

Globalizing Mass Culture

Historical Forms of Cultural Globalization

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TABLE 14.1 Historical Forms of Cultural Globalization

| <i>Premodern</i> Pre-1500 | <i>Early modern</i> Approx. 1500–1850 | <i>Modern</i> Approx. 1850–1945 | <i>Contemporary</i> 1945 on |
|---|--|--|---|
| EXTENSIVITY | | | |
| All world religions and empires remain regional though stretching across many societies and cultures | Christianity expands to Americas on the back of demographic and military victory | Western global empires develop, creating thin inter-elite cultural connections. This provides part of the infrastructure for the diffusion of transnational secular ideologies and discourses to Asia, Africa, Latin America | Infrastructures of telecommunications, linguistic interaction and transport more extensive than ever before |
| Hinduism restricted to Indian subcontinent; Buddhism restricted to South and East Asia; Christianity restricted | Capacity of Western culture to penetrate and influence outside of the New World very limited | | Use of English as a global language unparalleled |

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TABLE 14.1 (continued)

| <i>Premodern</i> Pre-1500 | <i>Early modern</i> Approx. 1500–1850 | <i>Modern</i> Approx. 1850–1945 | <i>Contemporary</i> 1945 on |
|--|--|---|---|
| EXTENSIVITY (continued) | | | |
| to Europe and Near East; Islam most global in the early phase of world religions, from South Asia to North and East Africa | | Western global empires develop early infra-structures of trans-continental and interregional telegraphic communications | Scale of corporate ownership, operations and reach of global markets in cultural products very extensive though highly uneven |
| Most successful enduring multicultural empires also regional: Roman Empire, Han China | | Western global empires embed European languages as key global lingua francas | Global diffusion of new means of cultural reception and transmission (TV, radio, etc.) |
| Nomadic Mongol empires bigger but culturally weak | | Emergence of early international media corporations—news agencies | Movement of popular cultural artefacts largely within West but also from North to the South |
| | | Increasingly cultural institutions and flows organized at the level of emerging nation-states in West | A small but growing trend sees return of popular and literary cultural forms from South to North |

DENSITY

Low

Low

Increasing at a global level compared to pre-modern era, but in relative terms becoming less important in West given rise of national cultures, institutions, circuits of communication and transport

Sheer volume of regularized movement and communications unparalleled within states and across regions

Digitization of all media

TABLE 14.1 (continued)

| <i>Premodern</i> <i>Pre-1500</i> | <i>Early modern</i> <i>Approx. 1500–1850</i> | <i>Modern</i> <i>Approx. 1850–1945</i> | <i>Contemporary</i> <i>1945 on</i> |
|--|---|---|--|
| VELOCITY | | | |
| Negligible | Low | Increasing as modes of transport become faster and more reliable and early telecommunications makes simple text/voice instantaneous communication possible | Instantaneous communication possibilities, transport speeds incomparably faster and cheaper than ever before |
| IMPACT PROPENSITY | | | |
| Initial arrival of world religions and empires transforms cultural life of converts, often bringing literacy along with profound shifts in worldviews | Initial European expansion more powerful in extending military/environmental reach of Europe than cultural reach | Colonial communication infrastructures increase surveillance of colonies by metropolis | Transformation of possibilities and costs of global cultural, economic and political interaction; aids establishment, operation of MNCs, INGOs, etc. |
| Long-distance cultural flows and relationships within Eurasia provide key instruments of imperial cohesion, and possibility of diffuse peace and shared cross-community identities | Christianity established in Americas but only tiny outposts in Africa and Asia. Minimal impact on entrenched civilizations—Islamic, Indian, Chinese, etc. | Nationalism achieves powerful if variable cultural influence on elite and mass audiences in Western nations | Increasing foreign component to national systems of ownership and control of media corporations, cultural product markets |
| Diffusion of new ideas, technologies across major civilizations within Eurasia and parts of Africa has important cumulative effects, e.g. diffusion of printing | Impact of encountering other cultures probably greater on European culture initially than vice versa | Nationalism has some impact on colonial elite cultures, less on popular cultures | Increasing difficulties presented for totalitarian/authoritarian cultural projects and control of information |
| | | Other transnational ideologies and discourses predominantly impact at elite level. Marxism, through intellectuals and mass political movements, has major impact in Soviet Union, China, etc. Spread of science transforms context and status of many beliefs and practices outside of West | Increasing difficulties presented for state-led nationalist cultural projects in the culture industries |
| | | | Localized but intense economic and cultural consequences from mass tourism |

