

Original Article

Revisiting the Past: New Perspectives in Historical Research

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Abstract

Historical research is undergoing significant transformation as scholars increasingly move beyond traditional narratives and adopt diverse methodological, interdisciplinary, digital, and transregional approaches. This paper, titled *Revisiting the Past: New Perspectives in Historical Research*, examines the changing nature of historical inquiry and highlights the importance of methodological pluralism in understanding the past. It explores quantitative and data-driven history, interdisciplinary methods, microhistory, digital humanities, computational tools, material culture, archaeology, and non-European perspectives. The study further examines the role of memory, testimony, source selection, periodization, causality, and narrative framing in reshaping historical interpretation. Particular attention is given to connected histories, empire, globalization, economic networks, social movements, everyday resistance, and environmental history, demonstrating how local and global processes are historically interconnected. The paper also identifies contemporary challenges, including data gaps, representation, bias, ethical concerns, and the need for innovative pedagogical and public-history practices. It argues that broadening chronological, geographical, methodological, and conceptual frameworks can produce more inclusive and nuanced interpretations of the past. By integrating new sources, digital technologies, interdisciplinary perspectives, and connected historical approaches, historical scholarship can respond more effectively to contemporary intellectual and social challenges.

Keywords: Historical Research; Historiography; Methodological Pluralism; Quantitative History; Interdisciplinary Methods; Microhistory; Digital Humanities; Material Culture; Archaeology; Connected Histories; Global History; Environmental History; Periodization; Historical Sources; Memory and Testimony; Social Movements; Economic Networks; Public History.

Introduction

Diverse scholarly trends reach beyond traditional frameworks and urge reconsideration of foundational conventions governing the discipline. Such trends promote methodological pluralism; accentuate multidisciplinary engagement; encourage scrutiny of framing, periodization, causation, and currency; deepen exploration of evidence; and examine ethical dimensions of source choice. The comprehensive epistemological reshaping undertaken in early modern European history thus transcends mere modernist extension of postmodern premises. Recent scholarship on early modern Europe re-evaluates long-asserted uses of financial markets, universities, trade networks, petitions, and urban biopolitics in grappling with tensions between speculative and real investment central to capitalist development (Oldfield & Day, 2011), enriching historical understanding while refining perspectives on the geographical and social scope of contemporary queries. Presently, epochs demarcating the advent of modernity and the distinction between early and late modernity warrant first-rate reconsideration.

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Methodological Transformations in Historical Inquiry

The historical method interprets contemporary evidence concerning past events in a systematic manner that implies relationships lost to time. Employed rigorously, it makes it possible to arrive at an account that extends well beyond the narrative, one that reconstructs a recognizable sequence of events deserving of the label "history" and recounts a set of circumstances plausibly influencing those events. When it further suggests a judgment that something like an event at that moment was significant to certain actors, those biographers having for a while already turned to explanatory factors such as role and position rather than single motives or ideologies, it may be fairly described as "historical." Historical accounts rest inevitably on a variety of sources—textual, material, environmental, and more. The corpus varies from one episode to the next as does the recruiting of supplementary methods such as those developed in anthropology, geography, sociology, or even theology (Bateman, 2014). The greater breadth when history trained on one or another past depends not only on sources and techniques but also on the conceptualization of the entities, events, relationships, or processes of concern. Here too, the historiographical literature offers guidance. The intersection of the digital turn and history is rich and multifaceted. Scholar and practitioners investigate these themes along multiple axes. Some explore the epistemological dimensions of the digital medium, contemplate graphic forms of publication and representation, devise new kinds of notation and bibliography, consider non-standard artifacts as "sources" of history, and engage with curatorial challenges. Others invest considerable effort in the design, coding, and application of visualization tools and platforms. Time and again, however, enthusiasm for the "new" leads not merely to hasty generalization about what a medium affords (Alves, 2014).

