Transcultural Research – Heidelberg Studies on Asia and Europe in a Global Context

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Transcultural History

Theories, Methods, Sources

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Preface

With the end of the Cold War, the twenty-first century started unexpectedly early, accompanied by the sounds of new national anthems and the rather unspecific term of globalization. While trade indeed fostered global networks, an increasing number of new or reunited nation states required their own invention of tradition, taking the established form of national histories. In the Library of Congress catalogue, of the 190 general histories of Kazakhstan available in 2010, more than 60% were published after the 1990s, when the former Soviet republic became a sovereign state, and a member of the United Nations. The same is true of the many other states emerging from the former Soviet Union in Eastern Europe and Eurasia. Since then, history has shown an ambivalent interest in both border crossing, transgressive, "transnational" phenomena and nation states in all imaginable varieties, from liberal democracies to authoritarian and even failing states. In asking what kind of history the twenty-first century needs, we should first of all mention a certain imbalance: a well-established and still useful toolbox for national histories fails to nurture a historical narrative, which observes developments that cross borders of nation states and societies, and which has the globe rather than certain territories in mind. For the twenty-first century, the oft-quoted citation "past is prologue" reads the other way around: the global present lacks a historical narrative for the global past.

It would be presumptuous to offer such a global narrative as histoire totale—and yes, introducing transcultural history for this purpose might just add another conceptual approach to an already long list of transnational, transterritorial and transgressive histories. Nevertheless, transcultural history might serve as a conceptual wild-card, questioning the territoriality of historical concepts and offering a narrative that aims to overcome cultural essentialism by focusing on crossing borders of all kinds. Thus, the historical view we are presenting here does not present the totality of territories but rather the changing awareness of transgression. We look beyond the evocation of territoriality, and of social, political and cultural coherence with the aim of knowing more about the living conditions of moving societies, which are sometimes thrilling and sometimes dangerous. This approach
also reflects critically on the way history is constructed, asking who formed history in the past and who succeeded in shaping what we call the master narrative. Focusing on borders and questioning coherence, transcultural history is based on a self-reflexive awareness of its own historical background. Postcolonial studies with their critical claim of "provincialising Europe" provided substantial input into the discussion about the distance between Eurocentric universalism and access to globality by analysing transgressive moments beyond the imagined community of the nation. However, we are trained European historians, and our aim is to present a useful approach to global history, showing first of all how a Eurocentric but universal historiography removed or essentialised certain topics in Asian history.

In this regard, we gratefully draw on the manifold experiences that the collaborative research project at Heidelberg University has provided. Colleagues and students from different disciplines have made "Asia and Europe in a Global Context: Shifting Asymmetries in Cultural Flows" a thrilling intellectual experience that we hope to share with other historians and cultural scientists interested in the development of global, imagined communities.

As an empirical discipline, history is based on source material, analysed according to rules resulting from a strong methodological background. We need examples to find out whether applying the approach proposed gains us new information on limited historical topics, or, rather, new insights based on analytical tools applicable to other questions than those mentioned in this book. We therefore decided to critically question how the work of analysis should be done, and whether established methods are still useful in a transcultural context. 1

Readers might not spend their time on all chapters of this booklet in a similar way. In fact, the text suggests three different points of entry, which can be accessed relatively independently of each other. Part I on theories and concepts discusses the mechanics of history as an academic discipline. It deals with how this discipline—invented and spread as an apparent output of Western academia—copes with a globalised world, oversteps national borders, and resolves a Eurocentric past. This part might be of interest to professional historians, but also to colleagues working in transdisciplinary fields, who depend on knowing how the mechanics of historiography changed in the twenty-first century, if at all. Part II engages with methodological questions. Some of our readers, perhaps students working on their theses, might want to start there. Academics dealing with historiography on a daily basis might not need to reacquaint themselves with the historical-critical method that is well known to professional historians. However, the purpose of this book is to show how a new paradigm is translated into practice, and from this point of view, even professional historians might be interested in critically investigating whether the disciplinary basics have changed under the influence of a global perspective—or to put it even more explicitly: does global history refer to a global historiography?

One finding indeed confirms the still useful, albeit incomplete methodological toolbox historians are dealing with. The booklet closes with a third chapter on sources—which is admittedly the most incomplete part—even though we do attach importance to the question of empirical evidence, the so-called source material. The examples chosen cannot tell us satisfactorily the extent to which a transcultural approach reaches new historical findings, although the new way of reading well-known sources does indeed present aspects that were overlooked until now. Of course, the even more interesting point is whether the introduction of a new, transcultural way of addressing questions to the past might reveal a cosmos not known before. Although much more work remains to be done, our aim is to present ongoing research on global social networks of ordinary people, proposing a method of looking into a global imaginary not yet known. The idea of combining theories, methods and sources in one booklet may seem overly ambitious; however, it came about in a particular and thrilling circumstance: for the humanities at Heidelberg University, a Cluster of Excellence offered the chance to investigate "Asia and Europe in a Global Context: Shifting Asymmetries in Cultural Flows." This project has amalgamated different disciplines and started collaborative research in a process that brings together young scholars from all around the world. However, their attempts to define common historical grounds clearly demonstrates the need to find a new, appropriate way of accepting different historicities by critically explaining concepts, methods, and sources.

Reflections on methods, however, are closely connected to the main aim, the search for a global narrative. We enter the past at the end of World War I and look at the well known Paris Peace Conference, observing the multiplication of new borders; and the variety of transgressing institutions, concepts, actors, men and women inventing themselves as global subjects, but sharing a bitter experience with almost all local societies at this time, namely the awareness of having relatives buried in far distant places due to globalised wars.

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2 Additional aspects of the argumentation used in this book were previously tested in shorter essays. See Madeleine Herren, "Shifting Identities and Cosmopolitan Machineries," in Transcultural Turbulences, eds. Christiane Brosius and Roland Wenzlhuemer (Berlin: Springer Verlag, 2011), 67–82.
Acknowledgments

This book has benefitted greatly from the special research environment that the Cluster of Excellence "Asia and Europe in a Global Context" created at Heidelberg University. This platform offered a unique opportunity for lively debates among scholars from different disciplines, backgrounds, and generations. We are grateful to our colleagues and the students from the History Department who participated in these debates, and critically discussed our attempts to reach a less Eurocentric and more global historical narrative. We would also like to express our gratitude to Lisa-Marie Zoller and Christopher Blundell and especially to our editors, Dr. Andrea Hacker and Richard Littler, who saw us through the challenge of formulating this book in English.
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Introduction: What is Transcultural History?

1 Paris 1919: A Perturbingly Interconnected World beyond National Histories

In 1919, shortly after the end of World War I, the Paris Peace Conference created a magic moment of reordering international relations on a global scale. Contemporary observers described this moment in unusual metaphors. For E. J. Dillon, an Irish journalist and former professor of oriental languages, Paris in 1919 went beyond Western-shaped urban cosmopolitanism and turned into "a vast cosmopolitan caravanserai." On the streets of Paris appeared "once mighty viziers [who] shivered under threadbare garments in the biting frost," Armenian survivors of the massacre seeking justice, kings who had lost their crowns, and dictators who expected international legitimation. Transboundary biographies dominated in Paris at a time when one of the best known experts on the difficult situation in the Near East was a 28-year-old British colonel with a degree in medieval history: Lawrence of Arabia, "the most interesting Briton alive." Indeed, rather unusually for a diplomatic event, the Paris Peace Conference brought into the foreground media stars who crossed the fine but rigid lines of diplomatic hierarchies because they were well suited to new information technologies. Lawrence of Arabia's handsome orientalism inspired press photographers. Newsreel men liked Nicholas Murray Butler, who was not a diplomat, but the president of Columbia University. His voice lent itself to the not yet fully developed microphone and recording technologies. Global voices in and on Paris orchestrated the new finding of an

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4 Ibid.
6 Charles Peden, Newreel Man (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Doran & Company, 1932), 15.

M. Herrera et al., Transcultural History, Transcultural Research – Heidelberg Studies on Asia and Europe in a Global Context 4, DOI 10.1007/978-3-642-19196-1_1, © Springer-Verlag Berlin Heidelberg 2012
international order. Far beyond the usual diplomatic secrecy, an international civil society shaped and influenced the Peace Conference and the awareness of global connectivity in a way that left significant marks on the daily life of Paris. Expensive restaurants and war profiteers, communist revolutionaries and Russian aristocrats belonged to the picture Dillon could not refrain from describing in minute detail. He encountered a “dreamy unreality in the city where the grimmest of realities were being faced and coped with. (. . .) Chinamen, Japanese, Koreans, Hindus, Kirghizies, Lesghiens, Circassians, Mingrelsians, Bureys, Malays, and Negroes and Negroids from Africa and America were among the tribes and tongues forgathered in Paris to watch the rebuilding of the political world system and to see where they ‘came in.’” In this overwhelming global panorama, Dillon did not even come close to specifying all the signs of globality in 1919. In his view, the vision of a new global order heralded opportunities for a future world and offered a global perspective beyond national or local interests. After World War I, however, many more people than the small group of politicians, refugees, and adventurers, who were able to meet in Paris, became aware of places previously unknown to them. Death had become the defining global reality: millions of soldiers had been killed in action. Death was a daily occurrence, a sad fate for millions of surviving relatives. As Dillon chillingly mentioned, unburied corpses still lay on battlefields that could be easily reached within an hour’s drive of Paris. The experience of loss changed lives deeply, Rudyard Kipling, well-known for his pre-World War works celebrating British imperialism, now contributed to The Times as a member of the British Imperial War Graves Commission. He promised remembrance in “every part of the world,” and the opening of adequate memorials “from the vast and known cities of our dead in Flanders and France to the hidden and outlying burial grounds of a few score at the ends of the earth.” Global mourning had ambivalent consequences and conveyed a highly visible nationalistic impulse, especially for those seeking independence in 1919. The war memorials in Gallipoli, Turkey, became places of nationalism for Australians. But the simple presence of death on foreign soil also changed the identities of the respective places and challenged local mourning rituals—the graves of Chinese “cooies” in the deepest provinces of France expressed the close proximity of a non-Western world. Widows haunting Paris, demanding access to cemeteries in irrevocably wounded landscapes, sent a twofold message to the world, which was convened in Paris: besides border crossing mourning, which even overruled the state’s requirement of individual identification.

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[1] The Times announced the government’s decision to abstain from requesting passports for relatives visiting graveyards.

[2] In February, the British War Office explained that the delayed delivery of these pictures was partly due to staff “depleted by illness.” See “14,000 Photographs of War Graves,” The Times, February 24, 1919, 11.


2 Paris 1919 in the Historians’ Eyes

While the above mentioned missing pieces of global entanglement still suffer from a paucity of information, the obvious difference between the interpretation of the Paris Peace Conference found in school and history books, and a transcultural approach is only too clear. Even in books addressed to academic historians, the peace-making process is told from a national perspective. Therefore, questions answered in this context aim to explain territorial changes, focus on who successfully influenced the big powers’ representatives, and whether the Versailles treaty paved the way for a second world war. In these histories, the global entanglement, which in autobiographical literature between 1919 and 1939 is often described under the title “what really happened at Paris,” is sidelined. Although there is a growing interest in global history today, global aspects are still debated less as a driving force than as an additional topic in an ever growing and confusing list of scientific turns and fields of history. Of course, rarely will economic historians express doubt that a narrative of global economy started in 1919—after all, the British economist John Maynard Keynes attended the Paris Peace Conference and wrote sarcastic commentaries about the decisions of leading politicians. And yes, valuable work has been done on how transnational organisations that were present in Paris provided an example of international lobbying. However, the histories of the same global event—the Paris Peace Conference in 1919—differ widely according to their place of origin. While European historians discuss the Versailles treaty as a major failure that lead to the next worldwide war, the Australian National Archives proudly displays it as “Documenting a Democracy.” Indeed, the Versailles treaty gave the British dominions and India the first opportunity for signatory power, which can be read as an acknowledgment of sovereignty. How then should a history of the Paris Peace treaties be told? The ambivalent evaluations of Versailles, between success and catastrophe, produced their own historical consequences, separating the global moment of 1919 quite clearly into Western and non-Western memories. The differing perception of a multilateral treaty is a familiar tool in the historian’s toolbox, but, as we have seen, the diplomatic deliberations and their results—namely multilateral treaties—occupy just a small corner of the global stage set in Paris. Can history provide a way of depicting the whole panorama—a transcultural histoire totale, including the fear of Spanish flu, the Chinese mourning for relatives buried in France, and the photographers who did good business selling pictures of war graves? Attempts in this direction need source material other than the treaties’ texts and protocols of deliberation. They also need to question the basic assumption that history as an academic discipline gathers its primary or even all of its evidence from written source material. A transboundary and transcultural approach therefore challenges ordering categories (a history of Versailles for Australia, Europe or the world?), questions historical methods (introducing non-written sources, the sounds and smells of Paris instead of the text of treaties?), and scrutinises the function of history as social glue, which at this time comes in the form of national history.

3 Gaining a Global Picture: Analytical Concepts

In deliberating these issues, we have already left Paris and are observing the mechanics of academic methods, the way in which the past is transformed into history. With the requirement that history should present a global picture, but aware of local schemes of interpretation, the academic community provides several analytical concepts, namely entanglement, hybridity, intersectionality, and transculturality. Useful for creating a global approach, each of these concepts challenges well-established ordering principles, but primarily the territoriality of history that is deeply embedded in the historical narrative of the nation. Explicitly or not, all of these recently created concepts have neglected the question of which topic or era might have a paradigmatic character for global history. Rather, this debate grapples with the fact that history as an academic discipline and the methods it uses were created during the development of the modern Western universities in the nineteenth century. History, therefore, became closely connected to the idea of Western nation building. In contrast, the concepts mentioned above try to avoid methodological and disciplinary Eurocentrism or at least question claims to and monopolies on interpretation.

1. **Entanglement** focuses on the historical development of border crossing networks and creates a transnational history with a strong tradition in Western historiography.  

20 For an introduction see Sebastian Conrad and Dominic Sachsenmaier, *Competing Visions of World Order: Global Moments and Movements, 1880s–1930s*, Palgrave Macmillan Transnational History Series (New York: Palgrave, 2007). For network theories see: Manuel Castells and
2. **Hybridity** introduced the need—or possibility—to adapt, translate and imitate, and developed within the postcolonial debate.21
3. **Intersectionality**, used recently in gender research, questions the multiple ways in which social inequality develops.22
4. **Transculturality** renounces comparatism and focuses on contact zones, adaptation and exchange processes, modes of translations, and moments of crossing borders in a global context.

## 4 Transcultural Issues

At a glance, transcultural history introduces a global view of the past by focusing on processes of border crossing. Instead of attaching the past to clearly defined entities such as eras, territories, nations, classes, or states, transcultural history focuses on incompatibilities, tensions, and disputes which develop whenever people, objects, concepts, or ideas transgress the ruling orders of their respective time. The permeability of borders provides information on the acceptance or rejection of entanglements in the respective society.

Transcultural history, therefore, is driven neither by progress nor by the idea of a linear flow of time, where the past predicts the present. Rather, this approach assumes that the pulse of historical development is sustained by the perturbing awareness of a world existing outside the respective mind maps, an awareness that gains visibility each time limits and borders are established or changed. Each generation has found different answers for this tension between border-protected local identities and the lure of global openness. In almost every case, passing through borders is also much more than just a question of travelling, and always influences both those who stay and those who leave. If an individual crosses borders, s/he challenges social coherence and may cause a dangerous form of loneliness. As a collective enterprise, border crossing is simply a form of conquest, but frequently it is borders that move, not people. As a consequence of the world order newly created in 1919, people had new passports, which turned relatives into aliens and made old family possessions inaccessible. Today, in an era of globalisation and rapid communication technologies, there is a rising awareness that borders were never hermetically closed. Transparency and permeability, however, vary in place and time.

Compared to nationally focused histories, a transcultural approach highlights topics that have tended to be neglected in historical research for the time period between 1850 and 1939. A transcultural history presents:

1. Events and practices intended to introduce self-representation on a global stage (official, semi-official and non-official international conferences, transborder expeditions, markets and fairs including World’s Fairs and universal exhibitions, presentations of universal knowledge in different forms e.g. encyclopaedias, museums).
2. Shifting objects of contested origin (spoils of war), or those valued for their foreign character, forms of standardisation (Esperanto, road signs, pictograms).
3. Institutions and movements with opportunities for global membership (international organisations, transnational secular and religious communities), and/or global topics (globally spreading diseases, pollution, protection of nature, anarchism, terrorism).
4. Border crossing information and its financing; the question of transgression costs (multilateral treaties on exchange of publications, organisation of and access to global bibliographies).
5. Places and spaces with extraterritorial and international character (including international settlements, ports, postal offices, sanitary stations, the seven seas, the air and foreign cemeteries).
6. People living transboundary lives under different labels (cosmopolitans, internationalists, international civil servants, migrants, pirates23, proselytes, impostors).

Although not an exclusive enumeration, nor limited to the time period mentioned, these fields are useful for testing foreign influences in local contexts. To gain an idea of which global events, institutions, places and people influenced local identities or changed under local influence, special attention is given to encounters between Asia and Europe. We do not delude ourselves that we can overcome a Western point of view, but hopefully we can present a tool for uncovering the ambivalent meaning of globality as an expression of Eurocentrism or as an umbrella term for transcultural entanglement.

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21 Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 2002). Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000). For this approach, slavery is the key element in their historical rationale. In addition, the metaphor of the ship and the introduction of new media, especially music, as a neglected form of communication introduce a methodologically innovative aspect. Transculturality, however, presumes that the motley crew are also inside well-established societies, and not exclusively outside.

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5 Methodological Key Elements of Transcultural History

5.1 Establishing and Crossing Borders, Limits, Thresholds, Frontiers

As explained extensively in the following pages, history is, in this approach, more about constructivism than discovery or reconstruction. Search strategies and source materials are therefore closely connected to the theoretical framework. The second part of this book is, however, about methods and asks whether the usual way of framing research questions, finding source material, and making appropriate interpretations are still valid. Although most of the methodological tools work adequately, there are still some additional elements to mention: crossing borders not only shapes the preferred topics of transcultural history, but also directs the selection of source material. Crossing borders is connected to a framework of rules, sanctions, processes of identification and legitimation, and the need for translation and adaptation—all leaving traces in different forms, all therefore producing vast amounts of source material. In 1919, reports on the Paris Peace Conference mentioned a global public, but also testified to the sudden need for identification papers—a substantial change compared to the pre–world war situation, when passport legitimation was the exception rather than the rule, and did not need visual evidence in the form of a photograph. In 1919, passes for journalists were needed, as were special passports for the families of those attending the Peace Conference; for relatives visiting the cemeteries; for the experts, who had to line up for French library cards, and for the American soldiers, who needed red or white tickets to visit different sectors of Paris. We do not even mention the administrative background that accompanied this form of legitimation, nor the increase of standardisation in people’s appearance on the photographs for identification, and the multiplying dynamics that arose from the existence of both a civilian and a military administration.

Transcultural history, therefore, implies the inclusion of a broad range of different media (texts, images, sounds). Methodologies in turn demand further consideration, as does the question of the availability of source material. Generally, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries offer a wealth of sources, which answer almost all imaginable questions. However, a transcultural approach needs sophisticated reflections on sources, due to the simple fact that the availability and storage of source material follows national concepts of preservation, and avoids addressing varieties of entanglement. Since source material is preserved and organised in

24 Statistical research on migrants is illustrative of this point of view. An American study of immigrants and their children based on a census published in 1927 explained that the available official statistics gave details on parentage for “the white population only”, see Niles Carpenter, Immigrants and their Children 1920, a Study Based on Census Statistics Relative to the Foreign Born and the Native White of Foreign or Mixed Parentage (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1927), 2.

5.2 “Ce n’est pas une pomme”: Denying Borders by Claiming Authenticity

The Paris Peace deliberations raise another methodological challenge, that being the fate of prey and booty. Now legally protected, some examples of cultural heritage embarks on long careers as spoils of war—transcultural entanglements par excellence. For instance, the Versailles treaty obliged the German government to return the skull of Sultan Mkawa, the leader of a rebellion in German East Africa in the 1890s. Several skulls attributed to Mkawa started a lengthy odyssey and remained of political importance until recently, when the (original) skull came back to Tanzania. Other items embarked on similar odysseys, because article 247 of the treaty connected art with reparations. As replacement for the destruction of the famous library of Leuven, for example, the German government had to offer manuscripts, paintings and precious objects. The article partly even specified works of art which had to return to Belgium. Many of the listed van Eysk25 and other paintings, however, had been displayed legally and for a long time in German


25 The Treaty of Versailles mentioned The Mystic Lamb by the van Eysk brothers. Created in the 15th century, therefore long before the Belgian state existed, the altarpiece experienced adventurous travels: hidden during the Reformation, brought to Paris among spoils of war during the Napoleonic regime, sold to the Prussian king, given back to Belgium as a consequence of the Versailles treaty and taken back to Germany as war booty, the masterpiece ultimately returned to Ghent.
museums. This historical transformation of art’s function from a German art collecting tradition to Belgian heritage in a context of separation provides an example of ordering and reordering the past across borders. Further examples can be found in other peace treaties: frequently repatriation claims concerned objects that were originally created as a transcultural, or at least tranregional, expression of power. In 1919, the Pope, as well as the Italian and French governments, discussed to whom the insignia of the Holy Roman Empire should be transferred, arguing that Charlemagne was a Frank, and the insignia of power were Christian symbols. American newspapers even reported on the claims of the city of Palermo, arguing that the coronation coat used by the rulers of the Holy Roman Empire since the 12th century had been made by Islamic craftsmen under Norman rule, and therefore belonged to Sicily. The American art dealers calmed a debate that, if prevailing, would have brought back to Istanbul the famous quadriga of San Marco in Venice. However, the debate on restitution shows shifting political and cultural borders, the explosive force of transcultural entanglement when used to claim a rarely existing authentic origin, and the role of history as a powerful argument in the asymmetrical discourse of power.

6 Transcultural History beyond Paris 1919

British, German, Indian and Chinese histories and all other national histories told different versions of what happened in Paris in 1919. These various interpretations of the past are obviously present in schoolbooks, since the respective history of the nation is an important element in national policies of education. Moreover, schoolbooks are the most convincing way of demonstrating how history has contributed to identity building. Therefore, new approaches to history as an academic discipline must always discuss the impact of historiography and reflect on the history of history.

Tensions between a national and more global telling of history will shape this presentation. The obvious imbalance between the many national, imperial and territorial histories, and the few approaches that tell a history of global interconnectivity, will be discussed from a theoretical and conceptual perspective in the first part, and from a methodological point of view in the second. History as an empirical discipline needs source material. Examples of newly detected transcultural source materials and models of interpretation are mentioned in Part II.

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Part I: Theories and Concepts

1 Introduction

A border crossing transcultural history substantiates what is known as global history. Despite the overwhelming interest in global history and its transformation into a disciplinary melting pot, the nature of its potential contributions remains a matter of conjecture. Africanists point to the connections between globality and the Asian boom, complaining bitterly about a mix of market-related strategies and a shift in public interest from Out of Africa to Slumdog Millionaire. Indeed, regarded in this light, globalisation does seem to be replacing one blind spot with another. Instead of an additive approach that connects the continents, the thrilling aspect of a new global approach develops mostly from Globalizing the Research Imagination. This is the title of a collection of essays investigating the influence of globalisation on the social sciences and humanities. Behind all topics that explain global influences in whichever time and space, globality transforms the practice of research and oversteps disciplinary boundaries. Transcultural history will therefore have to introduce a shifting perspective from identifying entanglements to focusing on the asymmetric tensions inevitably connected to global coherence. The idea of an intertwined world of cultural exchange, instead of clearly specifiable, connected entities, is the starting point of research. The first step, therefore, is to return to the question of how history as an academic discipline works.

This book’s first chapter on historiography starts with the “mechanics of history.” It follows the fine lines that separate enduring, from making and explaining history. The aim is to understand how the shaping of history as a Western academic discipline influenced aims and objectives of research, and whether historical research was based on a global concept. As the following two parts explain, the meaning of what historians considered to be global or universal history changed

29 Jane Kenway and Johannah Fabey, Globalizing the Research Imagination (London and New York: Routledge, 2008).
substantially between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The question is why Western historians of a certain period were not interested in Asian history, even when they had access to source material. On the basis of nineteenth century historiography, the discussion focuses on the price of concentrated Western nation building. Developed under the umbrella of modern science, nineteenth century historiography differs sharply from its predecessors. In the eighteenth century, historians, who were merely interested in the mode of unintentional discovery expressed by the concept of "serendipity," noted Asia with curiosity and admiration. In the nineteenth century, European historians invented the Orient as underdeveloped, thus confirming Western progress. The history of historiography explains how the world came to have a Western past, while history lost its global scope.

During and shortly after World War I, Western historiography changed dramatically and became more interested in global topics. In the early 1920s, in an open, connected world shaped by international agencies that were multiplying on a global scale, historical approaches again made a substantial turn. Historiography provided valuable input for political propaganda, and justifications for both democracy and/or racial forms of ideological hegemony. For both extreme nationalism and the extension of extraterritorial activities, the past appeared to be a promising source of legitimation. Although historiography changed again under the influence of World War II and the following Cold War, in regard to global approaches, the tools and methods of historiography had found their characteristic shape.

Based on necessary information regarding the mechanics of historical research, this chapter on historiography explains the research design of transcultural history, its characteristics and main objectives, the meaning of transculturality, and the new impact of a transcultural historiography. Starting with the umbrella term of culture, the chapter introduces the history of the concept and explains the manifold meanings of transculturality that have developed since the 1930s. These debates illustrate which aspects of the past are rising to the surface of historical research.

The theoretical and conceptual chapter on historiography concludes by identifying the challenges and issues introduced by a transcultural approach. It shows how structure and agencies have changed, how transcultural history focuses on flows of information, and how it presumes different historicities instead of chronological linearity and transcultural topics instead of individual heroism. The question remains as to what new insights can be expected. Transcultural history seesaws between historical relativism—a constructivist approach with its main focus on the present—and objectivism, which still believes in the reconstruction of

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31 See footnote 128

32 George Orwell’s novel Nineteen Eighty-Four reflected World War II experiences. Memory politics turned to an important field of research, e.g. in the concept of Pierre Nora, who saw in memory sites (lieux de mémoire) the creation of a collective memory. See Jacques Le Goff and Pierre Nora, Constructing the Past: Essays in Historical Methodology (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985).
2.2 The Framing of History as an Academic Discipline in the Nineteenth Century

In the nineteenth century, the dilemma of using the past as a powerful argument on the one hand, and the impossibility of restoring what is gone forever on the other, gained a new dimension. In this period, the understanding of science and its institutional background, the university, changed. Scientific practice developed, with its differentiation of theory and methods and its secular division into disciplines. History was part of this process and became an academic discipline shaped by professional historians. In nineteenth century scientific discourse, one question deeply influenced the academisation and professionalisation of history: what is the difference between science and the humanities? What is history, if a scientific approach is a systematic way of gaining knowledge based on a method that governs the collecting of evidence and a theoretical concept that fits empirical evidence into an analytical structure? How are theory and methodology connected? Normally, research on social behaviour is at first concerned with methods for acquiring evidence, while in more formal sciences, such as mathematics, the theoretical approach is much more at the core of research. Because in all disciplines science implies objectivity, how can a historian, deeply involved in his own history, sustain objective distance? How can she or he meet the requirement of results being reproducible independently of the place and the persons involved in the research? Even more importantly, what is the appropriate language? Science prefers a conceptual language that is understandable to all researchers working in the same discipline, regardless of whether they are trained in the English speaking environment of Harvard or the Swiss-German environment of Bern. Scientific language gains more incisiveness when we think of the periodic table of elements. For chemists, biologists and physicists, water is understood to be a combination of the two elements oxygen and hydrogen. In contrast, historians do not have a universal terminology; instead of defining the phenomenon as H₂O they have to contend with the shifting meaning of “water” across time, cultures and languages.

The language problem becomes even greater when the results of historical research—consisting only of language—are considered. In view of these fundamental questions, a lack of a theoretical framework is not surprising. The historians’ response is generally to present source material and methodological advice, at best counterbalanced with theoretical reflections. The German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche criticised accumulating fragments from the past as “Blinde Sammelwut” (blind collection craze) and alluded to the tunnel vision that an obsession with the past might introduce. This hunter-gatherer historiography and the occasionally “antitheoretical” approach to the past enhanced popular interest in history. Indeed, history serves society’s need to create an identity legitimised by long lasting—and usually not newly invented—traditions. Following this path, history developed into the “most important pedagogic technology of identity formation” by establishing, using, and enforcing the principal master narrative of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: the history of the (Western) nation.

2.3 Differences between the Social and the Academic Function of History

To the present day, the obvious social utility of history is a source of opportunity and misunderstanding. Historians feel uneasy with certain expressions of public interest, with attempts to reanimate or “re-enact” the past, as historical reenactments always gloss over the risks and daily dangers of the past; to play a medieval knight is fine, to have his life expectancy is not. The historians’ work neither aims at the reanimation of the past nor the collection of historical evidence in a museum. Historians are neither bookish misanthropes nor whip-cracking copies of Indiana Jones. The past is not a wild jungle or a cross on a map waiting for audacious exploration. All these clichés should be read as a changing acceptance of history and its academic value by the society concerned. They always entail the question of who was addressed as a historian, and how close to the ruling power the historian’s position developed. There is a fine line between historians and history being a topic of historical research and the academic framework of history as a discipline. Historians do not discover, but primarily take a constructivist approach. Before the selection of appropriate evidence—the “source material”—is made, a decision concerning rationale and objectives represents the metacognitive structural design of historiography. This is the place of theoretical and methodological reflection. The first and most thrilling step in historical research therefore starts

34 As an introduction to the fundamental epistemic problems of history see Chris Loening, Konstruktion der Vergangenheit: eine Einführung in die Geschichtstheorie, Beiträge zur Geschichtskultur, Bd. 13 (Köln: Böhlau, 1997).
37 “Invention of tradition” is a strong historical concept introduced by Eric Hobsbawm (see below, note 48). For the identity building function of invented traditions see the introduction of national holidays and founding myths in the nineteenth century. As an example see the role of the legendary freedom fighter Wilhelm Tell for the Swiss nation building. Jean François Berger, Wilhelm Tell: Realität und Mythen (München: List, 1990).
38 Duara, “Why is History Antitheoretical?,” 107.
with a twofold disclosure of aims and objectives: why now? Contemporary interest in certain aspects of the past is not accidental. The appearance of historical topics therefore tells as much about the present interest in aspects of the past as about the past itself. Reflections on contemporary interests include the apparent paradox that recent change, e.g., the end of Cold War and the rising importance of Asia, nourishes the need for a rewriting of history.

For and against what is the research aimed? Do historians follow coincidence or inconsistency within the discipline? Do they follow a concept of a national history more interested in identity building than in transboundary elements? What is the contemporary value of the results? Legitimation? Unmasking totalitarian misuse of power? To provide democratic societies with the necessary insight into the past, with the hope of fostering good governance? To bring back forgotten memories? To give victims a chance to speak from the past and to re-establish the chain of memories? To ensure that future generations will avoid mistakes made in the past? To provide contextual knowledge in a present challenged by the dynamics of change?

