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Assessing professional developments

Historiography in a comparative perspective

It is no simple thing to assess the historiographic development of one single country. Historiography includes a lot of different writings, huge works in several volumes and short articles, comprehensive textbooks and specialised investigations, learned research products and media presentations for a broad public. These different types of works are not easily summarised in a formula of development. There may even be quite divergent developments of different genres.

Comparing historiographic developments in different countries may seem to be an impossible task. When we compare historiography of all sorts between countries it has to be the presuppositions they are constructed from that are compared. These methodological and epistemological premises also form the basis for the professional consciousness of the groups who have produced the historical works. The development of professional identities in different parts of the world and how these identities have changed and been related to one another is therefore a main theme of this comparison.

The professional development has been taken as the starting point for the work on an assessment of twentieth century historiography. As presuppositions of historical writings are the focus, it is important and interesting to see if they have been the same over time and in different parts of the world. Time and space are our variables. Changes over time are treated in each contribution. One of the main questions for the twentieth century is to investigate whether professionalism has been eroded. The idea of professionalism is certainly no longer as highly valued as earlier. From this does not really follow, however, that professionalism has vanished as a pattern of behaviour among historians.

The space factor is found out through comparison of the different contributions. Of course, these cannot aspire to represent all historical writing over the world. First, all parts of the world are not included, though it should be emphasised that this comparison takes into regard

more parts of the world than are usually compared. Second, the authors have their specialities and cannot know all about the vast regions they have to deal with. However, there are good arguments against an objection, which may be raised that the geographical division here is artificial and of no use. It may be debatable, as Pók says, if a certain area (in his case Eastern Europe) has such fundamental developments in common, which could make it into a suitable field of investigation. He shows that the concept of Eastern Europe itself has been an object of debate among social scientists and historians, giving platforms for historical studies. The concept of the area is loaded with history in itself. This is also true of Africa. As Odhiambo points out, Africa was universally denied a history by Europeans for a very long time and this attitude has led to similarities in approaches to history in the very different countries of Africa, which would not otherwise have been there. It turns out that not only states have their histories and historiographical traditions but also peoples and movements. A recovery of African initiative has meant to adapt history to African events, rather than European. New concepts have had to be created to see what was important and for whom.

The professional identity of historians has, of course, its basis among other things in the questioned past of geographical notions. Sometimes colonial developments and disputes on boundaries and the rights of ethnic groups have inspired historians to partisan standpoints, as shown by both Pók and Odhiambo, but on other occasions such debated questions have made them deepen their research on related problems. It is thus important to make comparisons in order to see if historical professionalism has had a similar development in different parts of the world, and to shed some light on the conditions for a vital historical discussion, even though we cannot aspire at covering the whole world.

Historical professionalism

A fundamental question is what forms the cohesion of academic professions, focused on a field of knowledge. There are two main possibilities and a combination of them. Either the profession may concentrate on upholding a set of methodological rules or norms, or it may subscribe collectively to a set of theories or theoretical presuppositions (Newton's physics, for instance) or the group may see both as necessary requirements for a professional. The group informally develops a consensus, and the content of the group's consensus is of a normative character.

In the German academic community of historians the combination of *Historismus* and teaching through seminars became an instrument for the professionalisation of historians. A common evaluative system was created in the latter half of the nineteenth century. A methodological part was often combined with individualisation of persons and collective entities

of the past, especially among the historians of the Middle Ages who were concerned with the editing of the *Monumenta Germaniae historica*. This work elaborated further methodological principles for editing which had been developed in France by Jean Mabillon and others from the 17th century and onwards and which gave rise to the *École des Chartes* at Paris. Methodology became important and the principles for the evaluation of sources became more and more systematised. Methodological discussions grew in Germany in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and a methodological direction of historians within the *Historismus* has been discerned, with a philosophical direction as its counterpart. The former was characterised by its devotion to empirical studies with a sincere application of methodological principles in order to obtain objective knowledge, while the philosophical direction generally rejected the possibility to reach any form of certainty and proclaimed relativity of knowledge. In fact it will seem that the differences within *Historismus* were great. On the one hand were those who saw historical relativism as fundamental and regarded history primarily as a means of orientation in the present. On the other hand were those who wanted to overcome as much as possible the constraints of the sources for the understanding the past, though still with a considerable relativism in regard to values (Oexle 1996; Scholtz 1997).

One impetus, but not the only one, for a new turn of historical professionalism grew out of the empirical *Historismus*. It was important that new methodological manuals were published and widely accepted in the European community of historians. J.G. Droysen had published his *Grundriss der Historik* in 1868 (revised ed. in 1875 and 1882), but its emphasis was rather on the principles of *Historismus* than on the strictly methodological side. Ernst Bernheim's *Lehrbuch der historischen Methode* (1889) and Charles-Victor Langlois' and Charles Seignobos' *Introduction des études historiques* (1898) were in this regard epoch-making. These books were in the first hand methodological and they got a very wide circulation and became the basis for university teaching in many countries. They taught how to find secure knowledge in history (Iggers 1984). The authors sought somewhat different epistemological bases for their standpoints but the authors of both books turned their back to the relativism of knowledge, which was a core element in the philosophical *Historismus*. Their differences mattered less than their methodological aims, which found appeal among historians. Through these books and, of course, others written in the same spirit, the emphasis of professionalism took a decisive step towards method. The norms that mattered were of a methodological nature.¹

