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The eighteenth century in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire: perspectives for a global history

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In his 1954 address to the American Philosophical Society on the role of the Ottoman Empire in world history, Arnold Toynbee emphasized the importance of the year 1453². The subsequent centuries he envisioned as merely a series of splendours and failures leading inevitably to the collapse of the Empire and the creation of the modern Turkish state. For many years, the process was seen as follows: the Ottoman Empire was a counterpoint to great global frescoes which had little to do with the methodological progress to be accomplished later in the field of history, now tackled from a global perspective. Even in this framework, as will be seen, the place of the eighteenth century cannot be taken for granted³. The Ottoman Empire's important position is recognised, of course, in valuations of the interlaced cultural and institutional spheres which have shaped the world; it is conceded that the Empire incarnated certain crucial aspects of the evolution of these spheres and their interstices at the moment when modernity emerged, the fundamentals of which are to be discussed on a solid base, beyond cumbersome ideological wreckage. Nevertheless, in the field of Ottoman studies, the common era eighteenth century is rarely considered as a key period. Work has tended to focus on Ottoman expansion in earlier period, as well as on the decline, portrayed as irremediable, of the nineteenth century.

Nevertheless, for the Ottoman Empire – and in particular for its Arab provinces, the eighteenth century represents a crucial moment. (This is not to ignore other aspects of the Empire nor non-Ottoman areas of the Arabic cultural domain). From a global historical perspective, the study of these provinces is a crucial area for current research. The same is true for work in connected history. It is only from this angle that the Ottoman Empire will be able to find its rightful place in reflections on the destiny of empires and on the characteristics of the societies to which they have given birth⁴. In the course of the eighteenth century, some

¹ The author of this paper, currently a researcher at the ZMO as part of a BMBF programme, benefited from DFG support in the work's earlier phases. She would like to thank her colleagues from the Franco-Italo-German DFG research project, as part of which this paper was produced, for their helpful suggestions. She would also like to thank her colleagues at the Zentrum Moderner Orient in Berlin for their comments and suggestions and Justin McGuinness for the translation.

² Toynbee (Arnold Joseph), "The Ottoman Empire in World History", *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 1955, 99-3, p.119-126.

³ On the discipline's development: Mazlish (Bruce), "Global History", *Theory, Culture and Society*, 23, 2006, p.406-408. In the same issue and in the same style (brief theoretical essay), see: Hobson (John), "East and West in Global History", p.408-410. See also: Mazlish (Bruce) and Bultjens (Ralph) (eds), *Conceptualizing Global History*, Boulder, Westview, 1993, 253 p.

⁴ See, for example: Subrahmanyam (Sanjay), "A Tale of Three Empires. Mughals, Ottomans and Habsburgs in a Comparative Context", *Common Knowledge*, 12-1, 2006, p.66-92. On method in connected history, and on its theoretical and practical links with global history see: Subrahmanyam (Sanjay), *Explorations in Connected*

of the most fundamental factors to speculations on nineteenth century global history emerge: the roots of domination, the roads and blind-alleys of modernity, the shifting and reinterpretation of the main currents of exchange, the future of state structures, the organisation of trade, the place of religion, the questioning of tradition's place in the regulation of societies. It is on the basis of these factors that those working from a connected history perspective construct their circulatory frameworks. It is clear that any unchallenged, preconceived idea of the eighteenth century has potentially undesirable echoes for anyone interested in the global history of the following centuries. In its interpretative tendencies, Orientalism may be seen as being based on a fundamental ignorance of the period.

The eighteenth century is important not only in itself but also as the implicit referent for thinking on the huge changes which were to take place in the region during the following century. Thus, from a global history perspective, it is essential to have a clear picture which includes the most recent advances in research on Arab societies in Ottoman times.

At a time when Europe was confirming its position as a space of State modernisation, cultural and political ferment and soon, the first stirrings of the industrial revolution, new questions were being raised, which concerned the following centuries as well: what was happening on the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean, what was the nature of State modernisation, commercial and urban change, and thinking about society and its religious bases? In short, the main question concerning the eighteenth century in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire is how to explore the possible origins of a growing gap with Europe which was headed – or was about to head, depending on the region, to the turning point of the Enlightenment. Discussions of such a split in the development of civilisations have produced certain major *topoi* of our time. If such a divergence has occurred, it is clearly essential to understand its causes and processes. It may, however, be a healthy thing to put the scale of such a split into perspective. To do this, questions of history-writing and the development of the conceptions which a society has about itself and its foundations must be tackled. The eighteenth century merits close examination, from a standpoint capable of putting into perspective the weight of heritage and the importance of influences, transfers and obstacles. In a context of inherited ideas, redefinitions, openings and closings, the period is certainly full of contradictions, as is European history of the same period, not to be summarised, of course, as an inevitable march towards progress, secularisation, urbanisation and industrialisation – in short, towards the Enlightenment. Far from being a block of modernity, eighteenth century Europe was a place of opposing and contradictory tendencies. The continent was scarred by multiple wars, a major revolution and reactions to it, reforms and blockages, and the invention of a vision which would constitute the heart of various new regimes and the anchoring in old regimes often a thousand leagues from the most advanced projects announced in the intellectual sphere. However, the overall vision of societies which were asking themselves questions about modernity, reform of the system which was not yet referred to as the *ancien régime*, the redefinition of the individual's place in society and that of society in history remain extremely relevant.

This is not necessarily the case for the Arab world, at least in such clear terms. In terms of history-writing, when Europe leaves behind mediaeval chronicles to move to Kantian reflection on universal history⁵, the old models retain greater importance in the Arab lands, it

History : from the Tagus to the Ganges, New Delhi, Oxford University Press India, 2005, 202p. On the perspectives for imperial comparativism: Subrahmanyam (Sanjay), "Par delà l'incommensurabilité: pour une histoire connectée des Empires aux temps modernes", *RHMC*, 2007, 54-4, p.34-53. See also in the same issue Douki (Caroline) et Minard (Philippe), « Histoire globale, histoires connectées : un changement d'échelle historiographique ? », p.7-21.

⁵ Kant (E.), *Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht*, 1784.

is often said. However, this assertion needs to be discussed, given that a renewed philosophy of history-writing had spread in the Arab world at the time of Ibn Khaldun, and the reasons for the phenomena which it covers need to be sought out. There is a clear need for a carefully thought out comparativist approach which can avoid reductive culturalist stances. There is also a clear need to construct a method for global history which can allow us to get beyond the difficulties inherent in this approach and widen thinking both on the roots of the contemporary world and its fractures and on the great historic movements between civilizations⁶. To begin with the comparativist approach to thinking about different cultural areas, this is not necessarily about bringing together highly diverse realities. Rather, it is a question of finding common points for discussion and study through concerted effort. This is one of the preconditions for the effective practice of global history. One should not bar oneself from comparing areas which are not usually compared. Rather, careful analytic methods are central to fruitful comparisons; it is not just a matter of juxtaposing content. Questions need to be shared as well. While there can be multiple and varied answers to a given question, the very fact of having raised the question moves the debate forward. With respect to the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire in the eighteenth century, a certain number of research questions can be raised which have already been discussed for Europe: State reform, secularisation, the modernisation of professional organisations, agricultural reform, thinking on education and teaching. Broadly speaking, it is essential to pay attention to the transfer and circulation of knowledge, models, ideas and techniques. Nevertheless, such transfers and models must not be reified: detecting a trend or an influence requires the subtle analysis of two societies, the originator and the receiver. And there is a problem, of course: in looking too closely for circulation and transfer, one runs the risk of finding them too easily and of neglecting the internal forces of development specific to each society. For this reason, our global history should be anchored in local research and collective comparativist practice. Such a declaration of loyalty to local terrain must not remain mere rhetoric. In history research, it is essential to start from a specific terrain in order to seek out the routes of circulation, rather than to begin with routes which are already too well marked out to correspond to the reality of history's hesitations. Global history is made in climbing rather than in freewheeling down the slope. Such precautions are even more important when they concern a period and a geographic area whose subsequent development still raises new questions. For a historian of the Arab eighteenth century, it would be an error to study the period without raising the big issues of the nineteenth century: from submission to an outside order to commercial decline, from the obstacles to State reform to changes in religion's place, or the big question of the weakening of the Ottoman Empire. It would also be an error to predetermine our reading of a society on the basis of our knowledge of its future or the future of the society which serves as its implicit referent. With this in mind, even research into the factors behind the obstacles depends on our open-mindedness.

Since the 1970s, and in particular in the light of Edward Said's work, the discipline has witnessed a broad call to re-examine the very roots of historians' interest for the Arab provinces⁷. Such foundational thinking is clearly essential to global history of this particular area. Given that the development of global history in general obliges us to rethink the heritage of colonialism for the Arab world, there can be no question of moving towards globality without taking into account the heavy load of *clichés* and *topoi* which are so often an integral part of the history of the region. However, these warnings, however salutary they may be, have sometimes run the risk of hampering the discipline's development, to the point that one

⁶ On this point, see: Riello (Giorgio), "La globalisation de l'histoire globale : une question disputée », *RHMC*, 54, 2007, p.23-33.

