

Braudel's Historiography Reconsidered

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To my son, Lai Wen, affectionately

For my wife: reliable and tolerant

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Preface

The essays collected in this volume represent my views on Braudel's concepts, methodology and principal books. Chapter 1 appraises his five central notions and serves as an overall background to assess Braudel's contributions to historiography. Chapters 2-4 evaluate his three main research books, while Chapter 5 examines a rather too difficult book that Braudel wrote for high school students, and Chapters 6-7 review two collections of his major articles. The three appendices look at Braudel's two minor writings and two biographies written about him. This book focuses on the inner logic and insights of Braudel's writings *per se* and not upon his interactions with the history community. Analyses related to these broader perspectives can be found in his two biographies.

Braudel's other writings are not analyzed here. (1) The multiple collective volumes *Histoire économique et sociale de la France* (Paris: PUF, 1970-82, "collection Quadrige", four volumes in nine books), edited by Braudel and Ernest Labrousse. (2) *La Méditerranée*, in 12 television films, then transformed into two picture books (1977) with texts from six other authors, Paris: Arts et Métiers Graphiques. (3) *L'Europe*, Paris: Arts et Métiers Graphiques, 1982 (transformed from eight television films). (4) *Venise*, Paris: Arthaud (with photographs of Folco Quilici, 1984). (5) *Le monde de Jacques Cartier* (a history of the French navigator Cartier, 1491-1557), Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1984 (picture book).

In his last letter (1823) to Thomas Malthus, David Ricardo wrote: "And now, my dear Malthus, I have done. Like other disputants, after much discussion, we each retain our own opinions. These discussions, however, never influence our friendship; I should not like you more than I do if you agree in opinion with me." The Ricardian spirit applies here. The story is told that after the village tailor had the greatest moment of his life in a private meeting with the Pope, his reactions were "38 short, take in the right shoulder." I only wish that this is not the case after my encounter with Braudel.

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The critic creates nothing, he only points out. But his pointing may show you powers that were indeed always there, and that were even effective, but that, once afresh seen, suggest to active passion a thousand devices whereby the world is revolutionalized.

Josiah Royce
The Spirit of Modern Philosophy

To criticise is to neither praise or denounce, but to *get nearer your subject.*

J.B. Yeats
Letters to His Son, W.B. Yeats & Others

La critique, c'était une découverte, une certaine manière de voire le monde; une manière de découvrir comment le type dont on lisait l'oeuvre et qu'on critiquait, voyait le monde. . . . Tout ça on le voyait dans le livre, mais pas tout de suit. On le voyait à travers des tas de notations qu'il fallait étudier.

Jean-Paul Sartre
La cérémonie des adieux

I hate being asked to criticize what I cannot praise.

Gerard Manley Hopkins
A Hopkins Reader

1

Concepts and Methodology

1 Introduction

This chapter analyzes five frequently used concepts in Braudel's writings viz. *longue durée*, *conjoncture*, *event-history*, *économie-monde* (economic-world) and *total history*. Examples are cited primarily from his three major books (*The Mediterranean* 1966, *Civilization & Capitalism* 1979 and *Identity of France* 1986) to illustrate his use of these concepts, and to clarify the historical insights which are developed. Braudel never rigorously defines these concepts, nor did he try to test them consistently by using historical evidence. In Figure 1, I illustrate the relative meanings of these five concepts from two viewpoints: space and time. The organic structure and the interactions among these five concepts are also illustrated. Finally, I evaluate how Braudel applied these concepts in his works, and conclude that *The Mediterranean* illustrated his key concepts almost ideally, *Capitalism* was less successful and *France* was disappointing.

A main feature of Braudel's historiography is the integration of time and space in historical analysis. In addition to this methodological consciousness, he also contributed significant new concepts to an understanding of time and space individually. Conventional historical analysis either portrays events in a linear time frame (such as

biography), or emphasizes historical changes in different geographic areas (such as changes of international trade centers). Some historians combine these two aspects (time and space), but few can be compared with Braudel, who applied a set of historical concepts (*longue durée*, *conjoncture*, event-history, *économie-monde* and total history) to panoramic subjects (such as the Mediterranean world), and generated significant historical insights.

In the development of concepts of historical time, Braudel's long-term (*longue durée*), mid-term (*conjoncture*) and short-term (event-history) views are innovative in the sense that they remind us that it is possible to have several concepts of historical time co-existing within a single subject of analysis. Utilizing this mode of thinking has also proved fruitful, especially when studying a complex topic. As to the concept of space, the *économie-monde* that he proposed is meaningful in the sense that Braudel pointed out a new unit of historical analysis: economic-world, a macro unit defined by the exchange of goods and services, not by politics or cultures. What is even more significant is Braudel's notion of total history (*histoire totale* or *histoire globale*) which governs the above four concepts together. When these four concepts are combined (i.e. both temporal and spatial elements are considered), the resulting analysis can be viewed as a total history. In short, when these five concepts are taken together as organic explanatory variables, one is able to conduct a three-dimensional analysis of a historical subject, by its time, its space and its totality.

Figure 1 is a simplified description of Braudel's five key concepts. In this two-dimensional presentation it seems that the short-term (event-history) is the *lowest* category, although this is actually not the case. In fact, each concept in Figure 1 has its own life and function; there is no question of superiority or order of value. Figure 1 also cannot illustrate the concept of total history since I can only express this in an abstract manner, explaining it as an overall notion governs the other four concepts on the space/time axes. Since total history is a notion that central to Braudel's historiography but often misunderstood, it is hoped that my explanations in Section 4 may clarify this concept. Finally, the "distance" between each curve on Figure 1 is only schematic.

