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Globalizing Cosmologies

Caroline Dodds Pennock and Amanda Power

Few terms are as ubiquitous and yet as deceptive as ‘globalization’.¹ Although historians quarrel over chronology and characteristics, it is conventionally understood to mean the specific historical process initiated by the European ‘discovery’ of the Americas in 1492, which culminated in our interconnected planet, our modernity. This is a modernity profoundly shaped by the demands and ideologies of capitalism, and so its history is traced principally through the movement of commodities and growth of markets.² Methodological considerations, including perceived availability of source material, have reinforced the tendency among historians to prioritize such approaches.³ Thus, in the established narrative of intensifying ‘global’ integration, the ‘globalizing’ is done largely by Europeans and their

¹ For just a sample of terminological debates see Paul Bowles, “‘Globalizing’ Northern British Columbia: What’s in a Word?’, *Globalizations*, 10.2 (2013), 261-76; and Nayef R.F. Al-Rodhan and Gérard Stoudmann, ‘Definitions of Globalization: A Comprehensive Overview and a Proposed Definition’, Geneva Centre for Security Policy (Geneva, 2006).

² Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The Origin of Capitalism: a longer view*, 2nd edn (London, 2002).

³ Works which (implicitly or explicitly) assume globalization to be synonymous with a ‘world economy’ include: Jan de Vries, ‘The limits of globalization in the early modern world’, *Economic History Review*, 63.3 (2010), 710-33 and co-authored articles by Dennis O’Flynn and Arturo Giráldez, beginning with their ‘Born with a “Silver Spoon”’: The Origin of World Trade in 1571’, *Journal of World History*, 6.2 (1995), 201-21.

empires; it is among them that the capacity for thinking and operating on a worldwide scale is concentrated, and their specific approaches and achievements are treated as archetypal.

Communities and societies that are not seen as playing an active part in this particular process tend to be excluded by default: mere forerunners, spectators or victims of the progress of more advanced nations. Yet their exclusion does not seem to provoke doubt about whether the contemporary world is really ‘globalized’ or prompt reflection on whether employing the terminology of ‘the global’ is more ideologically driven than geographically accurate.⁴

Despite multiple challenges to these Eurocentric biases, analysis continues to be dominated by a relatively stable, teleological and politicized understanding of the forms that ‘globalizing’ thought and action can take.⁵ At stake in all this is a moralized discourse in

⁴ Moyn and Sartori ask: ‘Even today are there not spaces on the earth that fall outside the networks of social life and intellectual circulation but whose inclusion is required for a truly global framework?... It may even be that the expansive space that is today called “the global” has never really existed’. ‘Approaches to Global Intellectual History’, in Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori (eds.), *Global Intellectual History* (New York, 2013), 5. The World Bank, for example, reported: ‘many poor countries - with about 2 billion people - have been left out of the process of globalization’. *Globalization, growth, and poverty: building an inclusive world economy* (New York, 2002), 2. Scholars, too, are content to conceive of ‘globalization’ that does not include the whole planet. See James Belich *et al* (eds.), *The Prospect of Global History* (Oxford, 2016), 3-5.

⁵ Jerry H. Bentley, ‘Beyond Modernocentrism: Towards Fresh Visions of the Global Past’, in Victor H. Mair, *Contact and Exchange in the Ancient World* (Honolulu, 2006), 16-29.

which ‘globalization’ is seen as a marker of modernity, and in which the legitimacy of the current forms of the ‘global’ and the ‘modern’ resides partly in their conjunction, and partly in a strongly implied comparison with the ‘backwardness’ of other times and places. The vast majority of works of ‘global history’, regardless of whether they are Eurocentric or consciously provincialize Europe, choose starting dates that conform to conventional periodization and its embedded assumptions about the distinctive nature of different eras. Many pre-modern societies, such as our own Pre-Columbian and medieval⁶ European fields of interest (when they appear at all), thus find their place in larger historical narratives only as a source of evidence for ‘archaic’ or ‘proto’ globalization.⁷ Particular aspects of the past are selected for study precisely because they seem to indicate deep continuities in human ambition and activity. These approaches tend to obscure the fact that ‘modernity’ and the ‘global’ are not fixed qualities residing only in the present, but are provisional and contingent ways of perceiving the world that have been, and remain, subject to perpetual redefinition according to the needs of different peoples and times. Scholars have generally lacked,

⁶ ‘Medieval’ is used occasionally in this article - with reservations - for chronological comparability, not to suggest a particular mindset, ideology, or developmental stage.

⁷ A.G. Hopkins, ‘Introduction: Globalization - An Agenda for Historians’, in his, *Globalization in World History* (London, 2002), 1-9. This discussion is largely limited to Eurasia, while existing historiography remains mysteriously silent on Pre-Columbian long-distance networks. See, for example, Heather McKillop, ‘Ancient Maya Trading Ports and the Integration of Long-Distance and Regional Economies’, *Ancient Mesoamerica*, 7.1 (1996), 49-62.

however, are approaches to recognizing and thinking about ‘global’ and ‘globalizing’ thought that can stand outside existing paradigms and dominant narratives. Our sense of what is ‘global’ and ‘globalizing’ is thereby gravely impoverished, stripped of the richness and diversity that – one might fancy – should characterize a terminology designed to describe humanity and its environments in their totality, and the ways that these have been imagined over the millennia.

In what follows, we contend that many communities and societies - whether conceived as pre-modern, indigenous,⁸ non-western, or otherwise subaltern to western modernity - possessed their own complex, sophisticated and dynamic ways of understanding the ‘global’ and envisaging themselves as ‘globalizing’ actors within it. These were not less creative, vivid, sophisticated or ambitious than our own; one could argue that they were in some ways more so. But historians working on such societies have tended to make cases for their inclusion within ‘global history’ in terms that speak to prevailing constructs, or simply accept their exclusion, rather than to seeking to challenge, reframe or even simply to improve, the

⁸ We follow the UN’s ‘working definition’: ‘indigenous’ refers to cultures (or the ancestors thereof) ‘which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing in those territories, or parts of them.’ Douglas E. Sanders, ‘Indigenous Peoples: Issues of Definition’, *International Journal of Cultural Property*, 8 (1999), 6. Such groups frequently suffer economic, political and social disadvantage.

nature of these constructs.⁹ Instead of allowing the imperatives and values of a particular form of ‘globalization’ and its conception of the ‘global’ to determine the framework of research, we need to be asking far more important questions: what does it really mean to be ‘global’ or to ‘globalize’? Why have societies thought in ‘global’ terms and why have they presented their activities as ‘globalizing’? These questions require a much broader enquiry into the many conceptions of the ‘global’ that have emerged in human societies, and how they have functioned in those societies and beyond. Our concept of ‘globalizing cosmologies’ offers a fresh approach to this problem, using the cases of Aztec Mexico and the late-medieval Latin West (see Maps 1 and 2) as a lens through which to reimagine the global as a flexible and culturally specific concept, the precise understanding of which shifts through time and space without ever losing its imaginative power.

In order to redefine such well-established paradigms of global history, we must first address the conceptual slippage that causes most scholars in the field to confuse specific characteristics with generic models. Frequently, it seems, we treat ‘our’ ways of imagining the ‘global’ and ‘globalizing’ as if they were universal categories of description and analysis which can be applied as analytic tools for the study of the past. This leads to a distorting focus on certain - often quite peripheral - aspects of the history of societies to which we are otherwise indifferent. It embeds the assumption that human societies will, or should, move

⁹ E.g. Martin Pitts and Miguel John Versluys (eds.), *Globalisation and the Roman World: World History, Connectivity and Material Culture* (Cambridge, 2014); Nile Green, *Terrains of Exchange: Religious Economies of Global Islam* (London, 2014).

towards thinking and acting ‘globally’, that it is essentially the removal of obstacles and the acquisition of helpful technologies which enables this natural, inevitable step.¹⁰ Such assumptions obscure the considerable distinction between developing large-scale trade networks and viewing these as ‘global’ in their compass and significance; between engaging widely with the inhabitants of different regions and presenting that as a process of ‘globalization’; and, indeed, between the capacity to think in ‘global’ terms and having the desire to act beyond one’s borders. The conceptual slippage arises, presumably, because we are all natives of our modernity and its ways of imagining the ‘global’. We are immersed in these subjectivities, these compellingly constructed rationalities and, perhaps, their shimmering promises for the future of ‘globalized’ humanity. At this moment in history, we inhabit teleology’s triumph and our whole way of life, including our professional activities, is deeply implicated in its praxis.

