



XXIII  
INTERNATIONAL  
CONGRESS OF  
HISTORICAL SCIENCES

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POZNAŃ 2020 / **2022**

OPENING  
CEREMONY

**AUGUST 21<sup>ST</sup>, 2022**

**16.30-19.00** – Collegium Minus, Aula UAM, Wieniawskiego 1, Poznań

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## **OPENING CEREMONY PROGRAM**

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Mistress of Ceremonies **EWA JARMAKOWSKA-KOLANUS**

### **Welcoming speeches and Opening of the Congress**

**Bogumiła Kaniewska** Rector of the Adam Mickiewicz University Poznań

**Tomasz Schramm** President of the Committee of Historical Sciences of the  
Polish Academy of Sciences

**Marek Woźniak** Marshal of the Wielkopolska Region

**Mariusz Wiśniewski** Vice-Mayor of Poznań

**Andrea Giardina** Honorary President of ICHS

**Catherine Horel** President of ICHS

### **Debate: *Quo vadis historiae?***

Introduction: **Catherine Horel** President of ICHS

Participants: **Olufunke A. Adebayo** (Nigeria), **Dipesh Chakrabarty** (USA),  
**Ewa Domańska** (Poland)

### **Concert:**

University Chamber Choir

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### **19.00 – Welcome Dinner**

Concordia Taste, Zwierzyniecka 3/1, Poznań



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# WHERE IS HISTORY GOING IN AFRICA?

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**Olufunke Adeboye**

Department of History & Strategic Studies, University of Lagos (Nigeria)

## **Introduction**

It is a delight for me to be in the midst of eminent historians at this intellectual convocation, especially after two consecutive postponements of the Congress. The past two years have been quite eventful for the entire world due to the ravages of the COVID-19 pandemic. While we are relieved that normalcy is gradually being restored to our world, we equally commiserate with those who lost their loved ones or suffered grievous impairment as a result of the pandemic. We are gathered here to celebrate the discipline of history and its associated sciences: to assess how far the field has come and to chart a new course for the future. This will also include prescriptions of viable solutions for its identified challenges. My focus in this presentation is on the practice of History in Africa. I start by defining this practice from traditional and modern perspectives, and then trace the journey of African history, unearthing the roots of modern African historiography. Next, I discuss the multiple dimensions of the crisis faced by African historiography in the last quarter of the twentieth century and also address the contemporary state of history in some parts of the continent. Finally, I conclude by identifying what the future holds for the discipline in Africa.

## **The Python's Eye, Elders' Rags and the Academic Clio**

In this Section, I attempt a definition of History that begins with traditional understanding of the nature and value of history, and later dovetail into modern

academic appraisals of the discipline. In traditional African societies that were primarily oral, history was both a consciousness of past cultural heritage and a custodian of knowledge about man and his society. E.J. Alagoa in his 1979 Inaugural Lecture at the University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria deployed the metaphor of the python's eye from traditional Ikwerre philosophy to communicate the meaning and value of history. "The eye of the man with local roots is as penetrating as the python's eye."<sup>1</sup> While exegeting this metaphor, Alagoa submits that history "equips the individual with the vision of the python and with ears keen enough to hear even the soft footfall of the ant."<sup>2</sup> Similarly, Yoruba traditional philosophy claims that no matter how trendy the wardrobe of the modern youth is, he or she can never compete with an elder who has accumulated more rags. The rags refer to past experience and knowledge of the past at the disposal of the elder. These are invaluable and ever relevant to the resolution of contemporary issues and helping to chart a way for the future. *'Bomode ba l'aso bi agba, ko lee l'akisa bi agba.'*

In these traditional societies, history is used to define the origins and corporate existence of groups or communities. It was only through history that some knowledge of the lineage, group or community could be gained on its achievements, heroes, villains, travails, and its position in the temporal and spatial continuum. History was also valued as a means of keeping the society together and sustain wholesome interrelationships within it. Within centralised polities were professional oral historians who compiled accurate genealogies and kinglists. Examples of these were the Griots in the Western Sudan, the Arokin in the Old Oyo Empire and the Ihogbe in the Benin Kingdom. In these centralised kingdoms, the making and transmission of history were controlled and regulated because of its political and legal implications. Such traditions were transmitted when the heir apparent or king elect was being initiated into the kingship cult. During coronations, the traditions of the people were recited publicly and symbolic events from the past were dramatized while the names, genealogies, titles and praises of the ancestors were chanted.<sup>3</sup>

But beyond this official terrain, history was appreciated by other groups. It was transmitted through informal education connected with initiation into age grades, secret societies, puberty rites or during the training or apprenticeship of priests and diviners. On the home front, history was also transmitted informally every day as

family praises were chanted and ancestors invoked from time to time during ceremonies like funerals, marriages and child naming events.

Academic historiography further articulated the concerns of history using different registers. P.T. Zeleza presents history as an attempt to "peer into the foggy future through the prism of the past." It is equally a "process of reconstruction in which certain aspects of the past are abstracted, acted upon and lived by people in the present"<sup>4</sup>. According to Erim O. Erim, history is an organised and critical study of past activities that have impacted the present.<sup>5</sup> And the central purpose of the study is to acquire knowledge of the nature and capabilities of humans through a study of what they have done in the past.<sup>6</sup> This resonates with R.G. Collingwood's definition of history as an attempt to answer questions about human actions done in the past.<sup>7</sup> This generates human self-knowledge and "understanding" as articulated by Marc Bloch.<sup>8</sup> This understanding also enables humans to increase their mastery of contemporary society.<sup>9</sup> Critical approaches of post-modernist scholars to history emerged after these more mainline orientations. Hayden White presented the historical text as a 'literary artifact' while Keith Jenkins characterised history as a "shifting, problematic discourse".<sup>10</sup> While these perspectives were critiqued in African classrooms, they hardly found meaningful representation in the numerous attempts to reconstruct various aspects of the African past. In fact, the impact of post-modernism and the other "posts" – post structuralism and post coloniality – on African historiography has been described as being a case of "theoretical intent" than that of actual practice.<sup>11</sup> Other scholars have insisted that history still remains one of the best tools for understanding the world and preparing for the future.<sup>12</sup> The late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries in Africa represented the digital turn. This is not to claim that all African historians are digital experts but that academics now use some level of digital resources in addition to the more traditional sources and methodologies.<sup>13</sup> Whatever tools are used to reconstruct the past, whether traditional or modern digital, the emphasis is still on the production of knowledge through penetrating analysis and interpretation. So, whether the past is viewed through the penetrating eye of the python or the computer screen, or treasured as the rags of an elder, the overall end is the production of knowledge that would enable us better understand the present as we anticipate the future.

### The Journey So Far: Where is African History Coming From?

The study and teaching of African history on the continent and the global North has come a long way. Even though diversities existed in the various contexts, the trajectories of this historiography have been similar for the various units of the African academy on the continent on one hand and those of North America and Europe on the other hand.

A provocative starting point in the production of knowledge about the continent by outsiders is what has been called imperialist or colonial historiography in Africa represented by the infamous pronouncements of G.W. Hegel (1830), Professor A.P. Newton (1923) and Professor Hugh Trevor-Roper (1963). Hegel presented Africa as “unhistorical, underdeveloped... still involved in the conditions of mere nature... [and] on the threshold of world’s history”.<sup>14</sup> According to Newton, Africa had “no history” before the coming of Europeans. History only begins when men take to writing”.<sup>15</sup> Hugh Trevor-Roper also claimed that what existed in Africa (in 1965 when he wrote) was only “the history of Europeans in Africa. The rest was darkness... And darkened is not a subject for history.”<sup>16</sup> Earlier in 1930 C.G. Seligman had pronounced that the civilisation of Africa was the civilisation of migrant Hamites who were “better armed as well as quicker witted than the dark agricultural Negroes.”<sup>17</sup> These and the other Eurocentric, racist and subjective perspectives had to be battled by the founders and arrowheads of African historiography. This imperial historiography blatantly held sway till the Second World War when the forces of decolonization were unleashed and several academic cum political voices rose to challenge it. This denial of African history by colonial historiography has been summarized as a ploy to destroy and rob the African of his “self-respect, pride, identity, and even humanity.”<sup>18</sup>

From the second half of the nineteenth century, literate Africans began to challenge the absurdity in colonial historiography. The vanguards in this set were not academic but ‘self-taught’ historians who challenged the view that there was no African history. Some of them began to record historical traditions, laws, customs, proverbs and sayings of their own communities and major events in their history before the colonial advent. Their publications were important contributions to the rewriting of Africa’s history before World War II. Their efforts also marked a significant development in

the march towards the emergence of modern African historiography. Some of these writers had been rescued from slavery and brought under missionary influence. Others were amateur historians who felt compelled by the sense of duty to document the past history of their respective communities.