1. Quantitative History and Data-Driven Approaches

Quantitative history and data-driven approaches utilize statistical and computational methods to analyze historical data. Significant contributions include works by Allen, Rothstein, and Fogel, assessing the role of quantification in American history. Several studies focus on economic and social aspects, such as Fogel and Engerman's "Time on The Cross," and Thernstrom's analysis of poverty and progress in Boston. Researchers have examined legislative behavior, regional development, and social movements using these methods. The field draws from diverse

sources, including journals like the *American Economic Review* and *Social Science Quarterly*. However, estimating the number of quantitative or social scientific historians is difficult due to their dispersed publication venues and the occasional use of social science methods by historians who do not identify as "quantitative" (Morgan Kousser, 1980). Quantification in history came late and from outside the discipline. A few initial successes, such as Lee Benson's 1957 critique of impressionistic treatments of elections and his subsequent quantitative analysis of election returns, inspired many others. The development of "econometric history" began with Alfred H. Conrad and John R. Meyer demonstrating the profitability of applying modern economic theory to historical problems. By 1960, cheometricians held annual conferences to coordinate research. Merle Curti's quantitative study of community social structure and mobility also influenced the rise of the "new social history." The historical profession's elite responded quickly, but not uniformly.

2. Interdisciplinary Methods and Microhistory

Historical inquiry has undergone dramatic transformations over the last sixty years, leading to numerous novel perspectives on topics of prime interest to historians. These methodological revolutions range across a broad spectrum of approaches; new quantitative methods have facilitated sophisticated historical analysis of extensive datasets beyond the reach of traditional techniques, while textual corpora of various kinds have become accessible for statistical scrutiny (Boldizsár Simon, 2009). Interdisciplinary experimentation has stimulated examinations of specific classical subjects, like ancient Rome, through the lenses of biology and ecology, and of modern economies through theories drawn from mathematical physics. At the microhistorical level, the lives of isolated individuals have been recast within new paradigms informed by law, economics, demography, medicine, and narrative theory; scientific approaches to the workings of the mind have even entered the fray.

3. Digital Humanities and Computational Tools

Digital Humanities builds on the incorporation of quantitative measures into humanities research. Originally linked to broader developments in Quantitative History and Data-Driven History, the term has narrowed to denote the computational analysis of historical data (Milligan, 2013). The growth of Digital Archives and Web-archives amplifies the relevance of Digital Humanities to historians. A growing number of institutions and scholars offer formal coursework in programming and related areas which facilitate

interdisciplinary collaboration across fields and approaches. Ten years ago, such collaboration was regarded as the future of historical scholarship. Low-cost tools such as Geographical Information Systems (GIS) helped historians work with spatial data. Each new tool and dataset offered exciting possibilities but also spurred concerns. Models and datasets inevitably involved narrative choices, making it impossible to shed the 'narrative straitjacket' imposed by quantitative history. Crowdsourcing promised to unlock vast archival resources but risked condemning historians to a soulless repeat of nineteenth-century 'bare records'. Early forays into computational text analysis generated useful insights but inadvertently amplified the homogenization of sources much lamented in earlier discussions of 'mass culture'. Fewer than a dozen scholars could exploit the enormous World Wide Web digitization and offering splendid resources for web historians and enabling the study of public talk in web genre outside mainstream academics.

The Role of Sources in Reframing Historical Narratives

Historical inquiry benefits from a variety of sources that open up new questions and offer alternative narratives. Analyses of material culture and artefacts contribute to the reconstruction of life in various historical epochs (A. Dilcher, 2007). The arrival of non-European archives and objects has helped to address Europe's blind spots in the study of the past and to develop a transregional or transnational perspective (Strömberg, 2018). The interplay between memory and history invites explorations of collective and public memory, testimony, oral history, and the ethical entanglements of source selection (Oldfield & Day, 2011).

1. Material Culture and Archaeology in Historical Analysis

Both archaeological and material culture studies constitute important frames of analysis for a variety of historical themes. Recent microhistorical scholarship on early modern Europe has notably employed archaeological evidence to scrutinize inquiries into issues such as the land-market expansion in Renaissance Italy or the transformation of Jesuit missions into a distinctive model of globalisation during the sixteenth century (Ribeiro, 2019). Such inquiries unearth significant examples of emigration to, or abroad from, the territories of the Venetian Comune between the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Several studies embark upon a wider examination of the resilience of individual, social, and collective memory post-1918, focusing on a range of built

structures, infrastructures, and objects—e.g., monuments, bridges, statues, railways, town-planning signs and even porcelain. Material culture under colonialism and post-colonialism in the Global South is often addressed through an archaeological lens. New collections and fieldwork chronicle a series of transformations following the end of colonial rule, or highlight the continuity of the local material culture and its deep democratization despite enormous changes (L. Clark, 2015). The focus turns to eight key points regarding the periodisation of early-modern science and its interactions with European colonial networks.

