Ferdinand Magellan, Vasco Da Gama, and the Chinese explorer Zheng He that can be used to extend a lesson based on the article. In addition to the videos, the collection also includes lesson plans and Google Earth Voyager Stories that allow students to trace the routes taken by the explorers. The Google Earth Voyager Stories can be used in the classroom, but would also be a splendid resource for distance learning. While numerous avenues exist to expand the original article, "The Shape of the World: Eurasia" remains a useful essay for high school world history teachers. Murphey's clear writing style and vocabulary choices make the article accessible to high school students. This is especially important for English-language learners and students who may be learning in a hybrid or virtual environment. The ongoing pandemic has shown everyone how interconnected Asia is with the West not only because of the spread of the COVID-19 virus, but also because of the product shortages that continue to occur due to disrupted supply chains. Rhoades Murphey's article reminds all of us that those connections are not new and are most certainly relevant to our lives today.■

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Eurasia and the End of History

By Wynn Gadkar-Wilcox

One of the difficulties of the world history curriculum, whether in high school or in college, is that by its very nature it requires presenting students with grand and sweeping statements about the past. Even at the college level, teachers of world history stand up in front of a group of freshmen, many of whom are taking the course to fulfill some general education requirement (and are perhaps not that enthused about being in the class) and who may not have taken world history in any meaningful sense in high school. Faced with the need to give these students an adequate bird's-eye view of history, we are starved for brief, digestible summaries that can introduce major themes and basic facts in a minimalist way. In the past, world history teachers have therefore felt that they needed works such as Rhoads Murphey's "The Shape of the World: Eurasia." We especially needed these kinds of texts in the late 1990s when it first appeared, as this was precisely the period in which courses in world history were becoming required and we needed help organizing and formulating themes for these still-nascent courses.

We are fortunate to have had someone as esteemed and experienced as the late Professor Rhoads Murphey to write such an essay. Only a person of his considerable erudition could write seven short pages on the entire sweep of Eurasian history and still make meaningful statements capable of giving students a passable overview. It is an astounding text from which students can still learn a great deal. Yet despite his herculean effort, any text presented at this level of generalization will inevitably obscure as it enlightens and will reflect the peculiar interests and obsessions of the time in which it was written. This article will make three arguments: first, Murphey's analysis reflects a 1990s view of globalization; second, despite its framing of an argument about a single, united Eurasia, it tends to contrast differences and narrate contacts at two poles of Eurasia, namely western Europe and China, and largely excludes discussions of interactions in the Middle East, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia; and third, that certain of its ideas, such as Aryan migration, need to be updated in light of new research that has been published in the past two decades.

To make these points is not to say that any historian in our current era would write a seven-page essay on Eurasia any better than Professor Murphey did more than two decades ago. It is rather to suggest that this work has these flaws despite its being an excellent rendition. It is the best possible outcome from an impossible task. Aiming to be both comprehensive and brief enough for our world history audience is like pouring two gallons of water into a one-gallon jug: no matter what technique one chooses, one inevitably loses half the content. My suggestion is for teachers of world history to abandon this noble effort at sweeping historical comprehensiveness and instead encourage their students to embark on close readings of texts that speak to a much narrower set of Eurasian experiences.

Murphey's work delights in relating the substantial contacts and borrowing across Eurasia from ancient times in a way that reflects the spirit of the mid-to-late 1990s. From the outset, he makes several points that world history students need to hear. He notes that Eurasia is a single, continuous landmass and that Western civilization has had "interconnections throughout history." Western civilization is indebted to the East, as it really originated in the Middle East and was deeply influenced by places such as Persia, still farther east (7). Murphey's main purpose is to celebrate the considerable Asian contributions to European material culture in the forms of shipping, mathematics, and technology, as well as intellectual culture in the form of the admiration of enlightenment intellectuals for for Chinese political culture. His emphasis is on positive interactions, mutual contributions, and celebrating interconnections. His approach to understanding Eurasia as a single landmass and moving beyond the idea of Europe and Asia as separate continents recalls Kären Wigen and Martin Lewis's *The Myth of Continents*, which was published in 1997, the same year as Murphey's short piece, and which devoted many pages to the fictional nature of the Asia–Europe divide.[1] In addition, this kind of celebration of interconnectedness may reflect the triumphal spirit of the immediate post-Cold War world, when globalization was viewed positively and the "end of history" could be prognosticated.[2] What these views obscure, however, is that the cultural interaction being celebrated often had militaristic and imperialist origins, as was the case with the Mongol invasions that facilitated European travel to Asia, as well as the European imperialism that dominated Asia in much of the Modern Era.

Second, there is some inherent tension between the concept of a unified Eurasian landmass and the noncontiguous contact of the "western and

eastern ends" of Eurasia, which acquired "their own distinctively different forms and styles" (8). Since the peoples of Eurasia are contiguous with one another on one single continent, it seems at least initially strange that they would develop separately. Murphey squares this circle by positing Central Asia as the "dead heart of Asia," the vast desert where, throughout the centuries, bandits preyed on caravans (8). The trope of the Central Asian wasteland allows Murphey to posit a reason for the supposedly very different cultures in East Asia (particularly China) and Western Europe. But he cannot do so without erasing most Central Asian agency. The essay's description seems to belie the importance of cities such as Samarkand and Lhasa, whose inhabitants have been cultural brokers for the entirety of Eurasia across a broad span of time. Additionally, while Persia and India receive some coverage and Southeast Asia is mentioned in passing, even they are but sideshows in Murphey's very brief act.

