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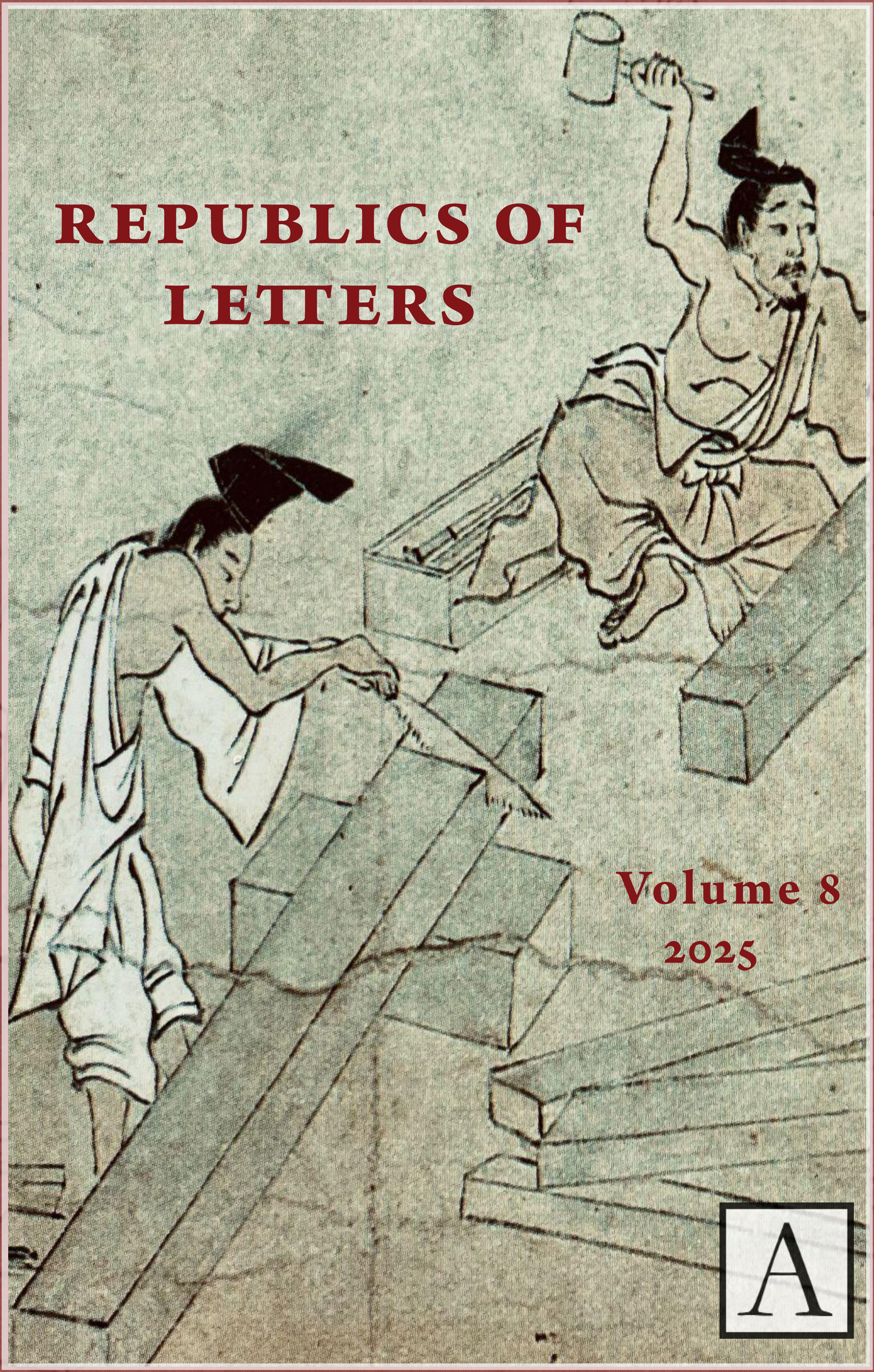

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Republics of Letters is a digital journal of scholarship, reflection, and conversation concerned with the period 1300 to 1900. The journal's range is uncommonly broad, not only in period but in discipline and approach, embracing history, literature, art history, music, and other fields of scholarship about the late medieval, early modern, and colonial past.

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Illustrated Scrolls on the Origins of the Mandala at Taima Temple (*Taima mandara engi* emaki, second half of the thirteenth century). Reproduced from Komatsu Shigemi, ed. *Taima mandara engi*. Nihon Emaki Taisei 24. Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1979.

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DIALOGUES

"Braudel's La Méditerranée *(1949): Paradigms and Possibilities after Seventy-Five Years*

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History," argued Fernand Braudel in the preface to *La Méditerranée*, "can do more than study walled gardens. If it were otherwise, it would surely be failing in one of its most immediate tasks which must be to relate to the painful problems of our times."[1] For this reason, Braudel insisted in his 1950 inaugural lecture at the Collège de France, it was necessary to escape the shackles of "narrative history," the same history that he had taught in Algeria at the beginning of his career between 1923 and 1932. Adherence to Leopold von Ranke's injunction to relate "things just as they really happened (*wie es eigentlich gewesen*)," had, in Braudel's view, led historians to focus merely on history's gleaming surface:[2]

> *It is precisely our task to get beyond this first stage of history. The social realities must be tackled in themselves and for themselves. By social realities I mean all the major forms of collective life, economies, institutions, social structures, in short and above all, civilizations—all aspects of reality which earlier historians have not exactly overlooked, but which with a few outstanding exceptions they have all too often regarded as a backdrop, there only to explain or as if intended to explain the behavior of the exceptional individuals on whom the historian so complacently dwells.*

1 Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Siân Reynolds (Harper & Row, 1972–73), 1:22.

2 Fernand Braudel, "The Situation of History in 1950,", in *On History* (University of Chicago Press, 1980), 11–12. On the colonial roots of Braudel's historiography, see Manuel Borutta, "Braudel in Algier: Die kolonialen Wurzeln der 'Méditerranée' und der 'spatial turn,'' [Braudel in Algiers: The colonial roots of the 'Méditerranée' and the 'spatial turn'], *Historische Zeitschrift* 303, no. 1 (2016), 1–38.

Few if any other books of the immediate postwar period continue to generate such intellectual vibrations within the humanities and social sciences as *La Méditerranée*. Indeed, the last quarter-century has seen Braudelian themes flourish as never before: Mediterranean history, spatial history, environmental and big history, world-systems theory, studies of historical networks, communications, diasporas, slavery and forced migrations—themes that loomed so large in Braudel's work all emerged, in the first decades of the twenty-first century, as central areas of research in historical scholarship. As exemplified by both recent large-scale histories and the proliferation of journals and conference volumes, Mediterranean studies are thriving.[3] Moreover, the increasing availability of primary sources through digital databases has enhanced the return of the Braudelian longue durée and made it easier for scholars to work across extensive time scales of multiple centuries.[4]

To be sure, Braudel's work has met with both admiration and fierce criticism. Indeed, *La Mediterranée* found critics from its first appearance, and its influence has inspired controversies and reappraisals ever since. The great Americanist Bernard Bailyn was merely one of the earliest (and most sharp-tongued) of the many readers who have been disappointed, or perhaps disenchanted, by the awkward relationship between the book's three main sections: in Bailyn's judgment, while "The parts of his 'world' are all there, … they lie inert, unrelated, discrete."[5] In Italy, too, Braudel's work initially met with resistance. Delio Cantimori, the prominent Marxist historian known for his *Eretici italiani del Cinquecento* [Italian Heretics of the Sixteenth Century], told the Italian publishing house Einaudi in 1948 not to translate *La Mediterranée,* labelling the work "the *Gone with the Wind* of historiography, which tickles everything but satisfies nothing," adding that it was full of "empty neo-positivism and neo-sociologism."[6] It is easy now to dismiss Cantimori's response, but it shows just how controversial and innovative was Braudel's approach, especially in a country whose historiographical culture was profoundly shaped by the legacy of Benedetto Croce and neo-Hegelian historicism. In any case, Einaudi ignored Cantimori's recommendation. The Italian translation appeared in 1953, marking the beginning of the work's international reception, long before *La Mediterranée* became available in English.[7] Later, Einaudi further contributed to Braudel's success in Italy, publishing his long and influential essay "L'Italia fuori d'Italia"—later translated also in English as *Out of Italy: Two Centuries of World Domination and Decline*—in the influential *Storia d'Italia* [History of Italy] edited by Ruggiero Romano

3 See especially Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Wiley, 2000); David Abulafia, *The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean* (Allen Lane, 2011); Guillaume Calafat and Mathieu Grenet, *Méditerranées: Une histoire des mobilités humaines (1492–1750)* [Mediterraneans: A History of Human Mobility (1492–1750)] (Éditions Points, 2023).

4 David Armitage and Jo Guldi, "The Return of the Longue Durée.: An Anglo-American Perspective," *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 70, no. 2 (2015), 289–318; Dan Edelstein, Paula Findlen, Giovanna Ceserani, Caroline Winterer, and Nicole Coleman, "Historical Research in a Digital Age: Reflections from the *Mapping the Republic of Letters* Project," *American Historical Review* 122, no. 2 (2017), 400–424.

5 Bernard Bailyn, "Braudel's Geohistory—A Reconsideration," *Journal of Economic History* 11, no. 3 (1951), 277–282.

6 Delio Cantimori, *Politica e storia contemporanea. Scritti 1927–1942* [Politics and Contemporary History: Writings, 1927–1942] (Einaudi, 1991), 795. On Braudel's reception in Italy see John Marino, "Braudel's Mediterranean and Italy," *California Italian Studies* 1, no. 1 (2010), 1–19.

7 Fernand Braudel, *Civiltà e imperi del mediterraneo nell'età di Filippo II* [The Civilization and Empires of the Mediterranean in the Age of Philip II] (Einaudi, 1953).

and Corrado Vivanti.[8] Italy proved in every respect crucial for Braudel's work and career. As Maurice Aymard has noted, the systematic exploration of Italian archives led Braudel to reconceive *La Mediterranée* and to move in the second edition "from Spain to Italy, and from the western extremity to the center of the sea," focusing less on Philip II's foreign policy and more on the economic history of the Mediterranean.[9]

More recently, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, Guillaume Calafat, and Mathieu Grenet, among others, have challenged Braudel's vision of Mediterranean history, arguing that it is in fact Eurocentric and centers on the northern Mediterranean and its archives, marginalizing the southern shore.[10] Ian Merkel has also shed new light on Braudel's colonial view of the non-European world and on his relationship with French cultural politics in both Algeria and Brazil.[11] In another important volume, Maria Fusaro, Colin Heywood, and Mohamed Salah Omri have investigated Braudel's maritime legacy, showing that the Mediterranean did not lose its centrality after the Spanish-Ottoman truce of 1580, but remained in fact an essential element of intra-European power and hegemony throughout the early modern period and beyond.[12] Such criticism has also enabled scholars to recover alternative and less familiar historiographical approaches to the Mediterranean, starting with Shelomo Dov Goitein's *A Mediterranean Society*, a large-scale reconstruction of cross-confessional trade networks between the ninth and the nineteenth centuries, based on the manuscripts of the Cairo Genizah.[13] While Braudel and Goitein are usually seen as opposite paradigms, in their possible collaboration as in its failure, one can see the slow emergence of "thalassography"—in Peter Miller's formulation—and its potential today for future research.[14]

There is no need to rehearse here *La Mediterranée's* other well-known gaps and limitations, whether the absence of religion and religious life, beyond a struggle between Christianity and Islam that was painted in overly broad strokes; or the near invisibility of women, aside from queens Catherine de Medici and Elizabeth I; the lack of interest in art and visual sources; or Braudel's rather monolithic vision of Islam and the Ottoman Empire, which the flourishing of Ottoman studies in recent decades has decisively rejected. As Lucette Valensi has noted, some of Braudel's assessments would be strongly criticized today for essentializing people and reifying civilizations.[15] One example is his treatment of the Moriscos, the descendants of Iberia's

8 Fernand Braudel, "L'Italia fuori d'Italia: Due secoli e tre Italie," in *Storia d'Italia*, eds. Ruggiero Romano and Corrado Vivanti (Einaudi, 1974), 2:2092–248. English translation: Fernand Braudel, *Out of Italy: Two Centuries of World Domination and Demise*, trans. Siân Reynolds (Flammarion, 1991).

9 Maurice Aymard, "One Braudel or Several?" *Fernand Braudel Center*, 24, no. 1 (2001): 17.

10 Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *On the Origins of Global History*, inaugural lecture, Collège de France, November 28, 2013, transl. by Liz Libbrecht, 2016, https://doi.org/10.4000/books.cdf.4171; Calafat and Grenet, *Méditerranées*, 1–28.

11 Ian Merkel, *Terms of Exchange: Brazilian Intellectuals and the French Social Sciences* (University of Chicago Press, 2022).

12 Maria Fusaro, Colin Heywood, and Mohamed-Salah Omri, eds., *Trade and Cultural Exchange in the Early Modern Mediterranean: Braudel's Maritime Legacy* (Tauris, 2010).

13 Shelomo Dov Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza*, 6 vols. (University of California Press, 1967–1993).

14 Peter N. Miller, "Two Men in a Boat: The Braudel-Goitein 'Correspondence' and the Beginning of Thalassography," in *The Sea: Thalassography and Historiography*, ed. Peter N. Miller (University of Michigan Press, 2013), 27–59.

15 Lucette Valensi, "The Problem of Unbelief in Braudel's Mediterranean," in *Braudel Revisited: The Mediterranean World*, 1600–1800, ed. Gabriel Piterberg, Teofilo F. Ruiz, and Geoffrey Symcox (University of Toronto Press,

Muslim population who were first forced to convert and then expelled by Philip III between 1609 and 1614. Considering their clash with the Spanish monarchy an example of "conflict between religions, in other words a conflict in the very strongest sense between civilizations," Braudel controversially referred to the Moriscos in *La Mediterranée* as "an unassimilable population."[16]

Over the past two decades, thinking "with and beyond Braudel," scholars at California institutions have produced a wealth of scholarship on Braudel's oeuvre while also pushing studies of the premodern Mediterranean in new and exciting directions.[17] While historians have initiated and traditionally dominated such conversation, innovative work by literary scholars such as Barbara Fuchs, Sharon Kinoshita, and Roberta Morosini has shown how fruitful a Mediterranean paradigm can be for rethinking the history of languages and literary traditions.[18] To carry forward this tradition, we gathered twenty-one roundtable speakers at a symposium jointly organized by Berkeley and Stanford in November 2024 and invited them to comment on *La Mediterranée*'s impact and legacy within their subfields, reflect on current disciplinary trends, or share their vision for future directions.[19] Eighteen of the resulting reflections are included in the volume. Fittingly, their topics range widely across time and space: from classical antiquity to the twenty-first century and from the Caribbean to the Red Sea (and beyond). Given *La Mediterranée's* discipline-crossing approach, it seems equally fitting that the essays in this issue embrace an unusually broad range of methodologies and disciplinary perspectives, from cultural poetics to historical geography and from social history to geo-aesthetics.

We have organized the essays into four thematic clusters, building on the topics and approaches that emerged most prominently both during the symposium and in the resulting written contributions. Nearly all of the contributions deal with more than one of these themes, however, and some even straddle all four. We accordingly encourage readers to read through the essays in orders different from the one we have proposed, in the hope (or even certainty) that other productive connections and cross-currents will emerge.

We extend our deep thanks to everyone who made the Symposium such a stimulating and convivial gathering: to our keynote lecturers, Barbara Fuchs (UCLA) and Alessandro Stanziani

2010), 28.

16 Braudel, *The Mediterranean*, 2:780. On Braudel's view of the Moriscos see Lucette Valensi, *Ces étrangers familiers. Musulmans en Europe (XVI-XVII siècles)* [These Familiar Foreigners: Muslims in Europe (16th to 17th Centuries)] (Payot & Rivages, 2012).

17 Piterberg, Ruiz, and Symcox, *Braudel Revisited*, 4. See also John A. Marino, ed., *Early Modern History and the Social Sciences: Testing the Limits of Braudel's Mediterranean* (Truman State University Press, 2002); Cavan Concannon and Lindsey A. Mazurek, eds., *Across the Corrupting Sea: Post-Braudelian Approaches to the Ancient Eastern Mediterranean* (Routledge, 2016); Brian A. Catlos and Sharon Kinoshita, eds., *Can We Talk Mediterranean? Conversations on an Emerging Field in Medieval and Early Modern Studies* (Palgrave, 2017).

18 Barbara Fuchs, *Knowing Fictions: Picaresque Reading in the Early Modern Hispanic World* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021); Sharon Kinoshita, *Marco Polo and His World* (Reaktion Books, 2024); Roberta Morosini, *Il mare salato: Il Mediterraneo di Dante, Petrarca e Boccaccio* [The Salty Sea: The Mediterranean of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio] (Viella, 2020). See also two influential works by Karla Mallette: *The Kingdom of Sicily*, 1100–1250: A Literary History (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005) and *Lives of the Great Languages: Arabic and Latin in the Medieval Mediterranean* (University of Chicago Press, 2021); together with Ayesha Ramachandran, *Lyric Thinking: Poetry, Selfhood, Modernity* (University of Chicago Press, forthcoming).

19 The symposium was held at Stanford and the University of California, Berkeley on November 15–16, 2024, and was hosted jointly by Stanford's Center for Medieval & Early Modern Studies (CMEMS) and UC Berkeley's Designated Emphasis in Renaissance & Early Modern Studies (REMS). In addition to two keynote lectures and two graduate paper workshops, the symposium featured a series of six roundtables: "The Mediterranean," "The Mediterranean World," "The Age of Philip II," "Time and Space," "Scale," and "Mobility."

(EHESS/CNRS); to the roundtable chairs (Déborah Blocker, Cathryn Carson, Sharad Chari, Marisa Galvez, Roland Greene, Fiona Griffiths, Laura Stokes), speakers, and audience members; to the participants in the graduate paper workshops; to our marvelously efficient workshop coordinator Jenny Smith; to our generous hosts at the Stanford Humanities Center and UC Berkeley's Doreen B. Townsend Center for the Humanities; to the ever-patient and ever-resourceful staff members at our respective institutions; and to CMEMS, REMS, and all of our cosponsoring units, programs, and centers.[20] Above all, we are grateful to the authors for agreeing to share their work in this venue and to the editorial team at *Republic of Letters* (especially managing editors Poornima Rajeshwar and Claire Sauter) for steering it to publication. A

20 The conference was organized through the support of many departments, programs, and institutions. At UC Berkeley we are grateful to Sara Guyer, the Irving and Jean Stone Dean of Arts and Humanities, and the Departments of French, History, Italian, Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures, and Spanish and Portuguese, as well as the Modern Greek and Hellenic Studies Program. At Stanford University we would like to thank the Department of French and Italian, the Department of History, the Early Modern Iberian Worlds Research Group, the Europe Center, the Stanford-France Center for Interdisciplinary Studies, and the Stanford Humanities Center. Additional thanks to David Do Paço, higher education attaché at Villa Albertine, the French Institute for Culture and Education.

Braudel, Philip II, and Sicily

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As one of those rare works that almost singlehandedly created an entire new historical field, Fernand Braudel's *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* is a text that continues to inspire. Journals, conferences, books, and the establishment of new tenure-track positions in Mediterranean studies all testify to Braudel's enormous and lasting influence.[1]

This is not to say that the field in 2025 neatly corresponds to Braudel's vision. Most noticeably, the chronological, geographical, and thematic ranges of topics have expanded considerably, and the second part of Braudel's title, "in the Age of Philip II," no longer describes the chronological or political focus of more than a small fraction of the scholarship on the Mediterranean World. Indeed, some scholars, such as those of the self-described "California school," question the usefulness of traditional political categories of analysis. Instead they have "promoted the Mediterranean not (*pace* Braudel) as a predefined place of the olive and vine [or of Philip II], but as a heuristic rubric useful for disrupting or reconfiguring existing categories of analysis (especially those defined by nation-states, continents, or religious cultures)."[2]

This short intervention challenges that view and suggests that the future of Mediterranean history still has much to gain by recognizing and embracing the fundamental importance of the political history of the "Age of Philip II" and the Spanish empire more generally in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Braudel's work, it is critical to remember, began as a political history rooted in the Spanish archives. The 1929 thesis that was the genesis of the later 1947 *thèse d'état* focused on the foreign policy of Philip II, 1557– 98, and it corresponds closely to the last section of volume two (pp. 967–1142) of the 1979 edition with the subtitle of "Philip II and Spanish political

1 Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Siân Reynolds, 2 vols. (Harper & Row, 1972), 2:993.

2 Quote taken from the program announcement of The Mediterranean Seminar Fall 2023 workshop at the University of California-Santa Cruz on the theme of "Mediterranean Studies, Present and Future." Brackets are mine.

policy in the Mediterranean from 1559 to 1574." With its emphasis on the Spanish and Ottoman military contest in those critical decades, including a very long treatment of the battle of Lepanto, that section is a brilliant example of a lively political/military history narrative that underlined the importance of the Spanish monarchy in checking Ottoman expansion westward in the latter half of the sixteenth century. More generally, the political analysis in the later pages underlines the central role that Spain under Philip II played in shaping the history of Italy, Sicily, Malta, the Aeolian islands, other islands in the western Mediterranean, and the Spanish coastline.

As one of the first works to emphasize the importance of Spain and Philip II in shaping the Mediterranean, Braudel's book opened up substantial new horizons for historians. But the breadth of his work and historical vision defied easy or frequent imitation. Moreover, the general challenge of successfully executing an *Annales*-style study of Mediterranean cities, islands, economies, or major social transformations has more often than not resulted in shorter scholarly interventions as opposed to macro histories that aspire to embrace the *histoire totale* that Braudel dared to pursue.

In the final paragraphs of this short essay, I would like to suggest an example of a large Braudelian theme that honors his vision of the Mediterranean. This is the history of Spanish Sicily in the long sixteenth century, a subject pointed to in his work to one extent or another but never fully developed.

Sicily had a substantial presence in Braudel's work and in his view of the Mediterranean. The island played a critical role in the Spanish and Ottoman political contest, and it is in this realm that Braudel gives Sicily the most attention. From the beginning of Philip II's reign, the king had to face the constant threat of attacks on the island and nearby territories by the Ottomans and their surrogates in Tunisia. The Siege of Malta in 1565 was the most serious threat to Spanish control of the central Mediterranean, and it was a force of Spanish soldiers from Sicily that successfully lifted the siege and delivered a heavy blow to the Ottoman navy. In 1571 the Holy League of papal, Venetian, and Spanish ships that defeated the Ottomans at Lepanto sailed from Messina, where many of the ships were provisioned, again underlining the central role that Sicily played in the Spanish imperial system in Italy.

Braudel provides excellent detail on these major events, but this is really just a beginning in understanding how Spanish military policies reshaped Sicily in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. A full-scale history of the island in the Spanish period will require a more extensive analysis of the expansion of fortresses around the island, the funding and maintenance of the Spanish army and navy in Sicily, and the role that the Sicilian forces played in the broader Mediterranean policies and military activities of the Spanish monarchy. Philip II had an extensive and detailed political agenda for the island that did not end with Lepanto, and his Sicilian policies deserve an expansive section in a history of Spanish Sicily.[3]

Similarly, while Braudel mentions some of the major Spanish viceroys and their role in the political history of Sicily, a full-scale study of the island will require a much more comprehensive political analysis rooted in the thick archival sources available. The Estado Sicilia section in the

3 A few samples of useful historical literature on early modern Sicily and the Spanish theme include: Francesco Benigno, *L'isola dei vicerè: Potere e conflitto nella Sicilia spagnola (sec. XVI–XVIII)* (University of Palermo Press, 2017); Francesco Benigno, "Integration and Conflict in Spanish Sicily," in *Spain in Italy: Politics, Religion and Society*, ed. Thomas Dandelet and John Marino (Brill, 2006); Giuseppe Bonaffini, *La Sicilia e i Barbereschi: Incursioni corsare e riscatto degli schiavi* (1570–1606) (ILA Palma, 1983); and Helmut Koenigsberger, *The Practice of Empire* (Cornell University Press, 1969).

archives at Simancas, most importantly, contains roughly 100 volumes of correspondence from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries between the Spanish monarchs and their Sicilian viceroys, inquisitors, nobility, bishops, and others that have never been systematically exploited and incorporated into a political history of early modern Sicily.

Similarly, these sources also provide substantial materials for a social history of the island under Spanish rule. Spanish immigration to the island transformed Sicilian society to an extent that has gone largely unstudied and unacknowledged. Tens of thousands of Spanish soldiers, merchants, churchmen, lawyers, noblemen, and their families and followers settled on the island, frequently intermarried with the native population, and spent large sums of money on palaces, churches, convents and monasteries, hospitals, charities, and other enterprises. Cities like Palermo expanded greatly in the sixteenth century. Palermo, in particular, grew from roughly 30,000 at the beginning of the century to 100,000 by 1600. Again, Philip II played a central role in encouraging Spanish settlement in Sicily, and the decades of his rule witnessed an overt program of Hispanization represented, for example, by the appointment of Spaniards to most of the major bishoprics of the island.

Another essential theme, the economy of the island, also needs additional research that incorporates the influx of money from Spain. The existing work on taxation, agricultural production, and noble and church income leaves the economic picture limited at best. Spanish bishops, viceroys, merchants, inquisitors, and lawyers added a great deal to the economy, a fact that has yet to be studied or quantified as part of a much larger imperial economy.

Finally, a new history of Spanish Sicily will need sections on cultural production and religion, areas that Braudel largely left to the side but that played a major role in shaping Spanish Sicily. Hundreds of new churches, convents, bishop's palaces, and monasteries were built in Palermo, Catania, Cefalù, Siracusa, Noto, and Messina under the Spanish. Parallel to this, the Sicilian nobility built and decorated new palaces all around the island. In part, this was a peace dividend brought about by a serious reduction of major threats to the island's people and property under Spanish rule. While the Ottoman pirates never completely disappeared, they no longer posed a serious threat to the cities or major noble estates that flourished in the age of Philip II and beyond.

This was the Sicily of Philip II and the other Spanish monarchs in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It was a distinct period in the island's history when it was truly at the center of the Mediterranean World, and it still awaits a well-deserved, full-scale history that follows the spirit, if not the exact letter, of Braudel. A

Braudel's Florence: Hidden Dimensions of His Mediterranean

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Fernand Braudel was famously less interested in people than places. He preferred to reconstruct the history of an entire region, organized around a large body of water, rather than focusing on a particular city from which to take the measure of the Mediterranean. He studied capitalism writ large rather than the political economy and commercial ambitions of a single state. Or at least this is how the early modern world appears in his classic *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II,* originally published in 1949, and his monumental three-volume *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th–18th Century* (1979), thirty years later. Here I hope to complicate our understanding of Braudel's Mediterranean by introducing other dimensions of his work that suggest he was also trying to identify some of the most interesting actors and places in the transformations of the early modern Mediterranean.

Two years after his Mediterranean appeared, Braudel coauthored a local history of ships and merchandise in early modern Livorno, the most important Tuscan port of this era, with the Italian economic historian Ruggiero Romano. *Navires et merchandise à l'entrée du porte de Livorno (1547–1611)* (1951) is a detailed empirical study of the growth of Livorno as an entrepôt of the Mediterranean. It offers a valuable account of the foreign ships arriving in Livorno from North Africa, Iberia, England, and the Netherlands and the goods they brought into the Florentine market that fueled the Tuscan economy. We see the growing significance of the free port's expansion, especially under Grand Duke Ferdinando I (r. 1587–1609), who promulgated laws known as the *Livornina* (1591 and 1593) that offered special exemptions and protections to foreign merchants who did business in Livorno, regardless of their faith. The failed Tuscan Company, founded in 1576 to ship spices from Lisbon to Livorno, and the short-lived *Compagnia Orientale*, inaugurated in 1602 in a moment of greater ambition, suggest that the Florentines aspired to their own East India Company even if it never really got off the ground. Braudel understood that the Grand Duchy of Tuscany was no sleepy backwater basking in its former glory but a fascinating experiment in political economy, as it attempted to position itself between the Iberian worlds of the

Atlantic and the Indian Ocean while establishing new partnerships with England and Northern Europe.

Recent work on Tuscany's long-distance projects of commerce and failed dreams of establishing a presence in Southern India, Brazil, Morocco, and Sierra Leone remind us that the Mediterranean was not only a physical and human unit, but a crossroads of possibilities that multiplied in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, connecting the Mediterranean to other parts of the world.[1] The activities of Spanish, English, Dutch, Jewish, and Muslim merchants in Livorno, along with the presence of enslaved populations brought to this city, suggest that Braudel was right to pay attention to Tuscany's thriving port.[2] Tellingly, when the Florentines purchased a Dutch ship in 1606, in a thwarted effort to establish a route across the Indian Ocean, they named it *La Livornina*.

One of Braudel's favorite Renaissance proverbs concerned the ubiquity of the Florentine merchant: "Sparrows and Florentines are all over the world" (*Passeri e fiorentini sono per tutto il mondo*).[3] He considered Tuscany the axis of the Italian peninsula, successfully negotiating competing interests in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Braudel's Florence was a city of financially savvy entrepreneurs who did not readily cede their position to competition. They evolved with changing times.

While completing a collaborative project on the Florentine merchant Francesco Carletti (1573–1636), I have found myself wondering what Braudel might have said about Carletti's voyage around the world between 1594 and 1602 and his experience of the Dutch Republic litigating over his confiscated goods before he returned to Florence in 1606. Carletti embodies Braudel's understanding of early modern capitalism better than almost any other actor in this world. In May 1602, he famously declared: "Where my goods go, I want to go with my person, come what may" (*Dove va la robba, voglio andare con la persona, seguane [sic] che vuole*).[4] A product of Braudel's Mediterranean world, Carletti cannot be found in the pages of these two volumes.

1 Corey Tazzara, *The Free Port of Livorno and the Transformation of the Mediterranean World* (Oxford University Press, 2017); Samuel Fettah, *Les limites de la cité: Espace, pouvoir et société à Livourne au temps du port franc* (*XVII1–XIXe siècle*) (École française de Rome, 2017); and Brian Brege, *Tuscany in the Age of Empire* (Harvard University Press, 2021).

2 Marie-Christine Engels, *Merchants, Interlopers, Seamen and Corsairs: The "Flemish" Community in Livorno and Genoa* (1615–1635) (Verloren, 1997); Gigliola Pagano De Devitiis, *English Merchants in Seventeenth-Century Italy* (Cambridge University Press, 1997); Christina Galasso, *Alle origini di una comunità: ebree ed ebrei a Livorno nel Seicento* (Olschki, 2002); Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (Yale University Press, 2009); Stephanie Nadalo, "Negotiating Slavery in a Tolerant Frontier: Livorno's Turkish Bagno (1547–1747)," *Mediaevalia* 32 (2011): 275–324; Andrea Addobbati and Marcella Aglietti, eds., *La città delle nazioni: Livorno e i limiti del cosmopolitismo* (1566–1834) (Pisa University Press, 2016); Cesare Santus, Il *"Turco" a Livorno: incontri con l'Islam nella Toscana del Seicento* (Officina Libraria, 2019); Tazzara, *The Free Port of Livorno*; Fettah, *Les limites de la cité:* ; Brege, Tuscany in the Age of Empire; Tamar Herzig, "Slavery and Interethnic Sexual Violence: A Multi-Perpetrator Rape in Seventeenth-Century Livorno," *American Historical Review* 127, no. 1 (2022): 194–222; Tamar Herzig, "Enslavement, Religion, and Cultural Commemoration in Livorno," *Religions* 14, no. 5 (2023): 1–13.

3 Fernand Braudel, Out of Italy: *Two Centuries of World Domination and Demise,* trans. Siân Reynolds (Europa, 2019), 87.

4 Rome, Biblioteca Angelica, ms. 1331 (Francesco Carletti, Ragionamenti), fol. 191r; Brian Brege, Paula Findlen, Luca Molà, and Giorgio Riello, eds., *Trading at the Edge of Empires: Francesco Carletti's World, ca. 1600* (Officina Libraria/I Tatti Research Series, 2026). In fall 2026, there will be an exhibition at the Biblioteca Laurenziana on *Global Florence: The World in the Age of Francesco Carletti*, 1573-1636 to further explore these issues and a new English translation of Carletti's *Ragionamenti* by Brian Brege with Paula Findlen and Giorgio Riello.

Instead, he plays a minor role in *Civilization and Capitalism*, traveling the globe "with a bag containing pieces of eight and silver, and bundles of selected merchandise." Braudel had Carletti in mind when he described the early modern global merchant who saw merchandise as "a kind of capital which appreciated at every move, paid the traveler's expense and even … afforded him a handsome profit."[5] This ideally was the result of engaging in global commerce, leaving the Mediterranean behind. Carletti found the reality far more uncertain. Having followed his Asian goods, confiscated from a Portuguese carrack by Dutch privateers off the island of St. Helena in 1602, all the way back to Middelburg, he described himself two years later as having nothing but "an empty purse and a bag full of patience and another full of documents" (*essendomi rimasto in quel cambio la borsa vota, et un sacco pieno di pacientia, e un altro pieno di scritture*).[6] In the end, Carletti returned to Florence to become a minor courtier and Medici advisor on global affairs. He watched the world come and go through Livorno, Pisa, and Florence.

Braudel did not privilege Tuscany in his account of the Mediterranean. Ultimately, however, his exploration of the Florentine archives and libraries—described in the discussion of unpublished sources at the end of the *Mediterranean*—led him to explain its significance to the Mediterranean world and read Carletti's lively and illuminating *Ragionamenti*.[7] Braudel eventually declared, "Everything came into and out of Florence."[8] He was not only describing the local networks connecting Florence to other Italian states, Western Europe, and the Mediterranean but thinking of how Carletti made his city part of a far more global history. A

5 Fernand Braudel, *The Structures of Everyday Life: Civilization and Capitalism, 15th–18th Century*, vol. 1, trans. Siân Reynolds (Harper & Row, 1981).

6 Rome, Biblioteca Angelica, ms. 1331, Francesco Carletti, *Ragionamenti*, fol. 203v.

7 Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Siân Reynolds, 2 vols. (Harper & Row, 1972–73), 2:1254–56.

8 Braudel, *Out of Italy*, 76.

Braudel, Lepanto, and Philip II

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This brief intervention on Philip II (1527–1598) in the context of the era that he helped to shape and define takes as its point of departure and as its primary object of reflection the Battle of Lepanto (1571): not the military history, but rather the religious significance of the event and the phenomenon of its commemoration. This Christian victory was widely celebrated throughout Europe between 1571 and 1573 by all *except* Philip II, an individual who had invested more financially in the naval alliance of the Holy League than any other member and who had more cause than most to champion it. Revisiting the matter of Philip II's loud silence on an event so significant for Christendom, this speculative contribution reconsiders scholarly assessments of the statesman and reimagines his understanding of both the maritime military conflagration and the site of its unfolding.

The Battle of Lepanto was fought in the Mediterranean, east of Greece, on October 7, 1571, between the forces of the Ottomans and those of the Christian alliance known as the Holy League (the combined forces of Spain, Venice, and the Papacy).[1] The battle was pursued in the manner of a crusade. Public processions and devotions were organized, prayer and rosary recitation were encouraged, and galleys were decorated with religious banners. On the ships, Mass was performed daily, rosaries were distributed, crucifixes raised, blessings, confession, and last rites administered, and absolution for Christian combatants declared.[2] Following the victory, Pope Pius V proclaimed the date of the battle the Feast of Our Lady of Victory in honor of Mary, who was held responsible for a sudden shift of wind that favored Christian forces.

1 Histories abound. Compelling recent narratives appear in Niccolò Capponi, *Victory of the West: The Great Christian–Muslim Clash at the Battle of Lepanto* (Da Capo Press, 2006), and in Roger Crowley, *Empires of the Sea: The Siege of Malta, the Battle of Lepanto, and the Contest for the Center of the World* (Random House, 2008). I draw on them and the primary sources they cite in my description here.