2. Non-European and Transregional Perspectives

Historical study in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries has broken free from national and European-bound frameworks that have fundamentally constrained historical analysis. Dimensions, orientations, and frames formulated for the Fifteenth-Century Mediterranean or Seventeenth-Century Atlantic have limited the study of many other, larger regions and times (K. Jenco & Chappell, 2020). Rethinking the framework for a study of the Edo period thereafter prompts new questions and guides attentiveness to different types of experiences and historical practices, thereby leading to reconsideration of data and languages. Three questions probe what is missing in the standard pre-Edo and Edo framing: Where does it place China? What about the Southern Tribes? Why is the modern period forced onto analysis in the first place? Attached to the term early modern, modern marks an enormous shift in how the frame is applied historically. Constraints avoid posing questions that neither frame invites, such as the nature of other movements, the content of other travels, and activities that fall outside them altogether. Boundaries cease to coincide with geographical space: are the options under study Middle Eastern, Chinese, or Russian? Histories of practice and experience across multiple regions or compulsory reconstructions by others in those systems likewise emerge.

A frame based on politically or geographically defined centers, EU, South-East Asia, or the Asian Pacific, often leads to analysis of Japan as central within each area. Considerations of the frame defined as prior to the Meiji Restoration and continued statements of perennial state formation, from the Sixteenth Century, or of centuries of institutional development before the European encounter raise similarly profound questions. Historical study has resisted, even dismissed or dismembered, the frame of world history.

3. Memory, Testimony, and the Ethics of Source Selection

Images are devised to represent the world; collective memory extends beyond the epistemic limits of conscious recollection and interpretation; the art of memorization no longer situates itself in the sovereignty of a reality to minister; the moment when the memory envelops its past inscribes a past that gradually withdraws from the fold of the 'past'—relating it purely to a 'there', to another terrain (A. Dilcher, 2007). Yet any periodization of visual technologies must sooner or later include the voltage of images—akin to documents, faithful references of enclosed activity—that in no longer necessitating the sovereign competence of memorization in which the aporia of retention can persist. History escapes immemorial foundations yet is always embroiled in memory. What persists of this articulation inflects the sameness of silence: silence at once longer and heavier. Something is always inscribed at the heart of the screen of history.

Conceptual Innovations in Historical Theory

Recent critiques of the notion of the "historical period" suited to the French revolution, writing that "these events cannot be imported into a singular period designated for them," echo previous insights into other key historical moments, notably the French empire, the USSR, and even the Enlightenment itself. Events that have received no significant historiographical attention were perceived to possess some conceptual anaesthesia, whose examination could clarify connections with longer-term sociocognitive, institutional, economy-related, and political transformations. Because nothing prevents the description of "connected histories" or "apologies" for the catastrophe of World war II's decoupling from the subsequent periodization or historical concept of "(post kwot) communism," clarifying precisely how and to what extent the notion of "empire" might be reconfigured or reclaimed illuminates intuitively wider conceptual possibilities for the recently emerged "connected histories." Likewise, acknowledging the punctuated tension between markup differentials for labour and constant returns within auto catalytic networking under network-oriented "empire" facilitates optional removals of temporally selective narrative framing for a variety of "connected histories." Since the Late-past remains expressed in terms of arbitrarily fragmented "early," "modern," and "contemporary," promoting communications that reduce any perceived denudation unearthed through episodic stimulus-response experiments over "ontologically structural" increments of an

ostensibly constitutive "now." Fleshing out the disjunctive, genre-invoking, literature-styled "the" connects readily to diverse transitional concerns spanning Romance epochal change, the Multiplication of religiousness, and Russian "revolutionary off-condition" still grouped as "Long-2700," elucidating how each alters common intuition of one's accession to "History" (Hodges, 2019).