The first decades of the twentieth century witnessed a change in the general approach to historical professionalism. The emphasis had been on the theory of the state or the theory of state systems or the theory of the (individual) nation. Now the methodological element became

central either alone or in combination with a nation- or state-based theory of development. Without the proper knowledge of how to evaluate sources a historian was not accepted as a professional. Several factors helped to make methodology a central element in the professionalism of historians. One was the rise of national historical associations. This was a process that took place all over Europe (and also beyond Europe in some countries) in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Philosophical and political issues divided all such associations and, thus, only methodology was really a common basis. This was even more the case with the international organisation of historians, later known as the *Comité international des sciences historiques*, which can be traced back to 1898. In the early programs of its international congresses from 1900 and 1903 methodology played an important role and the object of the discussion was rather which conclusions must be drawn by philosophers from the established methods than the other way round. After the congress of 1908 the French historian François Simiand complained in a review article that methods had not been sufficiently emphasised in the congress contributions (Erdmann 1987).

In the last decades of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century the historical associations of the European countries also in most cases started journals (Stieg 1986; Middell 1999). In most of these journals articles on themes of history were combined with critical reviews of books. An important element in such reviews was to examine the methods used and the shortcomings of authors in respect to methodological rules. Thus, in the form of critical reviews of the works on history, the methodological norms were spread. These norms were also commonly accepted. In the case that a historian wanted to contradict criticism he/she had to show that the principles had been observed rather than that these principles were not valid. This is something that characterises methodology in a wide sense but is not valid for the kind of substantive norms that characterised the major part of *Historismus*.

For the formation of the profession of historians the debates on the application of historical methods were very important. A series of such debates took place in different countries in the first decades of the twentieth century. A wide debate that took place in Germany was called the *Methodenstreit* and focused on the correct use of methods in regard to any scientific activity. Generalization and interpretation were advanced as alternatives. Karl Lamprecht, with his concept of social and cultural history, was rather lonely in Germany and is often regarded as defeated. In fact, part of the issue was the theories of *Historismus* and the alternative professed by Lamprecht. Another part dealt with methods and their application in the strict sense, where individualization (W. Windelband, H. Rickert, M. Weber, F. Meinecke and others) was opposed

to views based on structures and collectivities (W. Sombart, H. Pirenne, F. Simiand and others) (Iggers 1984).

However, in many countries the application of strict methods had consequences for earlier well-established conceptions of national historical developments. Hu Shi and his students Gu Jiegang and Fu Sinian struggled for a new critical history ('scientific' and based on well-examined sources) in China in the nineteen-twenties as is clarified by Edward Wang in his contribution. The Swedish brothers Weibull criticised their predecessors in the work on old Norse and Swedish history for slackness in the use of the material and Halvdan Koht and Edvard Bull laid the foundations of a critical history of Norway (Torstendahl 1964; Dahl 1970). Frederick Jackson Turner and Charles Beard gave new visions of history as a social science in the United States, as mentioned by Richard Vann in his contribution. Turner and Beard combined new methods with a criticism of old theories and the construction of new ones and in the United States a lasting dispute occurred on objectivity and its preconditions (Novick 1988). In these cases and many more we can discern, in the first few decades of the century, a new confidence among historians, especially those with central positions in the academic community. They wanted to lay more secure foundations for the knowledge of history and they thought that they had found such foundations in the examination of the sources. This implies severe struggles against other historians of earlier dominant schools. Methodology was certainly central for all the new trends, but often there was another element too, which is less observed. Many of them were optimistic about the possibility to reach certainty about what had taken place in the past and they wanted to erase sheer assumptions and guesses in order to make history more reliable.

The men I mentioned were historians, not philosophers. Their aim was to clarify the role of historians and to sharpen the instruments of the trade, not to make epistemological innovations. Sometimes their expressed views seem a bit crude, but there are good reasons to say that their statements deserve an interpretation based on empathy and not the misrepresentations that are often made of them in these days. If these historians were optimistic about the possibility to reach truth, they were not referring to truth in general or "the whole truth of the past" (or even of a part of the past) but true statements on the past. Their ambition was to clarify and analyse sharply. They saw their craft as a development of knowledge, either in the same sense as science was knowledge or in the sense of an idiographic analysis of a specific cultural process in contrast to the nomothetic ambitions of science.

It seems that not only in Europe and the United States historians – and we are concerned here only with those who led the academic profession in their countries – at the turn of the century took one of these perspectives on the task of the historian. The same

concentration on the production and growth of knowledge seems to have been the case also in China, Japan, India, South America and, to an extent, Africa. Maybe the explanation is simply that the university systems of these countries had created their conception of an academic discipline of history under the influence of European models. But then it is to be noted that their conceptions were exactly as “modern” as those that came to prevail in late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Europe. Some of them, for instance Fu Sinian in China, had a very scientific view of the work of the historian. Science was his model, and it seems to have been so also for other historians in other countries. However, this was not the case with all of those who embraced the new ideas of firm knowledge and the search for true statements. There seem to be striking similarities between Hu’s and his pupils’ historical school, as presented by Wang, and the Swedish Weibull school, in respect to their devotedness to source analysis and source criticism and their quest for secure knowledge in history. However, nothing indicates that the Weibull brothers had science as their ideal and they were certainly not Darwinists. When they were challenged to indicate their models in historical research they mentioned Bernheim and alluded to a heritage from Ranke.