To counter this tendency, it may be helpful to draw on the distinction made in anthropology between the ‘emic’ and the ‘etic’ perspective.¹¹ Most histories of the global and globalization present themselves as taking an etic (external and notionally objective) perspective, but are in practice emic (culturally immersed insider) in their basic definitions. In other words, global

¹⁰ See esp. Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the making of the modern world economy* (Princeton, 2009).

¹¹ See Alan Barnard, ‘emic and etic’, in Alan Barnard and Jonathan Spencer (eds.), *Routledge encyclopedia of social and cultural anthropology*, 2nd edn. (London, 2010), 180-3; Daniel K. Richter, ‘Whose Indian History?’, *William & Mary Quarterly*, 50.2 (1993), 387-9.

histories are written by historians indigenous to our particular ‘globalized’ modernity, but are constructed to give the impression of detached scholarly objectivity, claiming to deal in universals when in fact they are doing the reverse. Such difficulties are hardly unique to the practice of global history, but they are particularly acute here because the problem extends to the most basic definition of what belongs to the field and what does not. Even explicit challenges to the Eurocentricity and modernocentricity of global history have tended to reinforce this slippage rather than exposing it. For example, Sanjay Subrahmanyam famously attempted to subvert Eurocentric developmental schema by using the notion of ‘connected histories’ to uncover the roots of ‘early modernity’ emerging organically in South Asian communities rather than being imposed by European encounter. His has been an important project: an influential attempt to recover active, intricate indigenous histories for South Asian societies. But even while overtly rejecting Eurocentric models, Subrahmanyam implicitly confirmed globalization (in its contemporary sense) as an essential quality of modernity. For Subrahmanyam, ‘modernity... is located in a series of historical processes that brought hitherto relatively isolated societies into contact, and we must seek its roots in a set of diverse phenomena - the Mongol dream of world conquest, European voyages of exploration, activities of Indian textile traders in the diaspora, the “globalization of microbes”...and so on’.¹² Many of the characteristics of Subrahmanyam’s South Asian ‘early modernity’ mirror the attributes of a surprisingly conventional understanding of the origins of globalization. An autochthonous modernity might be a way of recentering global narratives on Asia, or even

¹² Sanjay Subrahmanyam, ‘Hearing Voices: Vignettes of Early Modernity in South Asia, 1400-1750’, *Daedalus*, 127.3 (1998), 100.

Africa, but what about the Americas and Australasia? By virtue of deriving from a field whose history may be fitted relatively neatly into conventional models of interconnectivity, Subrahmanyam's work implicitly reinforces the exclusion of some other non-western societies from current understandings of 'modernity'. Within this system of stable categories, even when one element is problematized, others are left uncontested, so that the essential structure remains in place. Only by recognizing and reimagining the 'global', and indeed, the activity of 'globalization', as emic concepts, the essences of which are transformed by their historical context, can we create a conceptual framework which provides space for medieval and non-western histories, or even for alternative perspectives on modern developments. It is not enough to find conventionally conceived, external, markers of global modernity on the margins, we must try to step outside our own embedded assumptions and view the 'globe' from 'inside' another reality.

How, then, can the historian recognize and reconstruct a variety of 'emic' conceptions of 'the global' from an 'etic' standpoint? How can we overcome the pervasive sense that the 'global' is produced by tangible integration between particular (though not all) regions? If we recognize our view of 'globalization' as an ideology rather than a process,¹³ by what methods can we discover the strands of 'globalizing' thought in societies whose ambitions and scope for activity took a different form? There is a tendency to presume that medieval and

¹³ For example, a more palatable synonym for economic and cultural colonization of the global south. Cf Vijay Prashad, *The Poorer Nations: A Possible History of the Global South* (London, 2012).

premodern indigenous societies had a partial and incomplete knowledge of the globe, which - in stark contrast with early modern European societies, of which the same thing was true - precluded them from possessing 'globalizing' ambitions as they were unable to conceive of what we now know to be our whole planet, much less involve themselves in more than a small part of it. There is little doubt that these societies were generally aware of the limits of their information about the details of distant lands - more aware, in many ways, than we are of the limits of our own.¹⁴ Yet their epistemological priorities were such that this did not impact on their capacity to envision their environment on a cosmic scale, to assign meaning to it, and to see their societies as significant agents in global time and space. They did this - as we do ourselves but often without fully recognising it - by imbuing the earth with an existential coherence that accounted for the nature of life and humanity.¹⁵ We have called the product of this imaginative capacity a 'globalizing cosmology'. By this we mean a cosmology - a complete view of heavens and earth - that enables a society to think about its place within a clearly envisioned 'global' context, to conceive of its actions in such terms

¹⁴ A point made effectively, if polemically, in Noam Chomsky and Andre Vltchek, *On Western Terrorism: From Hiroshima to Drone Warfare* (Chicago, 2013). See also Denis Cosgrove on the way that western 'global' thinking has been dominated by carefully crafted imagery and propaganda. *Apollo's Eye: A Cartographic Genealogy of the Earth in the Western Imagination* (Baltimore, 2001).

¹⁵ See Denis Cosgrove, *Geography and Vision: Seeing, Imagining and Representing the World* (London, 2008).

and, in many cases, to legitimize political, social or economic agendas with reference to ‘global’ processes.

Our intention in this is not simply to redefine the ‘global’ as the world-view or *oecumene* of any given society, although we would certainly contend that the complexity and sophistication of indigenous and medieval world-views make them worthy of at least equal consideration with the ‘global’ thought of later periods. It seems likely that most, if not all, societies understand their environment in ways that produce a cosmology, but that does not make them ‘globalizing’; simply to have an understanding of the world is not necessarily to engage with that world. A ‘globalizing’ cosmology is typified by a process of engagement, in which the implications of the world-view translate to tangible activity. It might include origin or creation myths, divinities and other transcendent forces that affect the whole world, rather than just the specific portion of it in which the culture operates. It could be fundamental to identity: was the society connected, isolated, large, small, expanding, contracting; how was it to be ordered; what were the roles of women and men in this process; how should it relate to its neighbours? It might provoke or support expansionist, ‘globalizing’ or universalizing aspirations, or be explored and articulated through a creative dialogue between existing ideas and new ambitions.¹⁶ Within longer histories, it might well serve all these ends at different times, or at once, for different groups within society: there is no reason to assume

¹⁶ It might also cause a society to refuse to engage in ‘globalizing’ behaviour or to reject opportunities to connect with other societies.

homogeneity or a unidirectional process of the kind usually envisaged as ‘globalization’ or something that necessarily engenders such a process.

Often, such processes were experienced most profoundly during what might be called a ‘globalizing moment’: a time when a society or elements within it consciously intensify their sense of themselves as global actors in order to achieve what might be relatively localized ends, or to disseminate their world-view more widely. The concept of ‘globalizing cosmologies’ is very broadly applicable, including to our own modernity, but in what follows we will explore it through an integrated comparison, principally, of ‘globalizing moments’ among the Aztecs and the thirteenth-century Latin West.¹⁷ In both cases, we have access to articulations of highly developed and sophisticated cosmologies, and are able to see something of the context in which they operated, their aims, and their intended audiences. Medieval and indigenous societies can be investigated as entities confident in their ‘global’ framework and possessing a harmonious sense of their cosmos; a totality of vision which grew out of and facilitated social and political action. This is an important subversion of narratives which tend to see the indigenous inhabitants of Africa, the Americas, Australasia and, perhaps to a lesser extent, Asia, as ‘recipients’ of globalization, victims and subjects of the oppressive forces which inevitably accompanied colonization. The global history of these

¹⁷ Here understood as the parts of westernmost Eurasia in which the authority of the Roman church was acknowledged. See Tim Geelhaar, ‘Talking About *christianitas* at the Time of Innocent III (1198–1216): What Does Word Use Contribute to the History of Concepts?’, *Contributions to the History of Concepts*, 10.2 (2015), 7-28.

societies was not merely ‘a response, on a global scale, to the shocks set off by the Iberian initiatives’.¹⁸ If anything, many cultures possessed more powerful global ambitions before 1492, when their global imagination was unhindered by European hegemonies and categories.

The Aztec (or, more properly, Mexica) people of Tenochtitlan who dominated Central Mexico in the 1400s are a prime example of the ways in which a ‘globalizing cosmology’ can be deliberately constructed and actively experienced. They thought in ‘global’ terms and operated within a framework which was consciously designed to embrace and transform every aspect of the world, known and unknown. The Aztecs were only too aware of the limitations of their geographical knowledge: the world was *cem-anahuac*, the place surrounded by water, a universe bounded on the horizontal plane by the *ilhuicaatl* (‘water which reaches the heavens’), these great oceans forming a perfect orb (it is tempting to say, ‘globe’).¹⁹ Perpendicular to the terrestrial world (Tlalticpac, the earth, ‘on the land’), the vertical plane reached below to the nine underworlds of Mictlan and above through the multiple, probably thirteen, heavens. Importantly, this belief structure blended the

¹⁸ Serge Gruzinski, *The Eagle & the Dragon: Globalization and European Dreams of Conquest in China and America in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2014), 3.

