

Ravi Arvind Palat

3. TERENCE HOPKINS AND THE DECOLONIZATION OF WORLD-HISTORICAL STUDIES

Perhaps the absence of fundamental change calls for no special explanation and only the European miracle does.

— Ernest Gellner (cited in
Jones, 1981: 225)

In one of the first conversations I had with Hopkins on my doctoral research project on the historical sociology of late medieval and early modern India, he said something to the effect “Everyone talks about the Americas’ silver and gold going in large amounts to India, but where did it go?” Though I did not realize it then, this question was to decisively shape my research, and my Ph.D. dissertation was, in an important sense, an extended answer to Hopkins’s question.

Hopkins’s question was to have a determinative impact on my work because an answer to it offered a way out of the static, anti-historical structure imposed on the historical experiences of the extra-European world by dominant models of world-historical studies. Premised on what Meaghan Morris (1990: 10) has called the “positive unoriginality” of the peoples outside the privileged arena of northwestern Europe,

historical change was seen as a unique attribute of Europeans in these studies and the very terms of possible debate seemed stacked against the historical experiences of once-colonized peoples. Centrally concerned with the “rise of the West,” non-European peoples were fossilized as the “peoples without history” and were accorded historical specificity only once they became subject to the processes of incorporation, or more restrictively, to colonization.

Since only the European trajectory of socio-historical transformation was acknowledged, and the modern social sciences represented theoretical encapsulations of these processes, even when Indian historians exposed the untenability and ahistoricity of conceptualizations such as “Oriental despotism” and the “Asiatic mode of production” (Thorner 1980, Gunawardhana 1976, Habib 1983, Chandra 1981), discussions on the patterns of long-term, large-scale social change experienced by the peoples of the subcontinent continued to be framed by discussions of the European experience. Thus, Irfan Habib, the doyen of Indian historians examined the “potentialities of capitalistic development in Mughal India” (Habib 1969) while others debated whether there was an “Indian feudalism” (Sharma 1965, 1974, 1985; cf. Mukhia 1981, 1985; Habib 1985). Though these studies forcefully refuted inherited conceptions of Indian history as a history of eternal recurrence, as an endless game of musical chairs played by despotic monarchs with little effect on the lives of the desolate masses, precisely because they continued to acknowledge the European experience of social change as the normative historical pattern, they took the form of arrays of purported attributes—private property in land, forms of labor exploitation, degree of state power—between India and a composite West European model. The resulting distribution of values of properties was then proffered as an explanation for the arrested growth of Indian societies. These analytical procedures eliminated the narrative, logical structures of historical explanation and as Hopkins insightfully observed almost without thinking about it, [the analyst] inverts the subject and the predicate: one moves from “this exhibiting this condition” to “this condition having this as an instance” (1978: 211-12). Thereby, the condition takes on a categorical

form and becomes the focus of attention.

Hence, the historical experience of the peoples of the South Asian subcontinent continued to be seen as arrested, distorted, and travestied models failing to evolve autonomously towards the universal goal of capitalist development due to a variety of structural impediments. By generalizing a model of long-term, large-scale social change derived from the particular experience of northwestern Europe, these studies were unable either to perceive the possibility of alternate trajectories of historical transformation, or to recover the specific socio-historical dynamics of different historical social systems before these were incorporated within the capitalist world-economy. Or, as Francesca Bray persuasively puts it:

if the dynamics of change differ from those we have identified as operating in European history, then it is not surprising that our traditional models fail adequately to interpret change in non-European societies, or even acknowledge its existence. (1983: 4)

At the same time, the notion that change occurs within nationally-bounded social structures, as it purportedly did in Europe, was so deeply inscribed within reigning conceptions of world-historical studies that explorations of Indian history were framed within regime-centric, dynastic, and administrative units. Not only did this procedure lead to scholars generalizing inappropriately their findings on a subcontinental scale, but it also reduced relationships falling outside these boundaries to the status of epiphenomena, “inessential to the formation and reproduction, thus to the definition of the relationships concerned” (Perlin, 1985: 98). The possibility that exchange relations aggregated through time could both reinforce and transform relations of domination and subordination within each of these supposedly autonomous units of analysis was therefore eliminated *a priori*. Consequently, while historians of agrarian systems elaborated tax schedules and patterns of land holdings and tenancies with increasing sophistication, they remained almost oblivious to the increased flows of monetary media to a region poorly-endowed with gold and silver deposits and seldom inquired into the supply of coinable metals on

which the revenue claims were predicated. Similarly, historians of long-distance trade showed a marked reluctance to follow Ashin Das Gupta's advice to go "nosing around the indigo fields of Agra because the indigo would eventually be exported" (1985: 482), and simply attributed the relentless flow of bullion to the subcontinent to the peculiar proclivity of South Asians to hoard gold and silver.