James Africanus Horton was born by Igbo parents in Sierra Leone and was later taken to Britain where he studied medicine. His publications included: *Medical Topography of the Coast of West Africa* (1859), *Political Economy of West Africa* (1865), *The Medical Climate and Meteorology of the West Coast of Africa* (1867), *West African Countries and Peoples* (1867) and, *Letters on the Political Conditions of the Gold Coast* (1870). Edward Wilmot Blyden (1832-1912) also belonged to this category. He was born in the Danish West Indies to Igbo parents. He migrated to Liberia in 1851 and spent most of his life in Liberia and Sierra Leone. He was a journalist and soldier. In his publication titled, *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race* (1887), he advocated the need for the development of a distinct “African Personality.” This was to be based on the rewriting of the authentic history of black people to counter the myth of white supremacy.<sup>19</sup> Other writers in the mould included A.B.C. Sibthorpe, a Sierra Leonean school teacher, who published a *History of Sierra Leone* in 1867; and the Abbe P.D. Boilat, a priest from Senegal who published in 1853 an ethnographic work titled *Esquisses Senegalaises* which contained some sections on the early history of Senegal.<sup>20</sup>

Irked by the growing snobbery and discrimination of the colonial state in different parts of Africa, many more of the educated elite became self-appointed historians and cultural revivalists. Because of the background of early schools established in the eighteenth century, the Gold Coast (Ghana,) was the centre of this cultural revival, which later spread to other parts of the continent. John Mensah Sarbah (1864-1910) was trained as a lawyer in 1887 in Britain. Though a legal scholar, he attempted to write history. His publications included: *Fante Customary Laws* (1897) and *Fante National Constitution* (1906). In these texts, he advocated that the British should not ignore indigenous customary law because Africa had a long history of legal precedents and time-tested institutions to guide the affairs of the Gold Coast. These should not be replaced by British institutions.<sup>21</sup> Other Gold Coast intellectuals concerned with the preservation of the African heritage included: Casely Hayford who published *Gold Coast Native Institutions* (1903), *Ethiopia Unbound* (1911) and *The Truth about the*

*African Land Question* (1913); and Carl Christian Reindorf who in 1889 published a *History of the Gold Coast and Ashante*.<sup>22</sup>

Outside the Gold Coast, were other intellectuals. The Rev. Samuel Johnson completed the *History of the Yoruba* in 1897, which was published posthumously in 1922.<sup>23</sup> In 1939, Akiga Sai published *Akiga's story: The Tiv as Seen by One of Its Members*. In East Africa was Sir Apollo Kagwa, the Katikiro (Prime Minister equivalent) of Buganda (Uganda) who published: *The Kings of Buganda* (1901), *The Customs of Buganda* (1905), *The Clans of Buganda* (1908) all in his native language – Ki-Ganda.

These were not critical authors, and neither were they professional academic historians. They were moved by a spirit of patriotism to correct the prejudices of imperialist historiography on Africa and to inform/educate the younger generation about their past. Their task was marked by anxiety to preserve the knowledge of traditional customs and values, and underscore their importance. Oral traditions were their major source of information, and by documenting them, they helped to fix the otherwise fluid source.

Professional academic historians arose after World War II to challenge the claims of colonial historiography while consolidating the pioneering work of the early African intellectuals. Thus emerged nationalist historiography, which has also been characterised as the intellectual arm of the decolonization project which extended till the 1960s. This period saw an increased emphasis on the collection of information about Africa, the establishment of museums of African antiques, of archives and the encouragement of research into African laws and customs. Few American universities began to emphasise black/African studies while various centres were established in Paris and London to study African History e.g. School of African and Oriental Studies (SOAS) of the University of London and the International Africa Institute in London. Apart from Kenneth Onwuka Dike, who got a PhD in African history in 1951, other African students followed suit. These formed the vanguard of the corps that championed the decolonization of African history at African Universities. Oral traditions were used as internal sources, in addition to written sources to drive this new phase of history writing.

One of the centres of this nationalist historiography was the University of Ibadan School of history, with African pioneers such as K.O. Dike, Joseph Anene, Jacob

Ade-Ajayi and S.O. Biobaku. Other scholars trained in Ibadan and later dispersed to other universities also identified with the school.<sup>24</sup> Their main focus remains the Africanization of the syllabus (decolonization of curriculum): mentorship and academic reproduction; inclusion of language studies (e.g. French and Arabic) and launching of multidisciplinary research projects. Ibadan was the rallying point for other historians through the Historical Society of Nigeria – founded in 1955 – which launched the *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* in 1956. This was a pioneer Journal in the dissemination of historical research in Anglophone Black Africa. Ibadan's influence was also felt in other parts of Africa such as Zambia, Madagascar, and Cameroon through the scholars that earned their PhDs from Ibadan.<sup>25</sup> Perhaps, the most distinctive feature of the Ibadan school of history was the Ibadan History Series of monographs which was published by Longman, London. These were PhD theses published by scholars affiliated to the University of Ibadan. The themes preferred by these scholars included trade and politics not as economic history but as political history in the context of European commercial expansion: missionary activities within the context of political and diplomatic history, colonial administration: and the Islamic revolutions.<sup>26</sup> Non-African experts who contributed to the school included Michael-Crowder, J.B. Webster, R.J. Garvin, Robert Smith, and Murray Last.

Another centre of nationalist historiography was the Dakar School of History, which was the rallying point for Francophone West Africa. The two institutions identified as constituting the Dakar school were Institut Francais d'Afrique Noire (IFAN) and the History department of the University of Dakar. With pioneers such as Cheikh Anta Diop and Abdoulaye Ly, Dakar scholars made African history a weapon in the decolonization struggle.<sup>27</sup> While Cheikh Anta Diop popularized the idea of African cultural unity with his insistence that Egypt was part of African cultural space; Abdoulaye Ly's focus was more economic, generating a critique of the dependence of African economies on capitalist structures outside the continent, across the Atlantic. Successive generations of scholars affiliated to the Dakar school focused their research on pre-colonial West Africa history, the medieval empires and the assaults suffered by Africa from the slave trade and colonization. These included Boubacar Barry, Thierno Diallo, Abdoulaye Bathily, Oumar Kane and Sekene Mody Cissoko.<sup>28</sup>

In the East African region, the University of Makerere, Uganda and the University of Nairobi Kenya also contributed to nationalist historiography in Africa while the Dar Es Salaam school of history in Tanzania developed very distinct radical trajectories as we shall demonstrate later. However, a major pioneer in East African nationalist historiography was Bethwell Allan Ogot.<sup>29</sup> In the words of P.T. Zeleza, 'one of Ogot's key contributions to African historiography was methodological, the use of oral traditions to reconstruct history. He was among the first to depend almost entirely on oral traditions to reconstruct the precolonial history of the Luo for his PhD dissertation.'<sup>30</sup>

Taken together, nationalist historiography was not without its shortcomings. It has been said to be highly empirical, combative, idealistic in its preoccupation; with deep bourgeois biases and theoretical poverty.<sup>31</sup> Perhaps, the most succinct critique came from an insider, a member of the school of nationalist historians, A.E. Afigbo in his publication titled *The Poverty of African Historiography* which deeply lamented this paucity of theory.<sup>32</sup>

The dispensation of nationalist historiography was succeeded by the political economy approach, partly as a response to the seemingly bourgeois dispensation of the research orientation and publications of the first generation. This trend took off in the 1970s. Another incentive for the approach was generated by the disillusion that came with independence. "Seek ye first the political kingdom and every other thing shall be added unto you" was the Nkrumah mantra. However, it was soon discovered that independence did not bring about the much desired development in Africa states.

After a decade of political autonomy, an explanation had to be provided for the persistent underdevelopment in the continent. The political economy critique has two Marxist inspired manifestations – the dependency theory and the mode of production theory. The dependency theorists were led by Samir Amin, Immanuel Wallerstein and Walter Rodney.<sup>33</sup> These claimed the history of Africa from the period of the Atlantic slave trade through the colonial to the post-colonial periods was characterized by unequal exchange which culminated in the siphoning of economic surplus from the continent to the West, thus creating a dependent relationship. Part of the shortcomings of the theory identified by other scholars included the territorialization of poverty, locating it in the peripheries thus overlooking the poor in the West and the rich in the Third World.<sup>34</sup> The theory was also criticized for absolving the African local ruling elite of

various misdeeds and of political cum economic agency. They were characterized, in the literature as 'lumpen proletariat,' 'comprador' or 'auxiliary' and presented as "being incapable of rational accumulation and rational political activity."<sup>35</sup> Scholars from the University of Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania were particularly enamoured with this theory.

As the dependency theory began to lose its steam towards the close of the 1970's, a more orthodox Marxist mode of production theory became popularized. This was derived from French anthropologists such as Claude Meillassoux and Pierre-Philippe Rey and highlighted by African scholars such as Arnold Temu and Bonaventure Swai, who were initially affiliated with Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania and later moved to Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria, later known as the Zaria School of History – an eclectic school with three historiographical trajectories: Islamic, Marxist and nationalist. The main contribution of these Marxist perspectives was to integrate Africa into the universal history of the growth of the world economy. The problem of the mode of production theory was in trying to construct a few distinctive modes to explain the diversities of the African economy. By the middle of the 1980's the theory too had become jettisoned in the explanation of African realities. Appraising the impact of the Marxist theories, Paul Zeleza wrote;

The challenge posed to nationalist historiography by theories of dependency and modes of production did not constitute a crisis in Africa historical scholarship, rather these critiques represented healthy and welcome attempts to ask more penetrating questions and then provide more satisfactory answers to problems that are central to a deeper understanding of African history and society.<sup>36</sup>

So where did the crisis come from? We shall now turn to the crisis in Africa historiography in the 1980s.