The “new historians” of the early twentieth century were of another breed than Ranke and the Rankeans in spite of their notions of a legacy. Their primary interest was how to reach statements that gave a firm basis for historical conceptions. They were far less interested in the main question of nineteenth-century historiography, the long-term development of states and state systems. Turner and Beard had ideas of the development of the United States. And if we turn to Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre they advanced ideas of social organisation that characterised periods. Bloch’s feudal society is, however, also based on the meticulous scrutiny of sources. Many of these historians of a new professional standard found it easier to expand their interest into social and economic history, with a new wealth of source material at hand, than into the questions of the nature of states and the foundations of world politics in the past. Many of the new schools of history, inspired by the search for secure knowledge, directed their interest to social phenomena and economic conditions instead of politics.

Several of the historians mentioned above became founders of ‘schools’ of history in their countries. Schools were national and only occasionally had ramifications into other countries. Yet the schools founded in the beginning of the twentieth century with firmness of knowledge in view were less nationally confined than the state-centred schools of the nineteenth century. Their core notions could be extended to other countries and other peoples without risking any internal contradictions. Soon this was discovered, and some of these schools became influential all over Europe already in the interwar years.

A new phase for professionalism in history came after World War II. Social theories in the broad sense of theories of the social sciences had since long occasionally been used by historians. More regularly this was the case from the nineteen-sixties and onwards. In economic history it was already the rule to rely on and use theories of economics. The professionalism of economic historians has come to rely on the ability to apply such theoretical instruments as well as specific economic (statistical) methodology.

The analysis of social structures and social dynamics has also developed through the use of social theory. This approach had one of its origins in the Annales circle, then most often directed towards demography and geography and their social consequences. Theories of management and organisations and sociological theories have been used to a large extent by historians in historical studies only in the nineteen-seventies and eighties. More explicitly social science theory in general, including sociological and organisational theory, was proposed as the proper instrument for historical research by the so-called Bielefeld school, consisting of a group of historians who had some relation to the university of Bielefeld in the seventies. What they proposed was in line with what had been done by several American historians earlier, such as Merle Curti and Stephan Thernstrom, but their efforts had not been coordinated into a program. The Bielefeld historians advanced the concept of a 'historical social science' (Kocka 1977; Wehler 1980). This type of history found much appeal in the seventies and eighties.

Although this enthusiasm for social sciences has been criticised later, it is rather the theories used than the close link to social science that has met opposition. In part this criticism has been directed against the use of social theory in history from circles where social anthropology and its theorists have been accepted. An anthropological approach to history has become regular, and has included anthropological theory and theorists. Clifford Geertz as well as Michael Bakhtin, Norbert Elias, and Michel Foucault have been accepted as theoretical inspirations and have found growing appeal among historians.² Another very important source of new theoretical approaches, but all the same theoretical, has been the rise of gender theory. The relation between the sexes in history has to an increasing degree been seen from a perspective with its foundation in a theory of gender relations and power distribution.

The use of social science theories has thus been one source of professional identity among historians in the recent decades.

The growth of the professional community

In the twentieth century, though starting earlier, there has also been a great increase in the number of professional historians in the sense of those being able to live from being historians. Growing numbers have been employed in teaching. Universities have expanded enormously from the early years of the century to World War II and again after the war, especially during the period 1960-1980. To those employed in universities must be added teachers specializing in history in secondary schools. Historians working in archives and museums also belong to this category.

For France in 1910 Boer has estimated the number of historians in these categories to 1045 (Boer 1985). At the eve of the 1950s the number of professional historians in France has been approximated to less than 3000 but then this number does not include archivists and historians employed in museums. In 1967 the number of the same limited category of professional historians had grown to close to 8000 (Charle, in Bédarida 1995). Raphael notes that the number of historians who were teachers at the universities in France rose from 104 in 1920 to 228 in 1949. They were 450 in 1960 and 1448 in 1975 but stable for the rest of the century. In West Germany the numbers of university professors of history grew from around 200 in 1954 to 1113 in 1975 (Raphael, below). In Australia the take-off was later. Still in 1954 there were about 60 university professors of history. In the beginning of the 1970s the number had grown to 320 professors and lecturers and a total staff of around 750. This number has, however gone down to just over 400 in 1995 and has diminished further with budget cuts. (Macintyre, below)

Even though these examples do not tell a full story of the development, we can observe that the long period of growth of the numbers of professional historians in some “Western” countries has been followed by stagnation and cuts in the universities. It is not self-evident, however, that the same trends can be discerned in so-called developing countries or anywhere beyond Western Europe, the USA, Australia and New Zealand.

The number of professional historians employed in other institutions than universities is more difficult to determine. In some countries teachers in secondary schools specialise in such a way that one may talk of a category of professional historians there. In other countries this is not the case. The number of archivists and librarians who may be regarded as professionals in the field of history may also be debatable. However, it seems unquestionable that in many countries, especially in the rich countries, these groups have grown considerably during the twentieth century but not to the extent as did university teachers.

A world-wide profession?

