

# Editorial

Historians have expressed increasing concern about the segmentation of their discipline's scholarly expertise into discrete compartments, whether defined by place, period, theme, or sub-discipline. A deluge of monographs is obscuring the landscapes of historical knowledge, even in relatively neglected parts of the globe. The *Journal of Global History* has the ambition of helping to overcome this fragmentation in historiography, while avoiding pitfalls that have emerged in earlier attempts to achieve this goal.

Processes of globalization themselves require more historical treatment, and establish a subtle difference between the closely related endeavours of global and world history. Despite providing insights as to how the local and the global have progressively coalesced, or how the one has cannibalized the other, social scientists, cultural theorists and others, including many historians, have portrayed globalization as a recent phenomenon, beginning late in the twentieth century. Conversely, other scholars have pointed to evidence of trans-continental human connections over millennia, since *Homo Sapiens* first left the African continent, reiterating the old saw that there is nothing new under the sun. This journal proceeds on the assumption that globalization is in fact a process as much subject to change as any other, and that it is therefore misleading to neglect its fluctuating growth and decline. Processes and concepts tending towards globalization have emerged and developed, only to give way to the 'revenge of the local'.

Past explanations of globalization and its barbarian foes have relied on grand narratives of the 'rise of the West' and the 'Westernization of the rest', which have been exposed as flawed and inadequate. Historians are busily quarrying ideas and experiences derived from other traditions, to reach more balanced and satisfactory understandings, even though the Western past remains useful in framing global contrasts and interpretations. Indeed, there is a growing awareness that concepts such as the 'West' or the 'South' are themselves historical constructs, variously deployed by people in different regions of the world for complex purposes. The editors hope to contribute to the continuing deconstruction of the Western meta-narrative, while not throwing away all of its venerable bricks.

Equally undermined today are grand narratives relying on the determinist 'economic base' of Marxism and the 'rational man' of neo-classical economics, and this has led to new perceptions of how material life has correlated with intellectual, religious, political and military forces. Writings on the 'life-cycles' of commodities, and on cultures of consumption and labour, including considerations of their gendered nature, are examples of this trend, which the journal wishes to take further.

Writing global history does not necessarily entail taking the whole globe as the framework of analysis. On the one hand, new areas for study are emerging. Transcending the traditional focus on the nation state, they are defined as zones of interaction between diverse societies, rather than regions dominated by one particular 'civilization' or 'oecumene'. On the other hand, new comparisons are emerging, particularly between different parts of the 'South'. The editors wish to make the journal part of this process of straddling traditional regional boundaries and proposing innovative comparisons.

A focus on interconnections further implies investigations into patterns of both human and non-human change that stretch far back before the appearance of written documents. This kind of 'big history' has attracted increasing attention of late. It implies a sustained dialogue with specialists in other disciplines, notably geography, archaeology, glottochronology, epidemiology, climatology, vulcanology, environmental sciences, botany, biology and genetics. The journal hopes to be a forum for such interdisciplinary encounters.

The editors also seek interdisciplinary cooperation in the domain of recorded human history, for many other branches of learning have deeply influenced interpretations of change, notably sociology, anthropology, economics, political science, law, religious studies, and linguistics. The journal wishes to open its doors to those in all disciplines who take an interest in the historical implications of their own field of study.

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