⁷ Said (Edward), *Orientalism*, New-York, Vintage, 1978, 394 p.

of the key areas for today's work appears to be the adoption of a global approach, on foundations as solid as possible. It is in this framework that attention to the eighteenth century appears innovatory. E. Said along with the heirs to colonial ideologies before him consider that everything begins with Bonaparte's landing in Alexandria⁸. However, the eighteenth century is over at the moment of Bonaparte's arrival, and with it end possibilities for considering the relevance of certain other themes in global history, beyond the powerful horizon of considering the roots of colonialism. Nevertheless Said, with his attention to the destiny and thought of Silvestre de Sacy, had taken the track which could have anchored his demonstration in the eighteenth century: Sacy's career, though it developed under the First Empire, assuredly reflects interest in the Orient rooted in the last decades of the *Ancien régime*, the study of which could lead to the Enlightenment and its link to the Orient⁹. However, it remains the case that so far there has been little theorisation of the eighteenth century relative to either the Arab provinces or the Ottoman Empire, be it from the standpoint of Saidian-style studies of Orientalism or from the angle of global history. Even authors like Jane Hathaway, in her useful attempt to lay the historiographic and methodological foundations for writing a history of the eighteenth century in the Ottoman world, does not insist on the possible perspectives which a global history approach might open up¹⁰. Such a perspective, however, is more or less explicit in the work of Albert Hourani back in the 1950s¹¹ and in Ira Lapidus work it appears as absolutely necessary, in an exponential manner, through the interpretation of data from the period¹². In the framework of current advances in theorising both the practice of global history and the contribution of trans-national history, attention to the eighteenth century emerges as more than ever necessary¹³. The ways forward outlined by Sanjay Subrahmanyam must therefore be taken.

Attention to the eighteenth century allows us to raise certain fundamental questions. At the meeting point of Said's suggestions and the advances in thinking global history in general is to be found the complex question of how to overcome eurocentric attitudes¹⁴. Peter Gran, for example, tackles this question, drawing inspiration from Gramsci's Marxism as he tries to outline new ways of understanding the contemporary world¹⁵. The eighteenth century is more than just a backcloth of an approach the pillars of which are located elsewhere. It is the emergence of Bonaparte which Gran takes as a rhetorical opening onto a discussion of the

⁸ For a link between Bonaparte's invasion and thinking on modernity's roots in the Arab-Muslim lands, see: Ze'evi (Dror), "Back to Napoleon? Thoughts on the Beginning of the Modern Era in the Middle-East", *Mediterranean Historical Review*, 2004, 19-1, p. 73-94.

⁹ From Antoine Isaac Silvestre de Sacy, see for example : *Le livre des perles, recueillies de l'abrégé de l'histoire des siècles ou abrégé de l'histoire universelle par Schéhébeddin Ahmed almokri alfassi*, Paris, 1789.

¹⁰ Hathaway (Jane), "Rewriting Eighteenth-Century Ottoman History", *Mediterranean Historical Review*, 2004, 19-1, p.29-53. On the Ottoman eighteenth century, see also: Abou-El-Haj (Rifa'at 'Ali), *Formation of the Modern State*, Syracuse, Syracuse UP, 2005, 183p.

¹¹ Hourani (Albert), "The Changing Face of the Fertile Crescent in the 18th century", *Studia Islamica*, 1957, 8, p.89-122.

¹² See for example: Lapidus (Ira), "Islamic Revival and Modernity : The Contemporary Movements and the Historical Paradigm", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 1997, 40-4, p.444-460. On the importance of global history for interpretation of the contemporary world, see: Gradner (Margarete), Rothermund (Dietmar), Schwentker (Wolfgang) (dir.), *Globalisierung und Globalgeschichte*, Vienne, Mandelbaum, 2007, 219p. See also the works de Stefan Reichmuth.

¹³ On these points, see in particular: Conrad (Sebastian), Eckert (Andreas) Freitag (Ulrike) (eds), *Globalgeschichte. Theorien. Ansätze. Themen*, Francfort, Campus, 2007, 347p. See also: Budde (Gunilla), Conrad (Sebastian) Janz (Oliver) (dir.), *Transnationale Geschichte. Themen, Tendenzen und Theorien*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2006, 320p.

¹⁴ On this point, see: Chakrabarty (Dipesh), *Provincializing Europe. Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton University Press, 2000, 336p.

¹⁵ Gran (Peter), *Beyond Eurocentrism : A New View of Modern World History*, New-York, Syracuse University Press, 1996, 440 p.

century's very centrality: he considers that the in-depth study of local conditions via eighteenth century archives is essential to the understanding of later developments. This is an important suggestion in a panorama where everything begins with 1800 – or, put otherwise, in the framework of global history, temporal speciality shifts in 1800. The eighteenth century is important in academic terms. Its reconsideration should allow the discipline to overcome the deep discrepancies which have arisen as its spatial horizons have widened. The success of new thinking about method in global history has sometimes masked the permanence of obstacles which are difficult to overcome¹⁶.

The most recent impetus aiming at a re-evaluation of the eighteenth century's importance in global terms comes from Asia. As one reads Leonard Blussé and Femme Gaastra's work, one is led inevitably to raise questions about the Arab provinces and the Ottoman Empire¹⁷. Beginning with an examination of Job Van Leur's hypotheses, the contributors to this work seek to resituate the Asian eighteenth century in a broader dynamic pattern which cannot be reduced to the paradigm of domination alone. This suggestion can usefully be adopted in a reconsideration of the Arab and Muslim lands. However, it is in Chinese historiography that the deepest reappraisals are to be found: it is not sufficient to affirm that a period is far more interesting than has been thought for a long time to build a new paradigm. The new interest for a given area and period needs to be shaped by relevant questions which may produce new analytic tools. The historiographic debates on China centred on the concept of *early modernity* can be seen in this light¹⁸. Going back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with the aim of discussing the nature of the eighteenth century with respect to modernity, these approaches open new horizons which can be taken as useful inspiration for research on the Ottoman Arab provinces¹⁹. For behind these questions are to be found a number of the major issues under debate in this cultural area: its place in the world system, its relationship with modernity, the role of the State, the place of religion in both society and intellectual debates. In the analysis of the changes leading to the modern world, the study of the eighteenth century allows for discussion of the relevance of the break generally situated between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It is perhaps here that one of the most powerful aspects of Eurocentrism is hidden. In a challenge to Immanuel Wallerstein's theses²⁰, Andre Gunder Frank and Barry K. Gills develop a discussion of the relevance of the notion of world-system based on the period 1500-2000 (500 years), preferring a period of 5000 years²¹. Europe's, and sometimes 'the West's, relations with the remainder of the world are at the heart such analyses. Sometimes this recourse to the ultra-*longue-durée* is theorised in this framework. In his reversal of Kenneth Pomeranz' theses on the Great Divergence between the East and the West through which the latter entity overtook the former²², David Northrup attempts to follow global history specialists in their practice of making use of the two scales (time and space) and tries to read humanity's history with a single key which on the way

¹⁶ See, for example : Stuchtey (Benedikt) and Fuchs (Eckhardt), *Writing World History, 1800-2000*, Oxford University Press, 2003, 367 p.

¹⁷ Blussé (Leonard) and Gaastra (Femme) (eds), *On the Eighteenth Century as a category of Asian History : Van Leur in Retrospect*, Brookfield, Ashgate, 1998, 313 p.

¹⁸ See, for example : Ng (On-Cho), "The Epochal Concept of Early Modernity and the Intellectual History of Late Imperial China", *Journal of World History*, 2003, 14-1, p. 37-61.

¹⁹ On modernity and globality: Van Der Veer (Peter), "The Global History of 'Modernity'", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 1998, 41-3, p.285-294.

²⁰ Wallerstein (Immanuel), *World-Systems Analysis : An Introduction*, Duke University Press, 2004, 170 p.; *The Modern World System in Longue Durée*, Paradigm, 2004, 250 p.

²¹ Gunder Frank (Andre) and Gills (Barry K.) (eds), *The World System: Five Hundred Years or Five Thousand ?*, London, Routledge, 1993, 320 p.

²² Pomeranz (Kenneth), *The Great Divergence: China, Europe and the Making of the Modern World Economy*, Princeton University Press, 2000, 392 p.

short-circuits Marxist thinking on capitalism's development²³. However, rather than adopting such an all-embracing vision which cannot explain everything in the general dilution, perhaps it is better to focus attention on a key-period like the eighteenth century, adopting an unconventional perspective²⁴. The other approach which a global-history specialist can adopt is a thematic one, of course. As Vries suggests, in the area which concerns us, the theme of the State could be a central line of approach, allowing us to read the evolution of mediaeval structures and above all to open up comparative debates²⁵. However, although Vries is interested in research into the factors which make the difference between European and Ottoman or Chinese state construction, he unfortunately lacks an effective comparative method. It is for this reason that it seems suitable to take the Arab-Muslim eighteenth century as a base for overcoming the obstacle: global history must be anchored in historic method using analytic archive work and a deep knowledge of the societies under study. Comparison only comes later and will be all the more relevant if it is collective and founded on a co-ordinated programme of research. It is on these foundations that the present chapter seeks to explore ways to develop a global history of the eighteenth century in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire. The period is often dealt with in a summary fashion, even in work which tries to treat this cultural area's history from a global angle²⁶.