The rise of methodology and the search for secure knowledge into the primary criterion of professionalism was a decisive step towards a 'global' professional culture of history accepted in academic communities all over the world. There had been earlier steps, different in different countries and in different parts of the world. All of them had been based in a national cultural context and without a global appeal. This applies even to Ranke, though his influence was wider than that of most others. Though Ranke's ideals of source criticism were already somewhat antiquated at the turn of the century, he had been very successful in creating a circle of academic historians who regarded themselves as well educated and competent for the task of pursuing historical research and teaching. In that sense we may regard parts of the professional ethos of academic historians all around the world at the turn of the century as inspired by Ranke and his pupils. It applies certainly to all others who may be mentioned and who had inspired historians of one nation or another to gather around certain ideals, often with a patriotic slant, forming a more or less closed profession. It will seem that what happened all around the world about the turn of the nineteenth into the twentieth century was a merger of the professional self-assertion of the Rankean school with a professed methodology for the production of secure knowledge as the basis of the profession as historians. Of course, this referred only to academic historians and researchers attached to universities, research institutes and other learned institutions. This does not mean that the historians of such a creed gave up all other ideals. On the contrary, there continued to be national differences between historical schools, but a professed common basis also existed.

The common basis was one of the prerequisites for the creation of the world community of historians. It also became a canon which professionals had to gather around. Normative systems thus by themselves inspire a closure, which may also prevent development and innovation. This became obvious when Jan Vansina and his pupils started up the oral history analysis in Africa, as shown by Odhiambo. Many historians regarded Vansina's ideas with grave suspicion, for they did not conform to the established methodological rules. However, it is also a sign of the long-term flexibility that is also at hand in academic community that Vansina has become regarded as an innovator and that his ideas are normally presented and accepted in new handbooks. The common basis of professionals is no fixed manual but it should take time to change it or it would not have the normative value that is required to establish a profession.

It is to be noted that when the world congresses of history, organised by the *Comité international des sciences historiques* (CISH), were first created in 1898 the subject matter was

diplomatic history. The scope was widened in 1900. The "historical method" rather than a topic should decide the breadth of history according to the president of the 1900 congress, Boissier (Erdmann 1987, esp. pp. 26-30). Admittedly, these congresses for a long time were mainly a European affair but historians from other parts of the world were invited and gradually became more numerous at these congresses, but still at the end of the century CISH has not become a truly international body. When it was seriously proposed for the first time in 1995 to locate the next congress out of the Europe-North America axis, the proposal fell to the advantage of a European location. The board elected in Montreal in 1995 consists of eleven persons. Six of them represent different European countries plus the president who is a Hungarian living in the USA. Further there are representatives of the USA, Canada, India and Japan. China, Southeast Asia and Australia are not represented and so are not the whole continents of Africa and South America. This fact closely mirrors the participation and the focus of the questions, which have governed the work of the congresses in the past. Problems that have been formulated in Europe or the USA are regarded as the main problems of historical scholarship, whether they relate to substantial questions on specific history or the theory of history. The role of CISH should not be overrated. It was a weak organisation and it played little role for individual historians. Even though there were national committees in all countries affiliated to the *Comité international* they were normally no centres of professional formation, and CISH should be seen mostly as a sign of a gradually growing international professionalism than as an important factor in this process.

The degree of common professional identity within the academic historical community at the beginning of the century should not be exaggerated. It was certainly limited. But it had some foundations that are important for all types of professional identities. It was based in some norms that had to do with knowledge production within its field and these norms functioned as a cutting line between historical professionals and others (who may have been professionals of another trade). In most professions there is also a power giving authority to the professional project, normally the state. This is impossible for such international professions as those in sciences and humanities and therefore they are vulnerable to social pressure.

A first comparison of the fate of the historical profession must be devoted to its fate in the first half of the twentieth century. Two world wars and heated ideological struggles had their impact on historians and their sense of obligations to the international standards of the profession. International professions cannot be strong when the worldly powers do not support them but rather undermine their efforts to create common standards. Early in the twentieth century historians rallied more and more openly to the ideals of the state where they were born

and bred. National themes got the upper hand in Europe. This does not mean that historians denied their duty to use the methodological canon or to interpret according to rules and settle contradictions between sources according to other rules, but these duties tended to come in the second place compared to the duties to the state. From Odhiambo and Wang we can learn that it was not only in Europe that such development took place. Wang's observations about the turn to patriotism and nationalism among some leaders of the source-critical school of Chinese historiography are elucidating.

Historians working on national history normally know the language of the country whose history they deal with. In their own country they also have a lot of social tacit knowledge to rely on irrespective of the fact that they probably know where to find the sources for their study and more easily than a foreigner get access to these sources. Therefore it is probably an adequate use of research resources when many historians give priority to the history they regard as "theirs". However, recent tendencies to break up this pattern are important. Again, what has happened is mainly a post-World War II phenomenon, though examples of the same can be found earlier.

One of the good effects of the international congresses of history is the establishment of a large number of commissions and associations for specific fields of research. Many of these commissions lead a life independently of the congresses, which means that they arrange meetings and conferences for their members. Some commissions have existed for a long time. Europeans and North Americans still play a major role in these commissions, and their participation is in many cases wider than it used to be. Still it is rare that participants come from other parts of the world.

