

Methodological Foundations of Global History

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This article deals with methodological characteristics of Global History as one of the research areas formed on the wave of the crisis of classical historiography and philosophy of history. The article highlights the differences between the foundations of classical historiography (such as nomocentrism, linearity, progressivism, Europocentrism, national-state level of consideration of events, disciplinary focus, etc.) and their variations in Global History. The foundations of Global History are: non-linearity, interdisciplinary focus, supra-national level of consideration of events, socio-natural dynamism, long durée concept, openness of discourse, etc. The role of global historicism as Philosophy of Global History is examined.

Keywords: methodology of Global History, global historicism, Philosophy of Global History, the subject of Global History, the postclassical science, long durée, supra-national level of events, non-linearity, interdisciplinary focus, socio-natural dynamics.

Global History is one of the research areas in historical studies which was formed in the late 20th century on the wave of the crisis of classical model of history and philosophy of history.

History as a Science

History is a science studying the past of humankind. A systemic accumulation of the knowledge about the past existed as early as in the 3rd and 2nd millennia BCE in the Bronze Age Eastern civilizations (Egypt and China). However, the analytical research of the past on the basis of the rational critics of historical sources started with the works of the Ionic logographers (the 6th and 5th centuries BCE, Ancient Greece). It is from that time that history started to be formed as an analytical science. The term ‘history’ (meaning in the Ionic dialect ‘research, cognition’, see Takho-Godi 1969: 447) was introduced by the ‘Father of History’ Herodotus (484–425 BC) in his famous work *The History of the Greco-Persian War*.

All historical concepts are based on the ideas about the character and trends in the changes occurring in human society. The socio-critical analysis is the major foundation of all historical works.

Every epoch provides its own interpretation of the past on the basis of the dominant world views.

History obtained its classical form in the epoch of Modernity (the 17th to 19th centuries). The original *principles of the classical concepts* were the following: nomocentrism (belief in regularity and consistency of the historic process), determinism (causality of some

facts by other facts), logicality, linearity, progressism (ideas of the universal direction, increasing character of the historical process), ratiocentrism (focus on reasoning). An important feature of the classical concepts was Europocentrism. The main subject of classical historiography is the history of nation-states. In general, classical historiography became a theoretical justification of the modern (*i.e.* bourgeois and liberal) society and its role in history.

At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries the crisis of the classical science started, including the crisis of classical historiography. The epoch of Modernity had come to an end, which resulted decline of great New European doctrines (by Hobbes, Voltaire, Smith, Hegel, Marx), that defined the social mind-set, including the historic thought in this period.

In the 20th century, a need emerged to rethink fundamentals of classical philosophy of history and classical historiography. The world wars, socialist revolutions, collapse of colonialism and other global-scale events did not fit into the framework of classical concepts. Starting from the mid-20th century an active search for new ideas and trends in the social sciences and humanities began. Historical sciences needed a new theoretical and methodological substantiation.

The French Annales School played a key role in the development of the historical sciences in the 20th century. Marc Bloch, Lucien Febvre, Fernand Braudel and others expanded the traditional (focused on the nation-state level) range of problems and terms in historical studies calling for inter-disciplinary cooperation. Expanding the subject limits of historiography, the Annales School significantly enriched the historical thought including the issues of geography, economics, psychology and others (Afanashev 1980; Burke 1990; Smirnov 2002).

Global History

In the second half of the 20th century an array of new research areas in historical sciences was formed. The Global History became one of them.

The *subject of Global History* can be defined as the global socio-historical processes considered from the perspective of the natural world changes. The global socio-historical processes are social changes on the global scale. These processes are actualized not within the framework of nation-states (which is characteristic for classical historiography), but on the scale of humankind.

In contrast to the World History, based on the integrative methodology with a focus on converging history of nation-states within the unified discourse, Global History is based on description of humankind as a single whole, as a global community, as a population inhabiting and transforming the planet, as one of the driving forces of the planet's development. While the World History is generally oriented towards the Event, the Global History is oriented towards the Process. Global History can be defined as the *supra-event history, the history of trans-border processes going beyond the limits of nation-state significance*. This approach is named global historicism (Shestova 2011).

The difference between Global History and Big History lies in this: the former represents the history of humankind, starting from the occurrence of conditions for the emergence of humans, while the latter describes the history of the Universe, starting from the Big Bang (Spier 1996; Nazaretyan 2004).

Sometimes Global History is referred to as the history which studies the *processes of long duration (long durée)*. In the mid-20th century Fernand Braudel (1902–1985), a prominent member of the French Annales School, proposed a concept of the differentiation of the historical time, dividing the historical timeline into processes of long, medium and short duration (Braudel 1949, 1977).

