

socioeconomic development. The chapter effectively connects development, post-colonial state-building, and gender equality, demonstrating their interconnection in the UN agenda. Russo's final chapter tackles the concept of family planning. It shows how it was closely entangled with the fear of overpopulation and in turn integrated into socioeconomic development. Here, she retraces the final story of her book: the emergence of the liberal model of development and its close links with liberal and imperial feminism.

Women, Empires, and Body Politics is a welcome addition to the literature. However, it is regrettable that the premises of the CSW at the League of Nations are only referred to in a subtle manner, despite being the central elements of the CSW history. The history of the status of women in the interwar period could also make use of the imperial feminism perspective. Still, Russo's book successfully brings a critical analysis of the CSW actors, showing the complexity of their political beliefs. Her book participates in decoding the relationships between the Global South, especially African states, and the UN. *Women, Empires, and Body Politics* at the United Nations is thus not only useful to historians of women and gender history in an international context but also a good demonstration of the value of UN commissions as terrains to dive into the history of international organizations.

Notes

- 1 See, for instance, R. Leila J., *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement*, Princeton 1997.
- 2 S. Glenda and J. Carolyn, *Women, Diplomacy and International Politics since 1500*, Abingdon 2016.
- 3 See, for instance, J. Devaki, *Women, Development, and the UN: A Sixty-Year Quest for*

Equality and Justice, Bloomington, collection United Nations Intellectual History Project, 2005. And more recently, the collective book R. Adami and P. Dan (eds.), *Women and the UN: A New History of Women's International Human Rights*, Routledge 2021.

Peter Burke: *Ignorance: A Global History*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2023, 310 pp.

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The study of phenomena of ignorance has become a flourishing field in the past decades. The study of science served as the starting point for the current interest in non-knowledge phenomena. Today, phenomena of non-knowledge are studied in fields such as sociology of knowledge, environmental sociology, anthropology, and organisational and political studies. Ignorance and various phenomena of non-knowledge have been studied in contexts of disaster management, modelling, experimental music, economic organizations, political decision making, or science, as the second edition of the handbook of ignorance studies impressively shows.¹ What is missing in this field so far is a historical perspective on ignorance.

In his book, the historian Peter Burke aims to provide this perspective on phenomena of ignorance. In chapter 1, facets of ignorance are outlined and related terms listed. Burke also hints at related phenomena such as uncertainty, errors, and forgetting. In

several chapters of the first part, traditional and current perspectives on ignorance in different scientific disciplines are mentioned: psychology of ignorance (p. 8), sociology of ignorance (p. 9), and philosophy (chapter 2). Chapter 3 presents phenomena of ignorance that are relevant with regard to different collectives such as organizations, classes, races, men, and women. Chapter 4 starts with the observation that academic disciplines are places of institutionalized ignorance and concludes that the study of ignorance is and has to be a multidisciplinary enterprise. In chapter 5, light is shed on how historical science deals with ignorance. This chapter is relevant for the readership of *Comparativ* as it discusses methodological challenges of the historical study of ignorance and provides solutions for it: (1) focus on decline of knowledge and (2) focus on what is not there or missing.

In chapters 6–15, Burke presents phenomena of ignorance in social subsystems and topics across centuries and places of the world, thus across societies. He approaches ignorance through the perspective of a social historian (chapter 5) who focuses on how the creation, preservation, or dissolution of ignorance is rooted in social interaction, raising questions such as: What is being paid attention to? What must not be asked? Which questions ought not to be asked or are outside the realm of thought? Who uses ignorance, in what ways, and with what consequences? Taking this perspective, Burke takes the reader into the manifold phenomena of ignorance, presenting examples, anecdotes, and (hi)stories from social subsystems and topics, including religion (chapter 6), science (chapter 7), geography (chapter 8), war (chapter 9), business (chapter 10), politics (chapter 11),

catastrophes (chapter 12), secrets (chapter 13), future prediction (chapter 14), and ignorance about the past (chapter 15). The reader is made aware of facets and places of ignorance, reaching from churches as places of organizational ignorance, together with the strategic use of ignorance about their cultures by those who were forced to convert to Christianity, to the consequences that late modern rulers' ignorance of languages and nationalities in European countries had for the formation of nation-states in the beginning of the twentieth century. Furthermore, the reader learns about the consequences of accounting illiteracy in business and strategic ignorance related to clandestine business, as well as the diverse facets of secrets – censorship, spying, leaking, and forgery – and practices of prediction and forecasting.

It is undoubtedly an enlightening and inspiring book, especially in chapters 6–11, which shed light on the facets of ignorance. These chapters provide known and less-known examples from (mainly) Western history, which makes for very entertaining reading. However, I find a few issues are worth raising.

Those who expect a systematic, stringent, and logical presentation of a social history perspective on ignorance will be disappointed as the book assembles (hi)stories and anecdotes in a more or less eclectic way. Explanation is missing why topics and aspects presented have been chosen and not others. Why, for example, does the section on psychology of ignorance exclusively refer to Sigmund Freud and no other psychologists? Why are the sections on female and male ignorance much longer than those on race and class? On the latter, one could say at least as much as to the former. According

to what criteria have examples been chosen? Thus, a section on Western ignorance on China exists but not so on ignorance of Brazil or any African country.