All these reflections are highly valuable and closely connected to a fundamental insight into what history is and how this discipline works. Above all, history is a process of transformation, including and excluding aspects of the past by giving them the value of remembrance. Masterfully described by Michel Foucault, this process of including and excluding follows certain rules that are embedded in the philosophical and theoretical understanding of the discipline. These rules or ordering principles are, of course, for their part influenced by historical change. Their modification, however, has fundamental consequences and the power to delete or promote historical topics. Theories and methods, therefore, primarily reflect aspects of changing these ordering principles and are based on the understanding of history as an ordering power—an assumption that is more far reaching than a collection of historical facts: when Egyptian pharaohs deleted their precursor’s name, they destroyed the memory of a particular ruler. When in the nineteenth century historians stated quod non est in actis non est in mundo, they accorded preference to official sources and excluded non-written memories from the understanding of what history is, with far reaching consequences. Furthermore, it was not even necessary to mention that historical findings were always based on written evidence: non-written material from the past such as pictures, rituals and

tradietions simply disappeared from the historians’ horizon. Following this approach, illiterate people were objects of historical descriptions, but not subjects capable of creating their own history. Modern historiography is still deeply influenced by the ordering principles introduced in the nineteenth century, e.g., the significance of the nation, the Western model of modernity, the organisation of society and state, and the preference for written source material. The following discussion highlights the tensions between the global past and Western history by using the history of historiography. Looking at how historians have done their work provides an opportunity to slip into the pathologist’s role. A careful analysis of how historiography (mis)used the past shows its sometimes terrible consequences, and is probably the only way to learn from history.

2.4 The Nineteenth Century: How the World Acquired a Western Past and Historiography Dismissed a Global Scope

2.4.1 Establishing and Following the “Master Narrative” of the Nation

The dominant interest in nation-building gave the young academic discipline of history one of its most powerful arguments. Nation, nation-building, and national identity established the overarching coherence of the historical narrative. This specific way of telling history was summarised much later as a “master narrative.”

With the modern nation as its underlying motif, the history of historiography has a clearly Western focus. In contrast, the global focus of historiography is still a rarely mentioned topic (albeit one of rising importance), and was only recently introduced by Georg G. Iggers and Q. Edward Wang. What follows does not however present a survey of historiographical development in general, but is closely related to the question of transcultural entanglements in historiography. The question is how the

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40 This concept follows the idea of discourse analysis and the assumption of a dominant master narrative. For an example of how master narratives can shape historiography see James Elkins, Master Narratives and their Discontents, Lectures in the Theory of Modernism and Postmodernism (London: Routledge, 2005).


42 A legal principle stating that what is not in the files (i.e. documented in written form) is not part of the world (i.e. does not exist). First used for the documentary evidence of the state, this principle privileges governmental collections, first of all the national archives that developed from the nineteenth century into an additional attribute of sovereignty.
2.4.2 Welgeist versus Serendipity

Historians no longer played the role of curious travellers who produced knowledge from serendipity, an acknowledged form of insight in the enquiring and enlightened eighteenth century. The (Western) historians of the nineteenth century were initially interested in ordering principles, in mind-mapping the world, and finding not accidental, but scientific explanations for developments. Neither did they act at the periphery of social attention: in this age of historicism both traditionalists and modernists, although sometimes difficult to distinguish, were desperately searching for legitimation in the past. Modernists stressed the idea of a global spread of enlightenment, and indeed the beginning of modern, scientific historiography coincides with a universal interest in history. But interest in history also served competitive legitimation. After the French revolution, supporters of the ancien régime translated prerogatives previously given by divine right into traditions, fostering the idea that the past is a safer and better orientation in life than the uncertain future. Both modernists and traditionalists shared the common belief that the new, secular form of monopolised power, the nation, was the embodiment of a collective history, which went far beyond the invention of the nation state. As one example, the clear narrative of continuity that grew from the recently founded German nation’s emphasis on being rooted in the Holy Roman Empire. Another is the construction of a Hellenic nation, whose uncertain construction in 1830 gained stability in connecting the new nation to the ancient world of the fifth and fourth centuries BC. Historians played a major role in inventing and recounting such forms of continuities. They prepared the coherence of the so-called “imagined community,” constructing and presenting a common, national history as social glue. Following the master narrative of the nation, the common past was intended to offset contemporary asymmetries in political participation and their gender- and class-dependencies. Each nation that was created in the nineteenth century needed a founding history, as well as (apparently) historical flags, anthems, rituals and symbols. It was a golden age for historians and their ability to invent traditions.48

The rising interest in the history of the nation, and the political importance of historians, such as Thomas Carlyle in Victorian England, or Heinrich von Treitschke in Germany, almost had society forget that there was a blind spot in Western historiography, which happened to be, astonishingly enough, the rest of the world. At first sight, this statement seems more than brave, since a powerful endorsement came from no lesser person than G. W. F. Hegel. In his Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte the world was crucial for his reasoning on the philosophical background of history. In contrast to eighteenth century historiographers, Hegel replaced the coincidental collection of artefacts with a governing concept. A Welgeist (world spirit) now brought reason into history. In Hegel’s world, reason develops like a tree: old cultures, understood as roots, contribute to the results of reflection, which appear later as fruit. With the introduction of a “law of historical development” chronology had “de-globalised” the world into consecutive periods, giving some regions importance, while others disappeared. Hegel told his students that the “Orientals” had contributed to the concept of freedom, but added that only the individual could be free. Continuing along this line, Greeks and

Romans had reflected on freedom enjoyed by privileged groups, while freedom as a human attribute belonged, according to Hegel, to the European "we." The spatial sequence of chronology deeply influenced nineteenth century historians and gained wide popular appeal. Hegel himself increasingly followed Cho’s unerring march to the west. In subsequent versions of his lecture on the philosophy of history, interest in Indian and Chinese contributions decreased, as did that of nineteenth century historiography. Although historians acted as an international scientific community, and wrote on topics other than their own nation, a global approach to the past receded.

At first glance, the thesis of a decreasing interest in a universal historical approach seems somewhat absurd in the light of a globally connected nineteenth century. However, the more telegraphs, steamboats, and railways connected different cultures, and the more objects, information, and people crossed boundaries, the more the question of who tells whose history became a question of who will dominate the future. Therefore, the lack of a global concept in historiography should be understood as a competitive strategy, and not as an expression of missing information. Going into the "history of history" in the nineteenth century, this assertion can be verified from three different angles:

1. Asian demands for a globally applicable historiography
2. The minor interest in universal history, regarded as a topic of education rather than of research
3. The minor role of history in competitive discourses on border crossing concepts labelled as "internationalism."

49 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte, ed. Eduard Gans and Karl Hegel, 3rd ed. (Berlin: Duncker und Humbolt, 1848), 24. Hegel is again gaining importance in recent debates on universal history. It is indeed an interesting approach to go into Hegel’s reflections on slavery and, with the revolution of the slaves in Haiti, start thinking about Europe’s leading role as a result of influences from the periphery. See Susan Buck-Moors, Hegel, Haiti and Universal History (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009).

50 For an example see Frederic H. Hedge, “The world’s history in not an unending succession of events [...] but a process and a growth. The ages are genetically as well as chronologically related”, in Frederic H. Hedge, "The Method of History," The North American Review 111, no. 229 (1870): 323.

51 One of the most efficient carriers of knowledge, the popular encyclopedia, spread the idea of contributing a glorious past and a difficult present to the East, or told the history of Western discovery. For an example of the latter see “Indien,” in Meyers Konversationslexikon, 5. sätzlich neu bearbeitete Auflage (Leipzig and Wirm: Bibliographisches Institut, 1896), Bd. 9, 2051.


2.4.3 The Asian Start of Global Historiography

As Igers and Wang explain, Asian perception of Western historiographical tradition did not start as the more or less informal development usually described as "influence" resulting from incidental contacts between intellectuals. In the case of China, Rudolf G. Wagner accentuates the political value of having a "new history" as an already Japanese dominated path to the future. Due to the fact that history as dynastic history belonged to intellectual resources controlled closely by the state, history bureaus in China, Korea, Vietnam and Japan neither stopped working on their history of ruling dynasties nor did they ignore the new way that history was being approached in the West. The initiative for transferring historiographical concepts across cultural borders, and therefore starting a global historical narrative, came from Japan, and its use did not just copy Western knowledge in the catch-up race of "modernisation." Rather, this "new history" developed into a powerful instrument designed to shape a master narrative within Asian societies. By contrast, Western historiography of the nineteenth century seemed rather reluctant to consider global approaches, and global historians remained, if anything, at the periphery of the scientific community. This statement does not ignore the translation of imperialism into imperial histories. However, the academisation of the humanities had an ambivalent result: the introduction of universal scientific methods crossed borders of language and culture. This simple fact was not limited to objects of research, but produced new topics at the same time. Anderson gives a good example of this ambivalence by referring to folklore studies: in Europe, folklore studies accorded academic value to vernacular cultures and provided nationalism with the illusion of cultural authenticity from the past. When historians in the Philippines used the same intellectual framework, indigenous history no longer started with the Spanish conquest, and other borderlines began to appear: those between an elite history and a no less academic discipline, folklore studies.

Under the conditions of the nineteenth century, academic universalism and the notion of Western exceptionalism required and excluded each other simultaneously. While academic universalism seems to present unbiased analytical tools, the results of research have often, suspiciously enough, confirmed European exceptionalism. Factors far from the academic world intensified this process: not only the...
availability of information and faster communication technology, but also the existence of anarchists, revolutionary terrorists, and dissidents who were forced to flee their repressive states, created a globality that the state-supporting historians of the nineteenth century hurried to build strong borders against. Because historians preferred world histories that were drawn as a chronological-cultural evolution leading from an Asian past to a Western future, they were troubled by interferences on a global scale outside national or imperial borders. This can be seen in the Japanese difficulties organising Western historiographical knowledge.

In 1878, the Japanese legation in London welcomed a young scholar, who enrolled in Cambridge under the name Kenicho Suematsu.57 The young law student had accepted the request to find a historian in London who would write a Western historiography for Japan. He hired Gustavus George Zerffi who was instructed to examine French and English historical methods.58 What happened next is a good example of how globalisation and nationalism, modern science and popular interest, Asian and Western concepts interfered with each other. Zerffi exemplifies the complexity of transcultural entanglement, which neither developed as planned nor revealed long lasting consequences. Suematsu had a clear idea of what Zerffi should deliver, namely a European model of history-writing for Japanese historians. The twenty-three year old Japanese student gave Zerffi precise instructions in twelve points, which were later printed in the first part of the book. The Japanese outline focused primarily on famous historians from Greek antiquity to contemporary English, French and German historians. Zerffi then had to present a concise description of history, and how it was written in the past. He had to specially discuss universal histories and the methods used to develop a research question. Interestingly, Suematsu, who complained about Japan’s close combination of historical facts and philosophical reflections, demanded a histoire totale: not only facts about wars, rulers, and “debates in the parliament,” but also the “history of the people, the rise and progress of useful and ornamental arts, of religious sects, and of all those numerous changes which have taken place in the life and the manners of successive generations, and above all, the modes of thinking.”59 With philosophical reflections subordinated to ‘facts’ the ordered Western historiography had to demonstrate how sometimes historians became revolutionaries.60 Suematsu’s guideline ended with the most distinguished aim of history, which is “to teach men (...) that they may steer clear of the errors of their forefathers,” and “to establish (...) those

57 Also named as Kenichirō Suematsu (1855–1920).
59 Instructions, in Gustavus George Zerffi, The Science of History (London 1879). xi. The mentioning of the parliament is especially interesting, since Japanese parliamentarism refers to German and British models, although the National Diet had not yet start working at this time.
60 The text mentions Voltaire. Ibid., xii.

laws, customs and institutions which will best promote and accelerate the permanent and progressive amelioration of their own country and of the human race.”61

Zerffi’s publication was both far from the Western ideal of progressive development and counter to the Japanese plans. Thus, possibly the first book on the scientific value of history, reflecting the discipline’s transcultural input, resulted from an Asian request, but did not meet Japanese expectations, nor enhance British influence. Suematsu’s choice of Zerffi seems a good one. He was a gifted, extraordinarily self-assured lecturer, a member of the well-known British Royal Historical Society, interested in the Vedas, in Arabian culture and spirituality. However, he was not a trained academic historian and his public success was based on racism and a popular understanding of evolution. It is possible that he used the role of historian as a disguise to hide his appointment as a spy in the Austro-Hungarian secret service.62 With the transcultural biographical background of a Jewish revolutionary who had to escape Hungary in 1848, he delivered a tribute to the Hegelian understanding of history, instead of a study on French and English historical methods. Mentioned by the German Ludwig Riess, who taught history at Tokyo University in 1887,63 as “one of the earliest attempts at a history of history” Zerffi’s The Science of History inadvertently established a German foundation of Japanese historiography. Yet the complete disregard of this monograph in Western research literature documents the ignorance of transboundary topics mentioned above. Rarely has a publication of this range encountered such a degree of deliberate neglect in the scientific community, although admittedly it was not widely published. An American translation was postponed for almost ten years,64 and Western historians did not review it. Today, the book is among those rare examples of nineteenth century publications, which, contrary to expectation, is not available in European libraries with the exception of London. However, Zerffi tried to make use of his experience. Mentioning the Japanese mandate and presenting an interest in Weltgeschichte in continental Europe, he launched a debate on universal history in Great Britain, using the most explicit racism to argue for a rapprochement between history and evolutionary science.65 Zerffi’s activities provide a good

61 Ibid., xii.
64 The translation of Zerffi’s The Science of History was published with the title Shigōka (Rōbun) in 1887/1888. “shī” means history and “gakushō” study odes science.
65 Gustavus George Zerffi, “On the Possibility of a Strictly Scientific Treatment of Universal History,” Transactions of the Royal Historical Society 3, no. 1 (1874): 380–94. Combining racism with the measuring of brains and contemporary ethnology, Zerffi repeated a widespread popular historical approach: “The Black is pre-historical, and continues without; the Yellow has developed to a certain degree, and then remained stationary; and only the White is progressively historical and has influenced, and still influences, and will influence the destinies of the world.” Zerffi, “On the Possibility of a Strictly Scientific Treatment of Universal History,” 389. For the same argumentation see Zerffi, The Science of History, 56.
example of the complex and ambivalent use of a global approach, where the opportunity to introduce Western supremacy relied on multilayered entanglements, which make visible how the proclaimed Western academic, objective interpretation of the past always runs the risk of non-Western refutation. Zerffi therefore highlighted the idea of finding "everywhere law and order" and proposed to "utilise the past in order to promote our own welfare and that of humanity, by tracing law and order in the destinies of man."\[66\] Strictly denying free will as a force in history and distinguishing between people with and without history, the proclamation of a universal development of humanity prevented him from pointing to the obvious fact that well differentiated stages of development came closer to a political statement than a description of existing facts.

2.4.4 The Shifting of Global Topics from Research to Education

Despite Zerffi’s explicit language, until the turn of the century, the English-speaking scientific community’s interest in global or world histories remained rather weak. The futility of Zerffi’s plea confirmed a popular trend: globality remained less a scientific topic than an educational one; a matter of public interest, but not serious enough for historical research. Those historians interested in the world joined the Société d’histoire diplomatique, a French professional organisation that was open to international membership and based on member correspondence. From 1887, this association published a Revue d’Histoire Diplomatique that was designed to act as an intermediary between diplomats and historians.\[67\] International, though not global, interest clearly restricted to the state’s institutions of foreign relations provided the legitimatory background. Historians—
in this area exclusively male—\[68\] who presented their expertise to the arcane sphere of the elite working in foreign offices, cleverly manoeuvred themselves closer to power. However, the repositioning of historians from annalists to experts with political influence had a non-negligible price and far reaching consequences: firstly, even the most modern nation states in the West—most of them still monarchies—
left foreign relations to the old elite, i.e. to aristocrats with an appanage instead of a salary.\[69\] This situation made modern experts’ advice necessary, but also created a specific social context that relied on backward traditions. Secondly, these historians focused on governmental structures and institutions, and although the very fact of


\[67\] For the programme see “La Société d’Histoire Diplomatique,” Revue d’histoire diplomatique 1 (1887).

\[68\] One hundred years later, feminists started alluding to the exclusion of women in diplomatic history and international relations, see Cynthia Enloe, The Curious Feminist: Searching for Women in a New Age of Empire (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).


their work demonstrated the limits of traditional diplomacy, they preferred to adopt the mechanics of foreign relations rather than point to the growing importance of civil society’s transboundary networks. Therefore, nineteenth century modern or contemporary history had a global perspective, but preferred an institutionalised point of view with an understanding of the world as a playground of great men and sovereign states, which, in the historians’ literature, appeared as personalised actors.

This historiographical mainstream, however, provided the basic premise for one of the most interesting quarrels among the numerous German historians’ debates. When Karl Lamprecht, a historian from Leipzig, presented a cultural history and introduced social, economic and psychological reflections, he caused a storm of protest within the German scientific community. Indeed, only rarely could more tension be imagined than that between the analysts of high politics and someone who assigned historical importance to art and other such ornamental elements.

While German colleagues fervently tore holes into Lamprecht’s argumentation, mentioning errors and even plagiarism, his approach found a global public and transnational attention, both of which are rarely mentioned today. Never accepted by his German colleagues, and relegated to the margins of the discipline for the rest of his life, Lamprecht started his international career on the most global platform that the nineteenth century could offer, the World’s Fair. During the universal exhibition held in Saint Louis in 1904, Lamprecht gave a lecture on Historical Development and Present Character of History at the International Congress of Arts and Science. Although German chair holders might have understood Lamprecht’s performance in St. Louis as confirmation of exclusion, the Congress itself developed as a highly attractive and prestigious global platform, which included the participation of a highly profiled Japanese delegation. Furthermore, the history panel included “A general survey of the History of Asia,” delivered by Henri Cordier (1849–1925). In his attached vita, the famous French orientalist mentioned his position as “Chinese Mandarin of the third class, with decoration of ‘Precious star’, third degree.”\[70\] Although the published contributions to the Congress do not describe the attending public, it is most likely that at least some Japanese delegates listened to Lamprecht.

One year after the congress, an English translation was already published with other lectures, including one on universal history.\[71\] Here, Lamprecht rejected an


event-oriented chronological narrative and introduced the idea of a dynamic exchange where the "unity of history" does not appear in historical events, "but in the liquid, as it were, ethereal elements which are destined to influence universal history through long periods of time. These are the products of the higher intellectual activity, moral and religious principles, art, poetry, and science; these are the influences which become the chief constituents in the great stream of world history."

A considerable amount of literature has been published on Lampricht and his success in the United States and Latin America. However, we still do not know enough about the influence Lampricht had in Asia, nor has there been sufficient investigation into how much the discourse on *Kulturgeschichte* as a marginalised field within the discipline initiated a discourse on a global, national border transgressive approach to history. The 1904 Congress of Arts and Science presents a valuable starting point for gaining an idea of how the highly nervous debates on differentiation between academic disciplines influenced epistemologies. Ordering questions and normative explanation, saying, for example, that international law displaced religion on a global scale, give an impression of the multilayered forces that proved decisive in assigning a topic to an analytical framework. But again, between 1870 and 1914 the term "universal history" is rarely used in leading scientific journals, which reveals a rather uncomfortable inconsistency between the history of the modern nation and a religion-driven approach that worries about the declining importance of Israel, a land far from being a nation state at the time.

2.4.5 Popular Interest in the World and the De-Historisation of Non-Western Areas

The situation was different when publications addressed a wider public or had an educational scope, and in this context, extra-European topics had a more prominent platform than within the discourse of diplomatic history. It is interesting to note that the shift from research to education did not result in a decrease in public attention, in fact, quite the reverse happened. Archaeology and ancient history satisfied the public demand for bringing Asian history into the context of the glorious Western past. In 1900, Benjamin Ide Wheeler, president of the University of California, of *Arts and Science* [1904 in St. Louis], vol. 2. The spread of congress publications is impressive. A smaller version had been published in 1904 in 8 volumes.

69 See contribution of Woodrow Wilson, who welcomed the congress members as president of Princeton University, in Rogers, ed. *International Congress of Arts and Science* [1904 in St. Louis], vol. 2, 3–20.
70 For an example see George H. Schodde, "Israel's Place in Universal History," *The Biblical World* 10, no. 4 (1897): 272–76.

40 This critical approach found its way into a popular encyclopedia. F. J. Goldsmid took the opportunity to write a Britannica article on Persian history and explained that Oriental history held only little attraction for the West. See Frederick John Goldsmid, "Perplexities of Oriental History," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* (New Series) 2, no. 4 (1885): 365–89.
41 Asikawa wrote on F. Brinkley, *A History of the Japanese People* (New York 1915): "One may ask (...) if Brinkley's failings as a catholic historian are not most evident among some of the most important lines of his work; his weakness seems manifest on the cultural side in its deeper features, and is still more lamentable on the entire institutional side". The review ends in praising the book.
the periphery, far away from the master narrative of contemporary historiography, it brought together and developed Asian and European histories. In the review literature, two publications were often, although quite indignantly, mentioned, namely Vincent Adams Renouf’s *Outlines of General History* and a German series of world history, *Weltgeschichte*, published by Hans F. Helmolt in eight volumes between 1899 and 1907.91 Both were written for educational and public use rather than as examples of sophisticated historical research; both however, combined the presentation of extra-European histories with a global approach.92

When in 1909 Renouf—an American historian—published his *Outlines of General History*, the book was addressed to “eastern scholars.” Indeed, before being appointed Professor of History at the Imperial China University in 1906, he worked in the Chinese Maritime Customs Service (中國商務海關總稅務司), one of the Chinese institutions where modern internationalism and Western imperialism interacted. With a background working in a mostly traditional bureaucracy, and with the aim of introducing a new tax system and organising reparations payments as compensation for losses due to the Boxer Rebellion, Renouf reduced the book’s part on national history drastically to a general outline. As critically mentioned by his American reviewers, Renouf kept the discussion of the United States constitution to one page. Instead he mentioned the growing importance of communication networks, telegraph lines, and newspapers, and came to the conclusion that “the modern transformation of Japan and China is at least as significant as any other event or period in the world’s history.”93 However, such global approaches, in which the master narrative of the nation approximated an awareness of globalisation, remained uncommon in nineteenth century historiography. Historians, occupied primarily with the invention of national traditions and the integration of new political groups, such as workers, left the perception of global interconnectedness to other disciplines.

2.5 Which Discipline is Truly Global? Competitive Scientific Discourses and Internationalism

Focusing on the question of which academic discipline had successfully established an analytical tool to explain an apparently more and more interconnected world at the turn of the century, most historians answered from a national point of view. Diplomatic history became the leading paradigm. It focused on the high politics of establishing power and treaty making, with the sovereign states as major actors. However, it was mostly limited to those who were called major powers and located in the West. Transboundary aims based on a strong national point of view characterised almost all academic disciplines in the late nineteenth century.

2.5.1 International Professional Associations and the Search for Border Crossing Topics

Almost all academic disciplines founded international professional associations before World War I, because having members all over the globe established evidence of political importance. Therefore, the shaping of research designs with global scope remained a predictable development, as did the need for explicitly global or at least far reaching examples. Of course, the ever dominant master narrative established an asymmetrical discourse in which Western topics remained superior. But in a globalised century, proving superiority depended on two aspects: the successful inclusion of transboundary phenomena within the discipline, and the inclusion of non-Western topics and members from non-Western countries under Western interpretation. The consequences might differ from discipline to discipline, but these two characteristic traits came to public attention. Science and the humanities showed an increasing interest in transboundary negotiation processes called “arbitration.” Arbitration expressed the hopes of pacifists in peaceful conflict-solving procedures, but failed politically in the Hague Peace Conferences in 1899 and 1907. However, the idea of replacing political and military power by expert decision came to the attention of international law and fascist trade unionists, the Universal Postal Union and even some historians.94

The broad, disciplinary border crossing interest in arbitration in almost every branch of the social sciences and humanities had its counterpart in a highly visible shift of extra-European topics from the merely exemplary to the conceptual. For the Marxist concept of development Asian despotism and the Asian mode of production explained the development in historical materialism. In sociology, Max Weber developed his theory of the Asian society, which he based on Hindu and Buddhist influences on economies and modernisation. In turn, this approach found an attentive public in Japan, but, significantly, only in the young discipline of Japanese

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92 In the case of the German *Weltgeschichte*, the first three volumes were dedicated to America, Asia and Africa, an approach justified by the growing political importance of the Far East.
2.5.2 Internationalism and International Organisations: The Merging of Science and Politics

While arbitration and the inclusion of extra-European members in transboundary networks characterised the border crossing potential of humanities and social sciences in general, some newly created disciplines focused explicitly on globality in the late nineteenth century. One of the most successful global approaches, albeit hidden behind legal formalism, developed around the American Journal of International Law and the American Political Science Review, both newly founded in 1907. Here, the intriguing new input consisted of the introduction of international organisations and international congresses as new agencies in international politics. Rather unspectacular at first sight, the revolutionary impact of this idea becomes more evident when the semi-official character of most of these institutions is taken into account: the lack of formal extraterritorial rights for even governmental foundations and the rich variety of these organisations, from the Universal Postal Union to the Red Cross, from the international nomenclature of causes of death to the international administration of states’ debts. These organisations were the starting point of international administrations, institutions and persons in legal limbo, who were neither accepted as diplomats nor exclusively national. The leading figures in the interpretation of this phenomenon combined international law with political science and developed an international administrative law. International administration had, in their opinion, the “advantage of operating largely in a field that has not been occupied as yet by systematised methods and historic traditions.” Again, it is no coincidence that the extra-European perspective played an important role. Although most international organisations had their seats in Europe, non-European memberships demonstrated their cohesive potential. In contrast to the narrative of modernisation and Western exclusiveness, international organisations gained power by inclusion, not by exclusion. Whoever wanted to make use of an international organisation as an attractive, global agency had to pay the price of including entities that had until now been on the Western periphery.


2.5.3 The Concept of Internationalism

In extending the discussion on the growing importance of global concepts to the question of how competitive discourses developed, the concept of internationalism is crucial. The blurred label of “internationalism” became a buzzword in the late nineteenth century debate on transnational networks. Pacifists, feminists, experts, heirs, endowments, world fairs, and international organisations all used the new label of internationalism as a concept on a newly arranged mental map. The rising degree of confusion becomes apparent when asking the simple question: in which subject area was the first American thesis on internationalism written? In the American Economic Review’s list of doctoral dissertations in political economy, John Culbert Faries’ The Rise of Internationalism (from Columbia University) was labelled a work on socialism—a more than surprising allocation as the author came...
from a missionary background. The book established different international actors beyond exclusively government-controlled international relations and underlined the significance of international organisations, World’s Fairs, the connectivity between universities, and the transboundary activities of associations and foundations. The author gave special attention to the development of auxiliary or international languages and presented the international Opium Conferences as a political expression of internationalism. Recently reedited in 2008, The Rise of Internationalism never received any academic feedback, and its author later published on handicapped and disabled soldiers and artificial limbs. The book however, provides a valuable introduction to the multilayered activities labelled as internationalism before World War I. Later forgotten in the history of international relations, internationalism introduced as a modern concept in the late nineteenth century the idea of semi-official cooperation between an internationally active civil society, experts and governments. In 1899 and 1907, the Hague Peace Conferences presented crucial moments in internationalism, since an international civil society held their meetings at the same time as the diplomatists.

2.6 How World War I and Propaganda Prepared New Grounds for Global Approaches

At first glance, there are good reasons for assuming an end to all competitive debates about globality with the outbreak of World War I. However, member states continued to pay their fees to established international organisations and in 1915 the World’s Fair, which still attracted international congresses, opened in San Francisco. As usual, governments reflected on the coming new world order shortly after war broke out. But this time, long distance communication and border crossing networks gave substantially more room to public reflections than similar situations had done previously. Numerous women’s congresses for peace convened, secret socialist meetings accompanied the Soviet takeover in Russia, and, at the very beginning of the war, the American carmaker Henry Ford invited pacifists onto his ship, the Oscar II, cruising towards Europe in the firm belief that he would bring back a peace agreement in December 1914. With The New York Times’ regular account of seaskick pacifists and finally with Ford’s return to his desk, such activities do not seem worth mentioning further. This is indeed the case when such public interventions are regarded as an additional feeble mission for peace in a long series of more serious official activities, including the Chinese government’s and the Pope’s offers to mediate. The situation acquires a different meaning when public activities are taken as unofficial counterparts of governmental propaganda. Both sides addressed a civil society and a public opinion beyond borders with an impact heretofore unknown and in a way that overruled existing censorship. The value of public opinion increased in 1917, when the Russian revolutionary government and the American president laid down their respective concepts of a new world order. This crucial moment of reorientation was a high point for historical concepts; reordering the past in an affirmative or dissociative way, influencing both the contemporary political debate and the position of history within academic disciplines. While historians concentrated on the question of war guilt in a national context, Wilsonian idealism and endowment money from Carnegie and Rockefeller enabled the establishment of chairs in international relations worldwide.

Both conventional historians and international relations scholars faced a unique situation after World War I when the introduction of a new international order stressed the invention of tradition and drew public attention. Leon Trotsky provided historians with explosive new source material and embarrassed Western govern-ments with the publication of the Tsar’s secret treaties. The President of the United States, on his part, established a Committee on Public Information. Its chairman, George Creel, declared “Selling America” to be the main aim and globalised the idea of the “melting pot” as a fight for public opinion by sending out people, producing films and pictures and spreading American news by telegraphy and radio around the globe. In the last year of the war, a thousand words per day came from the United States to Europe through the telegraph stations in Paris and London, while the stations in Darien covered Latin America. Messages portraying the American way of life were also sent from New York to San Diego, from there to the station of Cavite, which then handed over to Shanghai and Tokyo.

2.6.1 The End of the European Westphalian Order and the Beginning of Global Cooperation

Historians participated in the discussion on the increasing public support for border crossing internationalism versus traditions of governmental decision making in the small circles of the Western Great Powers. In debates about the appropriate tradition for international decision making, the Congress of Vienna (1814/15) acquired the significance of a watershed, dividing those who still believed in the European tradition of diplomacy from those who preferred to include internationalism in a global concept. In 1918, the British historian Charles K. Webster ...
conducted a study on the Congress of Vienna. The historian worked in uniform, since he was writing about the congress by order of the British Foreign Office. At this time, the American President Wilson—also a professional historian—had already renounced the Congress of Vienna as an outdated, autocratic institution of peace making, closely connected with the Westphalian order established in 1648.\textsuperscript{84}

This struggle between European traditions and the newly developed concepts in internationalism came to a head during the Paris Peace Conferences. The peace treaties combined in one document a traditional peace treaty with the establishing of the League of Nations, the foundation of new international institutions. The research literature frequently mentions the burden that the newly founded League of Nations had to bear with the fact that it was established in the same document in which reparations and war guilt were recorded. However, a less often mentioned but important consequence of this combination was the drifting apart of diplomatic historians focusing on the war guilt question, and the international relations specialists on the other. As part of political science, international relations attracted and partly monopolised research into different forms of international cooperation in the name of the League of Nations. Seasoned and newly active internationalists and cosmopolitans alike supported this new academic field.