The most well-known Braudelian concept is his three types of his-

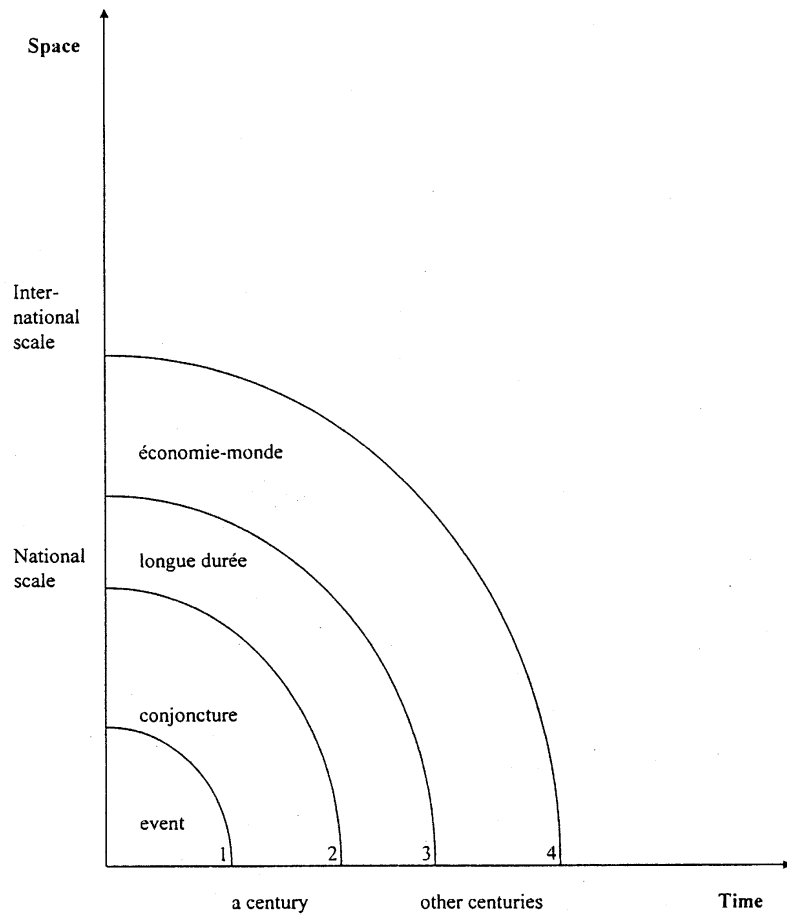


Figure 1 Braudel's notion of total history

Total history is a 5th notion that Braudel designed to grasp and to explain in a holistic manner the above four kinds of historic "units": event, conjoncture, longue durée and économie-monde.

torical time. This is, however, a simplified view. As Braudel was well aware, historical time cannot be neatly divided into three types. As he wrote: "But the worst of it is that there are not merely two or three measures of time, there are dozens, each of them attached to a particular history." (*The Mediterranean*, p. 1238) I also wish to stress that actually there are additional concepts, beyond the spatial and temporal, used or discussed in Braudel's writings. For instance his views on the notion of "structure" are very different from the views of structuralism prevailing during the 1950s-60s in France (see the final page of *The Mediterranean*); while another example is his frequent reference to von Thünen's location theory. These two concepts, as well as others, are not discussed in this study because they are neither his major concerns, nor were they initiated by him.

Section 2 reviews Braudel's concept of historical time, Section 3 examines his concept of historical space (*économie-monde*), Section 4 discusses his concept of total history, Section 5 on his method of historical writings, some evaluations of Braudel's concepts and methodology are made in the concluding Section 6. Given space constraint, only one or two examples are selected from his three major books to illustrate the concepts in question and more references are available to show other related examples not cited here. It is hoped that by these examples we may better understand the methodological arguments that are implicit in Braudel's texts.

2 Longue durée, conjoncture, event-history

Readers of *The Mediterranean* know quite well that,

[t]he first part is devoted to a history whose passage is almost imperceptible, that of man in his relationship to the environment, a history in which all change is slow, a history of constant repetition, ever-recurring cycles. ... in the second part of the book, studying in turn economic systems, states, societies, civilizations and ... in the complex arena of warfare. ... the third part gives a hearing to traditional history, ... that is, the history of events. (pp. 20-1)

The three types of historical time are apportioned as: *longue durée* (taking a century or longer as a unit of analysis) to Part I, *conjoncture* (10-50 years) to Part II, while short calendar time (from weeks

to seasons to years) to Part III. Calendar time is quite familiar to traditional history, to which Braudel added nothing new; conjuncture is borrowed from economics, although Braudel extended its applications to other non-economic aspects of history (social and cultural changes etc.); *longue durée* was Braudel's own creation, and he tirelessly advocated it from the end of the 1940s until his death in 1985. He claimed that *longue durée* is the most suitable notion for investigating the slow-changing and structurally stable aspects of history.

2.1 *Longue durée*

On February 20, 1944 Braudel wrote to his mentor Febvre: "You know my plan of tripartite: immobile history (the framework of geography), profound history, that of overall movements, event-history..." (Gemelli 1995:78 note 1 and p. 94) This indicates that *longue durée* had been conceived around 1940-4 during the War. In 1977 at the age of 75, Braudel reviewed his idea of *longue durée* as:

It was when I was constructing my book on the Mediterranean, I was led to divide the times of history according to their different speeds, according to different temporalities. I think there are actually rapid times, longer times, and almost immobile times. But it was in the end of this course, not by a preliminary operation, that I arrived at this conception of time of history. Similarly, the *longue durée* of which I am the advocator, it was an artifice by which I was escaped from certain tangible difficulties. I did not think to *longue durée* before writing my book on the Mediterranean. (Braudel 1978:244-5)

Why was he so passionate about *longue durée*?

I myself, during a rather gloomy captivity, struggled a good deal to get away from a chronicle of those difficult years (1940-5). Rejecting events and the time in which events take place was a way of placing oneself to one side, sheltered, so as to get some sort of perspective, to be able to evaluate them better, and not wholly to believe in them. To go from the short time span, to one less short, and then to the long view (which, if it exists, must surely be the wise man's time span); and having got there, to think about everything afresh and to reconstruct everything around me: a historian could hardly not be tempted by such a prospect. (Braudel 1969:47-8, and p. 77 for a similar statement)

In the indices of *The Mediterranean* and *Capitalism*, one cannot find the term “Longue durée”, whereas in *France* it appears in the index only four times in Volume I. It might seem that Braudel applied *longue durée* in his writings to a much lesser extent than one might have expected. However, I soon realize that *longue durée* is not a technical tool; it is a notion that serves as Braudel's cornerstone and is embodied in his overall framework, though not necessarily in the text itself. Two examples to illustrate this are presented below.

