

Book Reviews



Manuel Perez-Garcia. *Global History with Chinese Characteristics: Autocratic States along the Silk Road in the Decline of the Spanish and Qing Empires 1680–1796*. Singapore: Springer, Palgrave Macmillan, 2021. xxxv, 244 pp. ISBN 978-981-15-7864-9. doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-7865-6.

In *Global History with Chinese Characteristics*, Manuel Perez-Garcia provides some insightful viewpoints on global history by drawing attention to the international trade between the Qing and Spanish empires in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In addition to focusing on case studies of the Philippine *sangleys* (Chinese traders) and Manila galleons that served as international trading agents between the Qing and Spain, the author intends to challenge both the so-called “Sinocentric/Sinocentred” and “Eurocentric/Eurocentred” perspectives of global history scholarship.

Besides the introduction (Chapter 1) and conclusion, this book mainly consists of three chapters. In Chapter 2, Perez-Garcia provokingly studies the development of global history in the People’s Republic of China. Whereas most global historians aim to pass beyond the limits of modern historiography rooted in the idea of nation-states, global history studies have been used to reinforce nationalist narratives and political propaganda in contemporary China, such as the so-called Chinese Dream and the Belt and Road Initiative. The author terms this contradiction a “global history paradox.” Chapter 3 aims to deconstruct the historical narrative of the “High Qing” by critically reviewing the Qing market and fiscal systems. In so doing, Perez-Garcia argues that the Qing made a hard choice between economic growth and state control which he terms a “power paradox.” That is to say, to maintain social order, the Qing imposed strong interventionism and rigid bureaucratism on local societies to the detriment of the market economy in South China. Chapter 4 focuses on the global economic exchange between Qing China and the Spanish empire. By traveling between port cities in Asia and Europe, including Macao, Manila,

and Marseille, trading agents like the *sangleys* and Manila galleons jointly established global economic networks connecting Asia, Europe, and America.

Generally speaking, *Global History with Chinese Characteristics* makes three contributions to the field. First of all, it rhetorically challenges both Chinese nationalist and Eurocentric presumptions in previous studies of global history. Moreover, it tries to pass beyond the metropole—periphery discourse by stressing the roles of specific port cities and historical agents rather than state powers. While studying the function and operation of seaports in Europe and Asia from a comparative perspective, the author also pays attention to the approach of connected history by delineating the international connections between Marseille and Macao as a case study. Finally, in addition to the integration of economic markets, the author emphasizes that the global circulation of Chinese and European goods significantly shaped local economies, consumption behaviors, and geopolitical knowledge.

In addition to the contributions above, Perez-Garcia also provides interesting observations on the origins of globalization. Challenging previous scholarship on price convergence in global commodity markets in the 1820s as the beginning of globalization, *Global History with Chinese Characteristics* traces the start of early globalization back to the late sixteenth century when the trade routes of Manila galleons facilitated the exchange of commodity and currency between China, Europe, and the Americas (123, 175).

While the author endeavors to show how the trading networks between Macao, Manila, and Marseille integrated the early modern world in the second half of the sixteenth century, the readers might be surprised to find that some relevant and important works, such as *Spain, China and Japan in Manila, 1571–1644* by Birgit Tremml-Werner, are missing from the bibliography.¹ Furthermore, the author's argument raises a fundamental but unresolved question: when, where, and how did globalization start?

While the author makes efforts in tracing the integration of international markets back to the Manila galleons in the late sixteenth century, the readers should realize that the existing scholarship on early globalization is diverse and complex. For instance, Valerie Hansen provocingly traced the origin of globalization back to the eleventh century when the traveling of people and goods between Asia, Africa, and the Americas became more frequent than before following the Vikings' arrival in Canada.² Additionally, Sugiyama Masaaki

1 Birgit Tremml-Werner, *Spain, China and Japan in Manila, 1571–1644: Local Comparisons and Global Connections* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015).

2 Valerie Hansen, *The Year 1000: When Explorers Connected the World—and Globalization Began* (New York: Scribner, 2020).

powerfully argued that the Pax Mongolica profoundly connected inland and maritime networks. Consequently, Masaaki argues, the Eurasian integration under the rule of the Mongol empire in the thirteenth century served as the beginning of globalization.³

By pointing out different interpretations of international integration above, it should be noted that the origins of early globalization are diverse and plural. That is to say, the Columbian Exchange is neither the only origin nor the earliest monumental event of global history, even though it did profoundly connect the Americas, Africa, and Eurasia after the sixteenth century. On the other hand, in addition to the Vikings' arrival in North America, the Pax Mongolica in Eurasia, and the Manila galleons crossing over the Pacific, there are still different origins of early globalization that deserve attention.

While *Global History with Chinese Characteristics* mainly tells the story of early globalization in the late sixteenth century from a perspective of maritime history, it should be noted that Central Eurasian nomads also played significant roles in international integration. In addition, Central Eurasianists, such as Christopher I. Beckwith and Moriyasu Takao, have already challenged both Sinocentric and Eurocentric narratives of global history pioneeringly.⁴ In brief, complementing other works discussed above, Perez-Garcia provides us with thoughtful observations on the formation and narrative of global history with interesting case studies of the Qing and Spanish empires from a maritime perspective.

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3 Sugiyama Masaaki, *Kubirai no chōsen: Mongoru kajō teikoku e no michi* (Kublai's Challenge: The Way to the Mongol Maritime Empire) (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha, 1995).

4 Christopher I. Beckwith, *Empires of the Silk Road: A History of Central Eurasia from the Bronze Age to the Present* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); Moriyasu Takao, *Shiruku Rōdo to Tō Teikoku* (The Silk Road and the Tang Empire) (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2007).

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