

## When The Eagle Visits the Dragon

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Let me begin by thanking the organizers of this Congress, the leadership of the International Committee of Historical Sciences, its General Secretary, my colleague Robert Frank, and all countries who decided to support me. My gratitude is also to the sponsor of this Award and especially to our Chinese host, to the Shandong University.

I must admit that I have been always longing for this occasion to visit China, and I dare hope this will not be the last time. For a long time, I have shared the impatience of Spaniards who in the 1530s, when they barely settled in Mexico, were dreaming about crossing the Pacific Ocean to visit the land of the Chins (sic).

A few years ago, I tried to reread the conquest of Mexico in the light of Ming Dynasty China in a book entitled *The Eagle and the Dragon*. The Dragon was China, the Eagle Aztec Mexico with which I maintain very old and intimate relations. Hence, I realized that we could not write a line of history, even history of the Americas, without having in mind the past of this great country and the scope - very often abysmal - of our ignorance.

### **The Challenges of a Globalized World**

Today an European Americanist, a European specialist of Latin America is faced with many challenges, all related to the great transformations in contemporary era. Can we Europeans still claim to write World History? Can we still put an universal eye upon the rest of the planet? And, in my case, upon the history of Latin America?

Are our books irreparably tainted by Eurocentrism? And even if the kind of history we conceive and practice is still making sense for Europe, what content should we assign to it today when our Continent hosts ever increasing waves of immigrants from Africa and Asia, and there is still no European memory or memories that we can share with them.

As a European, I would try to answer these questions drawing from what my students and colleagues from Paris, Princeton, Mexico and Brazil have brought to me in many seminars, conferences and discussions for so many years. I also benefited and still benefit from what so many Latin American historians have taught me and it is to these great scholars, in particular to two great masters of the twentieth century, Brazilian historian Sergio Buarque de Holanda and Mexican historian Edmundo O'Gorman, I dedicate this conference.

### **All Sorts of Pasts**

We nowadays often speak of the amnesia that strikes the post-modern West. In order to explain it, we even have forged the concept of Presentism. It is true that in the West very often the present appears to us as the only possible horizon, and that it seems to dilute itself endlessly and to escape from our understanding. However, for those who take time to watch the multitude of screens around us, it appears that all sorts of pasts do coexist and proliferate, and that technological progress greatly contributes to this dispersion.

Pasts sold on the screens, on line and in bookstores have often to do with the history of ancestral heritage, a national and nationalist history, which keeps on flirting with historical fiction, epic and melodrama. This is the old legacy of the 19th century.

These kinds of pasts are now competing with TV series which are often remarkably produced such as *Rome*, *The Tudors*, *The Borgias*, or in the fantasy type like *Game of Thrones*. As all these productions, *Game of Thrones* speaks of our present. A French observer could review: "This flamboyant Middle Ages refers very precisely to the life that our planet will soon be living .... *Game of Thrones* describes what the world would look like after the fall of the American Empire, a blazing new Middle Ages where no power is stable and everything is possible. "

Confronted with all these pasts, I wonder if the historian should stick to the written text and neglect the image, the visual creation? But how to remain indifferent to what great movie and theater directors are offering us today. Thinking of Russia, it is clear that the masterpiece by Alexander Sokurov, *The Russian Arch*, opens another way to write history, originating a new approach between historical fiction and documentary. Taking another example in Italy, it is obvious that *Lehman Trilogy*, a play by Stefano Massini, directed by Luca Ronconi, develops an excellent analysis on the saga of Lehman Brothers, the US financial crisis and its origins that plunge into the 19th century. Every time images tell us and make us feel things that printed texts scarcely can.

The emergence of images everywhere irreversibly poses the question of the media, for centuries the Christian West, the countries of Islam and China closely associated history with writing and

civilization. Could we think of a new dominant form of history writing as based upon images, whether digital or virtual? In other words, it seems that a historian can hardly ignore the paths of contemporary creation. Far from the routine of the academic world, a temporary installation, a staging or the reinterpretation of a classic are often proved to be more suggestive than tons of articles. As a matter of fact many of these creators point exactly the problems of our time and even can offer a critical and constructive point of view which we need more than ever before.