In this context, Hopkins's question regarding bullion flows prompted me to look at the infrastructures generating a huge, and apparently insatiable, demand for money. Moreover, his insistence that "our acting units or agencies can only be thought of as *formed*, and continually re-formed by the relations between them," that relations make the units rather than the other way around (Hopkins, 1978: 149), offered a powerful means to transcend the constraints of state-centric research. Perhaps even more importantly, once I shifted the focus of my study to the infrastructures generating the demand for bullion, it opened the possibility of tracing a pattern of socio-historical evolution based on wet-rice cultivation that was entirely different from the European trajectory. As I began to look more closely at the Chinese case, that other great source for the drain of bullion from Europe and the Americas, it became apparent that the trajectories of societies based on wet-rice cultivation shared more in common with each other than either did with social formations in early modern northwest Europe.

Rather than restating my findings, what I want to underline here is that Hopkins's insistent questioning opened the door to the creation of an alternate apparatus of discourse, the very flexibility of which allows the emerging debates of world-scale historical social sciences to be joined however tenuously. Thus, instead of viewing Indian or Chinese history as arrested, deformed, and travestied caricatures of a normative European trajectory, it becomes possible to compare developments in southern India and southern China as variations of a similar process of change in societies based on wet-rice cultivation without reference to an idealized European model, and hence to recover the historical specificity of each historical social system.

The implications of this research strategy can perhaps be best

illustrated by contrasting it with some recent revisionist historical studies. In an attack on the ethnocentric biases of the modern social sciences, Blaut (1992), for instance, has argued that there were no qualitative differences between societies in Africa, Asia, and Europe, and that it was Christopher Columbus's accidental stumbling upon the Americas that inaugurated a series of processes that enabled proto-capitalists in Europe not only to dissolve feudalism in their region but also to overwhelm and subordinate rival proto-capitalists elsewhere. By universalizing a model of sociohistorical transformation derived from the particular experience of northwestern Europe, this argument not only posits capitalism as the teleological goal of human history but also obliterates the distinctiveness of other historical social systems and denies the possibility of alternate patterns of social evolution.

Instead of investigating the specific sociohistorical dynamics of the several distinct social systems in the Eastern Hemisphere, this mode of inquiry assumes that the contemporaneous evolution of exchange networks in several places in Asia, Africa, and Europe produces identical patterns of change everywhere. Or, to put it bluntly, Blaut and other revisionists attempt to transcend Eurocentrism by ruling out of court all the distinctiveness of non-European peoples, and thereby consigning them once again to the status of "positive unoriginality."

Sharply opposed to this analytical procedure is Hopkins's insistence that we seek to recover the historically specific trajectories of historical social systems constituted, and continually reconstituted by relational networks of power, exchange, and population movements. If we are to construct a framework to debate world history, conceived not merely as European history writ large, but as global history we have to reconstruct the historical trajectories of the several social systems before their collision with the trajectories of the capitalist world-economy. Only if we "provincialize Europe," to use Dipesh Chakrabarty's (1992) felicitous phrase, can we begin to construct a truly global history. It is in this task that Hopkins has been a beacon, for me and for others.

