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Resumen
La finalidad de este trabajo es examinar qué rol puede desempeñar la historia comparada en el futuro de la historia antigua. Mi propósito es mostrar por qué la historia comparada es importante, así como explorar las diferentes formas de realizar una historia comparada y las ventajas y desventajas que estas formas implican. Los historiadores antiguos utilizaron la historia comparada para completar la carencia de evidencia antigua, para estudiar las similitudes entre áreas y períodos separados en el tiempo y en el espacio, para "desfamiliarizar lo familiar", o para analizar cómo habían tratado problemas similares los otros historiadores. Este artículo analiza los problemas metodológicos que los diferentes abordajes de la historia comparada implican y provee una revisión de cómo esos abordajes afectaron diversas áreas de la historia antigua. Aunque cada abordaje puede ofrecer su propia y valiosa contribución, existen razones importantes para preferir un abordaje entre otros.

Palabras Clave: Historia Comparada; Historiografía; Historia del Mediterráneo; Metodología Histórica

Abstract
The purpose of this essay is to examine what role comparative history can play in the future of ancient history. My aim is to show why comparative history is important, as well as to explore the different forms of doing comparative history and the advantages and disadvantages that these different forms entail. Ancient historians use comparative history in order to fill in the gaps of the ancient evidence, to explore similarities between areas and periods separated in time and space, to 'defamiliarise the familiar', or to explore how other historians have dealt with similar problems. This article explores the methodological problems that different approaches to comparative history entail and provides a survey of how these approaches have affected diverse fields of ancient history. While each approach can make its own valuable contribution, there are good reasons for preferring certain approaches to others.

Keywords: Comparative History; Historiography; Mediterranean History; Historical Methodology

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The purpose of this essay is to examine what role comparative history can play in the future of ancient history. My aim is not merely to show why comparative history is important; I am equally intent on pointing out the different forms of doing comparative history and the advantages and disadvantages that these different forms entail. If much of my discussion might sound like criticism and complaint of the practice of my fellow ancient historians, there is I hope a good reason for this. On the one hand the practice of comparative history by ancient historians is exhibiting a growing trend of popularity; this is a positive aspect, and makes it important to raise a number of issues and problems with current approaches in order to strengthen the advantages and limit the weaknesses, at least as I see them. On the other hand, comparative history has remained within a rather circumscribed range of issues and aims; my essay tries to point out comparative approaches and comparative issues where future work would be highly desirable (or, in fact, imperative).

Let me start by examining three senses in which our work as ancient historians is inherently comparative. The great Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce famously remarked that all of history is contemporary history.[1] What he meant by that was that the way historians approach the past is always shaped by contemporary concerns and interests; that the questions we ask, the ways we understand our evidence, and the ways we formulate our answers are filtered by what we find important in our own world and how we understand it. The definition of our field as ancient history implies a constant and inescapable comparison with modernity.[2] Beyond this first comparative level, which applies to all forms of history, Greek historians constantly also engage with another form of comparative history which is specific to their field. While Roman or Egyptian histories are the histories of the Roman or Egyptian states, and the societies, economies and cultures created by these states, Greek history is a very peculiar subject. It is a history without a centre and it is a history of communities scattered across space and exhibiting great social, economic, political and cultural diversities. Comparison between different Greek communities has always been an essential aspect of the work of Greek historians: the comparison between Athens and Sparta has traditionally been the most influential.[3] Finally, given the complex ways in which Greek and Roman history and culture were intertwined, the comparison between Greece and Rome has long been an essential aspect of ancient history; Plutarch's *Parallel Lives of Greeks and Romans* shows how old and complex the pedigree of this comparative aspect has been.

Nevertheless, I want for the time being to put aside these comparative aspects which are inherent to ancient history; I shall return to them at the last part of this essay for reasons which I hope will become clear and will appear justified. I want rather to focus on the more traditional understanding of what constitutes comparative history for ancient historians: that is, the comparison of Greek or Roman history with other historical periods or other cultures and societies of world history. I want to focus on a range of questions relating to the value and nature of comparative history understood in this way: in what ways can comparative history be useful to ancient historians? Which kinds of comparisons are legitimate and fruitful and which are misleading? What kind of questions should we ask and what kind of questions should we avoid?