### **A Global Renaissance?**

Today, how to build a past that makes sense, a past less based upon an ethnocentric memory, a shareable past which we can use to consider the present in a more critical and informed way, and with this distance could allow the Braudelian term of “la longue durée”.

Globalization besieging us in all forms leads many of us to explore the track of a global history. A global history that would take plural forms because it would be written according to each local area, connecting and reconnecting the place we live with the various circles of the region, the country, the continent and even the globe in which it inserts. These global histories would follow a common thread, they would systematically explore the globalization process and analyze the resistances and obstacles which opposed these global transformations.

It goes without saying, it could only be a collective enterprise. But I can at least, at the end of my career, consider a domain with which I am most familiar, the 16th century Iberian. The 16th century is a crucial moment to understand globalization and the origins of modernity from an European point of view. It is no coincidence that Carl Schmitt introduced the word “global” by associating it with the effects of Iberian expansion which, according to him, has transformed the image of the world and outlined the foundations of international law. If we agree with Martin Heidegger that “The fundamental event of the modern age is the conquest of the world as picture”, it is obvious that during the 16th century the European representation of the world acquired an extreme and unprecedented importance. The challenge is crucial! Europeans not only invented an image of the Earth - on the globe or world map - but it will become its exclusive representation and systematically exported and imposed all over the world. For the first time one could see all the parts of the globe at the same time and in any place. The production of the first globe, that of Martin Behaim (1491/1493) - who was born in Nuremberg and died in Lisbon- coincided with the division of the planet between Spaniards and Portuguese, which was sanctioned in Rome by the Bull *Inter cetera* (1493) and the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494). It also coincided with the first voyage of Christopher Columbus.

From this point of view, the conquest of the perspective in Quattrocento Italy is more than a major chapter in the history of European art. This pictorial revolution anticipates the way European cosmographers strove throughout the 16th century to represent the Earth in three dimensions. Each time, new techniques changed the Europeans' relationship to the world and reality by generating new forms, always more convincing and effective, of representation.

But making of the Earth a European image goes much further. It provides a tool for speculation and programming used to foster systematic appropriation: on the globe and the world map, the European eye and finger got trained to distinguish what has been discovered, what is already conquered and what still remains to be taken. This image was developed to record and anticipate the progresses and conquests made by Europeans. The triumph of the European image was imperialistic; it means representing a totality – the entire globe- and expressing the monopoly of the European scholars' view. This was not merely an powerful instrument for geographers, but also for merchants, diplomats, statemen and soldiers.

This mode of global apprehension of the Earth, which was born, it is worth being recorded, from the collaboration of cartographers and pilots - often Muslims - and Portuguese sailors , has been so dominant that it is under this form of "image conceived" that all mankind today perceives and represents the planet. Beyond its political, religious or philosophical difference, mankind adopted for granted cartographic inventions by the European Renaissance - up to the notion of Atlas- . In the same way today mankind reads its past through historicism promoted by the Old World. It is also thanks to the expansion of Iberians that Europeans began to impose their way of writing history on the rest of the planet, for such reason I will return on this topic below.

Gradually, the Iberians, then the Europeans managed to present themselves and to establish themselves as the measure of all things. That is why in the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century in Spanish universities, in Salamanca, there began a debate which would last for the centuries to come: The debate was about defining what kind of relationship the Christian West, supposed to be heart of civilization, would maintain with the other nations on the globe, all pagan nations considered to be barbarians.

### **A Turn to the West**

In a spatial and geo-philosophical approach, the German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk identified several changes that transcend the history of Spain and Portugal, and went broadly beyond that of the 16th century. These changes explain one of the major dynamics of a global history envisioned from the European continent and from a European point of view: Westernization.

