

# Gender In History Global Perspectives

Gender In History Global Perspectives Gender in history global perspectives Understanding the role of gender throughout history offers invaluable insights into the social, political, and cultural evolution of societies worldwide. From ancient civilizations to modern times, gender dynamics have shaped the way communities organize themselves, interact, and define power. Exploring gender in history from a global perspective reveals a complex tapestry of experiences, beliefs, and practices that challenge us to reconsider traditional narratives and recognize the diversity of human experiences across different cultures and epochs.

### The Significance of Gender in Historical Contexts

**Defining Gender and Its Historical Relevance** Gender refers to the social, cultural, and behavioral attributes and roles that societies consider appropriate for men, women, and other gender identities. Unlike biological sex, which pertains to physical differences, gender is a social construct that varies across time and cultures. Historically, gender has played a pivotal role in shaping societal hierarchies, rights, and responsibilities. It influences access to resources, political participation, and social status, making it an essential lens through which to examine historical developments.

**Why a Global Perspective Matters** Focusing solely on Western narratives often neglects the rich diversity of gender experiences worldwide. A global perspective:

- Highlights differing gender roles and norms across cultures.
- Challenges ethnocentric assumptions about gender universality.
- Illuminates how colonialism, globalization, and intercultural exchanges have affected gender systems.
- Contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of human history.

### Ancient Civilizations and Gender Roles

**Mesopotamia and Egypt** In ancient Mesopotamia, gender roles were intertwined with religious beliefs and social hierarchy. Women could own property, engage in trade, and even serve as priestesses, but their societal roles were often subordinate to men. Similarly, in Ancient Egypt, women enjoyed comparatively high status. Queens like Hatshepsut wielded significant political power, and women could inherit property and run businesses. Nonetheless, gender distinctions persisted, especially in religious and familial contexts.

**South Asian and East Asian Societies** In ancient India, texts like the Manusmriti outlined gender roles emphasizing the duties of women as mothers and wives, yet women like Gargi and Maitreyi were renowned philosophers, indicating complex gender dynamics. In China, Confucian ideals emphasized filial piety and hierarchical relationships, reinforcing patriarchal family structures. Women were expected to be obedient and focus on domestic roles, although women like Empress Wu Zetian rose to power, challenging traditional norms.

**Indigenous Societies** Many indigenous societies across the Americas, Africa, and Oceania exhibited diverse gender systems. For example:

- Some Native American tribes recognized Two-Spirit individuals, embodying both masculine and feminine traits.
- Many African societies had matrilineal clans where inheritance and 2 lineage passed through women.
- Pacific Island cultures often embraced gender fluidity and non-binary identities.

### Medieval and Early Modern Gender Dynamics

**Europe's Gender**

Norms Medieval Europe was largely patriarchal, with gender roles reinforced by Christian doctrine. Women were primarily seen as homemakers and caregivers, though some noblewomen wielded political influence through marriage alliances or as regents.

Islamic World and Gender Islamic societies in the medieval period had nuanced gender roles. While men held political and religious authority, women could own property, engage in business, and, in some cases, influence political decisions, especially in private spheres.

Africa and the Middle East In parts of Africa, women played critical roles in trade, agriculture, and leadership. For example, the Kingdom of Kush and other Nubian states had powerful queens and female warriors.

Early Modern Europe and Colonial Encounters The Renaissance and subsequent periods saw strict gender expectations but also notable women writers, artists, and thinkers. Colonialism introduced new gender norms and disrupted indigenous gender systems, often marginalizing women and altering social structures.

Gender in the Industrial Age and Colonial Expansion The Impact of Industrialization The Industrial Revolution transformed gender roles dramatically:

- Men became primary breadwinners, working in factories.
- Women entered wage labor in textile mills and domestic service.
- This shift contributed to early feminist movements advocating for women's rights.

Colonialism and Gender Norms European colonial powers often imposed their gender ideals on colonized societies, disrupting indigenous gender systems. Conversely, colonized women sometimes resisted these changes, leading to complex gender negotiations.

Women's Movements and Suffrage The 19th and early 20th centuries saw the rise of women's suffrage movements worldwide. Achievements include:

- The granting of voting rights in countries like New Zealand (1893) and the United States (1920).
- Activism for gender equality, education, and labor rights.