We will begin by examining the question of the historiography of this geo-cultural area, taking into consideration the difficulty of thinking globally in a fragmented world – or one which is perceived as being so or has become so. Next, we will examine the question of the inheritance of global thought which has come down to us, arising, for example, both from the broad, self-interested colonialist vision and the global-convergence of the Marxists. Then the question of how to think the global today will be raised, in terms of the Arab world's history, and above all, the question of how, in our research practices, we can move beyond the preceding paradigms and the limits of the segmentation inherent in them. In each of these sections we will focus on a certain number of points, including notably the State, nations, empires, religion, and cities; we will try, moving between spaces and scales, to determine the specificities of the eighteenth century in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire as it has been successively conceived.

The Arab historians of the eighteenth century and the universal dimension: a rich corpus, a literary genre

Many generations of Arab historians tackled the task of writing a general history. In the ninth century CE, Al-Ya'qubi, going back partly to the Greek and partly to the Biblical traditions, wrote on the origins of the world, then on its history. He included discussion of India, China, and the Byzantine lands in his considerations, spaces beyond the Muslim horizon. Moreover, his temporal horizon, beyond considerations of Biblical mythology, ran beyond the Hijra Era: he had no hesitation in taking an interest in the Pre-Islamic Period, using a variety of sources²⁷.

²³ Northrup (David), "Globalization and the Great Convergence: Rethinking World History in the Long Term", *Journal of World History*, 2005, 16-3, p.249-267.

²⁴ On ways of discussing the relevance of the concept of world-system, see : Benton (Lauren), "From the World-Systems Perspective to Institutional World History : Culture and Economy in Global Theory", *Journal of Global History*, 1996, 7-2, p. 261-295.

²⁵ Vries (P.H.H), "Governing Growth : A Comparative Analysis of the Role of the State in the Rise of the West", *Journal of World History*, 2002, 13-1, p. 67-138.

²⁶ See, for example: Hodgson (Marshall), *Rethinking World History. Essays on Europe, Islam and World History*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, 328 p.

²⁷ On al-Ya'qubi, see : Millward (William), «The Adaptation of Men to their Time: an Historical Essay by Al-Ya'qûbî», *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 1964, 84-4, p.329-344.

For a thousand years, this tradition of history writing constituted a genre in itself, given new impetus in the fourteenth century by Ibn Khaldun, whose work constitutes a renewed reflection on historical method and the writing of history²⁸. Ibn Khaldun drew inspiration from the tenth century historian Al-Mas'udi and the whole Arabic historico-geographic tradition, giving the notions of globality and universality a methodological incarnation²⁹. For Ibn Khaldun, author of the *Kitāb al-'ibar* (c.1370), the writing of a universal history requires a plan, a definition of history which can incorporate all humanity and an explicit method to be passed on to historians in order to lay the theoretical bases for a new historical science the object of which will be the comprehension of civilisations³⁰. It is on such foundations, with varying degrees of talent, that the Arab historians of the Ottoman eighteenth century conceived of their discipline. In the Ottoman world, Ibn Khaldun had been studied since the sixteenth century, well before his translation into the Ottoman language in the eighteenth century by the official historians of the Imperial Court. From the first decade of the eighteenth century, thanks to the work of the historian Na'ima, then again from the 1740s, with the work of Piri Zade Mehmed Effendi, translator of Ibn Khaldun and in particular of his *Muqaddima* (introduction), Ottoman history-writing took on board the global dimension inherited from the great Arab historian³¹. Thus, in thinking about the way society and its history was conceptualised in the eighteenth century, one should stress the fact that the Arab-Muslim intellectual tradition had already adopted elements of a theoretical complexity that Europe was sometimes only just discovering in the eighteenth century. The Greek philosophy of history had made its way into the Arab tradition, as had a willingness to consider all the elements contained in the sources as part of an analytic approach. Globality, then went beyond simple belonging to a common civilisation.

For the Arab historians of the Ottoman eighteenth century, belonging to the House of Islam also constituted an element of globality, in as much as it provided a form of unity, at least in rhetorical terms. Writers were rarely ignorant of the deep cleavages present in this world, even if the eighteenth century was characterised by Ottoman domination across almost all the Arab lands, from Algiers to Baghdad. In this sense, even if there was an awareness, in the eighteenth century, of a Muslim sphere extending beyond the Ottoman lands, towards the Indian Ocean and the Far East, it can be said that for the first time for several centuries, and perhaps even since the founding myths of the idea of a single community of Believers, the Ottoman political entity had a certain global-Muslim dimension, about which the imperial propagandists were not slow to wax lyrical³². Two main ideological strands can be distinguished in the interpretations of imperial Ottoman globality: the pro-Ottomans and those who contested the Empire's pretensions³³. History was being written both at Court in Istanbul and in the provinces, in particular the Arab provinces. In terms of form, there were two main distinct genres: local chronicles and attempts at general history³⁴. In the first category, for the

²⁸ See: Talbi (Mohammed), *Ibn Khaldun et l'histoire*, Carthage, 2006, 112p.

²⁹ See in particular: Lawrence (Bruce) (ed), *Ibn Khaldun and Islamic Ideology*, Leiden, Brill, 1984, 136p.

³⁰ On the discovery of Ibn Khaldun in Europe, by writers like Herbelot at the end of the eighteenth century, then Sacy or Hammer Purgstall in the early nineteenth century, see: Schmidt (Nathaniel), "The manuscripts of Ibn Khaldun", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 1926, 46, p.171-176.

³¹ On the *Muqaddima*, see: Rosenthal (Franz), *The Muqaddima, an introduction to History*, Princeton University Press, 1967, 1547p. For an Arabic edition of the text, see: 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Muhammad Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimat*, Paris, Duprat, 1858, 4 vol.

³² See : Karateke (Hakan) and Reinkowski (Maurus) (dir.), *Legitimizing the Order : the Rhetoric of State Power (the Ottoman Empire and its Heritage)*, Leiden, Brill, 2005, 262p.

³³ For the prosopography of the Ottoman historians, see Hakan Karateke's project "Historians of the Ottoman Empire", Harvard University.

³⁴ On history writing in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman empire: Weintritt (Otfried), *Arabische Geschichtsschreibung in den arabischen Provinzen des Osmanischen Reiches (16.-18. Jahrhundert)*, Hamburg,

province of Egypt (Misr), for example, one can place writers like Ahmad al-Damurdâshî Kathudâ ‘Azbân,³⁵ Ahmad Chalabî (Celebi) or the famous Al-Jabartî, who from 1754 to 1826 was to narrate the Cairo of before, during and after the French occupation³⁶. Criticised by the upholders of the established order for his fascination with French science and the French Revolution, he represents a source in which one can study the complexities of the Arab world’s relationship with Islamic, Ottoman and modernising globality. For the majority of the major cities of the Arab lands there exist important chronicles or biographical dictionaries written in the eighteenth century³⁷ – see Ibn Kannan ou Mohammad Khalil al-Muradi for Damascus for example³⁸. Local politics can be read in these chronicles, and an idea can be developed of the more or less coherent wholes through which the local takes its place in the global; also clear are the ways in which local learned figures perceived the articulation between the different spheres of globality³⁹. Any thinking on the different scales at work within the Empire must certainly begin at this level.

The most interesting efforts, however, are perhaps those which led to the writing of universal histories. The Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, where part of the present article was drafted, has certain manuscripts which are part of this general history discourse. The authors of such works narrate the history of the world since the rise of Islam⁴⁰. To these writings can be applied a similar set of questions as those asked about the Enlightenment or modernity.

EB Verlag, 2008, 250p.

³⁵Ahamad al-Damurdâshî Kathudâ ‘Azbân , *al-Durra al-musân fî akhbâr al Kînâ,a*, chronicle published by ‘A. ‘Abd al-Rahîm, Cairo, 1989 and translated by D. Creelius and ‘Abd al-Wahhâb Bakr, *Al-Dammurdâshî’s chronicle of Egypt, 1688-1755*, Leiden, 1991. See also: Harîdî (Salâh), *Târikh waqâi’ misr al-qâhira al-mahrûsa*, Dâr al-Kutub wa al-Wathâ’iq al-Qawmiyya, Cairo, 2002, 381p. Ahmad Shalabî, *Awdah al-ishârât fî-man tawallâ Misr al-Qâhira mial-wuzarra’ wa ‘l-bashât*, ed. A.R. ‘Abd al-Rahîm, Cairo, 1978. This chronicler, narrating Ottoman history from 1517 to 1737, allows himself to criticise administrators such as pachas and qâdîs sent out by central government.