### **Crisis in African Historiography**

Two manifestations of the crisis have been identified in Africa historiography as practiced within and outside Africa. First was the crisis of relevance within Africa and the other was the crisis of institutional decline in several offshore centres of African studies. While the early symptoms of this crisis became ripe in the mid-1980s and persisted

till the end of the century, others had been foretold as early as the 1960s. This crisis of relevance affected the practice of African history in many universities in Africa. In the words of Adeoye, “the popularity of the historians waned in proportion as the euphoria of independence waned and pressure subsequently mounted on practitioners to demonstrate the continuing relevance of the discipline under the new dispensation” of nation building.<sup>37</sup>

Incidentally, practitioners of African historiography were among the first to draw attention to observable lapses in the knowledge they produced. E.J. Alagoa and J.F.A. Ajayi in different publications identified the theoretical poverty of Nigerian historical scholarship, especially its lack of engagement with models and concepts.<sup>38</sup> Obaro Ikime (1979) and G.O. Olusanya (1986) bemoaned the shallow analysis of nationalist historiography and its complete disregard for socio-economic contexts.<sup>39</sup> In addition, Ikime calls for “more imaginative histories that will see our problems in something of the holistic manner, the past being constantly illuminated by insight into problems of the present, and the present drawing from the accumulated experiences of the past creatively and innovatively... Our history must become more functional.”<sup>40</sup> Closely related to this was the charge of lack of engagement with social issues levelled against this historiography. A.E. Afigbo exposed a lack of overall construct, methodological and analytical poverty in African historiography, which Ikime also reinforced in 1979.<sup>41</sup>

Similarly, in East Africa, B.A. Ogot admitted the inability of historians to make the reconstructed past usable in the present. This created “cynicism among the radicals and disappointments among the conservatives.”<sup>42</sup> The verdict was that history had become irrelevant. Incidentally, the most trenchant critique of African historiography came from the second generation of scholars at Dar Es Salaam School of history in East Africa represented by A.J. Temu and B. Swai. Some of the issues raised by this corps of radical historians, writing within a Marxist frame, included: failure of previous historians to use history as a tool for understanding and overcoming contemporary problems, failure of the reconstructed past to serve the interests of the poor (being too elitist), too much emphasis on technical issues and not the social contexts of reconstructed events and lastly that the analysis generated was superficial by not identifying underlying factors that moulded events. The verdicts were that the nationalist historiography exemplified by the works of the Ibadan School of History, Dakar

School of History, and the first generation at Dar Es Salaam School of History could not promote socio-economic transformation anywhere.<sup>43</sup> In the words of J.I. Dibua, “by over romanticising the past and claiming to study it for its own sake rather than using history to serve as an instrument of political, social and economic transformation. Nigerian [as well as African] historians have tended to become antiquarians.”<sup>44</sup>

The symptoms of this crisis of relevance of historical scholarship varied from place to place depending on prevailing circumstances. In Nigeria, the Historical Society of Nigeria (HSN) became moribund and its key publication – the *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* (JHSN) and the *Tarikh* stagnated. The Ibadan History Series of monographs also ceased to be published. Students’ enrolment for the History Honours program dropped while the attitude of government to history and other humanities became more hostile by the day. The subject of history was removed from the syllabus of Junior Secondary schools, history was removed from the list of courses qualifying for a government scholarship while research funding for history dropped. In Dar Es Salaam, the decline in student enrolment was so acute that it was reported that in the 1994 academic session there was no single registered history major.<sup>45</sup> Economic reforms proposed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) implemented by several African governments under the Structural Adjustment Programmes after 1986 did not help matters. These adjustments stipulated ‘budgetary disciplines and academic relevance from universities.’ The humanities, especially history, were hard hit by the ensuing budgetary cuts. After all, they did not produce ‘skilled’ personnel.

All these resulted in what has been called the ‘peripheralization’ of the discipline of history in Africa.<sup>46</sup> The subject was no longer central to nation-building and economic development. Budgetary cuts further affected research output. The Institute of African Studies of the University of Ghana had nurtured a vibrant history unit that had enjoyed government funding for its mandate of promoting Pan-African ideas and elevating colonial influences. It had so much succeeded in executing this mandate that in the late 1960s UNESCO designated it as a Regional Centre for Research in the forest zone of West Africa.<sup>47</sup> By the middle of the crisis when government funding dropped, even library facilities suffered. Many staff left the University for greener pasture. The few remaining were overburdened. In this circumstance, research, which had once been their strong point, became virtually impossible.

This crisis also manifested outside Africa. In a presentation on the contribution of the Ibadan School of History to African historiography, J.F. Ade-Ajayi had underscored the collaboration and support of non-African Africanists. Jan Vansina, a Belgian at the University of Wisconsin had published the main monograph on the use of oral traditions. Roland Oliver of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London had coordinated the interdisciplinary international conferences of 1953, 1957, 1959, at which new methodology was defined and developed.<sup>48</sup> Several other non-African scholars, too numerous to be listed here had also contributed to the rise of African historiography.<sup>49</sup> However, many of these 'offshore' African History 'schools' or centres had to battle institutional decline at various points in their history. According to Esperanza Brizuel-Garcia, the budgetary cuts of the Thatcher regime in the 1980s affected SOAS and other British universities. Retired professors were not immediately replaced, working conditions became tougher: heavier teaching loads, stagnant salaries, plus rising cost of living in metropolitan London made recruitment and retention of faculty at SOAS very tough.<sup>50</sup> At Wisconsin, budgeting cost also affected the history program at the time that students' enrolment was declining. At Northwestern University, even as funding from private sources [Ford Foundation] dried up in the 1970s and 1980s, students' enrolment was not affected immediately as faculties such as Ivor Wilks and J. Hunwick continued to serve in the history department.

It is clear from the above that the crisis of relevance affected the practice of African historiography both within and outside the continent. And despite all negative prognosis, the discipline still survives in the twenty-first century. How has it been able to survive? Is the practice of history today any different from that of the 1970s and 1990s?

### The Contemporary State of History in Africa

Numerous attempts have been made to resolve some of the challenges in African historical scholarship. As far back as the 1980s historians began to address new themes such as environmental history, women's and gender history. This move represented a change of beat from the combative historiography of nationalist scholars to what has been termed historiography of self-education, self-reliance, national integration and for the mutual understanding of communities.<sup>51</sup> By the late 1990s, some scholars had

already started to bemoan what they called the fall of the old grand narratives. In the words of P.T. Zeleza, "the era of syntheses, of Dubois, Dike, Diop, and Davidson, of asking the deep civilizational questions, appeared over, replaced by that of excessive specialization, petty enquiries, and endless self-indulgent critiques of 'theories' whose lifespan was the proverbial fifteen minutes of Western pop culture."<sup>52</sup> By the turn of the twenty-first century, this new move had accelerated. Additional themes explored included: the informal economy, social history of crime, family history, sexuality, diseases and healthcare, food culture and subaltern history.<sup>53</sup> In the case of Nigerian historiography, this new move has been tagged the "third wave" of historical scholarship by Saheed Aderinto, Paul Osifodunrin and other contributors to an anthology titled *The Third Wave of Historical Scholarship on Nigeria* in honour of Ayodeji Olukoju celebrated as an arrowhead of that initiative.<sup>54</sup> This 'third wave' is seen as coming after the first wave represented by nationalist history and the second wave located in the 1970s and 1980s, which entrenched fields such as economic, social and women's history. This third wave is characterised by deep specialisation in very narrow but novel fields of history; deployment of new sources and methodology, and focus on the contemporary period.<sup>55</sup> This appears to be a pragmatic shift given the previous over-concentration on colonial themes. It should also be noted that this move was not peculiar to African Universities. Outside the continent, Africanists were also exploring new fields. At SOAS London, by the opening of the twenty-first century, research attention has shifted to themes such as gender, population, agriculture, urban and environmental history, identity formation etc.<sup>56</sup> While this shift has attracted commendations in terms of the sheer volume of new research generated especially at the graduate level, it has also created concerns about an emerging division of labour where African scholars dug up the minutiae of specialised research while non-African Africanists synthesized them into broader reconstructions.

The *UNESCO General History of Africa* in its eight volumes had brought together various experts to distil the essence of the African past and given African scholars a platform to synthesise their narratives. The *General History* thus "bucked the trend toward intellectual balkanization and dependence in the production of social and scholarly knowledge on Africa."<sup>57</sup>

Another issue that attracted the attention of institutions was the loss of interest in the study of history and the consequent drop in university enrolment for the subject.

This affected not only the universities in the continent but also those in Europe and North America. One popular solution adopted in Nigeria was the rebranding of History departments and the attendant curriculum change. This exercise produced 'hybrid Departments of History and International Studies, History and Diplomatic Studies, History and Archaeology, and History and Strategic Studies.'<sup>58</sup> In these departments, not only were the curricula revised, new textbooks were produced with additional pedagogical amendments by teachers. These have produced remarkable results. Enrolments have gradually improved as students embraced the new courses. On the other hand, departments of History that refused to rebrand – the 'purists' – still lament the dropping enrolment of students. The public visibility of many of the scholars in the rebranded Departments further served to attract students both at the undergraduate and graduate levels. History there is no longer seen as a dry subject.

A recent development in African historiography is the call for a re-writing of African history. This call is located in a wider campaign for the reconfiguration and decolonization of African Studies generally. Scholars have discovered that some elements of colonial imperial prejudice have survived incognito in several forms over the years in the work of Africanist historians, which unfortunately were being used to teach African history in various universities. These range from arguments that promote the 'racialization of history' in favour of some Caucasoid stock, to those that claim the poverty in Africa is a primordial condition that has defied all efforts to address it.<sup>59</sup> Various research schemes in reconfiguring African history have sprung up to address these and similar misrepresentations of the African past. Such schemes are anchored in the use of internal sources such as oral data and information gleaned from what has been dubbed 'tin-trunk' texts.<sup>60</sup>

There had also been a revival of previously moribund professional associations. The Historical Society of Nigeria is gradually being revitalised as it resumed the publication of its landmark journal, *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* in the twenty-first century.<sup>61</sup> A similar fate befell the Historical Society of Ghana founded in 1951. Its journal, *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, stopped when the society became defunct in 1983. The publication of the journal was only resumed after 2001 when the society was resuscitated. Other institutional building efforts manifested in the promotion and strengthening of historiographical schools within various academ-

ic spaces. The Department of History and Strategic Studies of the University of Lagos, for instance, became distinguished for its strategic integration of economic history with international relations and public history in the first two decades of the twenty-first century. This formed the base for the Lagos School of History. Moreover, the academic reputation of its members had brought many of them into administrative limelight within the public sphere. And this has earned additional respect, not just for the scholars concerned but also for the discipline. A.I. Asiwaju, Akinjide Osuntokun, G.O. Olusanya, T.G.O. Gbadamosi, A. Adefuye, B.A. Agiri, Adebayo Lawal, Ayodeji Olukoju, A.O. Akinyeye and R.T. Akinyele, are some of the leading lights in this regard. Closely related to this is the sustenance of departmental flagship publications such as the *Lagos Historical Review*. Increasing access to third-party research funding and a growing mastery of digital research tools have also widened the scope of research collaboration.