Gender and Post- Colonial Societies Reclaiming Indigenous Gender Identities Post-colonial nations have often sought to revive indigenous gender practices as a form of cultural sovereignty. Examples include:

- Recognition of Two-Spirit identities in Native American and Indigenous Canadian communities.
- Reassertion of matrilineal traditions in parts of Africa and Southeast Asia.

Challenges of Gender Inequality Many post-colonial societies continue to grapple with gender disparities, rooted in historical, religious, and cultural factors. Issues include:

- Gender-based violence.
- Disparities in education and political participation.
- Legal inequalities and discriminatory practices.

Contemporary Perspectives on Gender in History Intersectionality and Multidimensional Identities Modern historians emphasize intersectionality—the interconnected nature of social categorizations like race, class, and gender—to understand complex identities and experiences.

Global Feminist Movements Contemporary feminist movements operate globally, advocating for:

- Reproductive rights.
- Gender equality in workplaces and politics.
- Recognition of diverse gender identities beyond the binary.

The Role of Digital Media Digital platforms have transformed activism, allowing marginalized voices to share their stories and challenge dominant narratives about gender.

The Future of Gender in Global Historical Perspectives Embracing Diversity and Inclusion Future scholarship aims to:

- Incorporate marginalized groups' histories.
- Recognize non-binary and gender non-conforming experiences.
- Challenge essentialist notions of gender.

Addressing Persistent Inequalities Understanding historical roots of gender inequalities can inform policies and

social changes to promote gender justice worldwide. Interdisciplinary Approaches Combining history with anthropology, sociology, and gender studies enhances our comprehension of gender's evolving role globally. Conclusion Exploring gender in history from a global perspective enriches our understanding of human societies' diversity and complexity. Recognizing the myriad ways gender has influenced and been shaped by cultural, political, and economic factors across different regions and eras encourages a more inclusive and comprehensive view of our shared past. As contemporary societies continue to evolve, acknowledging the historical foundations of gender norms and disparities remains essential for fostering equality and justice worldwide. --- References and Suggested Further Reading - Scott, J. W. (2011). *Gender and the Politics of History*. New York: Columbia University Press. - Butler, J. (1990). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge. - Lerner, G. (1993). *The Creation of Patriarchy*. Oxford University Press. - Tambiah, S. J. (1990). *Culture, Identity, and Politics: Ethnographic Perspectives*. Wiley-Blackwell. - Enloe, C. (2014). *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*. University of California Press. --- By understanding the multifaceted history of gender across the globe, we gain a richer, more nuanced perspective of the human experience—one that recognizes diversity, challenges stereotypes, and promotes equality for all gender identities. Question Answer How have global perspectives shaped the understanding of gender roles throughout history? Global perspectives have highlighted that gender roles are socially constructed and vary widely across cultures and time periods, challenging Western-centric narratives and emphasizing the diversity of gender experiences worldwide. What role did colonialism play in shaping gender norms in different regions? Colonialism often imposed Western gender norms and disrupted indigenous gender roles, leading to the marginalization of local practices and the reinforcement of binary gender identities in colonized societies. How have women's movements across different countries influenced global gender history? Women's movements have fostered cross-cultural exchanges of ideas, highlighting common struggles for rights and equality, and influencing international policies and perceptions of gender justice. 4 In what ways has the history of gender been shaped by intersecting identities such as race, class, and ethnicity? Intersecting identities have complexly influenced gender experiences, with marginalized groups facing unique challenges and opportunities, which has enriched the understanding of gender as a multifaceted social construct globally. How do global perspectives on gender history challenge traditional Western narratives? Global perspectives challenge Western narratives by revealing diverse gender systems and histories, emphasizing that gender is not universal, and advocating for a more inclusive and pluralistic understanding of the past. What is the significance of studying gender in a global historical context? Studying gender globally uncovers shared patterns and differences, fosters cross-cultural understanding, and contributes to a more comprehensive and equitable view of human history and social development. Gender in History: Global Perspectives Understanding the role and representation of gender throughout history is vital to comprehending how societies have evolved, how power dynamics have shifted, and how cultural norms have been constructed and challenged across different civilizations. The study of gender in history offers a nuanced lens

through which we can analyze the intersections of identity, power, and societal change on a global scale. This comprehensive review explores the multifaceted dimensions of gender in history, emphasizing diverse regional perspectives, key themes, and ongoing debates.