TABLE 14.1 (continued)

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|---|---|--|--|
| IMPACT PROPENSITY (continued) | | | |
| | | Rise of nations and nation-states has important impacts on organization and spatial extent of systems of communications, transport, education, cultural institutions of all sorts (national press, national media, etc.) | Transformation in the cultural context of national identity formation |
| INFRASTRUCTURES | | | |
| Reliable non-oceanic shipping | Reliable oceanic shipping | Railways | Telecommunications, cable, satellite, computing, Internet |
| Writing | Mechanized printing | Telegraphy | Radio, television |
| Imperial frameworks for safe and regular land/sea passage over long distances | Imperial frameworks for safe and regular land/sea passage over long distances | Steam-powered/mechanized shipping | Jet airliners |
| | | Imperial systems of control | |
| INSTITUTIONALIZATION | | | |
| No formal institutions exist for regulating or mediating intercivilizational encounters | No formal institutions exist for regulating or mediating intercivilizational encounters | Early international public unions begin to regulate cultural interactions—introducing standard time, early international copyright law, regulation of international telegraphy and postal services | International cultural interactions and infrastructures increasingly regulated—in part by corporate and trade law. Political organizations—like UNESCO—have weak regulatory capacity |

TABLE 14.1 (continued)

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|--|--|---|--|
| STRATIFICATION | | | |
| <p>Cultural flows dominated by imperial and theocratic bureaucracies and ruling classes</p> <p>Scientific, literary, philosophical cultures and ideas have an elite and narrow audience, i.e. Hellenization of Near East after Alexander; spread of Islamic mathematics to medieval Europe</p> | <p>World religions enjoy mass audience—though often reliant on prior military conquest</p> | <p>Fundamental inequalities between metropolises and colonies in terms of control over cultural institutions, flows and messages grounded in fundamental military, political inequalities and domination</p> <p>Elite audience for transnational discourses and ideologies</p> <p>Predominantly elite audience in colonies for imperial communications</p> <p>Mass audience for nationalism—though invariably elite dominated</p> | <p>Mass audience for popular culture, highly uneven within societies especially by generation</p> <p>Mass consumption of tourism, mainly restricted to wealthy societies and wealthy social classes</p> <p>Maintenance of elite intellectual, cultural power networks</p> <p>Dominance of Western cultural flows but increasing diversity of flows</p> |

Thinking Globally About History and Culture

In the Center of the Map: Nations See Themselves as the Hub of History

✻ MARSHALL G. S. HODGSON ✻

In the sixteenth century the Italian missionary, Matteo Ricci, brought to China a European map of the world showing the new discoveries in America. The Chinese were glad to learn about America, but one point in the map offended them. Since it split the earth's surface down the Pacific, China appeared off at the right-hand edge; whereas the Chinese thought of themselves as literally the "Middle Kingdom," which should be in the center of the map. Ricci pacified them by drawing another map, splitting the Atlantic instead, so that China appeared more central; and maps are still commonly drawn that way in that part of the world. Europeans of course have clung to the first type of map, showing Europe in the upper center; while the commonest maps in North America show the U.S.A. in that post of honor, even at the cost of splitting a continent in two. The temptation not only to put one's own land in the center of the map, but one's own people in the center of history, seems to be universal. The most famous case of this is indeed that of the "Middle Kingdom." Many Chinese used to suppose that the Temple of Heaven at the Emperor's capital, Peking, marked the exact center

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