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Gender Meets World History:
Family and Political Regency[1]

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Abstract
In the last decades, history has taken different turns. In particular gender perspectives have been adopted and elaborated in almost every research area of history, though not that much in world history. For instance, the articles published in the *Journal of World History* between 2001 and 2013 show a general pattern of considerable gender blindness (with a few but important exceptions). The following article discusses several explanations as to why world history neglects gender perspectives. Firstly, one reason might be that world history, although not unfamiliar with cultural aspects and methodologies, has a strong tradition in materialism, while gender historians mostly work with cultural perspectives. Secondly, the article argues that gender historians are interested in underlining how complicated gender relations were in the past and thus they do not fit that well into more generalized world history approaches. Thirdly, gender historians do much research on women in local contexts in their own countries, which, of course, is of minor interest for scholars in world history. Fourthly, one might say that there is no lack of gender in world history – almost every society in the past has had a gender order that discriminated against women in comparison with men. What is lacking is a consciousness of this structure. Fifthly, the idea that most women in history have lived their lives in families and families do not play a crucial role in world history might prevent thorough research on this matter. In order to clarify that gender often worked as a structuring principle in human societies, the article concludes with an overview of similarities of the significance that gender had in almost all early modern political regencies. Dynastic thinking was established all over the world, and was everywhere built upon imagined family and kinship, being at the same time engendered with superior masculinity and subordinated femininity. It might be beneficial to take this worldwide structure into account in research on world history.

Keywords
Gender, culture, world history, family, political regency, dynastic thinking

[1] I am indebted to the two anonymous reviewers whose competent comments contributed to strengthen the arguments. The article is built on Maria Sjöberg, "Har världshistorien ett kön? Familj och släkt i världspolitikens mitt", *FLEKS Scandinavian Journal of Intercultural Theory and Practice,* 2 (2015).

Introduction: Gender Meets World History: Family and Political Regency

Research on gender history has grown tremendously in Western Europe and in the US since the rise of social history in the 1970s, and gender, defined as a socially constructed hierarchical order based on perceived sexual differences between men and women, is now a well-integrated aspect of historiography.[2] Although gender is perceived to be synonymous with women in several studies, and therefore not fully utilized as the analytical category of power-relations that it could be, it must be said that the impact of gender on history is significant.[3] This conclusion does not, however, apply to all historical approaches. A closer examination of this matter makes it clear that a gendered historical perspective is particularly absent in surveys or synthetic works on world history that are used in teaching at colleges and universities.[4]

Students reading chronologically based overview courses, which often begin with undergraduate studies in history, meet a past that is basically portrayed as being gender-neutral. Although textbooks in history should rely on actual research, one must distinguish the former from the latter. As far as one can judge from the previous discussion, it appears that *research* on world history is also characterized by a corresponding gender-blindness. In the American historian Patrick Manning's review on the research of world history and the emergence and further development of this research area, it is noted that: "World history, especially as a history of great states and long-distance trade, included little recognition of gender and little space for women."[5] The situation may have changed somewhat since the turn of 2000 when Manning made his assessment. Several overviews on world history have been published in which gender issues are dealt with.[6] Still – if you believe recent contributions to the debate, then scholars in world history often, but not always, overlook gendered aspects of the past.

How could that be? Is gender of less relevance to the world history approach than others? In recent years, the discussion has suggested several possible causes for the lack of interest in gender issues, which are later addressed in this article. In light of these circumstances, the intention of the following text is to bring the debate a step further by showing how gender, defined as a socially structuring order of power, can provide other and deeper perspectives on structural regimes of the past and therefore be useful for researching world history. In the first section, however, a brief background must be given. The second section provides further details about the outline of the previously mentioned

[2] Gender as an analytical category of power relations in societies is discussed in the groundbreaking essay by Joan W. Scott, "Gender: a Useful Category of Historical Analysis", *Gender and the Politics of History,* (New York: Colombia University Press, 1988).

[3] Christopher Alan Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World 1780-1914,* (Malden, Oxford, Carlton: Blackwell Publishing, 2004) is a wonderful piece of work but exemplifies also how gender is seen as synonymous with women's history.

[4] In Maria Sjöberg, *Kritiska tankar om historia* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2012), some actual surveys and synthetic works are examined from this point of view.

[5] Patrick Manning, *Navigating World History [Historians create a global past]* (New York, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 208.

[6] For example Bonnie Smith (ed.), *Women's History in Global Perspective,* vol. 1-3 (Urbana, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004-2005); Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Gender in History. Global Perspectives* (Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011 (2001).)

discussion. The third examines whether world history research really is as uninterested in gender perspectives as the debate suggests, and finally, it is shown how gender as an analytical category based on how empires and great powers have typically constructed the political regency can elaborate an explanatory context in a way that could also be of significance to world history.

Culture and World History

In general, historical research has undergone major changes since 1970, and in many ways, research in gender history has followed the mainstream pattern. In the 1970s the concept of gender history did not exist. Instead the concept was women's history, where efforts were aimed at making visible the invisible and almost forgotten women of historical significance in the past. In connection with the upswing of social history, an approach in women's history was established where women became a variable (among others), particularly in studies on socio-economic or demographic conditions in the past, regardless of approaches where power relations between and within genders were a guiding principle. In 1980, gender became a historical analytical concept and this area has since developed in several directions: queer, intersectionality, and materiality are just some of the many aspects that followed from poststructuralist and postcolonial influences. Power issues, however, are still of vital importance. The strained relations between essentialist and constructivist interpretations that have always existed in the movement for gender equality in Western Europe and the US since the turn of twentieth century – and still remain – imply that questions about what was determined by natural versus cultural circumstances are constantly being reviewed; cultural perspectives therefore dominated.[7] The development of theoretical perspectives in gender history subsequently coincides with the general shift of interest in history, from a focus on tangible assets to cultural conditions. Research emphasis on the varied past stresses symbolic and linguistic aspects and is made more important with a deep contextual understanding of historical processes rather than seeking driving forces and a foundational cause.[8]

The emphasis on cultural aspects, which is significant to research in history in general, is not as evident in synthetic works on world history, defined as history "of connections within the global human community".[9] The underlying issue in several synthetic works, which more or less follow Manning's view on world history, is the rise of the current Western world, interpreted from different angles, but with materialistic conditions in focus. For example, the anthropologist Jared Diamond's widespread and influential study of human history over thousands of years seeks the causes behind the growing inequality in the world. However, it is not injustices based on gender arrangements that are in focus, nor unequal class relations, but the distribution of material resources between countries