--- Introduction: The Significance of Gender in Historical Analysis Historically, gender has often been overshadowed by narratives centered on political, economic, or military developments. However, recent scholarly work underscores that gender is fundamental to understanding societal structures and historical processes. Gender influences roles, expectations, and access to resources, shaping individual lives and collective histories. Recognizing gender as a social construct that varies across cultures and eras enables historians to deconstruct traditional narratives and appreciate the diversity of human experiences.

--- Historical Perspectives on Gender Across Cultures

Ancient Civilizations - Mesopotamia: In early Mesopotamian societies such as Sumer, Akkad, and Babylon, gender roles were often defined by divine laws and societal norms. Women could hold positions as priestesses, merchants, and even rulers (e.g., Queen Puabi of Ur), although their status was generally subordinate to men.

- Ancient Egypt: Women in Egypt enjoyed relatively high status compared to other ancient societies. They could own property, initiate divorce, and hold administrative roles. Notable figures include Hatshepsut, one of Egypt's few female pharaohs.

- Greece: Classical Athens exemplified a highly gendered society where women were largely confined to domestic roles, excluded from political participation, and their legal identities were often subsumed under their male guardians. Conversely, Sparta allowed women more freedom, including property rights and physical education.

- Ancient China: Confucian ideals emphasized patriarchal family structures, with women expected to be obedient and subordinate. However, women in certain periods held influence within the court, such as empresses and consorts.

Medieval and Early Modern Periods - Europe: The medieval period reinforced gender hierarchies rooted in religious doctrine. Women's roles were primarily domestic, but some, like Joan of Arc, played pivotal roles in military and political spheres.

- Islamic Societies: Women's roles varied across periods and regions, with some women participating actively in trade, scholarship, and governance. Notable figures include Khadijah, the Prophet Muhammad's wife, and women scholars like Aisha.

- Africa: Diverse gender roles existed across the continent's many societies. In the Kingdom of Kush or the Yoruba culture, women could hold significant political and spiritual authority.

Colonial and Post-Colonial Eras - Colonial Impact: European colonialism often imposed new gender norms, disrupting indigenous gender systems. For example, colonial administrations frequently suppressed women's traditional roles and marginalized their influence.

- Post-Colonial Movements: The 20th century saw a surge in women's activism across the globe, challenging colonial legacies and advocating for gender equality, such as the Indian independence movement and African liberation struggles.

--- Core Themes in the Global History of Gender

1. Gender and Power Power relations have been central to gender history. Societies have constructed hierarchies where male dominance was often institutionalized through laws, religion, and cultural practices.

- Patriarchy: A system where men hold primary power in political leadership, moral authority, social privilege, and control over property.

- Matriarchy and Matrilineality: While rare, some societies

practiced matriarchal or matrilineal systems, such as the Minangkabau of Indonesia or certain Native American tribes, where lineage and inheritance passed through women. - Gendered Governance: Queens, regents, and powerful women like Elizabeth I or Catherine the Great exemplify how gender could influence political authority. Gender In History Global Perspectives 6

## 2. Gender and Economy

Economic roles have historically been gendered, influencing access to resources and opportunities. - Labor Division: Agricultural societies often assigned women to domestic tasks, while men engaged in warfare, hunting, or large-scale labor. - Women's Work and Entrepreneurship: From medieval European widows managing land to women traders in the Indian Ocean world, women have historically been active economic agents. - Property Rights: Access to land and inheritance significantly affected women's economic independence, with variations across cultures.

## 3. Gender and Religion

Religious doctrines have profoundly shaped gender roles and perceptions. - Christianity: Interpretations of biblical texts have historically reinforced gender hierarchies, but also provided women with spiritual authority in certain contexts (e.g., female saints, nuns). - Islam: The Quran and Hadiths have been interpreted diversely, leading to different gender norms across Muslim societies. - Hinduism: Deities like Durga and Saraswati symbolize female power, yet societal practices often subordinate women. - Indigenous Religions: Many indigenous faiths celebrate female spiritual figures and matriarchal traditions.