Thus historians from different countries sometimes work together, arranging meetings for the discussion of problems of mutual interest. Common research projects and informal working groups of historians from different countries also have been established, especially from the sixties. No secure basis for an estimate of their number or membership is available.

Scholars are also much more mobile in the early twenty-first than they were in the early twentieth century. It would be false to pretend that the labour market of historians has become truly international, for most posts are reserved for those culturally bred in or adapted to the country where a post is advertised as free. However, the academic labour market was still more closed earlier. In this respect history remains much more confined to a cultural milieu than all sciences and many social sciences and arts.

In spite of such restrictions a change has taken place. In many countries in Europe and North America it is common to find among historians in university staffs those who were not born in the country. In order to get their posts they have had to adapt to the rules of the employing institution. Mostly they have settled permanently in the country and have a good knowledge of its language. Some come from another country within the Euro-American circle, and some from the so-called Third World. The latter happens more often in the United States than in Europe. European or American historians have seldom taken posts in the Third World, where universities can rarely pay a competitive salary compared with a European or American standard.

When Europeans and Americans establish themselves in Third World countries they often have temporary assignments from research or relief foundations. Even if they endeavour to establish contacts with the researchers in the country where they work, the chance for them to succeed in this is less than for those with tenured positions in universities or academies.

Thus the final note must be that the twentieth century has witnessed a change toward globalisation in the discipline of history. It has become more accepted than before to work with the history of other peoples and other countries than one's own, and the national colouring of history has become less apparent even though this development has been far from linear. There is also a weak tendency to break national boundaries in the recruitment of personnel to research and teaching posts in universities. However, if this were all, there would be little reason to talk about a growing globalisation. Only through the acceptance of the same professional standards in all parts of the world a true global historical culture can be said to exist. Such a consensus among historians seems to have won ground, but it is far from total. In spite of this it will seem, however, that active historians around the world, as a group distinct from historical theorists, have come to accept more common norms now than ever before, but these norms are not necessarily exactly those that originally were the basis of professional self-consciousness among historians.

A challenge to professionalism: totalitarianism and official ideology

The subordination of professionalism to the state and its policy was common to democracies and non-democracies in the period of World War I. Nobody was allowed to question the aims of the state and the historical arguments used to justify politics were not to be critically examined. This

denial of the right to pursue a critical debate has remained most common in dictatorial and one-party states in all parts of the world during the twentieth century.

However, there is a difference between the situation just before and during World War I and the situation in the interwar period and during World War II. Fascism, including Nazism, had a view of history and of education that went contrary to international professionalism. Intellectual aims became subordinated to the ideology (or ideologies) which had distinctive historical theses as part of its base (the origin of races, the struggle for world domination). Such fundamental theses and all the ideological statements that were derived from them were exempted from criticism and could, thus, not be the object of the examination required by methodology. At the same time education according to the requirements of the dominating ideology was favoured by Fascism. This meant that academic professionals were given a difficult choice between keeping to their own professional ideals and being ousted from their positions or pursuing their choice of career.

Not only Fascism but also Communism put academic professionalism to a test. From the point of view of professionalism the situation was similar though slightly different. Marxism aspired to the position of a science of historical development, and it also had a strong attraction for intellectuals. Many historians all over the world became Marxists (or historical materialists) out of their free choice, but this does not mean that all of them became the mouthpieces for communist states and the Soviet Union. Many of these historians remained faithful to their professional ideals and tried to combine them with historical materialism. Those who were citizens of the Soviet Union met the difficulty of maintaining their own materialism and professionalism when the State demanded a loyalty to its own interpretations and an official version of Marxism which had no place for professional critical examination. The fate of E. V. Tarle is elucidating: Being entrusted with important duties just after the Revolution he was condemned to Siberia as an enemy of the state in 1930 but soon released without rehabilitation. He accommodated to the situation and, when the state needed patriotism during the war, his capacity was used and prized by Stalin in spite of his lack of the right sort of Marxist ideas, for which he was again criticised in the late part of his life (Kaganovich 1995).

Logunov's contribution is an intensive study of the consequences of state domination over history, in his case in Russia. He raises some very important points in his paper when he stresses that there were some distinctive professional traits of Russian historiography that persisted through seventy years of political efforts to guide the choice of topics and direct the models of investigation. Logunov traces a Russian cultural heritage in the academic historical culture of Russia, in spite of official multiculturalism. Of course, this Russian heritage also came

at odds with the historical traditions of other ethnic groups in the Soviet Union. However, it is also noteworthy that there are several signs from the late Soviet period that professionals in the Soviet Union were eager to keep in touch with the trends abroad. Even more notable is the present lively professional historical discussion in Russia on all matters, not least methodological and theoretical. The scholarly community is certainly working intensively to catch up with what was lost during the years of seclusion from literature and debate.

It is interesting to compare Logunov's perspective with what Pók says about the historical communities in East European countries during the years of Soviet domination. In one way he, like Logunov, admits the destructive consequences of state domination over history but both of them also point at limitations of that domination. Pók shows that a strict discussion within the framework of official Marxism-Leninism could be used to open up new and urgent spheres of investigation quite outside of the realm of historical materialism. This tactic or research strategy was used also in China, as shown by Wang, when Jin Guantao and Liu Qingfeng used a cybernetic model to criticise certain conceptions established in the Marxist approach to Chinese feudalism.