Let us then turn to examine what sorts of approaches constitute comparative history and what value those approaches might have for ancient historians. A lot of what passes as comparative history is only so in a rather qualified sense. I refer to conferences and volumes which are devoted to a phenomenon or process in a long-term perspective, or as it appears in different areas and cultures. Much fascinating work has been done from this point of view: recent publications include excellent volumes which examine various phenomena and processes from a cross-cultural and diachronic point of view: the participation of slaves in warfare,[4] the means of identification created by state agencies,[5] the cultural history of travel,[6] or Mediterranean mega-cities.[7] The problem is rather that this fascinating work is not really comparative: these volumes normally consist of essays from scholars examining the phenomenon or process in their own field or period and according to the dictates and special concerns of their own discipline. Comparison only exists in the eye of the reader as he goes through the various essays; sometimes the gap is filled by ambitious introductions, which bring into light the common themes and differences emerging out of the specialised case studies, but more often than not introductions are merely content to summarise the individual essays.

A personal example might be useful here. My own comparative experience has been formed by participating in the activities of the Nottingham Institute for the Study Of Slavery (ISOS), founded by the late Thomas Wiedemann, which is the only institute devoted to the study of slavery as a global and diachronic phenomenon. Over the last decade ISOS has organised biennial conferences that bring together historians specialising in different periods or areas and ask them to consider a single phenomenon or process in their different areas of

specialism: e.g. the representation of slave bodies,[8] manumission,[9] and slaves and religions.[10] Although actual discussion during ISOS conferences fruitfully crosses disciplines and specialisms, this is rarely reflected in the published volumes, where authors normally follow the dictates of their own discipline and field; introductions rarely do more than summarise the essays, although there are important exceptions.[11] We have been looking for ways to break this spell and make comparison more focused, and the solution we have adopted for our latest conference on *Sex and Slavery* is to have scholars specialising on modern slaveries responding to papers on ancient slavery and vice versa. It is a solution that could prove very stimulating over a range of similar conferences and projects.

Let us now move to ‘proper’ comparative history, that is works that compare an aspect or process in antiquity with the equivalent phenomenon or process in another period or culture. In a significant number of cases the motivation behind such comparisons lies in a peculiar problem that ancient historians face. Ancient documentary evidence is fairly limited or completely absent for most areas and most periods of ancient history. It is very rare for ancient historians to have at their disposal series of data, and most of the times they can solely depend on anecdotal evidence which often comes only from literary sources. Interpreting anecdotal evidence necessitates constructing models, hypotheses and series of connected assumptions that can allow us to make sense of the disparate data. This is obviously more important in certain areas of ancient history than in others, but there are certain fields of ancient history where comparative evidence is an essential aspect of historical work: ancient demography is perhaps the quintessential example in this respect.[12] Most of the times this necessity generates useful work, but my question here is whether comparative history can help when ancient historians disagree over the interpretation of fragmentary and anecdotal evidence.

I want to use as an example here a long-standing debate between William Harris and Walter Scheidel on the mechanics of reproduction of the slave population of the Roman Empire. Scheidel has argued that the replenishment of 75-80% of Roman slaves was the result of slave reproduction, and used the example of the antebellum American South in order to show that it was possible for a slave population to reproduce naturally.[13] Harris has argued that slave trade and the enslavement of foundlings were more significant means of replenishing the slave population, and has used comparative evidence from early modern Italy in order to show the ubiquity of foundlings in many societies.[14] Both historians have used comparative history in

order to support their interpretation of very problematic ancient evidence: can comparative history accordingly allow us to decide the case?[15] I would personally rather side with Scheidel on this debate, and I would argue that slave reproduction in the ancient world played a much more significant role than we tend to think, with all the social and cultural consequences of a significant population of Creole slaves. But the reason I believe this is not comparative history, but my own analysis of the onomastic evidence for Athenian slavery, which points, among other things, to reproduction and the existence of slave families as very important factors.[16] Comparative history can allow us to test the 'limits of the possible', the historical possibility and plausibility of our hypotheses and models; but I would argue that in most cases it would be a mistake to use comparative history as a means of settling debates which can be only be decided on the basis of ancient evidence.

