



Introduction

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At the beginning of the 21st century, history as a topic of intellectual discourse has regained its central position. But the discussion of the past is no longer merely a discussion of what happened when; it is more and more a reflection on how we live with our respective pasts, how we conceptualize the past and how we give meaning to it. That is why research on historiography and historical thought is no longer confined to a small group of specialists; it has become a major concern of the community of professional historians as well as of the interested public.

As everything and everybody in this world is part of a process, which is commonly called globalization, so is the writing of history. While other fields of intellectual creativity have long been internationalized, the writing of history is confronted with a special load of difficulties when trying to react to the challenge of globalization. The writing of history is, of course, much older a profession than the existence of nations on this world. But it seems safe to argue that since the emergence of the nation state history has been part and parcel of the process of creating and debating national identity. Up until today history writing fulfills its main task and is therefore being subsidized by the state in taking part in the process of nation building by explaining and discussing the reason why the different nations are what they are today. If globalization is not only taking place in the field of economics but is a process which includes every aspect of human life, the nation state is at stake and that means the writing of history will have to be redefined in what is concerned

its point of departure as well as its main object of inquiry. Will the historical profession fulfill its task in creating identities, which transcend the nation state or will historians in future legitimize what they are doing by preserving the memory of the nation in a world without nation states? Is it possible to identify with mankind or will historians in future see the need to go to smaller units of identification and write the history of the region, the city or else the village searching for roots that have long been neglected but which reemerge as the only legitimate and conceivable object of identification. This is where the much discussed issue of history and memory enters the scene. The concern for history and memory reflects doubts that both the producers of historical knowledge as well as the consumers have developed about their understanding of the past. Individual memories gain importance where the grand narratives loose their persuasiveness. But we also need them when it comes to writing history about what has not left any written sources behind. The smaller the unit of inquiry the more we have to rely on non-historical or oral sources.

Globalization is also a process of globalizing the discourse. And globalizing the discourse means re-defining the relationship between universality and particularity in the context of historiography and historical thought. If it is true to say that historiography in the context of the nation state tends more towards stressing the particularity of the nation than on universal aspects of world history, can we then assume that historiography in the context of globalization is more inclined towards finding universal aspects of history. Or will globalization lead to a renewed emphasis on the particularity of historical development, albeit no longer within the confines of the nation state?

But who is qualified to re-define the relationship between universality and particularity? And who is qualified to define what universality is? Up until today, the historical profession is dominated by the European experience and dominated by historians who more often than not cling to the notion of universality without even being aware of the histories of non-European countries and regions. If this experience forms the basis of what we define universality to be the globalization of the historical discourse will lead to a suppression of alternative understandings of history and hence an impoverishment of historical thought. It will reduce the multitudinous possibilities of

writing, conceptualizing and understanding history to a unified conception of world history dominated by norms of European origin.

Those who are aware of this dominance are usually not part of it. Historians specialized on non-European histories as well as historians from regions with their own historical traditions are not prepared to accept this kind of globalized discourse. They claim that globalizing the discourse should be guided by the idea of diversity. People should know much more about the histories of countries, which are not their home countries. And they criticize historians working within the framework of the European tradition who are seldom aware of the fact that their colleagues from outside are usually highly interested in what is going on in the other spheres of history writing. Even though Chinese historians since the early 20th century for example could easily have been proud enough about the tradition of historiography in their own country to reject the European style they have eagerly been absorbing eurogene theories and philosophies in order to reform their own historiography. The low profile European and many US American historians keep in getting acquainted with non-European forms of history writing contrasts strongly to this kind of openness. And this is true even if they do take an interest in African history, for example. However, dealing with the histories of foreign countries by integrating them into one's own worldview does still not necessarily imply that we know how history (or better histories) are being written in Africa. The same is true for Asia with its rich tradition of history writing and enormous amounts of historical sources and for all other regions of the world that deal with their respective histories in a manner which does not conform to the norms set in the European world. Not knowing about their respective conceptualizations of history does not only imply that they are not being given due respect. It also implies that those who cling to the European tradition miss a chance to probe their own history writing, maybe even to refine it or to open it to a new world. In a world in which nearly everyone of us is bound to transcend boundaries more than once in his or her lifetime, the success of intercultural exchange is based on understanding the other, and that means on understanding world history as a sum of histories written according to a myriad of different cultures and traditions of history writing. This way of globalizing our knowledge and understanding of world history implies that living in times where the world moves beyond the stage of

being organized in nation states we should not try to understand the unity of the world before we have taken fully account of its diversity.

Historiography East & West is dedicated to this approach. It is focused on how history is written and not on history itself. It is interested in understanding the methodology of academic history writing in an academic context as well as it welcomes manuscripts on historical theory and historical thought. *Historiography East & West* is a forum of discussions on different approaches to history writing. It can be comparative but must not be so. It is out to offer a platform for historians from different regions and cultures of the world to engage in a discourse aimed at equipping us with the ability to understand each other and borrow from each other in order to gain a better understanding of ourselves.