Westernization, that is to say, the extension of part of the 16<sup>th</sup> century European norms, institutions and obsessions wherever outside of Europe means first the opening to the West. Men of antiquity and the Middle Ages kept staring eastward. The East – or Orient- attracted pilgrims and Crusaders of the whole Latin Christendom, Italian merchants and even Portuguese sailors down to the coast of Africa. Illusions triggered by Mongol invasions, news from Cathay brought by Marco Polo, dreams from an Ethiopia governed by Priest John, the riches of India reached later by Vasco da Gama, and then the Portuguese plan for colonizing South China in 1517 never stopped reviving this European tropism. When the Portuguese wrote the chronicle of their maritime expansion, they drew up the *Décadas da Asia*, and when they launched the epic poetry, they sang the Orient of *Lusiadas*.

The horizon began to move with Columbus' crossing of the Atlantic. The Castilians were not content to break the limits fixed by the Pillars of Hercules. In several decades, they undertook to recognize and conquer another hemisphere earlier called *Novus Orbis*. The West thus is not only a direction in space, a point far away where the sun sets, it became materialized taking a physical and real consistency with its fascinating or disturbing land, rivers, forests and “new” humanities. Since then the West has never ceased to draw desires and expectations from an increasing proportion of European population. It was towards the West that Spanish and Portuguese conquistadors, missionaries, adventurers, pirates, officials, craftsmen and even artists embarked. Some to discover and conquer new lands, others, more prosaically, just to make a living. Some even lived from their art: painters like Simon Pereyngs, writers such as Mateo Alemán or musicians like Gaspar Fernández, all left the old world behind to settle themselves in Spanish Mexico. Not everyone got the indispensable laissez-passer: as we know, the great Cervantes was not allowed to export his talented works on the other side of the Atlantic.

The West, therefore, entered noisily into European history. At worst, it was a space for looting and destruction as denounced by the Dominican priest Bartolomé de Las Casas in a famous essay that spread all around Europe: *Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies*. At best, West appeared as a salvation land, home of religious hopes, missions, even messianic and millenarian expectations. The Franciscan evangelizers of Mexico thought themselves as workers from The Eleventh Hour, they claimed to mark out the ending point to the Christianization of the world just before the return of the Messiah. The West was also an early place used to export Renaissance utopias: in Mexico bishop Vasco de Quiroga was inspired by the ideas of Thomas More to create indigenous communities which are still admired today, and which appeared then as the best antidote to the ravages of the Spanish conquest. In Peru, a Dominican Francisco de la Cruz, moved from utopia to heresy: this former rector of the University of San Marcos was burnt on the stake in Lima in 1578

for having announced and promoted the transfer of Church of Rome to the Indies. Some time later, in the early 17th century, the Puritans of New England planned to settle a new Jerusalem in North America and made their colony another Palestine from which the natives were systematically excluded.

Centuries later, from Argentina to the United States, the 19th-century America attracted those who were starving in the Old World, many of them being victims of the industrial revolution. Finally it was also to the West, from the 16th to the 19th century, that the slave trade transferred millions of Africans in unbearable conditions. The survivors scattered from Rio de la Plata to New Amsterdam (New York), from Recife to Cartagena.

The turn to the West therefore was not only a matter concerning caravels and discoveries. It is the change that created the Western world and gave it its human, material and imaginary dimensions. It explains the indelible ties linking the history of Europe and European memory with Iberian America from the late 15th century. Atlantic links were established through the massive use of black slavery (and also Indians in Portuguese America), through the construction of the first Early Modern colonial societies, usually with fatal consequences that we know, through the exploitation of mineral wealth and predation in all forms but also through the gestation of a mixed humanity unparalleled and unprecedented in the world.

Obviously, the East the Portugueses visited, and of which they occupied only insignificant fragments, played a quite different role in the building of the European mind. Even though it also mobilized material and spiritual forces, as well as the powers of imagination – with later the birth of Orientalism- the East was never changed into a space where the newborn Modern Europe tried to replicate itself.

On the contrary, in the Americas, New Spain, New Castile, New England, New France and even New Lusitania (northeastern Brazil), the litany of names given to new colonial societies in the American continent obeyed this principle, that is the replication of Western Europe out of Europe. At the same time, Europe learnt how define itself between the East and West it has created, building a diverse and dominant identity. Western Europe stopped to be the western end of the Ptolemy world, and brutally asserted itself everywhere on the globe developing an Eurocentrism increasingly aware of itself and which can only be explained under this global context.