¹⁹ Bernardino de Sahagún, *Florentine Codex, General History of the Things of New Spain*, trans. and eds. Charles E. Dibble and Arthur J.O. Anderson, 12 books in 13 vols, 2nd edn (Santa Fe, 1950-82), 11: 12: 247. Hereafter *Florentine Codex*. References are given as book: chapter: page number.

metaphysical with the earthly. One passed through the lower levels of the clouds, moon, sun, stars and planets, before reaching the gods and finally Omeyocan, the place of duality, the extreme edge of the known universe. The physical nature of these celestial realms is clear in Aztec thought: the gods lived not in a different dimension, but merely on a higher level. Similarly, Mictlan, the land of the dead below, was a dark, cold and damp place, foul for inhabitants, but much like the soil of the fertile earth. Spirits trying to reach Mictlan had to undertake an exhausting four-year journey to reach the lowest, ninth, level.²⁰ The Aztecs' global universe encompassed both the spiritual and the physical. Ometeotl, the transcendental god of duality, lived not only in Omeyocan but also (in his identity as Huehueteotl, the Old God) 'on the navel of the earth, within the circle of turquoise': at the apex of the universe, and also at its axis.²¹ The Aztecs' island capital of Tenochtitlan, surrounded by water like the world itself, was a deliberate microcosm of this world-view, and its physical and metaphorical focus was the Templo Mayor (Great Temple), which tangibly linked local and global concerns.

The universal scope of the Aztec cosmos is clear and, in its ambition to reach beyond the mundane and encompass all aspects of the world, it is inherently 'globalizing'. In studies of indigenous, particularly Mesoamerican, cultures, this type of world-view is frequently

²⁰ Eduardo Matos Moctezuma, 'Symbolism of the Templo Mayor', in Boone (ed.), *Aztec Templo Mayor*, 186-9.

²¹ *Florentine Codex*, quoted in Miguel León-Portilla, *Aztec Thought and Culture*, trans. J.E. Davis (Norman, 1963), 32.

referred to as a 'cosmovision'. Borrowed from Spanish (*cosmovisión*), this term refers to 'the ways in which cultures combine their cosmological notions relating to time and space into a structural and systematic whole'.²² The cosmovision is more than the world-view in that it engages directly with how belief and practice are integrated: this is a way of viewing, structuring, understanding, and engaging with the world through cosmology (in its anthropological sense, as a coherent vision of an ordered universe). Inherently driven by praxis, the cosmovision is a reciprocal structure, binding together a society's multiple ideologies and activities, in which the physical and spiritual worlds are harmoniously and purposefully integrated.

One of the difficulties in trying to establish the 'globalizing' nature of cosmology is that cultures and ideologies can be frustratingly complex, shifting and intangible - a contributing factor, no doubt, to the tendency of scholars to focus on trade and commodities as a way to trace 'global' networks. This situation is compounded in the pre-modern world by the elusiveness of medieval and Pre-Columbian belief, especially in the almost limitless realms of individual experience. The scarcity of sources for Mesoamerican culture is well known; the rich indigenous pictorial record was largely destroyed in the aftermath of the European invasions and post-conquest alphabetic documents tend, inevitably, to capture a static and monolithic picture. Dominated by elite perspectives, these early 'codices' are an invaluable,

²² David Carrasco, *Religions of Mesoamerica* (Long Grove, 2014), 69.

but highly problematic, source for Mexica belief and practice.²³ But the coherence of Aztec thought is not merely a standardized figment of the early colonial imagination. Operating on a smaller scale than the vast regions that acknowledged the authority of the Roman church, the Aztecs were able to effectively impose a dominant ideology which was remarkable for its coherent synthesis of the terrestrial, metaphysical, political and spiritual realms. History and myth were mirrored in ritual and urban planning, while humans were constrained by not only natural and divine forces, but also the expectations of historic and calendrical cycles. And, as we will demonstrate, this complex and fatalistic cosmology was no mere idealized model, but a strategic means of structuring the Aztecs' 'global' vision at a particular moment, promoting and validating their imperial agenda.²⁴ This was not the immutable and homogenized world-view which is sometimes presented as typifying non-modern cultures; the Aztec cosmovision was a dynamic structure in which the relationship between individuals and the world was constantly reinvented. This active dialogue between ideology and practice is fundamental to our conception of a 'globalizing cosmology'; the interpretative force of the 'global' lies not in its etic structural significance as a theoretical mechanism of history, but in the flexible ways it can influence and help to articulate a society's understandings of its actions within the metaphysical world. As we shall see, Latin Christendom also had a richly imagined cosmos,

²³ Caroline Dodds Pennock, *Bonds of Blood: Gender, Lifecycle and Sacrifice in Aztec Culture* (Basingstoke, 2008), 3-9.

²⁴ Johanna Broda, 'The Provenience of the Offerings: Tribute and Cosmovisión', in Elizabeth Hill Boone (ed.), *The Aztec Templo Mayor: A Symposium at Dumbarton Oaks, 8th and 9th October 1983* (Dumbarton Oaks, 1987), 211-56.

in which the temporal and spiritual realms were closely entwined. Significantly, however, the Aztecs were acting principally within the relatively discrete setting of Tenochtitlan and its surrounds - their sphere of influence had a single clearly identified centre, and there seems to have been relatively little dispute regarding the essentials of their world-view, although there was naturally variation of belief and practice across the empire. The colonial sources - largely recorded by Spanish missionaries informed by male survivors of the indigenous nobility - almost certainly overemphasize the apparent consensus of belief; but a universal education system, effective administrative and religious centralization meant that the Tenochca were able to create a coherent and widely shared world-view which could shape Aztec actions and be actively promoted in their subject territories.

In contrast to Mesoamerica, there is, of course, a remarkably rich survival of documentary and material evidence from medieval Europe. The bulk of it was produced by a relatively narrow group of elite males with a shared interest in ensuring continuities in authority and ideology over the centuries, crafting what has often been described as *the* 'medieval world-view'. More recently, historians have recognised the indeterminacy, variation and subjectivities that it obscured. We should therefore see local identities as existing in dialogue with cosmologies that invested immediate concerns with larger resonances. This means that the cosmologies themselves should be understood as dynamic, contested, flexible and purposeful rather than, as formerly, as inert representations, or mere curations, of an

oecumene whose outlines had been laid down centuries before.²⁵ Even if cosmologies were largely constructed and promulgated by members of elites among a population conditioned broadly to accept ecclesiastical pronouncements, they had to be meaningful to their recipients, and adaptable enough to gain traction in a variety of shifting situations, to survive challenge, resistance and rejection.

To see how these ideas worked in the Latin west as ‘globalizing’ cosmographies, it is necessary to look beyond the sources that are usually deployed to understand ‘world-views’: predominantly geographical materials and travel narratives. There is, in this period, no shortage of material for a historian looking to find traces of ‘proto-globalization’; this is, indeed, the general tenor in studies of such sources. But that is to impose a teleology and embed values that would have meant very little to the people concerned. The ‘globalizing’ character of medieval Latin thought was not a product of the accumulation of information about the world and its opportunities, but emerged with changes in the dynamics of power and social order. Much of the meaning of human existence was located beyond an individual’s palpable environment, beyond the merely factual: within a richly imagined, fluid, ‘global’ time and space.

²⁵ See J. B. Harley and David Woodward (eds.), *Cartography in Prehistoric, Ancient, and Medieval Europe and the Mediterranean*, vol. 1, *The History of Cartography* (6 vols. Chicago, 1987-), esp. 506-9.

