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## The Many Histories of World Society

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sary restrictions with respect to the rights of other subjects. That may be legally correct, but it is not clear whether Molina's text has this clarity. After all, it is true that Molina considers it inadmissible to exercise *dominium* to the detriment of others, as he explains with reference to the situation of Noah in the Ark (*De iustitia et iure* II 18, 141).

Secondly, and more importantly, it is not clear why children and the intellectually disabled could not also be represented in the fulfilment of duties, as has been the practice of civil law since time immemorial. However, in that case the situation presents itself rather differently to Simmermacher's point of view, because the (constructed) objection that children and *amentes* are not liable due to their actual lack of reason and freedom of will is dropped.

If we look at it this way, Molina's theory of law differs from modern concepts of human rights in only one point, but one of the greatest significance: Molina considers man as *dominus suorum actuum*, who thus can also dispose of his own freedom – at least in an situation of extreme hardship for the purpose of self-preservation (*De iustitia et iure* II, 33, 242). Only in this way is Molina able to arrive at a contradiction-free justification of slavery, which in his case starts from the thesis that the slave is saved by the purchase from otherwise certain death (whether due to unjust persecution or extreme hardship). At the same time, Molina sharply

criticized the practice of the Portuguese trade with African slaves. According to Molina, the responsibility for the legality of the slave trade, or more precisely for the legality of the transaction between the slave and the slave trader, lies with political government, which can influence the framework conditions to a certain extent. Legitimate reasons for the transfer of the *dominium* over a slave are, according to Molina, imprisonment in a just war, criminal punishment, selling oneself into slavery and being born a slave. Nevertheless, for Molina the slave is not without rights, but retains certain legal claims (based on subjective rights), namely from the contract of enslavement, from donations, from the criminal behaviour of the master towards the slave, or from his own winnings through gambling or trade. All this Simmermacher establishes in her thorough discussion in chapter 5. She concludes that Molina granted the slave a legal status between subject and object. In addition, slaves are entitled to protection from injustice. This applies even if the slave cannot assert this legal claim him- or herself, but needs a representative. Simmermacher speaks of a »basic structure« (*Robbau*) of a theory of human rights in Molina's thought. Indeed, the legal doctrine of Molina represents a step towards a theory of human rights. That is no small feat.



### Manuel Bastias Saavedra

## The Many Histories of World Society\*

For anyone who still held doubts, the Covid-19 pandemic that began in the last days of 2019 has certainly confirmed that we live in a highly interconnected world society. Perhaps unlike any other event in a generation, the pandemic and its effects have not left any corner of the globe untouched, as poignantly illustrated by the cases of infection

reaching even the secluded communities that live deep within the Amazon rainforest. It has become evident that decisions made on one side of the planet can have almost instant consequences on the other. Such a level of interpenetration has certainly been accelerated in recent decades by the internet, the ubiquity of long-distance travel,

\* GIUSEPPE MARCOCCI, *Indios, chinos, falsarios. Las historias del mundo en el Renacimiento*, Madrid: Alianza Editorial 2019, 345 p., ISBN 978-84-9181-519-8

and other technical and societal developments that have been broadly encompassed under the rubric of globalization. And even though such a high degree of interdependency is relatively new, our highly interconnected world society has a history that goes back several centuries. But how far back does it go? This question has occupied historians over the past three decades as interest in global and world historical perspectives has grown. While some historians have sought to locate the origins of the process of global connectedness with the beginning of long-distance trade and ancient empires in what has been referred to as »archaic globalization«, most mark the beginning about five hundred years ago, when regular communication across the Atlantic was established.

Giuseppe Marcocci's book, *Indios, chinos, falsarios*, weighs into this debate by highlighting the new ways in which history had to be reimagined as a response to the expanding horizons of the world of the 16th century. If universal histories had been written before in ancient Greece, in ancient China, and in other places, the age of explorations inaugurated by the Portuguese and Spanish monarchies brought forth a new form of historical production, encompassed in the book under the idea of »world histories«. Though not constituting a new genre or school of thought, what these world histories had in common was a sensibility towards the existence of the multiple pasts that accompanied the mutual discovery of new lands and peoples. World histories did not merely have an interest in compiling the multiple pasts of the world as entities separated from one another, but rather created a new global reimagining of history (53). These historians of the global Renaissance were able to »think about the world as a unitary object and tell its story« (200).