### **Multiple Actors**

The history talked above, however, is only the European side of the past. Only a global history is able to restore the historic landscape in all its thickness, complexity, diversity and

ambiguity. These dimensions had been too often erased by the Western and national histories for centuries. Can we still today pretend to explore the European Renaissance without including the countries of Islam, without China, India or Japan? How to think the New World paying no attention to these major actors in the 16th century world?

Let's take just two examples. Let's go backward to 1517, almost exactly five hundred years. In the same years, Spanish and Portuguese, obsessed by the Moluccas and profits to be taken from its fabulous spices, embarked in two enterprises of conquest. One is well known, the conquest of Mexico with its decisive impact for the future of America. While the other has long remained unnoticed: fascinated by the riches of the Celestial Empire, soldiers and sailors from Lisbon plotted to conquer and colonize the widespread areas of southern China.

We are not seeking to compare systematically these two episodes, but rather to reveal the links between these parallel enterprises and to set the scene of a past whose protagonists are no longer two but at least four: Spaniards and American Indians, Chinese and Portuguese. We also have in mind the premonitory intuition of the great French historian Pierre Chaunu who announced fifty years ago: "Tomorrow, the history of European expansion in the 15th and 16th centuries should be written in parallel with the history of success and failure of the Chinese expansion "

My idea was to bring to light and to think globally the links and connecting processes between, on one side, the Chinese and the Portuguese worlds and, on the other side, between the Spanish and the American worlds. Colonial history and imperial history often forget or neglect this double event because history departments in our universities are too much separated and divided and because the geographic divisions introduced (and imposed) by cultural areas studies fragmented our researches, making eventually invisible these links that had been suddenly established in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century.

If, on the one side, the Mexican and Peruvian Indians after the Caribbean populations were rapidly absorbed into the Castilian and European influence, a quite different story took place on the Asian side, that is, the integration of Lisbon as a new partner within a world of centuries if not millenniums of economic, political and religious exchanges which irrigated this vast region of Asia.

The two conquest projects had been elaborated, it worth observing, thousands of kilometers from the European shores, the Spanish being established on the island of Cuba, and the Portuguese in Malacca they had just conquered. No matter the Iberians succeeded or failed, definitely these enterprises put Western Europe in contact with other continents. The scene, then, became a global one. If the Portuguese appeared in Asia as outsiders, lost among many other political and economic agents, the Spaniards in Mexico were not doing it alone: as we know, the conquest of this country

would have been impossible without the decisive cooperation of its allies and native troops. In other words, no matter it played in favor of the Spaniards or benefited China, the process of globalization we are facing today begun in the 16th century, and perhaps is it not useless to come back to it today.

### **Mexico City-Istanbul**

A global approach should also aim at exploring other links in addition to those that unite colonies and metropolies. These links which transcend the colonies and metropolies have also much to teach us. We usually think that the troubled relationship between America and Islam countries is a very recent phenomenon. But coming back to the beginning of modern era would help us to nuance this view. The best way could be to confront texts, written in Istanbul and in Mexico City.

Is it any wonder that the Ottoman Empire, as the dominant power in the Mediterranean and a part of Europe, had been quite early interested in the New World? Istanbul - like London, and in fact at the same time - began to collect all kinds of information, maps, relations concerning the new India, that is Spanish America. It is more surprising that Mexico City, the capital of New Spain, expressed also its concern at Ottomans' ambitions. The intellectual elites of the great Mexican city, in the early 17th century, speculated eagerly about the fate of the Sublime Porte, while all over the countryside of New Spain, the newly converted Indian masses were trained to wage war against the Moors (Moros in Spanish) by engaging into simulated games in their villages. In 1539 in Tlaxcala, close to the Mexican city of Puebla, at least 5,000 native participants joined to play the conquest of Jerusalem. Part of them acted as European troops and other formed armies of Indians from Mexico, Peru and the Caribbean. And all these natives struggled against other ones costumed in Turks, Syrians and Jews.