More ambitious than filling in the gaps or making sense of ambiguous evidence is a different mode of doing comparative history. This involves the focused comparison of an ancient phenomenon or process with the equivalent phenomenon or process in one or more other periods or cultures. This mode can serve a number of related purposes according to its proponents. One such purpose is to allow us to understand a phenomenon better by distinguishing the culturally- or context-specific aspects, which will naturally differ between our comparative examples, and the common features which can then be taken as the essential nucleus of the phenomenon, or the real explanation of the process. A second purpose takes the opposite form: by examining how the same phenomenon or process is articulated in different forms among different societies or periods, it helps to 'defamiliarise the familiar' and thus to throw new light on aspects that were taken for granted, or to question unexamined assumptions. A particularly interesting example is the project spearheaded by Walter Scheidel on the comparative history of the Roman and Chinese Empires.[17] Around the beginning of the first millennium CE in two separate areas of the globe a mosaic of different states, economies and cultures became gradually unified politically, economically, culturally and ideologically through their incorporation within imperial structures that far exceeded in size, power and wealth anything that had taken place in earlier human history. Comparing the various aspects of the structure and history of the Chinese and Roman empires can allow us to explore common aspects in the processes of imperial unification; comparison can also allow us to follow the divergent futures of these empires, and explain why a series of dynasties maintained imperial unification through the centuries in the case of China, while this proved impossible in the case of the Mediterranean and Europe; finally, comparison can also throw

new light on aspects of the Roman or Chinese imperial formations that we tend to take for granted.

These are very ambitious propositions, and it is essential to examine a number of caveats and problems that relate to such approaches to comparative history. As we all learned in school, you can only compare apples with apples and oranges with oranges, but not apples with oranges. So it becomes important to make sure that one compares what is comparable: but how does one know what is comparable and what is not before one undertakes the comparative exercise? This is why it is important to broaden as much as possible the pool of comparanda out of which ancient historians construct their comparisons. Given the Eurocentric foundations of our discipline, it is not surprising that for a very long time ancient historians have limited their comparative examples to the history of Europe: it is not accidental that the comparative discussion of ancient economic history has until recently almost exclusively focused on a comparison between antiquity and medieval, early modern and modern Europe.[18] It is therefore particularly welcome that in recent years ancient historians are willing to expand decisively the pool of comparanda beyond European history.[19] I have already mentioned Scheidel's project on China, and there are various other important projects on China I shall have the chance to mention later; equally important is the fact that medieval and modern India has finally entered the comparative imagination of ancient historians.[20]

But enlarging the pool of comparanda can have significant unintended consequences. The history of what is traditionally called 'Greek colonisation' has been long dominated by implicit and explicit assumptions on the basis of the colonial history of modern European empires in the last two centuries. A recent volume[21] has attempted to show the problems created by taking comparative examples and assumptions from this limited historical pool and has attempted to broaden the pool by making comparisons between Greek 'colonisation' and earlier forms of European colonisation before the nineteenth century.[22] But once we broaden the pool of comparanda, it becomes questionable whether the Greek phenomena that were classified as colonisation on the basis of modern European comparisons can still be classified as such; as Nicholas Purcell has suggested in his contribution to the same volume, colonisation is simply a misleading historical framework, and we need a very different comparative approach to understand these phenomena.[23]

This leads to a wider problem with comparative history conceived as a study of the comparable. It is rather interesting to note the deep asymmetry between the recent popularity of comparative history among Roman historians, and the lack of any similar trend among Greek historians. One might wish to argue that this reflects the greater conservatism of Greek historians, or the wider ambitions or talents of Roman historians, but, being a Greek historian, I am unsurprisingly reluctant to accept this explanation; I think that an easier explanation is the dominance of the obvious in the way ancient historians think about comparative history. In the case of Roman history there are readily obvious phenomena that lend themselves to comparative analysis: the history of empires is the obvious example, and all the phenomena associated with empires, like dynastic courts,[24] royal rituals[25] and imperial ideologies.[26] Even more, the study of empires has a long historical pedigree on which comparative studies can immediately tap.[27] In the case of Greek history there are few obvious comparisons to make, and even where there might be some mileage, as with city-state cultures for example, there does not exist a long tradition of historical research on which Greek historians can immediately tap. One need only compare the few comparative studies on city-state systems and their limited impact[28] with the spate of works on imperial systems.