There is also continuous human capacity development to take advantage of evolving digital tools and pedagogy. The distance barrier between scholars working in different parts of the world has gradually collapsed "paving the way for fast and sustained collaboration in the areas of research, teaching and professional development."<sup>62</sup> New subjects of research continue to emerge with old themes revisited and reinterpreted. With new themes came new sources. In addition to traditional documentary and oral data, an anthology edited by John Edwards Philips in 2005 titled *Writing African History* featured the use of linguistic evidence, physical anthropology and botanical data. While all these, together with archaeology had been popularized by nationalist historians in the 1960s, it is gratifying to know that these tools are being refined especially within the digital space to produce more precise data.<sup>63</sup> More recently, Akinwumi Ogundiran's transdisciplinary study, *The Yoruba: A New History* (2020) exemplifies the nexus between history, archaeology and linguistics in the reconstruction of a pre-colonial past.<sup>64</sup>

Contemporary challenges in Africa also find expression in the themes of historical research published by mainstream Journals. The *Journal of African History* published by Cambridge University Press, *African Historical Review* published by Routledge and University of South Africa, and the *International Journal of African Historical Studies* published by the African Studies Centre at Boston University regularly feature arti-

cles on security, conflict, and nation building, together with other themes like religion, marriage, gender, sexuality, health, children, poverty, social infrastructure and other economic and political subjects – a well-rounded and robust package. The more recent *Journal of West African History* published by Michigan State University attempts to “fill a representational gap” by focusing, among other things, on women and gender, sexuality, popular and public culture.<sup>65</sup> *History in Africa* published by the African Studies Association remains committed to issues of historiography, sources, methodology and recently features articles on digital innovations. *African Economic History* published by the Africa Studies Program at the University of Wisconsin continues to feature economic themes spanning all periods of the African past. Many other mainstream African Studies journals also devote considerable space to articles on African history. These include: *Africa*, *African Affairs* and the *Canadian Journal of African Studies*. The University of Dar Es Salaam still maintains its commitment to theory and historiographical debates in the writing and teaching of history as represented by seminar topics advertised on its institutional website. A 2006 collection of essays on *Themes in West Africa's History* edited by Emmanuel Kwaku Akyeampong includes subjects such as social inequality, disease in West Africa history, Pentecostalism, Islam and culture and the impact of the Structural Adjustment Program on African nations. A distinctive feature of the anthology is the way it combines prehistory, precolonial, colonial, postcolonial and contemporary themes in the history of the sub-region to generate a panoramic mural.<sup>66</sup>

I must not end this section without commenting on the contributions of African historians in diaspora to the strengthening of African history. Of the numerous scholars in this category, two of them deserve special mention: Paul Tiyambe Zeleza and Toyin Falola. Several allusions have already been made to the works of Zeleza here. Originally from Malawi, Zeleza has taught in universities in Malawi, Jamaica, Kenya, Canada and the United States of America. He has published prodigiously on several aspects of the African past and most importantly on past and contemporary developments in African Studies and Africa's globalization. Toyin Falola, a Nigerian recently retired from the University of Texas at Austin in the USA is another prolific author on the African past. His writings include themes such as African historiography and epistemology, African cultures, urbanization, violence, citizenship and identity, diaspora communities, women and gender. He has also promoted various academic mentorship

and capacity-building initiatives for younger scholars through his various conferences in the US and other nations of Africa. This sampling of recent practices of historians shows that history is not static. Just as the socio-economic context is dynamic, historians have had to be creative, taking advantage of strategic opportunities to make history more relevant and responsive to the society.

### Peering Into The Future

The idea of predicting the future of history in Africa brings to mind a folk story. It is about two friends who visited the big oracle for divination about their future. One of them was told he would die a pauper while the other was assured of a bright and prosperous future. While the latter became confident and took things easy, the ‘prospective’ pauper declined the prophecy and worked hard all his days. He ended up prosperous while his friend died a pauper. Historians in Africa should not rest on their oars. If they expect a bright future in the discipline, they have to be innovative, creative and come out of their comfort zones. First, their research agenda has to be reviewed from time to time. Each nation or region has to decide what historiographical gaps it needs to fill. A proper execution of research agenda would entail a refining of extant methodology. More historians should embrace the use of theories and concepts and be more engaged with other disciplines. The infusion of relevant multidisciplinary perspectives would further enhance the quality of historical reconstructions and give it wider circulation and acceptance. What then becomes of the ‘purist’ who still preaches against the ‘contamination’ of history by theories, and who insists on studying the past for its own sake? Unless such practitioners innovate, they may be rationalised out of practice. Antiquarians have no place in the future of African history!

There is also the task of curriculum reform for the teaching of African history. This should be taken holistically to go beyond prescribing new courses but also involve attention to required resources – textbooks, learning materials and a pedagogical overhaul for the teachers. Contents, of course, should reflect local, national and global dynamics. Many of our textbooks are outdated; and lack of relevant textbooks makes a mockery of a well-developed curriculum. Beyond textbooks, additional learning/teaching resources should be developed, especially digital tools. The traditional teach-

er-focused pedagogy needs to be amended and made more student-focused. There is a need for us to enhance learning through research and self-experience, reform our assessment methods, and introduce diversity into our teaching methods. International exposure for students and lecturers should be encouraged. This would broaden their horizon, especially within the continent. This could be intra-African and intra-global South to enable students to better appreciate and connect with many of the material contexts and issues they had been reading about.

Closely related to this is the need to infuse the practice of history with more life in each nation. Historians should get out of the classroom and bring history into popular consciousness.<sup>67</sup> This can take different forms: speaking out on national issues through various media platforms;<sup>68</sup> preparing media interventions to propagate the value of history e.g. historical documentaries for the public and historical cartoons for children in elementary schools. For these tasks, historians may need to acquire additional digital skills on how to gather, preserve and present the past on the web.<sup>69</sup> The practice of Public History should also be popularised: writing the histories of public institutions, professions, occupations, vocations and public figures.<sup>70</sup> Historians should not be shy to take up public offices and give people the benefit of their historical training.

Finally, there are institutional issues to be addressed. There is a need for the creation of regional centres of excellence to galvanise key ideas of history generated by national schools of thought. This appeal was initially made by Bahru Zewde in 2000.<sup>71</sup> Two decades later, the anticipated regional centres are yet to emerge. Apart from local challenges such as paucity of research funds and splintering of research focus, a major reason for this failure is the lopsided direction of organisational networking and linkages. African institutions privilege and nurture vertical relationships with institutions from the global North than with other African Universities. Without regular horizontal exposure to one another through networking, it was difficult for regional centres to emerge to mobilise continental support. Again, it has been difficult for a strong continental association of historians to survive. The Association of African Historians (AAH) launched in 2000 had only survived within the West African Francophone academic community. It is hoped that the linguistic challenge that stood in the way of the consolidation of the Association would be mitigated by the mobilisation of modern digital tools and a renewed will of African Historians to make it work.

## Conclusion

The foregoing exploration has shown that history is dynamic and cannot remain the same. The African history taught at Ibadan, Dakar or Makerere in the 1960s cannot be compared with the history taught in 2022. Again, I have shown that our concern for the practice of history should not focus only on tertiary institutions but address elementary and high schools that constitute the pathways for later recruits into the university system. A combination of macro and micro histories is ideal. Both should go hand in hand and mutually reinforce each other. The same dynamics apply to the production of local and international publications. Splinters of local knowledge are useful for the immediate environment but African historians should contribute more to global debates and broaden their horizons. The value of capacity building cannot be overemphasized. We all need to improve our pedagogical skills and embrace digital opportunities to make the most of our production of knowledge. Lastly, historians are encouraged to devise more practical and creative ways of making history more relevant to the society. The future of history in Africa is bright if only the historian could be creative, innovative, and commit to penetrating analyses as those generated by the gaze of a determined python.

I thank you for your attention.

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# CAPITALISM, WORK, AND THE GROUND FOR PLANETARY HISTORIES

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**Dipesh Chakrabarty**

Department of History, The University of Chicago (USA)

As you may know, I am a historian who now takes an interest in the Anthropocene, this proposed new geological epoch that people are debating, and in the question of anthropogenic climate change. But I started out as a labor historian. When I received the invitation to address you, I remembered a day in Berlin, when after hearing me talk about my present concerns, the German historian of Africa, Andreas Eckert came up to me and said, Dipesh, you once used to talk about labor, and you now talk about the planet! What's the connection? This invitation gave me an opportunity to think about that connection between history of work under capitalism and the question of the planet.

The two words used in English to designate work, *Work* itself and *Labor*, give us a convenient point of entry into the question I want to explore. They are not the same word, *labor* and *work*. In European languages, at least in English, German and French, the status of the word *labor* appears to have followed a somewhat similar trajectory, it is a story with a happy ending but a sad beginning.

Even with my very rudimentary German, it seems to me that if you rummage just at the ground level of elementary etymological dictionaries on the internet, you will find that the German words, *arbeiten*, *Arbeiter*, *Arbeit*, have a connection to the proto-Indo-European word for orphans. And the connection is that orphans – child laborers – were associated with torturous forms of labor. So the word *arbeiten* has to do with the kind of hard work that *labor* meant in English too, one reason why we

call giving birth *laboring*. Labor then refers to something privative; to the plight of hard work, a meaning also conveyed by the French word for labor, *Travail*, the sense of which is preserved in the English word, *travail*. So across these languages, you actually see that the word labor has these sorts of beginnings, in stories of sadness.