Historians attempted to measure the presence of Islam in the Iberian Peninsula and to analyze the role of Turks in modern Italy. But they sometimes ignore that quite early Hispanic America shared the same concerns and the same obsessions with Islam and the Turk menace? From their part and also very swiftly, the Ottomans understood the considerable advantage that the New World brought to the Christian West:

“We ask your glorious majesty that in the future the sword of the Islam people would be thrust directly into such a rich land, hoping that soon the countries of New World will be full of the rituals of Islam and that the wealth that we have described (in this book) and other treasures of the ignominy-covered Infidels could be shared between the masters of Holy War and our nation ... ”.

It was in these terms that the author of *Tarhi-i Hind-i* wrote to the Sultan Murad II in 1580, begging him to conquer the “New India”.



### **The Process of Americanization**

Why do I link the study of Iberian New World so strongly with a global reflection on the processes of globalization? It seems to me that a global perspective invites to a better understanding of the role of the New World in the start of globalization. Until the 19th century and often much longer than that, the American countries has been taken only as appendages, they were considered just as products and sometimes rejects, bad replicas from Western Europe. But as soon as one leaves all the classical tracks of colonial history or imperial history, one has to recognize that this region of the world was also the cradle for other kind of dynamics, much less considered and studied.

A first strong impact: it was not in 1492, but in 1517 when the Spanish of Cuba discovered in Mexico the existence of cities and the Amerindian civilizations that the globe became a globe. It is this encounter that provoked the real swerve, a swerve which forces us to think the world as a whole and to break with the vision of the world divided into three continents (Europe-Asia-Africa), which has been the rule for centuries in Christian and Muslim countries.

From Mexico City to Lima, from New York to Buenos Aires, if one observes these cities in the “longue durée”, all these American “laboratories” are manifesting the same singularity. The invaded territories were not only anchors for European domination, local focus for Westernization and more or less intense métissage. In the long run, the colonized areas ceased to be just passive zones for reception, whenever, at the cost of slow processes of sedimentation in the colonial melting pots, what was originally European, African or Native American became “Americanized” and then spread out of the Americas in other parts of the world. In other words, this "Americanization" of another type - which should not be confused with the influence of the United States on the planet - anticipates the globalization in which we are living now. Therefore, the American spaces appear necessarily as a starting point, as the beginning of the global world that spread around us. Here are two or three examples.

Roman Catholicism left its Mediterranean and European cradle in order to invade the Americas, with more or less success, and to conquer a huge space which extends from Canada and Florida, to Chile and Tierra del Fuego. The building of local churches, the unfolding of ecclesiastical institutions all over the continent, the prevalence of the missionary work, the adaptation to a completely distinct environment from the European and Latin one contributed to “Americanize” Roman Christianity and lended it its extra-European dimension, demonstrating its ability to globalize itself, in other words, to fully realize its vocation to be a "Catholic", that is universal, community. The same thing could be said about many Protestant churches.

Similarly, the introduction of Castilian law in the Spanish dominions of America turned a local law into a corpus of measures applicable on a continental scale and then to both hemispheres: the *leyes de Castilla* became the *Leyes de Indias*. Once again, the extension out of Europe of a language and a system of values until then confined to a single region of the Iberian Peninsula marked a concrete and decisive step towards the global conquest of the world by the European idea of law and legalism.

In another area, one can wonder if world music would be what it is today if the American continent had not offered multiple impulses to traditional European, African and Amerindian musics. Popular and elite forms of music, born in colonial times, established themselves in the 19th century and then spread globally in the 20th century, now do continue to influence the music creation all over the world. This may be the most immediately recognizable form of Americanization, maybe the most exemplary and successful case: in other words musical forms and practices from three continents melted in the New World and gave birth to new forms and styles which circulated all over the globe.

These three examples, to which one must add the emergence of the first large-scale mestizo societies, mixing Blacks, Europeans, Amerindians and Asians, urge us to reflect on the role played by the American scene in the perspective of a global history, by which I mean a critical history of the globalization.