The League of Nations was based on sovereign member-states and even perpetuated colonial rule in the mandates’ commission. But there was also a hidden possibility of new and more global activities. A small international administration, a covenant with the promise of reviewing job applications in a gender-blind process, an immense variety of technical and intellectual forms of cooperation worldwide, and new international agencies in the form of foundations and endowments, all went into shaping a globally connected world after the end of World War I.

Again, taking a step back and thinking in terms of historiography, what happened in Paris and later in Geneva established a new border crossing platform and invited historians to follow new patterns when ordering the past, e.g. along the lines of world labour, world economy, world health, not to mention a critical investigation of the global spread of racism and antisemitism. Following the approach outlined above, the history of historiography provides evidence of how the disciplines adapted to the new situation after 1919. And as a further step, the blind spots created by the ordering principles established after World War I stimulate thought about who now called for a global approach.


\textsuperscript{86} The publication of historical source material proving the innocence of the respective government started shortly after World War I with the Forbürcher and continued with the publication of foreign relations documents. See Sacha Ziska, *Geschichte unter der Schere politischer Sensen: amtliche Akteninsammlungen im internationalen Vergleich* (Munich: Oldenburg, 2001).

\textsuperscript{87} The German war guilt statement of Fritz Fischer grew into the so called Fischer-Kontroverse, a crucial moment when political history was confronted by the approaches of newer forms of social history. See John Antony Moses, *The Politics of Illusion: The Fischer Controversy in German Historiography* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1975).

specific attention to the memory of those excluded from historical remembrance. Benjamin’s complex work gained the attention of postmodern and postcolonial approaches. In his understanding, history should always include the forms of suppression and the exclusions that a historical narrative is based on. Taking this idea as an expression of the 1930s’ complex debate on the meaning of the past, the question of how historiography informed a master narrative and why a certain group of experts gained a monopoly of interpretation affirms its importance: at least for the twentieth century, the history of historiography cannot be told as a story of discoveries, but as a struggle for the monopoly of interpretation of the past.

In the traditional field of history as an academic discipline, the methodology still came close to Western ideas of development, with capitalism as its driving force. In addition, the separation of topics, which resulted in diplomatic conferences being interpreted by diplomatic historians, only created blind spots. The Paris Peace Conferences may indeed live up to their description as a rather conventional form of peace making. However, these conferences also need fresh examination as the beginning of a reformulated, readapted and much more global form of international bargaining. Until now, research on the Paris Peace Conferences and the League of Nations has mostly adopted the analytic method of separating interfering influences into single lines, instead of studying the initial conditions of multilayered tangles. Consequently, there is a rich literature available on the rising importance of socialist internationalism due to the political success of socialist and communist parties after World War I. But rarely are overlaps mentioned between internationalism as a key leftist term, a continuation of the older middle-class internationalism, and a specificity of expert-related networks. From the same perspective, the foundation and functioning of the International Labour Organisation, planned as a cordon sanitaire against communist takeover, provided a rich platform of newly founded institutional possibilities for a more global form of international participation. However, neither the simultaneity of participating in the ILO without membership in the League, nor the coincidence of tripartism, diplomacy, and the participation of non-sovereign members, are at the centre of analytical interest in historiography.

2.6.3 Paris 1919: The Development of Dense Global Networks

More convincing conclusions are needed about the role of the Paris Peace Conference as a nucleus of competing global concepts, as a great fair, a meeting point of those who had been approached as allies during the war and now hoped to make gains in Paris. As a significant characteristic of this form of peace making, which differs from older forms of congresses, the inclusion of non-European and non-Western countries is crucial. Additionally, the new participants in international politics broke though the small exclusive circle of sovereign states. Already in Paris and later Geneva, some functioning transboundary networks were astonishingly successful. For others, internationalism turned into an expression of exclusion, and some were just mentioned so as to demonstrate how to control an "exotic" community. In all cases, transboundary networks seriously affected the contemporary mental map, since the availability of source material changed substantially: nineteenth century internationalists described their approach as "discovery." After World War I, systematic research and collection of source materials constructed globalism as a self-contained field with a specific past. For example, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace financed hundreds of books on the social and economic history of World War I, and made available in their Far East collection compilations of treaties that had been difficult to acquire until then. The International Labour Organisation’s book series covered working conditions in all member states, from Belgium to India. Other endowments made similar attempts, and various platforms and groups, such as the Institute of Pacific Relations, maintained transboundary networks in their journals and book series. All of these and the League of Nations’ intellectual cooperation and education institutions contributed to the formation of a rich encyclopaedic literature, published with the aim of presenting the broad spectrum of participating institutions rather than the unique features of single Western nations. Of course, in the light

102 E.g. international women’s organisations; see Rupp, Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women’s Movement.
105 See introduction to Alfred Hermann Fried, Das internationale Leben der Gegenwart (Leipzig: Teubner, 1908). According to Fried, the international law already exists but needs a travel book: ”Das, was man so oft als Utopie bezeichnet hat, ist Wirklichkeit.” Ibid., III.
108 For an example see: John Eugene Harley, International Understanding: Agencies Educating for a New World (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1931). Harley’s list of agencies is impressive and includes academic institutions and courses, international organisations with educational
of World War II all these attempts to create global connectivity between East and West seem to document a history of failure. Following this approach, the coincidence of different forms of globalism with various aspects of internationalism and cosmopolitanism appears to be an expression of faded hopes as well as the political failure of the newly established League of Nations.108

2.6.4 The Growing Importance of International Organisations and the Impact of War

What unspoken assumptions underlay the great variety of contemporary global concepts? With the outbreak of World War II in mind, historiography leans towards the assumption that global concepts cannot survive periods of political tension. However, border crossing contacts established in 1919 were still politically active in the 1930s. Publications on international organisations represented a still growing interest in institutionalised forms of border crossing. The number of international organisations increased between 1936 and 1938.109 Moreover, although the League of Nations came under increasing pressure in the 1930s, even fascist states in Europe and Asia developed comparable forms of—admittedly closely monitored—global approaches.110

In addition, the steadily growing importance of propaganda to economics and politics suggests that the alleged fading-out of global entanglements is a methodological problem rather than the description of a contemporary development. In the blind spot of methodological nationalism,111 mostly unnoticed by historiography, Western-Asian competition on global data developed. In the late 1930s the League of Nations lost its monopoly on providing the authoritative data collection on international organisations. Shortly after the foundation of the League, its secretariat collected information about international organisations and regularly published their latest forms in several editions of the Handbook of International Organisations.112 At first glance, the handbook seems to be a rather dry read of minor importance; however, only in this dataset did the connection between the League and networks of various kinds become visible. Although in the League’s covenant

 endeavours (which covers most of the existing official and nongovernmental organisations), and the major endowments and foundations.


111 Daniel Chernilo, “Methodological Nationalism: Theory and History.”

112 See above, footnote 109.

the value of a border crossing flow of information was clearly mentioned, adequate funding did not exist, and an institutionalised, categorising relationship between international organisations did not become effective until the foundation of the United Nations. Again, asymmetrical tensions between Asia and Europe show the growing importance of a political field later described by American political scientist as “soft power.”113 In 1934 the Japanese government published the first edition of the Handbook on International Cultural Organisations, in English and Japanese. The new Japanese handbook, which listed mostly organisations that had their headquarters in Japan, claimed a geopolitical shift of international organisations that contrasted with the data in the League’s handbook, where the overwhelming majority still had their seat in Europe.114

Contemporaneously, Japanese intellectuals insisted on the global awareness of international Asian networks. Herbert Newhard Shenton, professor of sociology at Columbia University and secretary of the International Auxiliary Language Association, came in for heavy criticism, when he conducted a survey of the languages used during international congresses. Shortly after his book, with the pleasant title Cosmopolitan Conversation, was released in 1933, Samitaro Uramatsu doubted “whether the book will be of any considerable use,” pointing to the lack of “oriental” networks.115 The debate on who was influencing the obviously powerful network of international organisations continued even during the war: a national socialist organisation, the Deutsche Kongress-Zentrale, planned to publish a fascist version of the League of Nations’ handbook. The manuscript of the German Handbuch of International Organisations was ready for publication when the war ended.116

This further raises the question of which approach can provide a useful analytical tool for the interpretation of ambivalent discourses that seem extremely national and at the same time universal. They are highly sensitive to missing elements of border crossing networks on the one hand, and, on the other, to their usefulness for aggressive propaganda.


114 None of the organisations in the Japanese Handbook were mentioned in the League’s Handbook, not even the Asiatic Society of Japan, founded in 1872, which is now located in the German Club and is one of the few with foreigners in leading positions. Also in contrast to the League, the Japanese dataset provided the opportunity to present Manchukuo as a new factor in international relations, while the League carefully avoided mention of the Manchurian puppet state as a member in an international organisation. For different editions of the League’s Handbook of International Organization see above, footnote 109.


Starting with the statement that in the nineteenth century Western historiography told a history of European expansionism, but left out the globe, the explanation above gives an answer to the question of what kind of historical evidence documents the idea of global networks and transboundary contacts after World War I. Indeed, in the shadow of semi-official contacts, dense activities developed across borders on a global scale. Newly established chairs of international relations analysed these border crossing activities, while historians preferred diplomatic history and national concepts of international relations.

The following part will discuss how to bring global activities into, and sometimes back into, the focus of historiography.

3 Transcultural History

3.1 Culture and Historiography

While for post World War I history, nation and national identities, the history of political decision making, and institutions still remain at the centre of historical research, Prasenjit Duara directs historiographical attention to culture. Before discussing Duara’s contribution in terms of its global value, it is important to classify the periodic demand for culture as an indicator of methodological and theoretical differentiation within historiography. As explained above with the example of Lamprecht, Kulturgeschichte challenged the assumption of the historicity of intentional actions reserved for states and statesmen. Nearly half a century after Lamprecht, at the end of the Cold War, a “new cultural history” challenged both the more traditional national history, and the German Geschichtsgegeschichte (history of society). The latter approach had been established as a critical counterpart to the national histories of political decision making.

3.1.1 The Impact of Culture

What is the significance of culture from a historiographical point of view? Culture appeared to complement social history’s lack of subjective life experiences, to bring in Alltagsgeschichte (everyday history) and gender. Furthermore, borrowing from the American anthropologist Clifford Geertz, the new cultural history presented an appropriate methodology known as “thick description”.

117 Debaties on Geertz within the historical academic community describe the difficult process of differentiation between social and cultural history. While in the case of social history the structures of economy and power are behind culture, the idea of culture introduced by Geertz shapes reality. From this point of view, culture loses its additive character as the expression of a superstructure as an umbrella term challenged the ordering principles of historiography. It questioned privileged economic interests and political decision making and, explicitly or not, asked the question whether there is a “reality” beyond language and culture, or whether a set of symbols shape reality. Under the influence of globalisation, this question became even more complex. Cultural entanglements now gained attention as “global cultural flows”.

118 Although more in the background, critical discussion of social history discovered hidden forms of methodological nationalism, pointing to the fact that not only the widespread national histories but also social history still worked with an implicit but rarely mentioned national research design.

119 Older concepts, primarily transnationalism and civil society, now acquired a cultural dimension, and brought to the fore previously neglected historical agencies. The ongoing discussion, however, developed more convincingly around method than content. Although linked to calls for “multiarchival research,” it rarely departed from Western topics for reasons of language competence. Furthermore, addressed or not, cultural dimensions in international relations and in economic and political history had rarely been dissociated from the question of the extent to which culture as a superstructure influenced what historians usually regard as the basic factors: power, violence, institutionalised bargaining, enforceability of obligations, responsiblity towards victims, and belief in universal values such as human rights and the protection of nature.

As long as historiography goes along with enlarging the superstructure and preserving the basics, nothing particularly disturbing happens. However, most historians will agree that things changed fundamentally after the end of the Cold War.

3.1.2 Historiography after the Cold War Ended: Subaltern Studies and Historicities

Apart from the widely accepted statement that “there is no new paradigm of historical studies,”120 the question of what exactly has changed finds different answers within the academic community. The American political scientist Francis Fukuyama published The End of History in 1989, announcing the successful with economy as its driving force. Clifford Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

120 The leading scholars in this field are anthropologists. See Arjun Appadurai, Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).


122 In the history of international relations, non-governmental organisations now gained significance as expressions of world culture, and performative aspects found attention in international politics. John Boli and George M. Thomas, Constructing World Culture: International Non-governmenetal Organizations since 1875 (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999), 13–15. Jürgen Osterhammel, Weltgeschichte (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2008).

conclusion of a continuous progression towards the final establishment of liberal democracy. Although controversial in terms of its political perspective, Fujiyama’s diagnosis finds confirmation less in the changing topics of historiography than in the challenge that confronted history in postcolonial debates.

Since the 1990s, history as the sum of authoritative, universally applicable rules separating the past from the present has indeed started to disappear. However, there is an option of it being replaced by different and entangled forms of historicities, and the opening of a global discourse.

The crucial impulse came from subaltern studies, a movement founded by the Indian historian Ranajit Guha in the 1980s. Since then, the label “subaltern studies,” an expression originally coined by the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, has appeared in various contexts and found a different expression. Dipesh Chakrabarty’s book *Provincialising Europe* influenced Western historiography in two respects: by questioning Western rationality towards religion and by proposing to replace the term “scientifc universalism” with a term naming its place of origin, which is Europe. Homing in on a critical investigation of Western elite historiography, the debate reverts to Franz Fanon and Edward Said, i.e. to decolonisation discussions and Orientalism in the post World War II era. But not until the end of the Cold War, when historiography was faced with the problem of conceptualizing a global history instead of a history of globalisation, did subaltern studies start to play a crucial role. This was for two reasons. Firstly, subaltern studies left the discourse of measuring the difference in development and modernisation by critically analysing the discourse of elite historiography. The idea of a genuine national historiography can be suspected of elitism, whether it is a matter of self-perception or the perception of others. Thus, subaltern studies propose a “history from below” to an Indian history of the Indian nation. This statement sounds familiar to the large community of labour historians, but rather than suppressing elite postcolonial debate it calls for the overcoming of stereotypes and essentialism. Secondly, as a result of this debate, the notion of culture has changed from historically saturated shared values to a substantially transgressive power, characterised at best as hybridity, as a power of transformation.

3.1.3 Multiculturalism and Critical Theory in the Debate Concerning Cultural Integrity and Guarantees of Diversity

This dynamic understanding of culture replaces the more static national entities as historical actors and facilitates an inclusion of transboundary movements. Culture avoids understanding networks as simple events and helps to focus on contact zones and entanglements. A cultural approach can analyse thresholds and borders, look

125 Although in taking a global perspective the debate itself has a clearly shaped origin, e.g. when pointing to the European Union’s supranational structure, where legal ontology replaces democratic participation.
126 For an insight into this debate see Seyla Benhabib et al., *Another Cosmopolitanism: Hospitality, Sovereignty, and Democratic Iterations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 13ff. Here, Benhabib starts with the discussion between Karl Jaspers and Hannah Arendt about the Eichmann trial and opens up a Kantian approach to debate. The book goes back to one of the core texts in Western discussions of cosmopolitanism: Immanuel Kant’s essay on perpetual peace. Benhabib underlines the fact that Kant protected foreigners by introducing the concept of hospitality, and relies on an ongoing debate, initiated by Jacques Derrida’s interpretation of Kant’s essay.
In these ongoing debates, historical examples play a crucial role, and reordering the past has become a key method for presenting blind spots on a global scale. However, unable to speak outside its methodological and theoretical frameworks, which have come under the suspicion of being Western-focused, and closely connected to its own past, the discipline got caught in its own web. After the “end of history,” a global orientation seemed helpful. The ongoing levelling of subspecialties, the shift from era to area, and intensified interdisciplinary cooperation based on the inclusion of source material beyond written sources, fed into the trend of a less national, more global history. However, as Iggers and Wang suspect, an increase in world and global histories, which might be enlarged by international, new international, and universal histories, has not (yet?) led to a sea change. Indeed, the conceptual opening of the national paradigm did not create a new theory convincing enough to replace the strong master narrative of the nation. The question, therefore, is what benefits can be expected from “transcultural history”?

3.2 Why Transcultural History: What is New? What is Different?

A closer, not nationally limited concentration on the ambivalent, transgressive functioning of culture might help open up new discourses that analyse under which circumstances certain parts of the past transform into global history, and whether the aspect of border crossing should develop its own historicity. Transcultural history should also specify certain topics that present different reactions to defining, creating, blurring and destroying borders from the perspective of societies that are organised into different entities, but also in regard to individual lives. Since history is closely connected to empirical evidence, this approach seeks to include source material that would otherwise remain forgotten in the “memory holes” of the past. Topics and questions that shed light on a transcultural history should make visible a wide variety of blind spots that are also of explanatory value for other forms of historiography.

In connecting the history of historiography to theoretical concepts and to the source material provided, and in explaining analytical tools and their application, our suggestions are a framework rather than an already established narrative. This approach, however, approximates our idea of closely coordinating teaching and research to give students from an early stage the necessary tools for exercising intellectual creativity within the guidelines of academic research. The following Exppresions. Accessed March 10, 2011, http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=310388&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html.

129 Iggers, Wang, and Mukherjee, A Global History of Modern Historiography, 390. As mentioned by Iggers and Wang it is also true that Immanuel Wallerstein, André Gunder Frank, et al. have worked with global approaches for a long time, not to mention contemporary concepts such as Weltöffentlich (world politics), which is difficult to use for the nineteenth century outside an imperialistic context.

section discusses transcultural history’s new aspects and how it differs from acknowledged standards of historiography.

3.2.1 Transculturality: Combining Culture and Border Crossing

Transculturality is the key concept of a not yet stable theory in contemporary cultural studies. The concept has a Latin-American prehistory going back to complex-American relations in the late 1930s. At that time, the Cuban internationalist Fernando Ortiz responded to the U.S.-American anthropologists’ discourse on acculturation. Instead of accepting that a dominant culture shapes, but also enhances a ‘minor’ one by an osmotic process, Ortiz insisted on reversing the perspective, highlighting a loss of genuine culture as a consequence of acculturation. This counter-hegemonic concept reflected the contemporary political situation.

At the time, culture provided a screen for competing political concepts. The most famous and oft-quoted example of such a cultural history with political impact is Oswald Spengler’s Decline of the West. Presenting a world history, Spengler ascribed different cultures with specific characteristics and a life span from early childhood to death. Although several cultures exist in this conservative model, they are conceived of as having parallel, distant lives. Besides the global spread of Spengler’s idea with the support of the British historian Arnold J. Toynbee, social scientists fervently debated the notion of diffusionism, an idea that culture spread simply through contagion rather than through the conservation of authentic heritage. Although close to the 1920s idea of global exchange, of internationalism and the enhancement of border crossing communication under the influence of growing governmental propaganda and cultural nationalism, Ortiz, with the concept of transculturation, pointed out the dark side of border crossing diffusion.

As one of the busy internationalists with strong national (Cuban) roots, Ortiz created an idea which regained importance in the debate on decolonisation after World War II. Transculturalisation as the territorial speciality of Latin America underwent a substantial change after the end of the Cold War, when the narrative of decolonisation gained a global perspective. Concepts, such as creolisation, lost their former Latin-American particularisation. Therewith the question arose as to whether creolisation should change from an emancipatory description of suppressed (non-Western) societies to an expression presenting a globally
interconnected world, therefore a world no longer caught in centre-periphery relations. For both history and anthropology this approach has raised problems: from a historical point of view, this form of conceptual globalisation undermines the original political intention of Ortiz’s concept. From an anthropologist’s perspective, the global approach blurs the term’s spatial characteristics. With the idea of an unavoidable worldwide entanglement, locating difference and authenticity becomes a difficult task. Transculturalism, therefore, opens a debate on the appropriate use of the analytical description of new forms of dependency.

3.2.2 The Renaissance of Transculturality in a Newly Shaped Global History

The discussion was given a new turn by the German philosopher Wolfgang Welsh in the 1990s. He introduced the term transculturality as a “puzzling form of cultures today”134 and proposed a focus on processes of entanglement instead of thinking of cultures as comparable entities. The transcultural approach enriched the debate on methods and the theoretical framing of global history that started after the Cold War in a merging of sociology and political sciences with publications on new international history and new diplomatic history. Within this debate, cultural and institutional aspects have moved to the fore, unfolding a new interest in border crossing historical developments in at least four different areas:

Firstly, after the Cold War interest in the historical development of international organisations grew as a result of the increasing importance of international non-governmental organisations. This was a topic that had belonged to international relations since 1919. International organisations provide methodological access to cultural contact zones and complex forms of institutional entanglements. Historians have been able to work out how states, experts, private associations and diplomats used international associations of different origin to shape the agenda of international politics to their own ends. Following this approach, multiplied agencies have widened the view to institutions and movements with global membership, and to

135 For this debate see Viranji Munasinghe, “Theorizing World Culture through the New World: East Asia and Cosmopolitanism,” American Ethnologist 33, no. 4 (2006): 549-62. An answer by Ulf Hannerz, one of the representatives of global culture, is in the same volume.


3.2.3 The Role of East-West Relations and the Shifting of Culture from Civilisation to Globality

Compared to transnational concepts in historiography, e.g. *histoire croisée*, entangled histories, connected histories, contact zone histories, and the approaches that point to transnational platforms as mentioned above, transcultural history puts the conceptualising power of the nation into perspective. Without denying that the master narrative of the nation is crucial for modern history, transculturality gains a different perspective by focusing on the shifting notion of culture. In addition to Welsch’s approach, culture is regarded as a form of entanglement in constant flux, but also as a concept which changed substantially from the nineteenth to the twentieth century. As Prasenjit Duara explains, cultural values conveyed as “civilisation” changed fundamentally from a Western-driven concept of civilising “the other” in the nineteenth century to a spiritual and moral value that nourished global discourse after World War I. Always closely connected to nationalism and imperialism, colonisation and decolonisation, culture also presents a platform of contended values. Focusing on entanglements, a transcultural approach always addresses the argument of culture in a deconstructionist way. It is important to mention the fear and aggression that lies beyond the evoked rhetoric of “East meets West.” At the same time, Asian philosophy played its part in Western discourse as a remedy against the often evoked decline of the West. Referring to Welsch’s metaphor of the puzzle, a transcultural approach avoids the harmful picture, mistrusts the idea of a harmonious coincidence, and focuses on the hair-line cracks that separate the pieces of the puzzle.

3.2.4 Searching for Examples of East-West Discourse after World War I

An initial look at East-West discourses after World War I shows an overwhelming presence of transcultural entanglements that allegedly present a global narrative: the label “international” merged with the newly discovered concept of “intercultural” relationships. Vaguely described as an “interchange of cultures,” this topic was on the agenda of several Institute of Pacific Relations conferences, and made its way into the American newspapers as “cultural relations between East and West.” Finally, the concept turned into a slogan in President Roosevelt’s World Fair speech in 1938 as “interchange of thought, of culture, and of trade.”


meets West” rhetoric shaped global discourses and legitimised a variety of League of Nations activities. However, the same rhetoric also turned an apparently harmonious meeting of the World Fellowship of Faiths into the almost perfect platform for Japanese nationalism. As a Shinto priest explained, the only way to preserve peace would imply Western support for Japan’s expansionist policy as an intercultural duty. Again, the nationalistic sound was far from being “authentic.” The same priest did missionary work in the United States and supported a dense transboundary network. With the advent of World War II, however, the idea of cultural entanglement changed in the reading of the US administration from a jigsaw piece in the picture of global cooperation to evidence for the threat scenarios of internal espionage. The priest spent the years from 1941 to 1945 in American internment camps and faced hearings of the Alien Enemy Hearing Board, which had carefully collected information about contacts with Asian and axis states.

3.2.5 Transcultural Topics

There is no need for a transcultural approach to tell the Shinto priest’s story. However, a transcultural research design transposes the meaning of this biography from an exclusively individual experience to a pattern that shaped the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. People living transboundary lives, using labels such as cosmopolitanism or piracy, appear as characteristic social phenomena rather than marginal occurrences limited to migration. These patterns can be found in other contexts, situations, places, and time segments. Even more importantly, the aforementioned puzzle’s fragmented picture is not just a metaphor. It is important to ask about the material foundation of transcultural entanglements, and whether special (exclusively urban?) surroundings are needed, and how, during the period in question, the puzzle pieces together a global landscape.

Rich material, not limited to the obvious transcultural entanglement in places like Shanghai or Harbin, is available for the 1920s and 1930s. Tensions between

transcultural materiality and the urgent need for the adaptation and reinterpretation of culturally defined habits substantially enlarge the research design. As mentioned in the introduction’s list of transcultural issues, a transcultural history opens up new fields of research. From the aforementioned source material produced by international gatherings and organisations, to the challenge of investigating transboundary lives, transcultural history attracts topics that have remained out of historiography’s reach until now. The question of transgression costs, and the economic value of border crossing flows of information, needs further research.

Moreover, shifting objects that are either of contested origin or valued for their foreign character invite a debate on material culture. In this respect, the political impact of shifting objects goes beyond the topic of spoils of war. A characteristic example can be found in Chicago. In 1922 the Chicago Tribune launched a competition inviting designs for a new office building. Plans were received from all over the world. The resulting Tribune Tower presented what architects and sponsors regarded as visual cosmopolitanism. It aped a French gothic cathedral, and, even worse, embedded in the walls there were artefacts of an awkward variety, partly paying homage to the East-West narrative: tiles from the Forbidden City in Beijing, and also a Chinese tombstone—not from China but from Luzon in the Philippines. The narrative of this strange building has an ongoing and long-lasting history. In 2008 the American Artist John Seward Johnson answered the tower’s globalism with a new interpretation of an American painting, created shortly after the opening of the Tribune Tower, in the 1930s. Johnson cited Grant Wood’s famous painting “American Gothic,” but used the form of two statues. The frowning couple, originally icons of an anti-internationalist, anti-modernist, agrarian, Iowa-based America, now has a suitcase, labelled with foreign destinations. This almost perfect rethinking of what the Tribune Tower had started just across the street plays with the ambivalent meaning of global icons. Whether the couple confirms that narrow-minded prejudices travel or the couple enjoys the foreign surrounding of the tower, cannot be answered with certainty. Still, the message seems obvious: global contexts and transcultural entanglements do not always follow the narrative of liberal cosmopolitanism, and global objects might have only loose connections with the ephemeral moments of transcultural exchange. Moreover, transcultural objects do not necessarily display transboundary lives, and their value as documents of travelling conditions remains questionable. With Johnson’s couple in front, the Tribune Tower transforms into a souvenir shop, which addresses collectors of memorabilia, but not the traveller. The question is, whether the history of the twenty-first century will highlight the tensions between confronting globalism and the certainty that living on borders was and still is dangerous for most people, except a few chosen cosmopolitans.

3.2.6 Historical Assumptions and Claims of a Transcultural Historiography

At first glance, the twenty-first century qualifies for new arrangements and openness. With the end of the Cold War, a period of structural change began: change in the political order, with the end of bipolar international relations; in economics, with the end of continuous economic growth; and change in social coherence, with the end of party-driven forms of communication. This list can also be read in a different light: the rising importance of globalisation; the growing power of non-governmental agencies; the obvious importance of networks penetrating established entities such as national states, political parties and citizens’ associations. Historians have the twofold objective of locating dominant elements in the past and analysing the consequences of these new histories for the ordering principles of those assumptions that decide how history should be written in the twenty-first century. What are the most important tasks for a transcultural historiography? What new understandings can be expected?

Creating global perspectives: As explained above, history as an academic discipline is a Western way of thinking and deeply influenced by the historical context of its introduction in the nineteenth century. Key elements of historical thinking, e.g. the specific use of time and space, should be carefully reinterpreted in light of non-Western traditions. Furthermore, this topic should address the tensions between local and global understandings of the past.

Introducing a concept of multiple agencies by methodological plurality: This way out of a westernised approach brings the assumption of linear developments into perspective. In order to provide an innovative start, Shmuel N. Eisenstadt introduced the idea of multiple modernities. Since then, the idea of multiple agencies has been regarded as more important than the idea of presenting source material relating to a clearly nameable actor (the state or worker, for example). The question is whether multiplication replaces universalistic approaches in general. From the point of view of nineteenth century historiography, wherein European history corresponds to universal history, the idea of thinking in different historicities seems helpful. The idea was introduced by French philosophers—first among them Jacques Rancière. According to this perspective, the way in which the past transforms into history is culturally biased and produces different analyses of the past. But, on the other hand, a growing interest in environmental history and the insight needed to understand the destruction of nature calls for an approach that is able to produce universal statements for phenomena not limited to national or cultural borders. In this case, the claim of universality is an antidote to

personal and national voracity, and history a mode of reflection about global

Safeguarding different approaches within the discipline and fostering different, complementarily usable methodologies: The introduction of new ordering principles does not erase previous interpretations of the past. The objective is not a replacement of diplomatic history with transcultural history. Rather, method-

ological self-consciousness and the introduction of interdisciplinarity based on

knowledge of more than one method should serve as the starting point for new

findings. With a more global, network-centred, culture-orientated historiography,

additional aspects of the past will become visible. However, the aims and objectives

will always critically reflect on what lies beyond its reach.

Focusing on exchange processes across cultures, transcultural history should

observe repressive reactions. The analytical tools used should also bring those

limits of the past to the surface, which are carefully hidden below a harmonious

rhetoric or the effort to use transcultural entanglement as a step towards a pacifist,

harmonious world.

4 Fighting Zombies: Methodological Challenges

of Transcultural History

Transcultural history excludes certain aspects of established historical

methodologies. In the following part, fundamental differences will be mentioned,

while iterative, more detailed methodological advice and an introduction to the use

of material culture and other not yet established source material (e.g. music) will be

discussed in the second part of the book.

4.1 From Spatial Storage to Flows of Information

The French philosopher and historian Michel Foucault described in his ingenious

book The Order of Things the shifting of episteme, which is accompanied by a

change in places and institutions where science is conducted.150 In the nineteenth

century, history focused on the archive (non-published material mostly produced

by governmental administration), the library (publications), and the museum

(artefacts, material culture). These places became national institutions financed,

supported, and run by public money and deeply influenced by the ruling power.151

150 Foucault, The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences.

151 This form of storage became closely connected to the “imagined community” of the nation.

Until the twenty-first century, whenever a new state was founded, a national archive, library, and/or

museum would appear. For a recent example, see the archives of Belarus that had a long list of

Once institutionalised, archives, libraries and museums often conducted their own

imperialistic politics, but also became objects of looting during wars.152 History

therefore not only asks how to gain access to the past with certain methods and

theories; history also describes an—from changing—attitude towards the way

in which information is preserved, protected, institutionalised and therefore

localised.153

4.1.1 Storage and Research

Naturally, critical historians know that what is preserved in such institutions

presents an incomplete selection of the past. How ambiguous such a preservation

of the past can be becomes obvious when looking at Napoleon I as an example of

how asymmetrical power relations are closely connected to memory policy.

Napoleon had the idea to open a central archive and immense library, both of which

served a whole series of new and ambivalent possibilities in centralising historical

information: archives, museums and libraries turned into public domains and

offered academic justification for looted material.