REFERENCES

- Balasz, Etienne (1960). "The Birth of Capitalism in China," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, III, 2, 196-216.
- Blaut, James M. (1992). "Fourteen Ninety-Two," *Political Geography*, XI, 4, 355-385.
- Bray, Francesca (1983). "Patterns of Evolution in Rice-Growing Societies," *Journal of Peasant Studies*, XI, 1, Oct., 3-83.
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh (1992). "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for 'Indian' Pasts?" *Representations*, No. 37, Winter, 1-26.
- Chandra, Bipan (1981). "Karl Marx, His Theories of Asian Societies, and Colonial Rule," *Review*, V, 1, Summer, 13-91.
- Das Gupta, Ashin (1985). "Indian Merchants and the Western Indian Ocean: The Early Seventeenth Century," *Modern Asian Studies*, XIX, 3, July, 481-499.
- Dirlik, Arif (1985). "The Universalization of a Concept: From 'Feudalism' to 'Feudalism' in Chinese Marxist Historiography," *Journal of Peasant Studies*, XII, 2-3, Jan.-Apr., 197-227.
- Dunn, Stephen P. (1982). *The Fall and the Rise of the Asiatic Mode of Production*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Fogel, Joshua A. (1988). "The Debates over the Asiatic Mode of Production in Soviet Russia, China, and Japan," *American Historical Review*, XCIII, 1, Feb., 56-79.
- Gouldner, Alvin W. (1980). *The Dark Side of the Dialectic, II: The Two Marxisms: Contradictions and Anomalies in the Development of Theory*. New York: Seabury Press.
- Grove, Linda & Joseph W. Esherick (1980). "From Feudalism to Capitalism: Japanese Scholarship on the Transformation of Chinese Rural Society," *Modern China*, VI, 4, Oct., 397-438.
- Gunawardhana, R. A. 1. H. (1976). "The Analysis of Pre-Colonial Social Formations in Asia in the Writings of Karl Marx," *Indian Historical Review*, 11, 2, Jan., 365-388.
- Habib, Irfan (1969). "Potentialities of Capitalistic Development in the Economy of Mughal India," *Journal of Economic History*, XXXIX, 1, March, 32-79.
- Habib, Irfan (1983). "Marx's Perception of India," *The Marxist*, I, 1, 92-143.

- Habib, Irfan (1985). "Classifying Pre-Colonial India," *Journal of Peasant Studies*, XII, 2-3, Jan.-Apr., 44-53.
- Hopkins, Terence K. (1978). "World-Systems Analysis: Methodological Issues." Pp. 199-218 in B. H. Kaplan, ed., *Social Change in the Capitalist World-Economy*, Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Hopkins, Terence K. (1979). "The Study of the Capitalist World-Economy: Some Introductory Considerations." Pp. 21-52 in W. L. Goldfrank, ed., *The World-System of Capitalism: Past and Present*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Jones, Eric L. (1981). *The European Miracle: Environments, Economies and Geopolitics in the History of Europe and Asia*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.
- Lefort, Claude (1978). "Marx: From One Vision of History to Another," *Social Research*, XLV, 4, Winter, 615-666.
- Morris, Meaghan (1990). "Metamorphoses at Sydney Tower," *New Formations*, 11, Summer, 5-18.
- Mukhia, Harbans (1981). "Was There Feudalism in Indian History?" *Journal of Peasant Studies*, VIII, 2, Apr., 273-310.
- Mukhia, Harbans (1985). "Peasant Production and Medieval Indian Society," *Journal of Peasant Studies*, XII, 2-3, Jan.-Apr., 228-251.
- Perlin, Frank (1985). "Concepts of Order and Comparison, with a Diversion on Counter Ideologies and Corporate Institutions in Late Pre-Colonial India," *Journal of Peasant Studies*, XII, 2-3, Jan.-Apr., 87-165.
- Sharma, Ram Sharan (1965). *Indian Feudalism, c.300-1200*. Calcutta: Univ. of Calcutta.
- Sharma, Ram Sharan (1974). "Indian Feudalism Retouched," *Indian Historical Review*, I, 12, July, 320-330.
- Sharma, Ram Sharan (1985). "How Feudal was Indian Feudalism," *Journal of Peasant Studies*, XII, 2-3, Jan.-Apr., 19-43.
- Thorner, Daniel (1980). "Marx on India and the Asiatic Mode of Production." Pp. 349-82 in D. Thorner, *The Shaping of Modern India*. New Delhi: Allied Publishers.
- Wickham, Chris (1985). "The Uniqueness of the East," *Journal of Peasant Studies*, XII, 2-3, Jan.-Apr., 166-196.
-