[7] Maria Sjöberg, "Från kvinnohistoria till genushistoria", Magnus Perlestam (ed.), *Genusperspektiv i historia. Metodövningar* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2001), gives a brief survey of the shift from women's history to gender history. Wiesner-Hanks, *Gender in History*, 6-10, gives a survey of different theoretical perspectives in gender history.
[8] Maria Sjöberg, "Förklara eller förstå. Meningen med historia", Lennart Andersson Palm & Maria Sjöberg (red.), *Historia. Vänbok till Christer Winberg* (Göteborg: Historiska institutionen, 2007).
[9] Manning, *Navigating World History,* 3.

and continents in the world.[10] Diamond uses an interdisciplinary methodology over large geographic areas. His emphasis on natural geographical factors and environments means that people's varied cultural conditions were certainly eclipsed, and continental interior conditions became homogenized. At the same time, natural and original geographic differences were elucidated. Even the archaeologist Ian Morris who, like Diamond, investigates historical perspectives on actual economic and political conditions – namely the current but perhaps temporary economic dominance of the West in the world – emphasizes natural geographic conditions. Morris constructs an index measuring resource availability and use of resources in vaguely defined areas known as East and West that are then compared over time. The emphasis is on quantifiable data and cultural conditions, and differences have a subordinate role, if any, in these measurements. For example, Morris states the following reason for why the industrial revolution occurred in the West:

> Given enough time, Easterners would probably have made the same discoveries and had their own industrial revolution, but geography made it much easier for Westerners – which meant that because people (in large groups) are all much the same, Westerners had their industrial revolution first. It was geography that took Looty to Balmoral rather than Albert to Beijing.[11]

Both Diamond and Morris are looking for an extended logic over the long period of time behind the economic and political dominance of the West during nineteenth and twentieth centuries. There is a long historiographical tradition on this issue. Unlike, for example, Andre Gunder Frank, Robert M. Marks, John Hobson and Kenneth Pomeranz, who all problematize the points of departure for comparisons between East and West and emphasize the complexity of the topic, pointing out that the issue is addressed from Eurocentric starting points, Diamond and Morris aim to find measurable causes and clarify factors that made the process logical and necessary.[12] Both Diamond and Morris also represent an influential approach in which cultural and social conditions are, if not rejected, at least overlooked in favour of natural science. The emphasis on quantifiable data may certainly have its place in a tradition of research that focuses on the economic balance of power, trade flows, and models of economic growth and population development. However, quantitative methods are one thing, what is measured is another. A survey of the history of mankind may well be based on quantitative measurements. However, there are reasons to raise objections on principle if the quantitative data ignores cultural aspects including socially and culturally arranged gender differences. Perhaps gender arrangements, particularly in the West, promoted economic growth, capitalism and

[10] Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel. The Fates of Human Societies* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1997), 406-407.

[11] Ian Morris, *Why the West Rules for Now. The Patterns of History and What They Reveal About the Future* (London: Profile Books, 2010), 565.

[12] Andre Gunder Frank, *ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian Age*, Berkeley (Los Angeles, London: Berkeley University Press,1998); Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence. China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000); Robert M. Marks, *The Origins of the Modern World. A Global and Ecological Narrative* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002); John M. Hobson, *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilization* (Cambridge: The Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, 2004).

modernity?[13] Diamond and Morris have an anthropologic and archaeological affiliation, but cultural conditions do not necessarily play a crucial role in purely historical synthetic works either. In a short answer to the question of why the Industrial Revolution initially began in England, the two historians John R. McNeill and William H. McNeill suggest the following:

> A short answer is that internal characteristics (lots of coal and iron) and developments (the sociopolitical environment after 1688) combined with tightening of the web both within Britain (roads, canals, railways, postal service) and worldwide (overseas trade and colonies, and population growth) to create the necessary conditions for industrialization, ones in which both the freedom and incentive to innovate attained unusual proportions.[14]

In no particular order, it seems as though almost everything was particularly beneficial for industrialization in England. Surveys of world history with synthetic claims, however, are a special area that is not necessarily reflected in ongoing research. But even in the latter, it seems that cultural and gender issues have been difficult to establish. In terms of demographic patterns, where John Hajnal already discerned a western and an eastern pattern in the 1980s, the American historians Kenneth Pomeranz and Mary S. Hartman respectively seem to be relatively unique in emphasizing cultural preconditions and consequences, including gender aspects.[15]

Criticism on the lack of cultural aspects in world history research has its parallels in economic history. In her study of Western economic growth during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Deirdre McCloskey argues that economy cannot explain economy. Instead of investment and exploitation, that is to say common economic factors in historical analyses, the explanatory context, according to her, might instead have to be sought in what can be summarized as cultural conditions. Like her predecessors, McCloskey stresses the importance of innovations for the outcome of the process, but it was not the innovations in themselves that caused economic growth in Western Europe. The cultural climate above all was the explanatory context; liberal ideas, new morals and a new way of speaking about the economic activity of the bourgeoisie: "What was unique was a new climate of persuasion, out there in the shops and streets and coffeehouses populated by the bourgeoisie."[16] McCloskey struggles against the dominance of financial perspectives in economic history and she emphasizes cultural aspects. She ignores, however, the fact that cultural factors also contain power relations of gender. It is an oversight that she perhaps has in common with a large part of research on world history.

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[13] Amy-Louise Erickson, "Coverture and Capitalism", *History Workshop Journal* 59, (2005).
[14] J. R. McNeill & William H. McNeill, *The Human Web. A Bird's-Eye View of World History* (New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003), 234.
[15] John Hajnal, "Two Kinds of Preindustrial Household Formation System", *Population and Development Review* 8 (1982:3), Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence;* Mary S. Hartman, *The Household and the Making of History. A Subversive View of the Western Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
[16] Deirdre McCloskey, *Bourgeois Dignity. Why Economics can´t Explain the Modern World* (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 9.

Gender in World History

Although gender issues hardly constitute a mainstream part of research on world history, it would be misleading to say that they are completely missing. Patrick Manning discusses three areas of research in his overview that he claims to be distinguishable. One seeks to make women who are overlooked in world history visible and describe their respective activities. The result is a series of books where women of historical significance, but subsequently forgotten in world history historiographies, are described.[17] This approach has a resemblance to efforts in the 1970s to make women in the past more visible. Although important knowledge is made available, it would be an exaggeration to claim that these reference works have had a decisive influence on world history research. Another focus was trying to find the historical roots of gender as a structural order where women generally, but not always, are subordinate to men. At this point, Manning highlights the historian Gerda Lerner and her work in which she seeks the roots of the patriarchal power order.[18] Similar perspectives to Lerner's arose in the 1970s but are also found in recent works including the American historian Peter N. Stearns' world history.[19] This focus cannot be said to have had a major impact on world history research either.