2 G. K. Chesterton, *Lepanto*, ed. Dale Ahlquist (American Chesterton Society, 2003), 63.

Braudel described Lepanto as "the most spectacular military event in the Mediterranean during the entire sixteenth century."[3] More recently, it has been characterized as "one of the bloodiest single days in military history."[4] The numbers Braudel reported concerning the event were staggering. To my knowledge, they have not been substantially revised: 438 fleets (230 Muslim and 208 Christian) and sixty thousand combatants dead or injured.[5] Some 170,000 individuals fought at Lepanto.[6] An estimated 70 percent to 90 percent of the Mediterranean's galleys participated in the battle.[7] Braudel marveled along with Voltaire at the seeming inconsequence of Lepanto from a military perspective, conceding that it had no great "strategic consequences," other than "halt[ing] progress towards a future which promised to be very bleak indeed."[8]

As Braudel saw it, the response to Lepanto was no less significant than the matter of the battle's strategic inconsequence. He described the "immediate impact of the victory" as "breathtaking."[9] By impact, Braudel meant the celebrations, plans, and campaigns devised in the direct aftermath of the battle, which included expeditions to North Africa (of crucial interest for Spain) and aspirations to reclaim the Holy Land and Constantinople, desires expressed by Pope Pius V and by John of Austria, Philip II's half-brother, the leader of the Spanish forces of the Holy League and the romanticized hero of nearly all Lepanto narratives in Christian Europe. Because Philip II was "not haunted by dreams of crusades," Braudel observed, such "extravagances" did not captivate him.[10] One could hardly imagine the Philip of Braudel's *Mediterranean* as a man who dreamed at all.

For Braudel, Philip II was most easily envisioned as a monarch immersed in a vast, horizontal network of ceaselessly flowing information, an embodiment of the imperial state conceived as an administrative apparatus.[11] An imaginatively inert sovereign lacking visionary capacity, Braudel's Philip II was more a bureaucrat than a true leader or statesman.[12] Though Philip II sat at the center of the Christian world, Braudel suspected that he had never contemplated it in embodied physical or concrete geographical terms:

> I do not believe that the word Mediterranean itself ever floated in his consciousness with the meaning we now give it, nor that it conjured up for him the images of light and blue

3 Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Siân Reynolds (Harper & Row, 1972–73), 2:1088.

4 Elizabeth R. Wright, Sarah Spence, and Andrew Lemons, eds. and trans., *The Battle of Lepanto* (I Tatti Renaissance Library, Harvard University Press, 2014), xi.

5 Braudel, Mediterranean, 2:1102; compare with John Francis Guilmartin Jr., *Gunpowder and Galleys: Changing Technology and Mediterranean Warfare at Sea in the Sixteenth Century*, rev. ed. (Conway Maritime Press, 2003), 235–68.

6 Geoffrey Parker, *Imprudent King: A New Life of Philip II* (Yale University Press, 2014), 204.

7 Guilmartin, *Gunpowder and Galleys*, 250.

8 Braudel, *Mediterranean*, 2:1103.

9 Braudel, *Mediterranean*, 2:1103–4.

10 Braudel, *Mediterranean*, 2:1104; compare with Laura Stagno and Borja Franco Llopis, "A Brief Review of the Scholarly Literature on Representation of the 'Turk' and Image of Lepanto in Italy and Iberia," in *Lepanto and Beyond: Images of Religious Alterity from Genoa and the Christian Mediterranean*, ed. Laura Stagno and Borja Franco Llopis (Leuven University Press, 2021), 32. The authors cite as a common explanation the "complicated relationship" Philip had with his half-brother, John of Austria.

11 Braudel, *Mediterranean*, 2:1236.

12 Braudel, *Mediterranean*, 2:1236.

> water it has for us; nor even that it signified a precise area of major problems or the setting for a clearly conceived policy. Geography in the true sense was not part of a prince's education.[13]

While Philip II may not have studied geography, he certainly experienced it, both physically and culturally. Though he may not have thought in terms of policy, he likely reflected on the sea and on broader questions of meaning. He had travelled widely and, if nothing else, he would have been familiar with the trope of the ship of the church and related scriptural and religious imagery.

In his study of the Escorial, Henry Kamen posited the genesis of the architectural project in three of eight years (1548–1551) that Philip had spent traveling in Europe between 1543 and 1559 while he was in charge of Spanish affairs.[14] As Kamen emphasized, Philip was the most widely travelled European ruler after his father, Holy Roman Emperor Charles V (1500–1558),[15] and the Escorial was a building "inspired by European experiences, constructed by men of international vision."[16] Arguing against the long-standing scholarly opinion that with the Escorial Philip II sought "to vaunt his military victories," [17] Kamen noted how the palace's Hall of Battles emphasizes peace rather than triumph and how neither Philip's momentous military victory at St. Quentin nor that of Lepanto are celebrated there. Instead, "Philip chose to commemorate a wholly unknown medieval incident, involving very few soldiers, fought within the country and with no significant repercussions for anyone," a victory pre-dating Spain's existence as a "political entity" and for which "the Muslims in the battle were, indeed, as Spanish as their Christian adversaries."[18]

In her study of poetry celebrating Lepanto in its immediate wake (1571–1573), Simona Mammana underscored how the battle was indeed viewed and commemorated as a crusade.[19] Contemporary verses depicted Lepanto as a "theomachy."[20] In them, Lepanto's protagonists are represented symbolically, and the terms of their comparison are mythological, historical, and biblical.[21] The victory of Lepanto is represented as "universal in significance"[22] and as denoting "the fulfilment of apocalyptic prophecies," those of "religious unity" and "the arrival of a golden age."[23] Turkish power was viewed as a just divine instrument for the punishment of Christian sins and a means to purge the world of them.[24] Defeat of the infidel would lead to the "reunification

13 Braudel, *Mediterranean*, 2:1236–1237.

14 Henry Kamen, *The Escorial: Art and Power in the Renaissance* (Yale University Press, 2010).

15 Kamen, *Escorial*, 26.

16 Kamen, *Escorial*, xiv.

17 Kamen, *Escorial*, xiv.

18 Kamen, *Escorial*, 196. On the Hall of Battles, see 176–99. Kamen notes how striking these absences are: "The great enigma is why, after so many triumphs, he failed to commemorate any of them in his new palace, where he had received the first official news [of Lepanto]," (187).

19 Simona Mammana, *Lèpanto: rime per la vittoria sul Turco: regesto (1571–1573) e studio critico* (Bulzoni, 2007), 15–16.

20 Mammana, *Lèpanto*, 98: "teomachia."

21 Mammana, *Lèpanto*, 104–105.

22 Mammana, *Lèpanto*, 107: "il cui significato è universale."

23 Mammana, *Lèpanto*, 122: "il compimento delle profezie apocalittiche … unione religiosa e avvenuto del tempo aureo."

24 Mammana, *Lèpanto*, 111.

of all peoples under one shepherd" and "would give rise to the millennium described in John's Apocalypse."[25] Lepanto was interpreted as a "pledge of the promise of universal palingenesis."[26]

I have always been struck by the fact that Philip's bed at the Escorial was positioned to offer him a view of the altar and that, if reports are correct, he wanted to view Bosch's triptych, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, as death approached. Might the Escorial reflect Philip's choice to emphasize millenarian dreams and eschatological expectations rather than military aspirations or missionary aims? Might it reflect the highest spiritual significance of events, the anagogical level of meaning for crusades like Lepanto (to borrow a construct from scriptural hermeneutics)?

The Philip "most accessible" to Braudel was the monarch "who sits silently reading at his desk, annotating reports in his hasty handwriting, far from other men, distant and pensive."[27] The devout builder and patron of sacred art at the Escorial is also knowable, and he is a very different character. Philip II may not have been endowed with political vision, but he was possessed of (if not by) biblical vision. For someone thus oriented, the Mediterranean was not only a natural body of water or a geopolitical reality, it was also a storied site in the creation, a theater of divine works where God's providential design became manifest. A

25 Mammana, *Lèpanto*, 116: "riuniti tutti i popoli sotto un pastore, avrebbe avuto inizio il millennio annuziato dall'Apocalisse giovannea."

26 Mammana, *Lèpanto*, 116: "pegno della promessa di una palingenesi universale."

27 Braudel, *Mediterranean*, 2:1236.

Sa'dian Morocco and the Dialectics of Early Modern Empire

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Birthed between the southern legs of the High and Anti-Atlas mountains, Morocco's Sa'dian dynasty was perpetually wedged between the fiercest rivalries of the early modern period. To its east stood the Ottoman Empire, to its north the Spanish, and along its western coast the Portuguese. Meanwhile, its Atlantic ports and Saharan trade networks were drawing a motley group of merchants, privateers, and emissaries of the English, Dutch, Genoese, and Venetian variety. Archival sources from the Sa'dian period feature a star-studded lineup of early modern contemporaries: Askia Muhammad, Catherine de Medici, Elizabeth I, Ferdinand Magellan, Hayreddin Barbarossa, Henry VIII, John Smith, Leo Africanus, Mary Queen of Scots, Philip II, and Sultan Suleiman, to name a few.

Even though Fernand Braudel had very little to say about Sa'dian Morocco in *La Méditerranée*, its place just before the book's conclusion is reflective of its peripherality. Braudel mentions Sa'dian Morocco within the context of the 1578 Battle of Alcázarquivir (commonly known as the Battle of Three Kings). Appearing in a single paragraph, Sa'dian Morocco is introduced just as the Mediterranean is fading "out of the limelight" and the Atlantic enters center stage. "For North Africa," Braudel writes, "it was the end of an era: no longer was it an outpost of the East."[1] Such framing perhaps seems out of the ordinary for Braudel, especially in a text that emphasizes the vastness and overlapping nature of the Mediterranean as a rejection of rigid categories of order. Instead, however, I argue that Braudel leaves us with an invitation to consider the generative capacity of the Maghrib's spatiotemporal limit.

Reigning from the mid-sixteenth to early seventeenth centuries, Morocco's Sa'dian dynasty offers a unique snapshot into one of the early modern world's vital frontiers of border making. Whether at the end of the Mediterranean, on the fringes of the East, the beginning of the Atlantic, the border between Africa and Europe, along the edges of the Islamic and Christian worlds, or

[1] Fernand Braudel, The *Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Siân Reynolds (Harper & Row, 1972–73), 2:1195.

straddling the fault lines of blackness and whiteness, Sa'dian Morocco was where limits were forged and eventually cemented. None of the Sa'dian rulers demonstrated a keen awareness of this reality more than Sultan Ahmad al-Mansur (1578–1603). Under his reign, Sa'dian Morocco reached unprecedented heights of wealth, territorial control, and power—all of this despite being surrounded by empires that exceeded it on all those fronts. What drove this seemingly anomalous reality, I argue, was how Sultan Ahmad al-Mansur understood that to maintain any semblance of Moroccan sovereignty and autonomy meant having to pragmatically exist alongside the competing interests and threats of external forces. This meant neither docile acquiescence nor reckless resistance. Rather, it entailed a total descent into the crossfires of the Ottoman-Spanish-Tudor English imperial triangle. Three key episodes offer insight into how Sultan Ahmad al-Mansur honed this empire-building strategy: the Battle of Three Kings (1578), the Portugal Expedition (1589), and the Sa'dian invasion of the Songhai Empire (1591).

Episode 1: The Battle of Three Kings (1578)

Up until 1574, the standard practice of Sa'dian succession was for the eldest brother of the deceased sultan to inherit the throne. In the absence of any living or viable fraternal lines, it would then go to the eldest son. When Sultan Abdallah al-Ghalib (r. 1557–1574) ascended to the throne, he swiftly pursued an aggressive policy of fratricide. His only two surviving brothers, 'Abd al-Malik and Ahmad al-Mansur, sought refuge in the Ottoman Empire, where they held key positions in the administration and military over the course of seventeen years—nearly the entirety of their brother's reign.[2] After al-Ghalib's death, his son Mohammad al-Mutawakkil inherited the throne despite the fact that 'Abd al-Malik and Ahmad al-Mansur both had superseding claims to rule as surviving brothers of al-Ghalib. Backed by the Ottomans, 'Abd al-Malik and Ahmad al-Mansur successfully seized the throne from their nephew in 1576, marking the beginning of 'Abd al-Malik's reign. Meanwhile, their nephew, al-Mutawakkil, fled to Europe where he began rallying support for his cause of deposing his uncle, managing to convince only Portuguese King Dom Sebastian I (r. 1557–1578).

On August 4, 1578, al-Mutawakkil and Dom Sebastian I marched onto the riverine city of Ksar El Kbir, along with around 6,000 mercenaries paid for by Pope Gregory XIII and arms provided by King Philip II of Spain. Awaiting this impending battle were 'Abd al-Malik and Ahmad al-Mansur, equipped with the remainder of the Ottoman forces that had helped them seize the throne two years prior and ammunition sent by Queen Elizabeth I of England. The battle was over after a mere four hours and three kings were now dead: al-Mutawakkil drowned in the Makhazin River, Dom Sebastian (unmarried and childless) was killed in battle, and 'Abd al-Malik died before the battle even began due to drinking contaminated water. 'Abd al-Malik's younger brother, Ahmad al-Mansur, was named the new sultan on the battlefield. One of the first actions Ahmad al-Mansur took as sultan was to flay and stuff al-Mutawakkil's body with straw, after which it was put on display throughout Morocco. The incident resulted in the disparaging memorialization of al-Mutawakkil in Moroccan sources as al-Mesloukh, "the Flayed."[3] In

2 Abderrahmane El-Moudden, "Sharīf and Padishahs: Moroccan–Ottoman Relations from the Sixteenth through the Eighteenth Centuries. Contribution to the Study of a Diplomatic Culture" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1992), 65.

3 Mohammed al-Ifrani, *Nozhet al-hadi: fi akhbar muluuk al-qarn al-hadi* (Dar Bouregrag lil tiba'a wa al-nashr, 2018); Abd al-Aziz al-Fishtali, *Manahil assafa'a fi ma'athir mawalina ashurafa* (Matbua'at wizarat al-awqaf wa

addition to the thousands who died on both sides, Ahmad al-Mansur held the surviving 14,000 Portuguese soldiers captive, including much of the Portuguese aristocracy. With neither ruling elite nor designated successor, the fate of Portugal's future was in question. Ahmad al-Mansur was well-positioned to determine its direction.

Episode 2: The Portugal Expedition (1589)

In the immediate months following the Battle of Three Kings, news of Dom Sebastian I's heirless death remained secret in an effort to defer the inevitable crisis. Philip II, however, was well-informed, as usual. His agents in Morocco, a fraternal duo of Corsican merchants, quickly sent word of the battle's outcome.[4] In response, Philip II promptly deployed Spanish forces throughout Portuguese-controlled territory in Africa and the Americas under the guise of ensuring their "security."[5] By 1580, the Portuguese Succession Crisis was in full swing as Philip II formally stepped in to fill the power vacuum in Portugal. Meanwhile, in Morocco, among the Portuguese elite held captive by Ahmad al-Mansur was one Don Antonio, grandson of King Manuel I of Portugal (1469–1521) and former governor of the Portuguese-held port of Tangier.[6] Not only did his royal lineage elevate him as a legitimate contender for the Portuguese throne, but several parties were particularly keen on supporting his candidacy if it meant weakening Philip II's position. Among Don Antonio's most enthusiastic backers were Queen Elizabeth I and Catherine de Medici.

Ahmad al-Mansur eventually released Don Antonio into the care of Catherine de Medici and, later, Elizabeth I. For years, Ahmad al-Mansur maintained an ambiguous position concerning the fate of Don Antonio, as demonstrated in the numerous letters exchanged with his French and English counterparts. In 1588, however, Ahmad al-Mansur shifted in his tone and became exceedingly supportive of the plan to place Don Antonio on the Portuguese throne in lieu of Philip II. One major event that would have likely swayed him was Elizabeth I's unexpected victory over Philip II's Spanish Armada. Galvanized by the English victory, with Ahmad al-Mansur on board and Don Antonio having promised Brazil to Catherine de Medici in exchange for her support, Elizabeth I moved ahead with a counter English Armada in 1589. The expedition devolved into a major naval disaster for England. Among the key factors that led to England's defeat was that Ahmad al-Mansur reneged on his commitment to provide reinforcements and material support. For three years, Elizabeth I pleaded with Ahmad al-Mansur for some explanation of his withdrawal. In March 1592, he finally responded to Elizabeth I, claiming he had been preoccupied with a more important matter, but he assured her that it would be of

shu'un al-islamiyya wa al-thaqafa, 1972).

4 Francisco Gasparo Corso and Andrea Gasparo Corso covertly worked on behalf of Philip II in North Africa. While ʿAbd al-Malik was in exile in the Ottoman Empire, he fought for the Ottomans in the Battle of Lepanto and was captured by the Spanish in the process. The Spanish released him soon after under unclear circumstances. It turned out that ʿAbd al-Malik had befriended Andrea Gasparo Corso during his captivity, and the two managed to negotiate the beginnings of a secret treaty between Morocco and Spain. The treaty was later ratified between ʿAbd al-Malik and Philip II in 1577, after which the Gasparo Corso brothers remained welcome guests in the Saʿdian court; see *Les sources inédites de l'histoire du Maroc: Archives et bibliothèques d'Espagne*, ser. 1, vol. 3, ed. Chantal de la Véronne (Paul Geuthner, 1961), 265.

5 Braudel, *Mediterranean*, 2:1180; Ronald Cueto, "1580 and All That: Philip II and the Politics of the Portuguese Succession," *Portuguese Studies* 8 (1992): 150–69.

6 "António, Prior of Crato," In *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th ed., vol. 2. (1911).

"great help" to their common cause of deposing Philip II.[7] The matter to which Ahmad al-Mansur referred was his recent invasion of the West African Songhai Empire.

Episode 3: The Invasion of the Songhai Empire (1591)

Thirteen years into the reign of Ahmad al-Mansur, Morocco was experiencing a degree of centralized rule emanating from the capital of Marrakech not seen since the Almohad dynasty. With the Portuguese decline and Spain's ongoing conflicts with both England and the Ottomans, any incentive to scrutinize Ahmad al-Mansur's moves was outweighed by more immediate and greater concerns. Ahmad al-Mansur could rest assured that the prospects of foreign encroachment were slim. Now was as good a time as any to begin expanding his empire. With an unnavigable ocean to the west, Ottoman Empire to the east, Spanish to the north—the direction was southward toward the West African Songhai Empire.

Thanks to the writings of Ibn Battuta and, to a lesser extent, Leo Africanus, the stories of abundant salt and gold mines in the region had spread far and wide. The Songhai had been one of the largest empires on the African continent, having inherited the vestiges of Mansa Musa's reign from over two centuries earlier. For over five centuries, Islam had forged an integrated network of stakeholders between North and West Africa, and they were not keen on Ahmad al-Mansur's military plans.[8] The most vehement opposition came from the elite of Fes, historically a rival imperial city to Marrakech, whose people had the means and motive to resist the sultan. To impede their opportunity, Ahmad al-Mansur looked to the burgeoning Atlantic for inspiration in pretext, policy, and purpose.

As the Atlantic became more and more accessible, maritime traffic in Moroccan ports skyrocketed, bringing along new encounters, goods, and ideas. Ahmad al-Mansur was no stranger to the Atlantic's growing importance in the sixteenth century. In the midst of constructing his lavish palace of Qasr al-Badīʿ in 1584, for example, Ahmad al-Mansur secured safe passage from Philip II for one of his architects to travel across the Atlantic and procure rare building material for the project.[9] Toward the end of the sixteenth century, sugar was surging as one of the most coveted goods dominating the Atlantic—a largely Portuguese enterprise sourced from its plantation colony of Brazil. At this time, Portugal's only competitor in the global sugar market was none other than Saʿdian Morocco. While the palates of European elites acquired an insatiable sweet tooth, Morocco, like Portugal, quickly confronted the reality that sugar required an exceeding amount of strenuous labor. To secure that labor, Morocco, again like Portugal, turned to the same place and adopted the same approach: capturing and enslaving Black Africans. To contend with the elite of Fes, Ahmad al-Mansur handed out chests of gold, elevated positions, and the promise of greater commercial opportunity. Those who could not be swayed were forcibly conscripted into administrative positions and dispersed throughout the most remote regions; arrest

7 "Lettre de Moulay Ahmad al-Mansur à Élisabeth, 22 March 1592," in *Les sources inédites de l'histoire du Maroc: Archives et bibliothèques d'Espagne*, ser. 1, vol. 2, ed. Henry de Castries (Paul Geuthner, 1925), 69.

8 Even though Islamic jursprudince, like most Abrahamic traditions, discouraged and limited Muslims from invading, capturing, and enslaving one another, the practical application of theological precepts was neither uniform nor consistent; see *Slavery on the Frontiers of Islam*, ed. Paul E. Lovejoy (Markus Wiener Publishers, 2004); and John O. Hunwick, *West Africa, Islam, and the Arab World* (Markus Wiener Publishers, 2006).

9 "Lettre de Moulay Ahmad al-Mansur à Philippe II, 10 May 1584," in *Les sources inédites de l'histoire du Maroc.: Archives et bibliothèques d'Espagne*, ser. 1, vol. 1, ed. Henry de Castries (E. Leroux, 1905), 436.

and execution were reserved for the absolutely unwavering.[10] The threat of domestic resistance had been subdued, and on October 16, 1590, Ahmad al-Mansur deployed his forces in a grueling trek across the Sahara. By August 1591, Moroccan forces decimated the Songhai and established control over its imperial strongholds of Gao, Timbuktu, and Djenné.[11] Within a few years, first-hand accounts described the scenes of subjection (to borrow from Saidiya Hartman) that were proliferating throughout the Atlantic world of captive Black Africans forced into enslavement. In the final years of Ahmad al-Mansur's reign, sugar production in Morocco reached unprecedented heights. Before his death in 1603, he would acquire one final royal sobriquet to complete his epithet: Ahmad al-Mansur al-Dahabi, *Ahmad the Victorious, the Golden*.

Conclusion

For Fernand Braudel, the history of the early modern Mediterranean may have been the "Age of Philip II," but not even he could ignore that Sultan Ahmad al-Mansur played an integral role in shaping that age. Ahmad al-Mansur strategically mastered the art of appearing neutral while covertly prolonging tensions by playing the Ottomans, Spanish, and English against one another. While they were preoccupied with the rotating cycle of battles, treaties, and scheming plots, Sultan Ahmad al-Mansur stabilized his internal authority and embarked on an ever-expanding empire-building project that extended Sa'dian territory from the southern shores of the Mediterranean, along Africa's northern Atlantic coast, and into the Niger Delta. He reigned over a vital site of the early modern period that collapsed and contained within it a world forever unmade and remade by difference.

From the very beginning of his reign, on the heels of his victory in the Battle of Three Kings to his final years after invading the Songhai, Sultan Ahmad al-Mansur evaded all attempts to place Morocco under any sphere of influence. He fashioned sovereignty and the foundations of the modern Moroccan state by wielding the reality that Sa'dian Morocco was suspended between the ultimate determinations of difference. He did so by refracting imperial rivalries against one another through his own empire-building agenda. Morocco was simultaneously removed from and integrated with all the different worlds that enveloped Morocco's frontiers—Islamic, Christian, European, African, Atlantic, and Mediterranean.

The seemingly liminal space that divides, delineates, limits, ends, and begins is also where meaning lies. "As thus separated," Hegel tells us, "they are just as much essentially connected."[12] In Arabic, the Maghrib is not named for its center, but for its dusk: "the land where the sun sets." The history of Sa 'dian Morocco is one that refuses the clarity of coherence and order. It demands

10 Mohammed al-Ifrānī, *Nozhet-elhādi*, ed. Mohammed Jādūr (Ministry of Culture, 2018); 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Fishtālī, *Manāhil al-ṣafā fi akhbār al-mulūk al-shurafā'*, ed. 'Abd al-Karīm Karīm (The Ministry of Islamic Affairs, 1973); *Majmu`at thawahir wa rasa`il as-sa`diyyin*, ed. Mustafa Benalla (Association Al Hassan Al Wazzan pour la Connaissance Historique, 2011); Maymouna Snoussi, "Addawla assa'adiyya fi a'ahd Ahmad al Mansur Eddahbi," (PhD. dissertation, Université de Dr. Moulay Tahar, 2017); *Majmū`at ẓahā'ir wa rasā'il alsa`diyyin*, ed. Mustafa Benalla (Rabat Net Maroc, 2011); Mohamed Hajji, *L'activité intellectuelle au Maroc à l'époque Sa`dide* (Dar El Maghrib, 1977); Anonymous, *Tarikh addawla assa'adiyya al-tagmadartiyya*, ed. Abderrahim Benhada (Dar tinmil lil tiba'a wa annashr, 1994).

11 John O. Hunwick, *Timbuktu and the Songhay Empire: Al-Sa'di's Tarikh Al-Sudan down to 1613 and other Contemporary Documents* (Brill, 2003).

12 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, trans. George di Giovanni (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 111 (§21.127).

a dialectical process of sublation in which we confront, name, and reveal the contradictions within. It is a history constituted not only by its limit but by the imperial logics that defined it as a limit. Like the namesake of the Atlas Mountains from which it sprang, historiography has cast the Sa'dian dynasty to the edges of the world not because it lacked importance, but because it carried too much. Yet it is there—underfoot and half-forgotten—where modernity would forge an enduring rampart of a world forever united in ontological and material difference. Perhaps, therefore, Atlas neither endured nor shrugged. Maybe he sublated. A

Braudel, the Sorbonne Early Modern Seminar, and the Fabric of Another Mediterranean History

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Few historians have shaped their discipline as profoundly as Fernand Braudel did in the second half of the twentieth century. His influence extended far beyond the École des Annales, reorganizing historical research in France through institutional leadership—notably as a founder of the *École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales* (EHESS)—and by championing regional studies, interdisciplinary methods, and history's maturation as a social science. An entire generation of early modern European historians trained under his guidance bears witness to his intellectual reach.

Among Braudel's monumental contributions, *La Méditerranée et le Monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* stands apart, not only for its scholarly ambition but for the extraordinary conditions of its creation.[1] In 1940, Second Lieutenant Braudel, refusing the armistice with Nazi Germany, continued fighting until his capture. Imprisoned in Mainz and Lübeck—without notes or archives—he drafted his doctoral thesis through correspondence with Lucien Febvre and negotiated access to German historiography. The resulting work, published after the war, redefined historical practice. Its interdisciplinary scope pioneered regional studies, while its *longue durée* framework embedded human events within the slow rhythms of geography and ecology.[2]

Yet today, Braudel's *Mediterranean* is regularly reduced to a pedagogical tool—a text that introduces undergraduates to regional chronology rather than the paradigm-shifting force it once represented. As new social science methodologies ascend, does Braudel's vision still hold relevance? Reflecting on my education and early career experience in historical research at the

1 Fernand Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* (Armand Colin, 1949).

2 Peter Schöttler, "Fernand Braudel, prisonnier en Allemagne: Face à la longue durée et au temps présent," *Sozial Geschichte* 10 (2023): 7–25; and Paule Braudel, "Braudel en captivité," in *Autour de Fernand Braudel*, ed. Paul Carmignani (Presses universitaires de Perpignan, 2002).

Sorbonne, this paper argues that *La Méditerranée* endures as a catalyst for interdisciplinary dialogue and transregional thinking.

A Millennial's Late Encounter with Braudel

As graduate students of early modern history at Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne in the 2000s, we were trained in the exacting methods of microhistory. Our education centered on a rigorous research seminar—collectively led by faculty and connecting us with Europe's foremost early modernists—where multilingual debates and comparative thinking were the norm.[3] Under mentors like Christine Lebeau and Wolfgang Kaiser, we learned to see how a seventeenth-century study of Tabarca could illuminate sixteenth-century confessional policies in Cologne or Vilnius.[4] The "Lebeau-Kaiser seminar" aimed to forge a cohort of scholars whose tightly focused case studies might resonate transregionally.[5]

Ironically, my first substantive engagement with Braudel came through Samuel Huntington's controversial appropriation of *La Méditerranée* to legitimize his "clash of civilizations" thesis. [6] Like many early-career scholars post-9/11, I rejected Huntington's model as reductive and politically hazardous—yet without critically examining whether his reading of Braudel was itself sound.[7]

This changed when Wolfgang Kaiser, as my thesis committee president, remarked, "Vienna is the Mediterranean without the Mediterranean." His comment led me to Braudel's own admission in volume 2 of *La Méditerranée*:

> *I could do no more than take cognizance, from a distance, of the German, Austrian, and Polish archives (...). The best collection of archives in this central European region which looked to the Mediterranean is in Vienna, at that time a political centre rather than an economic cross-road, but it made for political or dynastic reasons, an excellent listening-post (...). Circumstances prevented me from making this trip from which I had hoped to obtain information about the Mediterranean.*[8]

3 Originally established by Daniel Roche, the seminar was run at the University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne's Centre de recherche en Histoire Moderne by Nicole Lemaitre and Alain Canbantous, then later transferred to Christine Lebeau and Wolfgang Kaiser.

4 Sadok Boubaker, "Les Tabarkins: Une communauté de frontières," in *Les sociétés de frontière de la Méditerranée à l'Atlantique* (*XVI–XVIIe siècle*), ed. Michel Bertrand and Natividad Planas (Casa de Velázquez, 2011), 231–42; Mathilde Monge, *Des communautés mouvantes: Les "sociétés des Frères chrétiens" en Rhénanie du Nord (Juliers, Berg, ville de Cologne, v. 1530–1694*) (Droz, 2015); Laurent Tatarenko, *Une réforme orientale à l'âge baroque: Les Ruthènes de la grande-principauté de Lituanie et Rome au temps de l'Union de Brest (milieu du XVI–XVIIe siècle)* (École française de Rome, 2021).

5 David Do Paço, Mathilde Monge, and Laurent Tatarenko, eds., *Des religions dans la ville: Ressorts et stratégies de coexistence dans l'Europe des XVI-XVIIIe siècles* (Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2010).

6 Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (Simon & Schuster, 1996).

7 The Lebeau-Kaiser seminar intersected with many other programs in which the two organizers or their guests were involved, such as *Transméditerranées*, run from the EHESS by Jocelyne Dakhlia, that has notably resulted in Jocelyne Dakhlia and Bernard Vincent, eds., *Les Musulmans dans l'histoire de l'Europe, vol. 1. Une présence invisible* (Albin Michel, 2011), and Jocelyne Dakhlia and Wolfgang Kaiser, *Les musulmans dans l'histoire de l'Europe, vol. 2: Passages et contacts en Méditerranée* (Albin Michel, 2013).

8 Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Siân Reynolds (Harper & Row, 1972–73), 2:1259–61.

At the very moment I read these lines, I was deep in the Austrian State Archives, grappling with 700 boxes of documents (70 percent in Gothic script) on eighteenth-century Trieste. These records—spanning trade, diplomacy, and everyday life—forced me to reconsider my initial model of Viennese society.[9] More profoundly, they revealed how Mediterranean paradigms could intersect with broader social-scientific frameworks, as explored in the sections that follow.

Understanding Migrations Beyond Legal Categories

The study of early modern mobility in central European Habsburg history has long been constrained by a particular interpretation of diaspora studies—one that often amounted to little more than a rebranding of traditional "trading nations" narratives, adapted to contemporary identity politics. This approach found superficial justification in the Habsburg administration's own categorization of minorities, a practice mirrored in the Holy Roman Empire and Mediterranean states, where confessionalization policies seemingly reinforced rigid group boundaries. Historians, in turn, have frequently portrayed Central European cities as mosaics of state-regulated, identity-based corporate bodies.[10]

The Lebeau-Kaiser seminar demanded we challenge these assumptions. Trained in microhistory, we learned to reconstruct communities through observed practices rather than imposed categories.[11] Our research revealed these groups as sites of perpetual negotiation—between internal heterogeneity and external authorities—where belonging was fluid and multilayered.[12] This lens exposed how historical actors navigated multiple, overlapping "circles of social belonging" to advance their agendas—or simply survive.[13] Most crucially, it forced us to confront those whom the administrative framework rendered invisible: unincorporated populations like Muslims in Christian-ruled territories. Lacking institutional protections, these individuals strategically diversified their social resources and affiliations, operating beyond—and often in spite of—the state's classificatory logic.[14]

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9 David Do Paço, *L'Orient à Vienne au dix-huitième siècle* (The Voltaire Foundation, 2015).

10 David Do Paço, "Migrations and Super-Diversity in Eighteenth-Century Trieste," in Christoph Cornelissen, Beat Kümin, and Massimo Rospocher, eds., *Migration and the European City. Social and Cultural Perspectives from Early Modernity to the Present* (De Gruyter, 2022), 213-31.

11 Johann Petitjean, *L'intelligence des choses: Une histoire de l'information entre Italie et Méditerranée (XVI– XVIIe siècles)* (École Française de Rome, 2013); Fabrice Micallef, *Un désordre européen* (Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2014); Guillaume Calafat, *Une mer jalousée: Contribution à l'histoire de la souveraineté (Méditerranée, XVIIe siècle)* (Seuil, 2019).

12 Examples of particularly influential research introduced by their authors at the Lebeau-Kaiser seminar: Natalia Muchnik, *Une vie marrane, Les pérégrinations de Juan de Prado dans l'Europe du XVIIe siècle* (Honoré Champion, 2005); Marie-Carmen Smyrnelis, *Une société hors de soi, identités et relations sociales à Smyrne aux XVIIIe et XIXe siècles* (Editions Peeters, 2005); Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers:. The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (Yale University Press, 2009); and Roberto Zaugg, *Stranieri di antico regime: Mercanti, giudici e consoli nella Napoli del Settecento* (Viella, 2011).

13 Simona Cerutti, *Étrangers: Étude d'une condition d'incertitude dans une société d'Ancien Régime* (Bayard, 2012).

14 David Do Paço, "Muslims in Christian-ruled Europe, Fifteenth to Nineteenth Century," in *Routledge Handbook of Islam in the West*, ed. Roberto Tottoli (Routledge, 2022), 89–104.

Complexifying Mediterranean Geography

A practice-driven approach to historical analysis compels us to rethink the Mediterranean's spatial logic. Braudel—writing *La Méditerranée* as a former teacher in colonial Algeria—privileged North-South dynamics reflective of his era's geopolitical framework. Samuel Huntington, by contrast, imposed an East-West dichotomy informed by Cold War ideology and Orientalist assumptions, distorting Braudel's vision while foreclosing his nascent interest in Central Europe's Mediterranean connections.

My research on Ottoman traders' social lives—their economic networks, knowledge transfers, and the territorial unities these created—demands a radical reconfiguration. The Danube Basin emerged not as periphery but as one of Braudel's "*petites mers*." Akin to the Sahara, it was part of a connective subsystem, binding the Mediterranean world through decentralized yet interdependent ecosystems. Like the desert's trans-Saharan routes, the Danube's currents facilitated cultural and economic homogenization, revealing a Mediterranean far more spatially elastic—and intellectually capacious—than either Braudel's colonial lens or Huntington's bipolar geopolitics allowed. [15]

The Mediterranean as Zomia

The Lebeau-Kaiser seminar did not invite us to transpose Mediterranean models to other regions but sought to *de-mediterraneanize* the Mediterranean itself. In one provocative intellectual experiment, Wolfgang Kaiser proposed reimagining the region through the lens of the Zomia region—invoking James C. Scott's work on Southeast Asian highlanders' "art of not being governed." This conceptual pivot resonated with trans-imperial historiography, where the Mediterranean world emerged as a space where states and empires appeared as outsiders rather than central actors.[16]

Here, mobility functioned as a tool of emancipation—not only geographic, but also socio-economic, linguistic, religious, and even existential. Historical actors compensated for their lack of institutional protection by cultivating layered relational communities, exemplifying what might be termed a history of escape from the state.[17]

Yet Central European urban case studies complicate this narrative, revealing an unexpected dialectic: where Scott and Foucault emphasized administrative consolidation,[18] I also identify an "art of not governing." Faced with limited capacity, authorities often tolerated—even exploited—unincorporated populations whose activities destabilized traditional corporate bodies. These

15 David Do Paço, "Tempo, Scales and Circulations: The Lazarets in Eighteenth-Century Trieste," *Ler Historia 78* (2021), 61–84.