Courte Durée – processes of short duration (years and decades) – are manifested at the level of individual events, at the level of political history. Those processes mainly depend on the individuals' actions.

Moyenne Durée – processes of medium duration (decades and centuries) – have economic and socio-cultural underpinnings. In practice, they do not depend on individuals, but are rather predetermined by strategic objectives of large social groups and institutions.

Longue Durée – processes of long duration (centuries and millennia) – are determined by the character of socio-natural interactions and in-depth civilization dispositions. Those are the processes which Global History basically deals with.

Afterwards, Braudel's long durée theory in combination with the *Long Waves* theory of N. D. Kondratyev (1892–1938) formed the basis not only for Global History but also for such research areas as world-system analysis or macro-historical modelling, etc. (Modelski and Thompson 1996).

The Global History conceptions are based on the idea of *non-linearity* of historical processes. In contrast to the classical historiography, based on the ideas of linearity and progressism, Global History creates the dynamic picture of intertwined, multi-vector, multi-factor processes within the transformation of humankind from the earliest times up to the contemporary days. There is no constant steady movement or stable equilibrium in history. The postclassical science requires a discovery of new instruments for social analysis, including those dealing with the knowledge about the past of humankind. Extending the perspectives on the humankind past, discovering the dynamics of historical processes, expanding the circle of its participants, identifying the dead-end and long-haul pathways within the genesis of the most essential social institutions, Global History has opened up new possibilities to apprehend those changes that are occurring in the human society at present (Gills and Thompson 2006).

Another specific feature of the global-historical concepts is considering humankind in the light of global natural processes. Classical historiography considered the environment as an important factor of historical development. Global History considers that factor in dynamics, it explores the ways *the changes* within the natural world (changes of climate, relief, sea level, flora and fauna, etc.) have influenced any processes in the humankind history. It is also engaged in the research into the consequences of humankind's economic activities on the globe-wide scale (Grinin, Korotayev, and Markov 2012; Ilyin and Ursul 2012).

Global History contributes to *the interdisciplinary cooperation*, substantiating its concepts with the achievements gained by geology, mineralogy, radiochemistry, meteorology, paleontology, paleogenetics, epidemiology, demography and many other sciences and disciplines.

Being created in the age of informatization, Global History has purported the *open discourse*, with experts from the whole world, representatives of various schools and branches participating in the research. Global History has been created by their concerted efforts and, consequently, is a field for rigorous rivalries and disputes between various ideas. It is not only about overcoming Europocentrism of the concepts within the World History, which we have inherited from the classical epoch, but also contradictions between various approaches and methods. At the level of the historiography recording, the well-established Western traditions and standards still play a dominant role. Global History is open to revolutions in methodology of history.

As a phenomenon of the post-modern thought, Global History is also a process – a process of collective records of the humankind history open to the input by both professional and general public.

Global History studies trans-border social processes of ‘long duration’ and their dependence on specific features and changes of the natural environment. Migrations of tribes and ethnic groups, occupation of territories and regions around the globe, development of the human world, dissemination of material culture, spiritual interdependence of civilizations, differentiation and integration of languages, global technological revolutions and mechanism of distributing technologies, areas of the statehood emergence and relations between empires, farmers and classical nomads, historical trade routes, genesis of the system of world-economic relations, anthropogenic changes in the natural environment and physiological changes of the human in the long-term prospect are the main research issues of Global History (Shestova 2012).

Active *institutionalization* of Global History as a scientific and educational area started in the 1990s following the so-called ‘globalistics turn’ in the socio-humanitarian knowledge. Following the crisis in social sciences in the early 1990s, caused by the end of the confrontation era between the two systems, ‘globalization’ became the key concept in the social thought. Global History cannot be called the history of globalization, however, as Bruce Mazlish points out, the history of globalization is the core of Global History (Mazlish and Iriye 2005).

The first seminar on Global History was established by P. O’Brein in 1996 in the University of London (the Institute of Historical Research). The first Master’s program in Global History was launched in 2000 in London School of Economics and Political Science. Today, Master’s specialization and courses in Global History exist in many universities across Europe, Asia, and America.

In 2002, on the initiative of the Institute of Global and European Research (Leipzig University) the European Network in Universal and Global History (ENIUGH) was created. In 2003, the Global Economic History Network, GEHN was created. In 2008 the international network of global and world history – Network of Global and World History Organizations (NOGWHISTO) was founded.

In 2006 there was established the periodical *Journal of Global History* (JGH) which is published by the Cambridge University. In 2005–2011 three European Congresses in Global and World History took place.

Global History is an actively developing branch of research and education.

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