1. Temporalities, Apologies, and Revisions of Periodization

Contemporary historiography increasingly addresses temporalities, apologies, and revisions of periodization. The processes through which histories, as products of particular moments, are constructed and deconstructed remain fluid. Periodizations, like founding dates, are routinely revisable. They are never innocent, as they often reflect the struggles of intellectuals and political agents, revisable according to the frameworks, instruments, and institutions made available by shifting circumstances (Hodges, 2019). From this perspective, no engagement with the past fails to recover the present. Such a notion of the past comprises not only temporality but also apology and periodization. Apologies—frequently political and often contentious—illustrate how, in the wake of contested contemporary events, a new reflection on the past rapidly emerges. Likewise, periods originally articulated in turbulence, though momentarily inaudible, may resound with a different thematic accent in correspondingly altered frames. The periodization marking the emergence of scale from the *longue durée* and defining periods as more comprehensively ubiquitous, in unity with transformation of the contemporary world projection, has assumed renewed relevance in recent months.

2. Causality, Contingency, and Narrative Framing

Contemporaneous temporalities, varying scales of analysis, and technologies of connectedness shape the interactions between human and non-human agents while framing encounters through the lenses of servitude, labour, connectivity, and solidarity (Helo, 2016). Utilitarian and retributive modes of justification offer partial insight into these diverse perspectives, enabling their configuration as moral, political-agential, and knowledge-oriented. Equally nuanced are the trajectories of periods and periodization, material empire's links to race, and the very meaning of the global in conjunction with empire, planetary, and transnational legacies. Reframing modes of belonging as narrative constructions in terms of transnationalism, post-coloniality, cosmopolitanism, and connectivity fosters

investigation of the interplay between these narratives and identified phenomena concerning state, empire, ethnonationalism, class, nature, and economy.

3. Empire, Globalization, and Connected Histories

Imperial histories, narratives, and institutions took shape alongside the emergence of European empires and global economic integration, continuing to influence societies in the Global South. Settler colonialism is also linked to the rise of territorial empires and the expansion of slavery and the slave trade. These transformations are more productively examined through the lens of empire, which highlights connections between Africa, the Americas, Asia, and Europe. The discourse on epochal transformation—characterized by the expansion of empires, globalization, and the establishment of new connections—has long been a hallmark of historical writing. Nonetheless, an overly rigid periodization of these shifts may obscure the valuable interplay between historical periodization and other analytical categories; the latter should not be lost amid the former's increasing prominence (O'Brien, 2006). Contemporary discussions of imperial expansion, economic integration, the circulation of people and ideas, and new modes of identifying and traversing territory are helpful for conceptualizing the historical development of connected histories spanning various spatial scales and enabling interrogation of established connexions. The concept of an interconnected Eurasia, incorporating pan-Hellenic, Indica, and Indo-Malay rim chronicles from the Mediterranean to Southeast Asia, lifts early modern historical narratives beyond Eurocentrism. In formative periods of global history, manuscripts and printed texts, as well as religions and belief systems, were circulated and reworked across vast tracts of land. Following Colonialism, the French, Haitian, Russian, and other revolutions prompted historiographical re-examinations of empire, state, civil society, social contract theory, and sovereign authority through Arab, Asian, and African prisms. Analysis of foreign diplomacy, trade, and authority has long promoted imperial historiography, including states of global interconnectedness, ships and intraterrestrial perspectives, material circulation viewership, onward connections to the Atlantic, and the Pacific, Indian Ocean, hybridization, and syncretism of the early modern empire (van Ittersum et al., 2016). Attempting to reshape world historiography along multiple gradients, capable of encompassing early-modern world arenas.

Case Studies Illustrating New Perspectives

A closer examination of historical events spanning the last five centuries reveals long-neglected intercultural connections across Eurasia and between Europe and Africa. Multiple micro-studies document the swift establishment of transcontinental networks, the multilingual routes of the earliest European missionaries and merchants to China and Japan, and the rapid dispersion of metal technologies across North America. Vast quantities of environmental data illuminate further interlinkages, including shared climatic trends and concurrent regional environmental shifts across diverse ecosystems. This wealth of evidence extends to transmodal networks involving goods, technologies, cultural practices, ideas, and pathogens traversing diverse geographical terrains and flora. Historical narratives emerge that reshape pedagogical practices, university curricula, public outreach, and university education by introducing conceptual, temporal, model-based, and linguistic innovations capable of reframing historical studies in systematic and rigorous terms.