16 James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (Yale University Press, 2009).

17 David Do Paço, "In the Blind Spot of the State: Trieste in the Eighteenth-Century Trans-Imperial Adriatic Society," in *The Power of the Dispersed: Early Modern Global Travelers beyond Integration*, ed. Cornel Zwierlein (Brill, 2022), 365–88.

18 Michel Foucault, *La Naissance de la biopolitique: Cours au collège de France (1978–1979)* (Seuil, 2004)

groups, far from being marginal, were sometimes co-opted as imperial agents or aristocratic protégés, becoming integral to the very power structures they appeared to evade.[19]

These examples, explored at Fernand Braudel's invitation, facilitated a dialogue between Mediterranean and Central European histories. Though Braudel's interpretive model may have dulled with time, *La Méditerranée* endures as a foundational work, its authority rooted in unparalleled scholarly rigor, literary brilliance, and its transformative impact on global historiography. Its relevance persists not only through its unshakable coherence and narrative power but also in its footnotes and source analyses, which unveil fertile ground for research beyond the Castilian-centric lens of Philip II's reign.

Also, today, humanity's relationship with the environment stands among the most urgent questions of our age. Braudel's holistic vision—his interplay of climate cycles, trade routes, and societal-ecosystem dynamics—resonates in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in their regional frameworks and the conceptual scaling of the Mediterranean to spaces like the Caribbean, Southeast Asia, or Micronesia. The Mediterranean is thus a work of *longue durée* that implicates us all, challenging contemporary approaches to ocean governance. Yet Braudel's Mediterranean remains a human-centric construct: a dynamic, polycentric ecosystem narrated from the shore. Perhaps the next frontier of Mediterranean history lies in writing it not from the land, but from the sea itself, in line with the blue humanities. A

19 David Do Paço, "A Case of Urban Integration: Vienna's Port Area and the Ottoman Merchants in the Eighteenth Century," *Urban History* 48, no. 3 (2021), 533–51.

The Sea That Diffracts: Dante, Glissant, and Braudel's Mediterranean

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With respect to my particular specialty of Dante studies, I would submit that the impact of Fernand Braudel and of Mediterranean studies as a point of emphasis has been varied: We have been, insular field that we are, late to the game. I can point to recent publications such as Roberta Morosini's *Il mare salato: Il Mediterraneo di Dante, Petrarca e Boccaccio* (Viella, 2020) or to the more polemical *Dante and the Mediterranean Comedy* by Andrea Celli (Palgrave, 2022). Perhaps the more sustained mode of thinking about Dante and the Mediterranean has been the more-than-century-long debate over Dante and Islam (to put it more precisely, whether Dante may have drawn inspiration from the Islamic visionary tradition) since the publication of Miguel Asin Palacios's book *La escatologia musulmana en la Divina Comedia* (1919). What has long been interesting to me with regard to the debate over Dante and Islam is how very caught up it is in nationalism: detractors said that Asin Palacios was simply trying to assert Spanish influence and centrality; those on the other side said that Italian scholars were trying to protect their own national, cultural, and religious interests at the expense of shutting out the rest of the world.

Braudel's Mediterranean is of course a very appealing way to think beyond the nation, something that is particularly important to my work on Dante. This is not just a matter of decentering and looking to the sea as a whole but also drawing us into the geographical and topographical complex, before getting to the stuff of human history. The two faces of the Mediterranean for Braudel are "compact, mountainous peninsulas," and in between, "vast, complicated and fragmented stretches of sea, for the Mediterranean is not so much a single entity as a 'complex of seas.'"[1] Not just the one thing, but a complex.

Part of this fragmentation is of course the islands, the archipelagoes. And that is a model that I have been interested in with respect to Dante's *Purgatorio* as an island that is obviously

[1] Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Siân Reynolds (Harper & Row, 1972–73), 1:23.

implicated in this attention to the nonhuman, to the contours and boundaries of space. Dante's island is of course a world apart, an otherworld, on the other side of the planet. But it is still earthbound, and it has much to offer with respect to thinking about the Mediterranean from a differently grounded, or perhaps differently thalassic, perspective.

My recent work on Dante has been oriented to Martinican philosopher Édouard Glissant's notion of archipelagic thought. The whole world is archipelagizing and creolizing, writes Glissant in his 1997 *Treatise on the Whole-World*, asking us to change the way we relate landmasses and languages to one another.[2] I look at moments like Dante calling Morocco home in *Purgatorio* 4 and the hybrid language of Tuscan and Occitan in *Purgatorio* 26 as moments in which we might see the merit of reading Dante archipelagically.

In his earlier *Poetics of Relation*, Glissant offers the Caribbean as a model for new global paradigms, and he does so by means of departure from the enclosed geography of the Mediterranean:

> Compared to the Mediterranean, which is an inner sea surrounded by lands, a sea that concentrates (in Greek, Hebrew, and Latin antiquity and later in the emergence of Islam, imposing the thought of the One), the Caribbean is, in contrast, a sea that explodes the scattered lands into an arc. A sea that diffracts. Without necessarily inferring any advantage whatsoever to their situation, the reality of archipelagos in the Caribbean or the Pacific provides a natural illustration of the thought of Relation.[3]

The Caribbean (or Pacific) archipelago is here revealed to be a way of embodying relationality and openness, diffracting as compared to the Mediterranean concentrating and distilling.

Are the Glissant model and Braudelian model compatible? I'd like to suggest that they might be, that we might think of the diffractive, rhizomatic possibilities in the Mediterranean as well. Islands might help us do that, especially that most curious imagined island on the other side of the planet that is Dante's *Purgatorio*. Indeed, I'm particularly taken with Braudel's phrasing of the Aegean archipelago as "being so scattered over the sea as to be inseparable from it."[4] It is in these in-between spaces, in these fusings of land and sea, that we might shift our ways of reading to engage in what is not nationalist. (Here I'm reminded of Erich Auerbach's "Philology and 'Weltliteratur'," in which he writes, "Our philological home is the earth; it can no longer be the nation."[5])

What is the Mediterranean when it is seen in its crossing, as Ulysses speaks of seeing "l'un lito e l'altro," one shore and another, in *Inferno* 26 before he goes beyond the limits? What is it when seen from an island on the other side of the world, when instead of any Italian toponym, Dante calls his home Morocco in *Purgatorio* 4? What is the Mediterranean when it is seen from outer space, as Dante looks back to his home planet and twice describes it as nothing more than

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2 See Édouard Glissant, *Treatise on the Whole-World*, trans. Celia Britton (Liverpool University Press, 2020).

3 Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (University of Michigan Press, 1990), 33–34.

4 Braudel, *The Mediterranean*, 1:149. We might expand on this notion of "archipelago," especially in light of its medieval usage as the very name of the Aegean Sea; see, for example, Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron*, 2.4.13.

5 Erich Auerbach, "Philology and 'Weltliteratur,'" trans. Edward Said and Maire Said, *The Centennial Review* 13, no. 1 (1969): 17.

an *aiuola*, a threshing floor, and yet individualizes the full extent of Ulysses' mad flight across the Mediterranean in *Paradiso* 27?[6]

Braudel writes of the "life of the sea, a vital force" that can take hold of lands across it and come to dominate all. He then reflects on how far we might extend the Mediterranean, writing, "The historical Mediterranean seems to be a concept capable of infinite extension. But how far in space are we justified in extending it?"[7] Can the Mediterranean go beyond itself spatially? Braudel characterizes this question as difficult and controversial, but perhaps the fundamental one we should be asking. I think what Glissant offers with the Caribbean model of the sea that diffracts (a model that he too, it should be said, seeks to infinitely extend and make global) is not a competing vision so much as a way of bringing out the transformative possibilities of Braudel's Mediterranean that is not distilled over millennia in the enclosed "center" of civilization or as a form of imposed domination that spreads across the sea, but rather a new mode of thinking about the connective possibilities of the open sea and lands scattered in an arc upon it. The possible island world of Dante's *Purgatorio* might help us to see that archipelagic potential a bit better. A

6 All references to the *Commedia* are from the Digital Dante edition: https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/; the specific verses referenced are *Inferno* 26.103 (for "one shore and the other"), *Purgatorio* 4.139 (for "Morocco"), and *Paradiso* 22.151 and 27.86 (for "the threshing floor").

7 Braudel, *The Mediterranean*, 1:167.

The Impact and Legacy of Braudel's Méditerranée *in Medieval Italian History*

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Before I had ever read Braudel, I was already drawn to works of history that begin by taking you to a place by describing the land, with its particular mountains and plains, and the waters that divide, connect, and nourish it. A good example is David Herlihy's *Medieval and Renaissance Pistoia: The Social History of an Italian Town, 1200–1430*, published in 1967.[1] Its opening chapter traces the formation of the city's medieval territory, immediately discussing the plain of the middle Arno, the Ombrone river, and the high Apennine "spurs" of Monte della Calvana and the Monte Morello that rose north and northwest of Pistoia.[2] Such histories drew me into the field, taking me places I never imagined I could be. Even after encountering Braudel's *Méditerranée* in one of those graduate methodology seminars that introduce the novice historian to the many ways in which histories have been crafted and conceived, I didn't connect his *Méditerranée* with the kind of history I wanted to write. This is, I think, because medieval historians, especially those with whom I am most familiar who study Italy, had adopted only a sort of weak Braudelianism. This influence had two components.

First, historians of medieval Italy agreed that the Mediterranean's physical environment was very important, but they didn't give it the causal weight and narrative dominance characteristic of Braudel's *Méditerranée*. They tended, for example, to begin with the landscape, acknowledge its power, but then focus on all the canny ways people made their livelihood, and made meaning, in the awesome theater of its power. Put another way, empowering the natural environment (as Braudel, to his great credit, did) and minimizing the role of elite politics (as he also rightly did), opened up space for histories of other people and their struggles. The physical environment was there, right up front, but it wasn't the point; the people and their struggles were.

1 David Herlihy, *Medieval and Renaissance Pistoia: The Social History of an Italian Town, 1200–1430* (Yale University Press, 1967).

2 Herlihy, *Pistoia*, 1–14.

Second, many medieval historians adapted the *structures* emphasized by Braudel and the Annalistes into an analytical narrative form that was "bottom up." After sketching the physical environment, the historian layered analyses of the structures emerging from it, such as the economy, the society, and its governing institutions. These moved at different paces, the deeper ones at slower gaits (although rarely quite so glacially as Braudel's *Méditerranée*).

Partly, this adoption of what I am calling a weak Braudelianism may have been due to the different way Braudel's great work was received by medievalists. Braudel's focus on the great inland sea was not, perhaps, as striking to medievalists as it was to his primary audience of historians of early modern Europe. After all, we medievalists had been to the Mediterranean before. Henri Pirenne's *Mahomet et Charlemagne* (published in 1937) had already posited the Mediterranean as the very starting point of medieval history.[3] The Pirenne debate—over whether the expansion of Islam in the seventh century was the catastrophic rupture that marked the beginning of the Middle Ages rather than the collapse of the western Roman state two centuries earlier—was even acknowledged by Braudel as an inspiration for his *magnum opus*. When pressed to explain his choice of the Mediterranean as his topic, he recalled hearing a series of "marvelous lectures" by Pirenne in 1931 at Algiers about the Belgian historian's "ideas on the closure of the Mediterranean after the Moslem invasions."[4]

Nonetheless, Braudel's broader emphasis on geography, landscape, the environment, agriculture, livestock grazing, transportation, towns, and demography did have a significant impact on medieval history by valorizing work on these topics. This is certainly evident in my late mentor David Herlihy's career, as he moved from Bryn Mawr College, to the University of Wisconsin–Madison, to Harvard University (and finally to Brown). This impact on the history of medieval Italy, however, was far more evident in the United States than in Italy. Although there are lots of reasons Herlihy partnered with Christiane Klapisch-Zuber to undertake their massive computer-assisted analysis of the 1427 Florentine catasto (or census record), one was that very few Italian historians of the Middle Ages in the late 1960s and early 1970s were at all interested in demography and the history of the family, much less in computers.[5] The greatest impact in Italy of Braudel and the *Annales* School has generally been through the École française de Rome.

Installed in 1875 in the beautiful Farnese palace in the heart of Rome, this research institute's multiyear fellowships for doctoral candidates and early career historians working on medieval Italy brought the *Annales* revolution to Italy, particularly through its publication of the mammoth regional histories of scholars such as Pierre Toubert on Lazio (1973),[6] Henri Bresc on Sicily (1986),[7] Jean-Marie Martin on Puglia (1993),[8] and in the same year (1993) François Menant[9] on the Lombard countryside (between Bergamo, Cremona, and Brescia from the tenth to thirteenth

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3 Henri Pirenne, *Mahomet et Charlemagne* (Félix Alcan Nouvelle Société d'Éditions, 1937).

4 Fernand Braudel, "Personal Testimony," *The Journal of Modern History* 44, no. 4 (1972): 452.

5 David Herlihy and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans et leurs familles: Une étude du catasto florentin de 1427* (Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1978).

6 Pierre Toubert, *Les structures du Latium méridional et la Sabine du IXe siècle à la fin du XIIe siècle* (École française de Rome, 1973).

7 Henri Bresc, *Un monde méditerranéen: Économie et société en Sicile, 1300–1450* (École française de Rome, 1986).

8 Jean-Marie Martin, *La Pouille du VIe au XIIe siècle* (École française de Rome, 1993).

9 François Menant, *Campagnes lombardes du moyen âge: L'économie et la société rurales dans la région de Bergame, de Crémone et de Brescia du Xe au XIIe siècle* (École française de Rome, 1993).

century), Laurent Feller on the Abruzzo (1998),[10] and Amedeo Feniello on the Neapolitan countryside in the late Middle Ages (2005).[11] After the classic, and supremely valuable, *thèse d'Etat* survey of the sources, these works give extensive consideration of the natural setting (geography, hydrology, soils, vegetation, systems of agriculture) before reconstructing and analyzing the economic, social, religious, judicial, and political structures. Not all of these works have garnered equal attention from Italian medieval historians, but Toubert's thesis on *incastellamento*—a massive transformation of settlement patterns over the tenth through twelfth centuries—drove debate and research by Italian scholars from the mid-1990s, with articles appearing on the topic in Italian into this decade. Toubert's work had a huge impact on Italian research on medieval history, and the French school in Rome remains the most vibrant and ambitious force for innovative history on the Italian Middle Ages.

So, from my perspective, institutions matter even more than geography when it comes to changes in the writing of history. One wouldn't know this from the *Méditerranée*, but it is evident from Braudel's long tenures as director of the Centre de recherches historiques (beginning in 1949), of the Sixième section of the École pratique des hautes études (1956–1972), and of the *Annales* (1946–1985). Long may the two humanities centers that hosted this celebration of Braudel's work—the Stanford Humanities Center at Stanford University and the Townsend Center for the Humanities at the University of California–Berkeley—endure in their support of innovative history and historians. A

10 Laurent Feller, *Les Abruzzes médiévales: Territoire, économie et société en Italie centrale du IXe au XIIe siècle* (École française de Rome, 1998).

11 Amadeo Feniello, *Les campagnes napolitaines à la fin du Moyen Âge: Mutations d'un paysage rural* (École française de Rome, 2005).

Fernand Braudel: The Greatest Geographer *of the Twentieth Century?*

Martin W. Lewis
Stanford University

In 1981, I entered the graduate program in geography at the University of California, Berkeley and found myself in a war zone. The traditionalist scholars who hewed to the old "land and life" model and the young Marxian social theorists held each other in mutual contempt. The only author who found respect on both sides was Fernand Braudel. As my partner, Kären Wigen, and I had advisors in opposing camps, we thought it a good idea to immerse ourselves in his works. In rereading *Civilization and Capitalism* in the summer of 2024, I found the pages falling out of their binding, the handsome paperbacks destroyed by too many readings—and the passage of too much time.

The passage of time has also taken a toll on some of Braudel's claims. I was especially taken aback by his depiction of Central Asian nomadic peoples: "As soon as they appeared in history, they were what they would remain until their decline … hordes of violent, cruel, pillaging horsemen full of daredevil courage."[1] To be sure, such framing has a long pedigree across the Eurasian sedentary zone, but I would have expected something better from a scholar as great as Fernand Braudel.

And I do mean great. As Keith Thomas argued in a 1973 review of *Capitalism and Material Life*, "If there were a Nobel Prize for history there can be little question about its most likely recipient."[2] I would venture to add that Braudel was the greatest *geographer* of the twentieth century, without rivals.

That is quite the claim to make, as Braudel was not, formally speaking, a geographer. But geography suffuses not just the first part of *The Mediterranean*, but his entire corpus. And not just "geography" in the general sense, but geographical inquiry in many diverse registers.

1 Fernand Braudel, *A History of Civilizations* (Penguin Books, 1995 [1963]), 164.

2 Keith Thomas, "Historian of Everything," *New York Review*, December 13, 1973, https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1973/12/13/historian-of-everything/.

To appreciate Fernand Braudel's contribution, we need to know something about the discipline when he was intellectually coming of age. Human geography in the 1920s was under the spell of Friedrich Ratzel, noted for his environmental determinism and the concept of *lebensraum*, which was later to undergird Nazi ideology. The leading US geographer of the time, Elsworth Huntington of Yale, found acclaim by melding crude Ratzelian determinism with pseudoscientific racism, forging an unholy synthesis that would do much to discredit the discipline. Not coincidentally, Huntington mapped New Haven, Connecticut, in the central portion of his favored zone of optimal "climatic energy."[3]

Braudel embraced a geography of a different kind: "environmental possibilism," developed in France by Paul Vidal de la Blache. Although ignored today, Vidal's works are everywhere in Braudel; they were "read and reread,"[4] he tells us, when he was writing *The Mediterranean*. Equally important was the work of his mentor, Lucien Febvre. Although remembered as a historian, Febvre cared enough about geography to write a book on it, a devastating "possibilist" riposte to Ratzelian determinism. Febvre scoffed even at "environmental influence," which he regarded as reeking of astrology.[5] Instead, he insisted that people adapted to their natural environments while continually transforming them. This made geography not a "factor" but something far more basic: a fundamental dimension of life. As he saw it, "history" and "geography" were two sides of the same coin. Braudel took the whole coin and pocketed it for the rest of his life. Unfortunately, Braudel's intellectual partnership with Febvre came to a premature end; as originally envisaged, *Civilization and Capitalism* was to be a joint project, with Febvre providing the nonmaterial volumes.[6] That project, had it come to fruition, would have merited the designation of "total history."

Although a thoroughgoing possibilist, Braudel often portrayed topographical features as guiding the development of trade networks and other economic activities. He can therefore be described as an "environmental determinist" of sorts, as perceptively argued by Diliana Angelova in her contribution to this symposium. But his was a minimal and hedged version of the doctrine, far removed from the causal inevitability found in the works of scholars like Huntington. In their view, physical geography determines not just the course of trade routes but also the substance of thought and the direction of cultural development. In hardcore environmental determinism, "geography" is nothing less than "destiny"—to quote the title of a recent book.[7] Needless to say, Braudel had no use for such secular predestinarian thinking. (See postscript.)

Throughout his career, Braudel leaned on geographers, both well-known and unsung. *The Wheels of Commerce* is dedicated to Pierre Gourou, "in token of double affection"; *The Identity of France* turns repeatedly to Pierre Bonnaud, author of *Land and Languages*,[8] a book essentially unknown in the United States. But Braudel's geohistorical synthesis was very much his own. It

3 Elsworth Huntington, *Civilization and Climate* (Yale University Press, 1915); see also Martin W. Lewis, "Environmental Determinism, Ellsworth Huntington, and the Decline of Geography," *GeoCurrents*, 2010, https://www.geocurrents.info/blog/2011/02/10/environmental-determinism-ellsworth-huntington-and-the-decline-of-geography/.

4 Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Siân Reynolds (Harper & Row, 1972–73), 2:1273.

5 Lucien Febvre and Lionel Bataillon, *A Geographical Introduction to History* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1925), 16, 360.

6 Fernand Braudel, *Afterthoughts on Material Civilization and Capitalism* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 3.

7 Ian Morris, *Geography Is Destiny: Britain and the World: A 10,000-Year History* (Macmillan, 2022).

8 Pierre Bonnaud, *Terres et Langages, peuples et régions* (Auvernhà tarà d'Oc, 1981).

was also deeply rooted. He went so far as to argue that landscape has "as much to tell us as the richest documents of the archives"[9] and that the "[Mediterranean] sea itself … is the greatest document of its past experience."[10] That was exactly what I was taught by the old-school Berkeley geographers—particularly James Parsons—although I have yet to meet a historian who concurs.

Braudel's geographical scope was encompassing. He was fascinated by places as intimate as a single village and as vast as the emerging global system. He depicted regions, regardless of scale, as generally overlapping, always crosscut by networks, and perpetually in flux, if often at a glacial pace. Braudel's vast geographical knowledge, combined with his archival sleuthing, helped him highlight places that have been slipping out of the historical imagination, such as Ragusa, which is now called Dubrovnik. "The Tyrrhenian Sea," he tells us, "would have almost become a Ragusan lake if it had not been for the presence of Marseille and later Livorno."[11]

Braudel was even a fan of formal spatial models, particularly those of Johann von Thünen, who modeled the distribution of economic activities in a hypothetical "isolated state."[12] More problematic, he embraced the geometrical abstraction of Central Place Theory, particularly as deployed by G. William Skinner for China. Braudel wrongly[13] argued that the Chinese organization of markets, and hence the map of settlements, "was strictly, almost mathematically, based on geography …"[14] Yet elsewhere he decried the "dehumanizing" mathematicization of history and social inquiry.[15] Seeming contradictions like this litter Braudel's work, although they are almost always resolvable through careful reading.

What most distinguishes Braudel's geographical vision is his assertion that inequality itself is a fundamentally spatial phenomenon, rooted in the hierarchical relationship between centers and peripheries. "My conclusion," he wrote, "is that the organization of territory itself creates inequality and hierarchies. Marx saw the conflict between town and country as the oldest example of class struggle, a masterly insight."[16] The resulting vision may seem unduly constraining and inadequately concerned with disparities of wealth and power inside the metropole, but it is difficult to deny its historical salience.

It has been argued that the truly geographical mind is characterized by topophilia, or the love of place. Here again, Braudel fits the mold. His self-professed love of the Mediterranean generated a massive masterpiece, and his affection for France inspired another, half-finished at the end of his life. It is difficult to say which was his greater love. Intriguingly, he chose to live his final years, or so he tells us,[17] in the town of Céret, a few miles from the Mediterranean. This

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9 Fernand Braudel, *The Identity of France*, vol. 1: *History and Environment* (HarperCollins, 1989 [1986]), 32.

10 Braudel, *Mediterranean*, 1:17.

11 Braudel, *Mediterranean*, 1:121.

12 Braudel opined that von Thünen "ranks alongside Marx as the greatest German economist of the 19th century," although he faulted him for missing the inequality that was generated by the spatial zones that he modeled; Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th–18th Century*, vol. 3: *The Perspective of the World*, trans. Siân Reynolds (Harper and Row, 1984 [1967]), 38.

13 Central Place Theory is based on retail trade. The spatial patterns of the urban hierarchies that it describes, however, have been shown by several scholars to have been based more on administrative hierarchies and on wholesaling networks than on retail trade; see, for example, James Vance, *The Merchant's World: The Geography of Wholesaling* (Prentice Hall, 1971).

14 Braudel, *Afterthoughts*, 31

15 See, for example, Braudel, *Mediterranean*, 2:1243; see also Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism*,1:562.

16 Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism*, 1:176.

17 Braudel, *Identity of France*, vol. 1, 61–62; Braudel, *Identity of France*, vol. 2, 676.

Catalan-speaking community is in France, but just barely. To the end, Braudel sympathized more with peripheries, and peripheralized peoples, than with centers of power and their elite denizens.

To conclude, I would like to briefly speculate about Fernand Braudel's geographical legacy. Just as *The Mediterranean* was being published, academic geography began to wither in the United States, with most major universities shuttering their departments in the following decades. But by the 1980s, history was beginning to fill the gap, with burgeoning spatial and environmental history programs transforming the discipline. The works of Fernand Braudel surely played a role in this extramural revitalization of geographical scholarship. And for that, I give him my undying thanks.

Postscript. In the mid-twentieth century, the discipline of geography turned against the rigid environmental determinism that had previously characterized it, with the pendulum swinging so far in the opposite direction that any consideration of the role environmental features play in human history came to be effectively forbidden. The "cutting-edge" quantitative geographers of the 1950s and 1960s thus began their research projects by hypothesizing an "isotropic plain," featureless in all directions. They correspondingly relegated most of their forebears, including a scholar as brilliant and creative as Ellen Churchill Semple, to the ash heap of intellectual history. As a result, an analytical gap emerged that would eventually be filled by a new cohort of environmental determinists trained in other disciplines, typified by best-selling author Jared Diamond.[18] Unfortunately, these writers have little interest in the history of environmental determinism—and it tells. For an indispensable guide to the intellectual history of foundational geographical ideas, including environmental determinism, see Clarence Glacken's *Traces on the Rhodian Shore*.[19] A

18 Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (W. W. Norton, 1997).

19 Clarence Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (University of California Press, 1976).

From Géohistoire *to* Geoaesthetics: *An Art Historical Segue for our Times*

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Philosophy, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari contend, is *géophilosophie*. In their 1991 reflections on the nature of philosophy, Deleuze and Guattari observe that "philosophy is a geophilosophy in precisely the same way that history is a geohistory from Braudel's point of view."[1] It is no coincidence that they conceived the term *géophilosophie* along the lines of what Fernand Braudel had designated as *géohistoire* in an essay written while he was imprisoned during the Second World War.[2] As is now widely known, Braudel's *géohistoire*—"the study of a double liaison, from nature to man and man to nature, the study of an action and a reaction, combined, mixed, confounded, renewed endlessly in the reality of the everyday"[3]—found its fullest articulation in the first volume of *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II*, the magisterial book that opens with meticulous descriptions of mountains and water bodies to emphasize that the natural environment was not merely the setting or an inert backdrop for human action.[4] Taken together, these frameworks insist that the earth is not a passive stage but a generative agent in the making of historical form and meaning.

Thinking alongside *La Méditerranée*, here I return here to Braudel from within via the discipline of art history where the French historian's pioneering scholarship offers methodologies to explore the circulation of objects and materials across vast oceanic spaces in the early modern

1 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?* (Les Éditions de Minuit, 1991), trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell as *What Is Philosophy?* (Columbia University Press, 1994), 95.

2 Fernand Braudel, "Géohistoire: la société, l'espace et le temps," in *Les ambitions de l'histoire*, ed. Roselyne de Ayala and Paule Braudel (Éditions de Fallois, 1997), 68–114. For Braudel's géohistoire, see Guilherme Ribeiro, "A Arte de Conjugar Tempo e Espaço: Fernand Braudel, a Geo-história e a Longa Duração," *História, Ciências, Saúde–Manguinhos* 22, no. 2 (2015): 605–39.

3 As Braudel writes: "La géohistoire est l'étude d'une double liaison, de la nature à l'homme et de l'homme à la nature, l'étude d'une action et d'une réaction, mêlées, confondues, recommencées sans fin, dans la réalité de chaque jour." Braudel, "Géohistoire," 102.

4 Fernand Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* (Armand Colin, 1949).

period.[5] Such art historical deliberations on entanglements and encounters across oceanic scales, Alicia Walker argues, fruitfully shift our focus away "from origins and localities as the defining factors of history and toward the consideration of movement across boundaries traditionally defined by language, religion, ethnicity and geography."[6] The implications of the concept-term *géohistoire* for a discipline such as art history also take us beyond connected histories, to use Sanjay Subramanyam's felicitous phrase, to engage the indelible tractions between the natural environment and creative practices in shaping the contours of the early modern world.[7] Take, for instance, the notion of geoaesthetics, a term that I have employed elsewhere to consider artistic practices shaped through human interaction with geographical, botanical, zoological, mineralogical, and climatic formations.[8] The concept of geoaesthetics has, of course, has emerged only recently in scholarly discourse to designate post-1960s environmental art as a "form of thinking that works between the territory and the earth by opening up zones of indeterminacy."[9] However, the intellectual roots of the concept-term take us back to Braudel's *géohistoire* and Deleuze and Guattari's *géophilosophie*, from which we may rethink the diverse indices of both the phenomenal and the noumenal within which geoaesthetics functions in art history.

At face value, this line of enquiry is not new. Whether tracing the global circulation of silver from Potosí or porcelain from Jingdezhen in the early modern period, art history has always been attentive to earthly formations that are at the center of artistic production.[10] Our embattled ecological present, however, requires new art histories aligned with other registers of thought beyond narratives that solely focus on connectivity, mobility, and exchange under the menacing shadow of global capital formation. While art historians such as Ananda Cohen-Aponte have already proposed that we decolonize the so-called Global Renaissance by introducing questions of colonial power and hegemony when writing histories of artistic exchange in the early modern period, my proposition is for a history of art that is equally alert to Indigenous worldviews, the vitalism of more-than-human actants and actors, and other minor ways of being in alterity that

5 There is a significant body of art historical scholarship on the global early modern; for recent appraisals, see Stephen J. Campbell and Stephanie Porras, eds., *The Routledge Companion to Global Renaissance Art* (Routledge, 2024) and Monica Juneja, *Can Art History Be Made Global? Meditations from the Periphery* (De Gruyter, 2023).

6 Alicia W. Walker, "Globalism," *Studies in Iconography* 33 (2012): 185.

7 Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Connected Histories: Notes Towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia," *Modern Asian Studies* 31, no. 3 (1997): 735–62.

8 Sugata Ray, *Climate Change and the Art of Devotion: Geoaesthetics in the Land of Krishna, 1550–1850* (University of Washington Press, 2019).

9 Gary Shapiro, "Territory, Landscape, Garden: Toward Geoaesthetics," *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 9, no. 2 (2004): 113. Recent scholarship on geoaesthetics in contemporary art, literature, and cinema includes Susan Ballard and Liz Linden, "Spiral Jetty, Geoaesthetics, and Art: Writing the Anthropocene," The *Anthropocene Review* 6, nos. 1–2 (2019): 142–46; Mark A. Cheetham, *Landscape into Eco Art: Articulations of Nature since the '60s* (The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2018); and Amy J. Elias and Christian Moraru, eds., *The Planetary Turn: Relationality and Geoaesthetics in the Twenty-First Century* (Northwestern University Press, 2015), among others. Conferences include the biennial Geo-Aesthetics Conference initiated by the International Association for the Study of Environment, Space, and Place in 2008. Contemporary art exhibitions include GEO-AESTHETICS, Museum for Contemporary Art, Citadelpark, Ghent (2013). For a historiography of the term, see William L. Fox, "Geoaesthetics," in *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, ed. Michael Kelly, 2nd ed. (Oxford University Press, 2014), 171–75.

10 See Stacey Pierson, *From Object to Concept: Global Consumption and the Transformation of Ming Porcelain* (Hong Kong University Press, 2013); and Dana Leibsohn, "Made in China, Made in Mexico," in *At the Crossroads: The Arts of Spanish America and Early Global Trade, 1492–1850*, eds. Donna Pierce and Ronald Otsuka (Denver Art Museum, 2012), 11–40, among others.

have been all but marginalized by colonialism, capitalism, and the global circulation of objects and material.[11] From such a perspective, Potosí is not only the source of silver, a singularly precious metal that fueled the early modern global economy from the Americas to Asia, but, as anthropologist Pascale Absi has indicated, a mountain with contingent personhood.[12] Indeed, posthuman critiques from disciplines such as anthropology have by now linked the geological (nonlife) and the biological (life) to reimagine the vitality of entanglements across lifeworlds.[13] Along the same lines, a geoaesthetic approach from within art history promises to disturb the post-Enlightenment foundations of the discipline that emerged from a specific Westernist bourgeois intellectual culture with roots in European colonial expansionism.[14]

Figure 1: Krishna Holds up the Govardhan to Shelter the Villagers of Braj. Folio from a Harivaṃśa (Legend of Hari; an epithet of Krishna) manuscript, ca. 1590–95. Ink, opaque watercolor, and gold on paper, 28.9 x 20 cm. Collection: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, Edward C. Moore Jr. Gift, 1928rofl-v08-2026_Braudel_Ray Image 1.png

What would such an approach look like? Imagine accounting for relationships between the human species and the materials that constitute the planet in a manner not centered around ecological domination and resource extraction; imagine writing a history of art in which land itself becomes the entangled medium through which geoaesthetics is exercised; imagine an art history not just of trade, production, and technology, but of the geological imbued with agency and caught up in processual flows. Think, for instance, of the hill that the divine Krishna is believed to have miraculously lifted to protect the inhabitants of Braj from the torrential rain sent by Indra, the king of gods (figure 1).[15] Narrated in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (Tales of Vishnu; fourth or fifth century CE), the elegiac account begins with the young cowherd encouraging the pastoral

11 Ananda Cohen-Aponte, "Decolonizing the Global Renaissance: A View From the Andes," in *The Globalization of Renaissance Art: A Critical Review*, ed. Daniel Savoy (Brill, 2017), 67–94.

12 Pascale Absi, *Los ministros del diablo: El trabajo y sus representaciones en las minas de Potosí (*Institut français d'études andines; Fundación PIEB; Institut de Recherche pour le Développement; Embajada de Francia en Bolivia, 2005).

13 See especially Elizabeth A. Povinelli, *Geontologies: A Requiem to Late Liberalism* (Duke University Press, 2016).

14 As Donald Preziosi writes: "In point of fact, Art History makes colonial subjects of us all. In other words, the Enlightenment invention of the 'aesthetic' was an attempt to come to terms with, and classify on a common ground or within the grid of a common table or spreadsheet, a variety of forms of subject–object relationships observable (or imagined) across many different societies." Donald Preziosi, *In the Aftermath of Art: Ethics, Aesthetics, Politics, with a Critical Commentary by Johanne Lamoureux* (Routledge, 2006), 77.

15 See David L. Haberman, *Loving Stones: Making the Impossible Possible in the Worship of Mount Govardhan* (Oxford University Press, 2020); Charlotte Vaudeville, *Myths, Saints and Legends in Medieval India* (Oxford University Press, 1996); and Paul M. Toomey, *Food from the Mouth of Krishna: Feast and Festivities in a North Indian Pilgrimage Centre* (Hindustan Publishing, 1994), among others, for the history of the Govardhan.

community of Braj, the pilgrimage center in north India where Krishna is believed to have spent his youth, not to worship Indra, but to commemorate the end of the monsoon by venerating the hill that stands approximately eighty-five miles south of New Delhi.[16] To persuade the cowherds, Krishna states: "Cattle and mountains are our gods. Brahmins offer worship with prayer; cultivators of the earth adore their landmarks; but we, who tend our herds in the forests and mountains, should worship them and our kine."[17] Heeding Krishna's advice, the pastoral community prepares a feast in honor of the Govardhan hill, emphasizing the rock/divine-body assemblage as generative matter with elemental agency. Subsequently, to reveal the sacredness of the Govardhan, Krishna proclaims: "I am the mountain."