In the “Supplementary Note” (*The Mediterranean*, pp. 272-5) Braudel stressed the importance of climatic changes, stating that from the end of the 16th century onwards, the Mediterranean area became colder, wetter and rainier. He believed in the “Jet Stream” theory:

According to this hypothesis, there is a continuous air current over the northern hemisphere, a ring of air moving at variable speeds, ... the Jet Stream would have increased speed at the end of the sixteenth century, and moving nearer to the Equator and therefore to the Mediterranean, would have brought rain and cold weather south with it. ... Important questions still remain to be answered. Was the change we have suggested part of a long-term phase? If so, the sixteenth century would have marked the beginning of a long period of inflowing cold and rain.

Similar to geographic changes, climatic changes are also slow, and this theory fits very well in the *longue durée* framework. In this example, Braudel proposed a hypothesis without further supporting evidence. Although this is an interesting hypothesis which may have been elsewhere discussed by historians of climate, Braudel only indicated that history of climate is a good subject to bring *longue durée* into perspective, though climatology was not his area of expertise.

In *Capitalism*, *longue durée* has been used in an unusual manner, not in the context of slow variations such as those in geography and climate. The topic covered in I:90-2 is “1400-1800: a long-lasting biological Ancien Régime (1400-1800: un Ancien Régime biologique de *longue durée*)”. The implication is that during these four centuries life expectancy was short, infant mortality rate was high, diet and hygiene conditions were unhealthy, etc. Another example is III:620-3 “Capitalism and the long-term (La *longue durée*).” But ever since the 16th century European capitalism has never had a stable structure; it has

faced numerous crises in the past, and in the present century we have witnessed the 1929 Great Depression and the 1972-4 Oil Shock. The fluctuating history of capitalism is more related to social and economic changes and seems unsuitable to be examined within the *longue durée* context.

This is an example to show why I often feel puzzled about the “exact” meaning of *longue durée* and the topics to which one can appropriately apply this concept. As was his style, Braudel never clearly defined it, and his applications are sometimes confusing.

2.2 *Conjoncture*

The meaning of *conjoncture* in French needs to be clarified, in order to understand how it was used by economists and economic historians, and why Braudel was attracted by this notion. Braudel’s usage of *conjoncture* maybe unclear to economic historians since he never attempted to explain the inner mechanism of changes in *conjoncture*.

There is no corresponding word for *conjoncture* in English. The *Petit Robert* dictionary explains that *conjoncture* is “Situation resulting from an encounter of circumstances and which is considered as the point of departure of an evolution, an action.” And the “Study of *conjoncture*” is to “study an occasional situation (opposed to structure) in view of a prevision.” This explanation fits Braudel’s usage of this term since his main concern is changes and mutations in economic factors such as price change, population growth and production output; it is also used to describe social trends such as “*conjoncture paysanne*, *conjoncture seigneuriale*.” (see Gemelli 1995:107 and Braudel 1991:48)

This economic notion led Braudel to believe that “... the term *conjoncture*, ... suggest[s] possible new directions for research and some tentative explanatory hypotheses. ... Conjunctural analysis, ... is however one of the necessary means of historical explanation and as such, a useful formulation of the problem.” (*The Mediterranean*, pp. 892, 899) The concept developed because in his view,

Traditional history, with its concern for the short time span, for the individual and the event, has long accustomed us to the headlong, dramatic, breathless rush of its narrative. The new economic and social history puts cyclical movement in the forefront of its research and is committed to that time span ... side by side with traditional

narrative history, there is an account of conjunctures which lays open large sections of the past, ten, twenty, fifty years at a stretch ready for examination. (Braudel 1969, p. 27, see p. 29 for a similar statement)

Among Braudel's writings, Part II of *The Mediterranean* uses conjuncture most frequently: on economies (chapters 6-8), on empires (9), on societies (10), on civilizations (11), on the forms of war (12) and the concluding chapter (13) which restates his view on conjuncture in a more systematic and theoretical manner, providing more evidence to support his arguments. For instance, he offers a picture about changes in conjuncture in the Mediterranean from the 15th to 17th centuries:

An economic upswing, beginning in about 1470, reached a peak, or slowed down for a while, during the years of record high price 1590-1600, then continued after a fashion until 1650. These dates: 1470 (or 1450), 1590, 1595 or 1600, 1650 are only very approximate landmarks. The long upward movement is confirmed essentially by variations in grain price which give us a clear and unequivocal series of figures. If the wage curve, say, or the production curve had been used as a basis for calculation one would no doubt find somewhat different chronologies, but they would ultimately have to be checked against the all-powerful grain curve. (*The Mediterranean*, p. 893)

Although one understands that these dates "are only very approximate", but Braudel does not mention if this was the situation prevailing in the entire Mediterranean area or was limited to certain areas therein. How could it possible for Levant and North Africa to have a similar trend of conjuncture? This leads to an important objection to Braudel's usage of conjuncture: he never explains how he judges the turning points and duration of conjunctures, nor does he explain the background forces that mark the shape of the trend. These factors are what the reader wishes to understand but Braudel only sketched the broad outline and as more specific studies become available, the picture Braudel presented may be altered. The same problem again occurs in *France* (II:120): "I see it as affected by a long-term movement, an upward and beneficial one from the late seventh century until roughly 840-50 when it turned into downward trend, as usual faster than the upward one, from 850 to roughly 950." If Braudel uses con-

conjuncture in such a sweeping way, one can only consider his statements as hypotheses.

What is the usefulness of conjuncture? Braudel's afterthoughts, as expressed in *Capitalism* (III:618), are honest:

I believe in them [conjunctures] so firmly that since the beginning of our present difficulties, in 1972-4 [oil shock by OPEC countries, and stagflation in the early 1970s], I have often asked myself: is this the downward slope of a Kondratieff cycle? Or are we indeed embarking upon a much longer slide, a reversal of the secular trend? If so, are not the day-to-day remedies proposed to meet the crisis completely illusory? ... we can only identify without being able to explain them [conjunctures], is of course a very risky business.