However, Manning also identifies a third approach, namely studies inspired by postcolonial theories in which women in a specific territory are in focus but where the point of departure – due to the colonial or postcolonial context – is still global. It is particularly in this area, global in local and vice versa, that Manning sees opportunities for a closer collaboration and exchange between world history scholars and gender historians.[20] However, this point of view raises a problem of a theoretical nature that may have its roots in the confusing ambiguity about what world history really is. What distinguishes world history from the current use of the notion of global history? If comparisons between countries and institutions constitute a main key in the toolkit of global history, the focus on international relationships and flows, economy and culture constitute another. These two components may, however, be identical with aspects of

[17] Manning, *Navigating World History*, 209, is referring to Lynda G. Adamson, *Notable Women in World History: A Guide to Recommended Biographies and Autobiographies* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1998); Gayle V. Fischer, *Journal of Women´s History Guide to Periodical Literature* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1992); Bella Vivante, *Women's Roles in Ancient Civilizations: A Reference Guide* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1999).

[18] Manning, *Navigating World History,* 209, is referring to Gerda Lerner, *Creation of Patriarchy* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

[19] Famous essays from the 1970s are for example Gayle Rubin, "Traffic in Women. Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex", Joan W. Scott (ed.), *Feminism & History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). Originally published in 1975, Heidi Hartman, "Capitalism, patriarchy and job segregation by sex", *Signs* 1 (1976: 3); Heidi Hartman, "The unhappy marriage of Marxism and feminism. Towards a more progressive union", *Capital & Class* 33 (1979:2), Peter N. Stearns, *Gender in World History* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 13-14

[20] Manning, *Navigating World History*, 209 is referring to several studies from the beginning of 1990s, for instance Barbara Bush, *Slave Women in Caribbean Society, 1650-1838* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1990); Hilary McD. Beckles, *Natural Rebels: A Social History of Enslaved Black Women in Barbados* (London: Zed Books, 1989); Carol Devens, *Countering, Colonization: Native American Women and Great Lakes Mission, 1630-1900* (Berkely: University of California Press, 1992); Carol Devens, "If We Get the Girls, We Get the Race': Missionary Education of Native American Girls", *Journal of World History* 3 (1992:3).

vital importance in research on world history.[21] A third approach can be categorized as poststructuralist-inspired, aimed to undermine and destabilize the grand narratives in historiography. The latter is a matter of course in postcolonial cultural theory, but it is not as clearly defined as either world history or global history. Efforts to distinguish one from the other are at stake in an ongoing discussion among historians.[22] The question of what should count as trans-national, world history or global history is of less interest in this case. However, the implications and conditions determined from the varied theoretical perspectives are rather significant.

The basis of postcolonial cultural theory is in opposition to the Eurocentric metanarratives of the emergence of modernity, i.e. the hegemonic and teleological views on the politics of Western Europe and the US – that is to say the emergence of capitalism, modernity and liberal democracy.[23] Such grand narratives do, however, constitute grounds for syntheses and overviews in the historiography of world history. In addition to this, where scholars in world history have to homogenize cultural and socioeconomic conditions in various countries and regions to some extent, scholars on postcolonial issues try to stress these varied circumstances. The latter argue that even in countries that can be counted as quite socially, economically and politically uniform, experiences of, for example, being a woman, differ. All women in Sweden do not then have equal gendered experiences, and many Swedish women lack the experiences that women live through in other nations such as Germany, Ireland or the United States. The same is also valid for men. However, there are similarities between those countries as well; gender as a structural order of power is not tremendously different in any of them. Manning does not comment on the fundamental differences between a postcolonial approach and traditions that obtain in world history historiography. His optimism is based on postcolonial studies including topics that concern areas that are traditionally of interest for research on world history: migration, communication, trade and cultural encounters. Why then have gender issues had difficulties in getting established in the field of world history research? This discussion will focus on three distinct and partially overlapping views. First comes Patrick Manning's explanation:

> The well-established presumption that women's lives are acted out in the private sphere of the family rather than the public spheres of economy and politics has suggested that women's history is family history, and family history plays no great part in world history.[24]

Gender is interpreted as women's history, which in turn is perceived as private family histories that play no significant role in world history. There is reason to come back to Manning's conclusions. Firstly, however, it can be noted that Manning's statement has not been unchallenged. The American historian Merry Wiesner-Hanks says that she herself

[21] For example Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence,* Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World.*
[22] David Washbrook, "Problems in global history", Maxine Berg (ed.), *Writing the History of the Global. Challenges for the 21st Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).
[23] Jean-Frédéric Schaub, "Notes on some discontents in the historical narrative", Maxine Berg (ed.), *Writing the History of the Global. Challenges for the 21st Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 50.
[24] Manning, *Navigating World History*, 210.

has made the same observation as Manning, namely that scholars in world history seem to be gender-blind, but she definitively rejects the explanation that women's lives have not been public in the same way as men's, or that women have only been parts of the history of private families. She also rejects Manning's explanation for the uninterest in world history of scholars in gender history, namely that research on world history is seen as too focused on theories of world systems.[25] What then, is the reason for this mutual indifference? A cursory examination of social, cultural, and gender history historiography confirms the absence of world history approaches, and Wiesner-Hanks notes that trends in gender history research cover at least two aspects that may help to explain the lack of influence of gender perspectives on world history research. To begin with, research on gender history is characterized by efforts to problematize simple causations, i.e. to emphasize complications in the conditions of the past. No matter how discerning and sensible these interpretations may be, they will not be accommodated to global syntheses that scholars in world history produce. Secondly, gender historians mainly study women who mostly resided in the scholar's own country. Such territorial restriction, which incidentally is also valid to other approaches in historiography, is hardly compatible with research on world history. The emphasis on only women has historical explanations – for a long time women have been invisible in history – but it also means that the potential for scrutinizing power relations in societies such as gender, utilized as an analytical structuring category, might be lost.

However, Wiesner-Hanks is optimistic about future possibilities. Like Manning she sees a great potential in research based on colonial and postcolonial theories where movements and communication between countries and states are studied, i.e. processes that inadvertently became crucial to the world. Such studies include research on world history without having world history in the title and with analytical points of departure that often include a gendered perspective. Although Wiesner-Hanks, to a greater extent than Manning, pays attention to conceptual differences and theoretical contradictions, she obviously believes they are still surmountable.[26] Perhaps research on world history focusing on structures and macro-processes may still be compatible with a more cultural theory-orientated poststructural approach? The Australian historian Marnie Hughes-Warrington, similarly to Wiesner-Hanks, suggests an approach differing from the postcolonial and poststructural view and also argues that "Gender is commonly held to be a neglected topic in world history scholarship."[27] However, Hughes-Warrington means that this only applies to gender relations *in* world history. By putting the question the other way around, i.e. how the past has been influenced by gender (gender *of* world history), world history can also be seen as gender history. The difference between *in* and *of* may seem subtle or even unnecessary, but an extensive listing of ideas about gender in the many societies of the world, carried out by different historical studies and philosophical expositions, from ancient times to the present, confirmed to Hughes-Warrington that

[25] Merry Wiesner-Hanks, "World History and the History of Women, Gender, and Sexuality", *Journal of World History* 18 (2007:1), 53-54.