All life was lived below the turning heavens that encircled the sphere of the world, and the movements of planets, stars and comets, so much more intimately known in an age of dark nights, were believed to determine terrestrial life in tangible ways.²⁶ The instabilities of environment and fortune were potentially negotiable through relics, amulets, charms, prayers, penances and pilgrimages that drew on forces beyond the merely human.²⁷ These ways of understanding the relations of heavens and earth, and between humanity, nature and fate show an imagination at work that was already ‘globalized’, in the sense that the causative powers of the cosmos, and human strategies within them, were seen as operating on a ‘global’ scale, and meaningful precisely because of this. In more tangible terms, too, the local was imbued with ‘global’ significance. The produce of the farmed earth paid tax and tithe, linking labour to systems of governance, law and pastoral care, to the luxury trades, politics and wars of the secular and ecclesiastical elites. Such connections extended far beyond the knowledge of any individual: they were a multitude of fragile links – commercial, military, diplomatic, devotional, evangelical – that ran to distant parts of the world. Formal doctrine, part of basic education, was transmitted orally and widely depicted in material culture, disseminating official cosmologies, rendering them continuously active, forming the minds and perceptions of new generations of the faithful.²⁸ Past, present and future, as well as

²⁶ Colum Hourihane (ed.), *Time in the Medieval World: Occupations of the Months & Signs of the Zodiac in the Index of Christian Art* (Princeton, 2007).

²⁷ Don C. Skemer, *Binding Words: Textual Amulets in the Middle Ages* (Pennsylvania, 2006).

²⁸ Norman Tanner and Sethina Watson, ‘The least of the laity: the minimum requirements for a medieval Christian’, *Journal of Medieval History*, 32.4 (2006), 395-423.

authority, were envisaged on an explicitly planetary scale. The population learned that the first humans had been born in Eden [Gen 2.8], often marked on maps at the easternmost rim of the world's circle. There, the harmony of creation was ruptured by the first great sin of disobedience. Afterwards, humans - now mortal and doomed to suffering - multiplied and spread through the lands. Later, in Jerusalem, 'set in the centre of the nations, with countries all around her' [Ez 5.5], the death and resurrection of Christ restored the possibility of forgiveness and eternal life. It was from Jerusalem, the navel of the world, that the apostles travelled to the ends of the earth to bring the hope of redemption to all people. All these far-reaching episodes were physically located, and were enduringly resonant through time, filling the globe and infusing it with the fundamental truths and imperatives of the cosmos itself.

The apostles, with their explicitly global compass, became the archetype of the two forms of holy authority in medieval society.²⁹ One was vested through succession in the Apostolic See of Rome: the highest spiritual power in the world, with the right to bind and to loose all human souls [Matt 18.18]. The other was palpable in the fierce sanctity of individual women and men, whose devout lives and virtuous deaths brought ordinary people closer to God. These manifestations of 'apostolic' authority were widely and explicitly exercised: and always carried with them 'global' and 'globalizing' power. Secular rulers, too, drew on a sense of divinely mandated power that transcended mere territorial dominion.³⁰ It was as

²⁹ See Matt. 28. 18-20.

³⁰ See Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton, 1957).

God's temporal representatives that lay and religious elites alike framed demands for obedience from the population. Of crucial importance to this system was the promise to the population that the harsh inequalities and injustices of daily life would be remedied after death, obedience rewarded and sin and dissent punished. For the fulfilment of these promises, the globe was permeated by the strange and shadowy afterlife experienced by mortal souls awaiting this final judgement. As the Aztec *teyolia* (spirits of 'divine fire' animating the body) lingered in Mictlan, for the damned soul in the Latin West there was suffocating enclosure at the planet's fiery heart; for the contrite soul: purgation, variously located, but often in caverns running beneath the earth's surface, or at the antipodes. The redeemed soul might await the end of time in the earthly paradise of the east, or ascend to its maker through the planets and stars, observing the whole globe from afar and understanding the triviality of all human affairs.³¹ This tangle of ideas layered a higher reality, as imperceptible to living eyes as the terrible power of God, over the contours of the temporal sphere. The whole globe, then, belonged within these complex constructions of religious, social and political meaning, and there was no space for rival understandings of the cosmos. These were just some of the elements that historians have tended to see as a relatively static 'world-view', but which were in practice meaningful precisely because they were constantly being reshaped and deployed to serve immediate and local needs. Praxis was a perpetual and necessary element in the maintenance of the whole conceptual structure. Without regular

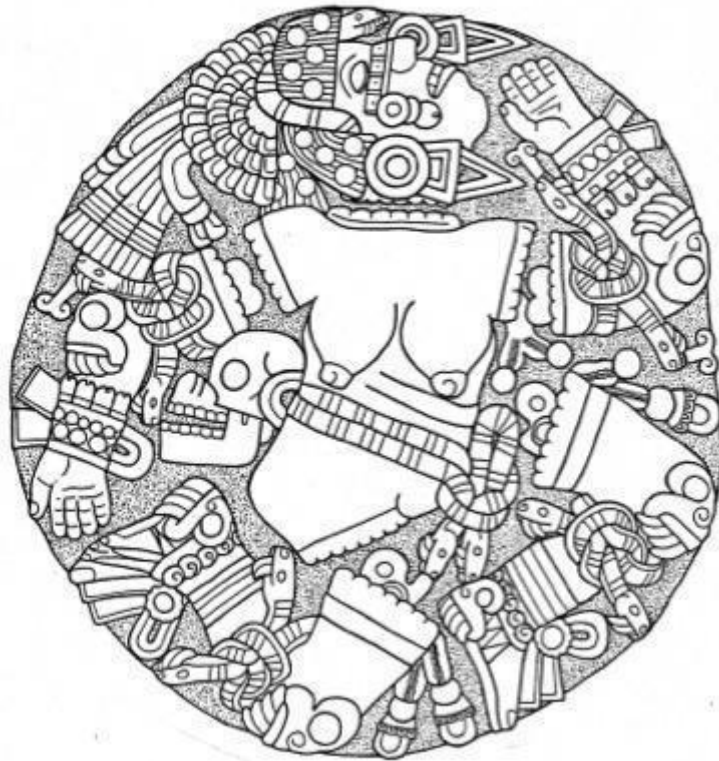
³¹ Eileen Gardiner, 'Hell, Purgatory and Heaven', in Albrecht Classen (ed.), *Handbook of medieval culture: fundamental aspects and conditions of the European Middle Ages* (Berlin, 2015), 653-73.

engagement and articulation, the force of these globalizing cosmologies would have faltered and been forgotten.

The Aztecs also rooted claims to ‘global’ authority in the layering of historic and spiritual power, establishing a metropolis which reflected and controlled the cosmos, and was ‘globalizing’ in both ambition and conception. Their great pyramid, with its twin temples of Tlaloc (water and fertility) and Huitzilopochtli (war and the sun) at the summit, not only represented the fundamentals of Aztec existence, but was also the axis of the terrestrial and celestial planes. Through this sacred mountain the Aztecs related the practical, politics and economics, (structure) with their ideology (superstructure).³² In Aztec origin stories, Huitzilopochtli, god of war, and the patron god of the Aztecs, was gloriously born and immediately triumphed over his sister Coyolxauhqui and her forces at the summit of Coatepec (Snake Mountain). The Templo Mayor, adorned with serpents, symbolized Coatepec: the physical, historical and spiritual site of Aztec power. Huitzilopochtli’s seminal victory was re-enacted during every sacrificial ritual: just as the dismembered pieces of Coyolxauhqui tumbled from the mountain peak, so the corpses of sacrificial victims were thrown from the temple summit, falling to rest near the huge Coyolxauhqui Stone which showed the broken pieces of the goddess [see Fig. 3]. Through the constant ritual reiteration of Huitzilopochtli’s first victory, the Templo Mayor was born and reborn as both the birthplace of the state and the centre of the cosmological universe. Lying at the heart of the

³² Eduardo Matos Moctezuma, 'Archaeology & Symbolism in Aztec Mexico: The Templo Mayor of Tenochtitlan', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 53.4 (1985), 800.

earthly plane of *cem-anahuac*, and acting as the nexus of the different layers of existence, the Templo Mayor was ‘the root, the navel, and the heart of all the world order’.³³ Much as Jerusalem was placed conceptually and cartographically at the centre of medieval Christian conceptions of the world [see Fig. 1], Aztec symbolic geographies framed Tenochtitlan as the centre of the universe. As one evocative Nahuatl song declared: ‘Who could conquer Tenochtitlan? Who could shake the foundation of heaven?’³⁴



³³ Diego Durán, *The History of the Indies of New Spain*, trans. and ed. Doris Heyden (Norman, 1994), 337.

³⁴ *Cantares Mexicanos*, fol. 19v, translated in Miguel León-Portilla, *Pre-Columbian Literatures of Mexico* (Norman, 1986), 77.

Fig. 3. Drawing by Emily Umberger of the 3.25m diameter Coyolxauhqui Stone, now in the Museo del Templo Mayor, Mexico. I am indebted to Emily Umberger for providing the image and for her permission to reproduce it.