The ambivalence of preserving and manipulating the past overshadows all forms

of information storage. Simultaneously centralised information helps us to under-

stand political decision making after a certain period of time has elapsed. This form

of delayed information154 has confirmed the historian’s new role as custodian of

the past. In democratic systems access to the archive presents a possibility of holding

former officials accountable for their governance. The continuous governmental

preservation of the past yields a collection, the ordering principle of which is the

production of empirical evidence within the framework of the national state, which

contributes to methodological nationalism. Of course, there is no unrestricted

access to everything a government produces. In addition, the so-called hermeneutic

circle explains the impossibility of finding evidence without prior knowledge of its

152 Although protected by international law, looting of archives was the standard practice of

Western imperialists. Discussions about granting Asian states similar protection started with the

Boxer intervention in China. See G. G. Philimore, “Booey of War,” Journal of the Society of


153 For an overview on the history of archiving: Sebastian Jobs and Alf Lüdtke, eds., Unwitting

History Archiving and Narrating in Historiography (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2010).

154 The Library of Congress, founded in 1800, is a good example of the problem of information

availability in a democratic system. The founders’ argumentation focused on the parliament’s need for

information comparable to that which was available to the government. See Library of Congress,

existence. Confronted by the immense quantity of material preserved in national archives, search strategies are crucial.

4.1.2 Transcultural Collections

Does a transcultural approach pose different basic questions? First of all, a history of transcultural collections should be researched more systematically from various points of view: where can we expect to find the evidence that is needed to produce a transcultural history? One possibility is to consider the source material produced by and about international organisations, since these institutions merely transfer rather than collect information. Although the source material of international organisations is still difficult to access and mostly limited to Europe, extra-European participation enhanced their importance as global players. This rather underestimated factor can significantly contribute to three potential research strategies for tracing the transcultural move of objects: one focuses on surveys on extra-European, for instance Asian collections founded in Europe after World War I. Another, more recent search for looted cultural property mostly pertains to National Socialist era provenance. And a third makes use of colonial collections and universal libraries that contributed to the utopian idea of making global knowledge available.

Transcultural source material is not restricted to international organisations and shifting objects. Internationalists have collected their own international databases, which need critical and careful investigation. For example, Paul Otlet, the Belgian internationalist and father of hypertext, used his considerable fortune to make available information about international organisations. He opened the so-called Mundaneum, an international university, and the Institut International de Bibliographie. These institutions used decimal classification and therefore followed global, not lingual or national rules of documentation.

136 For the spread of such collections see the International Federation of Library Associations. The organisation was founded in 1927, and the librarian of the League of Nations, T.P. Sevensma, acted as secretary of the Federation. William W. Bishop, “Review: The ‘Actes’ of the International Library Committee,” The Library Quarterly 6, no. 2 (1936).
138 Paul Otlet, Träité de documentation: le livre sur le livre, théorie et pratique (Bruxelles: Mundaneum, 1934).

4.1.3 The Political Value of Information and its Forms of Presentation

Since the late nineteenth century, information has become a buzzword. The various international organisations founded since then have had unstable legal statuses, not yet well established structures, and weak financial backgrounds—but all, without exception, have followed the principle of transboundary information. Where information flows crossed borders, and who was entitled to give and receive information—these questions gained an importance, which, from a transcultural point of view, superseded the partly weak activities of institutions. Of course, in the nineteenth century the boom in governmental statistics had a major influence on information, and the foundation of Western-shaped statistical offices in Asia provides an interesting insight into specific problems of finding a common language for global standards (e.g. chemical elements). Interestingly, the discourse on information became increasingly detached from the issues at hand and turned into a sheer expression of quantity. Museum collections with thousands of objects that were never exhibited, and kept in their original mailing boxes, demonstrate the anarchy of information where knowledge, in analogy to industrial production, became measurable output. A transcultural approach will follow the flows of information and the influence of communication technologies, but it must also consider formal aspects when questioning carriers of information. Telegraphy and telephones revolutionised communication and accelerated political decision making; generations of historians learned the careful analysis of telegrams and connected this newly created source to key events in modern history. New border crossing activities created new forms of information: the almost explosive increase in international associations, conferences and congresses in the second half of the nineteenth century created new events, but also introduced the question of what an appropriate carrier of information is, and how information can cross cultural borders. At first sight, the information consists of myriads of rather boring protocols of international meetings. But some reflected on their own forms of information transfer. In 1893, during the World Columbian Exposition in Chicago, the already mentioned Parliament of Religions published a report of more than 1000 pages. The report was organised in the form of a parliamentary protocol, at a time when neither parliaments nor the publication of regular protocols were fully established even

139 In the early twentieth century, museum builders preferred a “pyramidal” design, where the basement, as the largest part of the building, provided vast storage rooms. See Benjamin Ives Gilman, “The Museum Design as Tested by Experience,” Museum of Fine Arts Bulletin 22, no. 133 (1924).
in the West.\textsuperscript{161} The protocol gave a quotable aspect to this event, in a form that was influenced by diplomatic offices and Western association laws. Using it had far reaching consequences: in a protocol, the audience has no active role, which in this case meant that the numerous women present at the congress simply disappeared from the written documentation. However, by introducing a transcultural approach, the complexity becomes even greater.

4.1.4 Visual and Aural Information

The implementation of Western forms of documentation erased the transgressive participation of women, but other hitherto silent participants emerged when another border was crossed: the use and scale of different languages forced the organisers to introduce new meeting protocols. In contrast to the anti-modernist evocation of traditions and eternal truth, the congress used the latest technical equipment. During this congress, women and delegates from Asia made their appearance on new platforms and gained not a written, but pictorial or even audio presence: “By the aid of modern machinery, almost sentient in its perfection, with the help of the phonograph, stenography, and the myriad duplicated records of stereotyped modern printing, future generations shall listen almost to the very tones of those who met at the World’s Columbian Exposition in brotherly love to exchange pearls of wisdom for the gold of truth! The wonderful prophecy of the Bible, that ‘Brethren should meet and dwell in unity,’ has been realized!”\textsuperscript{162}

This example might also be taken as evidence for the close connection between theoretical reflections on the range of international public spheres and the need for close attention to patterns of historical interpretation.

4.2 From Chronology to Historicities

While questions of space are indeed crucial for history as an academic discipline, for the various reasons mentioned above, time as an ordering principle seems less manipulative, and the close connection to history is obvious. Indeed, history without time seems hardly imaginable. However, the use of time, even measuring the past in units of time, is far from being an objective and therefore uncontestable method. With the introduction of real time scales instead of mythical or religious narratives, history became one of the most important ideological motors of progress, where elapsing time became the measure of efficiency and productivity.


\textsuperscript{162} Ibid., 8f.
of conflicts and in contexts distant from the discourse of "eternal cultural value." For example, in League of Nations papers and Western political science texts, the inability to regulate the various Chinese-Japanese conflicts, and even Western interpretations of political change in China, all appeared under the umbrella of "timelessness." The cliché of "timelessness" as a Chinese characteristic should be regarded as a projection of Western incapacitation, as a remarkable transformation of an international failure to a national characteristic.

4.2.2 The Introduction of Different Historicities

Mindful of the debate on taxonomies and time, on history as a subjective and contestable process of including and excluding discourses, we may conclude that there are different historicities. Indeed, it is perhaps worth enlarging Appadurai’s notion of different “scapes” by allocating various forms of historical memories to them. It is certainly fascinating to understand globality as interference between different forms of border crossing memories, instead of attributing in advance a universal character to certain agencies.

The introduction of historicities implies giving up the univiosity of epistemological power, a serious step which needs counterbalancing with the characteristics of transcultural history. Although transcultural historicities may be pleonastic, it seems better to confront at least one serious methodological problem: as a method for focusing on transboundary entanglements on a global scale, transcultural history rejects comparison, one of the well-established methods in historiography. Networks and transgressive processes impede thought about (cultural) entities that are balanced against each other. Of course, the development of alternatives through comparison still functions well in the historian’s daily work—for example, comparing how traders' families from Hyderabad established contact with the West poses an interesting question. However, for modern history, one of the biggest

105 Paul Myron Anthony Linebarger, The Political Doctrines of Sun Yat-Sen: An Exposition of the San Min Chu I (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1937). Similar arguments can be found for other Asian countries, e.g. in the case of Korea, “Land of Eternal Calm”.


107 Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Jürgen Kocka, eds., Geschichte und Vergleich: Ansätze und Ergebnisse international vergleichender Geschichtswissenschaft (Frankfurt: Campus, 1996). The book shows how helpful comparative histories are, but the contributions also explain the nation-state as the most often compared entity when an international perspective is involved.

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challenges lies in pursuing methodological nationalism, or “zombie categories,” as Daniel Chernilo calls them. Indeed, thinking about the nation as a natural direction in human socialisation, and understanding modern history as a combination of capitalism and the modern state, offers an unpretentious and globally applicable model. Deeply embedded in the discipline’s history, as explained above, methodological nationalism underestimates non-national agencies, multiplies the blind spots in Asian modern historiography, and might even support nationalism in its most dangerous forms. The introduction of historicities, therefore, should be carefully protected against opening a backdoor to the legitimation of nationalistic approaches.

4.3 From the Big Powers’ Great Men to Transcultural Bodies and Transboundary Biographies

4.3.1 Disclosing the Gendered View of International Relations

The difference between regional and global history is not a question of distance, perhaps not even of space, but certainly of gender. In modern historiography the more international and global the research focus or topic, the less women are involved, not only as historical figures but also as female researchers. Two explanations seem obvious. In nineteenth century historiography, leading figures decided what part of the past was worthy of remembrance. No women could be found in such situations, and the discovery of international relations as a male-dominated space grew with the expansion of foreign relations administration. In short: nineteenth century diplomats had spouses and perhaps lovers; however, they certainly did not have female colleagues.

This rather self-evident image changes fundamentally when the richness of nineteenth century border crossing activities are considered. Photographs documenting international congresses clearly show the ladies’ big hats. Leading figures such as the Nobel Prize winner Bertha von Suttner celebrated their appearance at international gatherings. Such photographs, which gave visibility to the first


female academics, female experts working as factory inspectors in the governments' social policy administration, and, increasingly, women's associations, are perhaps only small corrections when considered in a national context. What women share globally is the simple fact that, until the 1920s, they had no political rights, though they did have free access to different international platforms. Female internationalists were tremendously successful in international lobbying, and even remarkably strong in non-Western countries, as an Indian example demonstrates: Founded in 1917, the Indian Women's Association supported Mahatma Gandhi's opposition movement and carefully covered international congresses at the same time. In 1931, the Indian movement was enlarged to an All Asian Women's Conference, which presented a transcultural program that aimed to "set what is appropriate for Asia from the Occidental influences (education, dress, freedom of movement, cinemas, machinery)" while preserving the common "oriental" culture. The All Asian Women's Conference gave Shrimati Sarojini Naidu an international platform. Naidu, president of the Indian National Congress from 1925, is a striking example of the asymmetrical picture of transcultural bargaining. Asian women gained increasing visibility in and through the League of Nations, as delegates to the ILO, as factory inspectors, and in international education organisations. This development challenged the Western mental map, since the women's appearance in international relations became a deliberately mentioned new attribute of those Wilsonians who carried out the new public diplomacy in Geneva. Very few women reached a high rank in the League of Nations' secretariat. However, the very presence of women with diplomatic passports challenged male-domination foreign relations for two reasons: firstly, once they were appointed, female diplomats represented their country and could therefore not be treated with disrespect. Secondly, the idea of Western progress had been turned upside down because newly founded countries, including the Soviet Union, led this development, while most of the older great powers still banned women from diplomatic careers.

4.3.2 The New Man and the New Woman: The Global Appearance of Transcultural Bodies

In the Roaring Twenties, cosmopolitan places such as Geneva and Shanghai, and international administrations located in urban surroundings, prepared the stage for the so-called new man and new woman, a hotly debated idea in the construction of transcultural bodies. New man accompanied by new woman, or la Garçonne, gained visibility through the controversial form of androgyny. Of course, it would be interesting to speculate whether or not these new men were merely the artificial projections of expressionist painters and poets. But a transcultural approach focuses on the strange ambivalence of conformity and deviance.

Almost all societies created concepts of the new man. The Soviet regime invented the new Soviet revolutionary man. Chinese officials presented themselves in coats named after the German foreign minister Stresemann in an explicitly modern, Western way. The fascist regime celebrated the new fascist man with a well-trained, athletic body. Fascist propaganda presented Il Duce, Benito Mussolini, stripped to the waist and working in the Pontine Marshes, thus emphasising the physicality of the new man.

In short, there were widely differing manifestations of the new man. Physical appearance, however, became a competition about who would occupy the social spaces that were now accessible to different social classes and different regions of the world. The coincidence of social and spatial shifting interfered in the Geneva milieu of internationalists. What is an appropriate appearance for an international civil servant, a newly invented and truly global position? The need to look different implied crossing the borders of traditions. It is even difficult to say who braved the longer border crossing process: the former Austrian Hofrat (privy counsellor) now addressed as a geistiger Arbeiter (intellectual worker), or the Chinese intellectual educated in Paris?

4.3.3 Transcultural Biographies: Examples of Both Sexes

Some biographies illustrate the different positions of people transforming into the transcultural body that the League's secretariat and its organisations presented. For example, the Austrian historian Adolph Dopsch informed the League of his changing living conditions, and described the dramatic change from the Hofrat-like position of a professor in Emperor Franz Joseph's Vienna to his new position as an intellectual worker in small republican Austria, where he now faced the problem of unheated office rooms. Compared to this situation, international civil servants in Geneva may have had more comfortable, but no less difficult lives. Egon Ranshofen-Wertheimer, a member of the League of Nations' information section and of Jewish background, had the bitter experience of finding out how unsafe and unprotected the transcultural body could become when he transformed from an international civil servant to a stateless person. The League paid him off, paying his way to London and the United States in 1939, but did nothing against the German

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173 Handbook of International Organisations: Associations, Bureaux, Committees, etc., 264. (In the 1938 edition.)
174 Dame Rachel Crowdy headed the Opium section of the League of Nations.
invalidation of his Austrian passport in 1938.\footnote{League of Nations Archives Geneva, "Personal File: Ignon Rasmussen Wertheimer."} The Indian Jal Jamshid Dalal, a young Oxford alumnus, former captain of his college football team and secretary of college cricket, worked almost 13 years for the League before he resigned in 1940. However, his personnel files do not suggest the prototype of a transcultural new man. First of all, Dalal was bored and worked so poorly in the minorities’ section that his supervisor intervened. As a disciplinary action (\footnote{League of Nations Archives Geneva, "Personal File: J. I. Dalal."}), Dalal had to take over the Czechoslovakian files. In the mid-1930s, the highly political question of German minorities in Czechoslovakia therefore lay in the hands of an official who was forced into this job without any German language competence. After his (understandable) failure his duties were reduced to “work of secondary importance” such as archival research, the organisation of meetings, and translation.\footnote{League of Nations Archives Geneva, "Personal File: Won Saofong." Cf. especially: Declaration de rectification de fait concernant mon etat civil, 15.10.1931} A completely different perspective emerges from the personnel files of Won Saofong. The highly esteemed Chinese lawyer with a French Ph.D. entered the Secretariat for ten years in 1928. As a liaison officer, he influenced the Chinese press, the intellectual milieu in China, and Western perception in the sub-committee on China at the Institute of Intellectual Cooperation in Paris. The photograph in his personnel file shows his preference for perfectly styled, made-to-measure Western business suits. However, the busy author and internationalist carefully kept his Western public life separate from his Chinese private life. In 1931, he had to disclose to the League’s administration a secret marriage in China, which, he explained, was the result of an arrangement made by his parents. He was divorced nine years later and remarried, also in China.\footnote{League of Nations Archives Geneva, "Personal File: Marie de Regel."}

The League’s secretariat fostered transcultural biographies in different positions. But the women from all over the globe that worked in Geneva remain still an unexplored and therefore faceless group. This is especially true for the numerous translators and clerks, the shorthand typists and servants. Although this group contains the well-known Ekatat, administration post of women increased with the introduction of mechanical devices, the female clerks in Geneva were often overqualified, as their previous appointments confirm. Marie de Regel, a Swiss born in Petrograd in 1894, for example, worked as a clerk in the League’s administration for nine years from August 1926. Before she entered the secretariat, she had done research in the Bodleian Library and was a translator in the League of the Red Cross Societies in Paris.\footnote{League of Nations Archives Geneva, "Personal File: Marie de Regel."} Besides the (expected) presence of women in rather low ranking administrative services, the ladies were present in every imaginable category of the international civil service. Most of these female representatives of the League contributed to the increase of transcambulatory networks, although not always by choice. Some of them survived political turbulences in their home countries due to the offer of a Nansen-passport, an international identity card for stateless persons.\footnote{League of Nations Archives Geneva, "Personal File: Tamara Goetz."} Therefore, a typology of transcultural biography faces great social diversity. For example, the typist Tamara Goetz, born in Petrograd in 1900, spent almost twenty years in Geneva. With her Nansen-Passport she remained in the difficult situation of a stateless person with a transboundary life by fate rather than by choice. Other women working for the League belonged to aristocratic networks that had old traditions of transnational travelling. Although not in a high ranking position, the Lithuanian princess Gabrielle Jeanne Anne Marie Radziwill had a model international career. She brought an already existing border crossing network to Geneva. Like many of the female international civil servants, she had her first transboundary experiences as a nurse during World War I. Radziwill worked for the Russian Red Cross in hospitals at the Russian-Persian front.\footnote{League of Nations Archives Geneva, "Personal File: Gabrielle Jeanne Anne Marie Radziwill."} In addition, she had close contacts to international women’s organisations, primarily to the Indian women aristocrats. However, as a former Russian princess Radziwill was the member of a society that had disappeared. She had connections instead of qualifications, and her work did not always satisfy, especially when compared to the work done by women experts such as British health specialist Dame Rachel Eleanor Crowdy, who, in the 1920s, was the most celebrated woman in Geneva. A British subject, Crowdy too had worked in France and Belgium during World War I, and her experience and well-established international contacts made her a valuable international expert even after her marriage in 1939. During World War II, she worked as regional advisor for the British Ministry of Information and reported on social conditions in bombed cities. Crowdy eventually retired as head of the League’s Social Questions and Opium Traffic Section.\footnote{League of Nations Archives Geneva, "Personal File: Dame Rachel Eleanor Crowdy."}

Even short term fellowships for positions that covered a few weeks or months but required administrative, border crossing efforts brought women to Geneva. For example, Beatrice Olga Elisabeth Zukotynska, a librarian working at the University Library in Lviv, spent three weeks in the Information Section in 1932.

4.3.4 New Cosmopolitans Drive Cars

At first glance, all these highly different biographies deny the existence of a transcultural embodiment, and even question the usefulness of a transcultural approach to biographical research. However, before the 1929 stock market crash and the consequent depression affected the world, the American press featured the League’s cosmopolitan staff and gave visibility to a new generation of modern diplomats. Dame Rachel Crowdy was presented as an athletic new woman diplomat, while Secretary General Eric Drummond was shown as light-handedly
steering both the giant machine of the League and his Ford coupé. It is exciting to see how closely League officials complied with these (mechanical) dynamics of modernity, how pragmatically they translated the machine as a metaphor of new international relations and a counterpoint to traditional, arcane diplomacy. However, distant from each other Ranshofen-Wertheimer, Dalal, and Wou were, they shared one characteristic in emphasizing their public appearance: they all drove cars. The League’s personnel files almost burst with exemption claims from customs declarations for the newly hired officials’ cars—and with fines issued by the Geneva police department. A closer look into customs declarations and moving companies’ invoices does indeed give the transnational body a more specific appearance, albeit from an unexpected angle. Contrary to expectations, the personal belongings that international officials from Shanghai and Vienna chose to take to Geneva are very similar: cars, pianos, typewriters, and radios are frequently mentioned in moving lists. The new man had a transnational body, but the border crossing approach demonstrates another and more significant characteristic, namely limitation. Transboundary lives were closely observed. A carefully administrated list of annual leaves of absence coincided with the obligation to declare one’s national home base, which in times of permanent political revolution could be a difficult declaration to make. It was carefully checked for its political value by the League’s administration. Therefore, the League as an international platform and an ideal example of transnational entanglement and cosmopolitan freedom became a system of multilayered, complex rules, which created constant administrative needs. Payments for travelling expenses raised the question of residence, which in turn acquired political importance when the League expanded the number of temporary collaborators, aiming “to improve relations with distant countries by developing a system of short-term appointments.” China, for example, shows that the enhancement of globality led to a closer monitoring of expatriates and emigrants, who were not eligible, according to the League’s own specifications.

As a biographical approach, transnational history provides the necessary analytical tools to bring to the surface the complex lives of transboundary biographies and point to the fact that the transnational embodiment was based on rules and limits, where pretendting and deceptive strategies had to counterbalance the fact that legal security belonged to those who preferred not to move.

5 Conclusions: The Transcultural Grave

Borders, limits, frontiers and boundaries confirm a pervasive mythological metaphor for each severed head of the Hydra two will grow in its place. With each delimitation begins a dynamic process of limitation. Transcultural history faces the Hydra and renounces comparative methods by focusing on transboundary processes of exchange. Following border violations and sanctions, transcultural history gives visibility to undeclared cultural limits, to border crossing actors, to a range of actions that define transboundary controls, and a way of arriving at a self-reflective historiography.

What are we giving up by following this line of thinking? Are we replacing a collective, meaningful history with the history of a cosmopolitan elite? Are we endangering progress towards personal freedom, an undoubtedly useful part of Hegel’s philosophy of history? Introducing fragmentation and competing borderlines, proposing the concept of differing historicities may destroy the intellectual tools needed for the development of a universal history. The twenty-first century will probably desperately seek a new universal history, since pollution, global warming, and infectious diseases represent only a few examples for which a global approach is needed. The question is whether or not this new universal history will develop in the Hegelian sense, as a state centred pattern of rules, based on Western enlightenment.

A further development of subaltern studies and a transfer of this approach to the well established entities of nineteenth century historiography can invigorate a non-elitist, global history from below. There is an interesting trend, which was brought to the debate by Gopalan Balachandran and further elaborates the idea of subaltern cosmopolitanism. New discussions reflect on the use of subaltern studies’ approaches in international relations research. The question of whether “the Subaltern can speak to/in International Relations” may gain an additional dimension, because the forms of relational search options—presented, for example, by the database LONSEA—will widen the scope, probably suggesting a history of subaltern diplomacy.

At least several attempts to develop a new universalism have been made. The political scientist Susan Buck-Morss, for example, is in favour of “approaching the universal not by subsuming facts within overarching systems or homogenizing...
premises, but by attending to the edges of systems, the limits of premises, the boundaries of historical imagination in order to trespass, trouble, and tear these boundaries down.\textsuperscript{106} There is growing academic interest in libertarian movements; in anarchism\textsuperscript{107} in the revolutionary motley crews; in the Black Atlantic; in the unruly sailors, pirates, men and women at the scene who shaped cosmopolitan contact zones.\textsuperscript{108} However, most of these approaches see in these newly discovered outcasts a history not only suppressed by the master narrative of the nineteenth century, the history of class, race and the nation, but also one that flourished in early modern history, coming to an end in the nineteenth century.

Within European history, a main aim is to (re)discover the important contributions to enlightenment and revolution by persons other than the acknowledged actors, citizens and workers. The historiographical approach advocated follows the idea of “porosity” and the introduction of historical ordering principles as an evocation, and not as a copy of the past. Ordering principles always need boundaries and there is always a transgressive force involved.\textsuperscript{109} In contrast, transcultural history gets closer to the potential conflict not only between established actors but also within the society in question. The focus on multiplying boundaries opens a history of misunderstandings, of wrong translations and insecurities. Often enough, mimicry and heterotropic communication do not serve as the outcast’s safe haven, but can be found in the centre of power, in the allegedly universal rules that stop being universal when migrants are concerned.

The question still remains whether transcultural history fosters, against its declared intentions, the history of an elite. Cultural sensitivity and a wider perspective may come at the cost of history being reduced to researching the select few who crossed borders, visited World’s Fairs, participated in international congresses or just appreciated arbitrary aspects of foreign life. Even if migration is considered to be as important, non-elitist part of transculturality, the question remains whether there is a social awareness of entanglement, or whether Little Italys and Chinatowns point to forms of transculturality where foreign cultures establish distinction on a tentative basis. In a period of globalisation, the understanding of what a foreigner is grew in complexity, as can be seen in the shifting concept of the expatriate, which is of growing importance in the twenty-first century. An expatriate as a “tentative foreigner” may not be interested in making contact with his or her surroundings, and the same may be true for those who always reside in one place. Both may ignore global interconnectivity or prefer imagining parallel lives, despite all obvious daily evidence of entanglements. Transculturality therefore, must avoid the pitfall of applying the mobile lifestyle of our current age, and bear in mind the imagination of foreignness as a phenomenon unconnected to everyday life.

The investigation of graves, for example, can yield evidence for how societies manage transcultural entanglements in certain ways at different times. Such investigations will also reveal whether the constructivist transcultural approach holds up when investigating times that are distant from today’s mobility. Rarely are societies more involved in cultural entanglement than when deciding the location and appearance of graves. Before the end of World War II, the dead were not reanimated, although there were exclusive exceptions. Instead, culminating in the catastrophic losses of World War I, each war produced transcultural memory sites, which were mentioned in the peace treaties, and introduced global forms of mourning and remembrance. With the framework of mourning in place, World War I’s endless fields of identical tombstones with foreign language names showed a new form of globality. The poppy, for example, acquired metaphorical meaning and became the symbol of remembrance throughout the British Empire. In 1915/16 Australian soldiers, as well as combatants from India and New Zealand, died in the battles of Gallipoli, a Turkish peninsula that controlled access to the Black Sea. The cemeteries in Gallipoli became highly nationalised places, important for the national identities of Australia, New Zealand, India and Canada. The same applied to cemeteries elsewhere. With Chinese “coolies” buried in Flanders fields, for example, and not in some urban cosmopolitan cemeteries, this process of identity-building became a global phenomenon.

One might object to regarding a world war as a transcultural factor, because of its cruel, fatal efficiency; however, as mentioned above, the way to handle the dead already had a transcultural prehistory. A new and no less transcultural aspect came with the introduction of cremation into liberal Christian and Jewish societies at the end of the nineteenth century. The complex controversy surrounding the new transferability of corpses increased reflections on Hindu and Buddhist practices in the West, Western supporters of cremation had already mentioned Indian and Buddhist traditions as transcultural background.\textsuperscript{109} But citing this Asian precedence to find an old cultural tradition that could fill the European gap also provided an opportunity to confirm Western supremacy: as a matter of course, all liberal Western cremationists mentioned the British as enlightened rulers who had stopped the barbaric burning of Indian widows. However, in the 1920s, the appearance of Asian burials in Europe, the Western adoption of Asian practices, and the mention of mixed rituals demonstrated first attempts at global forms of mourning, all transcultural in nature.\textsuperscript{110}

\textsuperscript{106} Buck-Morss, Hegel, Hait and Universal History, 79.

\textsuperscript{107} Anderson, Under three Flags: Anarchism and the Anti-Colonial Imagination.


\textsuperscript{109} Buck-Morss, Hegel, Hait and Universal History, 111–12.


Part II: Methods

1 Introduction: Adapting Methods to Transcultural Topics or Developing Transculturality as a Method

The question of whether well-established methods are flexible enough for transcultural topics evokes a rather technical answer: since transculturality crosses borders the source material should also have been produced by corresponding multilayered agencies. With this in mind, we can then explain to what extent traditional methods should adapt to new fields. Firstly, source material is not limited to written texts. Oral traditions, intangible heritage, and visual representation of the past require a well-equipped toolbox. Even texts—still a key element in historical research—need a specific awareness of transcultural aspects. Multilingual texts and questions of translation play an increasing role in historical research.

To what extent the method used in historical research should be criticised as culturally biased is a much more complicated and difficult issue. On one side, analytical tools and methods of questioning the past are closely related to the historical development of the discipline, and therefore drenched in methodological Eurocentrism. On the other side, transculturality as just another constructivist approach does not come closer to the "real" past.

Since the awareness of this problem might open an additional window that shows the complex mechanics of how the past turns into history, the graph below clarifies the process of cognition and explains the methodological focus of transcultural research (see Graph 1).

Presupposing the close entanglement between theoretical and methodological issues, this part will investigate transculturality as a method, not just as an additional field of topics. By asking how historians acquire information, and how they know what the crucial questions are, the methodological discussion highlights two key terms of historical research. Getting information and shaping the most relevant research questions are the highlights of daily academic practice. However, we will see that even an apparently inconspicuous bibliography can mislead the researcher.
Graph 1: Focusing on transcultural aspects of history requires a new research approach not only in terms of theory, but also in terms of methodology.

Although this part provides some topics very common to historical research, the aim is to merge daily practice with the questioning of transcultural entanglements. Transculturality, therefore, will be discussed in this part as a method for gaining information and asking questions, as an analytical tool to overcome an essentialist understanding of cultures, which is, if nothing else, helpful for a globalised twenty-first century.

2 Changing Structures of Cognition

2.1 Structures of Cognition and Establishing New Paradigms

Since Thomas S. Kuhn’s groundbreaking study of the structure of scientific revolutions, it became crucial to know how academic disciplines develop beyond a mechanistic understanding of research that enlarges knowledge by collecting information. Kuhn located revolutionary change in the modification of the disciplinary matrix. Referring to the Copernican revolution, Kuhn gives us a good idea what the oft-quoted change of paradigm means: the sun, not the earth, became the centre of the universe. Of course, this example poses two questions: firstly, does transculturality introduce a sea change or just a new label, and secondly, how do we use the valuable scientific literature that has been written up until now? The results achieved by applying these research designs will tell us whether or not transculturality will become the accepted paradigm of twenty-first century historical research. However, the debate about a new shaping of history as an academic discipline raises scholars’ awareness of the culturally biased form of knowledge production. In explaining changing paradigms, Kuhn did not need to discuss problems that became crucial for the twenty-first century: is there a universal scientific method, or is it always culturally biased? Do we have to abandon the idea of science, as impartial and neutral? The awareness of global dimensions has established the need for the discussion of ontology rather than epistemology, the fundamental question of what all human beings have in common rather than the finer differences between epistemologies, where the question of how we know what we know is crucial.

Lorraine Daston offered the example of clouds to explain the problem. In 1896, an International Cloud-Atlas introduced the possibility of connecting “the same words to the same things,” an enterprise that consolidated on a multilingual level “collective habits of perception, even of ill-defined objects,” and was even understood and used in a moment of “all-at-one-ness” outside the scientific community.

Such examples invite the investigation into the burgeoning of communities with special attention to the history of science in its global context. Research literature, therefore, is crucial as source material for a transcultural history. In the same way that a professional dealing with primary sources requires certain rules and questioning techniques, the research literature that we encounter during our research has to be critically evaluated regardless of the actual paradigm. Just as with primary sources, it is necessary to acquire additional knowledge about the research context in which those works originate. Here we are also guided by presuppositions, i.e. implicit assumptions, models and structures of thinking.

Apart from the necessity of reading carefully and generally observing information in a critical light, historians need to master techniques of systematising knowledge and insights. Likewise, they need to have a firm grasp of the various methods and theories in history as well as a firm understanding of the history of the discipline.

Compared to a transcultural research design, the major problem with research literature is a mostly unspoken, indirect but obvious form of methodological nationalism and Eurocentrism.