³⁶ By al-Jabarti, see in Arabic: *‘Ajâ’ib al-âthâr fî-l-tarâjîm wa-l-akhbâr*, Cairo, Maktabat Matbûlî, 1997, 4 vol. The English translation has a valuable introduction in the form of a guide: *‘Abd al-Rahmân al-Jabartî’s History of Egypt*, edited by Thomas Philipp, Moshe Perlmann and Guido Schwald, Stuttgart, Steiner, 1994, 4 vol. From the introduction to this edition (p.9): “His position as a non-European educated observer, his presence at the fateful encounter of a traditional Muslim society with the expansionism of modern Europe and the wealth of information make al-Jabartî’s work a document of world history”. On al-Jabartî, see also : Ayalon (David), “The Historian al-Jabartî and his Background”, *Bulletin of the School of African and Oriental Studies*, 1960, 23-2, p.217-249 ; Holt (Peter M.), “Al-Jabartî’s Introduction to the History of Ottoman Egypt”, *Bulletin of the School of African and Oriental Studies*, 1962, 25-1-3, p.38-51.

³⁷ For the example of Tunis: see the chapter ‘Les historiens du XVIIIe siècle’ in Abdessalem (Ahmed), *Les Historiens tunisiens des XVII, XVIII et XIXe siècle : Essai d’histoire culturelle*, Tunis, Publications de l’Université, 1973, 590p., p. 183-273 or Henia (Abdelhamid), « Historiographie moderne en Tunisie et mémoires de l’état (XVIIe-XVIIIe siècle) » in El Moudden (A.), Henia (A.) Benhadda (A.), *Ecritures de l’histoire du Maghreb. Identité, mémoire et historiographie*, Rabat, Publications de la Faculté des Sciences Humaines, 2007, 263p., p. 39-59.

³⁸ On eighteenth century Syrian chronicles, see: Masters (Bruce), “The View from the Province: Syrian Chronicles of the Eighteenth Century”, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 1994, 114-3, p.353-362.

³⁹ For thinking on history-writing, taking as an example, Morocco, one of the few Arab cultural areas not to have been incorporated into the Ottoman Empire, see Lévi-Provençal (Evariste), *Les historiens des Chorfa*, Réed. Paris, Maisonneuve et Larose, 2001, 500p.

⁴⁰ For example: Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Arabischen Handschriften : 9481 : Mohammad Ibn Ibrahim ben Mohammad ben Chahâda ben Hasan al-Khatîb ; 9483 : Ahmad ben Mohammad ben Mohammad ben Mustafa al-Essumâdî (general history in 99 chapters); 9484 : Yasîn al-‘Umri al-Khatîb (general history in 43 chapters). For a general catalogue of this corpus, see : Ahlwardt (W.), *Die Handschriften-Verzechnisse der Königlichen Bibliothek zu Berlin*, Band 9, Berlin, Asher, 1897.

Is this literature the simple continuation of history writing as it had existed in the Arab lands since the Middle Ages, or is there something new in the tone, subjects, method or the basic problematisation? Certainly, few historians of the period show an interest like that of Jabarti for innovations arriving from elsewhere. In addition, very few seem to know how to draw lessons from Ibn Khaldun, an author who is known to have been widely read in literary circles and whom many were not slow to pillage, as is normal in a sedimentary writing tradition. The general mediocrity of local scholars measuring themselves against universal globality is perhaps more an indication of the mediocrity of provincial intellectual life rather than a sign of Islamic civilisation's decline⁴¹. But for every Kant or Voltaire, there were numerous penpushers, too. It needs to be remembered that in the eighteenth century history writing in the Arab-Muslim lands the global approach was the result of a rhetorical exercise situated between narrative tradition, Ibn Khaldun's heritage and imperial Ottoman expression. During the following centuries, this corpus was to become a heritage in itself, undergoing interpretations and distortions created in the century of nationalisms, European imperialisms and the difficult confrontation with the ambiguities of modernity. In the next section, we will therefore take a close look at contemporary historiography and intellectual roots to develop an idea of the trajectory of global thinking on the Ottoman Arab-Muslim world.

On the difficulty of thinking globally: fragmented historiography

Contemporary historiography on the Ottoman Arab lands has long been fragmentary in character⁴². The first line of fracture corresponds to the frontiers of future nations. Although eighteenth century territorial divisions are very different from those which emerged in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, most of the available documentation is classified under national headings. There is thus a strong opposition between thinking which uses the paradigm "Islam" to gain access to globality and forms of history writing which are confined within anachronistic borders. The most striking case of the anachronistic redrawing of territorial boundaries concerns the lands which during the colonial period became the mandates of Lebanon and Syria. Although most of the published work is based on these twentieth century divisions, in the eighteenth century these lands formed the province of Bilâd al-Shâm, part of the complex administrative mesh of the Ottoman *ancien régime*. Twentieth century history writing of this province has generally been narrated on the basis of the post-First World War territorial realities. Nâdir al-'Attâr's *History of Syria in the Modern Age* (in Arabic), although it goes back to 1516, takes the toponym *Souriyya* (Syria) in the widest sense⁴³. In this writer's work, Syria is equivalent to *Bilâd al-Sham*. However, similar positions can be seen in writing on France, with respect to Alsace, Nice and Savoy. Whatever the case may be, this fragmenting of the contemporary nation, sometimes coupled with non-correspondence with earlier spatial divisions, makes Ottoman imperial reality difficult to grasp. Understanding the complexity of the Arab-Muslim cultural area is therefore no easy task. A similar treatment of the Ottoman period is to be found in most of the countries which were created after the Empire's dismembering. As a recent study of North African

⁴¹ On the notion of decline, see Dana Sajdi's work, part of the *Cities Compared* programme (EUME-Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin): "Decline, its discontents, and Ottoman cultural history: by way of an introduction" in Sajdi, (Dana) (ed), *Ottoman Tulips, Ottoman Coffee: leisure and lifestyles in the eighteenth century*, London, I.B. Tauris, 2007, 256p.

⁴² For a recent summary on this question, see: Choueri (Youssef), *Modern Arab Historiography. Historical discourse and nation-state*, London, Routledge, 2003, 239 p. On history writing in Syria, see: Freitag (Ulrike), *Geschichtsschreibung in Syrien 1920-1990 : zwischen Wissenschaft und Ideologie*, Hambourg, Orient Institut, 1991, 454p.

⁴³ Al-'Attar (Nâdir), *Târikh souriyya fî al-'usûr al-hadîtha*, Damascus, Al-Insha, 1962.

historiography shows, history writing is still largely fragmented⁴⁴. Globality remains a distant prospect, and even the Maghreb is rarely treated as a unit. As for the Ottoman period, it is the poor relative in this history writing. Very little research has been done on the eighteenth century on a global perspective.

Fragmentation in itself is not a problem. Rather more bothersome is the summary treatment all too often reserved for the Ottoman period. National historiographies on the whole see the genesis of the nation-state as something which goes without saying. While they follow a given approach, with few exceptions, they are not generally caricatures. The Ottoman period is considered as an occupation, usually covered in a brief chapter preceding treatment of a colonial occupation. There follows the struggle for national liberation, then the march to independence. This discursive approach is the same for both the Maghreb and the Levant. In most of the available books, the Ottoman eighteenth century is dealt with in a few pages, except in cases where there is an episode of more or less real local autonomy, essential to the main narrative of the independent nation's genesis. In the case of Tripoli, in present-day Libya, the so-called Karamanli period is read in this light. However, interpretation of the ways in which relations with the Empire could be constructed is now a key element in the global approach. In the Ottoman Empire, the rhetoric of belonging could take numerous forms⁴⁵.

Turkish historiography also retreated to its national base, as BÜsra Ersanli stresses in a recent book on the Ottoman Balkans edited by Fikret Adanir and Suraiya Faroqhi⁴⁶. After the great Ottomanist tomes of authors like Osman Nuri Ergin, founder of Turkish municipal history, in the early twentieth century, written in a context of neo-imperialist Ottoman vitality, at a time when people in Istanbul still believed that the cement of Empire would still hold, Turkish history writing very quickly fell back on the largely Anatolian spaces of the new Turkey. History writing, in addition to feeling the impact of the ideological need to consolidate Kemalist nationalism's foundations, was also seriously effected by the 1928 reform of the Perso-Arabic Ottoman script, which literally cut subsequent generations of Turkish historians off from the archives containing the discipline's raw material. It is only the current generation of young Turkish researchers which, in addition to having the competence to read the archives of the Ottoman period, displays a willingness to consider the Empire globally. Both from the point of view of global-history specialists aware of the latest trends in international historiography and from the angle of a Turkish Islamic revival seeking global roots, contemporary Turkey is a fertile space for research.

European and American work on the question generally follows the pattern described above. The Ottoman period is often treated as a parenthesis on the road to colonisation and subsequent independence and is rarely analysed in a critical light⁴⁷. Youssef Choueiri has tried to propose explanations for this approach to the nation-state⁴⁸. For Choueiri, in his analysis of the careers and production of a certain number of historians, national identity in the Arab lands – as is the case in Europe – is largely an ideological construction based on specifically oriented readings of the past. As part of this process, an avid research for national roots has marked history writing since the nineteenth century. Examples might include the historians Matar and Yanni in the case of Syria and Shafiq Ghurbal in the case of Egypt. Thus different

⁴⁴ Le Gall (Michel) Perkins (Kenneth), *The Maghrib in Question. Essays in History and Historiography*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1997, 286p.