Yes, conjuncture as Braudel applied it in history can "only identify without being able to explain them". He never tried to explain why and how the ups and downs occurred, their causes and consequences, or their intensities. The criticisms expressed by other scholars about conjuncture can be found in, for instance, Kinser (1981b:676 note 11) and Kinser (1981a:92-4); Hexter (1972:498-504).

2.3 Event-history

Braudel rejected the method of using exact dates, places, names and cause-consequences in a logically structured way of writing history. Instead, he wanted to analyze the overall environment, structure, and movement, emphasizing the impersonal, collective aspects of historical changes. This attitude was clear as early as the 1920s-30s, and through the time when he was writing the first edition of *The Mediterranean* during the 1940s. However, this attitude was modified in the mid-1960s when he prepared the second edition of that book, and in *France* (1986) he later developed an even greater interest in specific events.

A passage from Braudel's notes may reveal his conception about events, quoting from his personal notebook (f* 23), undated, entitled "L'Histoire, mesure du temps (History, measure of time)." The notebook belongs to the Archives Braudel which is not yet public. Braudel mentions the State of Bahia (Brazil) in this passage and we know he

was teaching at São Paulo University during 1936-7. Thus the following idea was documented before he wrote *The Mediterranean*:

One evening, in the State of Bahia, I suddenly found myself being surrounded by a tremendous number of fireflies. They were lighting here and there, more or less in high place, countless, ... just like many too brief sparkles, but shed sufficient light to see the landscape. This is so with events. (Gemelli 1995:84; see Braudel 1969:10 for a similar statement)

This is an excellent metaphor to describe that events are like the light from fireflies: brief and weak.

Braudel used event-history in Part III of *The Mediterranean*, with its main emphasis on war, politics, and diplomacy. He used archival materials extensively, he was exact in details and offered telling stories. Experts on specific issues might have various criticisms (e.g. Harsgor 1986), but for general readers Braudel was truly a master of event-history. It was by no means easy to handle the vast number of details and present them in an engaging manner. The archival materials he used and the secondary literature cited in both the footnotes and the Appendix are impressive.

But his attitude has changed in the 1960s:

Every event, however brief, has to be sure a contribution to make, to light up some dark corner or even some wide vista of history. ... I am by no means the sworn enemy of the event. ... In the first place, this kind of history tends to recognize only 'important' events, building its hypotheses only on foundations which are solid or assumed to be so. ... Another is the event with far-reaching consequences and repercussions as Henri Pirenne was fond of remarking. (*The Mediterranean*, pp. 901-2)

Braudel was 64 in 1966 when the second edition was published and in it he seems less hostile towards event-history than most readers and commentators believed (e.g. Hexter 1972:507-8ff.; Kinser 1981a:94-8), as can be seen in his restatement of this position on the final two pages of *The Mediterranean* (pp. 1243-4).

This changing attitude was even clearer after the mid-1960s with his two biographies of Spanish kings: Charles V (1500-58) and his son Philippe II (1527-98). Both were published in Italian translations in 1966 and 1969 although the French versions were not published

until their inclusion in his *Ecrits sur l'histoire II* (Braudel 1994) after his death in 1985. Why was he interested in writing these two biographies? He had accumulated sufficient materials about these two central figures of *The Mediterranean* (recall that the full title is *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*) and his attitude about event-history had changed. So in the process of revising the second edition, he must have been unable to resist the temptation to produce these two biographies. However, it might have been embarrassing to publish their French versions during his lifetime, partly because people would have questioned whether Braudel was returning to the traditional history, writing the type of biography that Febvre and Bloch rejected. Braudel's taste for events became more evident in his later life, as one can see from the many detailed descriptions of events, dates, names scattered throughout *France*; while a particularly telling comment is in Chapter 10 on Metz and Toulon: "This time I have not avoided exciting events, ..." (I:351)

3 *Économie-monde* (Economic-world)

In Wallerstein's well-known *The Modern World-System* (1974, 1980, 1989), a common keyword of the subtitles is "world-economy", indicating the influence of Braudel's notion of *économie-monde*. So, why did Braudel's version of this concept receive much less attention? Braudel mentioned *économie-monde* initially in the first edition of *The Mediterranean* (1949), but he did not add new substantial contents regarding *économie-monde* in the second edition, where one can find only a brief presentation of this term on pp. 387 and 418-9 (see below for detail). Most readers did not even notice its existence and moreover, the term is not even listed in the index.

3.1 *Origin*

Braudel initially developed this concept in the 1930s, inspired by the work of Friz Rörig *Mittelalterliche Weltwirtschaft: Blüte und Ende einer Weltwirtschaftsperiode* (1933, see Gemelli 1995:125, *Capitalism III*:634 note 4). But Braudel's early conception was vague, as one can see from his notebook entries during the 1930s-40s:

Many German writers even present that the economic life itself is organized in more or less vast spaces, in *économie-monde* [...] - so in ancient time, the antique world which is the Mediterranean... -, and that the current world economy is the sum more or less [...] of these *économie-monde* [...]. In the course of this evolution, there have been economic equilibria between economic space and society. (Gemelli 1995:95)

This passage is not easy to follow owing to its personal style, and the final sentence is especially opaque. But this brief illustration tells us: (1) Braudel's notion of *économie-monde* was inspired by German geographers, whose corresponding word in German for *économie-monde* is *Weltwirtschaft*; (2) Since Braudel was then conceiving *The Mediterranean*, he was thinking that the Mediterranean world is a kind of *économie-monde*, as he latter expressed in pp. 418-9; (3) he clearly distinguished *économie-monde* (economic-world, a huge network of economic exchanges) from *économie mondiale* (world economy, which refers to such as the global impacts of the Oil Shock of the 1970s).

3.2 *Examples*

In a section entitled "Is it possible to construct a model of the Mediterranean economy?" Braudel states that

Have we here enough material to measure the Mediterranean, to construct a comprehensive, quantitative "model" of its economy? As a unit it could then be compared to other "world-economies" [economic-worlds would be a better translation] either bordering on or connected to the Mediterranean. (*The Mediterranean*, pp. 418-9)

This opening statement shows that Braudel wished to present an economic-world model based on the Mediterranean economy, and after such construction, he believed models for other *économie-mondes* could be similarly constructed and then compared.