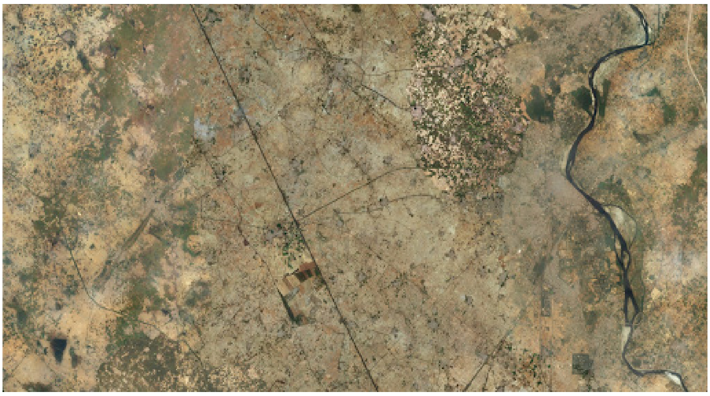

Figure 2: Satellite image of the Govardhan hill. © 2018 Esri, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DSrofl-v08-2026_Braudel_Ray_image2.png

Imagine the Govardhan not merely as mineral matter hardened into a mass but as the manifest form of Krishna himself, a hill that bled if wounded (figure 2).[18] While the origin of this narrative cannot be traced back to sixteenth-century texts with certainty, priests at the site reiterate the account to pilgrims to affirm, in Jane Bennett's words, "the vitality of matter and the lively powers of material formations."[19] One could contend that it was the alchemic quality of stone as elemental matter (*dhātu*) that made the hill a sacred site and a living being concurrently. Consequently, the ecumenical imaginings of the hill as both a divine being and a homoclinal ridge prompt a renewed art historical attentiveness to the geomorphological material that constitutes land—the texture of stone, the granulation of dust, the color of soil—to envisage a history of art that is receptive to the agentive force of matter in relation to human action on the planet.

16 Although the Sanskrit term vraja was used in scriptural sources to refer to the mythic space where Krishna had spent his youth, the geographic space of modern Braj was invented only in the sixteenth century when reformers arrived there to reclaim the purported sacred sites associated with Krishna's life. For this history, see Ray, *Climate Change and the Art of Devotion;* John S. Hawley, *A Storm of Songs: India and the Idea of the Bhakti Movement* (Harvard University Press, 2015); and Alan W. Entwistle, *Braj: Centre of Krishna Pilgrimage* (Egbert Forsten, 1987), among others.

17 *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, translated by Horace H. Wilson as *The Vishńu Puráńa: A System of Hindu Mythology and Tradition* (The Oriental Translation Fund of Great Britain and Ireland, 1840), 524.

18 According to local legends, the Govardhan bled when workmen struck the bedrock while digging a well on the ridge. That night, Krishna appeared in a dream to the workmen, explaining that their tools had cut his body and that they should refrain from further construction on the hill. Interview with Pandit Goswami, Govardhan, November 18, 2012.

19 Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Duke University Press, 2010), vii.

Obscuring the boundaries between art and the natural environment and between animate beings and inanimate matter, an engagement with the epistemic subjectivity of rocks then allows for an exploration of the contours of a geoaesthetic art history, as I have argued elsewhere. Moreover, going beyond questions of global connectivity, cognates such as *géophilosophie*, *géohistoire*, and geoaesthetics allow us to visualize stones as entangled in relational flows that intimately connect representation, theology, and the natural environment. Such an approach, in turn, has significant implications for how we engage with the materiality of artistic practices, in the process problematizing the purported rift between nature and culture that, as we now know, was an invention of a Westernist rationality that had emerged in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century natural philosophy.[20] This is not to suggest that the pre-Enlightenment world was intrinsically green, a world in which the human species lived "in harmony with nature."[21] Rather, it is in the conjoining of material and materiality—that is, the physical and the phenomenological—that stone becomes more than itself. Stone, aligned differently, becomes effervescent matter with the potential to unravel the ostensible dichotomies between nature and culture that haunt our anthropogenic present. And it is this epistemological reformulation that Braudel's *géohistoire* or the "relations between man and his environment" demands in a besieged present in which environmental precarity etches its mark on every aspect of life.[22] A

20 For a history of eighteenth-century scientificism, see Thomas L. Hankins, *Science and the Enlightenment* (Cambridge University Press, 1985).

21 As Ursula K. Heise notes: "Nowhere is this more obvious than in North American environmentalist thought, which has variously cast antiquity, Indigenous cultures, premodern rural cultures, or European cultures as models for how to live 'in harmony with nature.' […] Both problematic and empowering, such visions of the past enable a critical distance from the present even as they may distort historical realities. A historically oriented eco-cosmopolitanism would aim to recuperate a more accurate sense of the ecological cultures of the past with their achievements and their shortfalls." Ursula K. Heise, "Environmentalism, Eco-Cosmopolitanism, and Premodern Thought," in *Premodern Ecologies in the Modern Literary Imagination*, eds. Vin Nardizzi and Tiffany J. Werth (University of Toronto Press, 2019), 285.

22 Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Siân Reynolds (Harper & Row, 1972–73), 1:102.

Braudel and Antiquity

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These remarks pose questions that reach beyond the period from 1550 to 1600, which is the stated chronological scope of Braudel's 1949 book, *The Mediterranean in the Age of Philip II*. Of course, Braudel's revolutionary vision included relating multiple time scales that expanded well beyond 1550–1600 in order to investigate this period itself, but the questions I briefly posit here are: How have earlier periods been studied since Braudel's book came out, and what might come next? And what might be the intersections, if any, with how later times figure in his work?

Braudel himself pointed to antiquity as a time when the Mediterranean is best understood as a unity sustained by intense human mobility. "Mediterranean" is not an ancient term: it emerged only in the sixth century CE. The peoples living on its shores in antiquity—the Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, Phoenicians, and others—called it by different names. Yet, the first image in Braudel's book, the map encompassing the whole Mediterranean Basin and the Black Sea, which at once declares the significance of maps and figures for his approach and the scope of his work, would have been most familiar to the classical scholars among his 1949 original readers. Already in the nineteenth century the illustrated (and much debated) reconstructions of the geography of Odysseus's or the Argonauts' travels spanned the whole Mediterranean (see figure 1 for one such reconstruction meant to reflect ancient geographical knowledge), as was the case also for maps of archaic and classical Greek colonization, ranging from the Black Sea to Massalia (the ancient Marseilles) and beyond. Similar in scope are the maps used to illustrate the expansion of the Roman Empire, coloring to signal further Roman conquests of an increasing amount of the land masses surrounding the whole Mediterranean, which the Romans, in the end, simply called *Mare Nostrum*. The maps in Braudel, new as they were to many of his readers, resembled much the ones that have hung on the walls of Classics Departments ever since there were Classics Departments. Still, despite this inherent familiarity of scope, Braudel's book was a novelty that made big waves for scholars of antiquity when it appeared, and it motivated a major turn in the study of mobility and in network approaches to the ancient world.

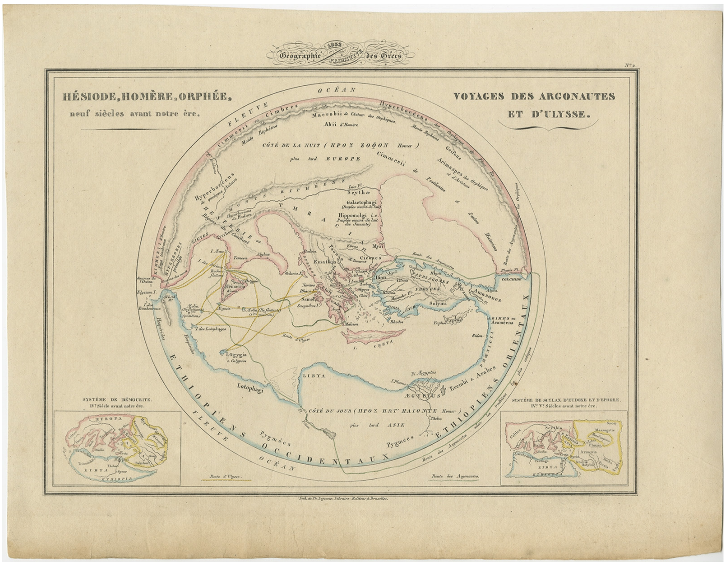

Figure 1: Atlas Map, "Geographie des Grecs Primitive," by Conrad Malte-Brun (1775–1826), Aime Andre, Paris, 1837

It took over fifty years for the publication of a work that attempted something on the scale of Braudel's *Mediterranean*, and when such a book appeared it was one that looked backward to antiquity. In 2000 Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell published *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History*—covering three thousand years from prehistory to Middle Ages—and scholars of the ancient world were ready to engage with it because of their long engagements with Braudel.[1] In the quarter-century since its publication, ancient mobility studies continue to grow alongside debates that spur further research. How connected was the ancient Mediterranean, really? Did mobility make it into a single unity? And what different types of mobility does one find across the Mediterranean region? For the ancient world, books are being written, and large and well-funded European Research Council projects are being launched on mobility. An example is "Migration and the Making of the Ancient Greek World" (MIGMAG), whose language of "complex multidirectional and multiscalar movements" is Braudelian.[2]

Well before the publication of Horden and Purcell's *The Corrupting Sea*, archaeologists of the ancient Mediterranean adapted, used, and disseminated Braudel's *Mediterranean*. Among these researchers—who had no textual evidence at their disposal but were newly empowered by radiocarbon dating, and who had no access to individuals' stories, but a wealth of objects, material culture, and excavations for evidence—the multi-scale temporal approach resonated deeply. And so did Braudel's ability to tell a compelling story in which landscapes and not named individuals played a central role along with trade and exchanges rather than political events. Since the eighties, Braudel's most lyrical passages again and again appear in archaeological studies of

1 Of the many reviews, see especially Brent D. Shaw, "Challenging Braudel: A New Vision of the Mediterranean," *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 14 (2001): 419–53; see also Ian Morris, "Mediterraneanization," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 18, no. 2 (2003): 30–55, for an evaluation of connectivity in conceptions of the Mediterranean from Braudel to Horden and Purcell.

2 Naoíse Mac Sweeney, "The Making of a Mediterranean Network: The Retrospective Ethnogenesis of the Greeks," keynote lecture, European Archaeological Association annual meeting, Rome, August 28–31, 2024.

various Mediterranean regions—almost as if Braudel's prose offered the words for these ancient periods for which there are no textual sources.

An astounding thing happened when a posthumous text appeared, which had the word Ancient in front of Mediterranean and was written by Braudel himself. *The Mediterranean in the Ancient World*, preserved only in manuscript for thirty years, was finally published in France in 1998 and in English translation in 2000, the same year as the *Corrupting Sea*. Braudel wrote this book by commission and relied on secondary studies—he wrote the full manuscript quickly in a few months in 1968 before many new discoveries changed crucial tenets of Mediterranean history. But, despite being obsolete in certain aspects, it is striking how well archaeologists received this work by Braudel. Cyprian Broodbank, a major figure in Mediterranean prehistory who was educated in the late eighties and early nineties on Braudelian paradigms, wrote of this publication as "this extraordinary windfall … this time-capsule of thought."[3] It contained mistakes, but was also a prescient work, anticipating, for example, that neolithic archaeological sites would be found on Cyprus and articulating the very concept of a laboratory island which became an important model for later scholars. In short, Braudel revealed the Mediterranean to be more than the sum of its parts already in deep antiquity. He presented the Late Bronze Age as an enduring web of cultural and commercial interactions of different scales, attending to large-scale regional economies and long-range trade alongside agriculture, both big and small. This approach offered an unparalleled model for how to write a prehistory of the Mediterranean. And where else could one find the scintillating use of appropriate and thought-provoking analogies: Late Bronze Age Ugarit as Genoa or even Venice, "Phoenicia as a booming 'sheltered sector' during the early Iron Age," and "Egypt as 18th and then 19th century China"?[4]

On the very same two days we celebrated the seventy-fifth anniversary of Braudel's *The Mediterranean*, just a few steps away on the Stanford campus, the ancient historians ran a thought-provoking conference on global antiquity in the Classics Department. Braudel and his approach came up there too—explicitly and implicitly. The comparative impulse and the focus on geography and deep structures were crucial to the discussion on the possibilities of a global ancient history, with Braudel invoked also as a model of visionary verve and institutional change volition—we might not be done with Braudel and the ancient world indeed.[5]

But what about the other end of Braudel's chronological scope—the eighteenth century, where my own work on mobility lies these days? Paula Findlen introduced to the symposium discussion a later book by Braudel, *Out of Italy*, covering the period from 1560 to 1660, when, in his own words, Italy "beamed a radiance out beyond its own frontiers, a light that spread to every corner of the world."[6] In this work Braudel combines analyses of deeper structures with a

3 Cyprian Broodbank, "Braudel's Bronze Age," in *Cretan Offerings: Studies in Honour of Peter Warren, British School at Athens Studies* 18 (2010): 33–40, at 35.

4 Broodbank, "Braudel's Bronze Age," 36.

5 For the program of the 2024 conference *Global Antiquity: Making Progress?* organized by Walter Scheidel, Ian Morris, and Reviel Netz, see https://classics.stanford.edu/events/global-antiquity-making-progress. For Braudel as a model of institutional change, see Ian Morris, "Evolutionary History," *Evolutionary Psychology* 20, no. 1 (2022), https://doi.org/10.1177/14747049211068279. For relevance in recently published books, see Justin Leidwanger and Carl Knappett, eds., *Maritime Networks in the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Cambridge University Press, 2018); and Sarah C. Murray, *Long-Distance Exchange and Inter-Regional Economies* (Cambridge University Press, 2023).

6 Fernand Braudel, *Out of Italy: Two Centuries of World Domination and Demise*, trans. Siân Reynolds (Europa Editions, 2019), 3. Originally published as *Le Modèle italien* (Arthaud, 1989).

narrative about growth and decline, setting in by the late seventeenth century. But recent decades have seen a reassessment of any such concept of decline for the Italian peninsula and, in fact, the Mediterranean at large. Paula Findlen herself has been at the forefront of reassessing Italy's eighteenth century.[7] In the 2010 book *Trade and Cultural Exchange in the Early Modern Mediterranean: Braudel's Maritime Legacy*, Maria Fusaro illustrates how the Mediterranean sea remained critical well into the eighteenth century for any European power aiming at global supremacy, explaining the increasing British maritime presence there which was at an all-time high. Maria Fusaro adapts to the British of the late 1600s what Braudel had said of the Dutch: "So they swarmed into the Mediterranean like so many heavy insects crashing against the window panes—for their entry was neither gentle nor discreet."[8]

There is here an intersection between considerations of chronology and of mobility, and between cultural, social, and economic histories. The eighteenth century saw more travel to Italy than ever, in particular British—a wandering academy, in some people's idealized view, but also the seed of a later period's mass commercial tourism. This Grand Tour was a cultural phenomenon as much as it was an economic and infrastructural one—after all, the routes traveled and the modes of travel were the same. Eighteenth-century tourists sought the glory of ancient Italy, and soon enough that of Greece, eager to see with their own eyes and to bring back knowledge as well as ancient artifacts. Their earliest modern predecessor, though, was a merchant, for the first depiction of the Parthenon in Athens comes to us from Cyriac of Ancona (1391–1452), who traveled widely in the early fifteenth century and worked in the Greek seas of the Venetian empire on family business while documenting antiquities. Where are these types of merchants with their intellectual curiosities in Braudel's *Mediterranean*? And where are their successors, the tourists among the economic or intellectual elites of later times?

Hester Thrale Piozzi (1741–1821) was one of these tourists in Italy in 1786. The widow, who married an Italian singer in a scandal that alienated her close friend Samuel Johnson, traveled to the Italian peninsula with her new husband, eager to understand its "customs" and to see its antiquities and art—so eager, in fact, that she found more occasions to cite ancient authors than anyone ever had, even in the distinctly un-classical city of Florence. But of the Mediterranean, Piozzi was skeptical—and I end with her words comparing it to the English Channel: "Nor does the steady regularity of this Mediterranean sea make me inclined to prefer it to our more capricious or rather active channel. Sea views have at best too little variety, and when the flux or efflux of the tide are taken away from one, there remains only rough and smooth."[9] There is such distance here from Braudel's confession, writing in the preface to his first edition of *The Mediterranean:* "I have loved the Mediterranean with passion, no doubt because I am a northerner like so many others in whose footsteps I have followed."[10] When did we, northern or not, start seeing the Mediterranean with such a loving gaze? $\boxed{A}$

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7 See, for example, Paula Findlen, Wendy Wassyng Roworth, and Catherine M. Sama, eds., I*taly's Eighteenth Century: Gender and Culture in the Age of the Grand Tour*, ed. Paula Findlen, Wendy Wassyng Roworth, and Catherine M. Sama (Stanford University Press, 2009).

8 Fusaro, Maria, Colin Heywood, and Mohamed Salah Omri. 2010. *Trade and Cultural Exchange in the Early Modern Mediterranean : Braudel's Maritime Legacy*. Tauris Academic Studies, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 1.634

9 Hester Piozzi, *Observations and Reflections Made in the Course of a Journey Through France, Italy, and Germany* (A. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1789), 2:59.

10 Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Siân Reynolds (Harper & Row, 1972–73), 1:17.

The Ancient Ports of Myos Hormos and Berenike and the Indian Ocean Trade: A Braudelian Perspective

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Braudel's most famous work pursued two somewhat contradictory arguments. First, it conceived of *la méditerranée* as a geographical region bound by the distinct features of its climate, links to the sea, and topography. To Braudel, these predicaments of geography affected everything from when to harvest grapes or slaughter pigs (in December), to when to launch ships (never in winter), to when to send war expeditions (in summer):[1] "The calendar was commander-in-chief."[2] Yet Braudel also argued that "the Mediterranean has no unity but that created by the movements of men, the relationships they imply, and the routes they follow."[3] That second point animates his elastic boundaries of *La Méditerranée:* its boundaries encompassed not only the inland sea and its coastal regions, but a larger area that expanded and contracted with the "movements of men."[4]

Within the social sciences, Braudel's interpretative method unites a soft "geographical/environmental determinism" with "possibilism," the notion that every environment opens a range of

1 In this paper, I have relied on the 1972 English translation of the 1966 edition of *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II*. See Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Siân Reynolds (Harper Collins, 1972), 1: 231–75. I would like to thank the conference organizers for their kind invitation to share my work. Thank you also to Martin Lewis, whose recommendations greatly improved this essay.

2 Braudel, *The Mediterranean*, 1: 254.

3 Braudel, *The Mediterranean*, 1: 276.

4 In Braudel's thinking, the boundary between the Mediterranean and the rest of the world, or of the Mediterranean as a unified historical region in the sense of Plato's "frogs around the pond" analogy, is ever-fluctuating "on its continental and seaward sides," extending north to the Black Sea, east to the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, and west to the Straits of Gibraltar and the Atlantic Ocean. Braudel, *The Mediterranean*, 1:419.

possibilities to human agents.[5] In *The Mediterranean*, "the concept of geographical space, all the permanent, slow-moving, or recurrent features of Mediterranean life," comes first.[6] As Braudel explains, the "slow-moving" aspects of reality form the constant structure of social life. The "movements of men," by contrast, are "the ephemeral" and dynamic aspects that —combined with everything slow-moving—define the "social history of groups, collective destinies, and general trends."[7] Braudel observes that in recovering the basic challenges of geography and climate, the historian can often rely on sources from various eras, including their own time.

This short paper employs Braudel's approach to explain the location of two ports on the Red Sea that were critical to the trade between the Roman Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean in the first century CE. Most scholarship on this ancient trade has followed a Braudelian perspective, though not always explicitly.[8] All scholars who study the trade confront the facts of climate and geography that enabled it. The seasonal monsoons and the ocean currents they created supplied the "slow-moving/permanent" conditions that enabled the trade in either direction (figure 1). In summer the Indian Ocean waters and winds move clockwise in a southwesterly direction. These conditions aided sailing voyages toward India. In winter, the monsoon winds and ocean water reversed their direction, traveling in a north-easterly direction, creating favorable conditions for sailing from ports in India to Arabia and Africa.[9] The strength of the monsoons and their predictable courses determined the timing of voyages. The peak months of summer (June through September) and winter (January through April) monsoon activity

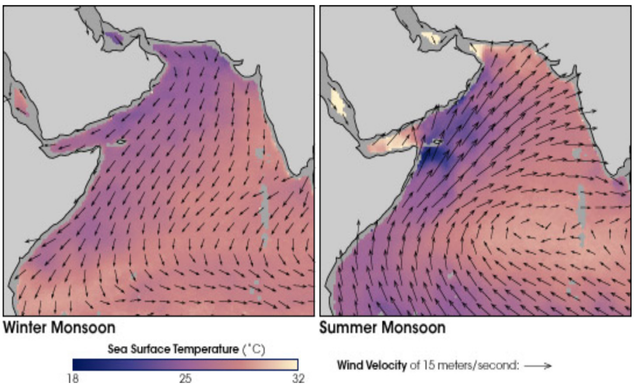

Figure 1: Sea surface temperature and direction and velocity of the winds over the Arabian Sea during the winter and the summer monsoons. Arrows indicate the direction and velocity of the winds. Maps by Robert Simmon. © Earth Observatory, NASA.

5 For this kind of soft geographical determinism (the role of the environment, seasonality, etc. on human decisions), see the enlightening study on the relationship between seasonality, labor, and reproduction by Brent Shaw, "The Seasonal Birthing Cycle of Roman Women," in *Debating Roman Demography*, ed. Walter Scheidel (Brill, 2000), 83–110. As Martin Lewis argues, Braudel's possibilistic orientation was indebted to Paul Vidal de la Blache (1845–1918) and Lucien Febvre (1878–1956), both of whom rejected the racist extremes of geographical determinism; see also Lewis's essay in the present collection. On environmental determinism more generally, see H. Ernste and C. Philo, "Determinism/Environmental Determinism," in *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*, ed. Rob Kitchin and Nigel Thrift (Elsevier, 2009), available at https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/social-sciences/geographical-determinism.

6 Braudel, *The Mediterranean*, 1: 353.

7 Braudel, *The Mediterranean*, 1:353.

8 For an excellent example of a Braudelian study, see Federico De Romanis, *The Indo-Roman Pepper Trade and the Muziris Papyrus* (Oxford University Press, 2020).

9 D. S. Pai, Arti Bandgar, Sunitha Devi, Madhuri Musale, M. R. Badwaik, A. P. Kundale, Sulochana Gadgil, M. Mohapatra, and M. Rajeevan, "Normal Dates of Onset/Progress and Withdrawal of Southwest Monsoon over India," *Mausam* 71, no. 4 (2021): 553–70. The onset of the seasons varies over the subcontinent. The summer and winter arrive at different times on the subcontinent. On the dates, see figure 2.

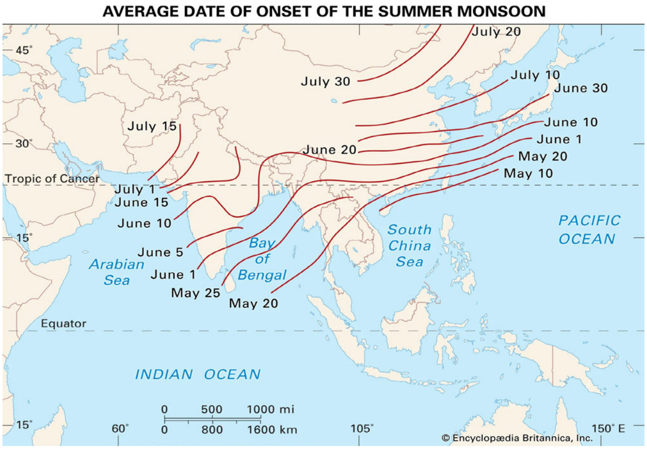

Figure 2: Average date of onset of the summer monsoon. © Encyclopaedia Britannica.

Figure 3: Google Earth Map of the Indo-Roman Trade. Map: Jack Harvey.

are preceded and followed by transitional periods of milder monsoon activity.[10] Altogether these are the "slow-moving" factors that determined the "ephemeral" undertaking of transoceanic trade voyages. The same basic monsoon patterns continue to this day, offering the opportunity to test various aspects of the journeys' challenges, such as the winds' velocity and their impact on the maritime routes (figures 2 and 3).

In their efforts to bridge the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean, ships traveled either via the Red Sea or the Persian Gulf (see figure 3). Each route required that cargo be partly transported over land. The routes and the ports changed over time.[11] At the height of the trade, in the first century BCE/CE, the route via the Red Sea and the Sahara was preferred as were direct vs. multistage sea voyages.[12] The ports on the Indian subcontinent that were critical to the trade were Barbarikon (a seaport near modern Karachi, Pakistan) and Barygaza (a river port, Bharuch, India) on the northwestern coast, plus Muziris/Nelkynda (two ports on the Malabar coast of India) on the southwest coast.[13] The three yellow lines in figure 3 connect the island of Socotra by the Gulf of Aden with Barbarikon, Barygaza, and Muzuris, in that order, from north to south. Two Red Sea ports, 230 nautical miles apart, were key to the trade in the Mediterranean basin: Myos Hormos and Berenike (figure 4).[14] The anonymous author of the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea,* which describes ports, cities,

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10 Lionel Casson, "Appendix 3," in *The Periplus Maris Erythraei: Text with Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* (Princeton University Press, 1989), 283–84, provides a useful table of these monsoonal winds and the transitional periods between them.

11 For a summary, see De Romanis, *Indo-Roman Pepper Trade*, 34–76.

12 De Romanis, *Indo-Roman Pepper Trade,* 61.

13 Casson, *Periplus*, 39 (Barbarikon), 41–44 (Barygaza), Muzuris/Nelkynda (54–56), 75, 77–79, and 83–85.

14 Myos Hormos: Strabo, *Geography* 2.5.12, Loeb Classical Library, vol. 49, 454–55; Berenike: Pliny, *Natural History* 6.26; both: *Periplus,* 50–51. These sites have been identified and excavated. For Myos Hormos, see David Peacock and Lucy Blue, *Myos Hormos—Quseir al-Qadim: Roman and Islamic Ports on the Red Sea*, 2 vols. (Archaeopress, 2006–11); Lucy Blue, "Port of Myos Hormos and Its Relations to Indo-Roman Trade," in *The Eastern Desert of Egypt During the Greco-Roman Period: Archaeological Reports*, ed. Jean-Pierre Brun et al. (Collège de France, 2018), https://doi.org/10.4000/books.cdf.5235. For Berenike, see, among others, Steven

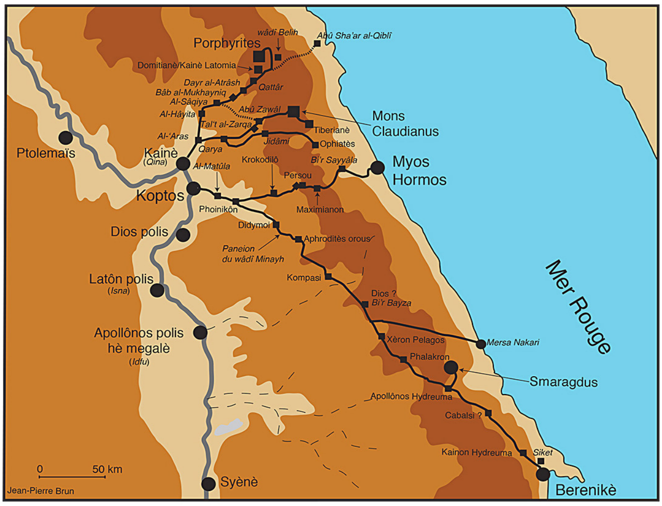

Figure 4: Map of the routes to Myos Hormos and Berenike at the end of the first century CE. © Drawing J.-P. Brun. Copied from Blue 2018.

navigation, and trade from Koptos to South Asia, mentions both.[15] In contrast, Pliny's *Natural History* (77 CE, based on early 50s CE data) omits Myos Hormos and assumes that trade ships to India departed from Berenike alone.[16] Regardless of which port ancient authors emphasized, transportation receipts confirm both emporia were operational and connected by traders as early as 6 CE.[17]

From Alexandria, export goods (especially gold and silver) were transported on the Nile to Koptos, then overland to either Myos Hormos (six to seven days) or Berenike (twelve days) (see figure 4).[18] The desert crossing was dangerous and resource-draining. It required water for thousands of people and animals, protection from thieves, and overnight stations. After its conquest of Egypt in 30 BCE, the Roman state provided essential infrastructure for the desert crossings: wells, armed guards, roads, and forts.[19] This investment was offset by a 25 percent import tax on all Indian Ocean imports.[20]

Yet the expense and difficulty of maintaining and protecting the desert roads to Myos Hormos and Berenike remain puzzling. First, neither port had the natural resources necessary for the thriving of humans and the animals they employed. Timber, water, and foodstuffs all had

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E. Sidebotham, "Archaeological Evidence for Ships and Harbor Facilities at Berenike (Red Sea Coast), Egypt," *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome*, supp. vol. 6 (2008); and Sidebotham, *Berenike and the Ancient Maritime Spice Route* (University of California Press, 2011).

15 The date of the *Periplus* is debatable. For a first-century date (40–70 CE), see Casson, *Periplus Maris Erythraei*, 50–51.

16 Pliny, *Natural History* 6.26, online at Perseus Digital Library, https://www.perseus.tufts.edu. Unless indicated otherwise, references to India relate to pre-1947 India, that is, present-day South Asia.

17 On the discrepancies between the written sources (Strabo) and archaeological evidence, see Sidebotham, *Berenike and the Ancient Maritime Spice Route*, 18, 184.

18 Red Sea coordinates: 22°N 38°E; 12°40′N 43°30′E and 12°29′N 43°20′E. The Red Sea is 2,250 km (1,398 miles) long and 355 km (221 miles) across at its widest point. Myos Hormos: 26.15°N; see Pleiades, https://pleiades.stoa.org/places/786069. Berenike: 23.91°N; see Pleiades, https://pleiades.stoa.org/places/785986?searchterm=berenike. See also Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology, "Berenike," https://pcma.uw.edu.pl/en/2019/04/17/berenike-2/. For the trade, see, among others: Federico De Romanis and André Tchernia, eds., *Crossings: Early Mediterranean Contacts with India* (Manohar, 1997); De Romanis, *Indo-Roman Pepper Trade*; Kasper Grønlund Evers, *Worlds Apart Trading Together: The Organisation of Long-Distance Trade between Rome and India in Antiquity* (Archaeopress, 2017); Roberta Tomber, *Indo-Roman Trade: From Pots to Pepper* (Duckworth, 2008); Rājan Gurukkal, *Rethinking Classical Indo-Roman Trade: Political Economy of Eastern Mediterranean Exchange Relations* (Oxford University Press, 2016).

19 Most recently, see De Romanis, *Indo-Roman Pepper Trade*, 31–58; for the Roman state, Matthew P. Fitzpatrick, "Provincializing Rome: The Indian Ocean Trade Network and Roman Imperialism," *Journal of World History* 22, no. 1 (2011): 27–54.

20 For the import tax, see De Romanis, *Indo-Roman Pepper Trade*, 277–97.

to be imported.[21] Berenike, for instance, drew potable water from fortified wells with their own garrisons located 7–8.5 km (4.3–5.3 miles) outside the city.[22] Second, at 230 nautical miles apart, the two ports were relatively close to each other. Myos Hormos held a clear advantage for overland transport, being only six to seven days from Koptos, that is, half the twelve-day journey to Berenike (figure 4). Given these advantages, why establish a port at Berenike?

Scholars attribute the need for two nearby Red Sea ports to environmental challenges in the northern Red Sea, particularly the relentless and dangerous winds noted by both ancient and modern authors.[23] Some researchers suggest one port served an "auxiliary" role as a weather haven.[24] Berenike's protected bay would have offered safe anchorage to heavy ships.[25] When founded in the third century BCE, its harbor was deep enough for elephant-carrying ships.[26] In the mid-second century, the 650-ton *Hermapollon*, carrying pepper, aromatics, and ivory from Muzuris in southern India, likely anchored there (Muziris is identified with Pattanam, a village near the town of Kodungallur in Kerala, India).[27] Despite these challenges, both ports were essential—trading companies maintained agents at each.[28]

The two harbors offered an imperfect solution, as evidenced by efforts to relocate the trade north, closer to Alexandria. A canal—precursor to the Suez Canal linking the Nile with the Red Sea, constructed and/or dredged at the time of Trajan (98–117 CE) —addressed the logistical challenges of desert crossings.[29] Yet the canal's existence did not eliminate reliance on either port. Mariners depended on Berenike for 800 years before silting forced its abandonment in the

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21 Sidebotham, *Berenike*, 18, 11–12, 102–24 (for the water supply).

22 Sidebotham, *Berenike*, 18, 11.

23 On the southward "creep" of Red Sea ports due to the northerly winds, see William Facey, "The Red Sea: The Wind Regime and Location of Ports," in *Trade and Travel in the Red Sea Region*, ed. Paul Lunde and Alexandra Porter (Archaeopress, 2004), 7. Facey is more optimistic about the ability of mariners to sail in the north of the Red Sea. For the winds, see also Federico De Romanis, *Indo-Roman Pepper*, 32–35.

24 Tomber considers the roles of Nechesia (Marsa Nakari), between Myos Hormos and Berenike, and Clysma (near ancient Suez) in the trade; see Tomber, *Indo-Roman Trade*, 64–65. See also Sidebotham, *Berenike*, 18, 186.

25 De Romanis, *Indo-Roman Pepper Trade*, 53–54; Sidebotham, *Berenike*, 18, 50–53 (on the relationship between heavy ships, northerly winds, and Berenike); Anna M. Kotarba-Morley, "Port Town and Its Harbours: Sedimentary Proxies for Landscape and Seascape Reconstruction of the Greco-Roman Site of Berenike Troglodytica on the Red Sea Coast of Egypt," *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean* 26, no. 2 (2018): 63–66 (a very useful overview of the site).

26 On the deep draft of the elephant-bearing ships, see Sidebotham, *Berenike*, 18, 50. Due to silting, the port later accommodated heavy-tonnage vessels. On this, see Kotarba-Morley, "Port Town and Its Harbours," 61–92.

27 On this ship and its cargo, see De Romanis, *Indo-Roman Pepper Trade*. For the text of the papyrus (P. Vindobonensis G 40882), commonly known as the Muzuris papyrus, detailing the cargo of pepper, malabatron, ivory, and others, see also https://papyri.info/ddbdp/sb;18;13167. Evers, *Worlds Apart*, 32, 99–108 (critiques De Romanis's estimate and lowers it to fifty to eighty tons, which is also the number estimated in previous scholarship). Berenike's harbor size contracted in the later centuries of its existence. See the multifaceted research of Kotarba-Morley, "Port Town and its Harbours," 83–84.

28 Casson, *Periplus*, 94–97. This conclusion is based on the "Archive of Nicanor," sixty-four receipts (scratched on *ostraca*) from Koptos, concerning the activities of a family transportation business (6 CE to 62 CE). On the archive, see Kai Ruffing, "Nicanor, Archive of," in *Brill's New Pauly Online* (Brill, 2016–2024). The entry contains key studies. Also see Tomber, *Indo-Roman Trade*, 63–64.

29 For the Trajan canal, see De Romanis, *Indo-Roman Pepper Trade*. It was operative only for parts of the year.

500s.[30] Myos Hormos endured until the third century CE, but, unlike Berenike, it would be reinhabited in the medieval period.[31]

Recent oceanographic scholarship can help deepen the environmental explanations for the two seemingly redundant ports. Studies of the Red Sea wind patterns reveal seafaring challenges that necessitated using both ports despite their inhospitable conditions. In Braudel's terms, seasonal wind regimes illuminate how the movements of men took precedence over their comfort: why one set of environmental challenges was chosen over another.

Much like the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea both enabled and hindered connection through its predictable ocean currents and winds. The Red Sea is 2,250 km (1,398 miles) long with a maximum width of 355 km (221 miles) and covers a surface area of roughly 458,620 km².[32] It has two distinct seasonal wind patterns dependent on the monsoons as well as the topography and the climatological conditions over the landmasses on either side. The Arabian subcontinent to the north and Africa to the south are arid deserts. These elements of climate and topography interact to produce seasonal patterns.