But if you look at the more modern histories of these words, you find that you are presented with romanticized, positive histories. For having started with sad connection to intense bodily toil, they end up in the 19th century, or I would say, from the 17th century on, in political-philosophical traditions as happy words rooted in Christianity. If you go back to Hobbes or Locke, labor becomes a Christian concept, something you have to mix in with the soil in order to *own* the soil. So the civilizational-cum-racist argument that Europeans used in taking over places like Australia was that the Aboriginal Australians “did not labor” while the white people did. Aboriginals, this exploitative argument about the land being *terra nullius* went, did not mix in their labor with the soil, that they only lived off the gifts of the land (an argument completely discredited by later research, and here I think of the work of two gifted Australian historians, Heather Goodall and Bill Gammage). Additionally, if you think about early 19th century philosophers like Hegel and their followers like Marx and Engels, you will find that that Christian word “labor” becomes a secular word. and one of the most popular words, one could say, of 19th century social and historical thought. Labor becomes associated with the laboring classes, and with the world-historical figure of the working class, the proletariat. Its associations become heroic. Engels, for instance, famously maintained that a key factor that made humans different from apes, was the fact that we, humans, labor. So in the philosophies of history that based themselves on such an understanding, labor came to be a good aspect of being human. It is in that sense that I say that the word labor ended up being a happy word in the 19th century.

The word labor eventually came to be synonymous with the word work. Thus, the famous historian Eric Hobsbawm would write a book about the working classes called *Laboring Men*. When Marx described abstract labor as so much expenditure of energy of nerves and muscles, he actually abolished the distinction between labor and work. But the word *work* has a different origin than labor. Its etymological connections go back to the ancient Greek word, *Ergon*, that is part of the word, *Energy*, or *Energie*, which is how we get the word *synergy* which means working together, or *allergy*, the work

of others. And which is also why, of course, at least from 17th century on, physicists began to define work as energy spent. So work and energy connoted something other than bodily toil or labor, allowing Adam Smith to talk about the work of nature. In recent time, Jason Moore, a sociologist, who has written about anthropogenic climate change in a book called *Capitalism In The Web of Life*, has spoken of the “work” that the planet does to produce minerals and metals or whatever else we dig out of the bosom of the planet.

So, starting from different origins, the words *labor* and *work* have come closer from 19th century on. And indeed, that closeness is a key to today’s crisis of “work” when the imagined proletariat of the 19th and early 20th centuries has been replaced by what Guy Standing called the Precariat of the 21st century, that is, people with only fragmented, precarious, non-continuous, isolated forms of employment that Uber drivers, or solar panel installers, for instance, have. We have come to a stage of capitalist production where we know that work is being done, because wealth and productivity are growing, but it is not necessarily being done by humans. Work could be done by machines, by digital technology or by the harnessing of artificial intelligence. As I said, *work* as a concept – because it is a concept that involves expenditure of energy – does not automatically refer to humans, whereas labor is a concept that points back to the idea of bodily toil of humans and/or animals. Today’s discussions of the idea of a Basic Universal Income actually portends a future of many without “work” while productivity, thanks to technology, the application of AI, soars. Will those under Universal Basic Income but with no work, lose dignity? This is where we come back to the romantic history of labor.

E.P. Thompson, Eric Hobsbawm, Harry Braverman and many other significant historians have told us the story of the struggle between workers and capitalists, over the processes by which individual workers’ labor was to be transformed into machinic work. That story now sounds distant. One could say that over time, the word work as applicable to all human and nonhuman processes of spending energy has come to dominate, marginalizing the word labor. But the more we get enmeshed in systems of work in which technology accomplishes much more than the labor of humans, our nostalgia for that romantic history of labor only intensifies.

The framework for work has been expanded by the 20th century itself, the century in which we probably came into what is now being called the stratigraphic Anthropocene. That is, the century in which human imprint on the rocky surface of the planet would become, as some argue, geologically recognizable. As the historian John McNeil has pointed out, the 20th century was a time of extraordinary change. Last century, the human population increased from one and a half billion to six billion and may rise by another three to six billion this century. The world's economy increased fifteen-fold. Energy use increased thirteen to fourteen-fold. Freshwater use increased nine-fold and irrigated areas by five-fold in one hundred years. Most amazing are the figures for how much earth humans have moved around, thanks to the invention of earth moving technologies early in the century, but increasingly in the post-World War Two period. The planet has literally been transformed by humans. In 1994, according to one estimate, human earth moving caused thirty million tons of rock and soil to be moved per year on a global basis. This was the equivalent of 200 tons of rock and soil being moved per person every year.

A 2001 estimate gives the figure of fifty-seven billion tons of rock and soil being moved every year around by humans. So for comparison, if humans are moving fifty-seven billion tons per year, the annual sedimentation carried into the ocean by the world's rivers each year ranges somewhere between eight point three and fifty-one billion tons a year. So humans move around a lot more than all the rivers on the planet taken together. Our technosphere – everything we build on the base of the biosphere, comprised of all the structures that humans have constructed to keep them alive on the planet, from houses, factories, farms, to computer systems, smartphones and CDs, to the waste in landfills and spoil heaps – is staggering in scale, representing a mass of more than thirty trillion tons. That is the weight of the technosphere, representing a mass of more than fifty kilos for every square meter of the planet's surface.

This is the expansion of the realm of work, keeping in mind my distinction between *work* and *labor*. As geologist Mark Williams said, “The technosphere can be said to have budded off the biosphere and arguably is now at least partly parasitic on it. At its current scale the technosphere is a major new phenomenon of this planet – and one that is evolving extraordinarily rapidly.” “Compared with the biosphere, though,” he maintains, “it is remarkably poor at recycling its own materials, as our

burgeoning landfill sites show. This might be a barrier to its further success – or halt it altogether.” My point is that this is all an expansion of the realm of work pushed along by our growing numbers, growing consumption, growing profit seeking and growing technological prowess. But the technosphere, not being very good at recycling its waste, is often described as parasitic by geologists.

This situation also produces a fascinating problem in the humanities, the problem of encountering the planet within humanistic thought. Let me quickly go over this romantic history of labor, and try to answer the question as to what it would mean to think about the planet while we're thinking about the distinction between labor and work. I go back to one of the most romantic historian philosophers of work. Not Karl Marx, but Martin Heidegger. German philosophers have a specially developed tradition of thinking about the human condition. If you think about that tradition, of which Heidegger is a major figure (even if one dislikes certain aspects of his personality, philosophy, and life), there were three words that became philosophical words within that tradition. And these worlds are *world*, *earth* and the *globe*. The planet, however, was not a philosophical word in that body of thought. If you read Karl Schmitt's book published during the Cold War period, *Nomos of Earth*, you will find that in his writing, the planet and the globe mean the same thing. If you compare Hannah Arendt's, *The Human Condition*, with Hobbes and with Schmitt, you will find that they all agree that the globe is a product of 500 years, initially of European imperialism, then European expansion, the rise of capitalist industrialization and basically, of technology that brings this planet together for humans.

In a major innovation, Heidegger introduced the word Earth as a philosophical category in 1936 in a lecture he gave in Frankfurt which eventually becomes his famous lecture on art published in his book on the poetics of language. Gadamer, his student, says it was startling to hear a philosopher talk about Earth as a philosophical category, as though it were a category as important as the category Matter or Form in philosophy. If you follow Heidegger, whether on the question concerning technology, at the moment of “turning” in his thinking, or when he speaks of the world as picture, or in his thoughts on art, you will find that he carefully separates the earth out from the planet. When he uses words like planetary imperialism, the word ‘planet’ means the globe. Heidegger does not talk about the globe, but when the famous the blue

marble picture, the Earthrise picture was taken from space, Heidegger gave a famous interview in which he said, “This is the end, we’ve been uprooted.” Because his whole argument was that humans remain within a communicative structure, vis-a-vis the earth. The planet, he said, was an astronomical body of no concern to humans, except when the planet erupted as an earthquake, or a volcanic eruption, or a tsunami. But you know that in historical memory when such things have happened, humans have tried to incorporate them into human thought and concern. So that the 1755 earthquake in Lisbon gave rise to a famous debate between Voltaire and the dead Leibniz on theodicy, on whether God was always good, or whether there was evil in the world. Why else, Voltaire asked, would 90,000 people die? When we had earthquake in India, in 1934, it gave rise to a famous debate between Gandhi and Tagore, where Gandhi was arguing that the earthquake symbolized divine punishment for the sin of treating some people as untouchable. And Tagore took a rationalist Voltaire-like position, except that Tagore did not believe in evil. These are attempts to draw the planetary back into human concerns.

But Heidegger was very clear that the planet, the astronomical body, was not of concern to humans. For Heidegger, the earth is an aspect of the planet that turns its face towards humans, which is why humans could be in a communicative relationship with the earth. Humans came into their essence, only when they developed language. And the reason that Heidegger considered language to be the house of being was that only an animal with language could, in his view, look around and wonder about the meaning of existence of trees, water, fish, everything around them, and ask, Who is this for? What does it mean that they exist? What does it mean that I exist? And therefore Heidegger, romantically – almost mystically and poetically – writes that the question of being, the question of what it means to be, could only be left to an animal that had language. Thus he says: the question of being is vouchsafed with humans.

The Earth itself is something that, in Heideggerian thought, has Poesis built into it; it brings forth things. The earth brings forth fruit, the earth brings forth fish. And this bringing forth is something that a human, a traditional peasant, imitates when he sows the field with seeds, and then depends on the earth to do its work, the skies to do their work, so that he can reap a harvest. Heidegger distinguishes that from his

view of technology that is about holding a gun to the head of this Earth and forcing it to produce more to meet our needs. But I will come back to this point.

Something of this Heideggerian sensibility was there in early thinking about production and sustainability. If you look at the history of the word sustainability, there was always an awareness that beyond the question of sustaining human life, there were questions of what the earth does to bring forth and sustain life, even in early intimations of soil chemistry, or soil physics in late 18th century German thinking. There was a sense that the soil had to do something, humans were not working alone. Marx’s theories of surplus value quotes 18<sup>th</sup> century physiocrats, arguing how there was always a gift from the land, because the land often gave us more than what we put into it.