The mapping of the cosmic order onto physical space is not a new idea. Such symbolic geography is frequently observed in pre-modern cities and scholars have made much of the ‘pervasive tendency to dramatize the cosmogony [origin or creation of the universe] by constructing on earth a reduced version of the cosmos, usually in the form of a state capital’.³⁵ But although such ‘exemplary centres’,³⁶ where the macrocosmos of the universe is patterned onto the microcosmos of the city, are widely recognized, the function of these spaces tends to be presented as an inevitable product of the ‘archaic mentality’. In this model, superstitious, ‘archaic’ man accepts the sacred view of the world without question; it is timeless, unchanging and eternal. Eliade goes so far as to say that ‘for archaic man, reality is a function of the imitation of a celestial archetype’.³⁷

³⁵ Paul Wheatley, *City as Symbol: An Inaugural Lecture delivered at University College, London, 20 November 1967* (London, 1967), 10.

³⁶ Clifford Geertz, *Negara: The Theatre-State in Nineteenth-Century Bali* (Princeton, 1980), 13.

³⁷ Mircea Eliade, *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return*, trans. W. R. Trask (New York, 1959), 5.

But although the Aztecs certainly viewed their world through a sacred lens, bolstering their claims to authority through the ritual re-enactment of mytho-historical³⁸ precedents, this did not produce retrospection, but rather ambition. The framing of Tenochtitlan as *axis mundi* and its inhabitants as predestined rulers was no accidental rationalization of imperial power; it was deliberately constructed (or at least reimagined) in 1431 when the city of Tenochtitlan was rising to power as part of the so-called Triple Alliance. At this time, the *tlatoani* (ruler) Itzcoatl ordered that all existing records be destroyed and a new official history be written to avoid the spreading of ‘sorcery’ and ‘falsehoods’ which might lead the ‘government to be defamed’.³⁹ This deliberate rewriting of history, occurring at a moment of transition, shows the Aztecs consciously deploying a globalizing cosmology to shape and direct their imperial aspirations. Some time after Huitzilopochtli’s victory over Coyolxauhqui, he is said to have miraculously ordained the Aztecs’ future settlement at a place called Tenochtitlan, which would be recognized ‘as the supreme capital’ and ‘rule over all others in the country’. Their future as warrior rulers was clear; as the priest Cuauhtlequetzqui proclaimed: ‘The might of our arms will be known and the courage of our brave hearts. With these we shall conquer

³⁸ ‘Mythical-history’ is an established term which acknowledges that there is no real value in trying to distinguish ‘facts’ from ‘myth in these richly layered cyclical histories. Susan D. Gillespie, *The Aztec kings: the construction of rulership in Mexica history* (Tucson, 1989) pp.xi-xxvii.

³⁹ *Florentine Codex*, 10: 29: 191.

nations, near and distant, we shall subdue towns and cities from sea to sea.’⁴⁰ This is no ethereal notion of sacred space, but a tangible and carefully conceived motivation for, and justification of, territorial dominance: of terrestrial and conceptual ‘globalization’.

By 1521, when the Aztec capital finally fell to the Spanish conquistadors, Tenochtitlan’s sphere of influence embraced some 200,000 square kilometres with a population of five or six million.⁴¹ The disparate borders of this hegemonic empire, comprising both subject and allied cities, required careful management, and military and political strategies were complemented by a cosmology designed to secure the Aztecs’ territorial position, physically and metaphysically. The ongoing excavations of the Templo Mayor demonstrate the process of ‘cosmological incorporation’ through which Tenochtitlan sought to secure its influence over subject and allied cities. Of the over 7,000 ritual objects unearthed from 131 burial caches over 80 per cent came from the imperial borderlands, including from areas of political volatility. It seems that ‘the Aztecs were making special efforts to gather and integrate the objects of peripheral cities and places into their city’s center... In this way, the social and

⁴⁰ Diego Durán, *The History of the Indies of New Spain*, trans and ed. Doris Heyden (Norman, 1994), 42-3.

⁴¹ Elizabeth M. Brumfiel, ‘Aztec hearts and minds: religion and the state in the Aztec empire’, in Susan E. Alcock *et al*, *Empires: Perspectives from Archaeology and History* (Cambridge, 2001), 284.

natural habitats of peripheral communities were symbolically contained at the *axis mundi*.⁴² This is an exemplary demonstration of Tenochtitlan's influence over its subject empire, but it was also a globalizing process, a tangible means of extending Aztec control. The Templo Mayor (and arguably the city as a whole) was not only the cosmos in miniature, but also the empire.⁴³

Folio 2r of the Codex Mendoza, the archetypal image of the Tenochtitlan-centred cosmology, represents this imperial and globalizing narrative [see Fig. 4].⁴⁴ The eagle alighting on the cactus recalls Aztec foundation stories, while also forming part of the Tenochtitlan glyph (the rock, *tetl*, below the *nochtli*, cactus) which sits above the shield and darts or arrows which are a metaphor for war and represent the city's warrior nature and origins. The page evokes not only the physical layout of the city's *calpulli* districts and its location at the heart of the lake, displaying the political structure through its founding dynasties, but also evokes the universe: Tenochtitlan sits at the heart of the four cardinal regions; Huitzilopochtli is suggested by the eagle, associated with the sun; and the whole is enclosed by waters, just as the world itself. But the account of the Tenochca past which appears at the base of the page and in the folios which follow, juxtaposes a political narrative with this metaphysical view; conquests are

⁴² David Carrasco, *City of Sacrifice: The Aztec Empire and the Role of Violence in Civilization* (Boston, 1999), 69, 54, 67.

⁴³ Emily Umberger, 'Art and Imperial Strategy in Tenochtitlan', in Frances F. Berdan *et al* (eds.), *Aztec Imperial Strategies* (Dumbarton Oaks, 1996), 85-106.

⁴⁴ This approach was inspired by Carrasco, *City of Sacrifice*, 40-3.

privileged over more domestic issues such as royal inaugurations, marriages, and natural disasters.⁴⁵ Through this complete and layered cosmology, Tenochtitlan expressed a clear vision of itself at a heart of a spiritual, but also highly political, universe. The harmonious ideal of the exemplary city is challenged by the competition on its borders; Tenochtitlan's globalizing cosmology was driven by both politics and principles.

⁴⁵ See Frances Berdan and Patricia Reiff Anawalt (eds.), *The Codex Mendoza*, 4 vols. (Berkeley, 1992), ii, esp. 3-7.

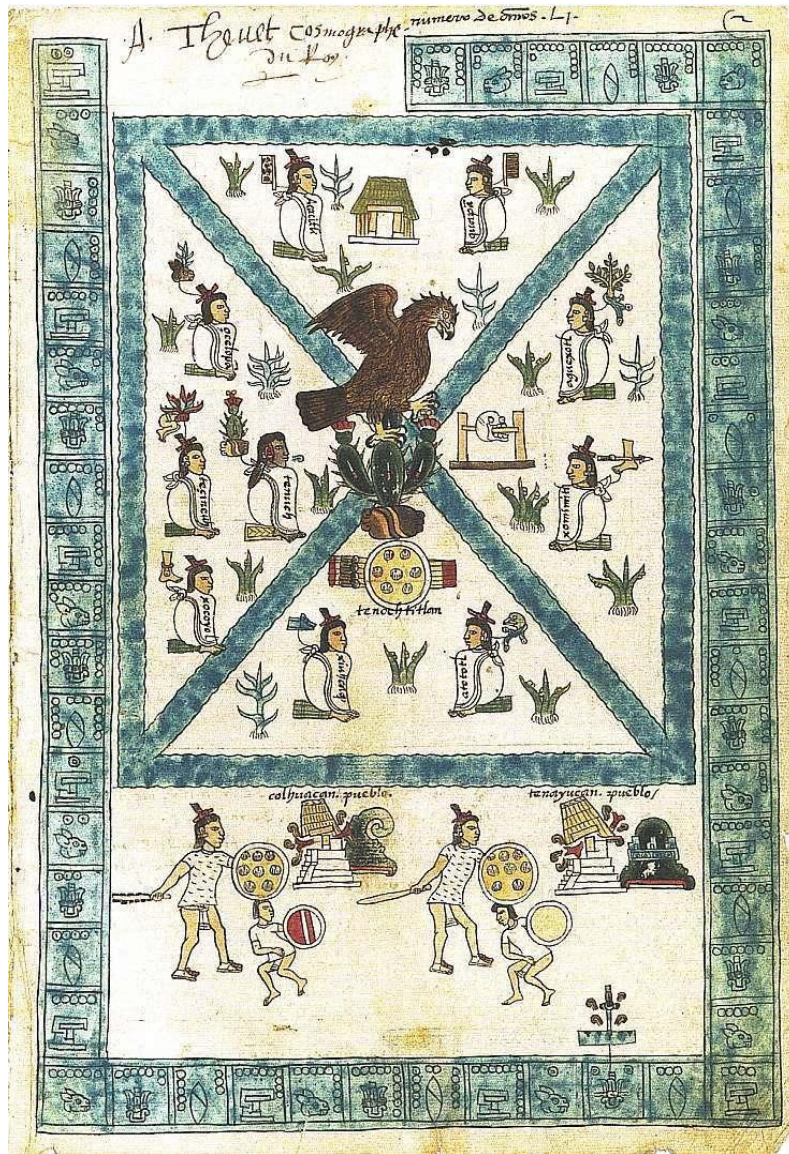


Fig. 4. Folio 2r from *The Codex Mendoza*. Copyright: Bodleian Library, Oxford

While elements in Christian and Muslim thought could inspire proselytizing activities, the Aztecs' distinctive cosmology was not universalizing. In Tenochtitlan, communal survival rested on the ability to manipulate power dynamics or 'flows of energy' within the existing cosmic structure, in which everyone and everything had their place. Failure to pay their 'blood debt' to the gods would result in a catastrophic collapse of the order of the universe,