That is why the journal is a multilingual journal. For those of us who do not regard English as their mother tongues it is quite clear that having to write in English hinders our intellectual capacities from fully developing whenever we touch topics for which every single author has to create the wording him or herself rather than copying it from someone else. On the other hand, we all know that publications can only find worldwide acclaim unless they are written in English. With the dominance of the English language over the scholarly production in most fields, the intellectual community has not only gained a common language of communication, it is also missing a lot of ideas and insights which some of us simply cannot or are not willing to express in English. That is why *Historiography East & West* sees the need to establish a truly multilingual journal and invite contributions from all over the world written in any language for which the editorial board can find at least two reviewers who can read the language and evaluate the contribution. On top of that, we supply every article with an outline in English and Chinese and we provide our readers with the service of translation if a reasonable number of reader informs us of the need to publish a given article in a language which is more widely read than the language the article carries. *Historiography East & West* especially invites contributions from historians all over Asia who because of the extremely rich traditions of history writing in this particular region of the world are highly productive in their respective countries but who because of the above mentioned language barriers do not

participate in the worldwide discussion on questions of historiography and historical thinking as much as they could.

As *Historiography East & West* is a multilingual journal it has to be an online journal. There is no easier way to combine different languages in one journal than to present the journal as an online journal. It is an online journal with an editorial board and a group of reviewers around it, which is decided to produce at least the same kind of quality conventional academic journals have produced. But it is also decided to make use of the internet technology to do what is still very difficult and expensive to realize in the context of a conventionally published journal: to give room for any language, any mixture of languages and mixture of scripts which we need to develop a style of discussion in our profession which is on line with the challenge globalization is posing to us.

If it is true that history has regained its central position in the intellectual discourse, more than only the historical discipline must be interested in participating in the discourse on how to write history. That is why *Historiography East & West* is not only a journal focused on historiography and historical thought and aimed at historians specialized in these fields. It is a journal that acknowledges the fact that every sector of human life has its historical dimension and that therefore we have to open up and establish closer relations with disciplines that are interested in inquiring in the historical dimension of human existence even though they might not necessarily conceive themselves as part of the historical discipline. We know that historians concentrating on the question of how history is being written need to discuss their findings with political scientists as well as sociologists. We need to hear the opinion of colleagues who know more than we do about how the media are influencing the creation and dissemination of historical knowledge just as we not only need historians from all over the world presenting their analysis of their own respective historiographical traditions. We also need the contributions of regional specialists who work on the writing of history in the context of cultures, which are not their own cultures.

Historiography East & West is the outcome of a "Conference on Modern Chinese Historiography and Historical Thinking" that was organized by Axel Schneider and Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik in Heidelberg, Germany, in May 2001. This was the second in a series of conferences on Chinese histori-

ography hosted by the Chair for Modern Sinology at the Sinological Seminar of Heidelberg University bringing scholars from many countries of the world together. The rising interest in issues of historiography and historical thought which the call for papers for this conference had clearly shown encouraged the organizers and the participants in trying to find a publisher for the project of a multilingual and interdisciplinary online journal. And we are happy to have found Brill as the publisher and technical supporter of this journal as well as the Chiang Ching-Kuo Foundation as sponsor for the first issues of this project.

The origins of this journal being as they are the first issues of *Historiography East & West* will bring out some of the papers that were given on the above-mentioned conference. This is especially true for the first issue, which is totally focused on modern Chinese historiography and will only present one paper on theoretical issues, which is not directly related to China. Except for practical reasons the editorial board has decided to start out with a China issue as systematic research on the tradition and modern development of Chinese historiography has been going on for many years both in and outside China with a comparatively big community of scholars all over the world producing articles and monographs. It is because of this development in the field that the editorial board feels the urgent need to attract the attention of scholars working about other historiographical cultures to the findings of research on history writing in China. And given the importance of Chinese historiography both for traditional and modern Chinese society we hope that colleagues from other sectors of the China field will also find an interest in this particular topic.

But there are still other reasons for the editorial board to choose China as a starter for the journal. It is the fact that history writing in China has not only always been of major importance for the community of scholars in China, it has also shown to be extremely open and flexible in adapting to the challenges it had to work up to. The 20th century is one of those periods in which Chinese historiography had to prove its flexibility and openness while undergoing change that was and is extremely influenced by Western thought. It is important to know about pre-modern traditions of history writing in China in order to understand its development in the 20th century. But it is at least of the same importance to understand what sorts of non-Chinese histori-

cal theories have exerted their influences on China and through which channels these influences have reached the community of historians in China. Thus Chinese historiography in the 20th century can serve as an example of what happens when different cultures of history writing get in contact with each other and start a process of cross fertilization. The first issue will therefore present a number of papers discussing channels of cross fertilization through the findings of authors writing about China as well as authors coming from China. On top of that, one article will be presented that was inspired by recent discussions on the issues of trauma and memory in the West. This approach to modern Chinese historiography is a different form of cross fertilization in which questions originated from outside China are being posed at Chinese historiography by non-Chinese regional specialists, a methodology that – as the conference showed – was both quite unfamiliar and appealing to our Chinese colleagues.

It is our hope that the Chinese experience might encourage our readers and contributors to embark on a journey through different cultures of historiography and historical thought, which will enrich their understanding of the diversity of historiographical cultures as a basis of rethinking their own traditions. This is how *Historiography East & West* as a truly multi-lingual and multi-regional interdisciplinary journal wants to contribute to the endeavor of making the writing of history work up to the challenges which globalization is posing in front of us.