[26] Wiesner-Hanks, "World History", lists a lot of recently published postcolonial studies using gender perspectives.

[27] Marnie Hughes-Warrington, "Genders", Jerry H. Bentley (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of World History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 195.

gender, and thoughts about gender, have played a crucial role in world history. 'Gender of world history' thus shows a different pattern than 'Gender in world history'. There is actually no shortage of gender in world history, according to Hughes-Warrington. What is still missing, however, is an awareness of this fact, which would mean that gender could be integrated into both teaching and research on the history of the world:

> There is no shortage of texts about gender in world history, even though the number of articles explicitly on that topic in the *Journal of World History* and the *Journal of Global History* is very low. What is still lacking, however, is widespread awareness of the extent to which gender shapes world historical research, writing, and teaching, particularly works in which women are not mentioned. It is time for studies of gender *in* world history to be joined by those of the gender *of* world history writing.[28]

Hughes-Warrington's distinction between 'of' and 'in' does not mean that criticism of the gender blindness in research on world history is unfounded. The critics do not deny the significance of gender relations in the past, but instead claim the absence of precisely the consciousness that Hughes-Warrington would like to see. However, she does not discuss how such consciousness is to be communicated and implemented, so this is still unanswered.

The criticism directed towards research on world history for its oversight on gender issues can thus be summarized: as women's significance in the past has mostly been regarded as private, in families (Manning), gender historians are either too bound to nation states or complicated historical processes so that they cannot possibly be part of syntheses of world history (Wiesner-Hanks); research on world history lacks awareness of the importance of gender in world history (Hughes-Warrington). Manning's survey of research on world history is from the early 2000s while Wiesner-Hanks and Hughes-Warrington discuss gender in world history about a decade later, in 2007 and 2011 respectively. In order to bring the debate a step further, the question is now what is said about these aspects in research on world history? Has something happened since Manning made his inventory at the turn of the twenty-first century? Was Hughes-Warrington right in her assessment that, for example, the *Journal of World History* only has a small number of articles on this topic?

Journal of World History

Hughes-Warrington mentions two journals with focus on world history, the *Journal of Global History* and the *Journal of World History*. In order to follow up her assessment briefly, it will be enough with a closer examination of one of the two: the *Journal of World History*. It was founded in 1990 by the historian Jerry H. Bentley (1945-2012), who devoted a large part of his scholarship to issues in world history. The journal publishes research that focuses on global processes and trans-national perspectives. The name of the journal already makes it clear that its interest is exclusively in world history. Its establishment in the year 1990 is consistent with Patrick Manning's view that world history was established

[28] Hughes-Warrington, "Genders", 204. Hughes-Warrington does not scrutinize the journals mentioned.

as an area of research at that time. World history was previously seen as something you taught, but not did research into.[29] The questions are then what kind of research has been reported in the *Journal of World History* in recent years and to what extent gender issues are discussed.

A review of articles in the journal from 2001 to the present gives interesting insight into traditions in research on world history and how these have changed. First and foremost, it can be stated that the number of articles published annually has increased over time; eleven were published in 2001 and nineteen in 2013 (including short introductions to the various special issues of the journal). In 2001, there were two issues per year, while from 2003 and onwards four were published. The increase in the number of articles reasonably reflects that world history is a growing area of research which engages several scholars. The average for the years surveyed was 15 articles per year with a total of just under 200. Some themes are recurrent and can be regarded as proper to traditions in research on world history, according to Manning´s definition above. Different types of cross-border movements like the spread of disease, ideas, climate changes, migration, travel and scientific exchanges are included in several issues of the journal.[30] Wars and conquests are also recurring topics.[31] Other topics include those concerning empires and imperialism, trade and missionaries. Varying aspects of these themes are found in almost every issue of the journal. Empires in China, India and the Eastern Mediterranean are particularly popular. Every year, at least one article was based on one of these empires at different periods of time and the various ways that they have influenced conditions in the past.

Although this examination is only brief and covers only slightly more than ten years, both change and continuity are manifested. Interest is continuously strong for the history of empires and conditions of economic dominance. Meanwhile, the theoretical and methodological premises have developed in manners that are consistent with general

[29] Manning, *Navigating World History*, 77-78.
[30] For example I. J. Catanach, "The 'Globalization' of Disease? India and the Plague", *Journal of World History* 12 (2001:1), James L. A. Webb Jr, "Malaria and the Peopling of Early Tropical Africa", *Journal of World History* 16 (2005:3). Under the heading of Forum in *Journal of World History* 24 (2013:4), four contributions were collected and all discuss different aspects on health and disease. Intellectual movements are discussed in for example Erik Grimmer-Solem, "German Social Science, Meiji Conservatism, and the Peculiarities of Japanese History", *Journal of World History* 16 (2005:2). In *Journal of World History* 21 (2010:3), six articles dealing with varied aspects on cosmopolitanism. Climate change is treated in for instance William S. Atwell, "Volcanism and Short-Term Climatic Change in East Asian and World History, c. 1200-1699", *Journal of World History* 13 (2001:1), Shuji Cao, Yushang Li, Bin Yang, "Mt. Tambora, Climatic Changes, and China's Decline in the Nineteenth Century", *Journal of World History* 23 (2012: 3). Migration is for instance discussed in David Northrup's introduction in a special issue on labour and work, "Free and Unfree Labor Migration, 1600-1900: An Introduction", *Journal of World History* 14 (2003: 2). In addition to Northrup's introduction, the issue contains three articles which treat work and mobility of labour in different manners. Travelling and cultural encounters are analyzed for instance in Kaushik Bagchi, "An Orientalist in the Orient: Richard Garbe's Indian Journey, 1885-1886", *Journal of World History* 14 (2003:3).
[31] Wars and conquests are treated in for instance Beatrice Forbes Manz, "Tamerlane's Career and Its Uses", *Journal of World History* 13 (2002:1), Michael P. Speidel, "Berserks: A History of Indo-European "Mad Warriors", *Journal of World History* 13 (2002:2), and *Journal of World History* 25 (2014: 1), is a special issue on the Military Revolution that includes four articles.