For individuals it was normally not possible to circumvent ideological domination through a research strategy but it posed to them the need to take difficult personal decisions. The balance acts of many historians in many different states, when they have tried to meet the demands of the state and at the same time keep their professional faith and status, has been typical for the profession in the twentieth century. Many lost their lives, others lost their living when they claimed the right to examine historical developments from their own premises. Still others gave up their professionalism in obedience to the worldly power.

Official ideology is, however, something that is not only at hand in totalitarian states. It is always difficult to challenge the official fundamentals of society, whether these are totalitarian or democratic, religious or secular. Rajeev Bhargava discussed the transformation of religion into an official state ideology in India and Pakistan in a recent article, where he showed the distorting effects on historians from both states of certain beliefs taken for granted in each of these states (Bhargava 2000).

It must be pointed out also that American liberal democracy was being promoted, during the Cold War around mid-century, in a way that forbade questioning. Democratisation and democratic traditions and all history that related to democratic values were not to be criticised. The reaction came in the late sixties and the seventies, when (some of) the young of the West turned against America, identified with the CIA and 'formal democracy', and gave their

support to materialism and communism. In many cases this meant also that they turned against the professional ideals of their university teachers. Academic professionalism was regarded as detached and impersonal and not corresponding to the needs of the contemporary world.

Professionalism questioned from inside academia

In different forms large parts of the academic communities in the world have proclaimed their discontent with the existing professionalism of history at their universities during the last thirty years of the century or more. These reactions have had one broad common denominator, although they have been very different in other respects. What they have had in common is a demand that the discipline of history should observe and deal with new aspects of the history of mankind. Implying that the profession and its norms have eliminated the perspectives that these groups of researchers find important, they have most often explicitly but sometimes only in implicit forms directed their criticism against historical professionalism as such.

This was true with large parts of the Marxist wave among historians in the sixties and seventies. This has also been true of 'women's history' and 'gender history', which have often been launched in direct opposition against the ruling layers of the professional academia, sometimes implying that the system of norms ruled out women's perspectives or gender perspectives from history. (????? – hänvisn????) Further, this has been true of anthropologically oriented perspectives on history and cultural aspects on history, which have grown to take a substantial part of historians' interest in the last part of the twentieth century. Finally, this has also been true of 'subaltern history', which has been launched with special reference to India. It might have the same reference to the history of any former colonial country. Its main claim is that history has been written from an elitist perspective, lacking reference to the people of the former colony of India. Its history has been suppressed. (Guha 1982; Chatterjee 1994). History with a materialist perspective, anthropological history, gender history, but less subaltern history, have also been built around their own theoretical devices and sometimes theoretical systems of their own. They have argued that new fields should be investigated with methods designed through new theory.

This criticism of the existing historical professionalism can be observed in most countries and regions of the world and it follows a main trend all through the twentieth century. History has expanded its field of research. With a widening field there have occurred tensions between those who won their merits and positions through the use of methods and theories, which were dominating when they were young, and those who advanced new fields with new theoretical foundations. Those who regarded themselves excluded from a fair treatment by the

ruling layer of professionals protested against the profession and its norms. In fact, they directed their criticism against the actual use of rules by those in power in the profession and not against professionalism. If and when the proponents of the new directions have come to the dominant positions in academia, their views have been incorporated in the rule system of the profession. This is something that has occurred already in regard to historical materialists and in many countries also with gender historians and cultural and anthropological historians.

The expanding field of history and the consequent criticism of the current delimitation of historical studies by those in leading positions in universities, research councils and other institutions within academia is the internal type of criticism, normal for scientific and scholarly work. Criticism can, however, go further and direct itself against the very foundation of professionalism, i.e. its normative system. In some instances such criticism has been advanced in the late twentieth century. First, Paul Feyerabend proposed it in a general form against scientific reasoning in general, later some philosophers of history brought it out with a specific relation to history from a post-modern standpoint.

Postmodernism is by no means a clear concept. The debate about postmodernism in history has been confusing, because so many different notions have been included. Some understand the inclusion of new areas in the historian's field of research as 'postmodern', with the more or less implicit assumption that earlier 'social history' or 'intellectual history' has been attached to a 'project of modernity' (cf. Iggers, in Str ath & Witoszek 1999). Others understand with postmodernism rather text-based analysis of such material that was not earlier used from this point of view. This kind of postmodernism in history can be exemplified through the well-known books by Natalie Z. Davis and Carlo Ginzburg (cf. Burke in Str ath & Witoszek). Still others make language itself the centre of postmodernism. A most fundamental extension of historical professionalism is demanded when the meaning of cultural patterns are made central to historical research. The search for meaning and not causality may be seen as the core of the turn towards cultural anthropology. If incorporated in historical professionalism this standpoint may cause some difficulty in the compatibility of rules. If replacing some other rules it may cause an exclusion of other parts of substantive historiography. This dilemma is not solved (cf. Iggers in Str ath & Witoszek).

Stressing the importance of language as a medium of communication and the need to see through the 'literary' constructions made within the framework of language ('deconstruction') these postmodernists tend to erase the difference between history and (fictional) literature and between knowledge and mental construction. The representation through language is common to these forms of cultural production. For them professionalism of history is part of a programme

of modernism in which they do not want to take part (e.g. Ankersmit in Torstendahl & Veit-Brause 1996; Ankersmit in Jenkins 1997; and White in Str ath and Witoszek 1999).