This dominance of the obvious indicates in my view the fact that ancient historians are not really willing to look deeply into comparative history. And that tendency further exacerbates a problem which is inherent in comparative history conceived as the study of the similar. Identifying similar phenomena in order to compare them necessitates abstracting them from the wider system to which they belong and from the temporal and spatial framework within which they took place. This is a methodological fallacy which can lead, and has led, to very serious misinterpretations.[29] The quintessential example here is Finley's famous comparison between the ancient consumer city and the medieval and early modern producer city.[30] The comparison rested on conceiving the city as an independent economic variable and then examining how ancient and modern cities supposedly affected their economies in different ways. But this meant, among other things, abstracting cities from the world-systems of which they were parts and examining them outside the spatial and temporal context in which they existed.[31] The result has been a tremendous conceptual failure from which ancient economic history has not yet fully recovered. Interestingly, precisely when Finley was introducing the distinction between consumer and producer cities in ancient economic history during the 70's, medieval and modern economic historians were abandoning the concept of the city as an independent economic variable and were moving towards different forms of economic

explanation.[32] This raises the issue of communication across different disciplines and their trends, to which I will shortly return.

For the time being, though, my point is that comparative history as a comparison of what is similar is methodologically valid only when it compares systems as a whole, rather than particular phenomena or processes. It is not that comparison of particular phenomena or processes can never yield valuable results; it is rather that more often than not such comparisons either state the obvious or end up committing significant errors. One of the most fruitful examples of the total comparison consists of G. E. R. Lloyd's numerous studies on the comparative history of Greek and Chinese science.[33] Lloyd has argued that comparison between Greek and Chinese sciences cannot rest on comparing theories, scientific fields or particular factors: it involves comparing what he terms the manifold, the full range of intellectual, social and institutional aspects of a scientific culture, as well as the historical interaction that binds them together as a whole.[34] Perhaps the most important result of Lloyd's comparative studies is not then the comparison itself, but rather its urge to delineate the manifold of Greek or Chinese science and the stimulus to further research that this can create.

To put it boldly: can comparative history serve any purposes other than heuristic? This is important because comparison is never innocent: it is always undertaken with a purpose in mind, and the purpose often predetermines the result. This is further exacerbated by another factor. Ideally, comparative historians should be people who are trained in more than one discipline or field, and who are thus familiar with the peculiar aspects of each discipline or field. In the sublunary world we all inhabit, though, it is normally the case that comparative history is undertaken by scholars who belong to one discipline taking an interest in another discipline in which they are really outsiders. As a result, comparative history is often skewed by the tendency to explore either how the comparative example resembles the case from ancient history, or why and how the comparative example failed to develop as our familiar case from ancient history did. A different form of the same problem is the tendency of many works in comparative history to merely restate the well-known differences between the compared examples. One such recent example is an otherwise careful study by Yiqun Zhou on the forms of sociability between and across gender divisions in ancient Greece and China.[35] Zhou argues that Greek sociability was based on the egalitarian and agonistic framework of the polis, which made friendship more important than kinship, while in China hierarchy and the patrilineal family made kinship more important relatively. One might have

various misgivings about Zhou's drawing of a Chinese/Greek polarity, but the real question is what the comparative examination has contributed that was not known beforehand. The problem here is that the Greek case is examined on the basis of certain traditional approaches that tend to focus on certain aspects and prioritise certain issues, while the Chinese is examined through different traditional approaches that prioritise different aspects and issues; it is rather unsurprising that the comparison ends up reproducing an already well-known polarity.

This leads me to another major problem I have already touched upon briefly. Comparative history involves engaging with two or more different historical fields or disciplines, with their different agendas, trends and methodologies. I have already commented on the dominance of the obvious as regards the comparative explorations of ancient historians; this means that comparative studies undertaken by ancient historians are normally dominated by the debates and questions within the field of ancient history. This creates a double danger. The first one is that ancient historians are geared to discover only what they are already looking for, since their comparative explorations are motivated by the debates within ancient history. In other words, ancient historians can miss what is really novel or interesting in the work of other historians, because they are not interested in the debates of other historians, but only to what they think is relevant to the field of ancient history. The second danger is that the ignorance of the particular debates and trends in the field of comparative study will lead ancient historians to significant misunderstandings or misinterpretations of other historians.