but at the same time the natural order had to be respected. Thus, although the conquest of ‘foreign’ gods was central to the Aztec strategic need to acquire captives for sacrifice - the pictograph for a defeated town is a toppled and burning temple [see Fig. 3] - these deities and their followers remained an inextricable part of the Aztecs’ thought world. In this ‘power-filled cosmos of motion’, one could not destroy an alternate ‘cosmic centre’, in the form of a rival city, without upsetting the natural balance.⁴⁶ Even enemies had to be incorporated into the cosmology. This can help explain not only the innately globalizing nature of the Mexica thought world, but also the specific form of their globalizing ambitions: a hegemonic rather than a territorial empire. This was a truly ‘global’ cosmos, a view which saw every part of the world, physical, spiritual, and natural, individual and communal, as interdependent.

The medieval Hindu-Buddhist states of Southeast Asia provide a comparable example of ‘a pre-modern totalizing construct in which social, religious, and cosmological orders were integrally linked’.⁴⁷ Based on a *mandala* structure of power radiating outward from diffuse centres, these states have been dubbed ‘galactic polities’ by Tambiah, who importantly emphasizes the ways in which sacred ideologies were inextricable from the secular rather

⁴⁶ Kay Read, ‘Sacred Commoners: The Motion of Cosmic Powers in Mexica Rulership’, *History of Religions*, 34.1 (1994), esp. 60-1, 64.

⁴⁷ Juliane Schober, ‘The Theravāda Buddhist Engagement with Modernity in Southeast Asia: Whither the Social Paradigm of the Galactic Polity?’, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 26.2 (1995), 309.

than superseding them.⁴⁸ Resisting the tendency to archaize pre-modern cultures, Tambiah presents Thai kingdoms such as Sukhothai and Ayutthaya (Map 5) as ‘pulsating’ states which were flexible and dynamic enough to cope with the inherent paradoxes and contradictions of the politico-economic reality. The fluidity of these kingdoms is evident in the fact that the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century rulers of Sukhothai balanced the model of an exemplary capital with the reality of ‘a moving center of improvised bamboo palaces, and field camps of the warrior king’.⁴⁹ During this period of instability, the cosmological model was deliberately deployed as a ‘globalizing’ strategy to solidify theoretical power which was tenuous in reality. The expansion and elaboration of the Templo Mayor at pivotal junctures for the empire suggests a similar connection in Tenochtitlan between the desire to establish strength at precarious moments and the promotion of the globalizing cosmology.⁵⁰ Much discussion of the temple as a compelling site of state power focuses on the ways in which the

⁴⁸ S.J. Tambiah, *World Renouncer & World Conqueror: A Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand against a Historical Background* (Cambridge, 1976), esp. 102-31; Cf ‘solar polities’, based on the analogy of the diminishing gravitational pull of the sun. Victor Lieberman, *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, Volume 1, Integration on the Mainland* (Cambridge, 2003), 33.

⁴⁹ Stanley Jeyeraja Tambiah, ‘The galactic polity in Southeast Asia’, *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, 3 (2013), 527-8, 511.

⁵⁰ Richard F. Townsend, ‘Coronation at Tenochtitlan’, in Boone (ed.), *Aztec Templo Mayor*, 371-410.

notorious human-sacrificial cult was used to promote elite power over the unfortunate masses,⁵¹ but its messages were also directed further afield.

The paradigm of the exemplary centre is seductive, an idealized model in which cosmos, state and individual are intertwined and mirrored, the city or state a perfect miniature of the supernatural order. But it tends to shift our focus to the centre rather than the periphery. Paul Wheatley characterized early urban centres as principally ‘ceremonial complexes...instruments for the creation of political, social, economic and sacred space, at the same time as they were symbols of cosmic, social and moral order’. He rightly highlights the secular as well as sacred connotations of such structures, and the ways in which they functioned as ‘nodes in a web of administered (gift and treaty) trade’, but again tends to allow the ‘all-pervading religious context’ of these ‘brittle, pyramidal societies’ to overshadow what we have chosen to call the ‘global’ context.⁵² Tenochtitlan was not merely an ‘[island] of sacred symbolism in the intrinsically hostile continuum of profane space’,⁵³ adrift in an ocean of unknown threats; it was an active presence at the heart of a complex web of influences.

⁵¹ John M. Ingham, ‘Human Sacrifice at Tenochtitlan’, *Comparative Studies in Society in History*, 26.3 (1984), 379-400.

⁵² Paul Wheatley, *The Pivot of the Four Quarters: a Preliminary Enquiry into the Origins and Character of the Ancient Chinese City* (Edinburgh, 1971), 225-6.

⁵³ Paul Wheatley, *City as Symbol: An Inaugural Lecture delivered at University College, London, 20 November 1967* (London, 1967), 26.

This is not to dismiss religious structures and interpretations; both the Aztec and medieval European worlds were profoundly shaped by metaphysical forces. Rather, we suggest a shift in both emphasis and approach. The tendency in scholarship is to see pre-modern and non-western cosmologies as part of an ‘archaic’ way of understanding the world, fundamentally distinct from ‘modern’, rational, ways of thinking and seeing. But, as Meinig wrote about twentieth-century New England: ‘Every mature nation has its symbolic landscapes.’⁵⁴ Padrón suggests: ‘Modernity naturalizes geometric, optical, isotropic space as a fundamental epistemological category’,⁵⁵ privileging empiricist and literal representations of the world, and this has tended to obscure the necessarily symbolic nature of contemporary cosmographies and cartographies. A fiction of completeness underpins the universalizing claims of modern globalization: we know the whole world and therefore it can be controlled and connected. But even the most ‘scientific’ modern representations of the globe are impacted by choices which reflect not only practical constraints but also political agendas. The standard map of the world has long been a subject of controversy for its Eurocentric representation, which reflects the preconceptions and preoccupations of its sixteenth-century Flemish designer Mercator. For him, Europe was the centre of the world and the requirements

⁵⁴ D.W. Meinig, ‘Symbolic Landscapes: Some idealizations of American communities’, in D.W. Meinig (ed.), *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays* (Oxford, 1979), 164.

⁵⁵ Ricardo Padrón, *The Spacious Word: Cartography, Literature, and Empire in Early Modern Spain* (Chicago, 2004), 39.

of European navigators his prime concern. Just as Aztec representations of Tenochtitlan operated to promote their ascendancy, one could argue that the Mercator Projection promotes European dominance over the globe. But this is just the best-known example of the continuing importance of symbolic cartographies, for all rectangular projections inevitably distort the ‘reality’ of the globe which they pretend to portray. Rather than seeing spiritual and metaphysical ways of interpreting the world as part of archaic, superstitious narratives of ‘pre-modernity’, we need to recognize them as part of a more ambitious narrative of global space, explicitly rejecting models which tempt us to draw an arbitrary line between archaic and modern modes of thought and articulation.