Today, the realm of what I have been calling “work” has expanded, thanks to revolutionary changes in technology, beyond anything that Heidegger could have seen or imagined. But we could still retrieve some points from his thinking while we also need go beyond this thoughts. When the realm of work expands like it has, Heidegger points out, when we have a technological relationship to earth, when we move away from Poesis as a mode of creation and move into a mode of demand from the earth, what in English translation is called “challenging forth,” it’s like mugging the earth. It is like pointing a gun and saying, “give me what you got (and more),” And the gun could be an oil rig that goes downwards, or industrialized farms to produce more fish and meat.

That is why Heidegger’s examples are always the traditional windmill, the traditional peasant, so that he could say that humans have traditionally lived with the Poesis of the world. Heidegger talks about saving the Earth and he says saving the Earth is not about mastering it, because any project of mastery will end in spoliation of the Earth, this Earth that he thought had its face turned toward us, humans, to whom the question of being had been vouchsafed.

But what even he did not think about at the time is this massive expansion of what I am calling work, which includes work that has no reference to humans. Work is really a seamless flow between what a river can do, what a waterfall can do, what technology can do, what I can do. It is not specific to humans. And the way capitalism has expanded is precisely by moving away from labor, which references humans to

work. And that is why we can become redundant to capitalism as laborers. When that happens, what you encounter when you spoil the Earth is the Planet. The Planet, in contrast to the Earth, is indifferent to us.

The Planet is what you see when you read the literature on Earth System Science, the science out of which the concept of Anthropocene comes, the science supporting anthropogenic climate change hypotheses. You will find that science comes from a comparative study of other planets. So it is not at all surprising that James Lovelock, who invented the theory of Gaia and used to work for Carl Sagan's unit at NASA, was driven by the question of whether or not there was ever life on Mars. And James Hansen, who is the patron saint of climate change science in the United States and was the first scientist to speak to the White House in 1988 on global warming, was actually a student of Venus, of planetary warming on Venus. He knew that Venus was very hot because there was a lot of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. And because he knew that the temperature of our planet was going up, he became interested in finding whether this was because of excess CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere. He took three months leave from studying Venus, and came to study this planet, and became a climate activist.

The key question in Earth System Science is not the humanocentric idea of sustainability, it is what they call habitability. What makes a planet habitable for complex life? When I read these scientists, I am in another universe of thinking that, because of its temporal and spatial scales, de-centers the human. Because, when as a historian I use the word modern, I cannot normally go beyond the last 500 years. Some people are very strict. They will say modern is the period, 1815 to 1914, or something like that. It is a word that indexes humans. When you read Earth System scientists, they use the word "modern" in a strikingly different way. Modern has nothing human about it. They will, for instance, write about the "modern" atmosphere of our planet. And do you know when they date it from? It is from 475 million years ago. No question of having humans as part of modernity even though they sometimes call it, "our *modern atmosphere*." And that is why their central question is not what humans can do to sustain themselves. Their central question is, how can *life* sustain itself, complex life, in spite of the five extinctions that we have had? Now, there is – in Heideggerian terms – a properly planetary question. For this planet, unlike his category Earth, does not return our gaze.

So, therefore, all projects of sustainability are, in some ways, romantic projects, about getting the earth back, wresting the earth from the hands of the planet. If you look at the post-humanist scholars Jane Bennett or Bruno Latour, you will see that their attempt is to somehow get us back to the earth (not necessarily Heidegger's earth) by acknowledging the multiple ways we are entangled with the earth, by moving away from an exclusively human conception of labor, by referring multiple agencies, actor networks, and all that. Earth System scientists have brought us face-to-face with – "the earth system" that itself is a story of entanglements. The Planet – this object of Earth System Science – is now knocking on our door to be accepted as a category of humanist and historical thought, not just scientific thought. Will we able to wrest the Earth back from the Planet? I do not know. But here I conclude by thinking back to Andreas' comment to me in Berlin some years ago. Perhaps thinking through the differences between the two words, *Labor* and *Work* might help us to bring the Planet into the conversations that you will have today.

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# WONDERING ABOUT HISTORY

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## IN TIMES OF PERMANENT CRISIS<sup>1</sup>

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**Ewa Domańska**

Faculty of History, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań (Poland)

It is a great privilege and joy to welcome you here. I have the honor and distinction of giving one of the inaugural lectures at the 23rd International Congress of Historical Sciences. I am very pleased as a proud local patriot – both as a Slav and as a Poznanian – that we are able to welcome you to the historical region of Wielkopolska, or Greater Poland (*Polonia Maior* in Latin). This region was at the very heart of the early Polish state of the tenth century, with some calling it the cradle of Poland.

### **Practicing “Epistemic Disobedience” (*desobediência epistêmica*)<sup>2</sup>**

I am a transdisciplinary- and future-oriented historian. I am interested in history and the theory of historiography, in the comparative theory of the humanities and social sciences, as well as in environmental humanities, especially in inter-dependencies between ecocides and genocides. I work at the Faculty of History at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, but I am also a recurrent visiting professor at the Department of Anthropology, Archaeology Center and Division of Literature, Cultures and Languages at Stanford University. My epistemic standpoint is important because like many of us these days, who are doing research, teaching, and living our lives in various parts of the world, we are bridging various knowledges of the past, standpoints, worldviews and cosmologies. As a historian from East-Central Europe, from the so-called “epistemic margins”, I have been colonized by knowledge produced by Western academia, yet I am also contributing to the slow but ongoing process of indigenizing knowledge of

the past by infusing global knowledge with drops of our local knowledges and ways of knowing the past.

When using the term “indigenization” I refer to the work of Daniel R. Wildcat, a Yuchi member of the Muscogee Nation of Oklahoma, professor of Indigenous and American Indian Studies at Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence, Kansas, who claims:

Indigenization is a set of practices that results in processes in which people seriously reexamine and adopt those particular and unique cultures that emerged from the places they choose to live today. It is an acknowledgement that the old ways of living contain useful knowledge for our lives here and now.<sup>3</sup>

I am going to follow Daniel Wildcat and consider indigenization as an alternative to thinking in terms of decolonization.<sup>4</sup> Doing so allows me to use as a reference point not a term burdened with violence such as “colonization” (or in the case of Poland and other ex-satellite countries of the Soviet Union – dependency), but instead a more positive term referring to local, indigenous pasts, knowledges and ways of living. However, I want to stress that I am not advocating here some sort of nationalism or nativism. Rather, I observe how East-Central Europe (like other “intellectual provinces”) is still often approached by Western scholars with a “colonial attitude,” as an ideal place to study atavistic examples of homophobia, antisemitism, nationalism, populism, and an exoticized postsocialist condition. Such images are one-sided and harmful; they perpetuate the treatment of “provincial historians” as an important source of knowledge about local events and as a kind of native informants, but not as equal partners of sophisticated discussions that might substantially contribute to globally created historical knowledge.<sup>5</sup> I am obviously not dismissing Western knowledge, since it forms a base of my cultural and intellectual heritage. But what I intend to do is to contribute to the emergence in the (far) future of a more holistic, inclusive, transcultural knowledge of the past that would respect various ontologies and cosmologies. Hopefully it would transcend center-periphery dichotomies and the division of the world according to regions that have a colonial and/or communist past.

My interest in non-Western knowledges and their status in global academia exposes my post-dependency condition as a scholar from East-Central Europe.

It reflects the call for epistemic justice manifested in a slogan proposed by the Polish art historian – Piotr Piotrowski: “provinces of the world unite!”<sup>6</sup> This interest also manifests itself in my standpoint as a scholar living today in the shadow of a real war, real ecological disasters, and real economic crisis; living in a reality that brings back the worst and most notorious images from the past, that – as we hoped in Europe after WWII – would never return. Indeed, in the oft-repeated “speech act” of “never again,” history is manifested only in “again,” but certainly not in “never.”

But I am not here to complain; we cannot afford to lament. I would prefer instead to wonder about ways to mobilize the imagination and to pre-figure potential futures we might hope for. We need a critical hope that, as the Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire said, “needs practice in order to become historical concreteness.”<sup>7</sup> I practice critical hope every day. It is our obligation, especially here and now, even if historians probably have fewer reasons these days to be hopeful. As Edward H. Carr in *What is History?* claims: “good historians, (...) have the future in their bones.”<sup>8</sup> Thus, historians have reasons to worry not only because of the current political situation, but also because as historians we are confronting major challenges related to our struggle for epistemic security with respect to memory politics, to sustaining an autonomy of the discipline of history which is melting into the broad field of “historical studies,” and to “extinction anxiety,” as the Polish historian Anna Brzezińska called it.

I find critical hope in what the Israeli artist and scholar Ariella Azoulay called “potential history.” This approach makes it possible to “extract from the past its unrealized possibilities as a necessary condition for imagining a different future.”<sup>9</sup> Potential history explores “the past as the storehouse of human possibility,” thus becoming a kind of laboratory that shows the conditions for coexistence and cohabitation in the world. It demonstrates that change is possible. Potential history does not advocate naive ideas of reconciliation and consensus; rather, it is more about considering how examining the conditions of people, nations, communities, and social groups in the past who lived together in conflicts can assist in building knowledge about coexistence in the present and the future.