This is certainly an attractive proposition, and Braudel treated it in length (44 pages, pp. 418-61), the longest chapter-section in this book. The section contains 17 sub-sections, covering the following topics: (1) estimation of agricultural production; (2) value of industrial output; (3) the putting-out (Verlag) system and the rise of urban

industry; (4) itinerant labor force, (5) volume of commercial transactions: local and long-distance trade; (6) total tonnage of Mediterranean shipping; (7) the state as the principal entrepreneur; (8) precious metals and their impacts; (9) one fifth of the population in great poverty; (10) food problems and (11) the reliability of statistics. This is a rich catalogue, but Braudel did not discuss the basic characteristics of an *économie-monde*, how it functions, or how this example could “be compared to other economic-worlds either bordering on or connected to the Mediterranean”.

In an *économie-monde* one might expect to see a center just as one would expect a capital in a country, one also might expect to see the (vital) role played by this center. In an earlier passage in chapter 6.1 (p. 387), Braudel presented the idea:

This world [the Mediterranean], sixty days long, was, indeed, broadly speaking a *Weltwirtschaft*, a world-economy [*économie-monde*], a self-contained universe. ... All world-economies [*économie-monde*] for instance recognize a center, some focal point that acts as a stimulus to other regions and is essential to the existence of the economic unit as a whole. Quite clearly in the Mediterranean in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries that center was a narrow urban quadrilateral: Venice, Milan, Genoa, Florence, with conflicts and inter-town rivalries as the relative weight of each city changed. The center of gravity can gradually be seen to shift from Venice, where it still lay at the beginning of the century, to Genoa, where it was so brilliantly established between 1550 and 1575.

In this impressive passage Braudel defines what a center means to an *économie-monde*, and in the case of Mediterranean, we are told that the center was not a single city, but comprised of four cities, and that with the center of gravity changing between them.

Braudel clearly illustrated *économie-monde* in *Capitalism* (III:21-4) and in his *Afterthoughts* (Braudel 1977:80-2). He tried to propose “some ground rules” (*règles tendanciennes*) as a theoretical framework for the *économie-monde* model, backed with historical evidence (*Capitalism* III:25-45). This is an interesting framework which is summarized below with short comments (given in square brackets).

Rule 1: “The boundaries [of *économie-monde*] change only slowly.” [The geo-historical time has a slow pace].

- Rule 2.1: "A dominant capitalist city always lies at the center." [Such as Venice, Amsterdam, London, New York. This is an observable fact].
- Rule 2.2: "Cities take it in turns to lead." [The leading role of Venice was replaced by Amsterdam, then by London, by New York, and perhaps by Tokyo in the next century].
- Rule 2.3: "The power and influence of cities may vary." [Venice had been a strong and independent state; Antwerp by contrast had virtually no political power; London commanded England's national market and later that of the Commonwealth].
- Rule 3.1: "There is always a hierarchy of zones within a world-economy." [An *économie-monde* contains different zones as satellites of the central city. These zones have different functions and different importance, the "polarized" core city integrates these zones into an *économie-monde*].
- Rule 3.2: "von Thünen's zones." [Braudel admired von Thünen's theoretical construction of location theory in *Der isoliert Stadt* (1826), but he criticized that this theory "contains no other town besides the great city", and that "what I would criticize is the absence from this schema of the very important concept of inequality [among different zones]." (III:38-39) He also presented five comments on the inadequacy of von Thünen's model].
- Rule 3.3: "The spatial arrangement of the world-economy." ["Every world-economy is like a jigsaw puzzle, a juxtaposition of zones inter-connected at different levels: a narrow core, a fairly developed middle zone and a vast periphery." (III:39) This is Braudel's hierarchy of zones within an *économie-monde*].
- Rule 3.4: "Do neutral zones exist?" [His main argument is that even within the most advanced *économie-monde*, there exist some backward corners. This is a minor point; in addition, "neutral zones" is an unclear term].
- Rule 3.5: "Envelope and infrastructure." [An *économie-monde* is like an enormous envelope, containing a core area and hinterlands to assure the functioning of the *économie-monde*].

Although the above rules are useful guidelines for an understanding of *économie-monde*, some rules such as 3.2, 3.4 and 3.5 seem unconvincing: they are not rules, at most they are some properties.

3.3 Braudel vs. Wallerstein

Beginning in the early 1970s, Braudel and Wallerstein expressed their different views on *économie-monde*. To contrast their major differences, the focus here is on their final exchange in October 1985, one month before Braudel's death. The historical evidence to back up Wallerstein's view on *économie-monde* has been presented in his three volumes on the modern World-System, and he also presented a more general theoretical summary and restatement in his 1980 article. Braudel's criticism towards Wallerstein was amicable and reserved, as can be seen from his unpublished draft, entitled "Restrictions d'Immanuel Wallerstein." (Gemelli 1995:231 note 2, which indicates their different views on *économie-monde* in more detail from their private correspondence). The three paragraphs in *Capitalism* III:69-70 are more like friendly remarks than a true critique. Braudel (1978:251-2) also mentioned Wallerstein's World-System, but in a quite sympathetic manner. The following quotation may reveal their main differences.

The grand difference between Immanuel and myself certainly will interest you. He follows Marx's lessons and he pretends that the beginning of the biography of capital was the 16th century, that is the dependence of a peripheral region (with slaves, mines, plantations...) in the benefice of Europe, which is enriching herself at the expense of the others. He pretends that there was an European *économie-monde* from the 16th century, and that this *économie-monde* was not possible without capitalism. Is that your idea?