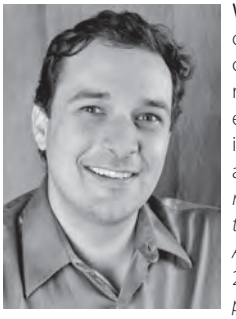
Finally, an essay that is twenty-five years old will naturally require some updating. One area in which new research has altered our understanding is in the case of Aryan migration. The idea of the Aryans spreading from what is now Iran to modern-day Greece and Turkey, as well as India, had already become problematic at the time that Murphey's work came out and has been the subject of considerable debate ever since.[3] Opponents of the Aryan migration theory point out that it is very hard to extricate it from its origins in Orientalist linguistics and problematic nineteenth-century European discourses about race. They note that linguistic affiliation is insufficient to establish common tribal links between "Indo-Aryans" and that, from the start, Aryanism served the purpose of positing the existence on very tenuous evidence of a primordial race that could be contrasted with Semites—a notion of Aryanism that became very problematic in the twentieth century.[4] Accordingly, I would not introduce this topic to a survey course without substantial caveats.

While these flaws may not be inevitable, writing a seven-page essay that covers the sweep of Eurasian history is an exercise fraught with peril. It is almost impossible to imagine a work that could do so devoid of cliché or stereotype, despite how helpful an introduction such as Professor Murphey's can be. If I were looking to pique my students' interest in East–West contact, I would go to the sources and focus on strategies of reading excerpts of primary texts. Excerpts from Faxian's travels are an excellent way to get a classroom conversation going on connections within Asia.[5] Not only *The Travels of Marco Polo* but fascinating accounts by Ibn Battuta and Odoric of Pordenone are readily available in English translation and tell us of Beijing in Mongol times, a major theme in Murphey's work.[6] Niccolaò Manucci's account of Mughal India offers sharp insights that are of great interest to students, and Samuel Baron and Christoforo Borri offer excellent views of seventeenth century northern and south-central Việt Nam, respectively.[7] There is no reason not to teach students from the sources. However, if teachers need a more detailed secondary account of the history of contact between China and Western Europe, about which Murphey spends the most time, I would assign portions of D. E. Mungello's *The Great Encounter of China and the West, 1500–1800*, which despite its age still gives a much more detailed introduction to some of Professor Murphey's themes.[8] And while there are not many films on European and Asian contact in ancient times, for the modern period, films such as *The Opium War* (1997) and *Mangal Pandey: The Rising* (2005) can offer students intriguing points of entry into critical issues of nineteenth-century European imperialism.[9]

Though I have been familiar with Professor Murphey's little text for many years, I have never assigned it in a class and would not consider it now, except perhaps in an upper-level course on methods of teaching world history. I would not consider assigning it despite its obvious value as an overview because I have become increasingly convinced that teaching world history with these kinds of broad, bold generalizations is a fool's errand. Our task, in my view, is to teach our students how to read historically across a wide variety of texts about the world. To do so, we must have the courage to make our students read deeply and carefully, even if it means that they do not read or even learn about history as widely or comprehensively as we would like. Focusing on covering just a few examples of contacts across Eurasia and going deep into primary sources, and then allowing students to make the contextual connections on their own, is the route that I have increasingly adopted in my classes over time. A narrative thread can be established in lectures that can connect these more specific texts together, even in the absence of a textbook. As a college professor, I have the luxury of this kind of teaching; high school teachers may have a curriculum to follow, which would require them to be more creative and strategic in adopting this approach. Nevertheless, though generalizations such as the ones Professor Murphey made in this extraordinary introduction to Eurasia have their place, I do not believe that their place is in an introductory world history survey course. ■

NOTES

1. Kären Wigen and Martin Lewis, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), especially 35-38.
2. Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).
3. For example, see Romila Thapar, "The Theory of Aryan Race and India: History and Politics," *Social Scientist* 24, nos. 1 and 3 (1996): 3-29; Edwin Bryant, *The Quest for the Origins of Vedic Culture: The Indo-Aryan Migration Debate* (New York: Oxford, 2001).
4. David Motadel, "Iran and the Aryan Myth," in Ali M. Ansari, ed., *Perceptions of Iran: History, Myths, and Nationalism from Medieval Persia to the Islamic Republic* (London: IB Tauris, 2013), 119–145.
5. H. A. Giles, trans. *The Travels of Fa-hsien (399-414 AD), or Record of the Buddhistic Kingdoms* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1923). Where possible, I am selecting editions that are out of copyright and freely available on the internet.
6. John Masefield, ed., *The Travels of Marco Polo the Venetian* (New York: EP Dutton, 1908); Samuel Lee, trans., *The Travels of Ibn Batūta* (London: J. Murray, 1829); Sir Henry Yule, ed., "Odoric of Pordenone," in *Cathay and the Way Thither* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1887), 43–162.
7. Niccolaò Manucci, *Storia do Mogor* [*Mogul India*], *1653-1708,* trans. William Irvine (London: John Murray, 1907); Olga Dror and K. W. Taylor, eds., *Views of Seventeenth-Century Vietnam: Christoforo Borri on Cochinchina & Samuel Baron on Tonkin* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 2006).
8. D. E Mungello, *The Great Encounter of China and the West,* 4th ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012).
9. *The Opium War,* directed by Xie Jin, (1997; Hong Kong: Golden Harvest), DVD; *Mangal Pandey: The Rising*, directed by Ketan Mehta, (2005; Mumbai: Yash Raj Films,), DVD.



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