Carolien Stolte and Alicia Schrikker (eds)

World History—A Genealogy: Private Conversations with World Historians, 1996–2016. Leiden. Leiden University Press, 2017, 429 pp. ISBN 9789087282769, price: EUR 29.50 (paperback).

This edited volume features twenty-five interviews with established world historians. With a few exceptions, the interviews cover their pre-academic biographies, intellectual development, academic employment trajectory, and assessments of their chosen field of studies. Rendered in free-flowing conversational form, the interviews are not only accessible, insightful, and entertaining to read, they are also revealing of the inner workings (and failings) of the guild of academic historians in general, and historians who work on non-European or world history in particular.

These interviews first appeared in Leiden University's *Itinerario* between 1996 and 2016. Readers of that journal will know that one such interview appears in every issue, and has in the forty years of the journal's operation, become an institution in its own right. The editors chose these twenty-five from the sixty or so interviews to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of Leiden University's Institute for the History of European Expansion (IGEER), which has since been reorganized and renamed "Colonial and Global History, 1200-present".

The list of interviewees reads like a who's who list of paradigm-setting regional and world historians. There are the local IGEER old hands like Leonard Blussé, Piet Emmer, and Robert Ross, who are themselves pioneers in the trans-regional histories of East and Southeast Asia, the Atlantic World, and South Africa, respectively; Geoffrey Parker, Patrick O'Brien, and Jack Goody, who defined and demolished the 'rise of the west' narrative; historians like Allison Blakely, Om Prakash, Ashin Das Gupta, and Adrian Lapian, who wrote path-breaking early modern histories of their own countries and peoples with Dutch East India Company sources; the doyens of nineteenth century world history C.A. Bayly and Jürgen Osterhammel; and the foremost historians of early modern Asian maritime trade Anthony Reid, Michael Pearson, and C.G. Brouwer.

There are also Patricia Seed, Ann L. Stoler, and Frederick Cooper, whose theoretical interventions redefined the study of race and empire; Natalie Zemon Davis and David Armitage, who successively led the cultural and imperial turns in French and British historiographies; Karen Wigen, Mark Elvan and John Wills, who asked big cartographic, spatial, and environmental questions of history through Japan's and China's pasts; and historians like Brij Lal and Felipe Fernandez-Armesto, who simply inspired with their popular histories for the causes of civil liberties and public engagement.

With such a diverse group of scholarly interests and backgrounds, it is no mean feat that the editors managed to make a case for a common “genealogy” that connects the old-boys networks, and shared institutions, conferences, and themes that give the otherwise wide-ranging “private conversations” some semblance of coherence as a book. They have also appended a very useful bibliography of seminal world histories identified by some of the interviewees. Several interviews help point out the current frontiers in the writing of world history. Perhaps more important, the charting of this “genealogy” is testimony that the future of world history writing at Leiden are now in the safe hands of the two junior faculty editors.

It is in the genre of the *Itinerario* “private conversations” that their content can vary according to the interests of the interviewer, and the character of the interviewed. I found Jack Goody’s intellectual sparring to be as enlightening, as Leonard Blussé’s gallivanting Orientalist tales entertaining, as Ann Stoler’s revelations of the gender politics in academia appalling, as David Armitage’s frontier charting predictions worth noting. We have already been enchanted by their prosaic classics. Still, nothing beats hearing it straight from the scholar’s mouth.

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