## 4. Gender and Identity Construction

The concept of gender as a binary has been challenged by diverse gender identities and expressions across cultures. - Third Genders: Societies such as the hijra in South Asia, Two-Spirit people among Indigenous North Americans, and Bugis society in Indonesia recognize multiple gender roles. - Transgender and Non-Binary Identities: These have existed historically but are often marginalized or misunderstood in different societies. --- Case Studies Highlighting Gender Dynamics

### Women in the Industrial Revolution

- The Industrial Revolution redefined labor markets, with many women entering factories under often poor working conditions. - The rise of wage labor challenged traditional domestic roles but also exposed women to new vulnerabilities. - Women's labor activism grew, leading to early labor rights movements. Feminist Movements and Gender Equality - The 19th and 20th centuries witnessed waves of feminist activism, from suffrage campaigns to broader gender equality movements. - Notable milestones include women gaining voting rights in New Zealand (1893), the United States (1920), and many European countries. - Contemporary debates focus on gender pay gaps, reproductive rights, and representation. Gender in Post-Colonial Contexts - Post-colonial societies often grappled with reconciling indigenous gender practices with colonial-imposed norms. - Women have played crucial roles in independence struggles, such as in Vietnam, Kenya, and Algeria. - Today, gender equality remains a key issue intertwined with national development and cultural identity. --- Challenges and Debates in Gender History

### Universalism vs. Cultural Relativism

Debates persist about applying Western feminist frameworks globally versus respecting local gender norms. - Intersectionality: Recognizing that gender intersects with race, class, ethnicity, and sexuality to produce complex experiences. - Deconstruction of Binary Norms: Challenging the notion of fixed gender roles and identities to include diverse experiences. - Historical Silences:

Marginalized groups, such as transgender individuals, sex workers, or women of lower social classes, are often underrepresented in historical narratives. --- Current Trends and Future Directions - Global and Transnational Histories: Emphasize cross-cultural exchanges and shared gender experiences. - Digital and Visual Histories: Use of multimedia to explore gendered representations and narratives. - Queer and Gender Non-Conforming Histories: Expanding the scope to include non-normative identities and expressions. - Policy and Advocacy: Applying historical insights to contemporary gender policies and social justice initiatives. -- - Conclusion: The Ongoing Journey of Gender in History The exploration of gender in history reveals a complex tapestry of power, identity, and societal transformation. It challenges us to reconsider assumptions about what constitutes authority, normativity, and social roles. As scholarship continues to evolve, integrating diverse voices and perspectives, the history of gender remains a dynamic field that offers critical insights into human societies—past, present, and future. Recognizing the multiplicity of gender experiences across different cultures and eras enriches our understanding of the human condition and underscores the importance of inclusivity and equity in shaping tomorrow's history. gender history, global perspectives, women's history, masculinity studies, gender roles, feminist theory, social history, gender norms, historical gender analysis, intersectionality

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in recent years historians across the world have become increasingly interested in transnational and global approaches to the past however the debates surrounding this new border crossing movement have remained limited in scope as theoretical exchanges on the tasks responsibilities and potentials of global history have been largely confined to national or regional academic communities in this groundbreaking book dominic sachsenmaier sets out to redress this imbalance by offering a series of new perspectives on the global and local flows sociologies of knowledge and hierarchies that are an intrinsic part of historical practice taking the united states germany and china as his main case studies he reflects upon the character of different approaches to global history as well as their social political and cultural contexts he argues that this new global trend in historiography needs to be supported by a corresponding increase in transnational dialogue cooperation and exchange

the book is entitled *History Wars in the Classroom: Global Perspectives* and examines how ten separate countries have experienced debates and disputes over the contested nature of the subject for example the black armband and whitewash factions in australia who adopt opposingly celebratory or denigratory views of australian history especially when evaluating episodes of poor racial relations there are also tensions between traditional patriotic views of history teaching and reformed or new history there are issues of political control of the curriculum and parallel issues of who writes it very topical in england at the moment over two expat big picture historians who work at harvard and columbia niall ferguson and simon schama

this second volume is concerned with issues that have shaped the history of women in particular places and during particular eras it examines women in ancient civilisations including women in china japan and korea women and gender in south asia and latin america medieval women and the history of women in the us until 1865

the american historical association's committee on women historians commissioned some of the pioneering figures in women's history to prepare essays in their respective areas of expertise this volume the first in a series of three collects their efforts women's history in global perspective volume 1 addresses the comparative themes that the editors and contributors see as central to understanding women's history around the world later volumes will be concerned with issues that have shaped the history of women in particular regions the authors of these essays including margaret strobil alice kessler harris and mrinalini sinha provide general overviews of the theory and practice of women's and gender history and analyze family history nationalism and work the collection is rounded out by essays on religion race ethnicity and the different varieties of feminism incorporating essays from top scholars ranging over an abundance of regions dates and methodologies the three volumes of women's history in global perspective constitute an invaluable resource for anyone interested in a comprehensive overview on the latest in feminist scholarship

