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Review of [Encyclopédie des historiographies: Afriques, Amériques, Asies. Vol. 1: Sources et genres historiques (tome 1 et tome 2)] by [Nathalie Kouamé, Éric P. Meyer, and Anne Viguier]
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Book Reviews

Nathalie Kouamé, Éric P. Meyer, and Anne Viguier, eds., *Encyclopédie des historiographies: Afriques, Amériques, Asies. Vol. 1: Sources et genres historiques (tome 1 et tome 2)*. Paris: Presses de l'Inalco, 2020. Pp. 1998. Available for free via OpenEdition, <https://doi.org/10.4000/books.pressesinalco.21819>.

This is the first volume in an encyclopedic series that asks the question: “What is the relationship between human society and its past?” (1). Specifically, the encyclopedia aims to examine historiographies produced in Africa, America, and Asia and therefore excludes “Western historiography.” The editors are keenly aware that they have not given themselves a straightforward task in formulating this ambition, for what exactly constitutes “the West”? They note that the terms “Africa,” “Asia,” and “America” are in fact conceptualizations made by the West and that they refer to groups of peoples that are diverse and cannot be strictly reduced to geographic areas. And what about (as they anticipate the readers’ criticism) the many connections between the West and the non-West? The editors explain their choice by referring to the paucity of preceding projects. Those authors who have paid attention to historiographical developments outside of Europe, such as Daniel Woolf in *A Global History of History* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), have always done so in addition to a discussion of Western historiography. In reply to the obvious critique that the West and the non-West have constantly engaged with one another, the editors posit that these engagements have usually only been studied under the assumption that it has been Western historiography that influenced non-Western historiography, whereas they want to demonstrate that it has also happened the other way around. Throughout the project, editors and authors indicate that archives, for instance, were not a Western invention: there are also Chinese and other traditions of record keeping. Moreover, they focus on intersectionalities of race, gender, and class in an effort to move away from essentializing tendencies. In other words, the project aims to engage with the cultural and historical specificities of the areas they have included. What these non-Western historiographies have in common, therefore, is their having been neglected as a result of European overseas expansion.

This specific volume focuses on the different sources and genres of historical research. The editors have taken a refreshing approach as to what constitutes a historical source. Building on innovations made primarily by African historians, which they pay homage to in passing, the *Encyclopédie des historiographies: Afriques, Amériques, Asies (EHA)* does not privilege the written word but has instead chosen to favor those sources and genres “that are little known outside of their place of production” (19). Second, they highlight any indigenous elements within those sources and genres that are in conversation with the West, in order to emphasize acts of reappropriation or, conversely, cultural uniqueness. And this finally explains what exactly they mean by non-Western as well: mostly those Asian, African, and American sources and genres that have been little explored by Western researchers or only from a perspective that favors a Western interpretation.

The strength of the work therefore largely lies in its inclusion and exploration of source material and historiographies that are relatively unknown to most historians, such as *Khipu* historiography. *Khipus* are threads and cords, sometimes knotted and sometimes very colorful, that were used by indigenous peoples in what is now Peru, most notably during the Wari Empire (600–1100), to record all kinds of agricultural, demographic, and religious information. These knotted and threaded historiographies, as Sabine Hyland explains in her entry, are a form of “non-alphabetic historiography” (964); they have not been studied previously because it was difficult to understand how they recorded information. Studying them increases the possibility of revealing indigenous epistemologies.

There are many more compelling entries that deal with material culture as the basis for historiographical analysis, such as the one on “Luso-African Ivory Salt Cellars (16th century) as an Historical Source for West Africa” by Peter Mark. The author demonstrates how the common perception of these salt cellars has changed over time as a result of historical research. Whereas they were first seen as the product of European influence, they are now understood as stemming from indigenous artistic traditions that merely reflect the intercultural contacts of the age. What this entry shows most clearly in the context of the encyclopedia is that the editors’ remarks on the entanglement between Western and non-Western traditions are indeed apt. They themselves draw attention to the fact that an analytic separation between various continents does not always square with our understanding of the world in terms of migrations and intercultural contacts. At the same time the project also contains numerous studies of chronicles and other written traditions, including an interesting entry by Chloé Maurel on the UNESCO’s “Memory of the World.” This registry of archives around the world, specifically in the global South, is described by Maurel in a way that reflects the *EHA* project itself, as one of its key goals is to preserve and diffuse the knowledge contained in these archives.

The encyclopedia presents a veritable treasure chest of knowledge to be studied by historians, anthropologists, and political scientists alike—as well as the general public. To its credit, the entire project can be read online via open access; it is mostly in French, but some entries are in English. It is an invaluable advantage that the project is thereby made available to many people across the globe, including those whose continents and countries form the encyclopedia's subject matter. At the same time, however, the very genre of the encyclopedia impresses upon its subject material a logic of categorization and collecting that originated in Europe in the nineteenth century and is somewhat imperialistic in nature—think, for instance, of ethnographic museums, where objects were and are displayed and organized based on geographic categories for the purpose of systematic study. That is not to say there is no worth in this method and its ambition to expand knowledge, or the deliberate focus on Asia, America, and Africa as historiographical worlds, especially since these very areas have long been ignored as historic places in their own right. Yet, this reviewer wonders whether it is possible to escape from the connotations of collecting and understanding from a European point of view that seems to be inherent in an encyclopedic project that originates from a former metropole and includes mostly Western authors. As such, the project invites a critical perspective with which to answer the question of what it means to study the non-Western world, as such, from the perspective of the West.

Larissa Schulte Nordholt

Ivan Matijašić, *Shaping the Canons of Ancient Greek Historiography: Imitation, Classicism, and Literary Criticism*. Beiträge zur Altertumskunde 359. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018. Pp. xii+293. €99.95 (cloth).

In a time of vigorous—and often painful—debate about national, ethnic, and religious identities, we witness an increasing need for authorized canons. These may consist of books, artifacts, great individuals, or events from the past and are usually embedded in education or broadcast in media so as to be etched in collective memory and consciousness. But how do canons come about? Who determines what they should involve, and what is to be excluded? To what extent are they malleable or replaceable? And what are their long-term developments and effects? To answer such questions one should read Matijašić's study of the origins, developments, and ultimate fixation of the canon of