⁴⁵ For a recent attempt to discuss Ottoman history in a renewed perspective: Barkey (Karen), *Empire of Difference. The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008, 342p.

⁴⁶ Adanir (Fikret) and Faroqhi (Suraiya) (eds), *The Ottomans and the Balkans. A discussion of historiography*, Leiden, Brill, 2002, 445 p.

⁴⁷ For critical analysis of eighteenth century Ottoman historiography, see : Hathaway (Jane), "Rewriting Eighteenth century Ottoman History", *Mediterranean Historical Review*, 2004, 19-1, p. 29-53.

⁴⁸ Choueiri (Youssef), *Modern Arab Historiography. Historical discourse and the nation-state*, London, Routledge, 2003, 239 p.

national historic traditions, sometimes with a nationalist tint, can be distinguished from each other.

For many years, religion was also an analytic tool, both for Arab authors, heirs of the earlier great history writers who travelled the Arab lands, and for European authors who took up ideas about culturalist fractures suggested by the preceding periods and gave them new ideological foundations. Distinct histories were also produced by the various confessional elements of Arab societies: histories of the Levantine Christians, of the Jews of the cosmopolitan cities. In this context, the cases of places or periods when several religions are present is problematic, from Jerusalem to Beirut, or from the cosmopolitan cities of Asia Minor to those of the Maghreb. And at this point, further historiographic lines of enquiry begin.

But beyond these well known lines of fracture, which once placed in the nineteenth century's nationalist framework were to produce new interpretations of the past, both in Arab nationalist and Zionist nationalist historiography, it is worth pausing for a moment to examine the historiographic treatment of the ethnic composition of the region's societies. An ethnic approach is of course a classic of colonial historiography: European powers situated themselves on the divisions which they themselves had constructed in ideological terms. The case of the Berber peoples of the Maghreb is the most obvious and best documented one. However, there is another aspect of this paradigm which continues to mark history writing: the tribal approach. Without wishing to deny the importance of this factor in the region's societies, and without denying the place of Arab historians since Ibn Khaldun in the description of social phenomena, it should be emphasized that the 'tribal approach' contributed to the fragmentation of history writing. The case of the Yemen is perhaps the most significant⁴⁹. As for urban history, it too has for long been fragmentary in character, facing difficulties in finding spaces for dialogue and above all unable to benefit from the methodological and conceptual advances made in research in other areas. The chief victim of all this fragmentation has been the Ottoman period, under-researched as it failed to correspond to any of the ideological requirements dictated by the previously mentioned trends.

It is only recently that Ottoman history has come to constitute a domain in itself ; it is still facing difficulties in bringing together the work of historians from different local realities⁵⁰. Although academics like Suraiya Faroqhi, Bruce McGowan, Donald Quataert and Sevket Pamuk, authors of the formidable *Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire (1600-1914)*, compensate to an extent for the slow start in global Ottoman studies, there is little work in the area adopting a global approach⁵¹. In global narrations, provincial realities are marginal, the focus remains on Istanbul and on chronology. Although *L'Histoire de l'Empire ottoman*, edited by Robert Mantran, is a precious work, its narrative is largely centred on political episodes seen from a Stambouliot perspective, although there are geographical excursions to the Balkans and North Africa⁵². Thinking on Ottoman globality and its limits and extensions is thus a major issue in the current confrontation with the methods of global history. In this context, the eighteenth century is certainly a crucial point since so much remains to be done in terms of analysing the construction of a State apparatus

⁴⁹ See, for example: Dresch (Paul), *Tribes Government and History in Yemen*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1993, 440 p.

⁵⁰ For remarks on Ottoman history writing, see: Faroqhi (Suraiya), *Approaching Ottoman History*, Cambridge University Press, 1999, 262 p.

⁵¹ Faroqhi (Suraiya), Mc Gowan (Bruce), Quataert (Donald), and Pamuk (Sevket), *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, vol. II, 1600-1914*, Cambridge University Press, 1994, 1010 p. See too: Faroqhi (Suraiya), *The Ottoman Empire and the World Around It*, London, Tauris, 2004, 290p. See also the works of François Geogron.

⁵² Mantran (Robert) (ed), *Histoire de l'Empire ottoman*, Paris, Fayard, 1989, 802 p.

in a more global perspective. Another major issue is the development of an understanding of the relations of the Arab lands of the Ottoman sphere with other Arab-Muslim regions: to the West, Morocco, and, to the East, the Indian Ocean. Dynamic in character, recent Ottoman studies have at last been able to capitalise on the advances in method and knowledge developed in the last few decades by specialists of the mediaeval Arab lands. Ottomanists must therefore move to consider the avenues resulting from research in full renewal in the light of global debates.

Who has thought globally? The contribution and limits of global paradigms in recent decades

In this context of historiographic fragmentation, a number of attempts have been made to overcome the limits and fractures. Often these attempts have carried strong ideological overtones. However, we who today are witness to the ideological stakes invested in global history are well placed to know that these overtones are normal, being at one and the same time the fruit of their time and the driving force behind the thinking. It is enough to be conscious of the underlying positions and to know how to decipher the specific words which function as keys to ideologised texts. With terms like Ottoman Arab World, colonial globality, Marxist globality and finally “globalisational” globality, changes in the intellectual landscape can be sensed through the discursive sedimentation of paradigms loaded with the ideologies of their day.

Initially, it was colonialism which promoted a real form of global thinking for the Arab World, often in the service of schemes aiming at domination. Without going into the different ways in which historians living under colonial rule in the former Ottoman lands rewrote older histories, it should be emphasised that this type of work produced some real attempts to approach the past from a global angle, taking into account proposals for global explanatory factors. The colonial period also produced important theories applied across the region, often fed by the great erudition of specialists. Comparisons were made, often in a derogatory tone, but also sometimes with a view to investigating factors which might explain colonial domination. With respect to the eighteenth century in particular, comparisons were made with a view to underscoring the supposed inferiorities of the civilisation subsequently to be dominated, the dominant tone being something like ‘At the time of Louis XIV’s brilliant court in Versailles, the Arab World was still ...’.

This does not mean of course that there was not work in this vein worthy of scrutiny. Though marked by a strong colonial, even imperialist ideology, Masqueray’s work on the North African society between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is still of great use, even if the dominant theme is the recreation of the Roman Empire in Africa under the aegis of France. So, although Masqueray’s comparisons between Graeco-Roman antiquity and Berber village institutions are far from being neutral, from a methodological point of view the perceptiveness of the analysis is undeniable. The same is true of the work of Italian scholars working on Tripolitania, even though they were ultimately in the service of the colonial and ultimately imperial designs of their country.

Arab historiography also had its imperial myths. As Youssef Choueiri stresses, in a chapter entitled “Carthage, Rome, Arabia”, the myth of an Arab Empire runs through the history writing since the nineteenth century, arising essentially in North Africa. No doubt such discourse arose as an echo of French imperialist re-readings of the past, on the basis of the region’s rich ancient history. Khayr al-Dîn al-Tûnisî (1823-1889), historian and statesman, belongs to this school. But here again the Ottoman Period during which this author lived and wrote was in no way a model. Somewhat mythified, the Islamic Empire lay a long time in the past and the Ottoman Empire was seen merely as a pale resurgence. For Khayr al-Dîn,

nevertheless, historic thought is irrigated by the idea of reform, in dialogue with the Islamic and Ottoman traditions as well as with European trends⁵³.

Turkish imperialist writing, in contrast, while it underscored the coherence of the State's construction and the successes of the conquests, had some difficulty in narrating the periods of retreat. The focus was more on the reforms of the nineteenth century rather than on the eighteenth century. With respect to the latter century, the main questions for the Arab lands concern the Ottoman Empire: How could the Empire's weakness and slowness in launching modernisation be explained? How could the State's attempts to modernise be explained? How could the variations in Ottoman governance be explained? This, it will be seen, is one of the major issues in current global history research on the Arab-Muslim eighteenth century.

Globalising analyses have also been proposed by researchers working from anti-colonialist and Third-World angles. However, paradoxically, these analyses are located in a geographical framework inherited from the earlier period. Maxime Rodinson's work seems to represent the most advanced attempt at a global overview of the march towards liberation⁵⁴. But here again, the inescapable character of the process conceals the trial and error of history and ideology. The march to liberation is both a powerful rhetorical motor and a strong temporal marker.

Marxism has also produced major globalising overviews. The eighteenth century fits this ideological framework only with difficulty. In the same way, the time of the great pan-nationalist movements was unable to create a true school of historical interpretation capable of overcoming the limits of earlier ways of writing the past. It is necessary to be aware that global history as it is conceived today is part of this inherited framework: in current debates, this history is shot through with the inheritance of global Marxist thinking and, in counterpoint, with the attempts of the anti-Marxists to invent in turn an approach to world history based on *longue durée* and grand spatial expansion.