Latin Christian thinking drew on a body of diverse ideas that had, as we have seen, extremely pronounced ‘globalizing’ tendencies. These could be left latent, or woven into larger social imaginaries, as required by local and immediate agendas or longer-term framings of proper Christian activity.⁵⁶ As a ‘globalizing’ imperative was so closely connected with the conceptualization and assertion of authority, it tended to be emphasized in situations where the nature, legitimacy and workings of power were at stake. One manifestation of this was the employment of eschatological language to emphasise the urgency of threats to the faithful, making it possible to invest even quite localized disputes and ambitions with cosmic implications, and periodically harnessed, rather as ‘security’ concerns are today, to give institutions and individuals a high responsibility and correspondingly enhanced powers. Such

⁵⁶ On ‘social imaginary’, see Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC, 2004).

tendencies were particularly palpable in the heartlands of the Latin West from the eleventh century.⁵⁷ They are perceptible in justifications for the rapid development of centralized ecclesiastical governance and jurisprudence, together with parallel developments in secular governance and systems of 'pastoral care' that brought the Christian inhabitants of the Latin West under regular clerical scrutiny and discipline.⁵⁸ The population was able to participate more actively in this cosmology through involvement in crusades and other penitential activities that connected individuals to the wider community. There was hunger among the laity for new forms of holiness that might renew and re-evangelize the world in its final age. Thus, economies, modes of governance, military ideologies, education, public ritual and display, and the direction of spiritual life drew energy and moral force from their location within a decidedly 'global' conception of past, present and future. It is in this far-ranging new dynamism that the employment of many strands of 'globalizing cosmology' can be detected.

One example of how it operated can be found in the response to the Mongol onslaught on Hungary and Poland in 1241-2. In conventional narratives of globalization, this was significant because it created the conditions for Europe to enter Eurasian networks of trade

⁵⁷ Traditionally understood by historians through paradigms of 'reform'. See Gerd Tellenbach, *The Church in Western Europe from the Tenth to the Early Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, 1993).

⁵⁸ Lateran IV, constitution 21, in Norman Tanner (ed. and trans.), *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* 2 vols. (London, 1990), vol. 1, 245.

and exchange.⁵⁹ Yet this narrowly conceived way of identifying ‘globalization’ takes a purely etic ‘world-systems’ perspective, obscuring the complex and strategic responses of Latin authorities, which served the demands of a very specific view of their society’s place in time and in human affairs. News spread rapidly of the attacks, but it was not until 1245 that a major Latin leader, Pope Innocent IV, attempted to communicate directly with the Mongols.⁶⁰ This was an especially precarious year for the papacy during a long-running struggle with the Holy Roman Empire. Innocent convened an ecumenical council, largely to assert papal supremacy against imperial claims: both directly, and by emphasising the importance of papal leadership in addressing other threats facing Christians. Around the same time, he launched an extensive evangelising enterprise to save souls before the world’s end, part of which involved dispatching envoys to the khan.⁶¹ Embassies were also sent around that time to the sultans of Syria and Egypt and the leaders of various Christian communities.⁶² The embassy to the Mongols was thus not principally a reaction to the attacks three years earlier, but related to internal politics. Although certainly aware of the immediate threat presented by

⁵⁹ Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System AD 1250-1350* (New York, 1989).

⁶⁰ Peter Jackson, *The Mongols and the West: 1221-1410* (Harlow, 2005), 58-134.

⁶¹ On the timing, see: Jackson, *Mongols*, 87; ‘Vita Innocentii IV’, in Alberto Melloni, *Innocenzo IV: La concezione e l’esperienza della cristianità come ‘regimen unius personae’* (Genoa, 1990), 269..

⁶² Jean Richard, *La papauté et les missions d’Orient au Moyen Âge (XIIIe-XVe siècles)* (Rome, 1977), esp. 45, 58-61.

the Mongols, the Council, too, considered that it was the danger to the Christian faith which was paramount.⁶³

The papal curia issued two encyclicals addressed to the Mongol khan and people, part of a series of statements that were designed to assert the authority of the papacy and the Roman church in a global context.⁶⁴ They set out concisely the cosmological understanding of the Latin church, within which they positioned both the Mongol actions and the Latin response. One contained an account of the human condition and redemption through Christ, emphasising the authority and role of the pope ‘to gain all people for God’.⁶⁵ The other reproached the Mongols for their violence and urged them to repent and make peace with God. Their significance and complexity can be missed if the identity of the envoys and their intended audiences are not understood. The envoys were friars chosen from among the Franciscans and Dominicans: orders recently instituted around a conscious reimagining of the lives and strategies of the original apostles in the service of contemporary ecclesiastical ends. Innocent explained that he had sent them, rather than high-ranking prelates, because the Mongols stood in grave need of pastoral guidance.⁶⁶ This placed the Mongols within the

⁶³ Lyons I, constitution II.4 in Tanner (ed. and trans.), *Decrees*, vol. 1, 297.

⁶⁴ Karl-Ernst Lupprian, *Die Beziehungen der Päpste zu islamischen und mongolischen Herrschern im 13. Jahrhundert anhand ihres Briefwechsels* (Vatican, 1981), nos. 20, 21, 141-9; James Muldoon, *Popes, Lawyers and Infidels* (Liverpool, 1979).

⁶⁵ [Authors’ translation.] Lupprian, *Beziehungen*, 144.

⁶⁶ Lupprian, *Beziehungen*, 149.

‘globalizing cosmology’ of the Latin West, obliterating any possibility of a rival cosmology. They could either conform to the truths set out for them, cease sinning, and become penitents under the guidance of Latin priests; or they could face damnation. Similar choices were being offered by inquisitors - albeit with more coercive force - to those in the Latin West who dissented from orthodox doctrine or practice. The letters to the khan were intended for a range of audiences including schismatic Christians and others encountered *en route* as well as the official recipients.⁶⁷ Yet one could argue that the most important audience - the one most likely to be attentive to the positioning and the project - was internal, and that even this explicit attempt at ‘globalization’ through the conversion of the Mongols belonged to the wide-ranging work of societal ordering and governance; or, as the papacy would doubtless have put it, of ensuring the salvation of the faithful.⁶⁸

It was, then, the short-term imperatives generated by the shift and press of affairs, rather than the history of trade and exploration, that must be examined if we are to understand the uses of ‘globalizing’ thought in the Latin West. Papal letters focusing on all aspects of the problems at hand, from an intransigent emperor, to the spread of heresy and the Mongol menace, were filled with a language of bleak eschatological urgency: imagery of Christians everywhere oppressed as kindness chilled and died in human hearts.⁶⁹ This was a landscape of foreboding

⁶⁷ Giovanni di Pian di Carpine, ‘Historia mongalorum quos nos tartaros appellamus’, in *Storia dei Mongoli*, ed. Enrico Menestò *et al* (Spoleto, 1989), e.g. 306–7.

⁶⁸ R. I. Moore, *The First European Revolution c. 970-1215* (London, 2000).

⁶⁹ Rebecca Rist, *Papacy and Crusading in Europe 1198-1245* (London, 2009).

on a global scale, for there was no space free of the thickening gloom of the end-times, while the threat to Christianity was necessarily a threat to all human souls. At the same time, responsibility to address the situation was envisaged globally. The summons to the council called upon: ‘the kings of the earth, the prelates of the church and other princes of the world’.⁷⁰ In the same vein, it was during these years that Innocent IV expanded the legal basis for papal jurisdiction over all human souls, not just Christians.⁷¹ This is, in many senses, a model of ‘extra-territorial or ‘cosmological’ globalization similar to the Aztecs’ all-embracing world-view. Thus, what we have, in the letters to the khan, the documents of the council, and canon law, is a deliberate reworking and deployment of a globalizing cosmology, unifying various elements of medieval European belief. The strategies drew on centuries of experience, but were innovative and modern, responding to a powerful conjunction of political, social and theological issues.

A ‘globalizing cosmology’ was far from the sole preserve of spiritual authorities. The thirteenth century was notable for the extent to which ideals of apostolicity permeated secular lordship. In most respects, Louis IX of France attained a spiritual power - confirmed later by his canonization - that far exceeded that of the politically embroiled popes of his day.⁷² Yet he sought to exercise this power through the same strategies as the pope and religious orders, using contemporary methods in pursuit of the old apostolic goals. The preparations for his

⁷⁰ Quoted in Tanner (ed. and trans.), *Decrees*, 273.

⁷¹ Melloni, *Innocenzo IV*; Muldoon, *Popes*, 3-18, 29-48.

⁷² See Jacques Le Goff, *Saint Louis* (Gallimard, 1996).

crusading endeavour of 1248-54 - during which he sent his own embassy to continue the efforts to convert the Mongols - included a programme of kingdom-wide moral and administrative reform.⁷³ He employed the techniques of *inquisitio* to address corruption, while penitential processions and prayers from the whole people sought to secure God's favour for victory.⁷⁴ This was not solely a view imposed from above on a skeptical population: the news of his subsequent defeat and capture in Egypt led to rioting against religious authorities, whose perceived incompetence was blamed for the failure.⁷⁵ On his return from the unsuccessful crusade, Louis undertook an even more vigorous regime of personal penance and moral reform of his subjects - recently characterized as 'redemptive governance'.⁷⁶ His approach was rooted in his society's strong sense that everyday moralities affected global affairs. We find echoes of his conception of royal governance in the ambitions

⁷³ William Chester Jordan, 'Anti-corruption campaigns in thirteenth-century Europe', *Journal of Medieval History*, 35.2 (2009), 204-19.