In some cases, this (self-) critical dealing with literature can lead to us increasingly challenge established opinions and seek to replace them with new theories. Sometimes the reading of academic literature can also bring about a correction in our own point of view, thus allowing us to phrase our initial hypotheses more precisely. Yet, most of all, this is where the results of the information process should be collated to provide practical consequences. After an interdisciplinary and globally oriented search for literature, the transcultural approach seeks to unveil and question the typical Eurocentric foundations of Western literature. The omnipresence of Eurocentrism is clearly visible. Simply open a random page of one of the world histories or, even more appropriately, a chronologically ordered

196 Ibid.: 104.
197 Ibid.: 106.
reference work. Then highlight in red everything that is European or Western, and in yellow everything that shows other cultures not presented as agencies in their own right, with their own traditions and role perceptions, but instead as objects of European power politics. The result is astonishing. It is not only the explicit, but also mostly the presupposed hypotheses and theories that we need to uncover and replace in a transcultural practice of reading.

2.2 The Methodological Focus of Transcultural History: Clash or Convergence?

"On hot days the cool water of a river usually invites for a refreshing and purifying bath." Used in an everyday context, this sentence makes sense; nobody would claim this to be untrue. If one were to ask a chemist, however, what an ordinary river was made of, his/her answer would not simply be “water.” Amongst all the water molecules a chemist would detect an impressive variety of organic molecules, minerals, metals, etc. In fact, one would be hard-pressed to find in nature any large quantities of pure water, that is to say H₂O only. As it is with “water,” so it is with “culture,” especially if one is acquainted with the broad notion of “culture” that has established itself in the humanities over the last few decades. The way in which academics in cultural and social studies proceed is quite similar to the way the chemist transforms the broad notion of water into a subject specific cosmic. Under the influence of the cultural turn, the everyday notion of “culture” has become an analytical tool that describes what societies share in terms of common ideas, values, institutions and practices. Looking at things from this perspective, is the way that the natural scientist deals with the phenomenon of water, and the way the cultural scientist deals with culture, really that far apart?

On the one hand, certain common considerations are obvious. Just as the chemist must decide whether he/she wants to examine water in different aggregate states and distinguish snow from hail and ice, or whether the presence or absence of certain minerals is important, a historian must decide about inclusion and exclusion. Should culture describe differences? Can we think about a society as a whole rather than differentiating between nations and parties? Or should historians better analyse exterior influences, effects of overlap and hybrid forms, for example by proving that something seemingly typical, such as Swiss chocolate, is really just a result of import, adaptation and translation?

On the other hand, there are also very clear differences, especially if we stick to the example of “water.” A chemist would always insist that water is defined as H₂O, regardless of what state it is in, whether it is polluted or not, whether in Osaka or

Berne, whether used for baptism in a Christian context or in Indian cleaning rituals. But historians would not be as certain. In particular, there are those who are interested in the overlaps, described as transculturality, and would question any claims of certainty regarding the meaning of water. To them, the importance of water varies from place to place and depends on cultural context. Water, a necessity shared by all human beings that literally submerges all kinds of borders, is a good example of how a transcultural history can simultaneously include political and cultural institutions.

Water supply became one of imperialism’s most pressing issues in the late nineteenth century. As late as 1942, some historians legitimised the British rule in India by mentioning the 75000 miles of irrigation channels built under British rule. Barrages, monuments of Western economic and technical supremacy, became transcultural landmarks and were named after Western officials instead of geographical locations. The “Lloyd Barrage,” today known as Sukkur barrage, is a striking example of the political struggles beyond the uncontested need to make water available: as Time magazine insinuated, the opening of the dam, which in 1932 was the largest in the world, gave “long-nosed Viceroy Lord Williand (…) time off from his troubles with Indian Nationalists.” The dam was Britain’s token gesture to India in an attempt to undermine Gandhi’s mass movement. Its opening presented a “platform glittering with native princes and staff officers.” The barrage, today in Pakistani territory, provided an important argument in debates over the cost of British rule in India.

Even in the spheres of diplomacy and high politics water played an interesting role. In Paris in 1919, the establishment of national borders found its counter project in the confirmation of certain rivers as international zones, administered by international administrations. The Paris Peace Conference confirmed transboundary rivers as independent spaces, exempt from state sovereignties.


204 Kate Louise Mitchell, India without Fable: A 1942 Survey (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1943), 254.


and river shipping lanes were issues wherein specialists at the Paris Peace Conference overruled the politicians’ positions and gave a platform to persons not usually associated with peaceful cosmopolitanism. One example would be the British Admiral Ernest Trowbridge, who controlled the Danube at the end of World War I.

Today, the United Nations has made water an issue of international importance. The convention on the protection of transboundary watercourses, the development of an international “water law,” and the combination of international law, civil liability, and resource management help clarify the transcultural reading of H₂O.  

The history of water has yet to be written. An attempt at such a history must follow a transcultural approach, because the debate needs the disclosure of cultural, political, and economic differences.

Following this line of thought, the study of foreign cultures can offer an insight into the constructivist perception of culture, probably resulting in the conclusion that there is no authentic culture, but always a transboundary bricolage. However, in spite of the omnipresence of cultural transfer processes and adaptations, powerful dissociation and differentiation processes shape cultural communities in a highly visible way. Claiming cultural authenticity, societies established monopolies of interpretation. For example: nineteenth century antisemitism and the antagonistic border debate about civilisation and culture between France and Germany illustrate the pertinence of investigating whether or not societies accept cultural diversity.

Omnipresent processes of adaptation or interaction are therefore less important than figuring out how small scopes of actions are, whether they change, and if they do, in which directions. As already mentioned, the humanities play a decisive role in setting borders. In the case of adaptation, one culture gradually blends into another. Consequently, history develops almost imperceptibly so that, although it remains philologically interesting, subtle long-term realignments are hardly—or at least with difficulty—palpable at the level of primary sources. For this reason we suggest a concept of transculturality (as already outlined in the first section of the book) that emphasises border crossing and border violation. The following section therefore explores how to gain empirical evidence (e.g. source material) that documents the highly dynamic and volatile setting of borders in different times. Of course, the question of whether this approach makes a difference to our understanding of the past remains crucial.


2.3 Methodological Premises of a Transcultural History

Like every other method, transcultural history looks at the past from a certain perspective. It prioritises a certain set of sources over others and selects the relevant information with very specific premises; it reads both historical evidence and research literature in a critical and interpretative way, and finally produces a new interpretation of the past from the entirety of material in a constructivist manner.

In order for this to be done in a way that is result-orientated and consistent with the theory, a transcultural historian requires a rather comprehensive methodological toolbox. Some elements of conventional historical methodology are still analytical tools for transcultural history without requiring any large adjustments. Yet it is important to leave behind other parts of the framework of rules set by European historiography of the nineteenth century. A history of border violations and trans-cultural negotiation processes has to consider at least two sides. We might even decide to follow Gerard Delanty, who argues that confronting local and/or national traditions with global events is not enough, since this form of confrontation always influences the local, national, and the global. Where can we find and document this kind of cosmopolitan imagination? The ongoing debate on seaport cities offers an example of the merging of multilayered histories. Most historians agree that ports are cosmopolitan places with specific social rules. There is, however, an increasing interest in the idea of a “port society” with a presumed existence outside even the coastline. Initiated by the diaspora debates in Jewish history, this idea removes border violations and transcultural negotiations from a concept that is limited to individual biographies. To live on borders might indeed be dangerous, but it is also a special form of social cohesion. As mentioned by Chris Rumford, civil societies as well as states can be analysed with a focus on their border making power. This involves thinking and analysing in a network-like way and is committed to the description of conflicting interdependences. Even though method and approach may still be dependent on the perspective, often in a Eurocentric sense, a transcultural historiography is always aware or makes itself aware of its own perspective. As opposed to other theoretical approaches, the nationalist, cultural, or social conditions of every historical analysis are not just echoed as implicit presuppositions. Rather, the transcultural tool of the historian will, due to the relational structure of border violations, bring all of Cherniwo’s “zombies” to light and thematise them explicitly.


An inherent feature of every transcultural historiography is a global level of analysis. As part of global history, transculturality prefers interactions and asymmetries between different cultural spheres. It is particularly interested in globally circulating ideas, and in competing claims for a monopoly of interpretation on international and transnational levels. From a methodological point of view, thinking globally avoids re-introducing cultural essentialism through the backdoor of transcultural entanglement. However, there are some difficulties to avoid: analysing places and situations of dense transcultural interaction presumes cultural authenticity in less entangled fields. Transculturality therefore is nothing more than a very special case, and cultural essentialism an unspoken implication. Transcultural history needs to pay special attention to two issues: firstly, what is truly new globally and not just an addition of national histories? Secondly, how can we make sure that “global” has more than a spatial definition? Debates on the differentiation between the local and/or national on a first level, global on a second, and cosmopolitan on a third help to find an adequate approach.\textsuperscript{212} The same is true for concepts operating on multiple levels.\textsuperscript{213} Recent attempts to research the history of the United Nations offer an example of the consequences: the United Nations is no longer understood to be a platform for decision making between sovereign member states. The newest literature differentiates between a “second” and a “third” United Nations. The second UN includes research on international administration. The third UN encloses all those who work as experts and NGOs in the United Nations’ fields without being a formal member.\textsuperscript{214}

A transcultural method does not isolate well-defined agencies, organisations, institutions, and states at the expense of the interactions between them. Quite the contrary, a multiarchival, multilingual research design should highlight transboundary networks and entanglements. Although literature is available on the difficulties of understanding what “networks” are, historians should bear in mind their constructivist understanding: networks (and entanglements) are functional. They are outside the historians’ preferred ordering categories, such as events, concepts, or institutions, and even in the most sophisticated archives’ inventories there are no “networks” mentioned. The art of historical research consists of having the knowledge needed to understand that there is a potential for noncompliance beyond each proclamation of norms and rules. It is therefore crucial not to lose contact with the well known master narratives of the period mentioned. To tell a transcultural history of the Paris Peace Conference does not make sense without mentioning World War I as a political argument crucial for the postwar situation. It is extremely helpful, however, to carefully analyse the meaning of history as mentioned in the source material. What insights do we gain? Restitution, a major topic with both a transcultural background in global history and a special impact after 1919, always implies a rewriting of history, a proposition that adapts the past to the present. Conflicting expolatory historical narratives, for example about lootened material and booties of war, help us to understand what a given society defined as transculturality without explicitly mentioning the term.\textsuperscript{215}

Taking the classical Greek meaning of methodes (μεθόδος “path of investigation”) literally, historians should avoid following a unidirectional path and instead explore different levels of abstraction. The question is whether or not global concepts influence local settings, or how and why originally local practices suddenly result in worldwide dynamics. Taking this into consideration we will provide examples of source material where such forms of entanglements appear. Especially helpful are World’s Fairs and international organisations as well as ways of dealing with death, a topic equally relevant for all human societies.

A transcultural approach is not limited to the search for and examination of texts. Departing from the limitations of classical historiography, we suggest a much broader notion of sources. There is a wealth of visual and aural material available. Allowing such primary sources not only includes material beyond textual evidence, it also underlines the interdisciplinary character of transcultural history. Historians with more than one methodological and disciplinary background might have a considerable advantage.

Source material however, remains closely connected to space, time, and the question of agency. The difference lies in the critical investigation into why certain artefacts of the past became history and gained acknowledgement as source material, while others disappeared.

3 Getting Information

3.1 The Historical Value of Information

In 2001, the Nobel Prize in Economics was given to a group of researchers who had introduced the concept of asymmetrical information. George Akerlof, Michael Spence and Joseph Stiglitz insisted on the economic value of knowing when buyers and sellers have different information.\textsuperscript{216} Almost the same is true for historiography. As we saw earlier, history is an empirical discipline and we need source material for gaining results. At the same time, the process of how to access source material is highly biased. How societies organise access to the past not only depends upon their aims and expectations but also results from the established storage strategies. In addition, information is based on a certain materiality, which separates the academic disciplines involved.

\textsuperscript{212} Delanty, The Cosmopolitan Imagination: The Renewal of Critical Social Theory.

\textsuperscript{213} Highly important reading for historians is: Eisenstadt, “Multiple Modernities.”


\textsuperscript{215} Vrečjnik, International Law, Museums and the Return of Cultural Objects.

For a long time, historiography preferred written sources and neglected oral, aural, and visual traditions. Historians preferred libraries, museums and archives and avoided including the non-terrestrial material that the past left for us. As the history of the discipline is closely related to the imagined community of the nation, methodological nationalism shapes even those research designs that are not related to the history of the nation. Statistics or diplomatic correspondences are therefore collected in national entities and prepared for comparison, while information on transboundary topics contradicts the commonly used ordering principles. For trans-cultural research, these rather trivial facts provide methodological difficulties when transforming information into a key term of historical research.\(^{217}\)

This rather complex background influences the procedure of gaining information, which is always the starting point for every researcher. Of course, information does not describe a data collection that is composed in an objective way. Data—an umbrella term for source material of all kinds—only becomes “information” because of a specific research interest, against the background of previous knowledge, on the basis of an interpretative technique, and in the form of verbal realisation. By way of an example, for a farmer (or city planner, or family house owner) who is digging a trench, a piece of pottery in the soil is normally little more than an obstacle affecting his spade. For an archaeologist, who recognises it to be part of a bowl, and who knows the products typical of a cultural community, this shard can become a piece of information that supports his thesis that around 3900 BC there was a settlement of the Cortalloid culture in this very place.

Information describes a two-way communication. Only what you ask for will be answered, while other important knowledge still remains in a status nameable as “raw data.” Talking about raw data is actually only a methodological device used to describe what precedes the information. Raw data should be understood as transcodendal objects: they lie beyond the possibilities of our cognition, because our own way of looking at the world and at the past is always slanted. Being aware of filtering knowledge in a particular manner during the process of selecting information describes the normal daily practice of research, but for a transcultural approach it is of an even higher importance.

The process of getting information comprises of steps and skills, such as the search for literature, creating bibliographies of primary and secondary sources, and a professional handling of resources, such as encyclopaedias, source editions, journals, etc. A special challenge for a transcultural gain in information is the

\(^{217}\) Significantly, “information” is not mentioned in the major encyclopedia of historical key terms, *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, although the history of the concept fits well in the approach used by its authors, Werner Conze and Reinhardt Koselleck. Access to information also indicates the distance between a democratic society—where the sovereign citizen needs information for political decision making—and the Ancien Régime, where feudal division is related to arcane fields. Additionally, information gained a certain materiality and its production, transfer, and availability had the power to shift borders, as explained by the French philosopher Etienne Balibar in his concept of the “polysemic nature of borders”. Etienne Balibar, *Politics and the Other Scene* (London: Verso, 2002), 81ff.

3.2 Turning Information into a Research Design

3.2.1 Looking for New Insights

Value and quality of information are closely connected to the research design. They depend on conceptualising a questionnaire around the problem that needs to be solved. This research design process includes, very simply, the disclosure of what the researcher wants to know, analyse, or prove, and explains the manner of access to the past, the hypotheses used, the theoretical approach, and the choice of source material. Since history is first of all an empirical discipline, the choice and the very existence of source material are crucial. This rather trivial aspect often turns out to be difficult and is closely connected to the procedure of preservation. Often, material simply did not survive, and newer material did not always survive as well as older material. For example, before the use of paper in Asia, palm leaves were typically used and have since proved to be more resistant than paper to the humid climate. Gaps in collections of historical sources, restricted files, or terms of copyright can prevent access to central documents. Therefore, information about reasons and mechanisms of storage techniques and specific cultures of archival preservation is crucial, as are insights into the reasons why sources did not survive.\(^{218}\) Was the material deleted because it was considered too uninteresting to be kept? Does the mediacy of the material allow for duplication, or was the letter unique, written by a single person and therefore forever lost when it was destroyed? Do we know enough to say that certain source material disappeared because it was too controversial to be preserved? Are there restrictive rules and laws for preservation and does the researcher have any chance to access the material? Historians have to bear in mind how significantly access modalities changed throughout

\(^{218}\) The same is true for today’s digital archives. In this case too we must always ask who has privileged access to exclusive databases and who decides what will be digitised and openly published on the web?
history. Today, the model that gives legal access to governmental documents is spreading.\textsuperscript{219} Documents, once released by freedom of information requests in the USA, are available to all researchers. For those working on intellectual history, a visit of the FBI site might give new insights.\textsuperscript{220}

A preservation history might detect looting—something that is especially interesting when working in a global and transcultural context, because places of preservation are sometimes far away from the places described in the sources.\textsuperscript{221} Such issues are useful for tracking down the borders we are interested in. For these reasons, a research design, though it should be phrased precisely enough at the beginning of research, should never be too tightly and rigidly framed; it is only normal that there will be unexpected challenges due to the lack of source material and of course new insights that change the thesis during research.

In spite of all the case by case difficulties that need solving, there is still a set of rules that helps turn information into a research design. Therefore, a viable historical research question ... 1. ... includes transboundary perspectives but is not too broad. When looking for a manageable topic we suggest starting by questioning the territoriality of the respective fields of interest and asking how costly transgressions can be.\textsuperscript{222} One of the key elements of a transcultural topic is its contested affiliation of space and place.\textsuperscript{223} Asking why an object, a subject, or a concept is regarded in a certain historical context as foreign, as identity building, or as border crossing is


\textsuperscript{221} See above, footnote 157: looted art.

\textsuperscript{222} Territorial affiliation and time belong to the historical points of reference. The fact that environments shape societies is not at all new. It is the importance of space that makes shaping a global history a long lasting concept. See Fernand Braudel, La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II (Paris: A. Colin, 1949). However, the so-called spatial turn in history means more than new reflections on the connectivity between geography and history.

\textsuperscript{223} Spatial histories do not understand the environment as a given fact that shapes and influences societies. Rather, spaces are seen as being made by humans. Spatial history encompasses urban spaces, but also invisible, virtual, and intellectual spaces. The Republic of Letters, for example, was never a state. Nevertheless, it brought together intellectuals from different places in a kind of space. In the twenty-first century, spatial history is accompanied by certain IT-equipment, with models of collaborative research and a strong focus on digital visualization. For an example see Stanford University, "The Spatial History Project," accessed March 12, 2011, http://www.stanford.edu/group/spatialhistory/cgi-bin/site/project.php?id=-997.

the first step in this direction. Use concrete examples, select exemplary events, ask for reasonable temporal limits, investigate representative people. This gives you structure and makes it easier to decide what is really important.

2. ... is not a summary and paraphrasing of relevant overviews.

At the moment, a transcultural approach has neither the disadvantage of being already covered by an overwhelming quantity of literature, nor the advantage of the scientific community agreeing on a few, but important publications. Therefore, innovative ideas are needed from all levels of academic research. 3. ... is not descriptive but explicative.

Transcultural history can tell stories about what happened in 1919 Paris beyond the debate on what the Peace of Versailles meant for the prospective development of European history. To follow Lawrence of Arabia in his daily routine may be of interest if the research question is not limited to describing the person. The question is why knowledge about him is important. The discovery of source material is just an intermediary step and a summary of sources does not count as a research result.

4. ... considers current tendencies in research and oversteps the boundaries between area studies and the discipline of history.

Good research ties in with the research community’s dialogues. For historians, the World Wide Web offers spaces where different platforms realise the Republic of Letters that the philosophers of enlightenment had in mind.\textsuperscript{224} For transcultural history the variety offered by Humanities and Social Sciences Online, or h-net, permits the overcoming of disciplinary borders and encompasses the difference between history as a discipline and history as a part of area studies.

3.2.2 Examples: A Transcultural Approach to Biographies, Institutions, Visual Source Material

As an empirical discipline history needs examples to show how a transcultural approach differs from Western historiography. Taken from the 1920s and 1930s, our preferred time frame, the following examples present the potential of a transcultural biography (Jan Christian Smuts); a global intergovernmental organisation (League of Nations) and a lesson on how high politics and popular culture interact (Hergé’s hero Tintin).

1. Jan Christiaan Smuts - Life and Work

The title “Jan Christiaan Smuts - Life and Work” suggests a traditional biography of an important male political figure, in this case the national hero and founder of the South African Republic. Indeed, in more than 100 publications on Smuts he appears as a romantic lover, as a general, a statesman, an internationalist promoting the League of Nations, and as a scientist involved in the debate about holism. Research on Smuts may be, and has been, done from a national perspective.225 However, a transcultural approach will instead investigate the transboundary aspect of his career. In a transcultural research design, the changing centres of gravity are important parts of the key questions. Therefore, Smut’s shifting role in historiography—from supporting the narrative of white nation building in South Africa, to illustrating critical considerations of racist ideologies, to informing today’s focus on Smuth’s deliberation with Gandhi—226 reflects the changing interest in presenting global coherence or nationalism in the twenty-first century. The methodological innovation of such a study is therefore not evident. Smuts, with his many changing political posts and liaisons on the one hand, and his work as a scientist on the other, is at least an enigmatic figure who is not entirely inappropriate for consideration from a transcultural perspective, or indeed from the aspect of border violations. A more concise, focused and quite acceptable question could thus be derived from a general idea, such as “The contribution of Jan Christiaan Smuts to the creation of the mandate system from the perspective of former colonies.” Another approach could reconstruct Smut’s global connections, for example based on his membership in the World Brotherhood Federation.227

2. The Role of the League of Nations on the Path to World War II

Discussing the role of the League of Nations on the path to World War II completely lacks reference to a transcultural approach; instead such a title uses the vocabulary of classic political history, where institutional agencies dominate, namely states and intergovernmental organisations. Secondly, even with methodological characteristics of a transcultural paradigm, the issue would still not be feasible. Neither would it be clear where such an analysis should start and end in terms of content, nor which comprehensible, intersubjective criteria for assessing the League’s role could be taken. It would also be entirely unclear why certain documents would ultimately be chosen from the endless sea of potential sources.


3. Getting Information

The topic has been studied extensively, but not exhaustively.228 The problem is that the League of Nations, a multilayered entity, is narrowed down to World War II—which we can only know ex post, while the sources produced before the war could, of course, not have anticipated it.

When applying a transcultural approach this methodological problem increases. The introduction of border crossing not limited to national borders also destroys the easiest way of telling stories by following time lines. Both could happen—that crossing borders brings objects, concepts, persons in a new “chronoscape,”229 or that parallel time frames open. In this case, it is interesting to ask whether transcultural entanglements collide in different understandings of time, or whether the awareness of different chronologies point to the future of a historical narrative with a polycentric world. Whatever the historian’s choice may be, reflections on the narrative’s time frame gain a crucial place in the methodological settings. Thus, researchers must face the hardly feasible challenge of how to deal with the extensive scientific discourse in this vast topic area. This study would not lead to more than random platitudes and speculations on a trite question. However, accessing the League as the first formally acknowledged global platform where non-Western states were at least able to claim political awareness of a global instead of a Western international system might start a re-evaluation of the League, which is today, as a failed institution, a rather marginalised topic within post World War I international history.


In 1936, the well-known Belgian comic-strip author Hergé (George Prosper Remi, 1907–1983) published a new Tintin adventure titled Le Lotus Bleu (The Blue Lotus). The comic poses a variety of innovative research questions when analysed from a transcultural perspective and calls attention to a type of primary source that is otherwise rarely examined. The title—“The Other Lytton Report. Hergé’s Representation of the Sino-Japanese Conflicts in Tintin et le Lotus Bleu”—arouses interest and implies that here both politics and everyday popular culture mingle in an explosive way. Hergé’s artistic work was strongly influenced by a Chinese friend

228 Struggling with chronology is a characteristic of newer literature, see, for example, the works of Zara Steiner, a well-known scholar of interwar European history, who insists in her latest publication that the time setting makes a difference: “Differently from most historians, I have shown that the management of the European state system in the decade after 1919, while in some ways resembling that of the past, assumed a shape that distinguished it both from the pre-war decades and the post-1933 period.” Steiner, The Lights that Failed: European International History, 1919–1933, vii.
229 For the methodological problems of chronology see Lorena, Konstruktion der Vergangenheit: eine Einführung in die Geschichtstheorie.
and he had good connections to the Far East.\textsuperscript{230} The original edition of this comic-strip can be seen as a civil society's attempt to exert a subtle influence on politics and the public. Though this appears a promising start, it is also evident that this topic will only suffice for an essay. Hergé translated high politics into a visual story that combines political incidences (the Mudjen incident, the Lytton Commission) with Western prejudice, while also giving an accurate portrayal of Chinese aspects as explained to him by his Chinese friend. The comic-strips therefore provide a fertile field of material that is qualified to elaborate on the visualisation of international relations, the difference between pictorial messages and text, and the translation of information from newspapers into a Western narrative. This allegedly low-brow fare needs high level research. Nowadays, the original edition of this comic-strip can only be located after much effort, while the contemporary edition, which is readily available, reduced exactly those political allusions that would be interesting to examine.\textsuperscript{231}

3.3 Bibliographies: the Art of Hiding Transcultural Entanglement

3.3.1 Searching and Finding Literature: the Daily Practice of a Complex Mechanism

Creating a bibliography and achieving a balanced selection of literature is an almost subconscious automatism, a daily practice in historical research. As a first step, this chapter, which is based on a graphical overview of search strategies, explains the complex mechanism of decision making behind the well-established method of bibliography creation. A second step reveals how to deconstruct the ordering principles of bibliographies. A third discloses asymmetrical information transfer in the history of bibliographical collections.

Visually speaking, the structure of a research bibliography resembles the architecture of a Greek temple.


Graph 2 The essential pillars of a research bibliography

Such a building needs solid foundations and a roof supported by strong pillars. Just as from an architect’s perspective every element is necessary to make the building long lasting and aesthetically appealing, it is crucial for the historian to include and consider all current types of publication. The importance becomes obvious when reflecting the different purposes of scientific texts, as shown in the graph below.

A balanced research bibliography results from following a step by step procedure (Graph 3).

3.3.2 Discovering Blind Spots by Deconstructing Bibliographies

Historians deconstruct the ordering principles of bibliographies by explaining the historical context of their origins. This strategy helps to trace the whereabouts of documents that are stored or hidden in the farthest corners of archives and libraries.
TIPS AND HINTS
Check how recent this literature is and start with a book that is no older than two years. Also use the most current issues of relevant journals, if they contain lists of appropriate literature.

Non-independent Bibliographies
In the appendix of a book or other text.

References in Footnotes

TIPS AND HINTS
As opposed to large libraries, the librarians and reading areas of departments and institutes are usually organised by topical areas. Browsing these stacks is a good first step when approaching a topic. It is particularly useful because you can immediately gauge the relevance of a work and take notes if necessary.

Local Search
Browsing the stacks of a library that is organised by subject areas.

Search Via Snowball System
Starting from bibliographic references one can find other useful works by tracing them back.

Unsystematic Bibliographising
Unsystematic Bibliographising uses incomprehensive tools for the search. This makes sense for a first orientation about the topic.

Bibliographising
Bibliographising is not a one-time task but a continuing process; the product is continuously refined. The process must be documented: what has been done, what still requires work? The results must be backed up: a database of its own or in a programme for managing bibliographies (still未经/finished), even that which is not useful, should be recorded and given a brief comment. The use of a specialised programme for managing literature, such as Zotero, ensures a consistent standard for bibliographising.

Systematic Bibliographising
Systematic Bibliographising uses specific tools for a comprehensive search for primary and secondary literature. After familiarisation with the topic you should produce a catalogue of questions or a word map of key terms to be used for the search.

Meta-Bibliographies and Indexes of Databases
These tools are crucial for getting an overview, e.g. the UNESCO Archive Portal, the National Archives Access to Archival Databases, Galaxie, the Digital Collections of the UC.

Bibliographies and Databases
Try to make equal use of printed and electronic media.

General Bibliographies
These are thematically very broad, e.g. International Bibliography of Periodical Literature in the Humanities and Social Sciences.

Subject Bibliographies
Bibliographies for a particular discipline or subject, e.g. International Medieval Bibliography.

Specialised Bibliographies
Bibliographies on individuals or subject areas, e.g. Bibliography on International Psychoanalysis.

TIPS AND HINTS
It is crucial how up-to-date a bibliography is. Therefore, make sure to distinguish between:
- Historical period: What historical period is covered by the works in the bibliography?
- Reporting period: When were the works in the bibliography written?
- Publication period: When was the bibliography published?

Distinguish further between:
- General bibliographies, e.g. Nihon: Bibliography of South Asia, London 1964
- Thesaurus bibliographies, e.g. Bibliography of Asian Studies, TIBS
- Reflect on the criteria used for selection and categorisation in bibliographies and databases and ask yourself where the gaps are. With printed bibliographies use the index.
- Consult a review first to see whether an interdisciplinary loan is worth your time and energy.
- Use online databases which offer short summaries of a source along with its bibliographical details, such as Historical Abstracts.
- Full-text databases such as JSTOR can provide valuable additions and save time.

TIPS AND HINTS
As opposed to large libraries, the librarians and reading areas of departments and institutes are usually organised by topical areas. Browsing these stacks is a good first step when approaching a topic. It is particularly useful because you can immediately gauge the relevance of a work and take notes if necessary.

Library Catalogues
Today almost all library cataloguing is digital and online, such as OCLC, but there are also local indices for other inventories in many libraries.

TIPS AND HINTS
Do not only search for titles or authors but via related terms or indices too. Include keywords in foreign languages. Be aware of different spellings and translation conventions.

See available options for translation and filtering during electronic searches.

Memorize important library catalogues only for independent publications. For articles in journals and anthologies use bibliographic databases.

Ensure that you find all and any collective monographs on OCLC that specialise on your topic.

Although creating bibliographies is sometimes a rather unattractive task, it never-}

theless ultimately represents, if conducted in the right way, a veritable art.

Keeping in mind the transboundary aspect of bibliographies, the following advice of how to use information may present a slightly shifted focus compared to other search strategies:

1. The quality of a bibliography depends on completeness, accuracy, and spatial and temporal balance. The primary sources section should include a multiaxial approach that considers different media and languages. In the literature section readers should expect to find a broad selection of overviews (introductions and handbooks), specialised research literature (journal articles, monographs, texts from anthologies or congressional reports and congress papers) and auxiliary resources (such as articles from encyclopaedias). The territoriality of bibliographical research may be of some importance. The same is true for the question of what and when key texts were translated and made available outside the places of publication.

2. A good search strategy is aware of its own weaknesses and gaps and explains what and why some aspects are missing. In addition, historians need a panoramic view that is not limited to bibliographies relevant to the topic under investigation. Relevant questions are: which databases or gateways could be particularly fruitful? Can a library or an archive be used, even without knowing the language?225 Using a local research library suddenly ceases to be the first step and in fact becomes the final step, giving either the required book’s call number or, in many cases, certainty of its absence from the library’s holdings.

3. Transcultural topics call for a combination of different bibliography strategies. The systematic approach outlined above reveals the gaps that require closing. An initial, unsystematic list is drawn up of literature of valuable preliminary work done by other researchers. Full-text, searchable source material may help to solve the problem of missing ordering structures. Additional material is sometimes waiting to be discovered if the cunning historian asks where a bibliography would place topics which obviously do not fit within the categories used. Sometimes the category “general” or “miscellaneous” hides gems.

