, djeluj lokalno”? Horizonti isprepletene povijesti u historiografijama srednjovjekovne i ranonovovjekovne Jugoistočne Europe

Moderne historiografije utemeljene su u 19. stoljeću, što se duboko odrazilo na njihovu prirodu i strukturu sve do kasnog 20. stoljeća. Naime, uspostavljene su: 1) kao nacionalne povijesti i 2) kao iznimno eurocentrične. U drugoj polovici 20. stoljeća nastali su brojni metodološki koncepti koji su društvenim znanostima nastojali raširiti te postavke i okvire, toliko sužene pri njihovu nastanku. Dogodili su se tako afektivni, lingvistički, prostorni, i drugi „obrat“ koji su uveli nove kategorije i nove perspektive. Iz poststrukturalističke kritike komparativne povijesti nastale su, među ostalim, historija transfera i historija isprepletanja. Danas se također naširoko polemizira o svjetskoj i globalnoj povijesti.

Od kraja 20. stoljeća do danas akademski prostor sociološke i povijesne znanosti uvelike je (bio) zasićen konceptom identiteta. Analizirani su kulturni, lingvistički, nacionalni, rodni identiteti, koji su svi mogli biti i fluidni, hibridni, promjenjivi, osporavani. Vrlo su važni i narativni identiteti jer pojedinci i grupe konstruiraju i internaliziraju identitete upravo posredstvom narativa u kojima su upletene rekonstrukcije sjećanja, ciljevi, vrijednosti, očekivanja – sve ono što tvori društvenu stvarnost, odnosno određeni kulturni imaginarij.

U članku autor iznosi neke karakteristike svoga profesionalnog puta od nacionalne preko eurazijske povijesti do povijesti transfera i povijesti emocija kojima se sada najviše bavi. Smatra da je nacionalna povijest važno nasljeđe svih europskih historiografija, no da je ključno da se ona kontekstualizira i poveže sa svim onim činiteljima koji su, isprepleteni, formirali fino tkanje povijesti. U tom je smislu, napose za povijest Jugoistočne Europe, promatrati ovu kontaktnu zonu na razmeđu Mediterana i kontinenta, planinskih lanaca i stepe, sjedilačkih i nomadskih entiteta, kršćanstva i „poganstva“ kroz ključ i široke eurazijske povijesti i unutar epistemološkog jedinstva znanja. Naime, cijelo je prvo tisućljeće kršćanske ere, upravo ono formativno za ovaj dio europskog kontinenta, obilježeno migracijama i provalama Huna, Avara, Mađara, Kumana (kasnije i Mongola i Osmanlija). U transferima (dobrovoljnim i prisilnim) ljudi, znanja, ideja, roba, (...) nastale su strukture koje danas možemo proučavati s aspekta povijesti ekonomije, urbanizma, religije, intelektualne i kulturne povijesti, povijesti emocija i drugih poddisciplina. Dakako, u međusobnoj suradnji i, koliko je moguće, unutar međunarodnih interdisciplinarnih okvira.

Ključne riječi: isprepletena povijest, nacionalna povijest, identiteti, kulturni imaginarij, Jugoistočna Europa

Keywords: Entangled history, national histories, identity, cultural imaginary, Southeast Europe

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