Wallerstein replies:

No, because you said that "this *économie-monde* was not possible without capitalism", but I say "*économie-monde* in itself should have an economic structure called capitalism". Ten years ago I did not accept the existence of multiple *économie-mondes* and you have finally convinced me. Today, I accept the existence, before the 16th century, of these *économie-mondes*, but I believe that each of

them, by reason of the internal contradictions of its structure, were either disintegrated or transformed into an empire-world. For one curious reason and that should be explained, this is not the destiny of the *économie-monde* constructed in the 16th century; in consequence, it was from then on the real capitalism expanded. (*Une leçon*, pp. 145-6; see *EspaceTemps* 1986, 34/35:44 for a similar statement)

Braudel did not pursue further the main focus of the debate, but this exchange urges us to consider questions on two fronts. (1) Historically, how did *économie-mondes* originate? How long have they been in existence? More importantly, as Wallerstein said, what were the internal contradictions within their structures that led them to collapse? (2) What are the basic elements that constitute an *économie-monde*? How can its internal exchange mechanism be explained? The first set of questions can be answered only as case studies become available; here I try to answer the second set of questions as follows.

3.4 *Basic features of économie-monde*

A world-economy ([*économie-monde*] an expression which I have used in the past as a particular meaning of the German term *Weltwirtschaft*) only concerns a fragment of the world, an economically autonomous section of the planet able to provide for most of its own needs, a section to which its internal links and exchanges give a certain organic unity. (*Capitalism* III:22)

This is Braudel's "definition", whereas Wallerstein's (1980:13) version is:

By contrast, the concept "world-economy" [*économie-monde*] assumes that there exists an 'economy' wherever (and if but only if) there is an ongoing extensive and relatively complete social division of labor with an integrated set of production processes which relate to each other through a "market" which has been "instituted" or "created" in some complex way.

Although both versions are well-defined, the overall concept remains abstract. Based on these two definitions and the other statements presented above, five major characteristics of both Braudel's and Wallerstein's *économie-monde* can be summarized as follows.

- (1) In the past, present and future, in industrialized or developing areas, there co-exist(ed) multiple *économie-mondes*.
- (2) An *économie-monde* is composed of a small core center, a rather developed middle zone and a wide peripheral zone. The relationship between these three zones involves “unequal exchange of goods and services, such that much of the surplus-value extracted in the peripheral zones of the world-economy [*économie-monde*] is transferred to the core zones.” (Wallerstein 1980:15)
- (3) Several *économie-mondes* co-exist and each has its own center; there may be one or two major centers in a larger geographical area of an *économie-monde*, called the center of economic gravity. Over time and with changes in economic conditions, the center of economic gravity also changes, as Rule 2.2 indicates. In *France* II:630-1 as well as *Capitalism* III:32, 71, 138, 266, 484, 523, 530-1, 575 Braudel illustrated this points several times.
- (4) The role of the State is important in maintaining and expanding an *économie-monde*. This is what Wallerstein has stressed but Braudel neglected. Another related aspect is that the boundary of an *économie-monde* does not necessarily match political boundaries, and usually an *économie-monde* boundary extends beyond the political and cultural ones.
- (5) Rule 1 says that the boundaries of an *économie-monde* change only slowly. As Braudel has stressed, “*économie-monde* should be judged within the *longue durée* framework.” (*Une leçon*, pp. 131-2) To this, one may add an amendment: for the *économie-monde* before the 15th century, the change was slow from a geographical point of view; but the change speeded up from 16th century onwards, as one can see from Figure 2-3 in *Capitalism* III:28-9, which shows radical changes in the European *économie-monde* between 1500 and 1775. Currently, the speed of change in *économie-monde* is even faster: consider that the center of economic gravity in this century has changed from London to New York, and is gradually moving to Tokyo.

4 Total history

Strictly speaking, total history is not a historical concept, rather it is a methodological claim of historical writing. I shall present Braudel's own idea, provide some comments from other scholars, and show how he applied this notion to his various books. Although Braudel used *histoire globale* and *histoire totale* interchangeably, for consistency I adopt the second term.

4.1 *Basic idea*

Similarly, the *globalité*, *histoire globale* that I defend, imposed on me little by little. That is something extremely simple, so simple that most of my colleagues in history do not understand me. On the contrary, this does not hinder them to attack me fiercely. . . . The *globalité*, is not an intention to write a total history of the world. It is not this kind of puerile, sympathetic and crazy pretension. It is simply the desire, when one approaches a problem, to go beyond the limits systematically. There is no historical problem, in my view, that is separated by walls, that is independent. (Braudel 1978:245)

He was aged 75 when he made this statement, and had defended this idea many times previously.

This idea can further be seen in his comments on Le Roy Ladurie's *Les paysans de Languedoc*:

In our discussions what I disagreed with him was exactly on the question that I preferred *globalité*. For me, the peasants of Languedoc is not an autonomous subject, not a subject in itself. Without the land, without the rivers, without the soil, without the vegetation, without the cultures, without the mountains, without the stone, without the paths (tracks), . . . there are no peasants without all these. I was fighting against Le Roy Ladurie in demanding him to have a kind of preliminary geographic study. For me, this is essential. He finally accepted but with regret. He did not want to go out of his subject. (Braudel 1978:245)

Three features of Braudel's total history may be summarized. (1) He advocated interdisciplinary studies, going beyond the limits of well-defined topical studies. (2) History should be observed and studied from diverse angles, with it being beneficial to expand the duration

of observation (*longue durée*) and to extend the geographic areas, such that extensive comparison will lead to significant results. (3) It is essential to combine the time dimension (three kinds of historical time) and the space dimension (geo-history, *économie-monde*) in order to investigate the complexity of the subject in question.

4.2 *Criticism and defense*

“One major obstacle to *histoire globale* arises from the fact that *histoire globale* has been much more the product of individual genius than of systematic theory.” (Stoianovich 1978:20) Although Stoianovich (1976:102-4, 133, 168, 207-8) offered more comments on total history, his basic attitude is clear from Chapter 4 of his book which is titled “An impossible *histoire globale*”. Some other commentators also criticized Braudel’s idea, from which three examples are selected. Pierre Chaunu was an early student of Braudel, who latter became Membre de l’Institut. He frankly stated that: “There cannot be a total history. All knowledge is necessarily selective, a rational choice. ... total history, in its basic meaning, is evidently a non-sense. It is a wish, it marks an direction, ...” (Coutau-Bégarie 1983:96, 99) Furet, who is a well-known member of the *Annales* school, has written:

Yet the idea of “total history” is elusive. ... “Total history” merely expresses the ambition of providing a fuller perspective, a more exhaustive description, a more comprehensive explanation of a given object or problem than provided by the social sciences whose conceptual and methodological innovations it has borrowed. (Furet 1983:394)

Hexter (1972:512) offered an unsympathetic way to describe this notion:

One can almost see an adult and a small boy. The adult asks, “What do you want?” Properly and promptly the small boy replies, “I would like a marshmallow cookie heavily coated with dark chocolate.” A little doubtful, the adult asks again, “What do you really want?” This time the boy pauses. Then his eyes light up. “I really want everything in the world!”