In this evocation of attempts to produce a global reading of the region's history, Fernand Braudel must be given a place along with the *Annales* School. With the eighteenth century, however, Braudel ran into an obstacle. His global explanatory system, constructed in isolation and, in particular, in an extremely limited dialogue with existing historiographies, concerns the beginning of the modern period. Like the world he describes, it disintegrates after the Battle of Lepanto of 1571. The eighteenth century does not form part of the Braudelian system. In fact, Braudel is chiefly concerned to demonstrate the existence of a Mediterranean system in contradiction with the historiographic preconceptions widespread when he was writing. However, when everything ceased to be articulated according to the patterns he had explored, the explanatory system was no longer valid. This does not mean that the need to write global history had disappeared. It seems necessary then, in studying the Arab and Ottoman eighteenth century, to go beyond the implicit limits inherent in the Braudelian legacy to seek out as yet unthought of paths in this period to uncover the marks of a history taking shape⁵⁵.

Other attempts at global history for the region have been written taking religion as a focus point. Franz Rosenthal is clearly the most interesting author in this respect. In 1952, he published an overview of what he called Muslim historiography⁵⁶. He linked his work explicitly to early trends in World History and sought in Arab and Orientalist work the roots

⁵³ On this figure, see, for example: Cetin (Atillâ), *Tunuslu Hayreddin Paşa*, Ankara, TC Kültür Bakanlığı, 1999, 61 p. and Smida (Mongi), *Khereddine ministre réformateur*, Tunis, Maison tunisienne de l'édition, 1970, 423 p.

⁵⁴ Rodinson (Maxime), *Marxisme et monde musulman*, Paris, Seuil, 1972, 698 p.

⁵⁵ For reflections on the Braudelian heritage and ways of bringing its foundations up to date: Horden (Peregrine) et Purcell (Nicholas), *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History*, London, Blackwell, 2000, 761 p.

⁵⁶ Rosenthal (Franz), *A History of Muslim Historiography*, Leiden, Brill, 1952, 558 p.

of globalising thought. In this way, he contributed significantly to reviving thinking on a cultural and historical Islamic globality and to articulating the works of mediaeval and modern historians which, in his view, constituted a corpus. The problem with this type of globalisation study is that it is based, right from the title, on the hypothesis of a unit of civilisation based on religion. In recent work, including for example Tayeb El-Hibri's *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography* (1994), the trend has been to leave to one side Rosenthal's salutary reflections on his approach⁵⁷. Such approaches are popular today, both among Muslim fundamentalists and some World History practitioners among which there be might be a certain willingness to reify readings of the past based on an outline both culturalist and religious. It thus seems imperative to engage in a critical form of World History which, while avoiding the reefs of exacerbated culturalism, will be ready both to tackle the fantasies and perils of the so-called 'clash of civilisations' and to work hard to refute such positions. The present article is a small contribution to just such an enterprise.

How to think globally today? Current research trends and ways forward for inclusion in global-history debates

Global history has now reached a certain maturity. It is still the object of constant redefinition, a sign of its vitality and of the lack of agreement on, for example, the way of practicing the discipline. We need to bear in mind that traditionally World History provides a forum for ideological debates of considerable influence in the discipline's articulation: any proposal for a global approach will be part of expectations with strong connotations and will contribute to tilting the scales one way or another. The same is true for any new challenges and questions around cultural, geographical or temporal breaks. In fact, questions of method are a clear indication of World History's development. As Giovanni Gozzini has emphasized, from *Weltgeschichte's* origins to current *World History*, the most productive debates have taken the concept of globality as a focus point⁵⁸.

There remains the question of key terms and whether they can be considered to constitute a paradigm. However, today the focus is no longer thinking about universal history, as in the time of Croce and Meineke, nor is it directed at chronological excursions around the concept of the world economy. Interest tends to lie with how so-called peripheral spaces can be fitted with the desire to develop broadbrush global analyses. It is only after returning from this journey that we can reach the initial debates. The major danger is that this approach be taken the wrong way round. Here arises the centrality of the modernisation paradigm, here lies the importance of discussion of William H. McNeill's theses on the Rise of the West⁵⁹. And here, above all, emerges the need to bring into the approach now called Global History spaces beyond the initial horizons – China, India, the Arab and Muslim lands – and by so doing challenging the founding paradigms. It is clear that global thinking can no longer take place within the narrow boundaries that the trajectory of Global History itself has created. At present the discipline is opening up, in part at the suggestion of the most active theorists. It is in their work that the basis for renewal is to be found.

However, a new enthusiasm for geographical expansion must not result in questions of method being forgotten. Global History is only global when the methods uses allow for a comparativism which goes beyond prejudices and not necessarily when it supplies readymade

⁵⁷ El-Hibri (Tayeb), *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography*, Cambridge University Press, 1999, 236 p.

⁵⁸ Gozzini (Giovanni), "Dalla *Weltgeschichte* alla *World History*: percorsi storiografici attorno al concetto di globale", *Contemporanea*, 2004, 1, p. 3-37.

⁵⁹ Mc Neill (William), *The Rise of the West: A History of the Human Community*, Chicago University Press, 1963.

keys for understanding for ever broader geographic spaces and time-periods. A research project co-ordinated by Paolo Capuzzo and Elisabetta Vezzosi follows this trend⁶⁰, as does the recent special issue of the RHMC, mentioned earlier. There is now an extensive literature on so-called peripheral areas, often limited, however, to explaining the reasons for the subordination of these lands. Few researchers, however, travel to investigate their hypotheses through fieldwork. The discussion often runs backwards, seeking, for example, in the general theories of the Arab-Muslim world the underpinning necessary for a theoretical edifice. However, what edifice can last if built on such foundations? There is thus a clear need to practice a global history of the region and its relationships with other regions starting in the field with intense study of local archives.

For global history in today's context, issues of method are grouped mainly around the 'Mediterranean Crossings' hypothesis. Echoing Daniel Rodgers highly influential work (there is no doubt that *Atlantic Crossings* was a milestone in global history), questions may be raised regarding, with respect to the Mediterranean lands, about the nature of exchange and the impetus to reform⁶¹. The terrain is a minefield, however, and wider issues related to colonialism quickly surface. A historian's task today is thus to find ways of reading exchanges and influences which go further than paradigms coming out of colonisation. For the eighteenth century, the task, though particularly delicate, is full of promise. This period could be seen as providing the solution to the dead-ends into which history of the nineteenth century so often runs. To turn to a programme traced out by Pierre-Yves Saunier – concerning other times and places, namely nineteenth century Europe and America, a certain number of ways forward are apparent⁶².

To begin with, the eighteenth century history of the Ottoman Empire seems to merit new attention, fed with concepts from global history. (Of course, the renewal of imperial history from a global-history angle is not something unique to the Ottoman Empire; logically, this begins with ancient Roman history). Starting with the question 'what is an empire?', a number of the most interesting phenomena in imperial history can be re-examined: the handling of local specificities, assimilation, circulation, the governance of diversity, for example. Writing on the Roman Empire, authors like Richard Hingley raise the question of the relationship between globality and empire⁶³. Focusing on elite culture and the limits of so-called connectivity, he suggests that we move forward cautiously on the route to global analysis – without by any means ruling it out.

Imperial comparativist approaches from a global perspective are by no means limited to the ancient Mediterranean; recent work concerns Russia, the Habsburg lands and the Ottoman Empire – which last concerns us in particular here⁶⁴. New work in Ottoman imperial history is being undertaken by a young generation of Turkish researchers and in the anglophone world. It looks at a range of areas all of which can have a global resonance – and would clearly benefit from further development from comparativist standpoints. Comparisons between the Anatolian, Arab and Balkan lands are clearly desirable. First of all, there is a need to examine

⁶⁰ Capuzzo (Paolo) Vezzosi (Elisabetta), "Traiettorie della World History", *Contemporanea*, 2005, 1, p. 105-133.

⁶¹ Rodgers (Daniel T.), *Atlantic Crossings: social politics in a progressive age*, Cambridge (Mass.), Harvard U.P., 1998, 634 p.

⁶² Saunier (Pierre-Yves), «Circulations, connexions et espaces transnationaux », *Genèses*, 57, 2004, p. 110-126. This author has also worked on the integration of so-called peripheral spaces into a global history approach (ed. with Shane Ewen) : *Another Global City. Historical Explorations into the Transnational Municipal Moment (1850-2000)*, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2008, 288p.

⁶³ Hingley (Richard), *Globalizing Roman Culture. Unity, Diversity and Empire*, London, Routledge, 2005, 208 p.

⁶⁴ See too Sanjay Subrahmanyam's and Barkey's approaches mentioned earlier.

new spaces: a start is being made on studying the Ottoman eighteenth century in the provinces from an earlier point taking as a basis knowledge of imperial historiography and a framework of questions about the Empire. Global Ottoman history is no longer seen as the history of the relationship of a central structure with lands conquered or administered. It is a history of much greater complexity, in terms of decision-making, the relationship between local élites and the imperial leadership, and negotiation of ways of belonging and fluctuating identities.