This criticism touches on the very foundations of professional history. If historical writing must be primarily judged as pieces of representation according to aesthetic norms and with little chance to distinguish ‘factual representation’ from ‘fictional representation’, then the foundation of a new profession is laid. These norms are not compatible with the old methodology of the profession and thus cannot be incorporated into the normative system. There is, however, little evidence in the contributions to this session that such a new rule system has played any important part in the formation of the discipline anywhere in the world – at least so far.

Professionals and the broad public

Not only the theoretical position of professionalism has been under attack. The social function of history as produced by professional historians has become questioned more and more intensively during the twentieth century, especially during the latter half of the century. Already in the first half of the century historians withdrew more than earlier into the academic community, producing works in the first hand for their colleagues and their students. The role of historians in public life and in public debate became less obvious than it had been earlier in many countries. While nineteenth-century European historians wrote their works in the first hand for the ‘wide’ public of ‘all educated people’ in their societies (which meant normally only a fraction of the population), this became more and more rare in the twentieth century. When historians still wrote such books these were regarded as a genre separate from their scholarly production. Popularisation and scholarly work became separated.

This process has been common to several countries in the West and is clearly stated by Macintyre for Australia. The authors who have gained the ears and eyes of the wide public do not bother to conform strictly to professional norms. “They write books rather than journal articles, make public statements rather than deliver conference papers, take up contemporary issues rather than historiographical ones, construct narratives rather than explore the methodological and theoretical concerns of the academy. For their part they see the academic conventions as an obstacle to the larger audience to whom they direct their work.” Macintyre’s description, which also means that historians have lost authority and standing in society, fits more or less well for several other countries and, for instance, it is quite valid for Sweden. However, historians have not accepted this situation, and many have tried to regain the authority that the professors of the discipline may have had earlier. It is typical for this situation that two recent presidents of the

AHA have found it appropriate to exhort American historians to write more readable to gain a wider audience, as Vann tells us.

The situation is not quite the same all over the world in this respect. In Germany and France professional historians have never been deposed from the leading position in the market for history and the interpretation of the past. Professors have been able to keep a leading position even when a host of amateurs have been trying to form their own conceptions of local history and similar topics, as shown by Raphael. Some of the *Annales* historians have become public heroes in France, and the German professors fought a fierce war about fundamental interpretations of German history (the 'Historikerstreit') in all public media in the early 1980s. Thus they have maintained their priority to the basic interpretation of German history.

The role of history and historians is much greater in Japan than in Europe and the United States. Not only is the Japanese society willing to support academic historical work but it also demands a lot of publicly financed historical works each province and local community, as Sato describes in a more detailed way. In addition to such professionally dominated writing of history comes a big sector of historical media culture.

Quite another situation is found by Odhiambo to be valid for several countries in Africa. There, it will seem that the difference between professionalism and amateurism is combined with a competition between the languages imposed by colonialism and vernacular culture. A popular historical literature has been produced locally, he says, often in non-western languages, "by individuals and collectivities believing in their past, giving themselves their own histories which tell of those pasts, and which have a meaning, authority and significance for the local populations." The question seems to be who is able to give the appropriate historical interpretations for a feeling of identity and an orientation in society, the non-professionals close to the local scene or the professionals at a distance. In a similar contest in Germany, professionals rapidly took the lead according to Raphael, but in Africa this seems not to be as self-evident.

During parts of the nineteenth century and still in the beginning of the twentieth historians have played an important role throughout Europe and in the United States as interpreters of contemporary society in the perspective of the past. With the rise of what in German is called the *Bildungsbürgertum*, i.e. intellectual strata with a good position in society without being tied to the old feudal structure, professional historians became influential in the public debate, as ideologues and also as politicians. Some have continued to play this role in the twentieth century. In a few countries like Poland historians have continued to play important

roles in the political life of the country but in most countries this has become rare or exceptional. Politicians who were educated as historians seldom had an academic career in the field before they turned to politics. This may be a consequence of the professionalisation of politics as much as of a diminishing influence of historians, but it is part of the changed roles of historians in these parts of the world.

A new situation was created with the new media society that appeared after World War II. Radio and TV made possible the transmission of 'culture' in any sense to the broad layers of society in a way that was not at hand earlier. Museums arose and attracted a broad interest. The popular press also intended to reach new groups of readers, and the cinema was a great entertainer. Further, the culture of the comic strip, cultivated first in the U.S., spread and made possible to reach those who would not read books, however 'popularised'. All these media formed a challenge for historians and others to make history in one form or the other available for those who did not read the scholarly works or the popular books.

No other country seems to have cultivated the historical strip in the same way as Japan. There, history is available since many years in the form of strips for any consumer. The great advantage of this strip culture is that no equipment is needed for its use. The cultural barrier, which is at hand in many countries between strip-makers and makers of 'serious' culture, seems not to be high in Japan.³ Fiction films in historical settings have been extensively cultivated in India and Japan and are well known all over the world. It is not clear to which extent the general public recognises the genre difference between such fiction films and documentaries enlivened through play-acting even if the 'educated public' would not hesitate about this.⁴ Documentaries and other radio and TV programmes of a historical content have become numerous in all countries in the world. History has, thus, found new channels.