Let me illustrate my point with an example from the history of ancient slavery. A major debate which has long dominated the field is the so-called 'humanitarian' debate. This debate focuses on the ways that slaves were treated by their masters: were slaves progressively treated in a more humane manner? Did Stoicism, Christianity or state laws ameliorate slave treatment? Were there any abolitionist tendencies in antiquity? The debate was traditionally polarised between German scholarship dominated by the Mainz school, which represented the 'humanitarian' approach, and Anglo-Saxon scholarship dominated by Finley's approach, which has stressed the unlimited power of masters and the lack of any progressive better treatment of the slaves.[36] As one can see, the whole debate is based on a top-down conception of slavery as a relationship which was unilaterally defined by the masters, and the debate only concerns whether the masters used that power in a more humane manner over the passage of time. It is accordingly not surprising that ancient historians, whenever they turn their attention

outside their field, are happy to cite social science works which fit in with their preconceived image of slavery, such as the comparative exploration of Orlando Patterson, who defines slavery as a form of social death inflicted by masters on slaves.[37]

Ancient historians commonly use the history of slavery in the American South as a comparative example, and Eugene Genovese's classic *Roll Jordan, Roll* is perhaps the most commonly cited work by ancient historians.[38] Genovese's book was at the forefront of a historiographical revolution that has completely transformed how New World historians understand slavery. Instead of the top-down approach to slavery as a relationship unilaterally defined by masters, modern historians have turned to an understanding of slavery as a negotiation of power in which both masters and slaves exercised agency in defining the relationship, although in clearly asymmetrical ways.[39] The rich documentary sources that exist for New World slaveries have allowed historians to move away from the top-down view presented by literary texts written by the slave-owning elite, as is largely the case in antiquity. Because ancient historians have been comfortably content with the terms of the 'humanitarian' debate within their own field, they have failed to notice the great changes in the understanding of slavery in other historical fields, and have failed to engage with or benefit from these novel conceptions. I hope that the message is quite clear: unless we pay attention to the different debates and conceptions of other fields and disciplines, comparative history will make only a limited contribution, if any.

This leads to my last point, concerning an alternative way of doing comparative history: as methodological and historiographical introspection. The modern historical discipline was largely defined during the nineteenth century; it took the individual state as its unit of analysis, and conceived states as bounded entities with their own distinct society, economy and culture.[40] As long as political history was the major historical field, the linear narrative of events was the dominant form of historical exposition; when cultural, economic and social history came to the fore from the 1950s onwards, synchronic and structural analysis became as common as diachronic narrative.[41] At the same time, the search for the motor of historical change became a key quest of both historiography and the emerging social sciences. No longer seen as the result of unilateral actions of kings and rulers or the will of God, various theories emerged to account for historical change. What they all had in common was an interpretation of recent European history as a transition from traditional societies ruled by land aristocracies into modern commercial societies based on commerce, industry and rational

bureaucracies. Trade, economic growth and intellectual enlightenment had undermined the power of aristocracies and unleashed the powers of unlimited future development. The dominance of this Eurocentric perspective on historical change meant that the rest of the world and the rest of history could either show similar patterns of change, or should be reduced to a static and stagnant history.

In the last forty years the historical discipline has experienced a historiographical revolution which has fundamentally challenged this nineteenth-century framework.[42] This revolution had a variety of distinct but interrelated sources. Instead of the linear narrative based on the state and its elites, historians have discovered the multiple durations of time and have realised the co-existence of multiple narratives based on gender, ethnicity and class.[43] Initially the contradiction was elided due to a division of labour: narrative could remain linear because it was based on events and the history of the state; economic, social and cultural history was pursued through synchronic analysis and their implications did not affect directly the writing of historical narrative. In the last few decades historians have been trying to overcome this division of labour by exploring ways of constructing historical narratives that can incorporate within a single but complex account the pluralities of historical time, as well as the multiple viewpoints based on gender, class and ethnicity.[44]

The second major source was the realisation that states, societies and cultures are not bounded entities, but are parts of wider systems of interaction with a variety of levels and processes which usually cut across political or cultural boundaries.[45] Instead of conceiving the West and the rest of the world as separate entities, where historical change only occurs in the West which finally dominated the rest of the world, modern historians have come to conceive the world as a series of interactive transformations in which both the West and the rest of the world participated equally, even if in different ways.[46] This new historical interpretation means that the old Eurocentric conception of historical change has to be abandoned in favour of more complex and more global approaches.[47] Global history,[48] *histoire croisée*[49] and connected history[50] have emerged as new approaches through which historians have tried to reconceptualise history since the demise of the nineteenth-century Eurocentric assumptions.