where should public history sit within the matrix of global international trans national and more local histories since its emergence in the 1970s public history has typically

been read as community oriented and more local in its applications the academic field in particular has developed along national lines and indeed we see in the many monographs edited books and journals that have emerged a distinct tendency to consider public history as understandable mostly in its relation to the nation state and its attendant mythologies the meta narratives that public history pushes against are the building blocks of national histories political military and heroic histories conceiving of a global public history seems to have more radical potential than an international public history which arguably simply collects these national histories what would a global public history look like and how can it disrupt the field if interpreted radically this book will centre the work of scholars and professionals in the field of public history it will offer novel reflections on postgraduate public history learning work experience and application from recent graduates and partnered institutions a mix of theory and practice traditional and creative methodologies it demonstrates the value of integrating work experience practitioner workshops and close collaboration in public history training

gender in history praise for the first edition wiesner hanks accomplishes a near impossible feat a review of what is known about the construction of gender and the character of women's lives in all known cultures over the course of human history theoretically sophisticated and doing justice to the historical and cross cultural record yet assimilable by students choice gender in history brilliantly explores the influence of gender constructs in political social economic and cultural affairs the remarkable cultural geographical and chronological range of wiesner hanks research is matched only by the sophistication nuance and clarity of her analysis this book offers a rare and valuable global perspective on gender roles in human history jerry h bentley university of hawaii over the past two decades considerations of gender have revolutionized the study of history yet most books on the subject remain narrowly focused on a specific time period or particular region of the world gender in history global perspectives second edition continues to redress this inequity by providing a concise overview of the construction of gender in many world cultures over a period stretching from the paleolithic era to modern times thoroughly updated to reflect current developments in the field the new edition features entirely new sections which address primates slavery colonialism masculinity transgender issues and other relevant topics as in the well received first edition material is presented thematically to reveal the connections between gender and structures such as the family economy law religion sexuality and the state wiesner hanks also investigates precisely what it meant to be a man or woman throughout history how these roles were shaped by various institutions and how they in turn were influenced by gender the author presents material within each chapter chronologically to highlight the ways in which gender structures have varied over time the new edition of gender in history global perspectives offers rich insights into all that is currently known about gender roles throughout world history a companion website is available at [wiley.com/go/wiesnerhanks](http://wiley.com/go/wiesnerhanks)

this innovative work offers the first comprehensive transcultural history of historiography the contributors transcend a eurocentric approach not only in terms of the individual



historiographies they assess but also in the methodologies they use for comparative analysis moving beyond the traditional national focus of historiography the book offers a genuinely comparative consideration of the commonalities and differences in writing history distinguishing among distinct cultural identities the contributors consider the ways and means of intellectual transfers and assess the strength of local historiographical traditions as they are challenged from outside the essays explore the question of the utility and the limits of conceptions of modernism that apply western theories of development to non western cultures warning against the dominant tendency in recent historiographies of non western societies to define these predominantly in relation to western thought the authors show the extent to which indigenous traditions have been overlooked the key question is how the triad of industrialization modernization and the historicization process which was decisive in the development of modern academic historiography also is valid beyond europe illustrating just how deeply suffused history writing is with european models the book offers a broad theoretical platform for exploring the value and necessity of a world historiography beyond eurocentrism

epic in scope and meticulously researched contemporary history exploring the globalized world delves into the importance of studying modern events examining diverse cultural perspectives revolutionary ideas pioneering figures and the challenges facing our world today with captivating storytelling and a wealth of insights this book is a must read for anyone seeking a deeper understanding of our complex contemporary world

this volume which gathers contributions presented at the annual conferences of l'association pour le développement de l'histoire culturelle adhc questions the subjects and boundaries of cultural history in france with regard to neighboring approaches such as cultural studies media studies and gender studies to elaborate a social history of representations historians philosophers and sociologists address a large variety of topics and methodological proposals definitions objects and actors memories and cultural transfers this book depicts the major questions that underlie the historical debate at the beginning of the 21st century

the first comprehensive overview of the innovative new discipline of global history until very recently historians have looked at the past with the tools of the nineteenth century but globalization has fundamentally altered our ways of knowing and it is no longer possible to study nations in isolation or to understand world history as emanating from the west this book reveals why the discipline of global history has emerged as the most dynamic and innovative field in history one that takes the connectedness of the world as its point of departure and that poses a fundamental challenge to the premises and methods of history as we know it what is global history provides a comprehensive overview of this exciting new approach to history the book addresses some of the biggest questions the discipline will face in the twenty first century how does global history differ from other interpretations of world history how do we write a global history that is not eurocentric yet does not fall into the trap of creating new centrism how can historians compare different societies and establish compatibility across space