4. Moreover, for transcultural research multilingualism is crucial. For a general understanding of the line of argument in a foreign text, a rudimentary knowledge of the language can aid a decision about the opportunity of starting a collaborative research project.

5. Apart from linguistic barriers a transcultural approach aims to overcome disciplinary limitations. When selecting bibliographies, transdisciplinary latitude is useful. Other subjects and methods help to specify blind spots and sharpen the research question. For this reason it is highly recommended to look at the databases or bibliographies of related subjects.

3.3.3 Manipulating the Past: Asymmetrical Information Transfers in Bibliographies

It is important to remember that for researchers bibliographies are just intellectual tools. Due to the development of information technologies, bibliographies themselves changed and published bibliographies lost their position as unique tools of information. However, for historical research, the crucial question is who published bibliographies, and which parts of knowledge gained a bibliographical visibility while others did not. As collections of (published) information about the world beyond local knowledge, bibliographies, even bibliographies of bibliographies, have a long and not exclusively Western history. However, things changed in the nineteenth century, when the national bibliography was created. From then on, the territoriality of publication shaped worldviews. In addition to the spread of Western classification systems, which introduced a universal system for naming for plants and animals, the introduction of national bibliographies differentiated between those who published and those who became objects of description. Of course, scientific communities had their own publications, and something like the abovementioned International Cloud Atlas seemed to present a cosmopolitan alternative. But even with explicitly international bibliographies in mind, the national approach dominated and was closely connected to international politics. National bibliographies not only became a crucial element of the imagined community, but also had an impact on political structures. The production of national bibliographies was the major task of national libraries, which were mostly founded in the nineteenth century. Moreover, these libraries became the operational part of multilateral agreements signed in Brussels in 1886 that regulated the exchange of information.

Since the late nineteenth century, bibliographies have been an example of manifold activities that are aimed at language-independent classification systems and at transcription and translation tools. In this context, bibliographical collections of information play a major role in debates about realizing utopian ideas of a worldwide share of information. Political crises and wars confirm ex negativo the political value of bibliographical information and show how closely connected learned societies, bibliographical exchange of information, and politics came. After World War I, the scientific communities served their respective countries, and these responsibilities and coherences did not just disappear after armistice. On an international level, the former allied states founded the International Research Council, renamed the International Council of Scientific Unions in 1931. This organisation of academies excluded the former enemy states, and German complaints about being isolated shaped the discussion in the 1920s. Therefore, there are good reasons to look beyond the development of bibliographies within a global context. For example, the participation of Asian states in international organisations with bibliographical focus gives important insights into the political value of information exchange. A transcultural approach not only confirms that tools of information transfer also have a history; it also shows that the historicity of ordering principles opens new perspectives and an awareness of topics, concepts, and subjects across the master narratives: in times of national bibliographies, which cover nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, the rather difficult process of establishing pools of global information presented an often used chance to question Western domination. In addition, all these explicit transboundary concepts help to specify what is beyond the mainstream of the master narratives. In the 1930s, the International Council of Scientific Unions replaced its former intention of excluding the enemy with the aim to ‘guide international scientific work in fields where no competent associations exist.’ Furthermore, specialists in bibliographical information transfer often provide examples of transboundary careers and biographies with a strong element of foreign cultural concepts.

Theodore Deodatus Nathanael Besterman (1904–1976) serves as an example of a specialist in the creation of transboundary bibliographies. After World War I, he mingled in the esoteric circles of the Theosophical Society, published on the

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235 Melvil Dewey, Classification and Subject Index for Cataloguing and Arranging the Books and Pamphlets (Amherst: Lockwood & Brainard Company, 1876).
236 Crucial for this development was the abovementioned Paul Otlet, founder of the International Institute of Bibliography (1895, Brussels), later renamed as International Institute of Documentation.
237 For an overview see Feather and Sturges, International Encyclopedia of Information and Library Science.
238 China and India belonged to the International Federation of Library Associations (founded in 1929).
history of bibliographical compilation, headed the UNESCO information department after World War II, and became a specialist for French Enlightenment and Voltaire. Another example is Henri Cordier (1849–1925), the editor of the Bibliotheca Sinica. He too was a collector of information with bibliographical intentions. After 1918, the Institute of Intellectual Cooperation in Paris, one of the League of Nations' most important networks for information transfer, took on the challenge of making bibliographical information globally accessible. Among other search tools, the Institute edited the Index Translationum, a list of translated works. Published in 1932, the first issue limited the works to Western language translations. However, the Institute published its own series of translations from Japanese and the idea spread fast, even in times of war. In 1940 reviewers mentioned an Index Translationum which was published in the English version of the Quarterly Bulletin of Chinese Bibliography.

3.4 Research Literature: Information Beyond Pretension

3.4.1 A Box Scheme for Thinking Outside the Box

In research literature knowledge appears to be refracted in several ways by differing perspectives. For historians it is important to understand what older literature can reveal, and what is outside contemporary knowledge. It is crucial to know whether or not research literature follows the master narrative, and no less critical to assess whether the historian's own experiences inform his or her work. For example, the difficult and multilayered historical interpretations of the end of the Cold War show how critically all these aspects influence the choice of historical topics and their presentations. In order to develop a sense for these issues, we propose following an established procedure of analysis of research literature, as explained in Graph 4.

Since different settings of categories are possible, the graph below can be read in various ways. Moreover, as the following discussion shows, recent developments in historiography undo the rigid classification in three of the graph's parameters. Transcultural history as an approach, as it has come up in recent debates,

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Graph 4 Visualisation of parameters for an analysis of research literature

Incorporates elements from political history, modern cultural history and, depending upon the thematic focus, concepts from social or religious history or the history of ideas. While older works can in many cases be placed within one of the above classic paradigms, more recent texts prefer hybrid forms. Again, it is important to mention that the paradigms in the graph are subject to change. It is perfectly possible that some of these hybrid forms may have the potential to become a leading paradigm within the next decade.

The x-axis describes the scientific paradigms. On the y-axis both perspective and the degree of abstraction are indicated. The key questions are: how much is the text's argument guided by primary sources? Which functions do primary sources have? Are they immediately discussed and commented on, or does the work in question give potentially highly complex theoretical explanations that are presented against a historical background or a historically well-founded model of periodisation?

The z-axis indicates the relevance of the target audience. It makes a difference whether a text has been written for academics who are conducting research in the same or a related field; whether the information has been adapted to schools, or whether the text is intended to entertain a general audience.
3.4.2 The Tunes of Transcultural Research

Since the late 1980s, the segmentations and amalgamations of theoretical paradigms have consistently been among the most influential developments in academic historiography. New approaches grew out of the conglomerate of theories, complementing elements of existing models and recombining them creatively to form new ones, as did transcultural history. However, this has lead to a situation wherein, at present, there is no longer a set canon or handbook that could claim to explain exactly how to write history. The question arises, therefore, as to how we can reliably acquire background knowledge in a global society that has not yet produced a definitive transcultural historiography. In order to achieve transcultural progress in knowledge we must therefore use existing literature to open up the historical context central to our question. Ultimately, this boils down to using literature not only as a medium of information but also reading it carefully so that readers will not be taken in by its theoretical and methodological presuppositions. The fact that historical interpretations always originate in a particular historical context is hardly new and is something that historians have generally been wary of.

Transcultural history gains visibility in conceptual multiplicity and border crossing networks. Terms and concepts considered as singular entities opened new perspectives when presented in their multiple guises; “historicities” rather than a “history” dismiss the idea of the one and only universal concept of history. “Multiple modernities” rather than one path towards modernity question the unidirectional way of progress. In addition, transcultural history examines interconnections and networks rather than strictly causal schemes of action and reaction. If we want to evaluate existing literature according to transcultural criteria, we must reflect on the circumstances of the work’s genesis more so than its content. For this we must ask ourselves: what did the historiographer choose for his or her subject and why? How, in which surroundings and why did they position the individual elements within the overall panorama? What was left out? We consider these historically conditioned forms and practices of inclusion and exclusion as central; they tell a lot about the time in which a historical work was written.

Classical historical works, the master narrative of which is the “nation”, are particularly interesting for their sections and remarks concerning border transgressions and violations. They are often not explicitly thematised, but can certainly be discerned, if this kind of literature is read against the grain. Instead of reading historical works simply as a direct source of information and accepting everything that is presented therein, we suggest a reading practice with three metacognitive levels:

Firstly, highlight elements that reach beyond or break up the traditional pattern of a nation state, such as scientific networks, religious rituals, cosmopolitans, etc.

Secondly, it is crucial to see where such developments, biographies or connections were sui generis placed by classical historiography. In which chapter(s) do they occur? How are they as incompatible elements linked to what was in line with the pattern of a nation state? Are they presented as a cumbrous foreign body or does the author try to modify them interpretatively and squeeze them somewhere into the national pattern?

Finally, one should ask which other attributions or positionings would have been possible and what is omitted or obscured by the chosen order of things. Contemplating the possible and effective thematic attributions that can be gained brings about an extra horizon of knowledge, which makes transcultural processes visible where they were not explicitly thematised, and promotes a relativising view of literature.

3.4.3 The Transcultural Reading of Non-Transcultural Literature

When reading historical works, one has to remember that every era has its standards, its particular perception, and thus its own historiography. (Ours too is only a conditional one.) When approaching a text it is best to do so in four steps, which take you from a very general examination to the search for specifically transcultural information; from a positive first appreciation to an increasingly critical dialogue with the work.

1. Reading and information: a first, uncritical reading of the text

Questions to consider: What new things and what general information does the text provide? What are the author’s main hypotheses? Which paragraphs are particularly typical of the mode of presentation in the book as a whole? What specific information does the text contain to answer my research question?

2. Contextualisation and labelling: first level of meta-cognition, i.e. an analysis of the text according to the aspect of inclusion; an examination of the table of contents with the question in mind of which emphasizes the book has.

Questions to consider: Which outstanding qualities does the book have and what are its mistakes or argumentative flaws? Which topics does the book deal with in detail? What picture of the time or subject matter does the book convey? As what does the object of my specific interest appear? In which chapter or context does it occur?

3. Background information and deepening of analysis: getting additional information on the author and work. (For more information on this see the analytical framework below.) Note: When getting background information one must always contemplate its authorship. Is it, for example, an uncritical self-portrayal or is it an outsider’s perspective; and, if the latter, is it by somebody who represents a similar view of history or a completely different one?

Questions to consider: Why does the (transcultural) object, in which I am interested, appear in a certain chapter? Which historical circumstances may have led to this positioning?
4. Change of perspective and critique: second level of meta-cognition, through the application of other possible arrangement criteria and through the search for interference by the arrangement criteria according to the aspect of exclusion.

Questions to consider: What is pushed to the background or completely left out due to the presentation at hand? In what other relations or contexts could the object of my interest have appeared also? What remains unmentioned due to the chosen attributions and positioning?

Considering the above, it can be said that transculturality is by no means limited to as yet undiscovered source material. It starts with a different form of reading, which is aware of inclusion and exclusion processes and thus reflects on what is not mentioned and why. By doing so, one lays the foundations for shaping new objectives and questions. A transcultural gain in knowledge ultimately requires a way of reading in which the balance of emphasis is redefined by shifting it from the centre to the periphery. Thus, our interest should centre precisely upon where the exclusion begins; at the periphery of a work, where resides all that is just about visible enough to be deciphered. The aim is not to invalidate established historiography or to ignore its findings, but to critically reflect on the past outside the confines of established historiography in order to prepare a fruitful discussion about the consequences of the principles of arrangement within a work.

The essential condition necessary for shaping new questions is therefore to read existing literature carefully, since new paradigms cannot develop out of an intellectual void.

3.4.4 Sirens Promising Objective Knowledge: The Example of the Encyclopaedia

The reference book is one of the most common academic genres—almost every society has tried to collect, preserve and provide general knowledge in a way suitable for efficient and easy access. In the form of encyclopaedias these books went with travellers all over the globe; they gave practical hints to farmers, taught women how to behave, provided an insight into Western habits for Asian scholars, and, most of all, fostered the illusion that universal knowledge exists in printed form. The presumed globality and objectivity, the gospel of universal, timeless knowledge and the editors’ news orientated selling strategies make the encyclopaedia an academic genre that lends itself particularly to transcultural research.

The entry on India in Meyer’s Konversations-Lexicon, one of the most widely spread encyclopaedias in German speaking households, illustrates the transcultural potential of such texts. In the 1896 edition, India had an entry of almost one page in length, and at first glance presented a rather dry geographical description. The geographical description was given exclusively through the Western author’s eyes. The entry starts with the remark that ancient Greeks had only “dürftige Nachrichten” (poor knowledge) of India, an interesting comment in a time when Europe believed that the beginnings of human culture exclusively lay in the Greek poleis of the fifth century BC. The spoken prejudice is remarkable in that the introduction of differentiation is only detectable when compared to the entry on Europe, which is presented as “unbedingt der wichtigste unter den fünf Erdteilen” (unconditionally the most important of the five continents).

Although we realise that the encyclopaedia’s point of view is dangerous and manipulative, the readership seems almost global and unlimited. The offer of providing fast and concise information obviously seems attractive when it answers questions such as: who was Toyotomi Hideyoshi? What were the precise causes for the 1879-1883 War of the Pacific? Which terms do other cultures use for what we call religion, and how have the meanings of these words developed over time? Which states became independent from the former colonial powers in 1960 and what did the borders of those states look like then? Typical questions such as these occur frequently when writing historical texts. To answer them it can often be helpful to consult reference works, especially when considering that a few concise points of information may suffice. General encyclopaedias, such as the Encyclopaedia Britannica, may offer an answer to all of these questions; however, they are not particularly suitable in a university context. Firstly, the information they provide is not detailed enough and secondly, they do not link it to research. Furthermore, there are more than enough subject-specific encyclopaedias with various objectives and possible uses at our disposal. Thus, the challenge is to find the right reference work, which is up-to-date and suitable for the research question at hand. To be more precise, the encyclopaedia’s ordering principles (indices, bibliography, etc.) should be as much in line with the structure of the research question as possible.

Investigating the issue of national independence, for example, would be difficult with an alphabetical encyclopaedia, though easier with a chronological one. On the other hand, to find out who Hideyoshi was, it would be advisable to consult a biographical encyclopaedia that specialises on Asia.

However, the biggest danger in using encyclopaedias is being seduced by their purported objectivity. By suggesting that they contain definitive knowledge and common sense interpretations, works in the encyclopaedic genre can be treacherous, and yet these suggestions have in some respects become one of their principle
characteristics. This holds especially true for the majority of general encyclopaedias and even, in a more restricted manner, for specialised ones. These too are by no means free of errors, one-sidedness, or even ideological undertones. Thus, as with every other medium of information, when dealing with encyclopaedias, a highly critical approach is required. For those who master this, encyclopaedias can gain a whole new dimension; they can be used and examined as primary sources. In fact, encyclopaedias are wonderful sources for evidence regarding the perception of the and the emphasis placed upon, anything by a certain group or society. An obvious example is the perception of India by English historians during the time of the British Empire.

With transnational research questions, using an older encyclopaedia as a primary source often makes sense and can be very fruitful. In such cases it is also worthwhile looking at general encyclopaedias. National encyclopaedias, for example, were usually intended to influence the forming of cultural identity and thus aided the spread of many a stereotype. One of the best ways to see that knowledge is not a matter of fact, but a construct dependent on socio-historical norms and fashions, is to read what earlier generations thought to be remarkable and how they wrote about it. A culture not only stores knowledge for pragmatic reasons but also for the purpose of self-promotion. It is therefore not only of interest what is known (or symptomatically unknown) to a society but how the elements of knowledge are organised. The forms in which knowledge is presented often give away more than the knowledge itself.

4 Questioning and Prejudice

4.1 Introduction: Where Are the Borders of Europe? Biased Positions

During collection and reading, primary sources undergo processes of interpretation and contextualisation. We question them according to our guiding interests, connect them to our previous knowledge, and interpret and embed them in meaningful, mainly transculturally orientated concepts. To avoid random dealings with primary sources, and to observe a scientific standard, we follow traceable and intersubjective principles along the lines of the source analysis and interpretation of the historical-critical method. As mentioned above, transcultural history is primarily interested in transboundary topics in a global context. Questions focus on topics and historical circumstances where claims of heritage and identity are part of a controversial debate. Rarely are these conflicts explicitly called “transcultural,” and it is a challenge for a reasonable research design to analyse them without overstressing transcultural tensions.

Developing a workable hypothesis starts with a critical awareness of the researcher’s biased position. Most researchers, even those who write the history of a nation, may stress the universal applicability of academic methods. Those who are aware of ongoing postcolonial debates may define their position as Western or Asian. Others may want to analyse what a European point of view means. Aiming at transcultural history, the typical scope of European history handbooks rarely provides the required information. A transcultural approach requires more of an insight into shifting borders than into the additive history of European nation states and cultural legacies.

The Europe of the eighteenth century, when Voltaire corresponded in French with the noble elite in St. Petersburg, clearly differs from Europe in the nineteenth century when European labelled values spread throughout the world by means of imperialism. In the twentieth century, the Europe of the European Union developed from economic and political treaties and offered a very different picture. A transcultural


250 For a short overview of the history of general encyclopaedias and their political impact see Ines Pohlhöhl, Die Politik des Wissens. Allgemeine Enzyklopädien im ‘Dritten Reich’, in der Schatz in der SBZ/DDR (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2010).


253 Nadine Kumar, Conquering Australia: Encyclopaedias and the Creation of Nations (Stuttgart: Südwestdeutscher Verlag für Hochschulwesen, 2009).


256 For a survey see Peter Childs and R. J. Patrick Williams, An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory (London: Prentice Hall and Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1997).

history of Europe, therefore, also questions geopolitical ordering principles. A spatial
definition of Europe cannot provide a substantial answer to the question of trans-
cultural history, whereas the issue of how and under which historical circumstances
the idea of Europe developed and came under pressure is more fertile.

Once again, the Paris Peace Conference serves as a good example of what a
transcultural approach can explain. Europe does not initially appear as an agency
in Paris, where national delegations and groups aiming at national independence
attended the conference. On the other hand, the Reparation Commission struggled
with a key element of what had defined Europe for a very long time, i.e. the Holy
Roman Empire of the German Nation. This complex medieval structure of govern-
nance, today used as a model of European integration, came under consideration
in a rather unexpected way, namely, in the restitution of works of art. The sad fact
that looting and booty are unavoidable side effects of war is not new. But in Paris in
1919 the meaning of authenticity and heritage in a global context had to be address-
ed. The treaties of Versailles and St. Germain mentioned works of art that had to be
transferred from Germany and Austria to China, the Near East, Italy, Belgium,
and France. All claims for these precious objects established argumentation that
alleged both cultural authenticity and expression of cultural heritage. In the Euro-
pean case, the list of objects concerned was long and came with the idea that
destroyed works of art should be replaced with objects of comparable value. For
example: apart from works of art that were allegedly stolen by invading armies,
estitution demanded that precious paintings from German collections be brought to
Belgium as replacements of originals that the Germans had destroyed. However,
this is not the whole story. Collections of books—and everyday consumer goods,
rather than precious museum pieces—also came to Belgium after the war. One can
rarely imagine a higher degree of cultural entanglement than the flood of books of
differing provenance, now available in Belgian libraries.

The creation of cosmopolitan libraries—the library committee also included
a Japanese delegate—as a consequence of war, is just one form of transcultural
entanglements. Moreover, the Belgian and Italian restitution claims not only
demanded looted objects; they also demanded works of art created by respective
nationals or those made on Belgian or Italian territory.

258 See Roland Axtmann, "State Formation and Supranationalism in Europe: The Case of the Holy
Roman Empire of the German Nation," in Europe Without Borders: Territory, Citizenship, and
Identity in a Transnational Age, ed. Mahel Berezin and Martin Schain (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins

259 See Article 247 of the Treaty of Versailles: The Avalon Project, "The Versailles Treaty June

260 This idea focused on the destruction of the University Library of Louvain by German troops
in 1914.

261 For example the triptych of the Adoration of the Mystic Lamb painted by the van Eyck brothers,
and the triptych of Diirck Bouts' Last Supper, both mentioned in Article 247 of the Treaty of
Versailles, see above footnote 259.

These claims concentrated on Vienna’s most precious art works, among them
the imperial regalia of the Christian emperors, as well as the treasure of the Golden
Fleece. Both treasures included antique stones, Arabian textiles, and masterworks of
Ottoman and Flemish artistry. Both combined precious objects of different origins
and expressed a certain, perhaps even typical way of how regional differences were
translated into an empire-like entity called Europe. Interestingly, the Holy Roman
Empire of the German Nation was considered to be an expression of Europeanness
long after its formal dissolution in 1806. But in 1919 this common ground of
European power came under pressure, when the Paris Peace Conference installed
legal experts in the reparation commission. Their arguments struggled with the
national claims and transboundary intentions pertaining to these objects. The fact
that the treasure of the Golden Fleece left Belgium more than 300 years before the
negotiations seemed less important than the legal impracticality of translating a
transboundary institution into a part of national heritage:

"The Order of the Golden Fleece was in its origin a dynastic Order of Chivalry
(...) not necessarily of one nationality, conceived as group round a Sovereign.
It was not a ‘national’ Order in its origin, and it never evolved into a ‘national’ or
political institution of the Low countries or of any other country. (...) Even if
the word ‘national’ be used in the secondary sense in which it may be applied to an
aristocratic Order attached to what has become in modern times (...) a national
dynasty, the Golden Fleece cannot in the eighteenth century justly lay claim to this
epithet of ‘national’ in relation to the Low Countries."

What do we learn from this example? Firstly, the attention on transboundary
processes and the increased awareness of powerful, non-written sources allow for
questions about European borders that differ from those featuring in national
histories. We gain more precise information about long lasting cohesions beyond
national entities and about how heritage outlasts structural change. Secondly, the
transcultural approach is useful beyond being a tool for analysing the entanglement
of cultures. In Paris in 1919, the reparation committee confirmed the existence of
transcultural entities beyond all national claims. However, the argumentation
followed a strictly legal point of view. As a consequence, the treasure of the Golden
Fleece remained in Vienna, but the debate opened up an insight into the fading of
a once powerful narrative—what Europe is—namely, the heritage of the Holy Roman
Empire of the German Nation. Following the main elements of transcultural history

262 The imperial regalia used for the coronation of the emperors of the Holy Roman Empire of the
German Nation expressed the medieval concept of regio. The precious and highly symbolic items
were preserved in Vienna. The Golden Fleece, a medieval order of chivalry, was founded in 1430
by the Duke of Burgundy. The “treasure” consisting of the order’s precious religious insignia, also
was (and is) preserved in Vienna.

263 The Internet Archive, “Allied Powers - Reparation Commission, Belgian claims to the
Triumph of Saint Théodose and the Treasure of the Order of the Golden Fleece, October 25,
belgianclaimsto00alrich_djvu.txt. (See VI. - CONCLUSIONS.)
as explained above, the transformation of transboundary objects into national heritage demonstrates that transculturality does not merely cover a process of merging and cultural entanglements. Rather, it affords a new insight into how already established forms of transculturality broke apart due to national claims. In the case of the restitution policy, the European debate developed within a global context. Cases such as the Chinese claims for astronomical instruments, the debate about the skull of Sultan Mkawa, and the whereabouts of an early Koran manuscript confirmed the impression that former Europe had dissolved in singular national claims.

History starts with questions; only by asking them can the past manifest in what historians call sources or primary sources. They shape the aims and objectives of historical research and explain which aspects of an impenetrable past can be turned into historical statements that are negotiable in an academic context. As we have seen, there is rarely a limit for such questions, at least not in terms of the topics concerned. However, the very notion of interrogating the past implies a) the possibility of an answer and b) the availability of source material, which provides the empirical evidence for the historian’s result. In a transcultural context, debates about source material include two specific problems: one concerns the materiality of sources and asks whether or not written sources are still the key element of modern historiography. The second is the possibility that the customary method of interpreting source material is fraught with the nineteenth-century’s methodological nationalism. Both aspects are part of an expanded imaginary where, at a first glance, a much simpler differentiation takes place, namely the difference between questions that are helpful and those that are unanswerable.

1. Answering questions

Keeping in mind the possibility of an answer, historians can exclude non-answerable questions based on their prior knowledge. It is senseless to query, for example, which species of potatoes medieval European societies preferred. The choice simply did not exist because potatoes only reached Europe in the sixteenth century. This is, however, a rather simple example of a problem which increases in complexity when concepts become involved. What is, for example, the meaning of “state” as written by a Chinese official during the Song dynasty compared to the European definition of the term presented in a dictionary of history edited in the West?264

Historical semantics can help to avoid asking the wrong questions. Established in the 1970s in Heidelberg, conceptual history (Begriffsgeschichte) introduced historical semantics to the historians’ toolbox.265 It is indeed impressive to see how the frameworks of ideas and expressions changed and how concepts gained new meanings at the watershed between ancien régime and modernity. However, although a conceptual approach is almost unavoidable for cross-cultural studies, the simple fact that linguistic translation reaches its limits when applied to concepts has complex consequences. Perhaps conceptual history is sensitive to the difficulties of replacing the idea of (at best) interacting cultural entities with the idea of transcultural entanglements. Is conceptual history therefore an inalienable part of a modern, non-European global history and a tool to verify migrating ideas and successful transboundary concepts? The answer needs more studies that follow this line of questioning. However, first investigations give an interesting insight into the convergence of different meanings in one word, and in the understanding of concepts, which have the potential to be globally successful. This development has an important influence on transcultural research designs. It highlights the potential of translingual concepts and, furthermore, increases the meaning of social practices in historical research.266 After the “linguistic turn,” historians understood that language forms reality—though Andrew Sartori shows that in the translation of culture the choice of the respective word can explain culture as daily life—or as elitist understanding of civilisation.267 In both cases the social impact is crucial and the linguistic approach needs a stable background that reflects the social history of the respective topic. Therefore, the combination of language and social conditions of life supply the information needed in order to avoid wrong questions. A transcultural approach helps to be mindful of this gap. Whenever cultural flows are recognised as foreign, the debate on how to translate, adapt, reject, or transform such influences can provide valuable information in order to shape an interesting questionnaire.

2. Availability of source material

Source material provides the empirical evidence for the historian’s work and guarantees the verifiability of conclusions taken from the past. Its selection is therefore crucial in two respects: firstly, badly chosen sources cannot support even excellent questions. Secondly, source material has what Koselleck described as “veto power,”268 meaning that source material has a higher value than the research design. Whenever, after critical analysis, source material still indicates the contrary to the historian’s assumption, the research might simply be wrong. In regard to a transcultural history, the choice and interpretation of source material


266 Translingual studies play an increasing role in the East-West dialogue. They start by questioning a presumption that each dictionary has, namely the idea that languages have equivalent synonyms. See Introduction: Lydia H. Liu, Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity, China 1900–1937 (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1995), 1–42.

267 Andrew Sartori, Bengal in Global Concept History: Culturalism in the Age of Capital (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

follows common rules. It is important to note that the Western-shaped discipline of history has influenced the definitions, accessibility, and storage of source material. For transcultural research it is therefore crucial to understand archiving procedures—which relics of the past have survived and why, what has disappeared, and for which of the many different possible reasons this loss came about. During the nineteenth century in particular, scientific preservation strategies served as justification for bringing relics with a foreign past to Europe and had long lasting consequences, as shown in the ongoing debates concerning the preservation of cultural heritage.

The daily practice of handling source material however, needs a theoretical understanding of objectivity and the value of the expected answers. What do we know after consulting the past? The historiography of historism had a precise answer to this question, promising an insight into “how it really was,” and said that a better understanding of the past allows for a better planning of the future. Modern historiography knows that the past is unreachable, and although, after the “linguistic turn,” historiography is aware that the narrative plays a crucial role, one aspect is difficult to transfer to a transcultural approach: the historian’s position. The disclosure of the historian’s position was always an effort to approximate objectivity as closely as possible. Introducing a transcultural position must overcome methodological nationalism, but transcultural historiography has to not only avoid geopolitical preferences (Eurocentrism). It must also be aware of an uncritical enthusiasm from all that pretends to be “exotic.” Again, from the methodological point of view, a careful analysis of transboundary moments in their respective historical context needs to be declared and labelled as a key element of a constructivist approach. Compared to other historiographical approaches, transcultural history requires a theoretical debate that is accompanied by a well developed methodological aspect. The following chapter combines both the question of transcultural objectivity and its methodological consequences.

4.2 Transcultural Objectivity

4.2.1 The Ambivalence of Objectivity

Research traditions differ in their approaches in terms of how source material should be properly analysed. The German school of history connects historical methodology with the approach used for the analysis of source material (historisch-kritische Methode). A transcultural history includes sources of differing media and thus questions the traditional understanding of the sources’ value and character. Therefore, we decided to follow the highly detailed German methodology while suggesting an enlarged version, which includes pictures and sounds.

The following part examines the historiographical method of source assessment for approaching sources with a comprehensive and well-structured questionnaire. These so-called W-questions (who, where, when, why) address all primary sources. In a transcultural context, the questioning technique gains a dynamic quality and highlights blurred ramifications and networks that the source material might refer to. The following general introduction to source interpretation shows how this work can be done.

4.2.2 The Historical-Critical Method and Source Criticism

The naming of the concept historisch-kritische Methode (historical-critical method) goes back to German historiography in the nineteenth century. This method applies to the interpretation of all primary sources of all epochs and all subject areas of history. As explained above, the definition of what a source is depends on the research design. The term “method” reminds us of the tool’s procedural nature, which provides a path to new findings. The term “critical” connects these findings to metacognition in a theoretical context. The following list enumerates the crucial points provided by source criticism:

1. Following the historical-critical method, the historian questions:
   a) the basic authenticity of the source (e.g. the wording or the supposed time of origin)
   b) the relationship of the source to the contemporary circumstances documented (accuracy and immediacy of the evidence; possible inconsistencies)
   c) the author’s intellectual position (e.g. political or ideological perspective).

2. The historical-critical method differentiates types of sources (Source Groups).

When discussing the sources’ external form, historians normally distinguish between written and non-written sources or more generally describe the material from which the source is created.272

a) In regard to the temporal proximity to the matter described the distinction between primary and secondary sources is crucial.

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269 “What’s past is prologue” is an often used Shakespeare quotation. It is engraved, for example, on the building of the National Archives in Washington D.C.


271 See above, Theories and Concepts: chapter 2: “Historiography”.

272 The applicability of this typology to “non-material” sources, e.g. aural sources, will be discussed later.
b) Following Ernst Bernheim’s source typology, historians differentiate between tradition (Tradition) and relic (Überrest). The former includes anything that is intended to survive and be preserved for posterity through tradition; the latter describes artefacts that are not consciously intended for posterity, but have survived by chance as relics. This typology, however, is not always applicable.

- The historian distinguishes between normative and descriptive sources, i.e., material describing ideal or utopian imaginaries, norms and rules (e.g., codification of law), and material pointing to tensions between facticity and ideal.
- The historian must also be aware of the sources’ perspective. Selbtestzeugnisse (self testimonials), e.g., autobiographies or diaries, raise other questions than Fremdzeugnisse (foreign testimonials).
- Finally, questioning a source’s purpose and contemporary accessibility offers a perspective on the intended public.