Unfortunately, ancient history has remained largely unaffected by this historiographical revolution which has transformed the rest of the historical discipline. The best way to see this is through our current textbooks. These are still based on a single linear narrative based on political history and relegate social, economic and cultural history to separate synchronic

analysis. I have explored elsewhere how modernist historians like Meyer, Beloch and Rostovtzeff, who were the first to integrate economic, social and cultural history into the traditional narrative of political history, employed the Eurocentric approach to historical change in order to create a dynamic account of ancient history. As Finley and others showed in the 60's and 70's the modernists' assumptions were mistaken; but Finley and his followers took us to the other extreme of Eurocentric approaches, that of the negation of historical change and the writing of a static history of 'the ancient economy' or ancient slavery, which lasted unchanged for over a millennium of history.[51]

I would accordingly posit that the future of ancient history would have to engage with three essential desiderata: how to write historical narratives that incorporate both the various dimensions of time and the multiple but co-existing perspectives based on space, gender, class and ethnicity; how to write accounts that move beyond the national narrative of bounded entities in order to study systems and processes of interaction that cut across states and cultures; and finally, how to account for historical change in a non-linear and non-Eurocentric manner. Accomplishing this task will not take place by borrowing ready-made solutions from elsewhere, as ancient historians often hope to do by turning to the social sciences. It rather necessitates an anthropological introspection within the field of historiography: if the past is a foreign country because they do things differently there, comparative history also involves exploring how other historians have dealt with similar problems in order to learn, re-examine assumptions, but construct *our* answers. This final understanding of comparative history can be accomplished in two different ways. One is historiography: the study of how previous historians, and in particular Greek and Roman historians, have dealt with similar problems not as mere intellectual history but as an exploration of concepts and methods which might still be of value.[52] The other is the study of how our historian colleagues working on other periods or areas are currently trying to deal with similar problems to those underlined above.

It is in this context that I finally come to discuss what is undoubtedly the most ambitious comparative exercise in the field of ancient history in the last few decades: Horden and Purcell's *Corrupting Sea*.[53] Their approach provides an excellent foundation for dealing with many of the issues underlined above. Their stress on the inherent mutability of micro-ecologies, connectivity, mobility and dispersed hinterlands undermines the traditional approach to societies and economies as bounded entities and offers a framework for examining wider systems of interaction. Their focus on intensification and abatement as

constantly ongoing processes challenges traditional approaches based on a linear conception of time and historical change. Furthermore, their long-term perspective on Mediterranean history, breaking down distinctions between ancient, medieval and early modern history provides an excellent opportunity for ancient historians to rethink the limits of their discipline, and can encourage more systematic comparative approaches.

Nevertheless, there are two fundamental ways in which comparative history should challenge and hopefully enhance the approach of the *Corrupting Sea*. The first concerns historical change: while intensification and abatement are useful additions to our palette of temporal concepts and have much to contribute, Horden and Purcell have been reluctant to consider the processes through which intensification and abatement are transformed into change.[54] They give the impression that radical historical change is something that comes from outside the Mediterranean in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[55] Even if this were the case, we still need a way to understand change, and the comparative study of how other historians have been trying to deal with this problem has much to contribute.