The question must be posed, however, which is the role that historians, the professionals, have played in this development. Have they taken part in it, have they suffered defeat in a competition, have others been more successful to exploit the value of history in such broad entertainment and education, etc.? There is no evident answer to all such questions, and the role of historians has differed. Some historians have managed to master the new media, such as the Lithuanian historian A. Bumblauskas. His programmes on Lithuanian history have come into the focus of a national interest. Normally historians have just been consultants to a new profession of media journalists, who have the adequate blend of knowledge of the technology involved and of the expectations of producers and public to make a product that has the possibility to be a success in the media concerned.

Thus, there is certainly a 'demand' for 'history' in twentieth-century society, even though the demand may be created by the media managers and the history served may be far from the history of professional historians. In a world where time perspectives tend to become shorter and shorter it may be a comfort to academic historians that there is a market for history outside of school and university and outside of the academic community of historians, even though it may be difficult for the academic historian to supply to this market with the kind of products it wants to have.

Through the media development during the twentieth century, and especially in the latter half of the century, a new market situation for history has come into existence. History is for sale in the bookstalls and news-stands in many countries. Sometimes professional historians produce these magazines and popular writings in their capacity as 'popularisers' or else they are written and presented by people who have specialised in such presentations. History is on offer in the TV and on film anywhere with or without professional historians among the creators. Professional historians have been accused of doing too little to present to the public what they know but, on the other hand, they have also been accused of not showing any interest in the issues that media people want to present to the public. History for the broad public has become a question of agenda setting, and it is no longer the rule that historians set the agenda. Journalists and producers of the media tend to define both the target groups – there is a difference between 'difficult' and 'broad' programmes – and the focus and theme of the media product. Even though 'history' may be a common theme, it is not certain that it is the history of the historians that is carrying the victory of the market.

Professionalism (when not understood simply as the source of a living or as a full-time employment) has its edge against the dabblers of the trade. Historians have maintained a high level of professionalism but at the same time it will seem that they have, at least in many countries, lost ground to 'dabblers' who have transformed themselves to a new profession. If there is a war, historians may have won a battle but lost a war. But if it is rather a market situation, professional historians may have kept their hold over their specific market while new dealers have taken the command of the considerable extension of the market, which has taken place in the media. This may form an excellent division of labour and is not necessarily to be deplored.

A lost professional identity?

Diversity has increased within the discipline of history. The links that could keep the profession united around some basic ideas have eroded, at least in many cases. Source criticism and source

analysis is used but not any longer regarded as *the* skills, which transform a student of history into a professional historian. Social theory has evolved into a lot of social theories, and those who would accept some of them would certainly not accept others. Nor is philosophy of history a uniting element among historians. It has brought about diversity rather than unity.

The identity as historian has become more of a formal designation than a substantial identification. Neither method, nor theory unites historians in each single country, far less in the world. It is even doubtful if historians any longer normally feel that they are within a 'school' or direction of historical research, which is understood by them to be the only ground of 'real' historical inquiry. Without a sociological questionnaire investigation it is impossible to give good evidence for the historians' understanding of their own identity but, in the beginning of the twenty-first century it seems doubtful that it amounts to much more than a formal training and a formal disciplinary connection.

It is important to note, then, that though the identity as historian may lack all obvious content, this does not preclude an elaborate cognitive identity. The cognitive identity relates then to each historian as an individual. It has often been pointed out that the disciplinary discussion has become more and more variegated. The number of historians engaged in the discussion of theoretical matters, philosophical as well as relating to social science theories, has also steadily increased. These discussions pursue issues that relate immediately to the cognitive nature of such theses that are fundamental for the speciality, which the discussant wants to propagate. Rarely, nowadays, have historians made the correct interpretation of singular historical documents their main issue. When singular documents are discussed, as they have to be in many investigations of medieval history and occasionally in later history, it has rather been the possibility to use them for new purposes that has been the matter of consideration. History has become a field of changing and gradually wider content.

As Irmeline Veit-Brause has insisted, "history is torn between the logic of memory and the imperatives of 'scientific' knowledge". The identity of the discipline and the identity of historians as professionals is determined in a spectrum of expectations from others and internal definitions and struggles (Veit-Brause in Torstendahl & Veit-Brause 1996). The twentieth century has been filled of these tensions and historians have gone in different directions. Yet there is a kind of cohesion among historians. They obviously wish to be of one profession even though they often behave as if the profession did not matter. The currently growing interest in the history of historiography (see the programme of the congress in Oslo in 2000) may have arisen from this desire. The past of the discipline seems to create one sense of identity that is otherwise lost or about to be lost.

Notes

¹ I intend to come back to the quest for secure knowledge more fully in another context.

² In one volume on postmodern challenges Peter Burke writes about Elias, Bakhtin and Foucault (Str ath & Witoszek 1999). In another (a volume of reprints) Patrick Joyce says that "if the 'end of social history' is not to be expected in one sense it is easily imaginable in another, an ending evident in intellectual ossification, one in which an intellectual hegemony is lost even as an institutional hegemony is retained. The journal *Past and Present* is a good example of this, as it is of the poacher turned gamekeeper." (Jenkins 1997).

³ The preceding statements rely on an earlier, unpublished paper by Masayuki Sato.

⁴ Here I draw upon a dissertation under work by David Ludvigsson.

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