The book is divided into six chapters and a short conclusion. The core of the book is made up by the four central chapters (chaps. 2–5), which are dedicated to four different ways of telling the history of the world that arose during the Renaissance. The first, exemplified by the work of a Franciscan friar in Mexico, was a diffusionist model (chap. 2) which tied the history of New Spain to the biblical narrative by making the original inhabitants of America descend from Noah, thus weaving the past of America into the narratives that had shaped the European tradition. The second narrative was one of a past shaped by the incessant movement of peoples and goods (chap. 3). This is illustrated by a Sinocentric account of the past written by a Portu-

guese captain, in which the ancient Chinese had not only been the first of the great navigators to reach the coasts of Africa and most of South and East Asia, but also accounted for the population of America. The third historical account can be found in the chronicle of Guaman Poma de Ayala, an Indian of Peru, who tried to harmonize the history of the Andean cultures with the history of the Old World. This narrative drew on an idea of cultural diversity that allowed different histories to be placed side by side on equal footing (chap. 4). Finally, Venetian printers began to produce world histories for widespread consumption that used a narrative technique based on the idea of simultaneity (chap. 5). The presentation of events in Africa, America, and Asia no longer occupied an anecdotal place next to the events of Europe, but were integrated, in their own right, into the world-historical narrative. These narratives are used in *Indios, chinos, falsarios* to organize a complex story of authors, books, printing, translation, forgery, the circulation of ideas, construction of world-views, and misappropriations; but mainly they serve to tell the story of worldwide connections and how these helped reimagine the past of the world as a whole.

The historians and authors that the book focuses on, however, did not belong to the historiographical canon of the Renaissance (45), and the narratives produced by these world histories did not subsequently come to pervade historiographical discourse. They were, rather, the »expression of a brief moment of the Renaissance« (15) that would eventually be superseded by more traditional colonial and geopolitical narratives characterized by demonstrations of cultural superiority (248). Chapter 6 deals with this decline of world histories when the tendency towards ethno- and, specifically, Eurocentric universal histories again came to the fore. The chapter that opens the book (chap. 1), which draws parallels between the global historians of today and the world histories of the Renaissance, could have served better as a conclusion. It is a clever way of crossing two global historiographies under the idea that the increased awareness of global dimensions tends to erode conventional forms of looking at the past: characterized today by the sustained critique of methodological nationalism and Eurocentric perspectives, and characterized in the 16th century by the reliance on the world's multiple pasts to the detriment of the wisdom of the ancients. These parallels

are a compelling way of addressing the promise and limitations of contemporary global history. Creative and integrative ways of looking at the multiple pasts of the world are certainly the promise that many historians see in the growing interest in recent global perspectives, but *Indios, chinos, falsarios* warns us that this way of looking at the past can also amount to no more than a brief interlude and become subordinated to politically expedient ways of defining the past in the interest of the present.

Beyond its historiographical insights, the book's argument also challenges its readers to think about what it means to live in a world of changing dimensions. In a way, the world histories of the Renaissance act as the unveiling of contingency: the idea that the past, and by extension everything that was in the world, could have been different. How else can one explain how the world histories slowly but consistently abandoned a reliance on biblical narratives or the authority of the classics in favor of multiple accounts received from various corners of the planet? In societies oriented towards the maintenance of tradition, this shift was nothing short of revolutionary. In sociological theory, Niklas Luhmann pointed to such a shift in his thesis of world society. The »world« in contemporary society had become fundamentally different to

that of traditional societies because it was no longer assumed to be an entity that existed in an independent reality. Rather, world society is a cognitive scheme that serves as horizon of reference for all meaningful communication across the globe, and as such it is oriented not towards unity but difference. While Luhmann argued that »the full discovery of the globe as a closed sphere of meaningful communication«<sup>1</sup> provided the decisive impulse for the emergence of world society, *Indios, chinos, falsarios* helps make the case that it was perhaps the need to confront the multiple pasts of the world what set the deconstructive mindset of world society in motion. The world historians of the 16th century were, in different ways, confronted with the problem of reconciling unity and difference: how to make sense of different pasts and traditions as belonging to a common world. Like those raised by the historians of the Renaissance and by today's global historians, »the question raised by world society is no longer the question about its existence, but how these plural worlds are socially connected to each other.«<sup>2</sup> As legal history opens up to more global perspectives, *Indios, chinos, falsarios* is certainly a book from which to draw inspiration and learn the craft with which it was put together. ■

### Albrecht Cordes

## Die Organisationsrevolution von 1600/1602\*

Mit einer gewissen Lust haben die Wirtschaftshistoriker nach der industriellen und der kommerziellen noch eine Reihe weiterer Revolutionen ausgerufen; man möchte fast von einer Revolutionsinflation sprechen. Doch Ron Harris erläutert überzeugend, warum er die Gründung der engli-

schen und der niederländischen Ostindienkompanien (*East India Company*, EIC, 1600, und *Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie*, VOC, 1602) für eine so umwälzende Änderung der Organisation und der Finanzierung des Handels ansieht, dass damit diese beiden Gesellschaften die Führung im eurasischen

1 NIKLAS LUHMANN, *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft*, Bd. 1, Frankfurt am Main 1997, 148.

2 ARMIN NASSEHI, *Die »Welt«-Fremdheit der Globalisierungsdebatte: Ein phänomenologischer Versuch*, in: *Soziale Welt* 49 (1998) 158: »Die

Frage der Weltgesellschaft ist dann nicht mehr die Frage nach ihrer Existenz, sondern die Frage, wie diese pluralen Welten sozial aneinander anschließen.« (English translation by the author)

\* RON HARRIS, *Going the Distance. Eurasian Trade and the Rise of the Business Corporation, 1400–1700*. Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press 2020, XIII + 465 S., ISBN 978-0-691-15077-2