## “Nations and governments have never learned anything from history,” but Individuals Did (?)

I was teaching and doing research at Stanford University last Spring. Robin Wall Kimmerer, an indigenous environmental scientist and a specialist in plant ecology, a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, State University of New York Distinguished Teaching Professor at the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry in Syracuse, author of the book *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* (2013) was hosted by Stanford in May 2022. I attended Kimmerer’s sparkling lecture which communicated to the audience the message of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK). In her teaching, Kimmerer reminds us that “a teacher comes, (...) when you are ready. And if you ignore its presence, it will speak to you more loudly. But you have to be quiet to hear.”<sup>10</sup> (Later I learned that a similar version of this saying – “When the student is ready the teacher will appear” is attributed to Buddha, Lao Tzu, or described as a Zen maxim and an old Chinese proverb.) Kimmerer refers to the living world as a teacher, to the land and plants as our oldest teachers and guides.<sup>11</sup> But as a scholar educated in westernized East-Central European academia, it is difficult to transcend my anthropocentric bias, and I was rather thinking about history as a life’s teacher, about history as *magistra vitae*.<sup>12</sup>

After a short meditation on this all too familiar topic, I returned to my daily routine, reading news about the war in Ukraine. Nothing surprising – images of destroyed homes, trees broken and uprooted, wandering dogs looking for their lost human friends, burning wheat fields, dead bodies on the streets, mass graves, forensic teams exhuming swollen and not fully decomposed human bodies, crying women raped in front of their children, hundreds of thousands of refugees searching for safe shelter. War as usual. Just another confirmation of the nineteenth century German philosopher – Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel’s famous statement: “what experience and history teach is this – that nations and governments have never learned anything from history or acted upon any lessons they might have drawn from it.”<sup>13</sup> And I begin to wonder whether we are at all ready to recognize history as a teacher. That history speaks to us louder and louder over these last decades using various languages and means of communication (viruses, bombs, algorithms to name but a few), yet we are

not quite ready to hear it. Perhaps we are not attentive enough. Or perhaps it is no longer history that we should learn from about the past...

A teacher comes, when you are ready.

## History-Resistant Pasts

The phrase “a teacher comes, when you are ready” does not mean that we are not looking to learn from history, or that we are passively waiting for history to teach us. The phrase manifests a whole process of learning, thinking and exploring various ways of knowing, experiencing and researching the past. Learning from history also means recognizing the limits of history as a specific approach to the past. As the Polish historian Marcin Kula observes: “Może warto uczyć historii, by czasem pokazać, że nie potrafimy wyjaśnić rozpatrywanych zjawisk, a w wielu wypadkach mamy odpowiedź jedynie historyczną” (Perhaps it is worth teaching history in order to demonstrate that sometimes we are unable to explain the phenomena that we study, and in many cases all can offer is a purely historical answer).<sup>14</sup> Thus, I was wondering that perhaps we need to step out of history for a while in order to address our current problems; perhaps answers that we are receiving from history are not enough or they even limit our understanding of events and processes. As Dipesh Chakrabarty reminds us: “there are pasts that resist historicization”<sup>15</sup>. He argues that:

Subaltern pasts thus act as a supplement to the historian’s pasts.

They are supplementary in a Derridean sense – they enable history, the discipline, to be what it is and yet at the same time help to show what its limits are. In calling attention to the limits of historicizing, they help us distance ourselves from the imperious instincts of the discipline – the idea that *everything* can be historicized or that one should *always* historicize. Subaltern pasts return us to a sense of the limited good that modern historical consciousness is.<sup>16</sup>

Thus, perhaps the ahistoricity of history-resistant pasts helps to reduce certain forms of absolutizing the past and opens an alternative to history – as a discipline – that incorporates different (non-Western or even non-human) perceptions of

changes, reasoning, and sensing.<sup>17</sup> As the historian of the American West Richard White points out:

History is not the only way of using the past. The current fascination among historians with myth, public memory, and tradition acknowledges that there are alternative and rival creations of the past. But the response of historians to rivals is imperial. Historians recognize alternative ways of using the past in order to historicize them, domesticate them, and make them part of history itself.<sup>18</sup>

Whereas historians propose a kind of alternative history and show that indigenous (and subaltern) pasts wait to be transformed into history, I would like to consider the possibility of studying these pasts in order to create an alternative to history. The potential resides not only in subaltern pasts and indigenous knowledges, but also in such flourishing subfields of history as animal history, plant history, new environmental history, the new history of things, postsecular history, posthuman/ist history, sonic history, sensory history, big and deep history – in all those fields that experiment with non-anthropocentric, non-European and non-secular approaches. In this context, learning from history means that we should also see the limits of history and learn from different approaches to the past.

I am aware that for us, historians from Europe, it is difficult to swallow heavy criticism of history as a kind of colonial enterprise that has contributed to (and continues to legitimate) various forms of violence and exploitation, and reinscribes barriers between nations and cultures. It is difficult to accept that history is understood as an ideology of the Western worldview and belongs to “the darker sides of Western modernity” (as Walter Mignolo would say). It is difficult for me, as a historian from East-Central Europe, burdened with all the heavy baggage of totalitarian regimes, the Holocaust and communist atrocities, to venture harsh criticism of anthropocentrism, especially now, when I see so much human suffering behind the border. But as a critical scholar I am also aware that “the Western world view is nothing but a point of view” – as Morgan Ndlovu, an anthropologist from the University of Zululand in South Africa, reminds us.<sup>19</sup> I have to accept that what Europeans cherish as civilization and progress, for non-Europeans (especially indigenous groups) translates into genocides, ecocides and epistemicides.

Researching new tendencies and emerging fields in the humanities and social sciences, I have observed a paradigm shift that began in 2001.<sup>20</sup> I have observed how it questions and dismantles the basic institutional foundations of history as the scholarly discipline that were laid in the nineteenth century already, namely: anthropocentrism, Eurocentrism, historicism, scientism, and secularism. Today, the possibility that over 250 years of tradition of the historical discipline as we know it might be coming to end, seems controversial. As does the recognition that we are bearing witness, on a global scale, to the emergence (and/or re-emergence) of approach/es to the past that will incorporate and adopt only certain elements of history, – that particular approach to the past that was born of the Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian cultures.

A teacher comes, when you are ready.

### History and Emergency Humanities

History has no survival value; it multiplies conflicts, rather than pacifies them. Historical processes are fueled by fights, wars, and revolutions, class, race and gender struggles. Conflicts shape history<sup>21</sup> (or have I been contaminated and biased by Marxist conflict theory?). The history of progress is the history of violence. Wars and conflicts are not aberrations of history; they are its foundations. Mass graves are nothing unusual – they are markers of human history (and humanity in general); death and concentration camps, and gulags are not exceptions; they are at the core of the legacy of humanity.<sup>22</sup> Of course we can discuss the constructive sides of wars and catastrophes: how they mobilize human solidarity, provide a source of stories about human altruism, courage and sacrifice and show the incredible human capacity to adopt to the most difficult living conditions.

In the times of persistent and permanent crisis history plays role of a limit experience teacher. It is important to explore the potentiality of history for studying and supporting human adaptive capabilities. By studying the human condition and limit experiences in times of wars, ecological disasters, terrorism and forced migrations, history might become a form of knowledge capable of demonstrating various strategies of survival and concrete, successful preparedness techniques. History might thus come

to be treated as a form of “soft power” not in the propaganda sense, but as part of the “emergency humanities”<sup>23</sup> that help to develop processes of resilience and adaptation stimulated from the bottom up.

Thus, what is particularly important is a critical examination of the capabilities of individuals and communities, as well as the capabilities of the space they occupy, alongside analysis of why and how certain practices were successful and unsuccessful in the past. (Local history, oral history, public history become crucial for such tasks.) Results of such research might also enhance individual and collective response capability to various types of disasters as well as help to develop the ethical stance of response-ability to them (enhancing abilities to act in a responsible way when such events happen).

A teacher comes, when you are ready.

### Historians' Response-Ability

In Indigenous teaching there is what is known as “The Four R’s” rule, which is based on principles of Relations, Respect, Reciprocity, and Responsibility (or: Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity and Responsibility).<sup>24</sup> These principles serve as a code of conduct, and as an ethical guide in cross-cultural teaching and learning. They suggest ways of becoming more responsive to different knowledges and ways of knowing and more open to learning from them. Sami scholar Rauna Kuokkanen understands responsibility as “an ability to respond to the world beyond oneself, as well as a willingness to recognize its existence.”<sup>25</sup> Feminist scholars such as Donna Haraway, Vinciane Despret and Karen Barad approach the notion of responsibility as response-ability in a similar way. Responsibility is an ethical and epistemic virtue that has to be cultivated. One has to be able to respond.

I reflect on the problem of bearing the consequences of my responses to current challenges, on my responsibility and response-ability as an intellectual, as a historian, scholar and teacher, but I also think about the social responsibility of universities, historical associations and organizations. What is current corporate, historical and social responsibility of CISH – as a world organization of historians, and of CISH’s

Commissions? How is its accountability and ability to respond to contemporary challenges manifested? Has its structure and mission been able to handle these pressures? As Toni Morrison, a Nobel Prize laureate in literature in 1993 says: “Freedom is choosing your responsibility. It’s not having responsibilities; it’s choosing the ones you want.”<sup>26</sup> And I have become to wonder: are we ready to make proper choices regarding our responsibilities?

A teacher comes, when you are ready.

### Conclusion

One of our Western elders, Hayden White, taught about “the practical past” versus the “historical past” created by historians. White was critical of the historical profession. As he argued: “Historians could tell you what the properly processed evidence licenses you to believe about what happened in given parts of the historical past, but they could not tell you how to deal with your present situation or solve your current practical problems.”<sup>27</sup> Thus, I have become to wonder: perhaps we indeed should consider “indigenizing the future” and abandon the idea of learning from history to instead focus on learning from the “practical past?” These ideas lead us toward history understood as an applied science that privileges such fields as local history, oral history and public history as well as particular methods such as place-based research, participatory research and action research. My point is that inside historical studies there are processes going on already that are moving historical knowledge closer to indigenous and traditional knowledges.