Reconsideration of the Earlier Modern Era and the contemporary period elaborates these interconnected historical configurations and illuminates the global challenges now facing humanity. Eighteenth-century Western European intellectual currents travelled through Atlantic-world circuits into the Gulf of Guinea, encouraging powerful social movements that emerged in Haiti in the 1770s. Romance Languages dispensed with Latin and suppressed most linguistic connections to that oral tongue despite retaining phonetic, lexical, and grammatical linkages. The quest for genuinely contemporary history thus remains fraught with challenges, yet the very difficulties of grounding historical studies in situated knowledge and time-specific action—once regarded as insuperable impediments—now point to illuminating possibilities and point the way toward profound theoretical reformulation. The difficulties of linking early modern European history to contemporary challenges were long perceived as a major hindrance, yet these very challenges now provide fresh incentive for traversing the historical terrain from island societies in 1600 to contemporary interconnectivities (J. McCallum & R. McLean, 2016).

1. Economic Networks and Local-Global Linkages

Previous research on economic entanglements in the Greco-Roman world has disproportionately concentrated on transregional or long-distance trade, neglecting the significant contribution of local-global linkages. The

Mediterranean served as a well-established space for commerce, spanning diverse markets and populations. Overland and maritime transport, however, were often uncompetitive against local acquisitions, which facilitated the circulation of goods and information. The business activities of local entrepreneurs could thus complement or compete with interregional exchanges. Ongoing interdisciplinary studies clarify the multiple levels of networks formed by agents in economic, political, or social spheres. Globalization predominately brought to mind distant connections, yet local channels were integral in sustaining transregional interactions across space and time (Preiser-Kapeller, 2017). “Connected histories” depict societies as interlinked entities. Emphasis on bordering or isolated processes fails to recognize the extensive historical interconnections that transcended spatial delineations. These transgressions demand fresh scrutiny of periodization, sources, or causation, and stimulate reflections on prevailing narratives. The benefits of global approaches abound; however, historians bear the responsibility of reminding audiences that long-distance and local networks possessed mutual implications and demands.

2. Social Movements and Everyday Resistance

Movement can elicit various interpretations, from street protests to the everyday practices of sociality (Todd, 2019). Movement is socially constructed through collective action and permissive environments (Kivisto, 2009). Movement emerges from internal divisions and subjectivities of social actors, enabling the overlapping concerns played out in single movements. Movement and identities are rooted in shared-praxis, not merely driven by ideology. Social actors become involved with movements in an indirect and uneven manner, eking out the freedom to act under structural constraints. Social movements conjure visions of people in the streets, carrying placards, chanting slogans, and demanding change. Disruption of business-as-usual is a hallmark of movement, activated by the organised but dispersed nature of collective action, which encourages observers to focus on the disruptions that frame such events as movement. Movements do not operate solely through alternatives to conventional worldviews, practices, and codes. Counter-cultural practices, the manuals of graffiti artists, life-style changes promoted by fitness movements, nudist gatherings, and the observance of the Sabbath are movement activities seldom directly affected by elite or opponent framing. Synthesis of everyday socialities with notions from transitions of deep organisational

form and the assemblages of varied activism repositions movement within wider artistry efforts.