what are the politics of global history this in depth and accessible book also explores the limits of the new paradigm and even its dangers the question of whom global history should be written for and much more written by a leading expert in the field what is global history shows how by understanding the world s past as an integrated whole historians can remap the terrain of their discipline for our globalized present

a comprehensive review of world war ii that offers a global level analysis written for academics and students of history world war ii in global perspective 1931 1953 presents a dynamic and global account of the historical events prior to during and after world war ii the author a noted expert on the topic explores the main theaters of the war and discusses the connections between them he also examines the impact of the war on areas of the world that are often neglected in historical accounts including latin america sub saharan africa and the so called neutral countries this comprehensive text clearly shows how in the struggle against the axis powers the united states replaced britain as the global superpower the author discusses the japanese invasion of manchuria in 1931 and the korean war 1950 1953 and argues that the core years of the war 1939 1945 cannot be understood without considering the turbulent events that framed them the text puts world war ii in context as a series of large regional conflicts that intersected and overlapped finally emerging as a genuine world war with the formal entry of the united states in late 1941 this vital text offers a comprehensive review of world war ii that frames it in a global context gives weight to the economic and political developments of the war provides a robust account of the main military campaigns contains illustrations and maps that themselves highlight little known aspects of the global war

the development of nationalism movement of peoples imperialism industrialization environmental change and the struggle for equality are all key themes in the study of both us history and world history in this revised and updated new edition tyrrell explores the relationship between events and movements in the us and wider world

globalization and consumerism are two of the buzzwords of the early twenty first century in consuming cultures renowned scholars explore the links between modernity and consumption the book fills a gap in contemporary thinking on the subject by approaching it from a truly global point of view it draws on case studies from around the world with africa asia and central america featuring as prominently as western countries a transnational perspective allows the authors to investigate the diversity of consumer cultures and the interaction between them the authors look at the genealogy of the modern consumer and the development of consumer cultures from the porcelain trade and consumption in britain and china in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to post second world war developments in america and japan and the contemporary consumer politics of cosmopolitan citizenship challenging and pioneering consuming cultures problematizes popular accounts of globalization and consumerism decentring the west and concentrating on putting history back into these accounts

for a long time the idea of china as a culture and society which was voluntarily secluding

itself from the rest of the world was dominant but in reality china has always been part of the world just as the world has always sought to penetrate china the relationship between china and the world was in the past sometimes smooth and at other times it was difficult but nevertheless the bond remained alive this collection presents an analysis of china from a global perspective within a broad temporal and spatial spectrum it reveals the early relations established between the roman empire and china the dynamics developed with the countries of the indian ocean southeast asia and japan and the gradual path of europeans and americans towards china the book reviews the development of diplomatic relations the signing of agreements and alliances and the rise and resolution of conflicts it also analyses the forging of economic relations the establishment of commercial exchanges and the creation of companies professional bodies and institutions of collaboration

this study is the first interpretive text for the study of american exceptionalism and the first overall assessment of geographic political economic social and cultural aspects of the american past written from a global perspective russo argues that life in the united states can be better understood if it is examined from either a wider perspective the english speaking world the western hemisphere western civilization or a narrower perspective regional and local variations even when the americans were innovative in their multi ethnic and multi racial society in their egalitarian social beliefs in their political democracy their innovations were soon copied by others therefore russo argues they are no longer distinctly american using nations as the basis for fields of study can both reveal and distort the historical record when one considers different perspectives america s uniqueness recedes in importance american culture was a variant of a wider western culture the american economy was an extension of western capitalism whether agrarian commercial or industrial american society was a western society with racial castes and multi ethnic additions to the population american government functioned like other western governments even with innovative forms republican then democratic the american past is thus seen to be far less distinctive than previous syntheses have assumed

this ambitious volume provides a comparative perspective on the challenges facing the discipline of history as eurocentrism fades as a lens for viewing the world exploring the state of history and the struggle over its ownership throughout the world the authors address the issues of globalization postmodernism and postcolonialism that have been largely ignored by practicing historians despite their importance to cultural studies and their relevance to history engaging in a vigorous critique of eurocentrism the volume at the same time reaffirms the importance of historical ways of knowing

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