Over the northern Red Sea (north of 19–20° N) the surface winds are directed southeast all year (figure 5).[33] The summer, or southwest, monsoon determines the direction of the winds in the southern Red Sea (south of 19–20° N). During winter the winds in the southern Red Sea change direction from northwesterly to southeasterly. That switch facilitates the movement of returning ships through the southern Red Sea. The area where these oppositely directed air currents meet in the southern Red Sea is known as the Red Sea Convergence Zone (RSCZ).[34] That zone is the site of an annual meteorological phenomenon that would have

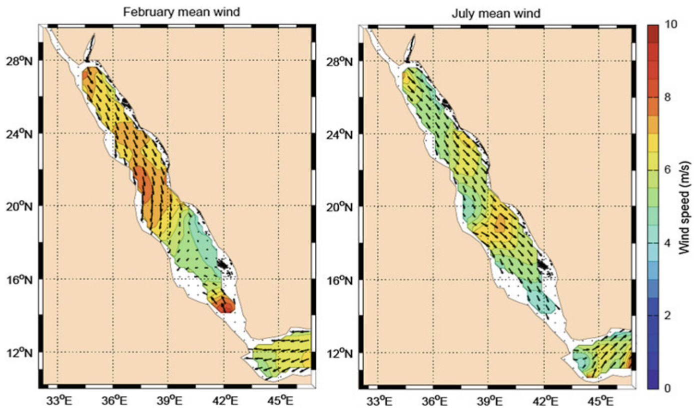

Figure 5: Climatological monthly mean surface winds for February (left) and July (right), at the two extremes of the annual cycle of surface winds in the Red Sea. The colored contours indicate wind speed, and the vectors depict the direction and relative speed. The climatological means are based on data from the QuikSCAT satellite scatterometer from September 1999 to October 2009 (Risien and Chelton 2008). Copied from Bower and Farrar 2015.

30 Sidebotham, *Berenike*, 18, 279–80; Kotarba-Morley, "Port Town and its Harbours," 89.

31 Lucy Blue, "Myos Hormos/Quṣeir al-Qadīm: A Roman and Islamic Port on the Red Sea Coast of Egypt—A Maritime Perspective," *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* 32 (2002): 139.

32 Najeeb M. A. Rasul, Ian C. F. Stewart, and Zohair A. Nawab, "Introduction to the Red Sea: Its Origin, Structure, and Environment," in *The Red Sea: The Formation, Morphology, Oceanography, and Environment of a Young Ocean Basin*, ed. Najeeb M. A. Rasul and Ian C. F. Stewart (Springer, 2015), 1.

33 Houshuo Jiang, J. Thomas Farrar, Robert C. Beardsley, Ru Chen, and Changseng Chen, "Zonal Surface Wind Jets Across the Red Sea Due to Mountain Gap Forcing Along Both Sides of the Red Sea," *Geophysical Research Letters* 36 (2009): L19605, doi:10.1029/2009GL040008.

34 Amy S. Bower and J. Thomas Farrar, "Air-Sea Interaction and Horizontal Circulation in the Red Sea," in *The Red Sea*, ed. Najeeb M. A. Rasul and Ian C. F. Stewart (2015), 330. For the RSCZ, see D. E. Pedgley, "The Red Sea Convergence Zone," *Weather* 21, no. 10 (1966): 350–58.

posed its own challenges to wind-propelled vessels. Winds within the zone are lighter (<4 miles/second) but unpredictable.[35] The RSCZ zone oscillates, moving every five days.[36] During 41 percent of the winter days it is between 18° N and 21° N. [37]

Beyond seasonal winds, the Red Sea experiences episodic but intense mountain gap winds caused by deep rifts in the mountains flanking the Red Sea (figure 6).[38] These mountain chains create a funnel-like formation that generally channels winds along the Red Sea axis.[39] Nevertheless, powerful mountain gap winds manage to overcome this effect and cross the Red Sea at high velocity. These dust-bringing jets occur every ten to twenty days, can last several days, and reach speeds up to 15 miles/second, blanketing up to 40 percent of the Red Sea.[40] In summer, they blow eastwardly, from Africa, causing storms that are most severe around the Tokar Gap. In winter (October–January), the gap winds descend from the Arabian subcontinent as cold, westward moving, dry, jet-like gales that can last for several days.

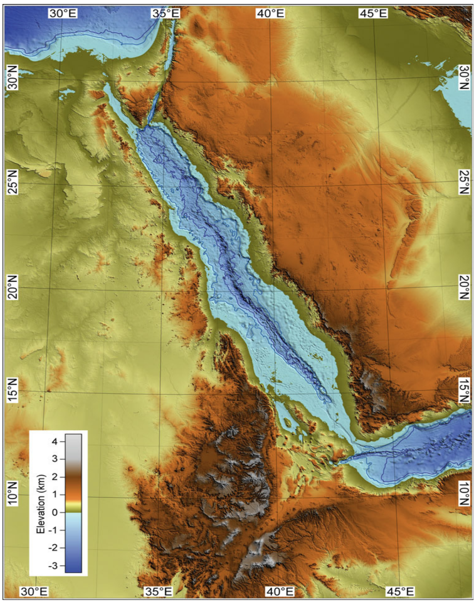

Figure 6: Topographic and bathymetric map of the Red Sea region. Bathymetriccontours are at 500 m interval. © Marco Ligi. Copied from Rasul, Stewart, and Nawab 2015, figure 2.

During the ten-year (2000–2010) Seawinds/QuikSCAT satellite mission, NASA measured fifth to seventy westward wind events north of 21.5° N.[41] Events south of 21.5° N were more numerous (between seventy and one hundred), longer lasting, and faster. In winter, the strongest winds occur in the northern end (at around 26–28° N) and the southern end (at 14–15° N) of the Red Sea basin.[42] Two northern Red Sea areas are prone to mountain gap wind jets: between 23° N and 24° N (three to four western wind jets annually) and between 25.5° N and 26.5° N (five to six events).[43] In winter, especially December and January, sailing north (beyond 26–28° N) was perilous, and sailing south (around 14–15° N, just north of the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait) was even

35 Bower and Farrar, "Air-Sea Interaction," 330.

36 Pedgley, "Red Sea Convergence Zone," 353–57.

37 Viviane V. Menezes, J. Thomas Farrar, and Amy S. Bower, "Evaporative Implications of Dry-Air Outbreaks over the Northern Red Sea," *Journal of Geophysical Research: Atmospheres* 124, no. 9 (2019).

38 Bower and Farrar, "Air-Sea Interaction," 330.

39 Pedgley, "Red Sea Convergence Zone," 353; Bower and Farrar, "Air-Sea Interaction," 329.

40 The speed at the eastern shore is 15 m/s; winds reach the western shore at 8–10 m/s at two places of greater impact. See Menezes, Farrar, and Bower, "Evaporative Implications"; Bower and Farrar, "Air-Sea Interaction," figure 2, 331–32; Jiang et al., "Zonal Surface Wind Jets," 2–6.

41 Viviane V. Menezes, J. Thomas Farrar, and Amy S. Bower, "Westward Mountain-Gap Wind Jets of the Northern Red Sea as Seen by QuikSCAT," *Journal of Physical Oceanography* 48, no. 3 (2018): 681–698. Here I follow Menezes' definition of western wind as in the 215°–280° range. On it, see Menezes, Farrar, and Bower, "Westward Mountain-Gap," 684.

42 Bower and Farrar, "Air-Sea Interaction."

43 Menezes, Farrar, and Bower, "Westward Mountain-Gap," 696; Menezes, Farrar, and Bower, "Evaporative Implications," 4838.

more dangerous.[44] Additionally, the northern Red Sea in winter experiences once or twice a year strong (≥ 8.5 m/s) north (*shamal*) winds, associated with dust storms lasting from twenty-four hours to five days.[45]

These environmental conditions have implications for the locations of the ancient Red Sea ports in the Mediterranean-Indian Ocean trade as well as for the ephemeral movements of men. They can be taken as a proxy for what ancient city founders and mariners considered when choosing the site of ports or when to sail the seas. That kind of knowledge cannot be reconstructed through the available textual sources alone. It parallels the expertise of the pilot who steered Vasco da Gama's ship from Melinde/Malindi, Kenya, to Calicut/Kozhikode, India, in 1498. That transoceanic crossing took twenty or twenty-two days (August 6 to August 26/28). The return journey, taken without the benefit of expert knowledge and against the monsoonal winds, took more than one hundred days.[46] The pilots who led ships from Egypt to India in the first centuries CE, like Vasco da Gama's anonymous pilot, presumably knew what to avoid and when to sail.

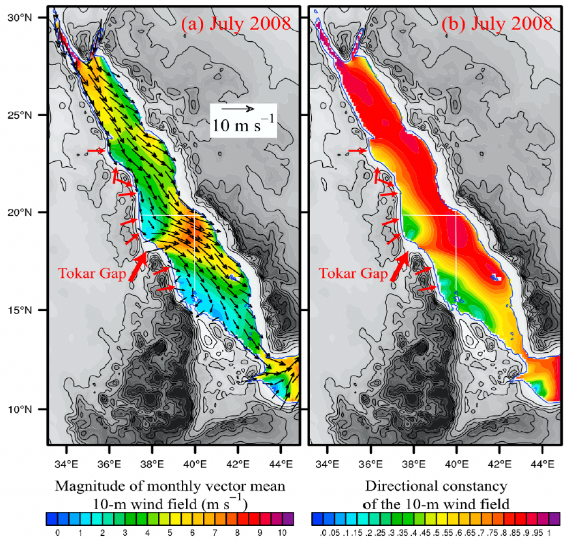

Figure 7: Monthly means of 10-m surface winds over the Red Sea from hourly WRF model output. (a) July 2008 monthly vector mean 10-m surface wind vector field overlapped with its magnitude (color contours). (b) July 2008 monthly mean 10-m wind directional constancy (color contours), defined as the ratio of the magnitude of the monthly mean 10-m wind vector to the monthly mean 10-m wind speed. The red (blue) arrows in figures la-lb (figures lc-ld) indicate the locations of mountain gaps along the western (eastern) coast of the Red Sea. The wind vectors are shown for ~30 percent of the grid points. Copied from Jiang, Farrar, Beardsley, Chen, and Chen 2009, figure 1.

First, they must have known that the month of July was particularly perilous for ships sailing in the southern Red Sea. To avoid the gales streaming through the Tokar Gap they must have left earlier (figures 7 and 8). Since strong easterly winds through the Tokar Gap (10 m/s and more) are a daily occurrence between mid-June and mid-September, ships would have had to depart from Myos Hormos/Berenike earlier than mid-June, possibly in May to mid-June, when they could take advantage of the southeasterly winds that dominate the southern Red Sea in the summer months. That timing,

44 The RSCZ causes more southerly winter events. For measurements, see Menezes, Farrar, and Bower, "Evaporative Implications," 4839. On the wind conditions in the south, see Pedgley, "Red Sea Convergence Zone," 356–57.

45 Menezes, Farrar, and Bower, "Evaporative Implications," 4843–44.

46 Gaspar Corrêa and Henry E. J. Stanley, *The Three Voyages of Vasco Da Gama, and His Viceroyalty, From the Lendas da India of Gaspar Correa, Accompanied by Original Documents, Translated from the Portuguese, with Notes and an Introduction by Henry E. J. Stanley* (B. Franklin, 1963), 109 (Melinde), 129 (advice when to cross the Indian Ocean), 137–38 (pilot's instruments and expertise), 144–45 (reached India in twenty days), 225–53 (return journey).

Figure 8: An enormous cloud of dust blankets the Red Sea on July 26, 2005. The winds blow from the east. Note the jet-like stream of dust flowing through the Tokar Gap (first third of the image, bottom to top, to the left). Image taken by MODIS (Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer) on NASA's Terra satellite. Credit: https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/images/15043/dust-storm-over-the-red-sea.

however, contradicts Pliny, who asserts that ships from Egypt to India set sail "before the raising of the Dog-star (Sirius) or else immediately after."[47] In the first century BCE/CE, Sirius rose around mid-July. Pliny's departure time would expose the vessels to gales through the Tokar Gap. In my view, Pliny likely confused the departure from Egypt with the onset of Indian Ocean crossings from the Gulf of Aden. *Periplus*'s author confirms this indirectly. He writes that "those who sail with the Indian [winds] leave around July," without noting the departure point.[48] Elsewhere, however, he specifies that direct voyages commenced from the Gulf of Aden (from Kane, Eudaimon Arabia, or the Promontory of Spices), implying that his earlier note about departure considered that area and not Alexandria or the Red Sea ports as the starting points.[49] The *Periplus* therefore provides evidence for a July departure for India, but only after the ships have traveled through the Red Sea. Additionally, the *Periplus* describes the west-to-east crossing as "hard going but favorable and shorter."[50] Such a characterization matches the climatic conditions. By July the southwestern monsoon winds in the Indian Ocean have peaked, making sailing bumpier but faster. As Casson demonstrates, a July departure would also position India-bound ships to reach the rain-drenched and wind-blasted subcontinent at favorable times for anchoring.[51]

Second, the pilots were likewise aware of the weather conditions affecting voyages from the subcontinent to the Gulf of Aden and then through the Red Sea to Myos Hormos or to Berenike. Pliny (6.106) gives the return season as December–January. Those months are the peak of winter wind activity in the Bab-el-Mandeb strait, the Tokar Gap, and gap winds in the northern Red Sea. In October, a transitional month, winds were variable and likewise imperfect for navigation (as Vasco da Gama discovered). Pliny's statement likely refers to the optimal period for crossing the Indian Ocean. If so, ships that sailed from India toward the Gulf of Aden in December–January would arrive at the Bab-el-Mandeb strait circa January–February. Optimal sailing conditions in the Red Sea were in February–March, when the winds in the southern Red Sea still pushed the sails north and those in the Arabian Sea blew toward the Mediterranean.[52] According to this logic, the timetable for voyages from ports in the Gulf of Aden to ports in South Asia was likely

47 Pliny, *Natural History*, 6.104. According to the IMCCE Sirius Calculator, in the year 26 BCE (the year of 120 ships sailing from Myos Hormos) the heliacal rising of Sirius occurred on July 30 BCE, while the summer of that year began on June 25. See https://promenade.imcce.fr/en/pages6/724.html.

48 Casson, *Periplus* 18.56, 85.

49 Casson, *Periplus* 19.57, 87 (with 15).

50 Casson, *Periplus* 13.39, 75.

51 Casson, "Appendix 3," in *Periplus*, 289.

52 Compare with De Romanis, *Indo-Roman Pepper Trade*, 67, and Casson, "Appendix 3," 287–91.

as follows: July–August for east/outbound journeys and December–February for the westbound ones. Sailing from Myos Hormos/Berenike toward the Gulf of Aden likely occurred in May–June, while the return journey through Bab-el-Mandeb to Myos Hormos/Berenike likely took place in February–March.

Third, considering that in winter the winds made the southern and the northern tips of the Red Sea unnavigable, Myos Hormos, situated at 26.15° N, is just at the southern boundary of the northern unnavigable zone (beyond 26–28° N). The choice of the site therefore depended not simply on its proximity to the Nile but also on the northernmost navigability of the Red Sea in winter. Still, it is located within one zone of intense westerly gap winds (between 25.5° N and 26.5° N). Berenike lies at 23.91° N, just at the northern boundary of the other zone for westerly gap winds (between 23° N and 24° N) (figure 9).[53] There's an important difference between these ports' ability to handle dust-rich storms.

Recently collected data allows us to observe the effect of the westerly jets with a greater precision (figure 9).[54] Although both Myos Hormos and Berenike are in the path of the sand-blasting jets, Berenike's harbor would have weathered them better because the Ras Benas peninsula, which juts into the Red Sea and curves southward, effectively blocks the direct impact. Note the green dot of calm in figure 10. The measurements indicate that at the site of Berenike's harbor the wind's velocity had decreased from ca. 8 s/m to 5–6 s/m.

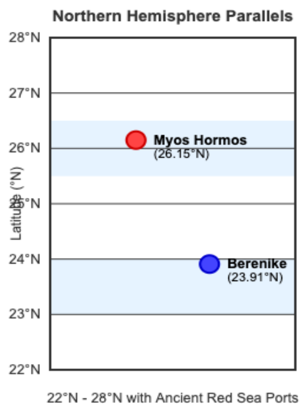

Figure 9: Locations of Myos Hormos and Berenike with respect to winter westerly gap winds in the Red Sea.

The goal of ships headed to either Myos Hormos or Berenike would have been to get to one of these ports before or after the onset of the winter westerly gales. It may be hypothesized that even if a ship got caught in such a gap-wind storm, Berenike's harbor would have provided a haven. No account mentions Berenike's harbor capacity, but it was the safer and deeper harbor.[55] Kotarba-Morley estimates that at Berenike, given its size before the silting, at its peak, 85 to 105 medium-size to large vessels (25 m x 7 m; 250–350 tons) could have been accommodated at one time.[56] That capacity would not have fit all the 120 ships of unknown size that the geographer Strabo states "were sailing from Myos Hormos to India" in

53 For slight variations of this position for Berenike, see 23.54° N, https://latitude.to/satellite-map/eg/egypt/51033/berenice-troglodytica.

54 Direct measurements for the Red Sea are hard to come by. Most of the work on the Red Sea is based on models. See, for instance, Sarantis S. Sofianos and William E. Johns, "An Oceanic General Circulation Model (OGCM) Investigation of the Red Sea Circulation, 1. Exchange between the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean," *Journal of Geophysical Research: Oceans* 107, no. C11 (2002); Sarantis S. Sofianos and William E. Johns, "An Oceanic General Circulation Model (OGCM) Investigation of the Red Sea Circulation, 2. Three-Dimensional Circulation in the Red Sea," *Journal of Geophysical Research: Oceans* 108, no. C3 (2003); Stoitchko Kalenderski and Georgiy Stenchikov, "High-Resolution Regional Modeling of Summertime Transport and Impact of African Dust over the Red Sea and Arabian Peninsula," *Journal of Geophysical Research: Atmospheres* 121, no. 11 (2016). Surface winds are considered those up to 10 m from the surface. For the measurements for that day, see Jiang et al., "Zonal Surface Wind Jets," 4, and figure 3; Bower and Farrar, "Air-Sea Interaction," 330–31.

55 For the size of the harbor at Myos Hormos and its location, see David Peacock, "The Site of Myos Hormos: A View from Space," *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 6 (1993): 226–32.

56 Kotarba-Morley, "Port Town and its Harbors," 87–88.

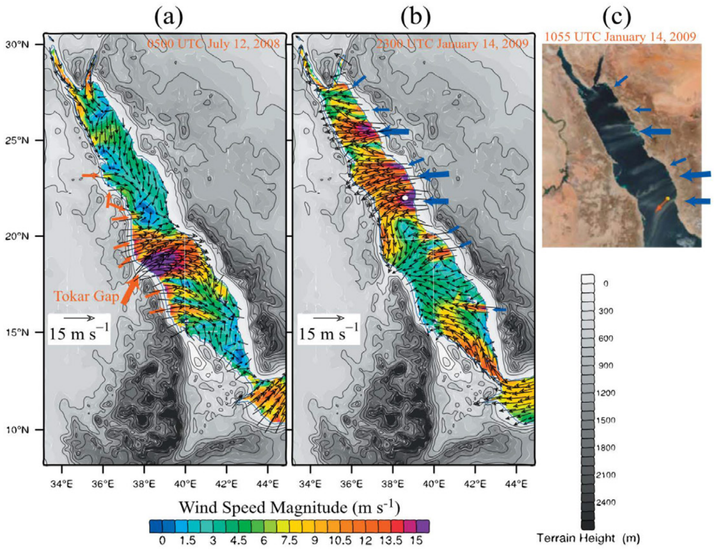

Figure 10: (c)-(d) Same as figure 5 la-lb but for January 2009. The red (blue) arrows in figures la-lb (figures lc-ld) indicate the locations of mountain gaps along the western (eastern) coast of the Red Sea. The wind vectors are shown for ~30 percent of the grid points. Copied from Jiang, Farrar, Beardsley, Chen, and Chen 2009, figure 1. Berenike is just below 25° N. Note the southeast horn-like shape of the Ras Benas peninsula.

26 BCE.[57] Therefore, anchorage at the ports called for advance planning. Perhaps the imperial authority responsible for the customs, maintenance of the wells, the forts, and the protection of caravans also managed the traffic of ships, ensuring they had safe anchorage in winter.[58] If most trading ventures with India in the first century operated like the *Hermapollon* and relied on loans, the loan givers would have kept records of those loans and would have monitored the arrival of ships. Those loans would have been one form of record keeping that whoever oversaw managing the ports may have had access to. If my hypothesis is correct, then Berenike would have served as an overflow harbor, not simply the port for larger ships, as hypothesized.[59] When a ship arrived at Berenike, a decision was made whether it could continue to Myos Hormos. Factors in making that decision included the weather conditions, the ships already at that port and their tonnage, and the time of their arrival.

Finally, let me offer a more minor point related to this hypothesis. The tight de facto connection between the ports may have engendered notional linkages, in which the name of one port stood for both. When Strabo speaks of Myos Hormos as a port of origin for all ships sailing to India, or when Pliny refers to Berenike in the same way, omitting Myos Hormos, both authors may have done so as a shortcut. Both ports harbored the same ships.

57 Strabo, *Geography*, trans. Horace Leonard Jones, Loeb Classical Library 49 (Harvard University Press, 1917), 2.5.12 (pp. 454–55).

58 For the forts, see Jean-Pierre Brun, "Chronology of the Forts of the Routes to Myos Hormos and Berenike During the Graeco-Roman Period," in *The Eastern Desert of Egypt*. For the taxation, see De Romanis, *Indo-Roman Pepper Trade*, 123–35. For the role of the state, see Fitzpatrick, "Provincializing Rome."

59 De Romanis argues for greater specialization; see De Romanis, *Indo-Roman Pepper Trade*, 46–54. That is not to be excluded. Yet the model I propose calls for greater flexibility.

To return to Braudel. Not all historical questions call for a Braudelian perspective. In this case, however, seeking to measure more precisely the "slow-moving" factors of the Indian Ocean monsoon's wind patterns has led—I hope—to a better understanding of the "ephemeral movements" of men: the rationale for constructing two closely aligned ports on the Red Sea as well as the timing of direct Mediterranean-Indian Ocean voyages. The narrow window for direct transoceanic voyages proposed here as well as the great risks and expense involved in sailing the seas, including the use of two linked harbors, could throw fresh insights on other aspects of the "ephemeral," such as the size of ships necessary to make the trade profitable, the volume of that trade based on the number and tonnage of ships, the involvement of the Roman state, the capital needed to make the trade profitable, and its size vis-à-vis other economic enterprises.[60] A

[60] I will be addressing some of these in a future publication.

Mobility and Immobility in the Early Modern Mediterranean

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In Part 1, Chapter 5 of *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World*, Fernand Braudel described the sea as "everything it is said to be: it provides unity, transport, the means of exchange and intercourse [...] But it has also been the great divider, the obstacle that had to be overcome." Essentially, the unity of the Mediterranean depended on the ability for people to move about it. "The different regions," Braudel continued, "are connected not by the water, but by the peoples of the sea [...] The Mediterranean has no unity but that created by the movements of men." Braudel recognized that despite the "land and sea routes" that crisscrossed the Mediterranean, an inherent tension existed therein, between mobility and immobility.[1]

In the following short essay, I'd like to reflect on this tension. I will discuss how my colleagues and I, who approach the Mediterranean from the vantage point of early modern French history, have interwoven considerations of mobility and immobility in our studies without assuming their incompatibility. Then, I will conclude by sharing an example of an individual I have been writing about in my recent microhistory projects, an Armenian prisoner of the French state, Avetik Yevtogliatsi, whose life epitomized this complex dynamic.

As some of the graduate students' workshopped papers—particularly those on captivity, enslavement, displacement, and exile—beautifully demonstrated at our symposium, scholars are increasingly highlighting how asymmetries of power and capabilities for violence, in addition to accidents of geography and environment, conditioned the movements of peoples and the circulation of materials, information, and ideas. The coexistence of voluntary and involuntary migration and people's simultaneous experiences with mobility and immobility were the central topics in a recent volume published in 2023, *Twelve Cities—One Sea*, to which I had the honor

[1] Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Siân Reynolds (Harper & Row, 1972–73 [1949]), 1:276.

of contributing.[2] The result of a collaborative humanities project, "People in Motion: Entangled Histories of Displacement Across the Mediterranean," the essayists of *Twelve Cities* explored how the development of trans-Mediterranean commercial, diplomatic, and trade networks intersected with the histories of "human dislocation," "isolation," and "discrimination."[3] In my own contribution, "Marseille—Between Independence and Incarceration," I described how southern France's foremost Mediterranean free port for global trade served as a regional industrial center, a prison town, and a naval yard, as a city that celebrated its physically and socially mobile merchants and historic trans-Mediterranean connections while thriving off the enslavement, incarceration, and immobilization of Protestants, Muslims, Orthodox Christians, "women of ill-repute," and other minoritized and marginalized populations under lock and key.[4]

The focus on "entanglements" to complicate the story of early modern mobility with an eye on displacement, dislocation, or immovability is not unique to the *Twelve Cities* volume. Early modern French historians have increasingly focused on topics ranging from empire, diplomacy, diasporic and multiethnic populations, and various forms of unfreedom to highlight how statist expansion materialized through policies that sought to regulate the entanglements of Christians, Muslims, and various racialized and religious minorities on French shores. Marseille has loomed large in many of these studies.

These contributions are welcome among early modern Mediterraneanists, who have occupied a small corner in French scholarship, where much of the studies related to the sea, for reasons having to do with the conquest of Algeria (1830), have focused on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As my colleagues Ian Coller and Gillian Weiss have described in the *Journal of French Historical Studies* forum on "Framing Muslims in the Making of France," "Key sites of memory [. . .] such as Marseille, the Mediterranean, the *bagne* (here, meaning colonial prison), slavery and abolition, find themselves shorn of the longer history to which they belong."[5]

But this is changing with a rise in interest in the migrants, merchants, prisoners, and slaves who seasonally or perennially made Marseille a base. Sebouh Aslanian and Olivier Raveux, for example, have taught us about the migratory paths of diasporic Armenians and shown how forced mobility laid the foundations for later voluntary movements across the Mediterranean to cities including Marseille.[6] Arazoo Ferozan's recent dissertation, "The Port City of Marseille: Cross-Cultural Encounters and Mercantile Networks in the Early Modern Mediterranean," reveals how long-term relations fostered between the city's Sephardic colony and non-Jewish consuls, ship-captains, and notaries allowed for the continued transport of goods around the sea. But the vitality of these networks did not imply a connected sea; piracy, commercial competition, and political contests between crown and municipality contributed to anti-Semitic waves that threatened the Jews of Marseille with forced removal. And Gillian Weiss's and Meredith Martin's *Sun King at Sea* studies Muslims chained on Louis XIV's galleys built at Marseille's Arsenal. These

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2 Giovanni Tarantino and Paola von Wyss-Giacosa, eds., *Twelve Cities—One Sea: Early Modern Mediterranean Port Cities and Their Inhabitants* (Edizioni scientifiche italiane, 2023).

3 Tarantino and Wyss-Giacosa, *Twelve Cities*, 12.

4 Junko Takeda, "Marseille: Between Independence and Incarceration," in Tarantino and Wyss-Giacosa, *Twelve Cities*, 19–35.

5 Ian Coller and Gillian Weiss, "Introduction: Framing Muslims in the Making of France, 1300–1800," *French Historical Studies* 47, no. 4 (2024): 521–22.

6 Sebouh Aslanian, *Early Modernity and Mobility: Port Cities and Printers across the Armenian Diaspora, 1512–1800* (Yale University Press, 2023).

turcs at the oar who provided labor to sustain French commercial and naval power while forced to participate in Louis's performance of prestige and imperial might embodied the simultaneous experience of immobility and mobility across the sea.

The focus on the social in these and other studies has allowed French historians to center their works on individuals who were not just "othered" subjects of French gazes, but actors who operated in a racialized Mediterranean world. Guillaume Calafat, Wolfgang Kaiser, Brian Sandberg and others have focused on corsairs, captives, and the intensified contacts between Jews, Muslims, eastern Mediterranean, and North African populations and the ways in which premodern concepts of race evolved across these encounters. What lies on the horizon are more studies that can show the interplay between the French Mediterranean and the Caribbean, Atlantic, and Indian Ocean worlds. In this regard, global microhistories of the kind modeled by the late Natalie Zemon Davis's *Trickster Travels: A Sixteenth-Century Muslim Between Worlds*, or more recently, by Sue Peabody in *Madeleine's Children: Family, Freedom, Secrets, and Lies in France's Indian Ocean Colonies*, can provide some inspiration for French Mediterraneanists hoping to globalize their analyses on race, ethnicity, and the complexities of long-distance seaborne mobility. [7]

This leads me to conclude with a few words about my current micro-historical project on Avétik, an Orthodox Armenian patriarch of Istanbul, and his servant Katchadur.[8] Both men were kidnapped, transported across the Mediterranean, and imprisoned by the French Crown amid the rising tide of anti-Orthodox sentiment following the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685). A study of these two unfortunate Armenians plucked out of the Ottoman Empire and incarcerated thousands of miles away highlights how trans-Mediterranean and trans-Atlantic regions were becoming connected, not only by the movements of sea- and ocean-going ships and the official correspondence, voluntary travelers, and merchandise and cargo they carried, but also through their transportation of "enemies of the French nation" and "libertines" seen as threats to the French social order.[9] These prisoners' seaborne movement forced their separation from their home communities and from French society. Mobility, in other words, imposed upon them social death and social isolation in the form of imprisonment or permanent exile in the colonies. Seas of connections were also seas of disconnections. Immobilized individuals still existed within a world in motion.

Avétik's kidnapping was ordered by the French ambassador to the Ottoman Port, Charles de Ferriol, and Louis XIV's secretary of state, the comte de Pontchartrain. They calculated that

7 On racialized French Mediterranean worlds, see, for example, Patricia Lorcin and Todd Shepard, eds., *French Mediterraneans: Transnational and Imperial Histories* (University of Nebraska Press, 2016); Guillaume Calafat and Matthieu Grenet, *Méditerranées: une histoire des mobilités humaines, 1492-1750* (Points: 2023); Calafat and Wolfgang Kaiser, "The Economy of Ransoming in the Early Modern Mediterranean," in eds. Francesca Trivellato, Leor Halevi, Catia Antunes, *Religion and Trade: Cross-Cultural Exchanges in World History, 1000-1900* (Oxford University Press, 2024): 108-130; Brian Sandberg, "'Moors Must Not Be Taken For Black': Race, Conflict, and Cultural Translation in the Early Modern French Mediterranean," *Mediterranean Studies* 29, no. 2 (2021): 182–212; Natalie Zemon Davis, *Trickster Travels: A Sixteenth-Century Muslim Between Worlds* (Hill and Wang, 2006); Sue Peabody, *Madeleine's Children: Families, Freedom, Secrets, and Lies in France's Indian Ocean Colonies* (Oxford University Press, 2017).

8 Junko Takeda, "Catholics Abandoned by Louis XIV: A Georgian Prince, an Armenian Patriarch, and Religious Politics in Islamic Asia," *French Historical Studies* 47, no. 4 (2024): 571–90.

9 Jennifer J. Davis, *Bad Subjects: Libertine Lives in the French Atlantic, 1619–1814* (University of Nebraska Press, 2023).

removing from Constantinople the patriarch, who politically benefited from the patronage of the sheik al islam Feyzullah Efendi, would strengthen French Catholics' position around the Ottoman capital at a time when the financial power and political connections of Greek and Armenian Orthodox communities frustrated Jesuit and Capuchin proselytization among eastern Catholics.

I was drawn to Avétik when I came across two sets of documents related to his kidnapping and subsequent incarceration: (1) Ferriol and Pontchartrain's archived letters about the "Avétik affair" and (2) a memoir written by Avétik while detained at the Bastille. In his narrative, Avétik wrote about his multiple detentions: around the Mediterranean, in a Spanish prison in Messina, and at Marseille's Chateau d'If and Arsenal of the Galleys; in Normandy at the Abbaye du Mont-Saint-Michel; and in Paris at the Bastille. Less than a year after he wrote his memoir, following his release from prison in exchange for renouncing the Orthodox faith, he mysteriously died, likely poisoned under Pontchartrain's orders. The secretary of state then detained Avétik's servant, Katchadur, who had sailed to Marseille in search of his master, and ordered him transported to Guadeloupe as a prisoner for life.

The tragic story of these two Armenian prisoners shows how considerations of Mediterranean mobility and immobility can be connected to histories of trans-Atlantic bondage and enslavement and to studies of the multiplication of imperial carceral spaces. But perhaps more importantly, the story of the vulnerabilities of two ethnic and religious minorities from an Islamic empire holds lessons relevant to the darkening world of the present day. Armenians numbered among many in the early modern world who experienced the ravages of wars fought by larger imperial neighbors: mass deportation, displacement, and dispossession. The broad historic trajectories that landed Armenians like Avétik in Istanbul from central Anatolia and the political accidents that delivered Avétik into French hands resonates in our own time, as the lives of millions of undocumented, visa-insecure, and stateless populations—largely of color—hang in the balance between forced mobilities and immobilities, both near and far from the Mediterranean. A

Reciprocity and Mobility in Braudel's Mediterranean: A Conversation

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Egidio Ivetic
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Editors' Note: Although a last-minute travel disruption prevented Professor Roberta Morosini (UCLA) from participating in the November 2024 symposium, she subsequently reflected on the theme of "mobility" in a conversation with historian Egidio Ivetic.

Roberta Morosini (RM): Braudel provides a geopolitical map of the Mediterranean through movements, depicting how societies interact with geography in terms of reciprocity. This, if I understand correctly, represents a vision of "total history," a world where "everything influences everything else reciprocally": economics intertwines with politics, culture, and society. Thus, we see an image of a society, even before history, entirely open to contingency, with no deterministic principle or latent structure. As a temporal structure that contrasts with the event-driven (which Braudel considered mere "dust"), it almost geologically realizes itself through society's interactions with geography. How much does this osmosis and reciprocity impact mobility in the Mediterranean?

Egidio Ivetic (EI): In his first masterpiece, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, Braudel begins with "The Environment" (Part One), which corresponds in his interpretation to the *long durée*, the deep structural history of the Mediterranean. Human mobility, the movement from one place to another, is not treated as a specific theme but rather as a natural trait depending on the contexts examined in his grand tableau. There are mountain dwellers who come down to the plains and reach cities, perhaps to sell something, to work, and then return—seasonal movements. Some do settle in cities, urbanizing, though they remain few. Braudel was among the first to reflect on mountain diaspora as a shared trait across the various Mediterranean shores, each defined, as we know, by mountain ranges. Not by chance, he titles an early section: *Mountain Life, the First History of the Mediterranean?* Following this are chapters on plains, where transhumance appears, particularly in Castile, where it was famously practiced. Braudel enumerates the seasonal nomadism that characterizes mobility between the Sahara and the Mediterranean shores, or in the Balkans.

The idea is that migrations are an intrinsic part of the circulation within an organism—the Mediterranean—which, as a maritime system, relies fundamentally on the movement of people and goods. These are recurring phenomena, both on a small scale and regional level, season by season. It is not about an exodus or mass migration that transforms a place's demographic features, but rather about small, individual migrations that enable adaptation. This was the Mediterranean of the sixteenth century. Braudel applies this model to the mountains, the plains, and maritime regions, particularly island contexts. Here he addresses island emigrants. There are also, of course, commercial migrations, such as merchant colonies that settled in Levantine trading posts, the famous *fondacos*, which had extraterritorial status. And it was through precise, negotiated terms that the meeting between Europeans/Christians and Muslims occurred, with economic considerations taking precedence. These dynamics follow a premodern rhythm; Braudel emphasizes that in the preindustrial world, seasons determined the rhythm of everything, with seasonal cycles imposing a determinism that influenced economic life. Year after year, this cycle repeated. Thus, mobility also appears as a known, recurring cycle, part of the whole. But it is almost always individual, familial, or small group mobility, an agreed-upon mobility, always preceded by well-established economic patterns—a mobility that sixteenth-century Mediterranean civilizations accept and incorporate while remaining fundamentally themselves. In Braudel's period of study, the late sixteenth century, the Christian and Ottoman/Muslim Mediterranean coexist in parallel historical tracks.