Karl Popper’s criticism of holism may be borrowed to defend the idea that Braudel’s notion of total history is not meaningless.

There is a fundamental ambiguity in the use of the word “whole” in recent holistic literature. It is used to denote (a) the totality of all the properties or aspects of a thing, and especially of all the relations holding between its constituent parts, and (b) certain special properties or aspects of the thing in question, namely those which make it appear an organized structure rather than a “mere heap”. ... The fact that wholes in sense (b) can be studied scientifically must therefore not be appealed to in order to justify the entirely different claim that wholes in sense (a) can be so studied. The latter claim must be rejected. If we wish to study a thing, we are bound to select certain aspects of it. It is not possible for us to observe or to describe a whole piece of the world, or a whole piece of nature; in fact, not even the smallest whole piece may be so described, since all description is necessarily selective. (Popper 1961:76-7)

Those who rejected Braudel's total history, as cited above were based their views on Popper's point (a). However, Popper's clarification helps us to have a more balanced view on Braudel's idea: total history is not intended to describe everything, every aspect of the subject; rather, it is intended to “make it appear an organized structure rather than a ‘mere heap’.”

4.3 *Applications and results*

From technical point of view, then, is that feasible to apply Braudel's notion of total history to one's own historical analysis? Actually it is quite difficult. First, few writers possess the requisite analytical tools from various disciplines (geography, economics, demography, cultural studies, etc. as Braudel claimed to have in the Preface to *France*). The combination of multiple disciplines is not an easy thing, especially if one really wants to achieve deep and significant results. Superficial marriages hardly generate true deep insights.

... one of the things we have learned, I believe, over the last twenty years is the danger of premature interdisciplinary work. You cannot, for instance, teach students to be interdisciplinary. ... But I don't think it works, and I don't think it could work, because it seems to me that to be good in interdisciplinary work, you already have to have very solid foundations in one discipline. That is, you learn how to be responsible; ... People who try to start out by

learning something about everything will not get anywhere. So I certainly think that an academic community of specialists is much more desirable than one that is made up of all-around amateurs. (Elster 1990:240)

Second, total history is certainly a good idea, constituting an ideal plot, but to find a meaningful subject which simultaneously includes the three sorts of historical time and an *économie-monde* is surely not an easy thing. Even were it possible, to such a huge subject it would be hard to find a unifying framework because there are too many aspects, too many issues, too many materials to be managed to reach an elegant final product that could satisfy Braudel's ideal. I am inclined to agree that Braudel's total history is a "product of individual genius", and in the 50 years since Braudel proposed the concept, I have not seen a historical work by another historian that has met Braudel's requirements of total history.

The next question is: How successful was Braudel's application of this notion in his three major books? As to historical time, the table of contents of *The Mediterranean* is quite clear that there are three parts in this book and each part corresponds to one sort of historical time. It is possible to validate these concepts from the rich collection of documents on politics, society, religion, and economic exchange accumulated in the lengthy list of archives in the Appendix of his book, and using these materials Braudel illustrated these concepts successfully. In terms of space (geography), the Mediterranean is a pivotal area, connecting several continents. The impressive volume of economic exchange over this sea made it a true *économie-monde*, upon which Braudel proposed this concept. In short, the four elements in Figure 1 are fully illustrated in *The Mediterranean*. It is from this sparkling work that Braudel see the magic power of total history, he persisted in this goal but was less fortunate when he applied it to his other two books. Let me explain.

Braudel's notion of *économie-monde* was fully developed in Volume III of *Capitalism*, impressing many readers with his capacity to spell out this concept with so rich historical evidence. Readers were also gratified that Braudel finally presented his own version of the concept in *Capitalism* (1979) after Wallerstein's first volume of *World-System* in 1974. One may say that the aspect of historical space is well

illustrated in *Capitalism*. But in terms of historical time, the elements covered in *Capitalism* are so heterogeneous and the topics included are so diverse that it seems Braudel was not able to demonstrate the aspects of *longue durée*, conjuncture, and event-history of this huge topic in an explicit and convincing manner, either in terms of framework or evidence. For instance, capitalism is a topic closely related to economic fluctuations and financial events, so is it appropriate to put capitalism in the *longue durée* perspective? Or, is the aspect of *longue durée* important to the history of capitalism? Both are doubtful. If the *longue durée* perspective is ineffective for this topic, then the time axis in Figure 1 is unsound. In short, total history seems less successfully presented in *Capitalism*.

Total history is also not well illustrated in *France*, but for an opposite reason. Braudel certainly knew France very well, and the rich documents in the French archives are more than sufficient for him to illustrate his three kinds of historical time. But I often find him over-involved in details: in *The Mediterranean* we see he apportioned the three kinds of historical time to more or less equal sections, but in *France* we see too few pages devoted to the *longue durée* aspect and too many pages to particular events, this is very different from *The Mediterranean*. The significant problem lies in his treatment of historical space: Did France ever constitute an *économie-monde*, from ancient time to today? The answer seems to be No, and the reason is evident if one reviews French economic history according to the five basic features of *économie-monde* presented in Section 3.4. One might argue that there existed some *mini-économie-mondes* (i.e. regional *économie-mondes*) in France, but even if this argument is valid, how could their scale and importance be comparable with the *économie-mondes* presented in the previous two books? More importantly, Braudel did not illustrate a single French *économie-monde* and demonstrate its operational mechanism convincingly in *France*. If this *économie-monde* aspect does not stand, then a major part of Figure 1 is missing such that the notion of total history is incomplete.