trends in historiography, including economic conditions, where cultural aspects are emphasized.[32] For example, there are several contributions about language, discourse, deconstruction and rhetoric.[33] There is therefore no lack of culture-orientated themes. The culture-theoretical frameworks vary, but in several contributions there are critical approaches towards Eurocentric perspectives directed to the grand narratives of the West on its path to modernity, i.e. the approach that in a broad sense can be attributed to postcolonial cultural theory, but without the word postcolonial in the heading.[34] Topics proper to traditions in world history such as trade and trade flows are discussed with culture-theoretical points of departure. For example, in the special issue on Chinese porcelain and trade, both the introduction and the subsequent articles took their starting points in perspectives dealing with the concept of material culture.[35]

Articles in *Journal of World History* therefore partly follow general trends in research in history, where cultural aspects are emphasized – in contrast to the synthetic works referred to above. To a great extent, the journal reports multifaceted research on various geographical spaces and times. In terms of content, the journal reflects its global and transnational ambitions well. The journal of course also has specialties of its own. One is a comprehensive review section. A large number of newly-published books are reviewed in every issue; judging by the titles, several books on gender perspectives are included. Another specialty is to publish historiographical articles. For example, the concept of civilization is discussed on the basis of earlier conceptions in world history.[36] Issues on context in world history are highlighted in several contributions that are all based on diverse and self-critical starting points. Altogether, the articles published in *Journal of World History* therefore reflect an area of research with an open mind for criticism, self-reflection and susceptibility. A third, and in this context particularly relevant, specialty of the journal is that, apart from Wiesner-Hanks previously-mentioned article and a huge number of book reviews, there is not a single article with the word gender in the heading. While influences from a variety of other cultural perspectives are now included in research on world history, it seems that gender has been remarkably reserved for its own subdiscipline. It therefore seems that Hughes-Warrington has drawn an overly cautious conclusion when she says that the number of articles on this topic was small; in fact there were none. A closer examination, however, modified the impression slightly. In a small

[32] In contrast to the view of McCloskey, *Bourgeois Dignity*.
[33] For example, Prasenjit Duara, "The Discourse of Civilization and Pan-Asianism", *Journal of World History* 12 (2001:1), On-Cho Ng, "The Epochal Concept of "Early Modernity" and the Intellectual History of Late Imperial China", *Journal of World History* 14 (2003:1), James D. Drake, "Appropriating a Continent: Geographical Categories, Scientific Metaphors, and the Construction of Nationalism in British North America and Mexico", *Journal of World History* 15 (2004:3).
[34] For example Maghan Keita, "Africans and Asians: Historiography and the Long View of Global Interaction", *Journal of World History* 16 (2005:1), Jeremy Prestholdt, "Similitude and Empire: On Comorian Strategies of Englishness", *Journal of World History* 18 (2007:2), Patrick Karl O'Brien, "Fiscal and Financial Preconditions for the Formation of Developmental States in the West and the East from Conquest of Ceuta (1415) to the Opium War (1839)", *Journal of World History* 23 (2012:3).
[35] Stephen McDowall & Anne Gerritsen, "Global China: Material Culture and Connections in World History", *Journal of World History* 23 (2012:1). In addition to the introduction the special issue contains four articles on material culture.
[36] For example Prasenjit Duara, "The Discourse of Civilization and Decolonization", *Journal of World History* 15 (2004:1).

number of articles the choice of topic provides reason to believe that the content has dealt with gender issues. A total of six articles out of almost 200 need to be further studied in order to achieve a secure impression.

Two articles show from different angles that international politics cannot be regarded as gender-neutral. In the American historian Judith P. Zinsser's analysis of the UN's work for women's legal rights, that power relations are based on gender is a crucial aspect. The article considers the government-organized conferences in Mexico City, Copenhagen and Nairobi as a large number of NGO-organized tribunes and forums. Although the decision-making and strategy papers were characterized by the ideological conflicts in the Cold War and the clear contradiction between rich and poor countries, Zinsser argues that conferences have been beneficial for women's work towards equal rights.[37] Zinsser also emphasizes how the language in the documents had changed. In Mexico City in 1975, the language was coloured by the view of the patriarchal traditions where women were defined as victims of forces beyond their control, or marginalized in the model of the world that documents were implicitly built on. In Nairobi ten years later, the language was different. Gone were the simple essentialist categorizations, and women had instead been transformed into active agents and practitioners in efforts to shape new international institutions.[38]

A similar approach to international politics was taken in the American historian Karen Garner's article on the World Young Women's Christian Association (World YWCA) and the organization's relationship with Japan in World War II. World YWCA was, although perhaps now largely forgotten, a part of the early 1900s internationalist aspirations which later formed the basis of the UN. The organization gathered Christian women from all over the world in order to strengthen their political commitment. The war resulted in severe difficulties in maintaining unity in the organization however; nationalism took over. After Japan's occupation of Manchuria, Chinese women had difficulties dealing with their Japanese sisters whom they regarded as too lenient towards Japan's imperialist politics. Japanese women were thought to need special education and they were taken into favour again only in connection with the association's meeting in Japan in 1947 – and then only on a programme dictated by US conditions. World YWCA and the events in Japan may seem to be a remark in the periphery of the past, but Garner argues:

> […] all have something to learn from this historic episode because the World YWCA visitation to occupied Japan in 1947 exposed a gendered and racialized power structure in Japan and, by extension, in the U.S.-dominated international arena, that echoes in the current discourse about "women and democracy".[39]

The two articles are certainly focused on *women's* international political work, but the intention was to uncover general and supranational political power structures and show

[37] Judith P. Zinsser, "From Mexico to Copenhagen to Nairobi: The United Nations Decade for Women, 1975-1985", *Journal of World History* 13 (2002:1), 141-142.
[38] Zinsser, "From Mexko to Copenhagen", 143-144.
[39] Karen Garner, "Global Feminism and Postwar Reconstruction: The World YWCA Visitation to Occupied Japan, 1947, *Journal of World History* 15 (2004: 2), 191.

how these have changed, that is to say a gender perspective according to the definition above. Women are in focus in a further three articles, but only one explicitly refers to gendered power structures. All three of them deal with topics related to myths, fiction and cultural aspects of the past. The American historian Christine Isom-Verhaaren shows how women have been exploited for political purposes from the 1500s to the 2000s, and she calls attention to their symbolic functions. In the 1500s, French women in the harem of Ottoman emperors symbolized a political and military alliance between a Christian king and a Muslim sultan, while the contemporary narratives of women in the harem during the sixteenth century make excuses for Western domination in the Middle East. Isom-Verhaaren does not articulate her piece of work as a gender analysis even though she still makes one in practice. Instead, she refers generally to the superpower political implications through a use of symbols.[40] The same can be said of the American historian Taymiya R. Zaman's article about the Portuguese woman Juliana Dias da Costa who had a great influence at the court of the Mughal Kingdom of King Bahadur Shah I in the 1700s. Imaginative stories about her circulated continually until the collapse of the British regime in 1947. Juliana Dias da Costa's life is formed into a story in the article that concerns not only herself but also the rise and fall of the Jesuit mission in India. [41]