RM: Through Braudel's historical geography, conceived as shifting along the long and medium term, we transition from studying "events" to studying structures and interconnections, which allows for the recovery of certain subjects relegated to the margins of history. From your perspective as a Mediterranean historian, how might this characteristic mobility reintegrate a Mediterranean perspective in university classrooms that goes beyond trends, inviting a reflection on migration—a theme to which you dedicate a chapter in your recent book, *Il grande racconto del Mediterraneo* (Il Mulino, 2023)?

EI: Braudel invites us to consider capillarity, small movements; and in a similar way, Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell discuss smaller, minimal movements, such as coastal cabotage, which played a vital role in Mediterranean life compared to large-scale navigation, more documented and thus more studied. Recent studies have highlighted the importance of organized colonization in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, i.e., the relocation of entire communities—agreements with sovereign authorities to repopulate abandoned Mediterranean territories. These were Orthodox Greek and Albanian communities, for example, who relocated to the Kingdom of Naples. Many of these colonizing efforts ultimately failed. Still, today we have a clearer idea of mobility in the early modern Mediterranean, including the influx of European renegades to North African ports. Nonetheless, on the whole, these phenomena did not involve significant numbers. The early modern Mediterranean was commercially dynamic, not in decline, and was generally socially conservative. The Mediterranean logic did not envision progress as we conceive it post-nineteenth century; it was about survival, conserving what one had and was.

RM: How does the concept of connectivity from Purcell and Horden, linking distant places through both sound and movement like on a map, differ from the central aspect of Braudel's historical poetics? Also, what are your thoughts on mobility and the *long durée* and the urgency of reevaluating Braudel now that Purcell and Horden have introduced the concept of connectivity—a spatial connection that doesn't account for the factor of time?

EI: Horden and Purcell have offered an epistemology for Mediterranean history, going beyond Braudel. They discuss fragmentation, precariousness, and connectivity as the paradigms on which the Mediterranean, understood as an organism, is based—an organism because it had the capacity to adapt to various historical shifts while remaining fundamentally the same on a structural level between roughly 1000 BC and 1800 AD. With the nineteenth century, everything changes: modernity transforms the Mediterranean, segmenting it according to state-national logic. This brings us to the present. Today the Mediterranean is first and foremost a matter of geopolitics, then everything else. Historians agree on this. But before, for a couple of millennia, the Mediterranean was what I call a "system of systems." But that was a different Mediterranean, the one we study.

RM: How significant is Braudel's experience of "exile" in his conception of "mobility," which informs his Mediterranean?[1]

EI: Exile in the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries was part of individual destinies, less so of "collective destinies," to use Braudel's phrase. Certainly, we have the expulsion of the Jews in 1492 and then the Moriscos from Catholic Spain. These are well-known events. The exile of entire communities of 200–300,000 people benefited the Ottoman Empire, strengthening North African and Balkan cities economically. However, it is essential to be precise, distinguishing territorial mobility, which is economic and social, from exile, which has deeper political, religious, cultural, and

1 I refer here to John. A. Marino, "The Exile and His Kingdom: The Reception of Braudel's Mediterranean.," *The Journal of Modern History* 76, no. 3 (2004): 622–52.

symbolic connotations. Exile events are exceptions, while mobility is a phenomenon—structural, at least from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. Once again, things have changed since the nineteenth century. There has been mass immigration of the French into Algeria, Italians into Tunisia, the population exchange between Turkey and Greece in 1923 involving millions, and the exodus of millions of French from Algeria in 1960–62. Mass exile resurfaces after every war. Today, the Global South knocks on the doors of the West—that is, the European Union, specifically Italy, in the Mediterranean. This is our own time: Exile has become a mass phenomenon. A

Braudelian Scale and the History of the Novel

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Could Braudel's *Mediterranean* be a model for literary history? I am currently toying with a history of the novel with passably Braudelian features—though probably not the ones his book is most known for. Geography itself isn't of much importance to me, or at least the idea of unchanging geographical inputs, contrasted with humankind's technological or cultural responses to them. Nor am I so interested in the spread of novels as merchandise, taking their place in a world of markets. And books are small—they don't need water routes for their dissemination. The sea won't matter much for me, either. By contrast, I am interested in the problem of how to model change at scale. And then the long history of the novel is, literally, somewhat Mediterranean, since it extends from Byzantium in the east to Spain in the west. So at the very least, *The Mediterranean* might be a potential inspiration for yet another take on the history of the genre.

As far as scale is concerned, the history of the novel has slowly been losing it. The earliest historians, from the late 1700s in England but a good century earlier in France, thought the history of the novel had to be a long one. They recognized and celebrated the distinctiveness and even superiority of new novels—the ones by Richardson, and Fielding, and Defoe, and also those by Lafayette, Lesage, and Marivaux. But it seemed obvious that the novel itself—though, to open a parenthesis, the question of what kind of entity "the novel itself" is, is at the heart of my project—had a longer history. These early commentators couldn't help backing up into what in English (but only in English) is called romance and then fanning out into places that weren't France or England. Over time, this changed. Things became more specialized, for one, which is normal; but also, critics started to look for causes, for, dare I say it, "historical specificity." Cultural phenomena were supposed to be produced by their "historical moment"; and critics were supposed to be able to read that moment in the forms they studied. And the moment was, inevitably, the moment of a shift, a key shift, of the turn to the modern. There was before; we're in the after.

All this is what's commonly known as historicizing. But Braudel, who wished for a kind of history that could do more "than study walled gardens," as he put it in the original preface, can show us another way.[1] Sure, partly from the sheer scale. But also because at scale, the idea of the hinge moment becomes impossible to maintain. Instead, he reaches for other models for change. In his original conclusion of 1949, for instance, he spoke of envisioning history "as a series of crises, between which one can detect pauses, moments of equilibrium."[2] But above all, he's interested in the idea of multiple types of temporality. Of course, there's the three-speed model of environmental interactions, social groups, and individuals, plus the two-level model of "structure and conjuncture" he evokes in the 1966 conclusion.[3] If the search for "historical specificity" usually means locating a moment on a linear time line, a moment taken as somehow homogenous (because everything clustered there is connected), a Braudelian view would stress the multiple layers composing the "one single moment in time"—"all the different histories that coexist in reality," as he states in the 1966 conclusion.[4] Since Braudel didn't set out to explain the change in cultural artifacts, I'm not sure his models are the best for, say, doing this new history of the novel. I personally look to his slightly younger contemporary George Kubler, the historian of pre-Colombian art, for ways of understanding the multiple temporalities of artifacts.[5] But the general point is just to get away from what seems to me a very narrow conception of the "historical moment."

The novel itself, I've written. But what is it? And should we worry when we start using the term to talk about books from times the term wasn't in use? Here's where I would bring in the Braudel of his later capitalism work. He just gives the whole problem a pragmatic shrug. "This does not bother me much," he writes of using the word *capitalism*. "Historians invent words and labels to identify retrospectively problems and periods in history: the Hundred Years War, the Renaissance, Humanism, the Reformation."[6] But this doesn't mean that we shouldn't be prepared, and before doing his own history of the word *capitalism*, he says, "The advice of Henri Berr and Lucien Febvre was that the key words of the vocabulary of history should only be used after asking a number of questions. Where do they come from? How have they come down to us? Are they likely to mislead us?"[7] The novel, like capitalism, is not a thing; it is not born, like an animal, which is either there in a given year or it's not. The novel is a concept that humans have invented to group a variety of artifacts produced by other humans, artifacts that appear to enough people to be worth grouping. Of course, we do this literally all the time, for on one level it's just what language, all language, is, whether we're talking about artifacts or things in the nonhuman world. The history of the word is important, but we mustn't assume that at any time words are adequate windows onto the artifactual world, any more than when we name a species we are isolating the essential difference of the organisms we're pointing to.

1 Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Siân Reynolds (Harper & Row, 1972–73), 1:23.

2 Fernand Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* (Armand Colin, 1949), 1095.

3 Braudel, *The Mediterranean*, 2:1242.

4 Braudel, *The Mediterranean*, 2:1238.

5 George Kubler, *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* (Yale University Press, 1962).

6 Fernand Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th–18th Century*, vol. 2: *The Wheels of Commerce*, trans. Siân Reynolds (Collins, 1982), 22.

7 Braudel, *The Wheels of Commerce*, 232.

Lastly, we might think about "great books" being like events in Braudel's scheme, "those essentially *ephemeral* yet moving occurrences, the 'headlines' of the past."[8] In the literary archive only a small part—the canonical part—"stands out" against a possibly more slowly changing mass of literary habit. (And it's not self-evident that the change of the mass is really an effect of the outliers' difference.) There would be differences, since art objects are reexperienced in the present in a way that historical events can't be.[9] Nonetheless, Braudel's discounting of the event would again help move us away from the more familiar models, in which great books, if they're not crystalizing the specificity of their historical moment, are the motor of literary history. And it would provide an alternative to the "distant reading" metaphor that dominates a lot of digital humanities work that we associate with literary history at scale.

The Mediterranean probably can't be a model for a history of the novel—it is founded on environmental materiality in a way that would make little sense for talking about how literary practices diffuse, spread, and sometimes fail—but, at seventy-five, it nonetheless offers some fresh ways for thinking about long-term change and about what "doing history" means. A

8 Braudel, *The Mediterranean*, 2:1243. Italics in original

9 Antoine Lilti, "Rabelais est-il notre contemporain? Histoire intellectuelle et herméneutique critique," *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 59, no.4 bis (2012): 65–84.

Narrative Traditions and the Signification of Historical Events

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Braudel's *La Mediterranée* was ground-breaking in its ability to illustrate what a history can look like when it has broken away from the story of political events. It explores the interface between geographical setting and human events, breaking this down even further into the "hinges" between long duration human practice (predicated on the relationship with these geographic spaces) and the more recognizable narrative of human history.

As part of a longer project on the reception of Andalusi communities displaced to the Maghrib, I am developing a theoretical framework which argues that the medieval Mediterranean witnessed the genesis of a new political culture when the space was overwritten by a set of narrative traditions that in turn allowed for the description and identification of political relationships and movements. For this project, which I conceive of as a kind of conceptual essay on the medieval and early modern refugee, I am interested in exploring a similar hinge between long-duration culture and event and the means by which the event takes on meaning against the backdrop of regular life patterns. Perhaps "disruption and continuity" can be thought of as the sort of digital binary of such an identification: The event was a disruption. The event produced a disruption. The event is part of a longer pattern and is thus a form of continuity, etc.

But I am coming at this thought from a different angle, not so much from the historical question of causes and effects of change, but rather from the cultural historian's question of how change, events, and social movements are given meaning and signified in their time and context.

Perhaps the most apt analogy I can think of is popular music. I don't mean necessarily "pop" over hip-hop or new wave or even Cumbia. I mean any genre of popular music and the means by which a new song produces the recognition of meaning within this tradition. And, as we may intuit, mostly it does so by being exactly the same as the ones that came before—so much so that only the initiated can tell the difference between one song and another. Meanwhile we, the initiated in a particular tradition, spend all our time trying to account for why a particular instance is meaningful and brilliant (a departure), often entirely forgetting that, in fact, much of the instance's brilliance lies in the fact that it sounds just like the rest, that we recognize and love it for that reason, and, perhaps most importantly, that enormous effort and cultural work are being done in transmitting the tradition as a whole, in sharing the repertoire to enough people so they can distinguish the instance in the first place.[1]

I find the analogy useful, because a similar dynamic prevails over narrative. But we are less inclined to recognize the power and the centrality of the narrative tradition, likely because it is a prime means by which we make sense of our personal experiences and the personal experience of the world. Still, you probably do not need too much convincing if I state that our narrative forms and genres are also highly repetitive, and that our enjoyment and engagement with them as stories depend on their predictability and conformity to a repertoire with which we are familiar. You may think that I want to talk about literature, but I don't—at least not primarily. I want to talk about the hinges by which we make meaning of smaller and larger instances within longer duration patterns of community behavior.

Ancient and medieval legal and literary traditions have at their hearts narrative complexes from which they generate meaning (including juristic meaning), interpretive stances, and, of course, further stories.[2] The narrative complex at the heart of Islamic law is the life of the Prophet Muḥammad (the *sīra*), which is, in turn, imbricated with a series of other narrative traditions through the Qur'ān and through the lives and actions of his companions and successors.[3] But let's stay centered on the figure of the Prophet. I'll mention two of an almost infinite number of examples of how the Prophet's life is used as a touchstone to make sense of events. The first is an action in the genesis-narrative of the Almoravids (a dynasty I work on) when a certain Yaḥyā b. Ibrāhīm, a Guddala chief from the western Sahara, travels east and returns looking for someone to teach Islam to his people. (He would return to his Saharan village with 'Abd Allāh b. Yāsīn, spiritual founder of the Almoravids.) Yaḥyā's trip eastward is identified as a *ḥajj*, which, of course, is the pilgrimage to Mecca, but, more specifically, it is the pilgrimage to Mecca as performed by Muḥammad in his life time (which co-opted and overwrote the pre-Islamic tradition). Yaḥyā's displacement and return, his trip, is given meaning through an analogy that rests on the Prophet's example.

The second example is this gem from Alfonso X's *Historia de Espanna*, in which a section is dedicated to the life of Muḥammad:

> *Despues desto paso el a Espanna et fuesse por Cordova, et predigo y aquella su mala secta; e dizie les en su predicacion que Nuestro Sennor Ihesu Cristo que nasciera de uirgen por obra dell Spiritu Sancto, mas non que fuesse Dios. Quando esto sopo el buen padre sant Esidro, que llegara entonces de la corte de Roma, enuio luego sus omnes a Cordoua quel prisiessen et ge le leuassen; mas el diablo apparescio a Mahomat et dixol que se partiesse daquel logar; ell entonces saliosse de*

1 I am citing an episode of the podcast *All Songs Considered* in which the host, Bob Boilen, reports on a talk he listened to. I cannot remember the episode, which was several years back. The broader concept echoes powerfully with T. S. Eliot's famous essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," although here we are de-emphasizing the individual talent. I make a similar point when teaching translation theory, a subject in which the work of reproducing the tradition comes to the fore.

2 See Robert Cover, "The Supreme Court, 1982 Term: Nomos and Narrative," *The Harvard Law Review* 97, no. 1 (1983): 4–70.

3 I wrote about this very recently in a post for the Harvard Program in Islamic Law: Camilo Gómez-Rivas, "Why I Love Teaching Islamic Law and Literature," *Islamic Law Blog*, November 26, 2024, https://islamiclaw.blog/2024/11/26/why-i-love-teaching-islamic-law-and-literature/.

> *Cordoua et fuxo et passo allend mar, et predigo en Arauia et en Affrica, et enganno y et coffondio muchos pueblos ademas assi como oy en dia ueedes, et tornolos a su creencia por que les prouaua el les afirmaua aquello que les dizie por la ley de los judios et de los cristianos...*[4]
>
> (After this he travelled to Spain and to Córdoba, where he preached his evil sect. He taught them in his preaching that our Lord Jesus Christ was born to a virgin by the grace of the Holy Spirit, but not that he was God. When the good holy father Isidore, who was arriving then from the court in Rome, learned of this, he sent his men to Córdoba, to apprehend and deliver him. But the devil appeared to Muhammad and told him to leave that place. He then left Córdoba and traveled across the sea and preached in Arabia and in Africa, where he misled and sowed confusion among many other peoples, as you can witness today, turning them to his belief, demonstrating and asserting what he taught about the laws of Jews and Christians…)

Here, the history of Córdoba and Spain are narrated, even if polemically, by reference to a different, even unrecognizable, life of the Prophet, but nonetheless present, seen from the outside.

The narrative matter of the life of the Prophet forms much of the core of the narrative tradition of Islamic law and ritual. It exists in parallel versions: one legal, one narrative—devotional, so that the dry proof prose of the *ḥadīth* is backed up by one of Islam's most affectively powerful narrative traditions (the *sīra* and its devotional offshoots). The life of the Prophet forms the core corpus of higher education in Arabic, so that its substance and rhetorical forms are shared across the literate elite and spill into other fictive and non-fictive genres, religious and secular, including popular prose, poetry, philosophy, polemical literature, and, naturally, historiography, which is on some level why movement such as Yāḥyā's is identified as a *ḥajj* and the movement of displaced Andalusīs as *hijra*. The identification is at once legal and historiographical.

The hinges I want to talk about (as I pursue this project further) are at least two. One makes sense of individual experience and local community by reference, example, or relation to the Prophet and his community. I'm thinking of this as the "biographical hinge."[5] The other, and often entirely related, is calendrical: how commemorative performance rehearses the narrative relation of locale within the broader Mediterranean space. The classical form of this (sticking to our focus) is the *Mawlid al-Nabawiyy* (The Prophet's birthday) in turn connected through story and spiritual and family genealogy to myriad *mawlids* (the feast of notable historical individuals, "saints," tied to villages, towns, and neighborhoods) across the Muslim Mediterranean, connecting the local with the wider Ummah (and readable to Jews, Christians, and others).

An event, a movement of refuge or displacement or of long-distance commerce, can be traced against this spatial and calendrical backdrop, which this Life and its many related stories have overwritten. A

4 Alfonso X el Sabio, *Prosa Histórica*, ed. Benito Brancaforte (Editorial Catedra, 1999), 88.

5 Can be termed mythical or hagiographical, but I am interested in the simple reference to a life story.

From Braudel to the Chinese-Western Rivalry

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Braudel's *La Méditerranée* was published at a historical juncture when the decline of European colonial empires and the disastrous consequences of intra-European strife triggered bold political imaginations and sweeping political reconfigurations: the creation of the post-World War II international order with the United Nations at its center, of course, but also projects of regional integration such as the EU as well as large-scale, transcontinental projects such as Eurafrica and Afroasia.[1] Going hand in hand with the political imagination and reconfiguration were searching historico-philosophical reflections and grand historiographical reconstructions. Alongside monumental works in the philosophy of history such as Arnold Toynbee's *Study of History* (1934–61), Karl Jaspers' *The Origin and Goal of History* (1949), and Eric Voegelin's *Order and History* (which began to appear in the 1950s and culminated in *The Ecumenical Age* in 1974), there was Braudel's *La Méditerranée*. The definition of the Mediterranean as an entity with its own history—a coherent historical world—makes this historiographical masterpiece a philosophy of history as well. As Braudel put it in the preface to the first edition of the work, "Woe betide the historian who thinks that […] the Mediterranean as an entity needs no definition because it has long been clearly defined, is instantly recognizable and can be described by dividing general history along the lines of its geographical contours. […] The question of boundaries is the first to be encountered; from it all others flow. To draw a boundary around anything is to define, analyze and reconstruct it, in this case select, indeed adopt, a philosophy of history."[2] As a philosophy of history, *La Méditerranée* shares with the other monumental works

1 On the now almost forgotten transcontinental projects, see Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Post-Imperial Possibilities: Eurasia, Eurafrica, Afroasia* (Princeton University Press, 2023).

2 Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philipp II*, trans. Siân Reynolds (Harper & Row, 1972–73), 1:17–18.

of the philosophy of history what Braudel, in his 1950 inaugural lecture given at the Collège de France, characterized as "a consideration of the whole destiny of mankind."[3]

Seventy-five years later, with the post-World War II world order under siege and new planetary challenges looming, the political imagination is again at work, and political reconfiguration is again underway. The political sea change comes with a new wave of historico-philosophical reflections and historiographical reconstructions that reconsider the "whole destiny of mankind" —for example, the renewed interest in world history,[4] the projects of global history[5] and "big history" (David Christian), and the invocation of a new "climate of history in a planetary age" (Dipesh Chakrabarty). In light of the political reconfiguration of the world today, my current book project—*Two Worlds: The Idea of the West vs. The Idea of China Across Time*—undertakes a historiographical reconstruction of a particular kind: a comparative study of the idea of Europe, as well as the associated idea of the West and the idea of China from the "the Axial Age" (Karl Jaspers) to the present. I'd like to highlight three aspects of this book project, which are inspired by Braudel but at the same time go beyond him.

First, following Braudel, *Two Worlds* approaches history on the scale of large, expansive regions, analyzing long-term, enduring structures—what he called "collective destinies and general trends." The regions examined are Europe/the West and China. Like the Mediterranean, Europe/the West and China are entities in need of definition, all the more so because their respective boundaries keep shifting across time. The need for definition and redefinition makes the analysis and reconstruction of the two regions an exercise in the philosophy of history. Among the "collective destinies and general trends," my project focuses on a dimension that Braudel curiously omits, namely the system of multiple political entities, something usually called "world order" in international relations and beyond. By "Europe"/the "West" and "China," I mean two more or less territorialized systems of multiple political entities, i.e., two world orders.

Second, *Two Worlds* is concerned with ideas and visions as an integral dimension of collective destinies and general trends. Braudel's discussion of collective destinies and general trends includes economies, empires, societies, civilizations, and forms of war. But he pays scant attention to the ideas and visions undergirding every society, or what Cornelius Castoriadis would call "the imaginary institution of society."[6] My project, by contrast, focuses on the imaginary, that is, the ideas, narratives, and images that configure a society and forge its collective identity, including those that define its ontology, those that locate it in time, and those that distinguish it from other societies. This means studying two traditions of political thought that articulate what Europe/ the West is and should be and what China is and should be; two traditions of historical thought that articulate what and how shared pasts and futures bind Europe/the West together and what and how shared pasts and futures bind China together; two traditions of alterity discourse that articulate how Europe/the West differs from and relates to others and how China differs from and relates to others. Above all, it means studying two traditions of imaginative literature that articulate the idea of Europe/the West and the idea of China in all these aspects.

3 Fernand Braudel, "The Situation of History in 1950," in *On History*, trans. Sarah Matthews (The University of Chicago Press, 1980), 6–22 (here 6).

4 On the renewed interest in world history, see the seven-volume *Cambridge World History* (Cambridge University Press, 2015), and the six-volume *History of the World* (Harvard University Press, 2012–2025).

5 See Sebastian Conrad, *What is Global History?* (Princeton University Press, 2017).

6 Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Polity Press, 1987).

Finally, *Two Worlds* takes a comparative approach. Although Braudel now and then referred to different world regions, and although his *La Méditerranée* has inspired historical studies of comparable regions such as the Indian Ocean or the Atlantic, his work is generally not comparative by design. In contrast, my project is designed to be comparative, studying Europe and China synchronously in five pivotal periods: the beginnings of the idea of Europe and the idea of China in the so-called Axial Age, the idea of Europe/the West and the idea of China as two regional world orders in the centuries between 1000 and1300 and then in the long eighteenth century, the general reorientation in the short twentieth century (roughly 1910–1990), and the idea of the West and the idea of China as two global world orders in the present age.

Concluding with a preliminary account of two competing visions of global order, one Western and the other Chinese, *Two Worlds* is a reconstruction of the past meant to illuminate, if not explain, a key aspect of the political configuration of the present. If the political configuration of the present is radically different yet nonetheless evolving from that of seventy-five years ago, this book radically departs from—yet is nonetheless inspired by—Braudel. A

The Annales School in Mexico: The Work of Mexican Historian Pilar Gonzalbo Aizpuru

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The presence of the *Annales* approach to historiography in Latin America has not been thoroughly accounted for.[1] This presentation examines the influence of the *Annales* school on Mexican historiography, emphasizing the work of the late Pilar Gonzalbo Aizpuru, general editor of the five-volume *History of Everyday Life in Mexico* and author, in addition to many research publications, of *An Introduction to the History of Everyday Life*. At the end, I discuss the relevance of the topic for my own pedagogy and research and how it is important for a literary historian like myself.

In his book on the French historical revolution, Peter Burke mentions Latin America several times. He describes the crucial importance in Fernand Braudel's intellectual development of the two years that he spent as a relatively young professor in Brazil. This extended residence in São Paulo coincided with that of Claude Lévi-Strauss, and there they both became familiar with the writings of the Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre, whose interests already paralleled those of the young French scholars.[2] Looking beyond Braudel to the influence of the *Annales* school in Latin America, Burke also cites the Mexico-focused research of Serge Gruzinski, as well as the importance of Braudel's work to Latin American historians, discussing three exemplary Latin Americans trained by *Annales* historians in Paris: the Argentine Tulio Halperín Donghi, the Mexican Enrique Florescano, and the Brazilian Luiz Felipe Alencastro.[3] Burke's approach centers on academic genealogy; leaving out the development and transmission of ideas through what we

1 A notable exception was Carlos Antonio Aguirre Rojas, *Los* Annales *y la historiografía latinoamericana* (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1993).

2 Peter Burke, "Elective Affinities: Gilberto Freyre and the *Nouvelle Histoire*," *The European Legacy* 3, no. 4 (1998): 1–10.

3 Peter Burke, *The French Historical Revolution: The Annales School, 1929–2014*, 2nd ed. (Stanford University Press, 2015), 37, 109, 121–22.

read and absorb. Historiographical methods are not determined by dissertation directors alone, who, when at their best, teach what it means to be a scholar, rather than any particular approach to scholarship. The historian on whom I focus this presentation did not have a genealogical affiliation with the *Annales* school, but she certainly carried out her scholarship in that tradition.

Pilar Gonzalbo Aizpuru was born in Madrid in 1935, on the eve of the Spanish Civil War.[4] She took her first university degree at the Universidad Complutense in Madrid; subsequently, an invitation to a conference in Guatemala first exposed her to Latin America, and she then moved to Mexico City, where she did her postgraduate studies, with a dissertation on women's education in New Spain. She taught for many years at the Colegio de México as well as at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México and other prestigious institutions. She wrote or directed over forty books, many with an extensive list of collaborators, as required by the nature of her historiographical approach to everyday life. She focused on the colonial period in Mexican history, particularly the (long) eighteenth century, and her best-known research was on everyday life and the *mentalités* it reveals—about women and family life; education; emotions, especially love and fear—examining life in the capital as well as in other cities. One book title in particular sums up her approach: *Vivir en Nueva España: Orden y desorden en la vida cotidiana* (Living in New Spain: Order and disorder in everyday life), from 2009.[5] I choose this particular title because it epitomizes her conception of the family, the workplace, the convent, the school, and other locales commonly associated with the private sphere as places of both order and disorder, both of which easily spilled over into the public arena. Indeed, she emphasized the concept of the everyday over that of the private, seeing the latter as culturally and historically contingent. She reminded students and readers that even the acts that we consider most intimate and private, up to and including defecation and sexual intercourse, were often carried out much more publicly than the way that we imagine them today.

From a methodological perspective, however, one of Gonzalbo Aizpuru's most telling essays is the general introduction to the *Historia de la vida cotidiana en México* (History of daily life in Mexico), a six-volume collection of which she was the general editor as well as the principal editor of the third volume (dedicated, naturally, to the eighteenth century) and a significant contributor throughout. In the general introduction, she elucidates how everyday life coexists with the succession of events that constitute public history. While everyday life can shape, postpone, or even precipitate those events, its nature is independent of those public or political events. So far, this is standard *Annales*-type rejection of *événements* in favor of a representation of the underlying *longue durée* of social conditions. But she elaborates on the disconnection as follows:

> *Hoy se aprecia la influencia de actitudes tradicionales en la gestación de revueltas en las que antes se pretendía ver un proyecto renovador. Sin desdeñar la importancia de los factores económicos, vale considerar que aún más que la explotación y la pobreza, lo que provoca el descontento es el cambio en las formas de opresión y la diferencia comparativa entre la pobreza de ayer y la de hoy, y [de] la riqueza de los otros, antes y despues.*

4 Biographical information: Anne Staples, "Pilar Gonzalbo Aizpuru (17 de enero de 1935–26 de febrero de 2024): In memoriam," *Historia Mexicana* 74, no. 1 (2024): 381–88; Pilar Gonzalbo Aizpuru, "Blog y artículos," in *Historia de la Vida Cotidiana: Textos, conferencias, entrevistas, investigaciones y más* (2024), https://vidacotidiana.pilargonzalbo.com/, accessed December 24, 2024.

5 Pilar Gonzalbo Aizpuru, *Vivir en Nueva España: Orden y desorden en la vida cotidiana* (Colegio de México, 2009).

> (Today, the influence of traditional [historiographic] attitudes is evident in the representation of revolts that were previously seen as projects for social reform. Without disregarding the importance of economic factors, it is worth considering that even more than exploitation and poverty, what provokes discontent is change in the forms of oppression, and the comparative differences between the poverty of yesterday and that of today, and [between] the wealth of others, before and afterwards.)[6]

One cannot help but wonder if this is a mere restatement of the shortcomings of political history or a pointed critique of messianic representations of political events. To Gonzalbo Aizpuru, it is not the mere discrepancy between the rich and the poor that provokes the cataclysmic events of political history, for such discrepancies are built into the underlying mentality of everyday life. Rather, it is the change in the conditions of everyday life, in the nature of that social and economic discrepancy, that brings the new social and economic structures into disaccord with the accustomed mentality. This is the key connection between the changes in everyday life and the events of conventional political history. She then continues:

> *Incluso en condiciones excepcionales de opresión, encierro, incertidumbre o violencia extrema, los individuos restablecen pronto alguna forma de cotidianidad, un comportamiento que les permita resolver continuamente los problemas de supervivencia y de mantenimiento de su identidad. No hay duda de que son posibles las historias de la vida cotidiana en campos de concentración, en ciudades sitiadas o bajo cuarentena sanitaria, en pueblos nómadas y en grupos de exiliados.*

> (Even in exceptional conditions of oppression, confinement, uncertainty or extreme violence, individuals quickly reestablish some form of everyday life, a behavior that enables them to continue to resolve the problems of survival and of maintaining their identity. There is no doubt that histories of everyday life in concentration camps, in cities under siege or quarantine, in nomadic villages and among groups of exiles are possible.)[7]

Here she addresses the converse: how events, even of extreme violence, affect everyday life. She acknowledges the moral imperative not to ignore human catastrophes and, indeed, proposes a method that looks them directly in the eye, regardless of whether the catastrophes are man-made or due to natural causes. People in the midst of catastrophic events, even those that result from misguided attempts at social reform, struggle to survive by reviving the mores of everyday life. The story of this tenacity can be—and indeed needs to be—told.

Still, I think that it is no accident that Gonzalbo Aizpuru, in her own work as a historian, concentrated on the eighteenth century. I do not think that this is only an extension of the *Annales* school's fixation on the premodern and the Old Regime. The long eighteenth century in Mexico was a relatively stable and prosperous era, extending from the Indigenous rebellion of 1691 to the wars of independence brought on by the transformations at the dawn of the nineteenth century in the aftermath of the French revolution (notably, for the Hispanic world, the abdication of Charles IV, shortly followed by Napoleon's occupation of Spain and the imposition of his

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6 Pilar Gonzalbo Aizpuru, General editor, *Historia de la vida cotidiana en México*, vol. 5. (Colegio de México, 2004–06), 1:11.

7 Gonzalbo Aizpuru, *Historia de la vida cotidiana en México*, 1:12.

brother Joseph on the Spanish throne). But stability and prosperity do not mean stasis and stagnation. The eighteenth century was also the period when the contradictions of a colonial mentality gradually gave way to a new mental or imagined community, a concept of Mexicanness.[8] Gonzalbo Aizpuru nods at these developments. But with her focus on women, the family, education, sexuality, religious experience, and ethnic mixing, she traces the period in a different way that does not turn its back on economic and political history but does not dwell there either.

This becomes most evident in yet another book, her *Introduction to Everyday Life*, or one might say to the Study of Everyday Life, since the intended audience is not primarily professional and academic historians, but students. She begins with some anecdotes:

> *A fines del siglo xvi, un vecino de la Ciudad de México informaba que una señora española, viuda de conquistador, había decidido vivir entre los indios porque no disponía de dinero que le permitiese vestir como correspondía a su calidad. Es un simple informe sobre la vida cotidiana de una persona sin méritos especiales, pero en pocas líneas nos da una idea de la manera en que se conformaba la sociedad colonial, según los criterios de categoría social y de exigencias formales de presentación exterior, a la vez que la opción para algunos españoles de convivir con los indios.*
>
> (At the end of the sixteenth century, a resident of Mexico City reported that a Spanish lady, widow of a conquistador, had decided to live among the Indians because she did not have the money to dress as befitted her status. It is a simple report on the daily life of a person without special merits, but in a few lines it gives us an idea of the way in which colonial society was formed, according to the criteria of social status and formal requirements for external presentation, as well as the option for some Spaniards to live with the Indians.)[9]

She continues with several similar stories, about a Peruvian lady who filed for an annulment when she discovered that her husband was not a white Spaniard but a mulatto slave; about the revolt of women in the convents when the bishops tried to impose a more severe monastic rule than that to which they were accustomed; and about an early twentieth-century rent strike. Each of the stories is seemingly insignificant in itself, save for the window that it opens up on a variety of attitudes about race, class, gender, religiosity, money, way of life, etc. For the incipient historians, the cumulative lesson in the compilation of the anecdotes is to go where the archive takes you and to interpret deeply. Thus, in a chapter in this book on the historiography of everyday life, she dutifully traces the history of the *Annales* from Bloch and Lefebvre through Braudel to Duby and his successors. But by underlining the potential riches of the micro-narrative, she reveals a primary affinity with Carlo Ginzburg, like her a historian of everyday life who did not sprout directly from the *Annales* tree.[10]

Finally, I want to talk very briefly about how her work has been important to me. I teach a course on notions of everyday life from Cervantes to the twentieth century. Gonzalbo Aizpuru's work is important in the course for bridging Cervantes and the nineteenth century by providing information about the eighteenth, especially by the way that she describes it: the way she uses

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8 Pilar Gonzalbo Aizpuru, "El nacimiento del miedo, 1692: Indios y españoles en la Ciudad de México," *Revista de Indias* 68, no. 244 (2008): 9–34.

9 Pilar Gonzalbo Aizpuru, *Introducción a la historia de la vida cotidiana* (Colegio de México, 2006), 11.

10 Burke, *The French Historical Revolution: The* Annales *School, 1929–2014*, 121.

narrative; her teasing out of maximum context and collective mentalities from the narratives; and the seriousness with which she approaches both material and emotional reality. The course has led to a book project, one that I am still sketching out. While I would connect the *Annales* school to a nonnarrative historiography that goes back to Burckhardt, I would also make a lateral connection to Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis*.[11] In the mentality of post-World War I Europe and the collapse of the nineteenth-century world order, there was a fascination with everyday reality and its depiction, one that ironically made for a new grand narrative precisely about its own futility.[12] A

11 Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton University Press, 1953).

12 I want to thank the Stanford University Center for Medieval and Early Modern Studies and the University of California, Berkeley Designated Emphasis in Renaissance and Early Modern Studies for organizing this conference on the historiography and influence of Fernand Braudel, and in particular Rowan Dorin and Diego Pirillo for inviting me to participate. I would like to dedicate this brief essay to my Mexicanist colleague Ivonne del Valle.

Contingency from Braudel to Blumenberg

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A strange but productive thing happens when you read Fernand Braudel and Hans Blumenberg alongside each other. That it is strange is not surprising: the two have almost nothing to do with each other. Each was a dominant force in their country's postwar historical profession—France for Braudel, West Germany for Blumenberg—and each was shaped by their very different experiences of the Second World War. Braudel was an economic historian, with a bit of geography and demography as well, while Blumenberg was an intellectual historian, with an interest in metaphors and concepts. They spoke to fundamentally different questions, literatures, traditions, and communities. But together they offer a new way of thinking about one of the key organizing concepts in our contemporary historical discipline, which is the concept of contingency.

