

[Was it a man's world? Intersections of gender and global history](#)

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Call for Papers

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During the last twenty years, global history has not only become an established field of expertise, but also a task mainly carried out by male historians of the global North. Until recently, only a few female scholars have shown any interest in engaging in the global history project. What is more, when we look at the global history books written in the past two decades, women appear only rarely as historical actors, and gender issues seem to be only relevant when it comes to family structures.

To be sure, gender relations and their intersections with categories such as ethnicity/race or class are an integral part of studies in colonial history or area studies. This is, however, much less the case in global history. In many of the numerous studies which examine the effects of worldwide interaction, individual actors – of all sexes – are barely mentioned: They only become part of global historical accounts when they have played a specific role as political leaders, revolutionary scientists or famous artists. Unintentionally, so it seems, the structure-driven or empire-centered approaches in global history each lead to a backdrop framing the traditional narrative according to which big men make history. The indexes of most global history books reveal this finding clearly: women do not show up. What does this mean for global history as a distinct field of research? What kinds of voices, memories and actors are silenced by such an approach? And what does it mean that the actors' gender, their masculinity or their femininity, are barely examined in a systematic manner, or that queer and transgender actors who do not fit into the Western gender dichotomy are mostly ignored?

What is more, there seems to exist a historiographical gender division in terms of who actually writes global history. Scholars such as Christopher Bayly, Jürgen Osterhammel, Akira Iriye, John McNeill, Ian Morris, Roy Bin Wong, Patrick O'Brian, Sven Beckert, Dominic Sachsenmaier, Dipesh Chakrabarty, John Darwin or Jan Luiten van Zanden, to name but a few, have described a world both of growing connectedness and increasing differences. In contrast to genres such as (post)colonial history, area studies or global microhistory, however, only a few female historians have joined the project of narrating the global past.

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Why is this so? What does this finding tell us about the discipline, and of the gendered labor division at work?

We would like to explore the potential benefit of adopting gender as a useful category for global history by having a fresh look at the long nineteenth century, the period which arguably saw the birth of the modern world (Bayly 2004). If we interpret global history as the examination of structured transformations on a global level, as Sebastian Conrad (2016) maintains, we might ask the following questions: How was the transformation of the world (Osterhammel 2014) characterized by particular concepts of gender, and how did the establishment of global entanglements shape gender orders around the globe? Did European expansion and the establishment of global markets result in an assimilation of gender roles, or did they rather lead to an increased dichotomy between male and female spheres? How were the respective notions of masculinity and femininity related to other social categories such as ethnicity/race, class, religion or sex in different parts of the world, and how were they performed in social practices? In which contexts did queer and transgender actors play a role in global interactions? What was the impact of mass media, new institutions of learning or the formation of nation states on gender orders, and how were they influenced by the establishment of labour movements and urban middle classes across the world? A starting point could be Peter Stearns' (2000) claim that there was an increasing polarization of gender characteristics after the eighteenth century; a polarization that can be observed throughout the world. Only after the late nineteenth century was this hegemonic gender order altered by the emergence of women's movements and new developments in terms of media and education across the globe; high-imperialism and anticolonial nationalism arguably influenced gender relations as well.

The conference will bring together scholars from different parts of the world to investigate these topics for the period between the late eighteenth and the early twentieth centuries. We are keen to examine the relevance of gender to particular social fields such as politics, labour, business and consumption, science and learning, religion, sexuality and family order across the world. Papers may focus on one particular area and period but should ideally address bigger questions as well, for instance by discussing transregional connections and comparisons or *longue durée* approaches. What is more, we are interested in methodological reflections on how to make silenced subjects visible or how to include performative aspects of gender in global history. Last but not least, we encourage papers that challenge the (gendered) genre of global history and explore how global history could, or should, be rewritten from a gender historian's perspective.

Proposals of two pages (max.) should be sent to Christof Dejung, <christof.dejung@hist.unibe.ch>; Angelika Epple <aepple@uni-bielefeld.de> before **1 July 2021**.

Accepted papers will be pre-circulated in advance of the workshop, which will be expected to be submitted by **30 June 2022**.

We plan a publication of selected contributions to the workshop, either in an edited volume or a special issue of a journal.

The conference will take place from **25 to 27 August 2022** at the University of Bern, Switzerland. For ecological reasons, we are considering a hybrid format with some of the speakers being present and others participating via Zoom.

Contact Info:

Convenors: Christof Dejung (University of Bern) and Angelika Epple (University of Bielefeld)

Contact Email:

christof.dejung@hist.unibe.ch