Furthermore, the book remains superficial regarding concepts related to ignorance. It is nice to see a list of recurring terms related to ignorance at the end of the book. However, additional page numbers as well as references to the authors who use the terms in the ways defined in the list would support a systematic work with the book. Furthermore, the definitions of the terms are partly imprecise or incomplete and differences and similarities between concepts remain unclear. Accordingly, what is the difference between ignorance of ignorance and unknown unknowns and nescience? Other terms mentioned in the book are, unfortunately not taken up in the list, for example Olympian ignorance, temporary ignorance, or colonial ignorance.

The book refers to relevant literature in the field of ignorance studies and to literature beyond this field that deals with ignorance phenomena. However, it is difficult and arduous to access this literature systematically as literature is cited in endnotes per chapter at the end of the book. A reader trained in history might be able to work with this style, but for academics from social science it is hard. It is even harder as a bibliography is missing that lists complete bibliographic information for all cited literature. This would be important as not every endnote includes complete bibliographic information.

Another concern is the overall thematic order and division of the chapters. Especially in the first part of the book, titled "Ignorance in Society", the order of the chapters and the topics within the chapters remains

unclear and is partly unexpected. Guidance is missing here as no overview of the chapters is given. Thus, it remains unclear why an entire but very short chapter (pp. 18–21) is devoted to the philosophical engagement with the subject, while perspectives of psychology and sociology are provided briefly in subchapters, although research on ignorance in these disciplines is rich. The lack of guidance and missing order is reinforced by the fact that there is only one sublevel of chapters under the main chapters, although further sublevels would have been useful in some places. Thus, it does not become visible at first sight that the sections on plague, smallpox, and cholera belong to the subchapter epidemics in chapter 12. Furthermore, in the middle of the book interesting figures related to the topics are provided. However, they are not systematically linked to the chapters. Thus, again it is upon the reader to find the way through these figures.

Last but not least – the title of the book is promising – a global history of ignorance. It is, however, a global ignorance mostly from a European, occidental angle. Only here and there are other perspectives mentioned, for example in chapter 2 on philosophy and in chapter 8 the section on Chinese ignorance. Burke reflects upon this restriction in the foreword.

Despite these points, it is a catchy book that presents the phenomena of not knowing in a multifaceted and anecdotal way that adds the perspective of social history to the field of ignorance studies. For newbies interested in the phenomena of ignorance, it is a good starting point, and experts in ignorance studies might find illustrative examples from history. For the systematic study of ignorance phenomena, however, I

do not advise reading this book and rather suggest to turn to other literature.

Note

- 1 M. Gross and L. McGoey (eds.), Routledge International Handbook of Ignorance Studies, 2nd edn, London 2023.

Julia Lovell: Maoismus. Eine Weltgeschichte (Aus dem Englischen von Helmut Dierlamm und Nobert Juraschitz), Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2023, 768 S.

Rezensiert von
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Julia Lovell, Professorin für moderne chinesische Geschichte an der University of London, hat den Versuch unternommen, eine Weltgeschichte des Maoismus von den 1930er Jahren bis zur Gegenwart vorzulegen. Das Buch ist flüssig geschrieben und richtet sich zweifelsohne an eine allgemein an Weltgeschichte interessierte Leserschaft über das akademische Fachpublikum hinaus. Eine deutsche Übersetzung durch den Suhrkamp-Verlag macht durchaus Sinn vor dem Hintergrund, dass die BRD zwischen 1967 und 1977 selbst ihr „rotes Jahrzehnt“ und eine „kleine Kulturrevolution“ erlebte.¹ Die Geschichte des westdeutschen Maoismus wurde erst wieder Ende der 1990er Jahre in den Medien zu einem Politikum, da in der rot-grünen Regierung unter Bundeskanzler Gerhard

Schröder einige Minister und Ministerinnen in der Vergangenheit Mitglieder von sogenannten K-Gruppen gewesen waren. Der Schwerpunkt von Lovells Weltgeschichte liegt eindeutig nicht auf der Begeisterung für den Maoismus im Westen, der Fall der BRD wird kurz erwähnt, sondern den einflussreichen Bewegungen im Globalen Süden. Die Kapitel zu Afrika, Peru, Südostasien, Indien und Nepal behandeln Parteien, die in „halb feudalen, halb-kolonialen“ Gesellschaften, so der offizielle maoistische Begriff, ländliche Guerillabewegungen aufbauten. Gestützt auf Bauernschaft und Bodenreformen sollten „vom Land die Städte eingenommen“ werden. Damit unterschied sich der maoistische Weg vom orthodoxen Marxismus, der im industriellen Proletariat in den Städten das revolutionäre Subjekt sah. Maoistische Bewegungen organisierten im Hinterland „Volkskriege“, als viele kommunistische Parteien, die loyal zur Sowjetunion standen, schon legalistische Strategien verfolgten. An den Beispielen von Indien, Nepal und Peru zeigt Lovell, dass überdurchschnittlich viele Angehörige von ethnisch marginalisierten Gruppen, Frauen und Opfer des „Kastensystems“ die Fußtruppen der maoistischen Bewegungen bildeten. Die Führungskader stellten hingegen in erster Linie Angehörige höherer „Kasten“ oder waren im Fall Perus Intellektuelle wie der berühmt-berüchtigte Universitätsprofessor für Philosophie Abimael Guzmán (1934–2021). In der Kombination von radikalen Agrarreformen, der Strategie des „langwierigen Volkskrieges“ und fanatischem Voluntarismus sieht Lovell das große Gewaltpotential des Maoismus. Der „rote Terror“ habe sich nicht nur gegen staatliche Kräfte