Braudel almost never used the word "contingency," except in passing. In his essay "The Situation of History in 1950," he argued that his approach was "not to deny the individual on the grounds that he is the prey of contingency, but somehow to transcend him, to distinguish him from the forces separate from him, to react against a history arbitrarily reduced to the role of quintessential heroes."[1] Another programmatic statement can be found on the last page of his *Mediterranean*, where he described even Philip II as an individual "imprisoned within a destiny in which he himself has little hand, fixed in a landscape in which the infinite perspectives of the long term stretch into the distances both behind him and before."[2] From statements like these, and indeed from the entire architecture of Braudel's work from the *Mediterranean to Civilization and Capitalism*, we think of Braudel as the poet of the structure, perhaps even as a geographical determinist, someone who registers contingency, if at all, only in the ephemeral world of mere events.

Today historians care a great deal about contingency. To take only one suggestive metric, the word or its derivatives have appeared in eighty-six articles in the ninety-six issues of the

1 Fernand Braudel, "The Situation of History in 1950," in *On History* (University of Chicago Press, 1980), 10.

2 Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Siân Reynolds (Harper & Row, 1972–73), 2:1244.

American Historical Review published since the year 2000. "Contingency" is one of the "five C's of historical thinking" developed by the American Historical Association for teaching teachers about history. In actual usage, the concept has moved from the province of "alternative history" or the formation of testable counterfactuals to a general approach to causality or, more precisely, an alternative to causality. Many historians today use "contingency" to capture some mix of accident and agency, to indicate that some historical process or event was not inevitable, but rather the outcome of a contextually specific set of prior conditions and the volition of some human will. In this way it is usually opposed to "structure," and the two concepts organize different time horizons and methodological approaches. Contingent histories tend to have more eventful temporalities and more discontinuities than structural ones do, and they tend to avoid the *longue durée*.[3]

Braudel offers another way to think about contingency, which is to recognize that a claim that something is contingent implies a claim of what it is contingent *upon*. In that way, Braudel is actually a historian full of contingency, but usually with the same set of geographic, demographic, or economic root causes. As William McNeill wrote of Braudel, his "most successful innovation in the writing of history [was] his insistence on the basic importance of geographically variegated everyday custom and almost unconscious routines, which, he claimed, set limits to all deliberate effort, whether in matters economic, political, or military."[4] Those limits, the conditions of success and failure, the local patterns of everyday life, are for Braudel all *contingent* upon geography, climate, and demography.

In sharp contrast to Braudel, Hans Blumenberg was greatly concerned about contingency. In his *Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, he argued (among many other things) that the basic condition of modernity was the anxiety that comes from the recognition of the contingency of the world.[5] In his view, ancient philosophy admitted no contingency: The universe could not *not* exist. Christian theology added an element of contingency, but one with explanation: The world exists as it does because of God's will. God could have chosen another, different world but didn't—a problem that later gave rise to theodicy. The condition of modernity, then, is the anxiety produced by the absence of God's will as an explanation for the existence of this specific world and everything in it. For Blumenberg, this modern problem emerged in a specific time and place: between the death of Nicholas of Cusa (d. 1464 in Todi, Italy) and the death of Giordano Bruno (d. 1600 in Rome). In other words, it happened in the Mediterranean world during the age of Philip II.[6]

And although it is not his subject, it is very likely that many or most of Braudel's fleeting historical figures (Philip included) would have agreed with him that they were "imprisoned in a destiny in which [they] had little hand," but they would have thought it God's plan, not the inexorable forces of geography. From our own vantage point, we might be able to see Braudel's work as an attempt to solve the legitimating deficit of modernity by recognizing the dependence of human society on the natural world and on the cumulative forces of history.

When we read Braudel and Blumenberg together in this way, something is revealed about the approach to history commonly practiced today in American academia. In our avoidance of

3 For a useful discussion of this, see William H. Sewell Jr., *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (University of Chicago Press, 2005), 101–13.

4 William H. McNeill, "Fernand Braudel, Historian," *Journal of Modern History* 73, no. 1 (2001): 135

5 I am relying on the 1983 English translation, and I am indebted to the discussion of Blumenberg in Ari Edmundson, "A Selective Affinity: Niklas Luhmann's Systems Theory and the Sense of Contingency, 1958–1973" (PhD diss., University of California–Berkeley, 2019), chap. 2.

6 Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age* (MIT Press, 1983), Part 4.

determinism and our embrace of human agency, we have sought to critique the legitimacy of the world around us, to embark on a project of denaturalization. I am wholly in favor of such a project, but I fear that by jettisoning a commitment to the causal implications of contingency and by overlooking the fundamental condition of anxiety produced by the embrace of the contingency of the world without any clear normative foundations, we are accidentally undermining our ability to build a cumulative intellectual community. A

Sanskritic Albion: Heterotemporalities in Colonial Knowledge Production

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Introduction: The Lama's Smile

It is hard to impress college students who were born in a world fully permeated by the Internet and who came of age during a pandemic. Yet I usually manage to garner a smile from them when I show them in class a seventeenth-century drawing of a llama happily riding Noah's Ark. The drawing is found in Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala's history and cosmography of the Incas, written for King Philip III of Spain in about 1615 to denounce the injustices of colonial rule in Peru. But why is a llama riding Noah's Ark? I explain to my students how Guaman Poma, a Christian, simply took the next logical step in a well-established natural and scientific corollary of his time: if biblical history were true history, if animals after the universal flood were descendants of Noah's animals, then it follows that a llama—a pair of them actually—rode with Noah and his sons.

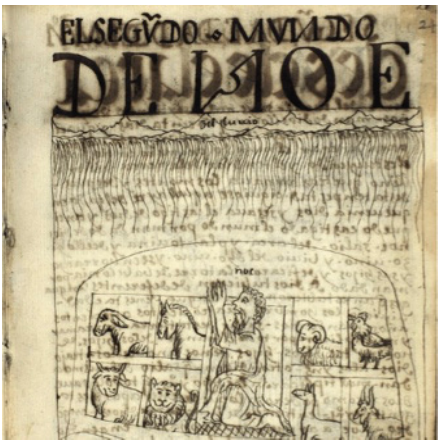

Image 1: Drawing of Noah's Ark by Guaman Poma. A llama rides along with other Eurasian animals.

While I show this image to my students to attract their interest, in reality this episode betrays a larger story, one that I let my students piece together throughout the course. The ark-riding llama is not merely an attempt to implant Andean realities into the colonizers' frameworks. Perhaps we could think of it as uncovering a framework that early modern scholars supposed was in place: a universality—that is, a unified, worldwide scheme of history and geography—based on the assumed historicity of the Bible. This same universal framework was shared and sought in other parts of the colonial world. In 1786, William Jones, an Oxford-trained scholar working as a judge in Calcutta at the service of the British East India Company, delivered a now-famous address at the Asiatic Society in which he described morphological and grammatical commonalities between some European languages, like Greek and Latin, and the languages of India known to him: Sanskrit, Hindustani, and Persian. This insight, sometimes hailed as the foundational moment for historical linguistics, was for Jones not the "discovery" of the Proto-Indo-European linguistic family, but the "uncovering" of biblical universality, what Thomas Trautmann has called "Mosaick ethnology." Jones thought to hear, in the similarities between pronouns and verbal suffixes across languages, the echoes of the pre-Babelian language of the Bible, and in their dissemination on the earth the proof of Noah's progeny repopulating the post-deluge world.[1]

Guaman Poma and Jones were engaged in similar processes of epistemological translation, attempting to integrate unfamiliar knowledge (Andean animals and Indian languages, respectively) into a universal biblical framework. Their methods—visual integration in Guaman Poma's case, linguistic analysis in Jones's—represent parallel approaches to constructing a universal scheme that could accommodate both European and non-European knowledge. While the framework of Guaman Poma and Jones hinged on the historicity of the Bible, this was not an uncritical presupposition forced onto different epistemologies and histories. As Alison Bashford and others have argued in a recent collection of essays, the encounter of colonial Western science with epistemologies outside Europe did not simply displace these epistemologies and cosmologies but in many cases integrated them into the heart of modern geosciences.[2] Bashford argues that modern science has been afforded "a special capacity to universalize or globalize a particular epistemology."[3] An enduring aspect of this universalized epistemology is the complete secularization of time, an absorption of multiple histories into the unified and empty timeline of geological time. Yet this absorption hides an existential sensation for the people inhabiting the world before this development: that they could live in multiple temporalities with which they were familiar.[4]

The existence of this early modern framework based on biblical historicity is well known, as Trautmann's take on Jones's project attests. My aim in this essay is to explore how placing different cases in conversation reveals not only a fuller picture of this framework, but multiple, competing temporalities that operated according to their own logic, what I call "alternative universals." The idea to query these alternative universals emerged from conversations with colleagues at the Stanford Humanities Center (SHC) and across campus. Juan Carlos Garzón (California State University, Fresno) explored the happy llama and its symbolic weight in Andean cosmography in the weekly workshop organized by the Center for Medieval and Early Modern Studies. The similarities, however, do not stop at the motives and the framework used, like the

1 While Jones did not elaborate on this biblical framework in the *Third Discourse*, he developed nonsystematically the idea throughout his oeuvre. For example, he considered that languages from Central Mexico, now known to belong to the Uto-Aztecan languages, were also part of this big biblical family. For a full development of the idea of "Mosaick ethnology," see Thomas R. Trautmann, *Aryans and British India*; Garland Cannon has written a biography of Jones, giving him the full cultural-hero treatment. See Cannon, T*he Life and Mind of Oriental Jones: Sir William Jones, the Father of Modern Linguistics*; See Kapil Raj, *Relocating Modern Science: Circulation and the Construction of Knowledge in South Asia and Europe, 1650–1900* for a nuanced take on Jones and his relation to the so-called native informants.

2 For several cases of this, see Alison Bashford et al., eds., *New Earth Histories: Geo-Cosmologies and the Making of the Modern World.*

3 Alison Bashford, et al., "Introduction," in Bashford et al., *New Earth Historie*s, 3.

4 Alison Bashford, et al., "Introduction," in Bashford et al., *New Earth Histories*, 11.

Bible. In conversation with Jaime Marroquín (Western Oregon University) during his yearlong fellowship at the SHC, we explored commonalities between early modern Mexico and India in terms of methodologies deployed in colonial encounters with unfamiliar epistemic terrains. Examining these alternative universals and their construction, I argue that the history of early modern knowledge production can be understood not as a teleological progression toward modern science but rather as a complex field that was later flattened by imperial historiography. In this essay I take a couple of "episodes" to historicize this modern rational universal of which we are heirs by looking at the messy coexistence of its antecedents. These encounters created what Charles Hirschkind calls "heterotemporalities": temporal frameworks that "articulate a place and time that intersects with but also exceeds" the boundaries of contemporary periodicity and historiography.[5] Unlike the teleological narrative of scientific progress, these heterotemporalities allowed multiple pasts and universals to coexist, creating spaces where biblical frameworks could accommodate both European and non-European knowledge without subordinating either to a singular progressivist timeline. Though we now know that indigenous categories and analytical frameworks were part of what would become "universal" and were not merely repositories of raw data as was previously believed, we tend to see these encounters and their results either as a quaint story, as in the case of Guaman Poma's llama, or as the discovery—sometimes accidental, like Jones's insight on Indo-European languages—of a modern scientific principle, a stepping stone into the terrain of modern, rational, European science.[6] In both cases, the colonial encounter stresses the teleology of the modern history of science identified with the European Enlightenment.

Against this teleological reading, I present two more attempts at constructing heterotemporalities as alternative universals. These heterotemporalities reflect what Dipesh Chakrabarty has called the "colonial-cosmopolitan" nature of scientific knowledge, shaped by colonial power structures while also resulting from exchanges among different knowledge systems.[7] By recovering these alternative universals, we can see that colonial knowledge production generated not failures or successes on a teleological path to modern science but multiple competing schemes that operated according to their own temporal logics.

Thus, I do not offer cases whose outcome was the construction of positive knowledge fully aligned with modern scientific frameworks. Such cases—like Jones's "discovery" of Indo-European languages—abound in literature, but they tend to strengthen the teleology of modern rational frameworks. Instead, I present two cases from colonial India that further illuminate the varied and conscious attempts at building a different universality. The first case involves Francis Wilford, a contemporary of Jones at the Asiatic Society who similarly sought to integrate Indian knowledge into a biblical framework, but through geographical rather than linguistic analysis. The second case examines Raja Krishnachandra, a Bengali ruler who engaged with European astronomical knowledge while maintaining historical frameworks linking India and Egypt that colonial science would eventually reject. These cases should be read not as either curious stories or cautionary tales but as evidence that multiple constructions of universality coexisted before the imperial consolidation of a singular, teleological narrative of scientific progress.

5 Charles Hirschkind, *The Feeling of History: Islam, Romanticism, and Andalusia*, 1.

6 See Raj, *Relocating Modern Science*, especially "Introduction," for a critique of the long-held idea of the local as feeding into the "universal" of modern science, like rivers into the ocean.

7 Dipesh Chakrabarty, Foreword, in Bashford et al., *New Earth Histories*, xvii.

A Shared Past: Francis Wilford and a Unified View of World History

In the second half of the eighteenth century, as the East India Company relied increasingly on Bengal's land taxation revenue, the colonial government appointed James Rennell (1742–1830) as the first surveyor general to create accurate maps. Contemporary scholars argue that Rennell's project became a "manifestation of Enlightenment encyclopedic mentality," uniting geographical and political knowledge of India while imagining a unified territory under a sovereign entity.[8] Like many efforts at colonial governance, this was a collaborative effort between British officials and local functionaries who were familiar with the regions under the company's administration. And while the collaborative nature of the mapping of India has been well-known, cartography has been identified as one of the processes that established the "scientific" or enlightened gaze upon India, almost as a vertical transfer of techniques and epistemologies, from Britain down to India.[9]

One of the British army officials hired as surveyor was Lt. Francis Wilford, who spent his first few years in India engaged not only in cartographic endeavors but in actual inspection of distant terrains, a perilous task that was mostly delegated to locals, not to British officers. However, despite his successes in the surveyor's office, Wilford was passed over for promotion to Rennell's position when the latter returned to England. Abandoning the surveyor career, he took a position in the newly created Sanskrit College in Benares, an institution founded by the British to promote and preserve what they thought was the immemorial and ancient culture of the Hindus, embodied in the figures of the pandits, a Sanskrit word meaning "learned" but denoting Hindu men, mainly Brahmins, who had chosen a scholarly career and trained under the traditional Sanskritic system of the region.[10] Wilford also became an active member of the Asiatic Society founded by Jones. There, he published extensively on Hindu geographical knowledge and history, with Jones himself responding positively to Wilford's early contributions.

The reception of Wilford's work and the broader Asiatic Society publications— mainly broadcast through the journal Asiatick Researches, the brainchild of William Jones—reveals how universalizing frameworks in this period were not distinct systems that merely coexisted but rather overlapping and porous constructions. When the Asiatic Society's journal was translated into French, figures like Georges Cuvier and Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, pioneers of what would become modern biological taxonomy, engaged with natural history findings from India, while orientalist Louis-Mathieu Langlès praised Wilford's historical insights.[11] This simultaneous engagement with biblical frameworks like Jones's and emerging scientific methodologies by the same intellectual community demonstrates the heterotemporality of this moment. These were not separate domains but overlapping frameworks of universality that scholars moved among fluidly before the imperial project later imposed a singular narrative of scientific progress.

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8 Matthew H. Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765–1843*, 5.

9 David Arnold, *The Tropics and the Traveling Gaze: India, Landscape, and Science, 1800–1856* ; See Phillip B. Wagoner, "Precolonial Intellectuals and the Production of Colonial Knowledge," 783–814, for a brief history of the long academic discussion about the so-called native informants in South Asian scholarship.

10 Vasudha Dalmia, "Sanskrit Scholars and Pandits of the Old School: The Benares Sanskrit College and the Constitution of Authority in the Late Nineteenth Century," 321–37. https://www.jstor.org/stable/23448394.

11 *Recherches Asiatiques; Ou, Mémoires de La Société Établie Au Bengale Pour Faire Des Recherches Sur L'histoire et Les Antiquités, Les Arts, Les Sciences et La Littérature de l'Asie. 2 vols. Paris: Imprimerie impériale, 1805.*

At the Sanskrit College, Wilford hired a host of pandits who provided him with a plethora of manuscripts on diverse subjects. Perhaps because of his own background as a surveyor, Wilford took special interest in any old work dealing with geography and history. The more he asked his pandits to deliver morsels of ancient Hindu knowledge on geography and global history, the more manuscripts the pandits produced for him. Wilford collected so much information on different subjects that he published articles amounting to five hundred or more pages over ten years, starting in the 1790s in Asiatick Researches. However, his articles, his ideas, and his reputation would suffer a severe blow years later when damning evidence of forgery came forward.

The nature of Wilford's findings was not starkly different from the claims made by William Jones. Unbeknownst to Wilford, Jones had stumbled upon the Proto-Indo-European family of languages while looking for the proto-Babelian language of the Bible, but in reality Jones's main project was to ascertain the historicity of the entire biblical framework, as we saw in the introduction. Jones's work, however, reveals an important distinction between the logic of "discovery" that would later be imposed on his findings and his own sense of "uncovering" relationships that had always existed but had been obscured by time and translation. While Jones built much of his argument on solid linguistic evidence and clearly parallel myths (such as the flood story of Manu rescued by Vishnu's fish avatar Matsya), he also reached for more tenuous connections between Hindu and biblical narratives. For example, Jones interpreted the story of Narasimha, Vishnu's half-lion avatar bursting from a pillar to destroy a demon, as an allegorical retelling of the Tower of Babel's destruction.[12] While modern historiography celebrates Jones for "discovering" Indo-European languages, he himself was engaged in uncovering what he believed were preexisting connections that confirmed biblical universality.[13]

Participating in the same "uncovering" framework, Wilford thought he had found further, irrefutable proof of Noah's story and lineage in a Sanskrit work, the generic-sounding Padma-purana. Like Jones, Wilford encountered the story of Manu and the god-fish Matsya, which bears obvious resemblance to Noah's story and to the Mesopotamian flood myth told in the story of Gilgamesh. But Wilford encountered a version of the Manu story that contained further details, closely resembling the biblical tale. In this version, Wilford thought to find the true Sanskrit name for Noah, Satyavrata. According to the purported Sanskrit text, this Sanskritic Noah had three sons, one of whom he cursed after becoming intoxicated, mirroring the biblical narrative. Wilford, however, was unable to recognize that Satyavrata is another name for Manu, not a novel "uncovering" but a different telling.[14]

Perhaps the most dramatic finding was the identification of the sacred islands of Hindu cosmography with the empirical geography of the world. In cosmological or cosmographic literature, like the extensive genre of the Puranas, the world was divided into seven islands arranged as the petals of a lotus flower around the mythical Mount Meru. Wilford's willingness to take at face value these texts, which even Hindu astronomers did not interpret literally, made him believe that he had encountered manuscripts with advanced geographical knowledge that posited that the original holy land of Hinduism lay in the West and that Hindus were acquainted with its name

12 William Jones, "Discourse Ninth on the Origins and Families of Nations," 136.

13 The critique against the logic of discovery in knowledge formation, especially in colonial encounters, has been well established. For some examples, see Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India*; Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*.

14 Francis Wilford, "On Egypt and Other Countries Adjacent to the Ca'Li' River, or Nile of Ethiopia, from the Ancient Books of the Hindus," 312.

and idea—just like, Wilford said, "distant Muselmans with Arabia." The name of the holy island of Hinduism in Sanskrit was Śvetadvīpa, the "White Island." It did not take much for Wilford to claim that this name was a perfect facsimile of the Greek name for England, Albion.[15] Thus, for Wilford this bit of ancient geographical knowledge fully integrated the ancient world in a single timeline (a biblical one) and in a single geographical framework. Instead of being discarded, he believed, ancient and non-European knowledge should be integrated into the same framework. For almost ten years Wilford kept publishing article after article on different subjects, especially history and geography. All his findings he claimed to have checked against Sanskrit originals, and he even purported to have shown William Jones some of the most fantastic findings, pointing at a universal framework for world history. However, in the same publication in which he announced the discovery of Sanskritic Albion, Wilford made a terrible acknowledgment: he claimed to have recently noticed, by mere chance, a smudge on the paper under the Sanskrit word Śvetadīpa when he was working on the article. To his own dismay, he realized that a different word had existed there, which his pandit had erased and written over. Then it dawned on Wilford that the extreme similarities of histories between European and Indian mythologies were the result of his pandit tweaking some details to make them align better.[16]

As Wilford confessed this damning smudge, he still defended his overall approach and findings, claiming that, while some details were definitely manufactured by his pandit, the structural correspondence between myths "evinces also some remote communication, at least, if not some affinity, at an early period, between the nations among which we find these legends equally current."[17] Arguing this claim allowed Wilford to accomplish two things. First, he portrayed himself as the victim of a ruse by the cheating pandit. Second, it left intact the validity and historicity of the Sanskrit corpus he thought he had found.

Convinced that, despite the forgeries, he had stumbled upon the key needed to unite ancient and modern, Indian and European geographical frameworks, Wilford created a synthesis of Aristotelian climate theory, colonial surveys, and Hindu Puranic geography. This moment of synthesis reveals that alternative universals often operated on the same evidentiary regime that would later support modern scientific frameworks, but were interpreted through different narrative structures. What distinguished Wilford's universal from later scientific geographical knowledge was not only the evidence itself—and in fact both relied on careful observation, textual analysis, and comparative methods—but the interpretive framework that organized this evidence. The following image shows this synthesis: decades of surveying had yielded enough information to map the Ganges River to its Himalayan origins in Climate III of Aristotle's scheme, while Wilford simultaneously positioned the mythical river Bhadra at England's latitude, north of Mount Meru, the center of the world for Hindu cosmology (no real mountain was ever associated with Mount Meru). This integration of empirical colonial cartography with Puranic cosmography demonstrates how heterotemporalities functioned not as separate domains but as overlapping

15 Francis Wilford, "An Essay on the Sacred Isles in the West, with Other Essays Connected with That Work," 245–375.

16 Nigel Leask, "Francis Wilford and the Colonial Construction of Hindu Geography, 1799–1822," 204–22. Leask sees in this case an extreme case of "colonial mimicry," perhaps a form of resistance; C. A. Bayly, however, has shown that the unnamed Pandit was indeed a swindler. The Pandit fired other translators and appropriated their salaries, building a mansion for himself on the banks of the Ganges. C. A. Bayly, "Orientalists, Informants and Critics in Benares, 1790–1860," 105.

17 Wilford, "An Essay on the Sacred Isles in the West," 375.

interpretive systems. When nineteenth-century scholarship later dismissed Wilford's work as fraud, it didn't reject the entire biblical framework that Jones had also employed. Rather, it selectively privileged geological time over biblical chronology while extracting evidence useful for positivist knowledge. This process retrospectively flattened the complex coexistence of multiple universalities into a singular narrative of scientific progress.

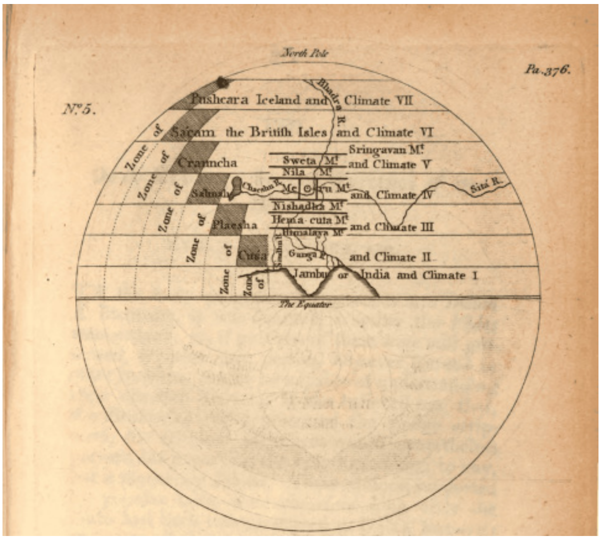

Image 2: A synthesis of three systems of geographical-cum-cosmographical knowledge.

Nineteenth-century scholarship was not kind to Wilford, and today this episode primarily serves as an example of fraught colonial relations, with the pandit's "blurred copy" subverting colonial science, perhaps even as resistance. While scholars like Leask interpret this event as "colonial mimicry," such readings treat Wilford's case as an anomaly rather than as evidence of broader patterns in colonial knowledge production. Rather than seeing Wilford's work simply as fraud or resistance, we should recognize how ethnographic methodologies like his created spaces where multiple knowledge systems could interact, producing new hybrid frameworks that do not fit neatly into later categorizations of success or failure. This perspective challenges us to rethink not only Wilford's specific case but the entire historiography of colonial science and its relationship to modernity.

Egyptian Science, or Is It Hindu?

Modern Knowledge and Ancient History in Bengal

Twenty years before Wilford published his findings on the deep history of the world, a group of officials from the East India Company made their way to the royal court of a local Bengali king, Krishnachandra Ray. Krishnachandra was the landholder of the largest territory in Bengal and was an important player in local politics, though his influence and fortunes started to diminish as the colonial project kept encroaching upon landholdings and policies of Bengal after the battle of Plassey. In 1777, the company officials arrived at Krishnachandra's court with a set of questions regarding the Hindu science of astronomy, jyotishashastra, mathematics, and history.[18] In the same spirit as the *relaciones* of New Spain, the company officials extended a questionnaire to

[18] The documents have been recently brought to light in the Hastings archive at the British Library by Joshua Ehrlich. See Ehrlich, "New Lights on Raja Krishnachandra and Early Hindu-European Intellectual Exchange," 159–71.

Krishnachandra.[19] The encounter with Krishnachandra was not merely a siphoning of information but a veritable exchange of ideas and frameworks.

Krishnachandra was well versed in several sciences, including astronomy. He owned Timurid astronomical tables and a European quadrant, showed keen interest in Newton's theories about tides and comets, and eagerly sought European scientific texts and instruments. He owned a copy of the Zīj-i Jadīd Muhammad-Shahī, a treatise on astronomy in Persian written by the Hindu ruler Sawai Jai Singh II of Amber.[20] Krishnachandra was able to recognize the figurative and mythological character of ancient Hindu geography. When asked why the Hindus believed Earth was triangular, Krishnachandra smiled and retorted: "That is a mere fable, there is no doubt but the Earth is round, and we have from time immemorial supposed it to be so. [E]ven the Sea is spherical, but a triangular figure has been ascribed to the Earth in some of our writings for the greater facility of classing and dividing the Different regions."[21]

But for all Krishnachandra's adherence to the tenets of early modern astronomical science, he still advanced a much-discussed position among orientalist scholars, which had also been the gateway for Wilford's universalist view of ancient geography of history: the purported connection between India and Egypt. When the company delegation suggested that sciences might have traveled from east to west through Egypt, Krishnachandra replied that "Egipt … is well known to us … [W]e have had an intercourse with its Inhabitants from time immemorial." He went even further, claiming there was "an extraordinary tradition amongst the Learned that even when by some accident, the Hindoo Books of Science were injured or distroyed they were recovered by Copies obtained from Egipt."[22] These claims, like Wilford's identification of Śvetadvīpa with Albion, represent not simply factual assertions but attempts to construct heterotemporalities that could accommodate both Indian and European knowledge within a shared historical framework.

Unlike Jones, whose work on language became retrospectively framed as a "successful" discovery aligned with later frameworks, or Wilford, whose geographical connections were dismissed as errors or frauds, Krishnachandra's case reveals how heterotemporalities operated as conscious constructions that served intellectual and political purposes beyond truth claims. Rather than seeing his assertions about India-Egypt connections merely as strategic deceptions to advance political aims with the East India Company (which Ehrlich suggests), we can understand them as part of an active construction of alternative universals that allowed for the simultaneous operation of multiple knowledge systems.

Why Krishnachandra sought to create a different temporality is beyond the scope of this essay, something I will explore in a future publication. Nevertheless, we can observe the

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19 For the use of *relaciones* in Mexico, see Jaime Marroquín, "The Method of Francisco Hernández: Early Modern Science and the Translation of Mesoamerica's Natural History."

20 In his treaty, Jai Singh derided the founding figures of Western astronomy like Hipparchus, calling him "an ignorant clown," and claiming Ptolemy was "a bat who can never arrive at the sun of truth." He boasted about the superiority of Indian-made instruments and corrected some astronomical tables made in Paris by Phillipe de la Hire in 1689 and brought to India by the Jesuits. Such moments of scientific exchange are frequently cited in discussions of early modern South Asia to demonstrate both a shared development of scientific rationality and a brief period of intellectual coevalness between Europe and India before colonialism's rupture. See especially James Poskett, *Horizons: A Global History of Science*, 86–92.

21 The full transcript of the document is given in Ehrlich, "New Lights on Raja Krishnachandra and Early Hindu-European Intellectual Exchange." I have consulted the manuscript in the British Library, having learned about it from this article.

22 Ehrlich, "New Lights," 5.

effectiveness of Krishnachandra's constructed temporality. When Nathaniel Brassey Halhed published the first Bengali grammar for English speakers in 1778, he was keen on finding and discussing the "most authentic and ancient compositions" in Bengali. The text to which Halhed turned, extensively quoting from it, was the Annadamangal by Krishnachandra's court poet, Bharatchandra, which was less than thirty years old. Bharatchandra engaged in what we might call classicism, trying to incorporate classic elements of Sanskrit poetry into Bengali verse. However, this classicism created a truly innovative literary field, for never in the literary history of Bengal had Sanskrit meters supported Bengali words. Yet when literary scholars in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries took stock of Bharatchandra's poetical prowess, they denounced it as an unimaginative token of the decadent and decaying Sanskritic culture.[23] Halhed's confusion of recent innovation for ancient tradition demonstrates how these alternative universals were not just theoretical exercises but the cause of tangible effects on how knowledge was catalogued, understood, and transmitted in colonial contexts.

Conclusion: Uncovering Early Modern Heterotemporalities

These four cases—Guaman Poma's llama, Jones's linguistic connections, Wilford's sacred geography, and Krishnachandra's Egypt-India ancient connections—collectively illuminate how colonial knowledge production operated through multiple, overlapping universalities rather than through a singular progression toward modern science. What unites these seemingly disparate examples is not just their shared biblical or mythological frameworks but their epistemological approach: each was engaged not in "discovering" new knowledge in the modern sense, but in "uncovering" connections long forgotten.

These heterotemporal frameworks emerged from the same methodological approaches—questionnaires, translations, collaborations with local scholars— that have been celebrated when they produced knowledge aligned with later scientific paradigms and dismissed when they did not. But rather than reinforcing teleological narratives that privilege knowledge based on its eventual alignment with modern science, these cases together challenge us to reconsider the temporal frameworks through which we understand early modern knowledge formation. What makes these alternative universals significant is not their accuracy by modern standards, but how they reveal the constructed nature of all universal frameworks, including our own. These four cases show us that we should read these attempts at alternative universals not through the harsh lens of periodicities imposed by modern historiography—including the framework of the early modern, which still sometimes puts excessive weight on precedent and continuity. They suggest a sophisticated crafting of new temporal frameworks, competing universalities that operated across colonial contexts, from the Andes to Bengal. We can apprehend the alternative universal in these cases only when we reconsider not just what constitutes knowledge—especially the fraught distinction between local and universal—but how it is temporally situated by both our modern frameworks and by the historical actors themselves, who actively theorized their own relationship to time, history, and universality across the colonial divide. A

23 Dinesh Chandra Sen, *History of Bengali Language And Literature*, 621.

Material Heuristics in the Humanities: A Year Between the Center and the Lab

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Republics of Letters publishes occasional dispatches from the front lines of scholarship, where new methods are explored and projects undergo rethinking. In the following essay, Ariel Stilerman (Assistant Professor of East Asian Languages and Cultures, Stanford University) discusses what he learned moving between the Stanford Humanities Center (2023–24 Fellow) and the Product Realization Lab, where he experimented with fabricating facsimiles of objects of medieval Japan such as illustrated scrolls and woodworking saws, as part of an exploration of "critical making."

How do we come up with new ideas in the humanities? We have time-honored tools to evaluate arguments: interrogating evidence, identifying logical gaps, and uncovering hidden biases. There's less clarity on how arguments are born in the first place. The process often feels as mysterious as alchemy: a hunch during a morning walk, a flash of insight over coffee, or a breakthrough amid cross-disciplinary chatter.

In this essay I argue that crafting objects can function as a powerful heuristic device in humanities research. I discuss Matt Ratto's notion of critical making, Pamela Smith's craft epistemologies, and my own experiences in what I call material heuristics to argue that making, and in particular analog making, can harness material construction and intellectual exploration to foster our understanding of texts, images, and meaning.

These insights emerge from a year spent thinking and making at the Stanford Humanities Center and the Stanford Product Realization Lab. During this time, my focus was on creating physical facsimiles of medieval objects - not exact replicas or meticulous historical reproductions, but affordable artifacts that could be handled regularly, showcased in lectures, and explored collaboratively with colleagues and students. These objects were meant to do their work somewhere between the rigor of experimental archaeology and the inventive freedom of structured play.

Fifteen years ago, digital media scholar Matt Ratto introduced critical making as "a way of drawing connections between thinking and conceptualization on critical social issues and shared practices of material construction."[1] In one project, Ratto built infrared-communicating devices from pre-coded components to explore how individual agency and participation in networks can modulate social interactions.

More recently, the *Critical Making Collaborative*, inspired by Ratto's work and led by Stanford faculty Shane Denson and Matthew Smith, has curated talks on compositions for haptic instruments by D/deaf and hard-of-hearing musicians (Lloyd May), the use of biometric data to refine operatic pedagogy (Westley Montgomery), the intersection of generative artificial intelligence and psychoanalysis (J. Louise Makary), textile-supported LED-style displays (Hideo Mabuchi), and a Midjourney-assisted graphic novel (Matthew Smith).

While critical making has lent itself particularly well to digital ecologies, others have explored analog forms of making. Pamela Smith's *Making and Knowing Project* at Columbia University, for example, focused on a sixteenth-century French manuscript detailing technologies like dyeing, casting, and woodworking. Smith's team of scholars and students recreated in a modern lab environment the materials and techniques described in the text to unearth new insights about the role of making in the production of knowledge during the early scientific revolution.

The project's chief deliverable was a digital object: a critical edition that layered facsimile, diplomatic, normalized, and English versions of the French text.[2] And as part of the project, codicologist Marc Smith and conservationist Alexis Hagadorn collaborated to reconstruct a physical model of the original bound volume as a way to explore the "author-practitioner's intentions, actions, and experience in creating the manuscript."[3] By bringing together the traditional tools of the humanities, such as paleography, philology, annotation, and commentary, with the methods of experimental archaeology, Pamela Smith and her team opened a dialogue between textual hermeneutics and material fabrication.

I applied to spend a year at the Stanford Humanities Center as I was finishing my book *Court Poetry and the Culture of Learning in Japan* on how writing about court poetry in a variety of medieval genres (professional guides, advice for personal success, Buddhist essays, and parodic fiction) brought knowledge about the culture of the aristocracy to other social classes. My second project, *How to Know Everything*, I set out to examine encyclopedic and technical works created in the aftermath of violence and disaster.[4]

At the Center, I had the opportunity to receive feedback on this second project from scholars of many other disciplines. It was during the weekly research lectures and daily communal lunches that I first heard the words "critical making." Across the street from the low,

1 Matt Ratto and Stephen Hockema, "FLWR PWR: Tending the Walled Garden," *Virtueel Platform* (2009): 51.

2 Pamela H. Smith, Naomi Rosenkranz, Tianna Helena Uchacz, et al., eds., *Secrets of Craft and Nature in Renaissance France,* A Digital Critical Edition and English Translation of BnF Ms. Fr. 640 (New York: Making and Knowing Project, 2020), https://edition640.makingandknowing.org.