In an article by the Canadian historian Adrian Shubert, however, gender as a power structure works as a starting point. His topic is hero cults in Europe, where a majority of national heroes are men who mostly performed their feats in war. However, Schubert analyzes female war heroes and compares one in Spain and two in India in order to counteract the Eurocentric perspective: what were the similarities and differences? In varied manners, the three female war heroes became part of their national memory production, in poems, paintings, music and other cultural expressions. Neither in Spain nor in India, however, was it unproblematic that a woman was a war hero. In India, however, there were religious traditions, including female war goddesses that nevertheless made it possible. There it was the fact that the two war heroes were widows, who had difficulty managing. All three challenged prevailing gender norms and all three filled various political purposes in the consciousness of nations. Despite differences between memory cultures in Spain as opposed to India, the similarities were overwhelming, emphasizing that European phenomena and processes have much to gain from comparisons with other conditions.[42]

To sum up, it is clear that research on world history has been influenced in different ways by cultural perspectives. Apart from the already-mentioned article by Wiesner-Hanks, however, there is a pronounced or implicit gender approach in only a few. Another article will be discussed and will be the last in this detailed review. It partly represents a continuation of the discussion Merry Wiesner-Hanks initiated and the intention is the

[40] Christine Isom-Verhaaren, "Royal French Women in the Ottoman Sultans' Harem: The Political Uses of Fabricated Accounts from the Sixteenth to the Twenty-first Century", *Journal of World History* 17 (2006:2).
[41] Taymiya R. Zaman, "Visions of Juliana: A Portuguese Woman at the Court of the Mughals", *Journal of World History* 23 (2012:4).
[42] Adrian Shubert, "Women Warriors and National Heroes: Agustina de Aragón and Her Indian Sisters", *Journal of World History* 23 (2012: 2).

same: to try to show how researchers in world history can create analytical benefits by exploiting gendered perspectives in their studies. The focus of the two American historians Ulrike Strasser and Heidi Tinsman is not women but men and masculinity. In conformity with Merry Wiesner-Hanks, they note how separate prerequisites in the two areas of research, gender and world history counteract a mutual exchange. According to Strasser and Tinsman, the main dividing line is between materialist and cultural perspectives: "[…] it is a heavily *materialist* world history that faces off with a predominantly *culturalist* history of gender and sexuality."[43] Strasser and Tinsman mean that neither cultural theories nor gender perspectives have made significant imprints in research on world history and they therefore conclude:

> More frustrating still, while a materialist emphasis does not per se preclude gender analysis – one only needs to recall the many superb feminist labor histories written within national frameworks – much of world history marches along merrily without paying much attention to gender and sexuality at all.[44]

If account is taken of articles published in the *Journal of World History* over the last thirteen years, it is clear that scholars in world history do not dispense with cultural perspectives. Instead, it seems to be gender aspects that deter, which is also confirmed when Strasser and Tinsman note that many feminist studies on work with implications for world history have been left aside despite the theories in them having a good foundation in materialistic traditions. Nevertheless, Strasser and Tinsman suggest solutions for a constructive interaction and they take Latin American research as an example worth following. It is an area of research "[…] that often has fluidly blended culturalist and materialist traditions *and* focused on masculinity in ways that are highly relevant to debates within world history today".[45] They argue that Latin American historiography has many similarities with world history. In both cases, the dominant narratives concern empire, global capitalism and state formation, and the influential perspectives in both have been materialistically founded. But unlike research on world history, gender and sexuality studies have been integrated into Latin American research for at least 25 years, serving as a particularly important counter to the essential interpretations of Latin America's backwardness.[46] Strasser and Tinsman highlight some specializations in Latin American masculinity studies that to a particularly large extent should inspire research on world history. Not least because scholars in Latin American research, as well as scholars in world history, often examine topics in which the implicit presumption is that scrutinized actors in the past were neutral to gender issues. Men are studied as political but gender-neutral actors and it is taken for granted that no women were near the men.

While this view is probably incorrect – in general women have existed where men have been and vice versa – Strasser and Tinsman emphasize that men in the past were performing gender as much as women were. Seen from that perspective, studies on

[43] Ulrike Strasser & Heidi Tinsman, "It's a Man's World? World History Meets the History of Masculinity, in Latin American Studies, for instance," *Journal of World History* 77 (2010:1): 77.
[44] Ibid., 80.
[45] Ibid., 78.
[46] Ibid., 84.

masculinity have been able to elaborate an explanatory context for instance to the empires that took shape in Latin America long before the conquests by Spain and Portugal. The persistent masculine culture, where sexual violence and male honour constituted the essential basis of a previous power structure has been seen as crucial to the emergence of empires, their survival and their downfall. But this masculine culture has also been the foundation of the power structures of the Spaniards and Portuguese. Furthermore, in research on the modernization process in the continent, this culture has been crucial for understanding the design of the development. The relationship between nation formation, based on male norms, and the contemporaneous family formation where women were subordinate to men, has been clear. According to Strasser and Tinsman, these conditions have several parallels in world history.[47]

In short, Strasser and Tinsman show how several different lines of research that focus on macro-processes in world history could elaborate explanations and historical contexts if scholars recognize that the objects of study are also included in power structures based on gender. In their case, they illustrated how masculinity and male power were constituted in a different but partially overlapping manner in the political project that resulted in the domination of the Incas, European state transformation and Spanish colonialism.[48] In general, their view and arguments can be interpreted as that they are looking for mankind in the historiography of empires, structures, global processes and transnational comparisons that are the main objects to scholars in world history.[49] Putting mankind into research on history entails an opportunity to formulate a hypothetical idea that there are actually no gender-neutral historical processes, even at the macro-level. This aspect will now be illustrated in a discussion about family history as world history.

Family and Political Regency

As previously stated, Patrick Manning suggests that scholars of world history neglect gender topics because they perceive gender as related to the study of women and women's history which have mostly occurred beyond the public view, in private family lives.[50] Manning is of course right. Most of gender history research is focused on women's history, mainly in Western Europe and in the US. Furthermore, women in the past have had public and formal exercise of power positions to a lesser degree than men. Manning's explanation, however, is also misleading. Most women's lives in the past have indeed taken place within the framework of families, but the same can also be said of most men. It can be argued for several reasons that family history is indeed world history, even if it is not noticeable in research on world history. In the following this will exemplified on the basis of some simple observations about features in empires and dynasties.

