EDITORS’ INTRODUCTION

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As Adam McKeown notes in his introductory essay to this volume, “the work of integrating world migration into world migration history has still to be done.” Both world history and migration studies are exciting, and growing, fields of scholarly inquiry. Yet most specialist readers will agree that migration studies, which is social scientific in its orientation, and world history—while they developed simultaneously over the past three decades—continue to develop in relative isolation from each other. The nineteen contributors to this volume share with McKeown and with the editors the desire to integrate world migration into world history. But good intentions are rarely enough and a very large unanswered question remains. How exactly does one tackle the monumental task of integrating the two? We are not the first, nor the last, to pose or attempt to answer that question.1 For that reason alone, it seems wise to explain what it is we attempt to do in this thick volume of collected essays.

For much of the twentieth century, histories of migration were written from the perspective of modern nation states and most modern historians developed their expertise within national historiographies. The result has been sizeable scholarly literatures on immigration and smaller ones on emigration, both focused on the years after 1500 when the seas became increasingly connected and crossing the Pacific Ocean became possible and, in fact, a regular practice in the galleon trade between Manila and Acapulco in what might be called a joint venture of the Spanish Empire and Chinese mariners and entrepreneurs. The first cluster of scholarly studies focused on the peopling and making of nations through immigration, especially through a focus on the new nations of North America. The latter cluster more often focused on

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1 Robin Cohen, ed., The Cambridge Survey of World Migration (New York, 1995); Jan Lucassen and Leo Lucassen, Migration, Migration History, History: Old Paradigms and New Perspectives (Bern, 1997); Dirk Hoerder, Cultures in Contact: World Migrations in the Second Millennium (Durham, 2002); Dirk Hoerder and Christiane Harzig with Donna Gabaccia, What is Migration History? (Cambridge, 2009).
European countries and, to a lesser degree, China and Mexico. They have treated emigration as either a form of international influence, or what Italian empire-builders once called “demographic imperialism,” or a relationship of dependency and exploitation between the more developed countries that attracted migrants and the poorer ones that lost their populations. The loss to the poorer societies involved the investment in raising and educating (or, at least, training) before migration children and adolescents who, after migration, would invest their human capital and pay their dues to the society, i.e. taxes, in a different country. After 1970, the study of the slave trade, of international labor migrations, and of early modern empires as ocean-and continent-bridging human movements pushed the study of migration backward in time and beyond the confines of any individual national territory, creating the foundation for our own work. At the same time it began to retrace the different experiences of men and women, as well as different generational trajectories.

It constitutes a very swift and bold step to leap from the temporal scales of nation states (which are usually measured in one, two, or three centuries) to world histories characterized by 500 and 1000 year periodizations. It is an equally long leap from the spatial scales of even the largest of nation states (Russia, for example, at 6.6 million square miles) to the global scale, since the land surface of the Earth is measured at about 57 million square miles. Add to this last figure the oceans and seas that provide the analytical units for our book—196 million square miles—and the contrast between global scales becomes even larger. Little wonder, then, that world historians usually analyze or attempt to compare and to connect large spatial units which, while much larger than modern nations, do not always encompass the entire globe. In their earliest works, many world historians focused on civilizations; more recently they have written of cultural areas or world regions, oceans, hemispheres, and continents. Such early world historians traced structures of states and perhaps routes across continents, whether the “silk route” or pilgrim’s routes to Mecca or Jerusalem-Yerushalayim-Al Quds. Routes in the seas and across oceans left no trace that historians, not seafarers themselves, could discern. Yet, much of the knowledge about the continents’ shape and extent began as “portolan” maps of mariners and, when the Chinese Empire reached across the seas in the 15th century and the European, future, empires, from the 16th century, open-minded and expansive-minded monarchs attached not only geographers to their courts but also