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Going Global

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Going Global

The Editors

While the academic conception of the humanities, or *Geisteswissenschaften*, may be a Western invention, attempts to analyze literature, art, music, language, theater, and history are not exclusively European phenomena but have originated in different parts of the world. For this reason, one of the stated goals of this journal is to advocate the study of the history of the humanities from a global perspective.¹ In the first issue we included one aspect of the humanities in China. The current issue includes essays on the humanities in precolonial Mali, pre-Hispanic America, the Ottoman Empire, and the Soviet Union.

What do we gain from a global perspective? A transgeographical history of the humanities not only helps avoid a parochial view but also shows to what extent practices and ideals in the humanities in different parts of the world are connected and comparable. In the current issue, Shamil Jeppie argues that the humanities in precolonial Timbuktu can be properly understood only if they are viewed as part of a larger network of learning that included North Africa and the Middle East. Sara Gonzalez asserts that Peruvian history writing focused on images as the basis for historical narratives in which the pre-Columbian rulers were connected to the Habsburg dynasty. Michiel Leezenberg draws attention to the fact that processes of vernacularization took place simultaneously in the Ottoman Empire and elsewhere in the world. Floris Solleveld focuses on Europe but discusses the notion of “revolution” in the humanities across different countries. Boris Gasparov makes us aware that, even in relation to the secluded situation of the Soviet Union, a comparative perspective is rewarding.

We wish to further encourage the study of the history of humanities from a pluralistic, comparative point of view. Our argument in favor of a global perspective does not, however, exclude the journal’s other goals. In fact, this issue’s Forum contributions by Herman Paul and colleagues deal with the question of how to write a history

1. Rens Bod, Julia Kursell, Jaap Maat, and Thijs Weststeijn, “A New Field: *History of Humanities*,” *History of Humanities* 1, no. 1 (2016): 1–8.

of the humanities that transcends disciplines. They hypothesize that scholarly personae offer a promising focus for such a project. By contrasting different disciplines and scholars, they show that a comparative perspective is fruitful not only for a global but also for a primarily local history of the humanities.