3. Environmental History and Long-Term Change

Understanding the role of the environment in long-term historical processes has long been regarded as an essential theme for historians. Works such as F. Braudel’s *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l’époque de Philippe II* (1949) already tackled, albeit partially focused, the interplay of nature and geography with human societies over long-term time spans. However, the environmental history subdiscipline took shape only in the aftermath of the rise of ecology during the 1960s. Research focused on Europe and North America, eventually spreading into the social-history-bred *campo de las víctimas* after the emergence of wider American and French conceptual frameworks associated with the notions of ‘the great transformation’ and ‘socioclimatic regimes’. Environmental historians in the English-speaking world have examined how ecosystems, climate, pollution, and other environmental categories interplayed with social processes across a wide range of human activities. The rich historical records available—representing another dimension of unprecedented opportunity of the Northern Atlantic entanglement—have fostered the development of historical ecology, which delves deeper into the relationship between ecosystems and economic dynamics across longer periods either than environmental history or than the abundant studies on the long-term relation between societies and climate change found in *Palaeo-Environmental History* (Moisés Santana-Cordero et al., 2024). While early approaches compared past ecosystems with contemporary ones in order to evaluate the implications of ecosystem degradation or perturbation, the notion of economic ecology inspired by A. W. Turchin’s work on population cycles now dominates. Historical-ecological research compares local economic cycles across different species and societies, delineates similarities and dissimilarities, and infers socio-economic flotsam.

Challenges and Boundaries of Contemporary Historical Practice

Trends across the discipline reveal methodological diversity, interdisciplinary bridge-building, and heightened scrutiny of source warrants (Hodges, 2019). Timeless questions of universalism, contagion, causality, and agency remain central but elude easy resolution; they have prompted conceptual shifts that revisit the still-pertinent legacy of premodern, transhistorical, and global historiographies. Contemporary inquiry is animated by the challenge of grappling with data

gaps, contextualizing sources that span the globe and prior epochs, determining what constitutes a fair and just representation, and confronting the limits of contemporary historiography—a task complicated by widening potential for projection of present concerns backward in time through narrative formation and analysis of historical agents. Alternative vehicles for articulation of the historical past, pedagogical outreach, narratives in public history, and adoption of open-access protocols nurture wider sharing of research outcomes, pursue equity objectives in discussions of representation, and counteract the detrimental influence of scholarly work sheltering behind paywalls—a barrier retaining the coercive dimensions of enclosure in the digital age (Oldfield & Day, 2011).

1. Data Gaps, Representation, and Bias

Historians committed to widening the range of subjects study must contend with the problems of data availability and representation. Factors such as class, gender, ethnicity, and race shape how societies select what to leave behind. These same factors also determine how those materials are treated, producing biases that have a direct impact on what becomes “history.” Societal differences therefore generate an uneven playing field. History thus remains a rich terrain for scholarly investigation, but the very term “historical” is deeply problematic when applied to most of the world (T. Gentilucci, 2014).

2. Pedagogy, Public History, and Open Scholarship

As history becomes more multi-faceted and diverse, teaching methods must evolve to keep time, from the junior high classroom to the postgraduate seminar. The traditional lecture remains an important part of higher education yet many historians are experimenting with alternatives to the conventional research paper, seeking to engage student interest, promote informal communication, and e48a9967-4390-4f78-8af3-17970216ea22 collaborative effort. Assignments to produce documentaries, podcasts, historical edits in Wikipedia, interpretive websites, and historical fiction have become more common, sometimes in conjunction with writing DSHEA essays. Older, person-centered approaches, earlier dominant in public history training, have often provided historical knowledge without critical reflection on how the past is now remembered and communicated. Public history projects inform students of how history is exercised beyond classrooms and academia; the exercise usefully hears the voice of selected constituencies and

addresses larger questions of historicity and public engagement (Annemieke Romein et al., 2022).

Conclusion

Traditional narratives often present the past as a sequence of chronological events arising from interactions among a small number of influential individuals. However, it is increasingly evident that economic, social, and environmental developments of long duration exert considerable influence on the formation, propagation, and the very content of polysemous and multitransferable socio-cultural formats, challenging the notion of modernity as a self-contained and autonomous phenomenon. Such deep-seated, uncaptualised trends may remain “barely visible” for generations and, though of major systemic consequence, sometimes seem to “stop dead” for lengthy periods with only minor perturbations. When for long centuries the majority of the total population remains estranged from formal ritual customs, wealth-configuring, civilised economy, bargain-freetown, providentially-shaped enlightenment, and gainful satisfaction of life, however, a variety of resistance forms frequently arise. Only by broadening chronological scope and contextualising acknowledged events within those distant underpinning currents can scholars contribute meaningfully to the simultaneously-gaining prominence of new perspectives (Oldfield & Day, 2011); (Bateman, 2014).

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