⁷⁴ Christoph T. Maier, 'Crisis, Liturgy and the Crusade in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 48.4 (1997), 628-57; Constance M. Rousseau, 'Home Front and Battlefield: The Gendering of Papal Crusading Policy (1095-1221)', in Susan B. Edgington and Sarah Lambert (eds.), *Gendering the Crusades* (Cardiff, 2001), 31-44.

⁷⁵ Garry Dickson, 'The Advent of the Pastores', *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire* 66.2 (1988), 249-267.

⁷⁶ William Chester Jordan, *Men at the Center: Redemptive Governance under Louis IX* (Princeton, 2012).

and self-presentation of other secular rulers. Emperor Frederick II, despite his long periods of conflict with the papal curia, also attempted to draw potency from this pervasive global cosmology, presenting himself as the proper leader and protector of the faithful, in crusade, against the Mongols, and elsewhere.⁷⁷ Here, the globalizing cosmology was deployed in a competitive arena, as Frederick sought to extend his conceptual and theoretical power beyond the borders of its effective influence.⁷⁸ These political antagonisms only strengthened the ways in which Christianity constructed itself around a ‘globalizing’ vision: disputes over specific aspects of the ideology energized the narrative and underlined its importance. Elites were critical to the creation, promotion and maintenance of globalizing ideas, but also contested and manipulated them in order to appropriate cosmological authority.⁷⁹

Globalizing cosmologies were thus frequently hegemonic, and recorded normatively by almost-exclusively male elites, who could draw on them in an attempt to position their office and actions more securely. Yet such ‘global’ claims and gestures were given greater depth of meaning because their societies were profoundly committed to a shared cosmology.

Globalizing ideas suffused the lives of individuals and communities, meaning that

⁷⁷ E.g. ‘Frederick's reply’ in Brian Tierney, *The Crisis of Church and State, 1050-1300* (Toronto, 1964), 145-6.

⁷⁸ Franz Bosbach, ‘The European Debate on Universal Monarchy’, in David Armitage (ed.), *Theories of Empire: 145-1800* (London, 1998), 81-98.

⁷⁹ On the construction of wider elite power, see Thomas N. Bisson (ed.), *Cultures of Power: Lordship, Status, and Process in Twelfth-Century Europe* (Pennsylvania, 1995).

cosmologies were also negotiated, created and contested at other levels of society. In Tenochtitlan, as the city reflected the cosmos, so the household mirrored the city, and the city the household; the threads of the globalizing cosmology reached outward to the empire's fringes, and inwards to the heart of the home.⁸⁰ While the *tlatoani* fought to keep in balance the universal forces which swirled around him,⁸¹ women's actions in the domestic sphere were also believed critical to maintaining the balance of the cosmos. Women were the guardians of hearthstones, symbol of the 'Old God' Huehuetectl, who was to be constantly appeased and supplied. With the women lay responsibility for caring for the revered maize: they blew softly on the grains before cooking to 'mitigate' their fear of the fire, and gathered dropped grains quickly to avoid divine displeasure leading to famine. The provision of food was a perilous activity: if a man ate a tamale which had been stuck to the cooking pot then he would fail on the battlefield: 'the arrow which was shot would not find its mark'. And if that most archetypal of female implements, the *metlatl* (grinding stone), was broken then someone in the household was fated to die.⁸² Even the most ordinary acts had to be completed with an awareness of their global consequences. In the Latin West, women were also able to operate powerfully within a 'global' environment. Despite their exclusion from clerical roles, women often drew authority from following an apostolic way of life, which meant rejecting the pleasures and ties of the temporal sphere, in order to obtain access to the hidden world of

⁸⁰ Caroline Dodds Pennock, "'A Remarkably Patterned Life': Domestic and Public in the Aztec Household City', *Gender & History*, 23.3 (2011), 528-46.

⁸¹ Kay Read, 'Sacred Commoners', 36-69.

⁸² *Florentine Codex*, 5, Appendix: 4, 13, 34: 184, 185, 194.

cosmic certainty which came only through dedication to God. Some joined religious orders, but many remained within their homes and communities, securing individual status and influence through their ability to call on the holy power that worked through prayer and the daily work of devotion, in some cases, producing revelatory visions or miracles.⁸³ Their prayers of intercession were widely considered to have a transformative power in the lives and spiritual states of those around them as well as far further afield - on the wars and missions of the faithful. The layering of macro- and micro- is inescapable; globalizing cosmologies were negotiated, created and contested at every level of society. Although a globalizing cosmology was often expressed or experienced in relation to the 'outside' world its meaning was localized and subjective; its audience and purpose were often predominantly, although not exclusively, internal.

We offer here 'globalizing cosmologies' as a challenge to monolithic, teleological ways of thinking about the 'global', and to the Eurocentric perspectives which often follow. The value of the 'globalizing cosmology' lies not in the way a society imagined its connections, its trade routes, but in its capacity to show the richness, variety and dynamism possible in 'global' thinking. There is an urgent need to think more provocatively and creatively; to develop more flexible and intellectually robust approaches to the questions of how, why and when communities conceive of themselves in global terms, and what we, as historians, can learn from being able to recognise and explore this strand in human thought. Understanding

⁸³ Tanya Stabler Miller, *The Beguines of medieval Paris: gender, patronage, and spiritual authority* (Philadelphia, 2014).

something of how societies have structured and used globalizing thought in a variety of periods enables us to see, for example, how early modern European societies came to prioritize the acquisition of empirical information about commercial and colonial opportunities over a deeper and more-integrated understanding of the cosmos. The consequent focus on commercial activity has led, in both western history and historiography, to a blindness to alternative ways of understanding and exploring significance, leading to the very 'narrow' sense of the 'global' which we have identified.

A 'globalizing cosmology' is a distinctive strategy for a society to adopt, but also one that, significantly, appears to be relatively common across recorded history. On the basis of the cases examined briefly here, we can see the close connections between globalizing thought and hegemonizing strategies. Complex cosmologies seem to be developed, articulated and widely disseminated as a way of legitimizing particular views of how a society should be organized and act, and at some points - 'globalizing moments', perhaps - injecting a sharp imperative into its affairs. They are effective precisely because they are 'global': they lay claim to all the space and time of humanity, consciously reducing or seeking to eliminate the legitimacy of alternative perspectives. The more successfully the cosmology can do this, the more effective it becomes as a way of describing, asserting, even policing, a society's sense of what is normal and reasonable. As we have shown here, the concept of a 'globalizing cosmology' enables us to rethink our linear and binary sense of the 'global', broadening our understanding to encompass a greater diversity of societies and perspectives, and helping us guard against the sense that our own culture was at some point in the past static and inward-looking, insulated from global dynamics. Paradoxically, globalizing cosmologies, although

frequently embedded in structures of conventional authority and hierarchy, potentially offer an important way to invert ‘global’ narratives and refocus them on previously marginalized histories. Such an approach might, for example, allow indigenous and colonized peoples to reimagine their own distinctive place in ‘global history’, rather than to see themselves as a peripheral player in Europe’s rise to world dominance.⁸⁴

There is nothing uniquely ‘medieval’ about a globalizing cosmology. These distinctive periods of engagement with ‘global’ thinking are experienced by societies throughout history and across the world. But it is our contention that what characterizes this particular ‘globalizing’ tendency at any given point is not tied to the tropes of modernity: to communication, technology, trade, and cultural interaction or uniformity. Societies in all periods, including our own, have grappled with their place in the global cosmos and deployed that position for specific purposes: political, religious, cultural and economic. And a United States which valorizes its place as ‘leader of the free world’ may be deploying a ‘globalizing cosmology’ just as much as an Aztec state which saw itself as the beating heart of the known universe, the axis of the thirteen heavens and nine underworlds.

⁸⁴ This approach complements the efforts of scholars who have sought to understand the ways in which global ‘encounter’ was perceived and driven by native peoples rather than Europeans, e.g. Daniel Richter, *Facing East From Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Harvard, 2003); Inga Clendinnen, *Dancing With Strangers: Europeans and Australians at First Contact* (Cambridge, 2005).