3. The historical-critical method investigates conservation and preservation, and evaluates contexts of time, space, and agencies (W-questions).

Although conservation and preservation are fields for specialists and experts trained in fields such as museology, they are significant to the historian for several reasons. Conservation and preservation are acts of power, and historians should always ask themselves what the reasons are for having access to source material. Specialists in contemporary history do not face the difficult situation where the loss of one manuscript endangers their whole research project. With the birth of the printing press, and later with the advent of film and sound recording tools, reproduction ensured the availability of sources. However, material only intended for temporary (daily) use (e.g., newspapers) are difficult to obtain if it is not stored in national libraries. Yet these libraries, most of which were founded in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, usually only collect what has been printed in the respective country. There is a dramatically different situation regarding the material produced “on the move” and this is of particular importance to transcultural history. Exile press publications, for example, were scattered in single numbers all over the world before they became partly available in digitised form. This makes access to a corpus of material extremely difficult. All kinds of dynamics—from war to disaster, from migration to transfers of power—can impact on the preservation and accessibility of source material.

Debates on conservation and preservation include the following issues:

a) Securing material by ensuring accessibility is an important factor in research. It requires basic linguistic skills to read old texts, palaeographic knowledge and knowledge of other scripts. Gaining access to sources can involve technical obstacles, especially in times of changing communication technologies. (Who, for example, still has the equipment that will enable them to listen to a shellac record or open a twenty-year-old computer file?) Special technical knowledge can be useful in securing and reconstructing authenticity.

b) The context of the source’s origin (sometimes called “external criticism”) can shed light on who produced, made use of, and stored the source material. By questioning the source’s origin, the historian implements a relic from the past in a specific historical context, which need not be an integral part of the source material, but can function as the historian’s intellectual “add-on,” a hypothetical construct that requires a constant and careful examination. The verification of such assumptions follows the abovementioned W-questions.

- In a chronological and event-oriented historiography, the first step is to investigate when the source material was created. Finding an adequate answer, however, becomes highly difficult if non-linear or cyclical notions of time come into play.
- Other problems can arise when the source’s place of origin (where) underwent significant change. Shifting borders, for example, can introduce a new aspect to the presumed places of origin.
- Besides the individual actors who create sources (a person, state, or community) a transcultural approach takes into account dynamic networks and border crossing relations as source-producing agencies.

c) The process of linguistic and factual decoding (sometimes called “internal criticism”) encompasses the “translation” of the material into a contemporary understanding of the material’s message. Historiography is aware of changing concepts. However, the complexity required to answer the seemingly simple question of what this material conveys, increases substantially when transcultural aspects and dynamic networks are included.

Germany to a German speaking public is obvious and informed Fried’s choice of presenting the manifestations of internationalism. Since this country had only a few international organisations located in Germany, Fried declared multilateral treaties as the most important element of governmental internationalism—an intelligent use of the idea that international relations were based on governmental networks called the “Concert of Europe.” Fried published a list of those treaties regulating communication, traffic, and commerce and named the signatory states. The list differentiated between great powers and small states, between the West and the rest, and produced a Eurocentric view with Germany as a leading state in internationalism. Although Germany had only few seats of international organisations in the nineteenth century and missed one of the most important drives of internationalism, the World’s Fair, Fried successfully presented a leading role for Germany. Competitive forms of visualisation shaped international mental maps in the late nineteenth century—the simultaneity of different lists and instruments of internationalism present the opportunity to analyse both the shifting concept of internationalism and their political use. Fried addressed a broader national German speaking public which was not limited to internationalists or experts. The booklet was published within the popular scientific series Aus Natur und Geisteswelt (from nature and the world of ideas), which presented knowledge ranging from automobile to zoology. At the turn of the century, Fried was a well-known author and held a strong position in the publication market. Like many of the European internationalists, he published his own journals. Furthermore, he carefully cultivated platforms of international self-presentation: a busy founder of several pacifist organisations and a committed member of the Esperanto movement, he closely cooperated with the abovementioned Bertha von Suttner, who received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1905. Six years later, the resolute pacifist Fried shared the Nobel Peace Prize with the famous expert of international law, Tobias Asser.

The Nobel prizes served as one of the most efficient forms of self-presentation for an international civil society. Donated regardless of national origin, through a powerful instrument of international lobbying, they crossed European borders before World War I. In 1913, the Nobel Prize in Literature was given to the Bengal author Rabindranath Tagore. With the Nobel Price therefore, Fried had gained acknowledgment as a member of the most prestigious circle of internationalists.

4.3 An Example: Alfred H. Fried and William T. Stead. Concepts and Practices to Create an International Public Sphere

Das internationale Leben der Gegenwart (contemporary international life) is the title of a small booklet published in 1908 by the Austrian pacifist Alfred Hermann Fried (1864–1921). Compared to Fried’s numerous publications, e.g. the Handbuch of Pacificism in two volumes or his well-known journal Die Friedens-Warte, the booklet seems of rather minor significance. However, it presents precious source material for a transcultural history for two reasons: Fried introduced a world shaped by border crossing networks without denying national competition. He thought of his booklet as a travel guide, and called it a “Bädeker für das internationale Land,” (A Baedeker for international lands) named after the most common editor of travel books in German speaking countries, Karl Bädeker.

Interpreted from a constructivist perspective, Fried created a world of transparent borders, but combined the label of “internationalism” with the strongest elements of the contemporary master narrative of his time: nationalism and territorial expansion. In his booklet, international organisations and multilateral treaties shaped a mental map, where states were valued as having the power to set international agendas. Of course, this approach was highly manipulative and highlights the political use of transboundary networks. The aim to present a highly entangled

277 Fried, Das internationale Leben der Gegenwart.


281 Besides the famous Friedens-Warte, the spread of international organisations and conferences was made apparent by the Annuaire de la vie internationale.

Blending nationalism, pacifism and internationalism, Fried’s biography and his interest in public relations characterise a certain type of internationalism in the pre-World War I situation. Close to Fried—and often quoted by him—comes the British journalist William T. Stead (1849–1912). Stead published the powerful Review of Reviews, a journal based in London, which soon obtained almost global coverage with the parallel publication of the Review of Reviews for Australasia in Melbourne, and the American Review of Reviews in New York. Although Fried missed Stead’s financial scope of action, both men justified an internationalist approach with a strong nationalist background. While Fried stressed the idea of understanding internationalism as a modern form of patriotism, Stead believed in a “Greater Britain” and imperialism. Both invested in international platforms and international lobbying; both met during the Hague Peace Conferences in 1899 and 1907. Fried quoted Stead’s activities in his Friedens-Warte and therefore bridged the gap between the English and German speaking internationalists. Stead’s campaigns, such as the one against the Italian-Ottoman war in 1911, created the required attention to ensure constant discussion, which helped create an international public. Both Fried and Stead built and supported their citation cartels by crossing the lines between governmental, diplomatic, and civil spheres, between rulers and subjects. In creating such an international public, Fried compiled a Who is Who of the Peace Movement. In 1907, Stead took the Hague Peace Conference as an opportunity to publish his version with the illustrated Le Parlement de l’humanité (La Conférence de la paix à La Haye 1907): Les délégués, biographies et photographies. Delegates now appeared as a group, carefully presented in photographs and embedded in advertisements for those hotels, firms, and travel agencies for which a peace conference turned from a political into an economic event. Stead’s photo album is one of the most impressive. Internationalists created a hybrid, but clearly visible community, even against the existing rules and orders of international meetings. The group presented in Stead’s blazing red book crossed the fine, but politically important line introduced by the diplomatic protocol. Under the title of a “World’s Parliament”—which is improper for a diplomatic conference—almost each delegate, regardless of his position, from fully accredited ambassador to expert without diplomatic rights, gained public recognition. Grouping internationalists clearly differed from the usual governmental behaviour, which presented diplomats as envoys of certain states. In 1907, at the same time that a widely covered diplomatic gathering happened in The Hague, the way of presenting such an event got out of exclusive governmental control. People like Fried and Stead gave a different interpretation of transboundary gatherings and showed diplomats and experts to be part of an international civil society. From this new perspective, encounters between civil and governmental forms of internationalism became an almost uncontrollable form of transcultural entanglement. Therefore, transculturality can be observed in the border crossing between diplomatic and civil public spheres, which had been strictly separated until then. In addition, the building of an international civil society is hardly imaginable without the support of non-Western countries. At first sight a strange thesis, Fried’s and Stead’s contribution shows the asymmetry between European diplomats, who were difficult to access in their well-protected residences, and the much more accessible envoys from non-Western countries. Representatives of states without established embassies in the Netherlands, and all the many experts that were far away from the centre of diplomatic power, had their rooms in the famous Hôtel des Indes, which Stead portrayed as an international meeting point. In his view, this hotel functioned as a non-official parliament building and was a hub for diplomats, researchers, and internationalists of all kinds. In Stead’s description, which he wrote in French—the nineteenth century global diplomatic language—the profession of diplomats had changed substantially, including biographical details and the way, in which representatives had begun to disregard dress codes. Stead published photographs of diplomats in formal dress, Japanese delegates in Western suits, Chinese representatives with a mix of Western and Asian clothing, and experts in their everyday clothes. Moreover, the pictures were part of their curriculum vitae. Stead, therefore, bestowed upon the former inaccessible diplomats a personality and sketched a transboundary global society, where the universities of Oxford and Heidelberg became more important than questions such as which nationals were in The Hague or to which country an internationalist belonged. In this social variety, where the softening of social differentiation in the West overlapped cultural entanglements, the lingering introduction of a non-official, non-governmental international public sphere became more successful than ever before. Both Fried and Stead made masterly use of this situation referencing each other. They stressed the unavoidable consequence of networking: networks are structurally endless and transboundary internationalism gains importance when not limited to the West.

286 The names of accredited diplomats were normally published in the governmental periodicals known as Staatskalender (state calendars).
287 Almost a hundred years later, environmental issues made comparable headway in the agenda of international politics. During the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, NGOs organised parallel sessions and visualised the power of an international and non-governmental civil society. Since then NGOs continue to challenge the UN system.
289 In Stead’s red book, the “circles international,” which described the meetings of non-official pacifists during the Hague Peace Conference, had its own section. Of course, the presences of Fried, Stead, von Suttner, and other internationalists was specifically mentioned. Ibid., 218.
Therefore, although the approach of pointing to the Japanese interest in Western organisations seems obvious, Western interest in Asian participation should also be mentioned. Fried noted the existence of Japanese correspondents. In the "long nineteenth century," internationalist approaches usually preferred as many border crossings as possible—including the acceptance of non-Western participation and even crossing the gender line by allowing female participation in international gatherings. However, this approach did not exclude imperialist mental maps, racism, or asymmetrical power relations. The methodological assumption that texts and pictures construct a reality by setting priorities is especially important for transcultural approaches. Border crossing always describes an ambivalent and highly contested issue, and is always trapped between innovation and revolution. Fried and Stead’s envisioned global networks therefore need the inclusion of contemporary backlashes, and careful consideration of ambivalences, asymmetries, and missing parts, including interpretation. Denying that diplomats were an exclusive elite by introducing an international civil society, gained a visibility that was unconnected to international gatherings. While Fried and Stead used the label "pacifism" and "humanitarian parliament" for the invention of an international public sphere, diplomatic traditions strengthened their normative approach. In 1917, when the Russian Revolution broke with diplomatic rules and, as previously mentioned, Trotsky decided to publish the Tsar’s secret treaties, Sir Ernest Mason Satow published *A Guide to Diplomatic Practice.* The book fixed diplomatic rules by offering a history of differentiation and exclusion. Addressed to diplomats and a general public, this book avoided the terms internationalism, pacifism, and public. It developed a set of rules that prevented the entanglement of civil border crossing and diplomatic decision making. To make this field even more complex, Satow was a Japanophile, a multitalented and multilingual scientist, and in Stead’s list of humanitarian parliamentarians. However, although the multitalented diplomat had a controversial career, he would never have regarded himself as an internationalist or member of an international civil society.

In summary, the works of Fried and Stead show the need for a careful analysis of the way information crossed borders, and of those who tried to establish public spheres concerned with transboundary topics. In addition to competing agendas—the confrontation of an international public sphere and the secrecy of diplomacy—historical conditions changed. Stead died as a passenger on the Titanic in 1912.

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Fried argued bitterly against the Versailles Treaty. For several internationalists, the Paris Peace Conference and the establishment of the League of Nations approximated their plans for an international civil society. However, World War I returned agency to governments and diplomats. In the logic of internationalism, non-Western participation was always presented as a valuable argument for transboundary activities. But again, critical research must investigate the function of this argument. In most cases, non-Western participation opened an opportunity

to Asian internationalists, which was not intended by the Western inventors of such international institutions.

4.4 Visual Culture and Pictures as Source Material

4.4.1 Images and Visibility

By utilising different media, the concept of transculturality overcomes the limitations of traditional written sources. The works of historians therefore need to undergo a methodological change, moving from analysing solely written material to incorporating multimodality and its implications to a discussion of the interrelations between form and content. Consequently, historians need to work more with pictorial sources. Yet these methodological implications are not limited to the addition of visual material; they also include oral sources (which can be transformed into written material).

Equating written sources with images does not necessitate a new methodological framework. Of course, more technical knowledge about artisanship and technology is needed. Indeed, an additional window to the past opens when a historian includes, for example, the paintings made for the main seat of the League of Nations in Geneva, or introduces a debate on the strange fact that weak parliamentarism contrasts with the pompous design of parliamentary buildings. However, a sea change happens when transcultural research focuses on visibility. The question is how far the assumption goes that visual material overcomes the limits of linguistic competences. From the methodological point of view, using a (written) catalogue of pictures approximates traditional historiography, while the idea of a transvisual approach is still in its infancy.294 But how do we know what the viewers see and what different perceptions might occur?295 What can we say about visual perception and whether visual entanglements developed in a way that is comparable to shifting concepts? How does which academic discipline choose samples, as visual culture forces open the category of “art” as an ordering principle? Being aware of the strong normative aspect of science, the question is what stays outside the reach of analytical tools that favour visibility. This is all the more important, because focusing on material culture seems the best way of finding evidence for transculturality.296 Granted, moving objects and their reinterpretation, adaptation,
miller whose life was dominated by worms and cheese. However, until now, all these historical life experiences came from a historiography based chiefly on textual evidence. But there is an additional very important opportunity not only to include visuality and material culture as an equal form of source material, but also to question source material that is not related to language about its transcultural potential. For example, Europeans rarely understand any of the Indian languages, but Bollywood films found a visuality that inspired a Western public. In short, transcultural history has a strong interest in material and visual culture with the twofold objective a) to specify the potential of non-textual source material and b) to apply the findings in other than transcultural contexts, such as the debate on the visual potential of popular culture and elites.

4.4.2 The “Century of the Eye”

The analysis of non-textual sources is a rather technical issue, but the question is whether visual elements are suitable for periodisation. For an introduction on how to historicise visibility we suggest investigating discourses on visibility after World War I, a period described in contemporary publications as the “century of the eye.”

In his 1935–36 essay The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction, the philosopher and cultural critic Walter Benjamin reflected on the sociocultural effects of this process. To art criticism with a historical dimension he assigned the important transfer task of making the aura of pictures, as well as art in general, comprehensible and communicable on a linguistic level. In view of new and efficient forms of reproduction and manufacture in the 1920s and 1930s, the question of how oral and visual representations interact, engaged art historians, artists, and philosophers. Apart from Walter Benjamin, the Belgian painter René Magritte worked with the contradiction of signs. In 1929 he created an oil painting of a pipe under which was written the sentence “Ceci n’est pas une pipe.”

Magritte, who significantly named the work La trahison des images (The Betrayal of Images), plays with the sign function of pictures. Viewers do not really see a pipe, which they can light and smoke, but merely the picture of a pipe. Thus the pipe image is a denotat of a real pipe. When looking at this painting, the beholder will make various associations, which can of course be very subjective; some would, for example, conote the pipe with cosiness. Magritte’s pipe on a simple, beige background may thus move the viewer to imagine a nice and warm sitting room in which a few bearded, elderly men sit together after a good meal, enjoying the comforting smell of pipe smoke whilst telling stories. It would be completely different, however, if one were to see that same pipe on a large poster outside a railway station with a line underneath it exclaiming “fumer met en danger votre sante” (smoking threatens your health), along with the logo of the World Health Organisation. This example also illustrates that in a semiotic analysis we have to see a picture’s semantics in close relation to its syntactic and pragmatic aspects. The syntax deals with the style, form and structure of a picture, while pragmatics concerns itself with the picture’s social functions. The scientific significance of the semiotic approach lies in the fact that people realised what sort of important historical information they could gain from pictures that formerly would have been discarded as uninteresting mass products or kitsch.

Around the same time that Magritte created his masterpiece, there were at least two additional developments that influenced the social meaning of visual culture on a global scale. On the one hand, propaganda became a noticeably more powerful and present force. It was used for commercial objectives in the form of advertisement, but also as a new and dangerous political force that was perfected as public diplomacy by almost every government. The growing importance of visual, non-textual elements became even more apparent in the second development—the spread of comics and the creation of pictograms. These were based on new or popularised technologies, such as photography and film, and arose in the form of traffic signs and operating manuals, both intended to be used regardless of their location.

They show that pictorial and written sources have a completely different potential. However, in one manner they are the same; we should never deal with them superficially but should assess and interpret them systematically and critically. Just as with textual sources, when dealing with pictures it is important to be aware of the fact that every picture has its own time-bound and culture-bound language, which has to be learned in order for it to be understood. This involves a conscious distancing from today’s intuitive understanding of images that we take for granted.


302 For an example, see Nancy Snow, Propaganda, Inc.: Selling America’s Culture to the World, 3rd ed. (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2010).
4.5 Example: Hendrik C. Andersen “The Creation of a World Centre of Communication”

Hendrik Christian Andersen, an architect and artist, sent plans of a global capital to several governments shortly before World War I.203 His idea combined nineteenth century internationalism with urban planning and European traditions of utopian thinking.205 In Andersen’s case, this blending of elements that are usually regarded as incompatible, challenges historical methodology. He presented his plans of a global city from a bird’s eye view, formally crossing the line between art and urban planning.205 Although using a modern form of presentation, Andersen preferred the traditional language of nineteenth century monumentism and symbolism and was, in this regard, far removed from the modernist architecture of his time and architects such as Le Corbusier.205 Andersen was a member of the fluid society of internationalists, but at the same time sought a close relationship with political power. He addressed his opulent and expansively printed plans to governments; their format prevented them from being distributed through international book market channels. Although not successful before World War I, the plans for a global centre eventually gained attractiveness and new political contexts. Though differing in their approaches, Andersen and Le Corbusier shared both the belief that regimes were now interested in their urban utopias and the conviction that a global


207 EUR (Esposizione Universale di Roma) is the name of quarters in Rome, designated for a World Fair planned in 1942. Although the World Fair did not take place, the buildings planned and partly erected provide a good example ofhow Italian fascism blended modern architecture and totalitarian megalomania. For the political implications of this process see Emilio Gentile, Fascismo di pietra (Roma: Laterza, 2007).

208 See, for example, William Thomas Steal, The United States of Europe on the Eve of the Parliament of Peace (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1899). In this book, which was published as a public preparation of the first Hague Peace conference, Steal visited each capital of Europe that seemed able to act as the future centre of Europe.

209 For this approach see Armand Mattelart, Histoire de l’emploi planétaire: de la cité prophétique à la société globale (Paris: Éd. la Découverte, 1999).

210 For this process see, for example, the reshaping of Paris in the epoch of Georges-Eugène Haussmann: Michel Carmen, Haussmann: His Life and Times, and the Making of Modern Paris (Chicago: I. R. Dee, 2002).
An overall view of Andersen’s project, which was never built, shows various important aspects of international life in the early twentieth century, as well as contemporary cosmopolitan utopias. The city was supposed to comprise of three main areas, which were sports, research, and arts. The designated areas for sports reflect the increasing importance of the Olympic Games and the impact of the foundation of the International Olympic Committee in 1894. Starting with the first games in Athens in 1896, the modern Olympic sports movement represents a popular example of how closely internationalism and national competition coexisted. As a further development, the sports movement contributed to ideas about shaping the bodies of modern men and women. In Rome, the EUR complex had some close connections to this idea.211 In Andersen’s plans, a Natatorium for aquatic sports is attached to the Centre Olympique, a great stadium for horse and cycle races and gymnastic exercises, which is flanked and surrounded by individual smaller stadiums for men and women respectively. More modern forms of sport were also taken into consideration. There are courts for ball sports, such as baseball or tennis, as well as skating lanes. Even a kindergarten is in the plan. The transition between sports and art is symbolised through a Grand Canal, presumably an allusion to Venice. The central Temple des Arts is surrounded by various artistic training and performance centres, such as an open-air theatre, an open-air school, conservatories and art schools. The constitutive element of the whole design are the Palais des Nations, situated on the main west-east axis and links the sports and culture areas with the administrative quarter. Here we can see clear references to the idea of World’s Fairs, as the main palais is surrounded by a number of smaller nation palais. However, they all look architecturally similar. On the same axis, there was also the giant Tour du Progrès at the centre of the administrative quarter. This tower, the monumental heart of Andersen’s plan of a World Centre of Communication, was intended to fulﬁl several important functions. First of all, an underground level was supposed to provide access to the congress buildings and to be the central station of the city’s very own metro system. The tower’s function as a centre for the world press was supposed to become evident on the higher levels: starting on the ground level with modern printing machines up to levels with editorial ofﬁces and assembly rooms and, further towards the top, levels with ofﬁces and viewpoint. Altogether the Tour du Progrès was to comprise 60 levels and be, of course, taller than the Eiffel Tower. The height of the tower was supposed to underline the symbolic power Andersen intended: “Truth, Love and Justice should spread from the Tower we build, expanding their radiant light through all humanity, and a powerful voice should ring out with faith and assurance, freely distributing knowledge to gratify the great human desire for advancement.”212

211 Displayed on the EUR compound, with only few changes, the Genius of Fascism turned into a sportsman symbolising the Olympic idea after World War II.

212 Hendrik Christian Andersen and Ernest M. Hébrard, Création d’un centre mondial de communication (Paris: P. Renouard, 1913), 70.

The tower is a good example of the contemporary search for new global symbols. The building unites modern communication technology with lighthouses and columns of victory, as well as with symbols of enlightenment. In addition, Andersen tried to copy the Eiffel tower, a well known tourist attraction. His plans pay particular attention to the administrative part of the global city. In the administrative quarter of the World Centre of Communication we can clearly discern contemporary ideas about stately organisation and the hopes for new technologies and research. The Tour du Progrès is surrounded by four pavilions, which are dedicated to different sciences that are important for the states: Agriculture et Industrie, Médecine et Chirurgie, Sciences Théoriques, and ﬁnally Sciences Sociologiques. Furthermore, the plan allows for several clubs and reception halls: the Palais des Religions and its counterpart, the Cour internationale de justice, and the Banque internationale, as well as a library. The city centre in Andersen’s plan is encircled by a ring with residential houses and parks. The outmost ring is designed for infrastructures for the latest transport technologies (airport and port), trade, commerce and industry, and a large fairground. Train and tram lines are the heart of inner-city transport. Communication within the city, as well as with the rest of the world, was supposed to be secured through telegraphic lines.

It was not only in the design of the city that Andersen tried to develop an ideal international construct but also in the promotion of his idea, for which he used the typical distribution channels of internationalism in the early twentieth century. He was in close contact with the Union of International Associations, whose leaders Paul Otlet and Henri La Fontaine were enthusiastic about his plans. Andersen preferred a form of international propaganda, which legally shielded his plans. Around his copyright protected designs he founded an international organisation named World Conscience. An International Society for the Creation of a World Centre.213 Besides the networking on an institutional level, Andersen also sought contact with official politics and diplomacy. He tried to send copies of his publication about the World Centre of Communication not only to the organisations known to him, but also to the governments of all countries. When the League of Nations was founded, Andersen hoped that his project could serve as its headquarters. He therefore published a volume called World Conscience, which was explicitly targeted at this aim and comprised statements about his plans from all over the world. When this option turned out not to have the success he had hoped for, Andersen offered his drafts to Benito Mussolini for the planned World’s Fair in 1942. At the Italian coast near Ostia a new city was planned. However, this fell through too soon when with the so-called project E42 another draft was accepted instead, the design of which ironically bears a great resemblance to Andersen’s.

213 See World-Conscience: An International Society for the Creation of a World-Centre to House International Interests and Unite Peoples and Nations for the Attainment of Peace and Progress upon Broader Humanitarian Lines, (Rome: Communications Office Hendrik C. Andersen, 1913). The office and address bring us back to Andersen. Therefore, there is some reasonable doubt about whether the organisation was more than an institution driven by Andersen.
How close Andersen was to the major innovations of his time becomes evident not only in the planning of an airport but even more so in the important role his concept ascribed to the Olympic thought. In 1913, when Andersen’s plans were first published, the International Olympic Committee had not yet held more than five Olympic Games. By comparison, international industrial fairs, for example in the form of World’s Fairs, had already become a well-established part of international life. Andersen’s ideas about the relation of city and natural environment also indicate his modernisation-orientated ambitions. For instance, the city was supposed to be surrounded by a wide green belt containing four hospitals, several parks, a garden city, and a tidal power plant.

Hendrik C. Andersen was not solely responsible for the project. For the publication of his volume he found supporters in the Italian law philosopher “Umano,” which was the pen name of the international lawyer Gaetano Meale, the economist Jeremiah W. Jenks, and the historian Gabriel Leroux, who wrote a contribution about “The Great Monumental Conceptions of the Past.” Most important in the context of the graphic presentation of Andersen’s plan was the collaboration with the French architect Ernest Hébrard. The analysis of his work opens up perspectives on important actors in the context of transnational visibility and the transfer of material culture through certain professions, in this case architects. While Andersen devoted himself to the World Centre project after World War I, Hébrard’s went to Thessaloniki in 1917, where he became chairman of the International Committee for the New Plan of Thessaloniki and worked on the rebuilding of the city, which had been destroyed in

a blaze. The aim was not to reconstruct the old cityscape but to create a modern one. In doing so, Hébrard mainly drew on Thessaloniki’s Byzantine traditions. From 1923 onwards he had worked as a city planner for the French government in Indochina, mainly Hanoi, where he had tried to combine elements of local traditions and French influences. Amongst his most important works in Hanoi are the Indo-China University (now called Hanoi University), the Bureau des Finances (now the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), and the Musée de l’École française d’Extrême Orient (now the History Museum).

4.6 Recorded Sounds as Primary Sources

The inclusion of non-textual source material is an important methodological element of transnational history. Pictures, films, and other forms of visual media allow for the transcending of borders created by nationality and language.

After World War I film became an instrument of governmental propaganda, and was part of totalitarian states’ arsenal of manipulative tools. Moreover, films have formed an important aspect of economic history and the history of technologies, they have expressed national and cultural identities.
entertainment, and generated new professions ranging from film-editors to cameramen. In the post cold war debate, modern global art history and media anthropology provide new tools for the analysis of images and films. Today, the history of films is an established subdiscipline of modern history. Since all these aspects are discussed in valuable research literature, we decided to introduce an aspect which, in terms of historical literature, has been rather underestimated: the history of sounds.

How historically important is music, the chugging of the railway, the bourgeois amateur playing the piano, or the daily noises in the streets of Paris and Rome? To the nineteenth century bourgeoisie playing and listening to music demonstrated a good education and the affiliation to an educated class. At almost the same time, modern nationalism became distinctly audible through the use of unifying anthems. Therefore sounds matter, but their interpretation requires adapted methodological tools.

The acknowledgement of the historical potential of sound is a relatively new development with only minimal research literature available on the subject. Though conventional tools of source analysis (the abovementioned W-questions) also apply to sounds, additional tools are needed to specify the nature and context of sound recordings. A draft of guidelines follows, though it is not exhaustive.

What is the difference between sounds and other sources? First of all, sound sources are available because they have been recorded, transmitted, and stored. Early recordings in the nineteenth century were made on cylinders and discs produced from a range of new and sensitive materials which, though they allowed the early recordings to be made, suffered in quality during subsequent playbacks. Therefore, only a few recordings from that time survived. As recording became more popular, technology developed and improved, thus making commercial recording significantly better. Regarding radio, though it underwent a veritable boom from the beginning of the 1920s, few of its acoustic sources survive. Due to

4.6.1 Lingual Sound Sources

As explained above, there are four categories of source material available:

1. (Original) recordings of an event

These recordings document an event, which did not take place for the purpose of being recorded. In fact, the sound sources complement other sources (text, picture, film) as, for example, live recordings of speeches or other public events. Before World War II, recordings were the exception, and of course, the source material that is still available cannot display a full and accurate picture of reality — even though the listener hears the same event that the historical audience did. In addition, the event’s audience differs from the recording’s audience, which is always anonymous. A live recording is therefore a different model of communication than a speech in front of a known or identifiable audience.

In terms of a critical interpretation, the following questions help us to understand the historical potential of sound recordings: we have to learn about the aim of the recording. In addition, we need to know which part of the respective event was recorded and which was omitted.

Relevant questions are: Are there any other recordings of the same event for comparison? Who were the addressees and what was the possible identity of the anonymous audience? How does the recording reflect the advantages and disadvantages of a sound recording? How was the lack of a visual dimension compensated for, if at all, during the recording?

2. Sources originating from intentionally recorded events

Characteristic sources in this category are interviews or studio discussions. Usually no other sources of the same event are available. The people involved are prepared for the situation and present themselves in this medium.

Relevant questions are: Is the recording part of a longer programme? Are there any particular nuances during the course of the conversation?

References:


3. Hybrid forms of originally and intentionally recorded events

The majority of acoustic sources are hybrid forms of the two categories mentioned above. News programmes, reports, features, podcasts, and similar formats consist of material recorded in a studio and sound bites that are often produced outside a studio.

With the development of recording solutions after World War II, the importance of aural sources increased. In contrast to written and pictorial sources, recordings produce the illusion of participating in live events and can therefore, like films, be sometimes misunderstood as being close to reality. Orson Welles' 1938 radio drama *The War of the Worlds* uses this imagination and ignited panic. Welles adapted the fictive novel by H.G. Wells for the radio in a typical broadcasting style combining the voice of a presenter with simulated news breaks, live reports, and music. Because Welles managed to simulate the news media so effectively, listeners really believed that extraterrestrials were invading Earth.

Relevant questions are: Which unique forms of information are delivered by sound recordings? What is the meaning of sound bites or outdoor broadcast? Do they serve to create an alleged authenticity, therefore adding to the credibility of the full recording? Do they blur fiction and reality?

4. Staged sources

This category includes audio plays, audio books, and other works recorded explicitly for an artistic purpose (e.g. radio operas). The recording relies on a manuscript that can be taken and reproduced in new and different ways. The staging of these productions emphasizes artistic and aesthetic aspects.

Relevant questions are: Is the same content presented in other forms elsewhere? What are the differences in the staging? How can this audio production be classified in the context of contemporary art? How are, for example, naturalistic sounds or different recording techniques used to create a realistic background?