CONTENTS

Immanuel Wallerstein ix

Introduction

I. GRADUATE EDUCATION: THE FORMATION OF SCHOLARS

Walter L. Goldfrank 3

1. Deja Voodoo All Over Again: Rereading the Classics

William G. Martin 9

2. Opening Graduate Education: Expanding the Hopkins Paradigm

Ravi Arvind Palat 27

3. Terence Hopkins and the Decolonization of World-Historical Studies

Immanuel Wallerstein 35

4. Pedagogy and Scholarship

II. METHODS OF WORLD-HISTORICAL SOCIAL SCIENCE

Reşat Kasaba 43

5. Studying Empires, States, and Peoples: Polanyi, Hopkins, and Others

Richard E. Lee 51

6. Thinking the Past/Making the Future: Methods and Purpose in World-Historical Social Science

Philip McMichael 57

7. The Global Wage Relations as an Instituted Market

Elizabeth McLean Petras 63

8. *Globalism Meets Regionalism: Process versus Place*

Beverly Silver 83

9. *The Time and Space of Labor Unrest*

III. SCHOLARS AND MOVEMENTS

Rod Bush 89

10. *Hegemony and Resistance in the United States: The Contradictions of Race and Class*

Nancy Forsythe 101

11. *Theorizing About Gender: The Contributions of Terence K. Hopkins*

Lu Aiguo 115

12. *From Beijing to Binghamton and Back: A Personal Reflection on the Trajectory of Chinese Intellectuals*

Evan Stark 127

13. *Sociology as Social Work: A Case of Mis-Taken Identity*

Terence K. Hopkins 143

14. *Coda*

Mohammad H. Tamdgidi 145

The Utopistics of Terence K. Hopkins, Twenty Years Later: A Postscript

Colloquium Photos 169

About the Contributors 193

Terence K. Hopkins Bibliography 205

Index 309

Copyright © 1998, 2017, by Immanuel Wallerstein; The Fernand Braudel Center for the Study of Economics, Historical Systems, and Civilizations; Mohammad H. Tamdgidi, Ahead Publishing House; each chapter or part by its contributor

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any informational storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher (representing copyright holders) except for a reviewer who may quote brief passages in a review.

Published by:
Ahead Publishing House (imprint: Okcir Press)
P. O. Box 393 • Belmont, MA 02478 • USA • www.okcir.com
For ordering or other inquiries contact: info@okcir.com



Library of Congress Catalog Number (LCCN): 2016920666

For latest and most accurate LOC data for this book, search catalog.loc.gov for the above LCCN

Publisher Cataloging in Publication Data

Mentoring, Methods, and Movements: Colloquium in Honor of Terence K. Hopkins by His Former Students and the Fernand Braudel Center for the Study of Economics, Historical Systems, and Civilizations / Immanuel Wallerstein and Mohammad H. Tamdgidi., eds.

Twentieth Anniversary Second Edition

Belmont, Massachusetts: Ahead Publishing House, 2017

334 pages • 6x9 inches

Includes bibliographical references, photos, chronological bibliography, and index.

ISBN-13: 978-1-888024-98-2 • ISBN-10: 1-888024-98-4 (hard cover: alk. paper)

ISBN-13: 978-1-888024-88-3 • ISBN-10: 1-888024-88-7 (soft cover: alk. paper)

ISBN-13: 978-1-888024-91-3 • ISBN-10: 1-888024-91-7 (PDF ebook)

ISBN-13: 978-1-888024-92-0 • ISBN-10: 1-888024-92-5 (ePub ebook)

1. Hopkins, Terence K., 1929-1997—Congresses. 2. Historical sociology—Congresses.
3. Sociology—Study and teaching (Graduate)—New York (State)—Congresses. 4. Social movements—Congresses. I. Wallerstein, Immanuel, 1930– II. Tamdgidi, Mohammad H., 1959– III. Title

Photo Credits: Sunaryo • Gloria N. Hopkins

Cover and Book Design and Typesetting: Ahead Publishing House

Printed by Lightning Source, LLC. The paper used in the print editions of this book is of archival quality and meets the minimum requirements of ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992 (R1997) (Permanence of Paper). The paper is acid free and from responsibly managed forests. The production of this book on demand protects the environment by printing only the number of copies that are purchased.