Furthermore, their conception of Mediterranean history needs to be subjected to comparative scrutiny. It seems to me that there is a tension between two different aspects of Horden and Purcell's approach.[56] As I suggested above, much of their approach reflects wider changes in the ways that historians have been thinking about their unit of analysis, their methodologies and their understanding of historical change.[57] Their version of ecologically-based history is paralleled by works on other regions, or on global history.[58] This makes one wonder what is specifically Mediterranean about their approach and what is part of a historical approach of universal application. Here, comparative history has much to contribute. It is interesting to reflect back, from the perspective of Mediterranean history, on the reactions of historians of the Indian Ocean to the *Corrupting Sea*. Not only does the pervasiveness of risk, mobility and connectivity appear as standard features of the Indian Ocean as well, but one gets the impression that from the perspective of the Indian Ocean the Mediterranean appears less dynamic and flexible. Horden and Purcell have rightly stressed that the architectural façades that certain Mediterranean cultures created should not make us think of cities as independent actors; we should rather examine cities as contingent agglomerations of processes that reach both below and beyond them.[59] This seems to be the case in an even stronger sense in the Indian Ocean, where environmental conditions made permanent urban structures from hard materials a rare phenomenon, and where human mobility and reconfigured landscapes seem to

have been even more dynamic.[60] Comparative Mediterranean history can thus learn a lot from comparison with other regions and times.

To conclude: comparative history is not one thing, but a plurality of approaches and perspectives. I have tried to show that different perspectives have their own advantages and disadvantages; while each approach can make its own valuable contribution, there are good reasons for preferring certain approaches to others. Hopefully, the recent trend of enhanced comparative research undertaken by ancient historians is an indication of the bright future that awaits us around the corner; but we need to take seriously the pitfalls involved in comparative research, as well as becoming more ambitious about what we are trying to achieve through comparative study.

Notas

1 Croce (1921: 11-26).

2 See Vlassopoulos (2010a).

3 Powell (2001).

4 Brown and Morgan (2006).

5 Moatti and Kaiser (2007).

6 Elsner and Rubiés (1999).

7 Nicolet (2000).

8 Wiedemann and Gardner (2002).

9 Kleijwegt (2006a).

10 Geary and Hodkinson (2012).

11 See e.g. the difference between the limited aims of Geary and Vlassopoulos (2009) and the ambitious comparative examination of Kleijwegt (2006b).

12 Scheidel (2001).

13 Scheidel (1997).

14 Harris (1999).

15 McKeown (2007: 124-40).

16 See Vlassopoulos (2010b).

17 Scheidel (2009).

18 See Vlassopoulos (2007: 123-41).

19 See Detienne (2000), (2005).

20 Bang (2008).

21 Hurst and Owen (2005).

22 E.g. Snodgrass (2005).

23 Purcell (2005).

24 Spawforth (2007); Duindam et al. (2011).

25 Cannadine and Price (1987).

26 Mutschler and Mittag (2008).

27 Alcock et al. (2001); Arnason and Raaflaub (2010); Bang and Bayly (2011); Burbank and Copper (2010); Morris and Scheidel (2009).

28 Molho et al. (1991); Nicholls and Charlton (1997); Hansen (2000), (2002).

29 Werner and Zimmermann (2006).

30 Finley (1973: 123-49).

31 For a general criticism see Horden and Purcell (2000: 96-101).

32 Vlassopoulos (2007: 126).

33 Lloyd (1996), (2006), (2009).

34 Lloyd and Sivin (2002: 3).

35 Zhou (2010).

36 See McKeown (2007: 30-51).

37 Patterson (1982: 13); Bradley (1994: 14-6).

38 Genovese (1974).

39 See Vlassopoulos (2011a).

40 Iggers (1968).

41 Stone (1979).

42 I have explored the implications of this revolution for Greek history in Vlassopoulos (2007).

43 Berkhofer (1995).

44 See e.g. Bender (1986), (2002).

45 Hopkins (2002).

46 See e.g. Washbrook (1988); Bayly (2004).

47 See Christian (2004).

48 Manning (2003).

49 Werner and Zimmermann (2006).

50 Subrahmanyam (1997).

51 Vlassopoulos (2007: 44-67).

52 I have explored the value of Aristotelian and other Greek concepts as tools for modern historical research in Vlassopoulos (2007: 85-96, 226-40); (2011a); (2011b).

53 Horden and Purcell (2000); see also Harris (2005a).

54 Harris (2005b: 34-8).

55 E.g. Horden and Purcell (2000: 359-62).

56 See their comments in Horden and Purcell (2006).

57 Abulafia (2005); Gipouloux (2011).

58 Richards (2003); Radkau (2008).

59 Horden and Purcell (2000: 92-101).

60 Wink 2004; Washbrook 2007.

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