### **Lessons from New World History**

The American laboratories also help us to understand why we all gather today in Jinan around a discipline which was born (in its Western version) on the shores of Mediterranean and redefined in Renaissance Italy and Europe, before spreading all over the world. The example of the Iberian New World makes us reflect on the way in which, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and starting in Mexico, a construction of the past invented in Europe was progressively imposed to the other parts of the globe. This history of gradual extension to the whole planet is a major process that deserves a constant attention if we want to remove the Eurocentric straightjackets and constraints which weigh upon our old historical discipline, whether in its liberal or Marxist variants. With this latent question for us Europeans, are we still able to write a World history or what could it mean today to think the world just from a European point of view.

The historical discipline in Modern Europe evolved in isolation from the rest of the world, turning its back not only to the major historiographical traditions grown in other parts of the world - and I think of course of China - but also neglecting alternatives which appeared in Colonial Spanish

America, especially in Mexico and Peru. Not only in the 16th century did Spaniards and Portuguese undertake to write the history of native societies, but Indians and mestizo scholars responded to this colonial pressure. They tried to explain the collision, the shock between two different parts of the world and the unprecedented transition that pushed non-European societies towards forms of more or less westernized colonial societies. The links between historicism, colonization and European modernity are obvious. Moreover, few scholars tried to analyze the intellectual responses of these native and mestizo elites faced with the imperative of historicizing their own memories. As a matter of fact, on Mexican codices and native paintings, glyphs and alphabetic glosses reveal new and creative ways to understand the local past. Indian elites have struggled to maintain their own meaning, their own perception of time and of the past in accordance with their intellectual and sensitive universe, without rejecting European technical innovations – such as alphabetic writing and the third dimension-introduced by European colonizers. From Texcoco to Tlaxcala, from Mexico-Tenochtitlan to Chalco-Amecameca as well as from the Andes emerged new interpretations of the past that do not let themselves be absorbed into the European and Christian matrix.

That would be, it seems to me, one more reason to be interested in the history of New World at the dawn of modern times.

### **Who is the cannibal?**

Finally, the Americanization makes sense only if one confronts it with other rival projects, which were launched in other regions of the planet: the islamization, the sinisation, or even the russification of a part of Asia. And nothing says that the globalization in which we are embedded will indefinitely continue to follow the paths of Americanization and Westernization. The irresistible rise of China, who realized very early how to get the best advantage from the Iberian globalization by absorbing the American silver in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, provides good elements to think of it.

Since we are in China, why not to recall an episode related with the Portuguese attempt of colonization of South China, a failed penetration as we know. To Chinese people, the Portuguese were not only "robbers from the sea". Public rumor also accused them of eating young children. These rumors that spread terrifying and xenophobic images seem to have been exploited by the Chinese authorities to dissuade people from maintaining contacts with these disturbing visitors. The Portuguese, said the rumor, stole children to eat as "roasted".

But when we study the topics of cannibalism in Europe in the 16th century, it is only the New World which is discussed, relayed by Montaigne and many other texts that have interpreted or

questioned the cannibalistic practices. The accusation of cannibalism was a key element in the composition of the exotic image that Europeans made of the native American populations, in order to justify the Conquest or, in another and opposite way, in order to use the example of the Amerindian societies as a mirror to criticize the European ones.

With China, everything is reversed. This time, it is no longer remote tribes in space or in time that are the target of accusation, but the Europeans themselves. In Chinese sources, the Portuguese were the Barbarians, the savages, the lovers of fresh meat. In that context, we Europeans are the cannibals for “the other”, and this “other”, as we all know, for a long time ago will be able to block any European invasion of its territory.

I would like to finish – not to conclude - on this historical testimony which sends us back to the mirror of the 16th century, either Iberian or Chinese. Because it forces us extract ourselves from one part of the world to consider another part, from Europe to China; because it breaks the clichés of European triumphalism as well as political correctness; because it imposes reversals of thought and encourages us to asking ourselves forever, as filmmaker Tsai Ming-Liang masterfully did: What time is it there (你那边几点)?

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