The most interesting aspect of all these issues concerns the inheritances and redefinitions which marked the eighteenth century: a mediaeval heritage in numerous provinces, ways of governing inherited from the Empire's early years – and the confrontation with requirements of the State-apparatus' construction. Here public expenditure, the army, provincial government and the modernisation of tax-policy are key domains. Also crucial are issues relative to a changing society: the world of work and its corporate organisation, the reform of religious foundations and the circulation of money, the individual's place in the confessional framework. It is clear that all these areas relate to research where European historiography has achieved much in terms of both method and results. The inclusion of the Arab, Muslim and Ottoman spaces in global history is to be based on comparison, first in terms of the method, then in terms of the results, with what has been learned in recent decades about eighteenth century Europe: the history and sociology of access to public responsibilities, the history and anthropology of individuals and the definition of personal and social identities, the history of the State's finances, the construction of the bureaucratic apparatus, and finally, the redefinition of relationships with the mediaeval and feudal heritage. With respect to these and many other research areas, the Ottoman Empire is to be included using the carefully thought-out methods of comparative history with global objectives, rather than in the great tomes summarising globalised history. In short, the Empire is to be included in a real connected history. It is only on this basis that the question of modernity can be raised, of an eventual gap with respect to the turning-point of the Enlightenment and the reasons for its eventual appearance.

Imperial governance in its entirety needs to be re-read in the light of these contributions. However, the Ottoman Empire may have something to contribute in return: the handling of confessional and ethnic diversity, the treatment of pre-imperial institutional and social structures, forms of belonging and incorporation. The Ottoman State apparatus' construction is not to be read in the light of what we know about its fall (which, after all, was brought about by an event of unheard violence, namely the First World War), but rather on its own terms. Though such an approach is the basis for a book edited by Cyril Black and Carl Brown, much still remains to be done⁶⁵. The Ottoman eighteenth century must be read as a period during which the State's structures were strengthened and provincial incorporation was consolidated. Provincial history can be re-examined by looking at local historiography from a relativist standpoint. After all, such history writing tends to overemphasise local periods of autonomous rule. The Ottoman rhetoric of incorporation and suzerainty is more complex – and this factor must be taken as a given, not in terms of biased comparison with alleged models.

The same is true for the circulation of ideas regarding reform. On the one hand, there is a need to put European models into perspective. (After all, Turgot had considerable trouble and the modernisation of European states was often chaotic). On the other hand, Ottoman attempts at reform should be read from a more open-minded standpoint and not necessarily in the light of

⁶⁵ Black (Cyril) Brown (Carl) (ed), *Modernization in the Middle-East. The Ottoman Empire and its Afro-Asian Successors*, Princeton, Darwin, 1992, 418 p.

our knowledge of subsequent events, notably the Empire's future defeat at the end of the First World War. The concept of old regime might be of great help.

With respect to civil society, new horizons are emerging. In situations where European historiography likes to develop new specificities, in the case of the Ottoman, Russian and Habsburg empires, one should analyse the data with new questions, reading eventual obstacles in a new light. This is all the more true given that research into Ottoman cosmopolitanism allows us to put many preconceived ideas into perspective – without, of course, necessarily falling into a some sort of beatific Ottomanism. Only a re-reading of the Ottoman and Arab eighteenth century will allow us to study the nineteenth century, and in particular the confrontation with colonialism, with a critical eye.

In the same way, economic history, from a global perspective, must move beyond the paradigms inherited from past decades, marked by a fatal break between Braudel's world system and the capitalist system from which the region is durably excluded, or at the very least marginalized. If this is the case, we should analyse the reasons for this and develop new comparative research projects, examining, for example, port-economies, labour markets, merchants' capacity for initiative, the State's organising capacities and obstacles, on the model of what Bruce Masters proposed for Aleppo in the 19th c.⁶⁶

A number of the key issues in the region's global history are linked to the social role of religion. Among such issues are the intellectual history of Quranic exegesis, the social history of individuals and their capacity to abstract themselves from an inherited system and change it. Here too, eventual blockages for the eighteenth century must be read and analysed from a comparative perspective. The definition of the individual in society must thus give rise to more complex analytic approaches.

However, the area which seems most promising is that of urban history, which in comparative terms is perhaps easier to research. For Ottoman urban history, it is high time to follow, on a comparative, global basis, the track signalled back in the 1980s by European historiography. There is much research on the European Middle Ages in a promising comparativist vein – take, for example, the work of Gerhard Dilcher, comparing the relationship of Italian and German municipal authorities to imperial structures⁶⁷, or Marino Berengo's work, published in the late 1990s⁶⁸. In the same vein, the different European urban historiographic traditions have learned to share questions, concepts, analytic tools and results. However, for the moment, this work is limited to the self-celebrated frontiers of Europe; the current growth in interest for Ottoman cities should be situated in the wake of European comparativist work, in the conceptual framework of global history.

In fact, the comparative approach to Ottoman cities is not fundamentally new. During the 1980s and 1990s, work was published in France in particular on several Ottoman cities – see especially research by Daniel Panzac and André Raymond⁶⁹. However, highly informative as they were, these researches were not from a globally comparative perspective: there was no bold exploration of other history-writing traditions, no drawing on them for new issues, even if this should raise various responses. For many years, the historiography of Ottoman cities

⁶⁶ Masters (Bruce), "The 1850 Events in Aleppo: An Aftershock of Syria's Incorporation into the Capitalist World System [The 1850 Events in Aleppo: An Aftershock of Syria's Incorporation into the Capitalist World System](#)", *IJMES*, 1990, 22-1, p.3-20.

⁶⁷ Dilcher (Gerhard), „Reich, Kommunen, Bünde und die Wahrung von Recht und Friede“, in Maurer (Helmut) (ed), *Kommunale Bündnisse Oberitaliens und Oberdeutschlands in Vergleich*, Sigmaringen, Thorbecke, 1987, 254 p., p. 321-247.

⁶⁸ Berengo (Marino), *L'Europa delle città*, Turin, Einaudi, 1999, 1040 p.

⁶⁹ Raymond (André), *La ville ottomane*, Paris, 1985. Panzac (Daniel) (ed), *Les villes dans l'Empire ottoman*, Paris, Cnrs, 1991. See also: Georgeon (François) Dumont (Paul) (ed), *Vivre dans l'Empire ottoman*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1997, 350 p.

was closed off in the paradigm of a seemingly self-evident culturalism. The city was considered to be Ottoman in itself, above all in the eighteenth century. Of course, while such an approach enabled historians to get round certain breaks in the Empire's character, it marginalized the huge gap in terms of comparisons with other cultural areas. Such comparisons are now necessary both in terms of content and method⁷⁰. A starting point for comparison could be an analysis of what might be termed 'the Ottoman *ancien régime*' and its encounter, even confrontation, with modernity. One of the bases for such a comparison is the critical use of notions elaborated in other contexts. Although research on the nineteenth century has moved forward considerably, and in particular in terms of interpretation of the Tanzimat reforms, the eighteenth century remains understudied, despite the valuable work by the likes of Edhem Eldem, Daniel Goffman and Bruce Masters⁷¹. It would seem that the critical use of the concept 'ancien régime' could allow certain advances towards a more global history.

The publication of Ariel Salzmann's *Tocqueville in the Ottoman Empire* has contributed to filling a gap in thinking in this area. However, the ambitions expressed in the title merit further work, in particular through a comparative history of the Ottoman *ancien régime*'s structures. Such research must not shy from borrowing concepts and problematic frameworks from the strong European historiographic tradition. In this spirit, it seems important to analyse eighteenth century government under the *ancien régime* and to compare its multiform and often ambiguous nature with modernity. The main questions concern the evolution of corporate structures, the civic role of confessional and corporate structures and the practical details of urban government. Comparative urban history in the Ottoman context should allow us to understand the secular dimension of social life, materialized at urban level by the *ancien régime*'s urban governance structures, managed by merchants and professional corporations. Such an understanding counters pre-existing patterns which insist on the absolute primacy of religion in the social organisation of this cultural and geographic area. Starting with archive work and an analytic framework informed by historiography and methods in other places, a beginning can be made on constructing a different vision of history, to be linked in with globality. When Bruce McGowan qualified the eighteenth century as being the 'century of the notables', he was touching upon a significant aspect of imperial globality at local level⁷². Today, it is possible to go further in trying to interpret the system and its relationship to adjacent systems as a whole. The existence, in contradiction with current thinking, of a local sphere of governance within the imperial whole invites us to rethink the model. Such an approach aims at renewing debates on the State's place and the origins of central structures. In fact, it would seem that the structure of central power can be read more clearly in its articulation with local contexts and bodies, which in turn allows for a clearer reading of the relationship to empires and the details of Ottoman belonging. In the case of the eighteenth century, comparison between Karamanli Tripoli, Husseinite Tunisia, the Yemen and an Egypt, then developing its singular identity, seems important. With respect to the Egyptian case, the French Occupation at the end of the eighteenth century allows us to study the extremely interesting confrontation between European revolutionary modernity and the Muslim World. This case-study must be anchored in the eighteenth century, however.

Another promising way forward is the analysis of Ottoman cities in the light of the theoretical propositions emerging from a global-history approach. If one wishes to escape culturalism in

⁷⁰ See: Lafi (Nora) (ed), *Municipalités méditerranéennes : les réformes urbaines ottomanes au miroir d'une histoire comparée*, Berlin, K. Schwarz, 2005, 373p.