Empires belong to the most viable themes of world-historical research: the reasons behind their rise and fall have a long historiographical tradition. Articles in the *Journal of World History* concerning the rise and fall of empires are numerous. For example, William S. Atwell discusses in an article how decisive the decline in China's import of silver was to

[47] Strasser & Tinsman, "It's a Man's World?", 91-96.
[48] Ibid., 94-95.
[49] Ibid., 96.
[50] Manning, *Navigating World History*, 210.

the fall of the Ming Dynasty in 1644.[51] In another article, Jack Goldstone discusses factors that were crucial to why the industrial revolution took place in the center of the British Empire.[52] In a third example, the longstanding Greek and Roman influence in Nubia is discussed.[53] Cultural perspectives in research on empires in the past have also been established.[54] Without making the list longer, it may be noted that several articles in the *Journal of World History* examine empires and bring new aspects into world history. At the same time, it is apparent that none of the many contributions regarding empires reflects on their gender power structures. But that is not an impossible task. It can certainly be done in different ways. In this case, it was decided to discuss the political significance of the family and the ways in which it manifests itself in an early modern gender power structure.

The political regency of empires demonstrates male-gendered power structures that are shaped by, among other things, family and relatives. Whether the supreme ruler was styled as a king, prince, emperor, pharaoh, caliph or sultan, the title usually, but not always, was borne by men. According to the American historian Judith Benneth, this political structure was significant to patriarchy.[55] The regency that promoted men was motivated by certain family lines and thus transformed the rights to reign into political dynasties which also laid the foundation for the eras in historiography. This pattern, where political rule is characterized by a dynastic thinking about the regency, is evident in the Egypt of the pharaohs, the emperors' China, the shahs' Iran and also other parts of the world such as England and Sweden during the seventeenth century, or in Kanem-Bornu ca. 1000-1897.

The dynastic principles all over the world preferred men. Female rulers existed but were generally improvised solutions in situations where no suitable men with closer kinship to the predecessor were available. In the choice between sister and brother, the brother often won, and if the female rulers were to be married, the regency was passed to their spouses. Of course there are exceptions to this general rule. Catherine the Great (1729-1796), for example, became the reigning ruler of Russia after conducting a palace coup against her husband. Her reign lasted just over a sixty-year period during the centuries when the tsars of Russia were counted as belonging to the Romanov dynasty (1613-1917). As with other long-lived dynasties, the rulers of the Romanov dynasty did not consist exclusively of male heirs who were biologically direct descendants of Mikhail Romanov.

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[51] William S. Atwell, "Another Look at Silver Imports to China 1635-1644", *Journal of World History* 16 (2005:4).
[52] Jack Goldstone, "Efflorescences and Economic Growth in World History: Rethinking the "Rise of the West" and the Industrial Revolution", *Journal of World History* 13 (2002:2).
[53] Stanley M. Burstein, "When Greek Was an African Language: The Role of Greek Culture in Ancient and Medieval Nubia", *Journal of World History* 19 (2008:1).
[54] For example Jonathan Karam Skaff, "Survival in the Frontier Zone: Comparative Perspectives on Identity and Political Allegiance in China´s Inner Asian Borderlands during the Sui-Tang Dynastic Transition (617-630)", *Journal of World History* 15 (2004:2); Giancarlo Casale, "Global Politics in the 1580s: One Canal, Twenty Thousand Cannibals, and an Ottoman Plot to Rule the World", *Journal of World History* 18 (2007:3).
[55] Judith M. Benneth, *History Matters. Patriarchy and the Challenge of Feminism* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 55.

There were elections of successors to the throne as part of temporary peace agreements in the seventeenth century; relationships constituted through marriage resulted in blood ties to the ancestral rulers becoming thinner and thinner. Despite this, the lineages continued to be formed in the name of Romanov.[56]

Relatives and families are closely related but are not the same. Both concepts also embrace historically changing conditions and the meaning of families and relatives vary due to different cultural conditions. What matters to one or the other varies, but whatever the constellation, and whether relationships were polygamous or monogamous, gender and sexuality were of vital importance. Women in harems ruled by emperors and sultans, and eunuchs in the imperial courts and palaces underline this, as well as officially sanctioned marriages between women and men that have shaped politically powerful dynasties. Furthermore, exposition in public was significant to political family life in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[57] A mixture of wives, sons, daughters, lovers, mistresses, and a lot of other people belonged to the courts of kings, emperors, sultans, queens and other princely persons. Life in courts was lived in public.

In general, women were legally subordinated to men, despite the fact that their lives in the courts could be boundless due to gender norms. On the level of principles, it is possible to perceive a structural result of this subordination; it fulfilled the task of securing political power in the hands of men. However, this was accomplished in two different ways. In societies where the rulers formally implemented polygamous circumstances, the great number of authentic princely offspring counteracted any threat of competition that may have arisen from rival family groups. At the same time, the ruler was more or less guaranteed that at least one of the offspring would be male and therefore suitable as a possible successor. In societies where monogamous marriage was the formal rule, it was monogamy that was the factor that would ideally secure male succession within the ruling family. Thus, the social construction of gender was closely linked to heterosexuality, but in different ways due to time and space.

Life in courts could be both overwhelming and at the same time crucial to governmental issues. In her study on France during the revolutionary era, the American historian Joan B. Landes argues that court life constituted political power under the autocracy – even for women – and there is no reason to believe that it would be dramatically different in other societies where royal courts were a political institution.[58] The people in royal courts were not necessarily related by kin to the ruler, but courts were organized as huge households and served a lot of functions; they were arenas for political discussions and the distribution of news, while for the nobles the courts complied with demands for education, experience and contacts for their subsequent lives as political actors. Power-aspiring noble families sent their sons and daughters to royal courts with the purpose of arranging suitable marriages. For them, royal courts constituted important markets for

[56] Maria Sjöberg "Haven och den europeiska kolonialismen", Maria Sjöberg (ed.), *En samtidig världshistoria* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2014), 523-524.
[57] Peter Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1994).
[58] Joan B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere. In the Age of the French Revolution,* (Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 1988).

marriages.[59] The royal family members were a part of the life at courts, and probably the most attractive objects to get involved with through marriage.