3 Alexis Hagadorn, "The Physical Construction of Ms. Fr. 640," in *Secrets of Craft and Nature in Renaissance France,* https://edition640.makingandknowing.org/#/essays/ann_328_ie_19.

4 Ariel Stilerman, *Court Poetry and the Culture of Learning in Japan,* (Harvard University Press, 2025).

exposed-beam architecture of the Center stands the brick building of the Product Realization Lab. There, alongside modern fabrication technologies like laser cutters and 3D printers, stood woodworking lathes, milling machines, and forges. The ability to move back and forth between office and shop was crucial to enable an iterative process that cycled between making and writing, much like that of Smith's author-practitioner.

The outcome of this year's research is a reimagining of my second project,now titled *Meet the People Who Built Japan: The Culture of Work in Early Medieval Japanese Literature*. It explores discourses on technology, community, and affect in connection to the lives of working people. Here I would like to discuss two making experiences that helped me find my argument.

One of them involved making a physical facsimile of medieval illustrated scrolls. These works carry the earliest representations of carpenters building temples and shrines. The illustrations showed individual tools and techniques with surprising technical detail, but they also felt crowded and haphazard.

Scene depicting the building of Ishiyama Temple in the eighth century, from Illustrated Scrolls on the Origins of Ishiyama Temple (Ishiyamadera engi emaki, 1324–1326), scroll. Reproduced from Aizawa Masahiko and Kuniga Yumiko, eds. Ishiyamadera engi emaki shūsei. Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Bijutsu Shuppan, 2016.

Medieval scrolls were produced by pasting together several pieces of rice or mulberry-bark paper or sometimes silk, which was then glued onto lacquered dowels and decorated with fabric wrappers and woven string. Constructing accurate replicas would have been complex and costly, so I had to make do with a physical facsimile. Starting from images available digitally or scanned from books, I edited them on a graphic design app, made hard copies on the office's printer on standard 11 × 17 paper, and then pasted them together with Elmer's glue. The dowels I made on a woodworking lathe.[5] The cost of each finished scroll was under $10.

The scrolls were unexpectedly unwieldy. If I tried to unfurl one fully, it spilled off my desk and onto the floor, then out of the office and into the hallway. It was impractical to view them in their entirety. Instead, I had to read them section by section, unrolling one end while rolling up the other. This physical interaction revealed something remarkable: The narrative structure of the illustrations was designed for this mode of viewing.

I came to understand how to parse one of the illustrations into three sections, each with a different theme: first the installation of pillars, then the milling of beams and rafters, and finally the social life of carpenters. Another illustration similarly devoted sections to the logging, the transportation, and the milling of lumber. I realized that beneath the chaos was a structured representation of complex technological processes. The narrative ratio of the scrolls was defined ergonomically, as the shoulder span of a reader!

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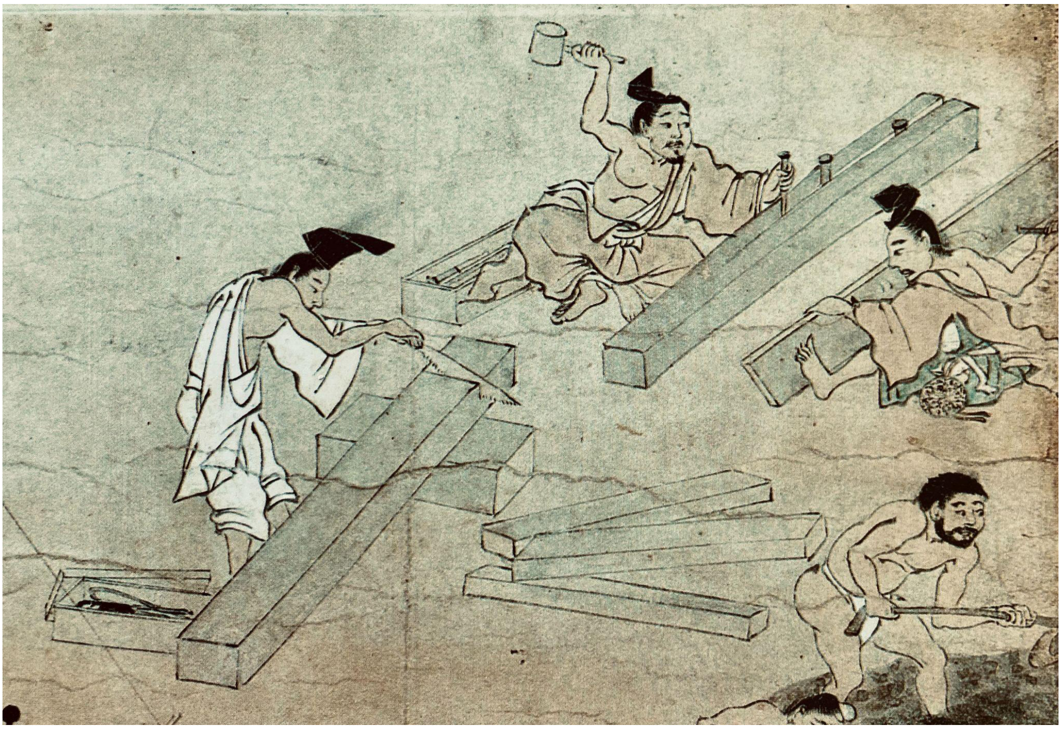
5 Lupita Rodriguez (East Asian Languages and Cultures) helped with the image processing and pasting.



Earliest depiction of Japanese carpenters at work, from *Illustrated Scrolls on the Origins of the Mandala at Taima Temple (Taima mandara engi emaki,* second half of the thirteenth century). Reproduced from Komatsu Shigemi, ed. *Taima mandara engi*. Nihon Emaki Taisei 24. Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1979.

The author holding a facsimile of *Illustrated origins of the Kasuga deity* (Kasuga gongen genki e, 1309) at Stanford University in 2025.

The other making experience involved a saw that appeared in many different illustrations but looked like nothing one could have found in a medieval Chinese or Korean toolbox. Known today as "broadleaf," it has a narrow blade with a serrated edge and a pointy tip. Historians of technology believe the broadleaf was invented shortly before the illustrations were made. One blade with this shape was dug out of a contemporary archaeological site. Through the original

Functional facsimiles of "broadleaf" saws produced at the Stanford Product Realization Lab in 2024.

excavated blade was severly deteriorated, but I found that a group of experimental archaeologists in the 1980s had made six replicas to determine its likely tooth geometry and thickness.[6]

Using their blueprints, I set out to make my own facsimile. They had laminated their own steel, but I started with a sheet of old carbon steel, which I cut to rough shape in a heavy-duty hydraulic metal shear and then brought to size on an industrial belt sander. The teeth I cut by hand, using a triangular metal file, in the geometry they specified. Using a tooth setter, I gave each tooth a little push in alternating directions, to keep the blade from binding.[7] Once a wooden handle was attached, the saw was ready to use.

It was clear that this saw could be used only to cut on the pull stroke. Before the medieval era, by contrast, saws had been designed to cut on the push, and thus much thicker. This new, thinner blade cut better, but it was much harder to produce. This got me thinking about the integration of different trades, such as carpenters and blacksmiths, into wider networks of craft. Tracing their connections in the work of social historians, I learned that they were commonly related by blood and marriage to each other but also to painters who made illustrated scrolls.

My goal was never to test hypotheses about the historical techniques used to create the original scrolls or saws. What interested me were the haptic and embodied dimensions of the objects and the opportunity to convey to others the social and cultural meanings of tools that are today obsolete but at the time represented the thrilling state of the art.

Given that Pamela Smith's groundbreaking project already integrated making into both research and teaching, it should not be surprising that many courses at Stanford offer analog making experiences. Liisa Malkki's students engage with a dozen different media (paper, acrylic, fabric, thread, natural dyes, leather, and so on) to explore multimodal ethnography

6 Hoshino Kinya et al., "Wa ga kuni chūsei no iwayuru ko no hagata nokogiri ni tsuite - shutsudohin wo sankō ni shita keijō fukugen to kinō tsuikyū," *Takenaka daiku dōgukan kenkyū kiyō* 1(1989): 1–13.

7 Craig Milroy (director, Product Realization Lab) supplied the old stock metal and helped me with the construction.

Last stage in the production of a "broadleaf" blade. The blue tool in front is a tooth setter, which bends each individual tooth slightly outward in an alternating left-right pattern. This creates a wider cut than the blade itself, preventing the saw from binding or pinching in the wood.

(Anthropology 344A) and creativity (Anthropology 351D). Li Liu's course on the archaeology of food (Archaeology 124) involves experimenting with fermentation to brew ancient alcoholic beverages such as chicha and beer. Elaine Treharne's students learn calligraphy from an expert scribe in a course on the materiality of medieval handwriting (Division of Literature, Cultures, and Languages 122Q). In Kathryn Starkey's new course on "Making the Middle Ages," students explore the meaning of objects for makers and users and create their own "forgeries" of historical artifacts (German 160/360). Furthermore, Treharne and Starkey co-teach a course where students learn medieval Germanic languages and create and inscribe their own medieval objects (English 255/German 255). Charlotte Fonrobert's students prepare meals to learn about dietary laws and mysticism in a course on Jewish culture (Religious Studies 129). Hideo Mabuchi's students grow indigo and use it to dye textiles (Applied Physics 100Q), learn to weave on a manual shaft loom (Art Institute 100B), and synthesize historic pigments (Archaeology 189). Jesse Rodin's students cook the food and sing the songs of the great banquets of fourteenth-century France (French Studies 166). Similarly, in my courses on the tea ceremony (Japan 188) we share a bowl of tea in a traditional tearoom, visit Japanese gardens, make ceramic bowls, harvest flowers, compose poems, and so on. In a course on early modern craft culture (Japan 126) I co-designed with Hideo Mabuchi and Craig Milroy, students learn to shape clay and to turn and lacquer wooden soup vessels.[8]

As I heard from graduate students at the Center and the Lab who expressed interest in incorporating making assignments into their future courses, I prepared a short essay—forthcoming from Yanai Initiative at UCLA/Waseda—reflecting on the ways courses can maximize these unique opportunities. I also started the working group Material Pedagogies for East Asian Studies (MPEAS, pronounced *em-pēs*) as a venue for humanities stu-

Turned wooden bowls resting upside down inside a traditional wooden cabinet at the Stanford Product

8 To research this course I traveled to Yamanaka, Ishikawa Prefecture, to consult with craftspeople such as turners Kawagita Ryōzō, his son Hirohiko and grandson Hiroshi, turners Nakajima Takehito and Rabea Gebler, base lacquerer Ishikura Masatsugu, and *makie* artist Yamazaki Mushū.

dents to make and think about objects. Together we studied early modern manuscripts on craft, examined items in the collection of the Cantor Arts Center, and made objects at the Product Realization Lab.

James Wronowsky, a PhD student of Japanese literature, wrote about his experience as a member of MPEAS:

> In the same way that Heidegger's hammer is experienced as "ready-to-hand" when we are absorbed in the realization of its function, a profound phenomenology emerges from our engagement with the lathe, the gouge, the table saw, the slab of untreated pine, and also the book, the archive, the natural world broadly.

As more people on campus expressed interest, MPEAS first became Make Analog, a venue to explore object making as a heuristic tool in premodern humanities research and an opportunity for students, staff, and faculty to engage with historical modes of fabrication. In the fall of 2025, Make Analog merged into the new Graduate Certificate in Making & Creative Praxis. This graduate certificate, offered jointly by the Ph.D. Program in Modern Thought and Literature and the Stanford Arts Institute, established a formal framework for doctoral students to integrate making practices into their humanities research, while conversely welcoming scientific researchers seeking to explore artistic practices.

There is something delightful in making objects with one's own hands, in sharing them with others, and in seeing what they have made in turn. Perhpas this is why so many researchers and instructors have felt drawn to exploring ways to bring thinking and making together.I am looking forward to learning how Making & Creative Praxis will continue pushing forward the field that Ratto's *Critical Making* and Smith's *Making and Knowing* have opened for us. There is no better way to illuminate our sources than to bring them back to life. A

"You Can't Write Early Medieval History That Way": An Interview with Jamie Kreiner

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Republics of Letters features an occasional series of interviews with scholars who have recently been in conversation with the medieval and early modern community at Stanford University. These interviews seek to capture ideas in motion: how current and recent work came to be conceived, how projects develop and change, and how new knowledge emerges into public view. In keeping with the journal's aim of reflecting on the present moment in our disciplines, these dialogues invite self-awareness, retrospection, and analysis of the relevant fields.

In September 2025, Stanford's Center for Medieval and Early Modern Studies hosted Professor Jamie Kreiner, Robert and Dorothy Wellman Chair in Medieval History at UCLA and a former SHC Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow (2011–12). Her recent book, *The Wandering Mind: What Medieval Monks Tell Us About Distraction* (Liveright, 2023), explores how early medieval monks experimented with their own cognition, showing their elaborate strategies to strengthen memory, to manage the wandering drift of attention, and to think about thinking itself. What generates a thought? How does it behave? Do you let it pasture, as a monk suggested, or gather it, as we still say? What emerges is the realization that distraction is not the blight of the digital era but a challenge that has always accompanied human life. A full millennium before ADHD became a diagnosis, monks were already building what we might call technologies of focus and social systems of accountability—tools that, in many ways, would feel useful today.

Perhaps the most surprising thing about *The Wandering Mind* isn't its subject matter but that it is a trade book. Kreiner wears her scholarship on her sleeve—one-fifth of the book consists of endnotes—but she also bets on accessibility, on the idea that history can be both rigorous and gripping. That bet, it turns out, has paid off—so much so that Stanford's Emanuele Lugli, associate professor of art history and director of Stanford Public Humanities, sat down with Kreiner to ask: What happens when an academic chooses to write for the general public? And how does that choice reshape what history itself can be?

[The following interview has been edited and abbreviated for clarity.]

Emanuele Lugli: *First, congratulations on the book. How did you come to focus on distraction? Was that your starting point, or a way to engage the general public with the early Middle Ages?*

Jamie Kreiner: When I was in grad school, I was reading monastic literature and immediately noticed how psychologically astute the monks were. I knew I wanted to return, eventually, to thinking about how they understood the mind. Much later—by then I already had tenure—a colleague of mine, a historian of psychology, said, "My gosh, you should write a piece for Aeon about how monks got distracted all the time." In some ways, the idea came directly from that conversation. I think talking with nonspecialists about our research is one of the best ways to see what others find compelling. So, while writing the book, I would regularly check in with friends and ask, "What do you think about this? When you think of X, what comes to mind?"

Lugli: *It's interesting that you mentioned tenure. I wonder if scholars only allow themselves to write trade books—or, which is really the same thing, to speak to nonspecialists—after tenure. Before then, we're so focused on making a contribution to our field, on networking with other specialists, on proving we belong, that anything beyond that orbit feels almost illicit. But after tenure, we enter a new, almost magical realm where we can rethink how we want to write, where we want to write, and even why. That, I suppose, is how an article for Aeon becomes possible—not just as a detour, but as an experiment in seeing what a work can become.*

Kreiner: I agree. Even though I was post-tenure and had already written two other books, I was really intimidated by taking on a project like this, because it involved working on regions of the Mediterranean that I was not a specialist in. We're all trained to stick to what we really know, and I felt I had to figure out what framing could justify stepping into areas I only knew secondhand rather than as a primary researcher. What ultimately made me feel okay about it was that there are many historians I respect who have gone beyond their specific areas of specialization to say something intelligent and mind-expanding about a larger world that their own specialization touches on but does not encompass entirely. But it took me a while to get out of the habit of thinking, "Well, I just have to stick to the things I was trained in or wrote my dissertation on."

Lugli: *What helped you in the process? Did you have a model of trade history in mind that served as a reference?*

Kreiner: I'm not sure that I had a specific reference in mind. I liked thinking about how it would be possible to write something engaging that wasn't just a biographical narrative with a plot. Because a lot of trade history does work that way, particularly in American history. The public really wants a gripping story with characters, and you can't write early medieval history that way. Norton, the press I ended up going with, said, "Take a look at some expansive and engaging histories—like Jill Lepore's work." Lepore is just a really smart historian who's capable of taking on the secondary literature and doing interesting stuff with it. So if she can do it, if others can do it, why can't an early medievalist?

Lugli: *That's actually something I noticed while reading the book. You include a few recurring figures—John Cassian, Evagrius of Pontus—but never turn them into central actors. You also present monks almost as a compact group, even though they span from the fourth to the ninth century and from Seville to Baghdad, while sidestepping many historians' anxieties about precise periodization and cultural differentiation. Were these choices entirely yours, or did your agent and editor gently guide you in that direction?*

Kreiner: That impulse did not come from my editor or my agent. Maybe in the very early stages, they asked, "Are there some protagonists you could center the story around?" And I thought, "Well, if we do that, it's going to be a very familiar story, and it will be much more circumscribed. We won't be able to cover all these different regions, and we won't be able to see the debates as clearly."

While writing the book, I also had to grapple with the part of me trained academically that sees all the ways things could be argued to death. But if you stop to defend every point, you lose the coherence and momentum of the narrative. You can't pause to justify the entire geography or to argue that certain women deserve a specific presence in the story. You do have to make choices about things you simply aren't going to argue about. The challenge is doing that defensively, without making it seem as if these are all resolved issues or making explicit claims that the study itself doesn't support. But there are a lot of implicit arguments embedded in the narrative—ones that, in an academic book, would have required a whole monograph just to justify.

Lugli: *Tell me if you agree with me on this. I sometimes feel that trade writing is mostly about editing—not just the words, but the material itself and even our own positionality toward it. In academic writing, we stake out more or less fixed positions, weighing arguments for and against a point, rehearsing every possible take on a problem. We rarely cut* *anything. But trade writing is different. There, you can't get lost in the weeds; you have to keep moving. For me, trade writing is primarily a matter of keeping the focus wide while editing relentlessly.*

Kreiner: I also think the editing starts much earlier with trade books than with academic studies. I spent far more time on the book proposal before the book was even written. I must have gone through at least three substantial drafts with my agent. Then, after talking to the editor, there was another very substantial rewrite. The description of each chapter might be only three paragraphs, but crafting a tight structure and a clear tone of voice was essential to show how the book would read. All of those editing decisions on the front end saved a ton of time later, because a lot of strategic cutting and choosing had already been done. The introduction alone must have gone through five substantial rewrites back and forth with my editor, which I loved. That's one of the things I really appreciated about working with a trade press: You have much more intensive engagement with your writing than you do with an academic book. That was great.

Lugli: *Can you tell us a bit more about the impact that the book has had, either in terms of your own intellectual development or the interdisciplinary conversations the book has generated since its publication?*

Kreiner: As I was saying, writing for a trade press means you've got to be more strategic about introducing readers to a complex world. I found that the payoff is that a wider audience will actually find and finish your book, and some readers even make the effort to write to you personally—some of them what you might expect, like retired people deeply interested in history. But I also heard from undergrads, cognitive scientists, and psychotherapists. Even monks were reading it! There are so many intelligent readers out there that we don't often consider, because we're mostly used to teaching 18- to 22-year-olds. Despite all the other forms of media now, there are still readers. I've also heard from podcasters and screenwriters about how the experiences of early Christian monks resonated with them. Some of these emails sparked conversations that are percolating into new projects. But I'm even more grateful to the responses for confirming that it's possible to enliven a distant historical period in the present.

Lugli: *The sheer range of coverage for your book, from the* New York Times *to the* American Benedictine Review, *already says something about the interest out there. I wonder how, if at all, this has shifted the way you think about writing history. I know it's a big question—maybe too big—but even a fragment of an answer would be revealing.*

Kreiner: It has definitely changed me, in that it's hard to imagine going back to a traditional academic book format. I still love treating journal articles as a space to get really technical and just speak to each other, but I enjoyed the challenge of writing for a wider audience, because it forces us, more pointedly, to think about what we find interesting and what truly matters in our work. The same goes for teaching:

If you give people enough guidance and time to work through something difficult, they can arrive at a surprisingly complex and nuanced understanding by the end. In that sense, it's both more pleasurable and more difficult.

Lugli: *You've done all this work almost entirely on your own. Maybe some friends gave you an agent's email address, but it sounds like you figured things out as you went along. What do you think universities could do to help scholars like you thrive? What kinds of resources would have been most useful?*

Kreiner: I think it's a good thing that universities like Stanford have started bringing people in to talk about non-trade book publishing—whether that's giving talks, writing articles, or contributing op-eds. I don't think academics fully realize that each of these is its own complicated domain, with rules just as specific as publishing an academic monograph with a traditional press. I've definitely had a ton of colleagues ask, "How do you get an agent?" and "How do you talk to a trade editor?" These remain very mysterious questions. Even a modest effort—such as a half-day workshop or a one-off event once a year—can provide the exposure and guidance that help demystify the process.

Another thing that can change is our own internal culture around how we talk about and evaluate work that isn't published in traditional academic venues. The AHA [American Historical Association] has already gone a long way by suggesting ways public history could be incorporated into tenure and promotion requirements. But there are still many subtle, casual ways in which academics can be dismissive of work that comes from outside the academy.

Lugli: *At the same time, it's heartening that there are still people who can think broadly, seeing connections between publishing and academia. In a way, your book is the result—not just of luck, as I mentioned before, but of encountering people generous enough to share their expertise and contacts. Those conversations open doors, rather than leaving us stuck behind them.*

Kreiner: I really like that way of thinking about it. I mean, it genuinely feels encouraging that so many people want to support serious work. Norton is there to make excellent books, and their agents are there to help those books come into being. It's not just lone voices fighting for themselves with no one listening—we do have advocates outside. A

The Grammar of the Corpse: An Interview with Elizabeth Spragins

Thiago Nunes Santana
Stanford University

R*EPUBLICS OF LETTERS* features an occasional series of interviews with scholars who have recently been in conversation with the medieval and early modern community at Stanford University. These interviews seek to capture ideas in motion: how current and recent work came to be conceived, how projects develop and change, and how new knowledge emerges into public view. In keeping with the journal's aim of reflecting on the present moment in our disciplines, these dialogues invite self-awareness, retrospection, and analysis of the relevant fields.

In this interview, Elizabeth Spragins (Stanford PhD '17, now Associate Professor of Spanish, Medieval and Renaissance Studies at College of the Holy Cross) discusses her recently published book *A Grammar of the Corpse: Necroepistemology in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Fordham University Press, 2023) with Thiago Nunes Santana (PhD candidate in comparative literature, Stanford University). The book, which was awarded the 2021 Helen Tartar First Book Subvention and 2024 Roland H. Bainton Literature Prize, examines how the presence and representation of the dead—especially in contexts of war, defeat, and imperial expansion—shaped modes of knowledge and narrative strategies across the Mediterranean world and beyond. The interview touches upon key concepts of Spragins' work, such as "necroepistemology" and considers how corpses, in their ambiguity between subject and object, functioned as indices of truth, instruments of authority, and political devices. It highlights the intellectual trajectory that led to the book while also pointing to its broader implications for how we think about agency, temporality, and narrative within Mediterranean and colonial studies.

Thiago Nunes Santana: *In the book, you define "necroepistemology" as "a system of knowledge grounded in or transmitted through firsthand experiences of the material dead," bringing together the symbolic and material dimensions of the corpse. Could you comment on how you arrived at this formulation—was it something that emerged directly from your reading of the sources? What were the decisive influences that shaped this concept, both within Mediterranean studies and in dialogue with other fields, such as anthropology or linguistic pragmatics?*

Elizabeth Spragins: The concept of *necroepistemology* emerged from my efforts to understand the function of corpses represented in a range of early modern Mediterranean literature (including a number of canonical texts from the Iberian globe such as Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, María de Zayas's *Desengaños amorosos*, Fernão Mendes Pinto's *Peregrinação*, or the Inca Garcilaso's *Comentarios reales*, as well as the less well-known texts that I study in my book). At the same time that I was noticing the prevalence of corpses throughout this corpus, I was reading scholarship (the work of Rolena Adorno and Walter Mignolo was especially critical for my understanding at this juncture) that examines early modern Iberian global historiography in terms of its epistemological interventions: How did witnesses at the furthest reaches of Iberian empires report their experiences to authorities? How did they prove to those authorities that what they said was true? What was at stake in being believed by figures of authority? What new techniques did such witnesses have to create in a world whose epistemological frameworks were being shaped and shifted by the very colonialism they were participating in? The early modern Iberian globe was a space in which simultaneously the reliability of information mattered a great deal but was especially difficult to verify. In such a high-stakes, unsettled epistemological space, purveyors of information had to develop new and innovative techniques for convincing their readers of the veracity of that information. Crucial for my recognition that corpses could be deployed as one such technique were Robert Harrison's *The Dominion of the Dead*, which helped me think of the relations between the living and the material dead in narrative terms, and Margaret Schwartz's *Dead Matter: The Meaning of Iconic Corpses*, which helped me articulate the symbolic function of corpses in representation. The term *necroepistemology* emerged relatively late in the project to describe this narrative technique.

Santana: *You situate the Battle of al-Qaṣr al-Kabīr within a broader Mediterranean framework and emphasize common aspects that link the representation of the body in the Spanish, Portuguese, and Arabic texts you examine. What were the significant methodological challenges in sustaining this approach, and how does this framing change our reading of the sources compared to accounts centered solely on Portuguese, Spanish, or Moroccan history? Do some aspects of the "grammar of the corpse" you reconstruct emerge because of this trans-linguistic and transcultural circulation?*

Spragins: The Mediterranean approach to the Battle of al-Qaṣr al-Kabīr was actually a strategy for narrowing the project to a manageable scope for what began as a dissertation project and turned into my first monograph. As my answer to your first question indicates, this project began as a wide-reaching study that planned to look at corpses written in a variety of contexts and traditions, with little to unite them other than the phenomenon of the literary corpse. One of the touchstone texts with which I had been grappling since the inception of the project was Jerónimo de Mendonça's *Jornada de África* (1607). The obsessive enumeration of corpses in his account of al-Qaṣr al-Kabīr is the focus of the first chapter of *A Grammar of the Corpse*. As I began to grapple with the reality of writing the sprawling dissertation my committee had approved, I settled on the solution of narrowing my focus to al-Qaṣr al-Kabīr as an event with a marked focus on important corpses (those of the three kings who died there) and that had sparked the production of narrative in the different language traditions I was trained to work in. Working across these different language traditions allowed me to reconstruct both the event and the literary phenomenon more fully than if I had only written from the Portuguese or Spanish or Moroccan perspective. Had I only worked from the Iberian perspectives of Portuguese and Spanish witnesses and chroniclers, my understanding of the corpse would have been limited to its literary uses by those writing from moments of defeat and devastation. Working with the Moroccan sources, however, revealed other literary mobilizations of the corpse for those in power, a perspective that brought to light both the potential threat posed by an unruly corpse and the range of uses to which it could be put (i.e., necro-violence).

Santana: *Across the book, you trace strategies—shifting temporalities, integrating bodies into assemblages that reveal the interplay of different agentic powers, etc.—all of which seem to converge on the question of narrative authority. Could you expand on how the representation of dead bodies becomes a tool for asserting such authority? How do you see these varied strategies—visibility, concealment, integration into an assemblage, erasure—working across the book to shape narrative authority?*

Spragins: This question beautifully summarizes the core question the book as a whole attempts to answer. I would thus encourage the reader of this interview to go read the book to get a better understanding of the nuances of this argument. In brief, however, I suggest that corpses inherently represent the truth of human mortality and that mobilizing the sense of truth or knowledge present in that material entity lends authority to the claims of the person or people who invoke it. At a moment of upheaval about knowledge and of particular interest in the utility of the corpse for generating new knowledge and power (e.g., Vesalius's dissections, the emphasis on saintly relics by Philip II of Spain, to name only a few), corpses' symbolic and referential power emerges as one possible compensatory mechanism to give narrators some apparently solid ground upon which to stand and make their historiographical claims. Corpses have a propensity to disintegrate, to break apart, to be misidentified, to be misplaced, or otherwise to behave in unruly ways. This instability renders that ground far less solid than it initially appears and helps explain the more complicated strategies the book analyzes for textually mobilizing corpses.

Santana: *Chapters 1 and 2 depict markedly different treatments of the body: In the first, the corpses of soldiers are displayed and catalogued in detail, while in the second, the royal body is concealed or mediated through other voices. Do you see this contrast as pointing to a broader principle within the "grammar of the corpse"—that certain bodies, such as those of rulers, carry a distinct representational logic from that applied to other kinds of bodies? Could this open the way for, say, some sort of typology of corpses, in which each category—royal or common—carries specific narrative and political functions?*

Spragins: Chapters 1 and 2 capture different aspects of the corpse that critics like Robert Harrison, Thomas Laqueur, and Margaret Schwartz identify: They are both distinctly present, retaining some aspect of their occupant's selfhood, and must be dealt with by the living (chapter 1), and they also tend to disappear and lose major aspects of their occupant's selfhood, both in the moment of death and in their ongoing disintegration into pieces (chapter 2). Certain of those aspects may be emphasized depending upon the particular corpse (presence or propensity to disappear) and the use to which it is being put, as in the social categories to which the question refers, but I don't think those categories apply across all corpses. In other words, I think there are cases of disappearing common bodies (to give a modern example, laws in the post-Vietnam era that impede the photographic representation of soldiers' corpses, which effectively conceal from the public those "common" corpses) and troublingly present royal or otherwise politically powerful bodies (for example, the public preservation and display of Philippine dictator Ferdinand Marcos in a refrigerated crypt from 1993 to 2016). I think the affordances of the uses to which those corpses are put differ according to their relative status, but my sense is that it is extremely context-dependent. In the context of issues of royal accession that arise in the example of Sebastian I's disappearing body discussed in chapter 2, it carries a unique representational logic within that context because of the ways in which that particular body was supposed to anchor the stability of the Portuguese state and the problematic ways in which it could not be made to do so. In representational terms, the authority that access to the corpse affords is complicated by the fact that witnessing such a powerful corpse can itself undermine the witness's credibility.

Santana: *In chapter 3, you draw on anthropological approaches that challenge the subject/object divide, applying them to the status of the corpse. In this framework, "necroepistemology" entails a reversal of traditional epistemological categories: The corpse is not an inert object but can also function as an agent. Could you elaborate on how this shift in perspective reshapes our understanding of the dead in these narratives? How does this reconfiguration of subject and object affect the way these texts produce and transmit knowledge?*

Spragins: This chapter grapples with corpses' liminality between subjecthood and objecthood, a quality that makes corpses particularly disturbing to their human observers and interlocutors. Were a corpse an entirely self-contained object, with no trace of subjectivity, with the potential to exceed the bounds of the body, it would be a less powerful and compelling entity than humans find it, whether as a possible revenant, an intercessor, or otherwise still agentive agent in the world. One of the best theorizations I found to discuss the subject/object divide was Jane Bennett's study *Vibrant Matter*, which argues that there is vital materiality that runs across human and nonhuman bodies and that understanding the webs of relationships that bind those bodies together more accurately portrays how agency exists as a result of those configurations rather than only from fully conscious actions by human actors. Recognizing corpses as straddling both of the major binaries Bennett theorizes—human/nonhuman, subject/object—allows us to understand the very nature of that liminality. Attending to that contingent and context-dependent quality of the corpse in narrative allows us to notice more finely the nuances of agency and objecthood, to causality of action. Observing how corpses act as agents in many ways reveals them at their most productive of authority within a narrative space, where mere proximity to them rather than agency or power over them bestows authority on that narrative.

Santana: *Your analysis combines linguistic pragmatics, narratology, and affect theory alongside sustained engagement with Mediterranean studies and cultural history. What kinds of sources and academic training were decisive in building this approach?*

Spragins: At the heart of this project was a desire to understand what role dead bodies play in texts, under what circumstances, and for what reasons narrators contemplate them. Performance studies by scholars such as Rebecca Schneider and one media studies book by Margaret Schwartz helped me find the language to articulate what I was seeing in my primary sources: corpses that were either disturbingly present, like in Mendonça's text, or absent, like the corpse of the Portuguese king, whose disappearance would cause all sorts of political difficulties for his successor, Philip II of Spain. Understanding the corpse as a communicative object also allowed me to consider other ways in which the corpse was being deployed textually. In addition to asking where the corpse was, I also could ask when are corpses? How do they behave as subjects? How are they acted upon as objects? The mobilization of these different approaches to the corpse (linguistic pragmatics, narratology, affect theory) emerged organically over the course of the project as I observed functions that corpses served: as embodied index, as a both human and nonhuman object, as a lingering subject. My engagement across these different disciplines was part of my effort to find the best language possible to explain what I was viewing across my heterogeneous corpus. At the heart of this was my training as a literary scholar whose mentors emphasized the need to ground an argument deeply in the language of the object of study and for the theoretical apparatus of that argument to serve the text rather than vice versa.

Santana: *Thinking about your earlier dissertation, how did the project evolve from that stage into the book? Were there shifts in focus, methodology, or corpus that significantly altered your trajectory?*

Spragins: The process of proposing this project as a monograph to different presses was critical for refining the dissertation into a more coherent whole. The dissertation was organized along geographical and linguistic lines: Portugal/Morocco/Spain. I studied multiple primary sources in each geographical section in an effort to situate each source within the literary, political, and sociocultural context in which it was produced. This organization also moved from the most familiar story of the event—that told by the Portuguese—to the most understudied one—that told by Moroccan chroniclers. As a PhD student, this allowed me to tackle each of these different traditions in enough depth that I developed the competence to discuss different cultural assumptions around corpses, literary authority, knowledge transmission, and other such issues. As a literary study, however, this organizational structure had a number of limitations. Greatest among those limitations was the sheer length of each of these chapters and my own propensity to get lost in the historical details.

Monographs are about distilling down your most exciting ideas to their most comprehensible and compelling, and communicating them as clearly as you can so as many as possible of your colleagues want to read it, cite it, and talk about it. An editor of a press to which I proposed the book told me that the project was too "granular" and insufficiently "speculative," which I have subsequently interpreted as code for, "This still reads like a dissertation." At the time I was deeply offended, but in retrospect that feedback needled me into thinking harder about the bigger stakes of my project: Was I writing a book that was primarily about al-Qaṣr al-Kabir, or was I writing a book about the literary function of corpses? The former was a granular history project that reconstructed the event from the different perspectives of the different sources that I was working with. However, since I knew my answer to that—my real interest was in the corpses—this feedback, harsh as it was, forced me to think about ways to restructure the project so that instead of focusing on the different language traditions the primary sources I was working with came from, I started instead to try to characterize what these primary sources had revealed to me about the different functions of the corpse. Picking and choosing what my key ideas were and refining the most important takeaways I wanted the reader to get from them was crucial for my revision of the book. This was the process that allowed me to move from the primarily geography and language-based framework of the dissertation to understanding the corpse as a communicative object that could be deployed in different textual functions.

Santana: *What is your next project?*

Spragins: My current book project, tentatively titled Tongues of Resistance, maintains my focus on bodies and power but shifts its focus to consider how racial hierarchies that emerged from Iberian empire constructed, controlled, and were resisted by the bodies of minority groups like Moriscos and African and Afro-Iberian people. I'm particularly interested in how Arabic language use constituted and shaped these racialized identities. Some of the texts I'm working with in the project include the language of the laws restricting Morisco cultural practices with particular focus on Arabic, a memorandum from a Morisco elder directed at Castilian authorities contesting those restrictions through a racio-linguistic conception of the Mediterranean region, Miguel de Luna's fake translation of the *Historia verdadera del rey don Rodrigo*, and the Lead Books, which forge a notion of ancient Christian identity with a core basis in Arab identity and Arabic language use. My contention is that each of these Morisco responses to institutionalized racio-linguistic discrimination is an act of race-bending, a racio-linguistic concept that describes how racialized subjects both make race matter and not matter, alternately reifying and destabilizing racializing discourses. A