⁷¹ Eldem (Edhem), Goffman (Daniel), and Masters (Bruce), *The Ottoman City between East and West*, Cambridge University Press, 1999, 244 p.

⁷² McGowan (Bruce), "The Age of the Ayan 1699-1812" Part. 3, In Inalcik (Halil) Quataert (Donald) (ed), *Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, Cambridge University Press, 1994, vol. 1, p.637-757.

such urban analysis, this is a necessary dimension of the healthy growing complexity of global-history themes. Rather than concentrate on research into more or less reified circulation patterns, reducing the relationship between Europe and the Arab lands to a dichotomy of imports and exports⁷³, the cities of the ‘other world’ should be considered in their own right. Such an approach must serve to increase the complexity of our questions and not to block thinking. It must be dynamic, on the basis that the same method must be adopted for two elements under comparison. For the historian, only the capacity to combine the intimacy of the archives with the handling of questions from different fields will allow global history to keep its promises. Broadly speaking, there are numerous areas for research around the notion of urban political economy⁷⁴. Present research shows clearly the complex articulation between local urban microcosms and the imperial administration. The paradigms of earlier decades failed to show the reciprocal definition of different spheres of governance and the idea of a shared, negotiated globality.

Beyond the promises of an urban history moving towards globality, the Ottoman eighteenth century may well become the basis for a more advanced discussion on the foundations and roots of Orientalism. Such a discussion would then link in with the vast debates on the meaning of history on the edges of civilisations. New attention to the careers of the first Orientalists of the 1750s, their relationship to the old world of Mediaeval merchants and the new world of the Enlightenment and the State thus seems necessary⁷⁵. It will also be necessary to put further stress on efforts being made to reverse perspectives, notably with respect to what Arab-Muslim rulers knew about Europe⁷⁶. The need is to dismantle the whole structure of *topoi* currently encumbering thought on the subject. This does not prevent us from going back over such *topoi* from a critical or unusual angle. Christine van Verhaaren proposes such an approach to the Ottoman harem, site of all fantasies of the Orient⁷⁷. The notion of *jihad*, around which many fantasies also cluster, would also seem to merit such an effort⁷⁸. The global history of the Arab-Muslim eighteenth century may also advance to contribute to a vein of Anglophone historiography focusing on the colonial encounter. There is no need for such an analysis to begin with Bonaparte. The focus can be moved back in time into the eighteenth century, without there being any risk of losing the substance – including critical distance - which the notion of ‘colonial encounter’ has acquired. Elements like the details of contacts between merchants in the framework of the ancien régime, piracy or empire, innovations and inequalities, the translation of different points of view, all merit examination in the light of research in local archives. In the same vein, the World History of this Ottoman-Arab geographic area must take into account work on gender, personal lives, sexuality and daily life⁷⁹. Breaks on the lines of civilisations can doubtless be situated here as much as they can in the narration of military, diplomatic or political conflicts. The same is also true for

⁷³ Nasr (Joe) Volait (Mercedes) (eds), *Urbanism. Imported or Exported ?*, Chichester, Wiley, 2003, 349 p.

⁷⁴ See, for example: Abdullah (Thabit), *Merchants, Mamluks and Murder. The Political Economy of Trade in 18th century Basra*, Albany, SUNY, 2001, 180 p.

⁷⁵ On the analysis of an Orientalist’s trajectory from a global-history perspective, see for example: Bagghi (Kauchik), “An Orientalist in the Orient: Richard Garbe’s Indian Journey, 1885-1886”, *Journal of World History*, 2003, 14-3, p. 281-325.

⁷⁶ For example, regarding the nineteenth century, see: Gilson Miller (Susan) (Ed.), *Disorienting Encounters : Travels of a Moroccan Scholar in France in 1845-46*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1992, 244 p.

⁷⁷ Van Verhaaren (Christine), “Royal French Women in the Ottoman Sultans’ Harem: the Political Uses of Fabricated Accounts from the Sixteenth to the Twenty-first century”, *Journal of World History*, 2006, 17-2, p. 159-196.

⁷⁸ See, for example : Peters (Rudolph), *Jihad in Classical and Modern Islam. A Reader*, Princeton, Markus Wiener, 1996, 204 p.

⁷⁹ See, for example : Ballantyne (Tony) et Burton (Antoinette), *Bodies in Contact : Rethinking Colonial Encounters in World History*, Durham, Duke University Press, 464 p.

religious feeling and the evolution of social hierarchies. Questions being asked of the nineteenth century should also be posed with respect to the eighteenth century: what is a notable, what is the place of religion in social life, where did the ancien régime run into new questions⁸⁰? There also exists a strong need to develop subaltern studies on the basis of work on guilds' archives. This is one of the ways forward for comparativist work. Here too one can expect to find significant deposits of material awaiting analysis and interpretation.

More generally speaking, for the eighteenth century these elements should lead us to a revitalised framework of questions regarding the State, and in particular the Ottoman State. It is important to leave behind the pervasive paradigm of decline and importation, adopting instead ways forward based on work on the Empire's central archives⁸¹. In this way, a new comparative dimension can be realised – as Richard Horowitz has attempted to do in his work on nineteenth century China, Siam and the Ottoman Empire⁸². A similar approach may be attempted for the eighteenth century, even if other geographical areas are not to be tackled head-on and certainly not alone. With such an approach based on new archive work, questions regarding the nature of State responsibilities, taxation, reforms and relations with the periphery and Europe may be raised. With this sort of research, a global history of State apparatuses becomes possible, based on the anthropology and sociology of bureaucracy as well as on study of the various attempts at reform – and their eventual failure. Revitalised examination of Ottoman governance of confessional and ethnic diversity is a useful direction, taking, first of all, historical method as a yardstick, then global history⁸³.

In the Ottoman context, the global history of the eighteenth century must take into account the geographical spread which such terms suggest. This is one of the most promising horizons for research: an approach to the East which not only puts into perspective an area long dazzled by the West, but also raises new questions. Along such lines, Patricia Risso studied the link between trade routes and spiritual and cultural trajectories between the Arab lands and the Muslim Indian Ocean⁸⁴. Both for the seventeenth⁸⁵ and nineteenth⁸⁶ centuries, this space has been broadly covered – hence questions regarding the eighteenth century command attention in discussions: what was the impact of the early European colonial development on the Arab trade routes? What were the consequences of change?⁸⁷

All these questions will only find answers in the specific work of numerous historians and through the sharing of their methods and findings. The present article cannot pretend to satiate

⁸⁰ See, for example: Clancy-Smith (Julia), *Rebel and Saint: Muslim Notables, Populist Protest, Colonial Encounter (Algeria and Tunisia, 1800-1904)*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1994.

⁸¹ For a critique of the notion of decline applied to the eighteenth century, see: Grant (Jonathan), «Rethinking the Ottoman 'Decline': Military Technology Diffusion in the Ottoman Empire, fifteenth to eighteenth centuries», *Journal of World History*, 1999, 10-1, p. 179-201.

⁸² Horowitz (Richard), "International Law and State Transformation in China, Siam, and the Ottoman Empire during the Nineteenth Century", *Journal of World History*, 2005, 15-4, p. 445-486; by the same author, see also the important article "Eighteenth century Ottoman Realities", *Studia Islamica*, 1962, 16, p.73-94.

⁸³ See, for example: Parker (Charles), "Paying for the Privilege: The Management of Public Order and Religious Pluralism in Two Early Modern Societies", *Journal of World History*, 2006, 17-3, p. 267-296.

⁸⁴ Risso (Patricia), *Merchants and Faith: Muslim Commerce and Culture in the Indian Ocean*, Boulder, Westview, 1995, 152 p.

⁸⁵ Barendse (R.J.), *The Arabian Seas: The Indian Ocean World of the Seventeenth Century*, Armonk (NY), Sharpe, 2002, 588 p.

⁸⁶ Boxberger (Linda), *On the Edge of Empire: Hadramawt, Emigration and the Indian Ocean (1880-1930)*, Albany, SUNY, 2002, 292 p. See also: Freitag (Ulrike), *Indian Ocean Migrants and State Formation in Hadramawt: Reforming the Homeland*, Leiden, Brill, 2003, 589p.

⁸⁷ See also: Barendse (R.J.), "Trade and State in the Arabian Seas: A Survey from the XVth to the XVIIIth centuries.", *Journal of World History*, 2000, 11-2, p. 173-225.

the appetites of universal history – and succumbing to such a challenge would have raised the risk of contradicting the very foundations of the present approach. However, the very fact of raising such questions carries within it the germs of an answer. If we stop considering the Ottoman Arab-Muslim lands in the eighteenth century from the anachronistic interpretative viewpoint of our knowledge of later developments, if we reject examination of transfers from the sole angle of imports, if we consent to consider the wealth of a diverse intellectual tradition, we will have already made considerable advances on the road to a global history able to take into account actual spaces and their history. At this point, the real questions will emerge: the origins of domination or the differing destinies in the evolution of concepts regarding individuals' place in society.