Perhaps we should rethink our understanding of methods of historical research and adopt recent proposals made by anthropologists to treat imagination as method, friendship as method, and hope as method.<sup>28</sup> We might also try to include in our teaching response-able reading of historical sources. Perhaps we should indeed be more attentive to Indigenous scholars, who stress that knowledges of the past “sit in places,” and if we want to address “big picture questions” we should include not only various local, traditional knowledges but also various other-than-human entities that participate in knowledge building. Perhaps we should re-learn how to learn from

animals, plants, rivers and mountains; how to respect them and treat them as gifts. Following the Arab-American writer and ethnobiologist – Gary Nabhan, Kimmerer argues that we need “re-story-ation” (and re-story-action) – to tell a different story about the world and our relationship to place.<sup>29</sup> In the meantime, however, while I am comfortably reflecting on history, women, men and children are being killed in Ukraine.

A teacher comes, when you are ready.

Each of us is a teacher and we should be ready to – as a phrase attributed to Mahatma Gandhi states – to “be the change you wish to see in the world.”<sup>30</sup> For now, I’d better get ready to pass on knowledge that we learn from survivors’ testimonies and war memoirs: how to adapt, to fight, how to hunt for food, how to prepare a shelter, how to provide medical first aid, and – above all: how to stay human.

## NOTES

- 1 I understand the term ‘wonder’ both as a surprise that opens up to what is new and inspiring but also as a “mode of historical attention” that enables the practice of various forms of “arts of attentiveness,” meaning “the cultivation of skills for both paying attention to others and meaningfully responding.” See Torbjörn Gustafsson Chorell, “Modes of Historical Attention: Wonder, Curiosity, Fascination,” *Rethinking History*, vol. 25, no. 2, 2021, pp. 242-257; Thom van Dooren, Eben Kirksey, Ursula Münster, “Multispecies Studies: Cultivating Arts of Attentiveness,” *Environmental Humanities*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2016, p. 6-7 [1-23].
- 2 Walter D. Mignolo, “Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and Decolonial Freedom,” *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 26, no. 7-8, 2009, pp. 159-181.
- 3 Daniel R. Wildcat, “Indigenizing the Future: Why We Must Think Spatially in the Twenty-First Century,” *American Studies*, vol. 46, no. 3-4, Fall-Winter 2005, p. 419.
- 4 Daniel R. Wildcat, “Preliminary Reflections on the Challenges of Rethinking Postcolonial and Post-Socialist Realities,” *Anthropology of East Europe Review*, vol. 22, no. 2, 2004, p. 97. As Wildcat confesses: “I have no idea how an indigenization process might play out in postsocialist or ‘de-socialist’ discourses. Nevertheless, in the Americas the outright persecution and frontal attacks on native knowledge and ways of knowing, e.g., the ‘total institution,’ and resocialization project of the off-reservation boarding schools has left many indigenous scholars looking for ways to see where our own cultures might lead us. Given the attempt to take our histories and cultures away from us, some native people in the Americas today are reclaiming, returning, reconstructing, and creating indigenous ways of living for implementation today. In this sense – a sense – of theft by one people from another in the most existential manner imaginable, I wonder if there is anything comparable in the postsocialist situations around the world” (Ibidem, p. 97).
- 5 Michał Buchowski, “Intricate Relations between Western Anthropologists and Eastern Ethnologists,” *Focaal*, vol. 63, 2012, pp. 20-38.
- 6 Piotr Piotrowski, “Peripheries of the World Unite!,” Paper presented at the XLVI AICA International Congress (Košice – Bratislava, Slovakia, September 24-27, 2013). Lecture available on YouTube, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O9lBuafjE\\_E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O9lBuafjE_E) (accessed: 27.07.2022)
- 7 Paolo Freire, *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. by Robert R. Barr. London; New York: Continuum, 2004, p. 2.
- 8 Edward H. Carr, *What is History?* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition edited by R.W. Davies. Penguin Books, 1987, p. 108. Carr is paraphrasing the words of Charles Percy Snow, referencing the latter’s well-known essay *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution* (1959).
- 9 Ariella Azoulay, “Potential History: Thinking through Violence,” *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 39, no. 3, 2013, pp. 565-566.
- 10 Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*. Milkweed Editions, 2013, p. 222.
- 11 As Kimmerer writes in *Braiding Sweetgrass*: “If plants are our oldest teachers, why not let them teach?” (p. 232).
- 12 *Historia vero testis temporum, lux veritatis, vita memoriae, magistra vitae, nuntia vetustatis, qua voce alia nisi oratoris immortalitati commendatur?* [By what other voice, too, than that of the orator, is history, the witness of time, the light of truth, the life of memory, the directress of life, the herald of antiquity, committed to immortality?] Cicero, *De Oratore*, II, 36.

- 13 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, trans. H.B. Nisbet. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 21.
- 14 Marcin Kula, *Krótki raport o użytkowaniu historii* (A Brief Report on the Uses of History). Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2004, p. 245.
- 15 Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000, p. 101.
- 16 Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, p. 112. As Chakrabarty stresses: “[H]istoricizing is not the problematic part of the injunction, the troubling term is ‘always’” (Ibidem, p. 111).
- 17 Here I follow Nandy, who is skeptical of Gyan Prakash and Dipesh Chakrabarty’s critique of history and claims that they propose “powerful pleas for alternative histories, not for alternatives to history.” Ashis Nandy, “History’s Forgotten Doubles,” *History and Theory*, vol. 34, no. 2, May 1995, p. 53.
- 18 Richard White, “Using the Past. History and Native American Studies,” in: *Studying Native America: Problems and Prospects*, ed. Russell Thornton. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998, p. 217.
- 19 Morgan Ndlovu, “Why Indigenous Knowledges in the 21st Century? A Decolonial Turn,” *Yesterday & Today*, no. 11, July 2014, p. 94. As Ndlovu claims: “the quest for the privileging of indigenous knowledges is the quest for a pluriversal world where all knowledges play an equal role in determining the direction and the future of the world” (p. 96).
- 20 I elaborate on this subject in *The Paradigm Shift in the Contemporary Humanities and Social Sciences*, in: *Philosophy of History: Twenty-First-Century Perspectives*, ed. Jouni-Matti Kuukkanen. Oxford, London, New York: Bloomsbury, 2020, pp. 180-197.
- 21 Margaret MacMillan, *War. How Conflict Shaped Us*. New York: Random House, 2020.
- 22 Tarik Kochi & Noam Ordan, “An Argument for the Global Suicide of Humanity,” *Borderlands*, vol. 7, no. 3, 2008, pp. 9-11.
- 23 The term “emergency humanities” was the title of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) biennial symposium organized in 2020. “Through critical approaches to politics, economics, geography, biology, history, the social science, religion, philosophy, and technology, the emergency humanities draws together holistic knowledge to pioneer pragmatic, scientific, humanistic solutions to crises like Covid-19” as well as other urgencies that we are facing today (climate change, loss of biodiversity, migrations, social injustice, etc. See J. Andrew Hubbell, John C. Ryan, *Introduction to the Environmental Humanities*. London and New York: Routledge, 2022, pp. 258-259.
- 24 Randolph J. Wimmer, “The 4 Rs Revisited,” Again: Aboriginal Education in Canada and implications for Leadership in Higher Education,” in: *Assembling and Governing the Higher Education Institution. Democracy, Social Justice and Leadership in Global Higher Education*, eds. Lynette Shultz, Melody Viczko. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, pp. 257-270; Wildcat, “Preliminary Reflections,” p. 96; Jo-ann Archibald Q’um Q’um Xiitem, Jenny Bol Jun Lee-Morgan and Jason De Santolo, “Introduction. Decolonizing Research: Indigenous Storywork as Methodology,” in: *Decolonizing Research: Indigenous Storywork as Methodology*, eds. Jo-ann Archibald Q’um Q’um Xiitem, Jenny Bol Jun Lee-Morgan, Jason De Santolo. London: ZED Books, 2019, pp. 1-2.
- 25 Cited in: Marc Higgins, *Unsettling Responsibility in Science Education Indigenous Science, Deconstruction, and the Multicultural Science Education Debate*. Palgrave Macmillan 2021, p. vii.
- 26 *A Conversation: Gloria Naylor and Toni Morrison* (1985), in: *Conversations with Toni Morrison*, ed. by Danille Taylor-Guthrie. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1994, p. 195.
- 27 Hayden White, *The Practical Past*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2014, p. 10. As White claims: “I understand Oakeshott to have understood the term ‘practical’ in the way that Immanuel Kant proposed in his second critique, the *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*: that is to say, as knowledge intended to help to answer the ethical question: ‘What should I (we) do?’ (...) the past thus invested as a possible source of practical knowledge” (Ibidem, p. 10). Indigenous knowledges are based on direct experiences and practicality. “One seeks knowledge because one is prepared to use it.” See: Michael A. Hart, “Indigenous Worldviews, Knowledge, and Research: The Development of an Indigenous Research Paradigm.” *Journal of Indigenous Social Development*, vol. 1, no. 1, February 2010, p. 9.
- 28 Michael Thomas Hayes, Pauline Sameshima, Francene Watson, “Imagination as Method.” *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2015, pp. 36-52; Marina de Regt, “Noura and Me. Friendship as Method in Times of Crisis,” *Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development*, vol. 44, no. 1-2, Spring/Summer 2015. pp. 43-70; Hirokazu Miyazaki, “Hope as Method,” in his, *The Method of Hope. Anthropology, Philosophy, and Fijian Knowledge*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004, pp. 1-30.
- 29 Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, p. 9.
- 30 The slogan is a paraphrase of Gandhi’s words: “We but mirror the world. All the tendencies present in the outer world are to be found in the world of our body. If we could change ourselves, the tendencies in the world would also change. As a man changes his own nature, so does the attitude of the world change towards him,” Mahatma Gandhi, “General Knowledge About Health XXXII: Accidents Snake-Bite” (1913), in: *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. XII, April 1913 to December 1914. The Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1964, p. 158, <https://www.gandhiserve.net/about-mahatma-gandhi/collected-works-of-mahatma-gandhi/012-19130401-19141223/> (accessed: 25.07.2022).



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