4.6.2 Musical Sources

Recordings of music share some of the categories mentioned above. Music can also represent a staging or live recording that has been designed explicitly for the medium of sound recording. Contrary to spoken language, music has an exclusively performative character, where sound, staging, and orchestration play a very important role. The recording of music changed consumer behaviour fundamentally. The possibility of repeating music detached it from the social event of a concert and became an individual practice of consumerism. Development of sound reproduction technologies support change in social behaviour, as mentioned in numerous debates about the digital distribution of music on the internet.

There are many different ways to categorise music; distinctions are made between serious and popular music, instrumental and vocal music, notated music and that which has been passed on by traditions. If one looks at common music dictionaries it becomes apparent that there are a great many differences in the explanations of what music can be.324

However, there is no need to understand music exclusively as sound; it is also language. Almost all societies have music, and special knowledge developed for reading and/or understanding it. Initially, a social classification of the audience and its sociocultural background help us to understand who prefers classical music, pop music, or world music. Another way of beginning the inquiry is to question the role of music. Is it intended to be a concert performance, such as a symphony or live concert of a band, a production of musical theatre, such as opera and musical, or is it functional, such as a march or hymn?

As a language with certain rules, musical interpretations are open to comparison. The ways of playing or listening to it can differ depending on period and location. Available source material includes the involved performative and the social value of concerts, but also written sources, sheets of notes, printed or not. Basic knowledge, at least in music theories and history, is needed to understand music as a language. However, in a transcultural context it is highly important to question the categories of Western musicology. Seemingly universal concepts, such as the idea of an "absolute music", an expression coined by Richard Wagner and performed by artists such as Johannes Brahms, present an understanding of music that is far removed from extra-musical influences. They follow a Western understanding of music, which favour the European concept of art.325 To solve this problem we recommend combining methods of musicology with methods developed in the context of ethnomusicology and anthropology.326

4.7 Example (Lingual Sound Source): "SOS SOS rao rao Foyn". Listening to Transculturality in an Early German Radio Play

On 25 May, 1928, the airship "Italia" crashed near the North Pole and only part of the crew reached an ice floe.327 After several unsuccessful rescue attempts, a Soviet
ice-breaker managed to save the crew. The story had contemporary newspaper coverage and the public eagerly followed the competitive rescue activities: who would be first to save the fascist crew? Furthermore, whose technology (planes, ships, and radio waves) would avert tragedy and who would emerge as the heroes? The story had all the necessary ingredients to be turned into the technologically innovative form of a radio play. That happened in 1928. But before analysing the play, some background information is needed.

The "Italia" left Spitsbergen for the first aerial crossing of the Arctic on May 23, 1928. After a smooth take off, the airship, designed and flown by the Italian general Umberto Nobile, reached the designated location for landing at the North Pole, but the weather changed. Instead of landing the airship, the crew dropped an Italian flag and a Christian cross at the point where navigation instruments had located the North Pole. On the way back the severe weather continued. What happened under these difficult weather conditions became the main topic of different investigations and autobiographical publications. All these sources confirm that the airship's gondola touched the ground and disconnected from the main body of the envelope. Some of the crew and the equipment fell onto the ice and the remainder of the now too light airship disappeared up into the sky, never to be seen again. The survivors built a makeshift camp from the remaining equipment and had enough technical tools to assemble a transmitting station with a still-working radio unit. From there they regularly transmitted emergency calls. An amateur radio operator in Siberia received their signals and forwarded the information. Contact with the ice floe was established shortly thereafter. The events in the Arctic rapidly became the number one topic in newspapers and radio broadcasts over the following days. Well observed by the media, an international rescue mission began with Roald Amundsen as its most prominent member. Amundsen, a worldwide celebrity, was searching for good during his attempt to find the casualities. The Soviet Union eventually sent out two ice-breakers. The first ship "Malygin" failed to reach the ice floe, but the other, the old ice-breaker "Krasin", succeeded in rescuing the remaining survivors on 12 July, 1928.

4 Questioning and Prejudice

The misfortune of the "Italia" and the surrounding coverage represented nothing less than an international mass media event. Newspapers and, most notably, radio stations provided extensive coverage, and were supported by the fact that, before the accident, films about the airship had featured in weekly newsreels. Nobile had sent telegrams about the course of the flight every day, and after the crossing of the North Pole, he wired his greetings to his family, the Italian king, Mussolini, and the Pope. The expedition was therefore a well-known event, and the public became more than curious when suddenly no news or emergency calls came from the "Italia."

Numerous books, novels, and movies made the crash one of the most famous disasters. All these publications contributed to the public's interest in polar expeditions of the time. Moreover, the crash challenged the technical achievements of the twentieth century: airships, aeroplanes, mighty ice-breakers, and invisible radio waves, which could cover hitherto unimaginable distances. From political and ideological perspectives too the misadventure presented the most telling contemporary tensions imaginable: a Soviet ice-breaker coming to the rescue of an expedition under fascist leadership. Thus, the idea of new media, namely radio, covering the well-known story of the "Italia," can be seen as a market orientated and well-reflected decision. Our chosen sample source, Friedrich Wolf's radio play SOS SOS rao rao Foyn. Kreiszeit rettet Italia broadcast in 1928, is the oldest surviving radio play in Germany and a convincing example for a trans-cultural methodological approach.

The radio play is based on spoken language, an aspect absent from textual and image sources. Many sources on the disaster thematise technology, progress, and solidarity, but virtually no other types of source reveal the substantial problem of how an international and mobile civil society communicates. The dramatic events in the Arctic had to address the lingual aspect and problem of how multilingual settings can be maintained for German listeners. In which language did the crew members of the "Italia" talk to each other, considering they did not all have the same mother tongue? How did they communicate with the crew of the ice-breaker? Did the Italian


radio operator send the Morse code in Italian or in an international standardised form? How could the Russian amateur radio operator understand the message?

The radio play provides two solutions. It presents the “SOS” as an internationally standardised signal, and the Morse alphabet as a way to cross lingual (and ideological) borders. Furthermore, there is another element that crosses borders in this play, namely the geographic coordinate system. Subdividing the world by degrees of longitude and latitude, the 1884 International Meridian Conference held in Washington D.C. had established the information that was now needed to identify the changing location of the ice floe.

The characteristics of radio allow us to delve deeper, because the new medium became part of how the story was told. A transcultural approach draws attention to how the play incorporates the new technology: whether the author decided to downplay the role of national newspapers and instead targets an international audience (e.g. by playing the socialist Internationale), or whether he intended to use this new, powerful, border crossing instrument for spreading national propaganda internationally.

Wolf’s radio play confronted lingual nationalism with the transboundary language of music. Playing popular tunes in the background, the radio play developed temporal and spatial categories beyond the reach of written and/or visual sources. Having these methodological opportunities in mind, an interpretation of the “Italia” accident based on the radio play overcomes the patterns of national histories. Such an approach gives an insight into the tensions between different transboundary agencies. Analysing the background music, not national anthems, but well-known socialist (Warschaujanka) and fascist hymns (Giovanetta), defines and claims the scope of action.

Questioning the political and ideological background, the play presents a new form of immaterial spatiality created by the sounds and associations that certain tunes evoke in the addressed public. The next step should question the differences between the radio play and other source material available, for example newspapers or books. Who are the individuals living in the transboundary spaces that the music implied? Following this thought, one turns from the analytical macro level to the micro level, i.e. the actors, which allows for the appreciation of new perspectives. If one looks at the play’s description of the crew of the airship, the “Malygin,” and the successful “Krasin,” one can detect surprising similarities.

The “Italia” accident gave a public platform to Arctic experts who had an institutional background as members of international organisations, some of which were newly founded after World War I. One of the most important organisations, the Aeroartec, the International Society for the Exploration of the Arctic Regions by Means of Aircraft, was founded in 1924 and presided over by the polar explorer Fridtjof Nansen. Its first conference had been held in Berlin in 1926. At the exact time that the “Italia” crashed, Aeroartec held a meeting in Leningrad. Although we cannot be certain whether the “Italia” contributed, the swift increase in membership within few years of up to 400 members from 22 countries is interesting and opens an additional perspective of analysis. Besides Aeroartec, numerous organisations interested in meteorology and hydrography used the “Italia” accident to gain publicity. Among them was an especially dense network of researchers and organisations, the so-called Polar Year.

Since the First International Polar Year took place in 1883 and the desert, icy, inhospitable man’s land had become a location of dense entanglements. At the time of the “Italia” crash, experts had started to plan the second Polar Year for 1931/32. For the organisations involved, financing problems increased the need to go public. For polar scientists, the “Italia” crash was therefore extremely rewarding and indeed overrode ideological concerns: Rudolf L. Samojlovic (1881–1939), the Soviet scientist, who led the “Krasin” rescue team, took advantage of his celebrity status in Western media and published his view of the “Italia” accident in 1930. The book became a bestseller, and Samojlovic made an extensive lecture tour throughout Europe. He was even invited to the US. Other experts had similar interests in maintaining a vivid memory of the “Italia” crash—Aeroartec organised a flight in 1932 for the discovery of the “Italia’s” missing wreckage. Even Umberto Nobile, the pilot of the unfortunate “Italia,” later worked for Aeroartec.

With the presentation of the interaction between economic situation, international organisations, ideological backgrounds, and the radio play, the potential of the new media for this specific topic has hardly been exhausted. Particularly Nobile’s role as fascist hero, defeated adventurer, and later communist has not even been mentioned. However, the short investigation of the radio play alludes to the added intellectual value of a transcultural concept. Specifying entanglements at the edge of methodological entities is particularly interesting and offers a new and different insight into

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325 International Hydrographic Organisation, founded 1921, see: http://www.lonsda.de/organisation/index/510


327 Samojlovic, Der Weg nach dem Pol.
the interests of the time. Until then studies were for the most part limited to explorers, their organisations, and newspaper articles. However, an institutional history of polar organisations is limited to their members and publications, and media coverage says more about the journal than about the public interest in the “Italia” accident. The radio play oversteps some of these limitations and creates a “virtual room” where the combination of actors creates a new form of a multilayered public sphere that is inaccessible to any historical approach focusing on limiting entities rather than on investigating the consequences of transboundary entanglements.

Keeping in mind a transcultural approach, W-questions in the case of radio plays are still useful from a methodological point of view, but need some adaptations. In terms of the “who” question: keeping in mind the specific “virtual room” that the radio play created, Wolf produced more than just texts. He is an innovator, who crossed the borders of different media and his biography provides a new insight into the opportunities and risks that the 1930s provided for global subjects and transboundary lives.338

Friedrich Wolf (1888–1953) started his professional life as a ship’s doctor on the transatlantic routes in 1914 and then became an army doctor during World War I. After 1918 he was politically active and joined the workers’ and soldiers’ councils. He also crossed the line of scientific based medicine by working as a homeopath, and fought, with many other socialist physicians, against the prohibition of abortion. Simultaneously, he founded a leftist agitprop theatre group, wrote novels and plays for the stage and radio. In 1933, Wolf emigrated to the Soviet Union. In 1938 he wanted to support The International Brigades fighting in Spain, but on his way he was arrested and imprisoned in France. After his release, he returned to Russia and then in 1945 to Eastern Germany, where he took part in establishing the GDR and the country’s public-owned television studio, Deutsche Fernseh AG (German TV Corporation). From 1949 to 1951 he was the GDR’s first ambassador to Poland.

What can be read as a typical leftist’s biography becomes more the transboundary life of what can be described as a “global subject,” always coming in contact with but never really embracing professional and spatial ordering principles and entities. From this point of view, the author and the main figures in his play about the “Italia” have more in common than expected. Even Umberto Nobile, expelled from his position as a fascist general after the crash, shared some of Wolf’s border crossing experiences: he emigrated to the Soviet Union in order to work on the development of new airships. He even worked as a lecturer for Aeroarctic and went to the United States in 1939. Between 1942 and 1943 he lived in Spain and returned to Italy in 1943.339 These examples of common experiences may present the difficult and sometimes uneasy aspect of gaining results from transboundary involvements, because the world, which is organised and separated into ideological, social, conceptual, professional, spatial, and temporal entities, suddenly reveals itself to be in a state of complex, dynamic, shifting, and dangerous entanglements.

4.8 Example (Musical Sound Source): Listening to Music in the Theatre. The Kawakami Group at the 1900 Paris World’s Fair

Among many attractions at the World’s Fair in Paris in 1900, the global public was eager to see a very special and indeed transcultural performance at the Théâtre Lise Fuller, which had become famous for its combination of eroticism,


modern dance, and technical effects: \(^{340}\) Loie Fuller, \(^{441}\) an American modern dancer and celebrated as "fleur de feu, reine du prisme" (flower of fire, queen of the prism), \(^{442}\) hired a Japanese troupe, the Kawakami, who became a main attraction of Fuller’s newly opened theatre. The Japanese theatre group gave a guest performance on the European mainland for the first time. \(^{443}\) The undisputed star was Sada Yacco, the wife of the group's leader Kawakami Otojiro after whom the group was named. Amongst their fans were the famous French artist Auguste Rodin and the composer Claude Debussy, who is thought to have taken inspiration from the group’s performance for his composition *Jardins sous la pluie*. Artists, such as the young Pablo Picasso and Rupert Bunny, made sketches of Sada Yacco.

The presentation of extra-European cultures had characterised World’s Fairs since their beginnings in the mid-nineteenth century. But in this case, the Kawakami group made just a whistle stop on a world tour, and continued to present Japanese culture in an adapted, global form. \(^{444}\) The tour had started in 1899 when the Kawakami sailed to the United States. American newspapers interpreted the tour as official Japanese propaganda and published only a few, lukewarm reviews. In short, there is an obvious imbalance between American and European perception. \(^{445}\) A transcultural approach aims to overcome the simple, accepted notion that exoticism was part of World’s Fairs and instead examines the problems and difficulties that the Kawakamis encountered during their world tour.

Prepared by Fuller’s modern, colourful, and effective dance, the Western public searched for a visual equivalent but struggled with the presentation of classical, language-orientated Kabuki theatre that was understood by only a small portion of the audience. The Japanese actors, on the other hand, faced the problem of adapting Kabuki traditions for a public not even aware of the existence of Kabuki. This setting of mutual misunderstandings and partly false expectations provides historical indicators of ongoing translation processes, prejudices, and the preparation of a globally acceptable form, which focuses on visuality. However, the global adaptation did not eradicate spatial differences. The Japanese theatre had more success in London than in the United States, and became famous in Paris. In the French capital “Japonisme” corresponded almost perfectly with the dominant style of symbolism and growing importance of dance and music. To follow on with an example that specifies elements of the bizarre and unconventional, take for instance the Western audience’s fascination with Sada Yacco. When she presented herself as a Geisha of the first rank, the Western public mistakenly expected pornography, and thus searched for (and certainly found) sexual connotations. From a Japanese point of view too Sada Yacco had crossed borders even by going on stage—but these borders were located on different mental maps. In a transcultural context, the question of (mis)perception can be understood in a much broader sense. How does perception differ in Asia and Europe? Does it make a difference whether Asian culture is imported to Europe and advertised as “exotic” or whether European theatre plays are adapted for the Asian region and seen as reforming theatre? What parallels can be observed in other areas of art and culture? To which extent do border-crossers such as Kawakami and Sada Yacco influence the image of the respective culture in a global context, or, for example, prepare the Japanese public for Debussy, Mozart, and Beethoven?

Of course, transculturality oversteps the analysis of what people said, what newspapers wrote, which images were presented, and which official catalogues were chosen. Again, the use of transculturality as a methodological approach results in a more convincing epistemology. A critical reading of Western descriptions of Sada Yacco’s dance in Paris explains the West’s fascination from a different perspective. Instead of formally analysing the choreography, such a study investigates how the moving silk kimonos highlighted the innovation of electric light. At this World’s Fair, electricity had a highly symbolic value for the Western world as an expression of modernism. This explains why the Western audience was so taken by the electrical light reflected in the Japanese garments, rather than the garments themselves, which were hitherto used only in traditional theatre performances. A transcultural study that claims to show how a pre-industrial *Kabuki* play reflected Western modernity needs, however, to investigate also the Japanese part in this transcultural situation. The Kawakami made their way to Europe because in Japan too West-Eastern cultural entanglements had begun to transform local habits. Modern theatre in Japan now used Western authors, such as William Shakespeare, to charge old theatre traditions with a nationalist meaning. \(^{347}\) Moreover, the


\(^{441}\) The American Loie Fuller was one of the first modern dancers and a highly professional businesswoman with talented technical effects in her show.


\(^{444}\) The pieces presented in Paris, e.g. *The Geisha and the Samurai*, originally a classical drama presented over two days, became a 30 minute performance. As Gautier wrote, the short version’s content was not even accessible to those who were fluent in Japanese. Gautier, *Les musiques bizarre à l’exposition de 1900*, 1.

\(^{445}\) Searching the database "Historical Newspapers" yields about 100 hits, most of them announcements of performances. However, there are increasing numbers of reports during the Paris World’s Fair. See ProQuest, "Historical Newspapers," accessed July 29, 2011, [http://www.proquest.com/en-US/catalog/databases/detail.jsp?db_name=his-news](http://www.proquest.com/en-US/catalog/databases/detail.jsp?db_name=his-news).

Kawakami utilised their performances in the West to address issues back home in Japan. By thematising, for example, the Sino-Japanese War, they brought contemporary political debates into theatre performances.348

From a methodological point of view, transcultural entanglements introduce some difficulties. Merging has a strong performative aspect and raises the issue of preservation. Apart from photographs, which cannot capture movement, motion pictures and sound come closest to conveying the visuality and audibility of the moving silk that contemporary viewers mentioned. The films that were made at the time only survived in fragments and are mostly inaccessible today. In contrast, rediscovered sound documents are now available on CD, although in poor quality.349 These recordings display probably the first Japanese music heard in Europe. As musical performance played an important role in the Japanese theatre of the time, the recordings display a combination of spoken texts, songs and instrumental pieces. This combination fits perfectly into the not yet fully established technology of recording, probably better than European theatre performances did. Why the Kawakami attracted the application of Western communication technologies needs further research, all the more because not one but two recordings are available: the first recording, made during the World’s Fair by the Gramophone Company, an English record company 350 was later used commercially. The second recording was made in 1901, when the Japanese troupe performed in Berlin and visited the Berliner Phonogramm Archiv. This newly founded archive specialised in ethno-musical recordings and over the course of the twentieth century became one of the most important record archives in Europe.351

The Kawakami group provides an interesting example of transfers in both directions: Kawakami brought Japanese theatre to Europe and took European theatre back with him to Japan. But there is another, perhaps only ephemeral third level. The new form of medially fascinated the contemporary audience more than the exotic character of the performance: silk in the light of electrical lamps, sounds recorded for commercial and scientific purposes, all in the spatial context of a World’s Fair, which realised utopian dreams for a manageable period of time. Following this thought, a comparison with contemporary recordings of music both from Asia and Europe offers clues as to the forms of staging used in the Kamakura production. Contemporary record catalogues, which have so far been

350 Ibid.

Fig. 4 Sada Yacco and the Kawakami group inspired Western artists with their theatre performance at the World’s Fair. Picasso, Pablo, La Danseuse Sada Yacco, © Succession Picasso / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2011. Pastel, 35.5 × 25 cm, 1900
neglected by historical research but are increasingly becoming available online, may afford additional perspectives.352

Going a step further, the new, globalised, ephemeral space created by music and preserved in recordings offered alternative ways of life. In Japan, women had for a long time been forbidden to perform as actresses at theatres, and even with the abolishment of this restriction, actresses had a low social standing. Gaining the profile of the female main character, Sada Yacco escaped these gender limitations with obviously long-lasting consequences: after her husband’s death and the end of the Kawakami group, she became an employer as the owner of a silk factory. Therefore, rather than comparing differences, transcultural entanglement offers evidence for a scope of actions which overstep rules under certain conditions.

5 Future Prospects—How to Find Sources Documenting a “Web,” “Flows,” and Other Relational Approaches

In 1939, Walter Benjamin worked on a draft about the philosophy of history and dedicated the historical approach to the commemoration of nameless people, dem Gedächtnis der Namenlosen.353 In the debates of the 1930s, an approach focusing on undocumented lives clearly relied on the conceptual framework of Marxist historiography. However, the bitter irony was that Benjamin himself fell into a namelessness far removed from what labour historians and Marxist historical materialism wanted remembered. The Jewish philosopher fled Paris shortly after the German occupation and arrived in Portbou, where he died from an overdose of morphine in still obscure circumstances in September 1940. With a misspelled name, his corpse was buried in the Catholic cemetery by the railway station, where the border crossing character of this little town on the French-Spanish border gains its most explicit visibility: here, the track gauge of the railway needed (and still needs) to be adapted to the Iberian railway system. In the light of Benjamin’s death, the spatial characteristics of this Mediterranean town serves as a persuading metaphor for a crucial problem regarding the proper documentation of transcultural entanglements: from a spatial approach, the frontier town offers the opportunity to cross borders by providing a variety of structural devices—an impressive rail freight transfer facility and a passenger station with immigration and customs buildings. At the same time, all these devices, which seem to support and invite the crossing of borders, substantially slow down the transfer: changing track gauges stops the flow of traffic despite the improvements produced by faster, longer, and more efficient trains. The immigration service increased, but only by extending into the waiting room. There are reasonable allusions to the fact that Benjamin could no longer bear waiting in no man’s land. He probably preferred to die instead of being thrown into new, unexpected, and unwanted circumstances, and thus missed the arrival of his visa papers, which would have transformed him from a displaced person into a migrant with a US work permit. The only witness to Benjamin’s death was his travel companion, Henny Gurland. She successfully escaped to the United States and only years later disclosed that Benjamin had addressed a suicide note to her and Theodor W. Adorno, which she had to destroy for security reasons.354

After reading this book’s chapter on methods, readers will know that Benjamin’s story, as told above, amounts to little more than speculation. Historiography is not able to provide the source material needed for documenting the transformatory power of a frontier town. The suicide note, which does not exist, would be needed to substantiate the tale. Our claim that changing relations and shifting networks played a crucial role in Benjamin’s demise faces the problem of presenting empirical evidence. How do we connect Benjamin’s life with the history of a place—Portbou—as well as with the history of railway technologies? How can we demonstrate more than the simultaneity of parallel historical developments that are driven by intrinsic factors?

Transculturality is an approach that illuminates what perhaps lies across parallel developments. However, to document this part, we have to think about relations. Cultures as “relational webs” challenge the potential of historiography.355 At the end of our discussion, it is therefore necessary to balance the methodological basics with the theoretical assumptions by going into the issue of empirical evidence—for historians, source material. We have to ask again in a critical way whether transculturality introduces a substantial sea change or whether we have to limit our expectations. A sea change must yield more and precise information as a result of re-reading well-known sources from a new perspective. Until now, the sources presented in this book are composed of documents that are underestimated in their value as sounding boards of a transcultural past. However, the discovery of these documents in visual, written, or aural forms do not automatically rely on using a revolutionary new questionnaire. Sada Yacco may be far removed from the diplomatic or labour historian’s attention, but both would find historical evidence of her life without a specific and new understanding of transculturality. Therefore, the question remains as to what else historiography can do other than freeze transcultural entanglements in the imaginary of holding areas and transit zones.


and follow migrants or cosmopolitans. Carefully investigating what modern historiography qualifies as source material might help us find out whether or not a transcultural approach is more than just another postmodern stereotype.

Transculturality, which we will resist referring to as a new “turn,” allows us to search for source material in three directions according to the development of scholarly debate. As Aof Benessiahel explains, transculturality appears a) as an umbrella term to specify what is similar in different (national) cultures b) as a denomination of identity-building attributes, which can travel in time and space, and c) as a specific form that adapts global influences. For methodological reasons, the most interesting aspect is that transculturality establishes an interest in “relational webs.” At first glance, relations explain why and how individuals form a society, at least for well-defined spaces and (national) territories. This is nothing new and has been at the core of social history, well established since Benjamin’s time. However, when social relations and territorial bindings come apart under the influence of globalisation, sociology faces some phenomena that are incompatible with social theory, including the “rise of new forms of citizenship and non-state membership.” Of course, under the premise of constant movement, it is difficult to decide what, then, constitutes a society. One suggestion is to introduce the relational understanding that “society is conceptualised as a network, though not a network of objects or of individuals, but as a network of relations.” After mentioning the difficulties in introducing networks as analytical tools into historiography, we try again to translate this assumption from a methodological perspective. The obvious conclusion is to abstain from explaining social relations with functions performed in a specific territorial context. However, gaining distance from a spatial explanation does not mean that the new approach dismisses territorial bindings, an approach, which would let collapse our narrative about Benjamin’s last days almost completely. Appadurai made a helpful suggestion by introducing a difference between the mode of movements and the question of “movability.” This difference brings Benjamin’s case to the fore again, pointing to tensions between opportunities to move or stay put. Appadurai stresses the “relationship between the form of circulation and the circulation of forms.” Indeed, interesting new results can be obtained by separating the different kinds of flowing, transgressing media, and the information they transport in different ways, by carefully asking to what extent historical contexts influenced the different velocity of circulation.

Still, with the reservation that the relationships described above only exist in theory, this approach can offer a way of finding empirical evidence, to which traditional historiography had no access until now. As always in historiography, a relational approach requires a testing field, such as the abovementioned international organisations. As we know, this example encompasses a variety of crucial problems: institutions and persons involved are transcultural by definition; their documentation, however, presents a major problem, because established forms of spatial storage give only a fragmented insight into their historical development. The same is true for the not yet investigated question of which places international offices chose and to what extent an extraterritorial influence shaped the local surroundings.

There is one available example database, LONSEA (League of Nations Search Engine), which tries to connect all factors involved in the presence of international organisations in a relational form. LONSEA started from the obvious fact that there are expanding actors in international politics, from the no less obvious burst of transboundary activities that occur under the umbrella terms of globalisation and globalisation. The League of Nations and its secretariat in Geneva functioned as follows: the rather small international administration was surrounded by a variety of different international associations, persons, and movements from all over the globe, including a substantial Asian participation. For political reasons, and because the secretariat had no funds available for propaganda, the League of Nations was eager to prove its global presence and therefore collected these activities in its regularly edited *Handbooks of International Organisations*. These handbooks serve as the backbone of the database, together with the personnel files of the League of Nations' secretariat. The information available covers different forms of circulations, e.g. the membership of persons, institutions, and states, but also topics of transgressive power, for example, the search for an international language, or physico-chemical standards, or persons. Both the personnel files and the information from the handbook help to understand who, when, why, and with what consequences global networks gained profiles as institutions, functioned as personal relations, and disappeared or prevailed in times of political tensions and economic crises. The database shows the local bindings of the institutions and persons concerned, but also the combination across searchable entities. Therefore, relations gain a spatial visibility—whoever connects whatever entities will immediately see whether dense relations cumulate in an identity building cloud, or end in isolation. Finding sources in this field depends on the extent to which relations develop and when, how, and in which fields relations overlapped within the formation of a dense cluster. Building this relation is therefore just a first, but
important step in the introduction of a statistical tool. In using force-based algorithms, the density of relations translates into a spatial model. The nodes appear as a physical entity, or to put it simply: dense connectivity is located in the centre; less connected persons, institutions, places, topics, or connections across the enumerated entities, are at the periphery. Since the tool shows the connected entities' "friends of friends," it is possible to measure the distance between them within a determined time frame. By using relations between entities, which cannot be related to each other using existing historical methods, we gain new insights. To put it more precisely: we gain a thesis that needs testing in the usual way in which historical research is conducted. However, the thesis itself is based on measuring relations and helps to understand transcultural entanglements in a far more precise way.

Searching the database for the most connected person during the lifetime of the League of Nations can provide a first insight into the expected results. Interestingly, the person who was better connected than the General Secretary of the League, or the president of the International Chamber of Commerce, or whoever historians expected to have global influence, turned out to be Arthur Sweetser. He was connected to 2812 organisations and people, creating 17152 reference points. A significantly less connected person was A. Lanhorelle, vice-president of the International Federation of Moto-Cycling Clubs. He shows only 58 connections, and would have needed 46860 reference points to reach the same community that Sweetser did. Arthur Sweetser (1888–1968) was a journalist and League of Nations' staff member whose dense and global relations almost completely escaped historians' attention. There is an interesting antinomy between the availability of material and the historical disinterest that turned Sweetser into an almost nameless person, although he published on aviation, was active in different international organisations, participated in important conferences, taught at the Geneva Institute, and cultivated close connections to globally active endowments. Furthermore, his personal papers, held by the Library of Congress, encompass more than 90 containers. Sweetser's life, therefore, can be documented with an enormous amount of source material, even without the many references in additional personal collections. The problem is that this material remains inaccessible to historians due to the unspecific, multilayered topics and institutions involved. Indeed, only a relational approach helps to understand the peculiarities upon which Sweetser's life was built. Only the idea of networks of relations explains where Sweetser's biography was located, namely on the safe side of those manifold spaces which turned fatal in Benjamin's case.

Along with postmodern literature, transcultural history may be approached by consulting the ancient historian Polybios. He wrote in several, wide ranging volumes about Rome's rise to world power. But as Denis Feeney vividly explained in a review, Polybios had to cope with the challenging problem of finding a global narrative for readers without access to easily attainable maps and chronologies. Although modern historiography addresses readers that have access to an overwhelmingly dense network of information, it faces a similar problem: finding a new narrative beyond or against established expectations might be as difficult as exploring unknown spaces. Although a part of global history, a transcultural approach provides analytical tools that aim less at the exploration of the globe, than at highlighting the many borders, limits, and fine fissures that a global narrative has to consider.

Although just a starting point, this book takes the question seriously of how the historians' work should be done. The narrative chosen emphasises a specific time period—the 1920s and 1930s—and includes methodologies, provides source material, and explains why borders are necessary for the understanding of how dense connectivity and entanglements developed. Knowing that historiography is exposed to constant change and that it explains present inventions of tradition rather than the past, Caroline Bynum made an important point. She suggests "an enthusiastic acceptance (instead of a grim fear) that each of us writes from a partial perspective" as a way to gain more time to establish arguments more carefully. A lot of additional work is needed to elaborate the many borders, the coherence, and connectivity between parts of the globe, such as Asia and Europe. Furthermore, multilayered structures transform into a narrative only in a complex way, and coherence encounters the problem that crossing borders is a rather dangerous experience. But this is obviously one of the key challenges that the twenty-first century will have to face, hopefully in a peaceful way.


Part III: Sources


1 Texts

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World Orders


War and Peace


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3 Sounds

Inventing Global sounds


Border Crossers


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For the 21st century, the often-quoted citation ‘past is prologue’ reads the other way around: The global present lacks a historical narrative for the global past. Focusing on a transcultural history, this book questions the territoriality of historical concepts and offers a narrative, which aims to overcome cultural essentialism by focusing on crossing borders of all kinds. Transcultural History reflects critically on the way history is constructed, asking who formed history in the past and who succeeded in shaping what we call the master narrative. Although trained European historians, the authors aim to present a useful approach to global history, showing first of all how a Eurocentric but universal historiography removed or essentialized certain topics in Asian history. As an empirical discipline, history is based on source material, analysed according to rules resulting from a strong methodological background. This book accesses the global past after World War I, looking at the well known stage of the Paris Peace Conferences, observing the multiplication of new borders and the variety of transgressing institutions, concepts, actors, men and women inventing themselves as global subjects, but sharing a bitter experience with almost all local societies at this time, namely the awareness of having relatives buried in far distant places due to globalised wars.

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