Relatives and families were therefore essential aspects of early modern political power structure in different ways. This observation applies to both the more contemporary Vasa dynasty in peripheral Sweden as well as to more prevalent research on world history in China during, for example, the Ming Dynasty. Dynastic thinking was a feature in the Ottoman Empire as well. It is therefore a general pattern which, with some interesting variations in interpretations, was established wherever regency was linked to dynasties based on kin and families. The 1479 marriage between the two cousins Isabella I of Castile and Ferdinand II of Aragon illustrates how the association through marriage between spouses also unified territories. Even the Kingdom of Spain under Charles V, which became part of the vast and loosely knit Holy Roman Empire, and also became connected to the Habsburg dynasty, was a result of marriage politics, inherited territories and family ties.[60]

In Sweden, which was never an empire but was still an aspiring territorial power in seventeenth-century Europe until the Treaty of Nystad in 1721, the Vasa rulers, like other royal families in Europe, entered into strategic marriages in order to connect with loyal allies abroad. Marriage and family members were institutionalized as part of foreign politics in Europe. Whether the marriage policy of the Vasas in Sweden was successful or not is certainly debatable, particularly as two of the Vasa dynasty rulers, Queen Christina (reigned 1644-1654) and Charles XII (reigned 1697-1718) did not marry at all. The debates in Parliament regarding the absent marriages of these two rulers indicate, however, the vital importance of marriage and family in dynastic thinking. Nevertheless, even the Vasa rulers pursued a marriage policy in accordance with the general pattern of royal politics in Europe from which the family relations created were intended to constitute important political relationships.

Dynastic thinking about political regency also meant considerations in domestic politics, especially if it was necessary to establish a new heir to the throne. To counteract a complete rupture of the continuity of the Vasa dynasty in connection with the 1718 death of the childless King Charles XII, his sister, Ulrika Eleonora, became the ruling queen. This was, however, not a matter of course and her inheritance right was disputed. When she later abandoned the throne in favour of her husband, Frederick I of Hesse, a new form of government was required that would prevent the monarch from once more establishing the same type of autocracy as previously, and which would at the same time outline specific assurances concerning future succession. Unlike previous conditions, succession then became exclusively male and included only offspring of the marriage between Fredrik I and Ulrika Eleonora.

[59] Fabian Persson, *Living in the House of Power: Women at the Early Modern Swedish Court. The Politics of Female Households: Ladies in Waiting Across Early Modern Europe* (Leiden: Brill 2014).
[60] Karin Sennefelt, "Den gamla ordningen och början på en ny", Maria Sjöberg (ed.), *En samtidig världshistoria* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2014), 555.

Due to the childless marriage and the death of Ulrika Eleonora in 1741, the legal arrangements to keep the throne in the hands of the Vasa descendants failed. Parliament then elected Adolf Fredrik, a distant relative to Charles XI, as a successor to the throne, and so Holstein-Gottorp became the ruling family of Sweden. In the most recent case where no biological family ties existed between representatives of and successors to the throne, a clever solution was instead adopted to maintain dynastic continuity, despite the fact that biological kinship changed. This was the case when the political regency of the Bernadotte dynasty was established in Sweden at the beginning of the nineteenth century and Jean Baptiste Bernadotte was made successor to the Swedish throne, becoming King Karl XIV Johan.[61] Although monarchs in Sweden have lost their previous power, and only symbolic functions remain, the Bernadotte dynasty is still on the throne.

Relatives and family were thus integrated in the political system where power structures reflected the male world. This has been illustrated over the course of political events in eighteenth-century Sweden, but it must be emphasized that these political structures, where family ties were intertwined with gender, were worldwide in varying forms. It is therefore noteworthy that these structural family aspects do not play more prominent roles in research on the rise and fall of empires. How many rises and falls in the past were dependent on difficulties in arranging a fortunate marriage and the constitution of beneficial family ties with allies? One interesting aspect of dynastic thinking is that it has had a counterpart among ordinary people. Most of them were not involved in high politics or politically powerful dynasties. In both preserved source material and research on world history they have therefore made little or no impact. Nevertheless, the organization of the household, where women were legally subordinate to the men, laid the foundation of normative ideals of the family that were also valid to ordinary people. In the legislation of inheritance this was expressed explicitly: both sons and daughters inherited property, although the daughters only got half shares in comparison with their brothers. There was, however, another complication. A daughter inherited only the right of possession of land, while the right of disposition over the land that she owned was transferred from her father to the man that she married.[62] Swedish legislation on inheritance from the Middle Ages until 1845 thus reflected dynastic thinking.

Conclusions

There is no obvious answer as to why research on world history to a large extent, but not completely, neglects gender perspectives in the past. Perhaps it is less fruitful to speculate on the reasons behind this gender blindness and instead more fruitful to concentrate on trying to show the explanatory power of a gender perspective, in addition to other perspectives. However, gender in the past primarily offers an explanatory context on a societal level, defined foremost as a binary (male/female).[63] As a power relation, gender then can then be seen as prerequisite for empires, as has been done in recent research. The British historian Philippa Levine concludes about the British Empire: "[…] the very

[61] Mikael Alm & Nils Ekedahl, "En dynasti blir till: medier, myter och makt kring Karl XIV Johan"**,** *Historisk tidskrift* 124 (2004:3).
[62] Maria Sjöberg, *Kvinnors jord, manlig rätt. Äktenskap, egendom och makt i äldre tid* (Hedemora: Gidlunds 2001).
[63] In recent gender research, gender is used as a more complicated analytical category, among other things based on individual sexual identities, that is of less use in analysis of political regencies in the past.

ideas as well as the building of empires themselves cannot be understood without employing a gendered perspective".[64] This can, however, be done in several ways.

As a socially constructed hierarchical order, based on perceived sexual differences between men and women, gender is discussed here in terms of how empires and great powers generally designed the political ruler's legitimacy on the basis of family and kinship with male privileges. Family and kinship have a long tradition in social history research, which in conformity with gender history, has had a distanced relationship to world history.[65] In this case, it seems to be fruitful to combine the two. In different ways, gender has been linked to other social relations, such as class and race, and historians, of course, have to be sensitive to varied patterns in different areas and to be careful in handling change over time. However, family ties, gender and political power were interwoven into a very conserving entity with heterosexual marriage as the key, which did not change in any of its basic aspects during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It is thus reasonable to conclude that both women and men have lived their lives in different kinds of families to a great extent, but that family life does not always constitute a private or individual history. This article demonstrates that family ties and marriage were engendered and can be seen as prerequisites in world politics, as dynastic thinking, which was the basic idea of empire-building. This argument highlights – finally – that it is not family life that made women invisible and men visible in research on world history, but rather an overlooking of the political implications of family lives in the past. In the end, empires either survive or fail on their own merits. Both survival and failure have always ultimately been the result of human actions, female and male alike.

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[64] Philippa Levine, "Introduction: Why Gender and Empire?", Philippa Levine (ed.), *Gender and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1.
[65] Manning, *Navigating World History*, 202.

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