Based on my reading experience as well as the impression obtained from the many book reviews of *Capitalism* and *France*, it is not unfair to say that *France* is far less insightful than *Capitalism*. So this is a question of value judgment: I think total history (including the

four concepts that it governs) was applied most ideally in *The Mediterranean*, less successfully in *Capitalism*, and unsatisfactorily in *France*.

5 Methodology

5.1 Perspective

During his undergraduate education at Sorbonne in the 1920s and his first teaching experience in Algeria in the early 1930s, Braudel studied, read and wrote so called traditional history, centered on great figures and diplomatic, military and political events. He had contacts with pioneers of New History like Berr, Febvre and Bloch, but Braudel's writings (mainly as journal articles and reviews) until the late 1930s were essentially conventional in topics and in writing style, as can be seen from his early writings collected in *Les écrits de Fernand Braudel* (Braudel 1996-2001).

His first major book *The Mediterranean* (1949) made a new landmark: he placed the history of events low in his value hierarchy, as Part III of the book. This Part III, as well as his earlier writings, together with his two biographies on Charles V and Philippe II (in Braudel 1994 *Ecrits sur l'histoire II*), all testify to his excellence in traditional history, deep knowledge of details, and excellent writing skill. But he was brave enough to reject these already reputation-earning assets and shifted to the *longue durée* and conjuncture perspectives. The transformation to one which de-emphasized the chronological narration of events and historical figures, and attempted to plot images of grand history, was a breakthrough in historiography. This attitude is evident in the introduction to Part III of *The Mediterranean* (1966).

A feature of this kind of historical writing which plots grand image is that Braudel did not aim to resolve puzzles or issues, nor to propose new hypotheses or proposition to be verified by historical evidence. Rather, he wished to expose structural images of important themes. In *Capitalism*, for example, Braudel treated this topic uniquely. In three volumes he showed that the activities of capitalism can be classified into three levels: daily life market activities; production and exchange within the national market; international capital flow and trade at the world economy level. He defended no thesis, showed little interest in the doctrines of capitalism that were often heatedly debated; what

he was interested in was to plot its complex images within his chosen framework, by abundant details from both archives and secondary literature. One needs to understand this writing style before reading his work, otherwise his framework and chapter design will be a burden for readers accustomed to text with rigorous inner structure and logical reasoning.

A structural characteristic of (or defect in) Braudel's framework is that his subject is usually huge, spanning several centuries, touching numerous facets, and his ambition is evident from the tables of contents of his books. In his mind there is always a "longue durée" perspective and "total history" design. His books generally ran to 1,500-2,000 pages but covered hundreds of topics such that each individual issue occupied only on average 2 to 3 pages, while some were even confined to one page, for instance the serious state finance crisis in the Turkish empire was treated only sweepingly in pp. 1195-6 (*The Mediterranean*). Such examples are not rare as one can see from tables of contents of these three books.

The question follows immediately: since only limited space could be assigned to each issue, and there are hundreds of issues in a book; although this might have satisfied Braudel's total history ambition, but how could this kind of scattered structure fit into Braudel's longue durée framework? In other words, to expose the longue durée aspect of his subject, the author must assign sufficient space consistent with the gravity of the topic. Only when treated in full length can the author's subtle ideas and arguments bring the reader to a full understanding of the topics. Braudel's longue durée, I argue, is embodied in the framework, not in the text itself: it is not evident that one always find the flavor of longue durée in Braudel's explanations, but this longue durée design can be observed easily in his table of contents. This is a peculiar feature of his design and an essential point to understand the inimitability of Braudel's writing style.

Given a structure such as his, it is difficult to find space to present a theory, a hypothesis, full-length evidence or arguments to resolve a historical puzzle. An efficient way, therefore, to read Braudel's books is to avoid dwelling on main body of the text, but first to read the introductions to the book, to the chapters, to the sections, and the first two paragraphs of small sections; normally this will suffice to transmit

Braudel's orientations and basic points of view. The text is sometimes interesting but not always worth the time to read. The final paragraphs, contrary to most history books, are often unimportant, because Braudel reserves making conclusions on his subjects.

5.2 *Unconventional methodology*

Nor was Braudel a man to make definitions. In *Capitalism* I never see him define this key term clearly. He did offer an interesting history of the term, but never gave its meaning in his own perception, nor an idea as to how he will use this key word. This puzzled conventional readers. His famous notions such as *longue durée* and *conjoncture* are similarly compounded: what are their definitions, how can one apply them to other materials? Braudel deliberately attempted to retain this vagueness to avoid being limited to narrow definitions, and so that he could expand the notion to other possibilities when feasible. He believed that in so doing he would produce a much richer final product. Take "conjoncture" as an example. He used this term frequently in the three major books, but even a systematic reader will still be uncertain about its exact meaning, or how to correctly apply it to one's own topics.

Braudel vindicated this attitude clearly in the last two months of his life:

I should never try to define, at least in the optic of my reasoning. All preliminary definition is a kind of personal sacrifice. I have discussed long time with a very great economist François Perroux, he is used to define the meaning of the words, the meaning of the problems, absolutely just like a theologian. I told him, but in vain, that to define in this precise manner is to stop the discussion. Once the definition is made, one cannot discuss any longer. ... The first volume of my book was entitled *Identity of France*. I was able to define the identity of France only after I reached the final page of my book. (*Une leçon*, 1986:160-1)

This is certainly an unusual way of thinking. It must be hard to accept for logically-minded historians since this unconventional philosophy might better suit artists.

This leads one to examine yet another of his unconventional methodology: the usage and the function of archives. In her younger

days Madame Braudel accompanied him in his visits to many archives in various countries. In 1992 she published a witness article, explaining vividly what archives meant to Braudel:

But his passion, the pleasure that he cultivated until the end of his long life, was to documents directly. For him, this was a grand open door to imagination. And Braudel had a lot of imagination. ... In archives, his imagination never left him alone. (Paule Braudel 1992:240)

Other telling stories about Braudel and archives can also be found in the same page of that article.

The thing that is puzzling is: since most archival materials are concrete facts and belong to event history, why would a man like Braudel, who rejects event history and promotes *longue durée* history, maintain a life-long interest in archives? How could archives be compatible with his *longue durée* perspective? Archives serve dual purpose in Braudel's works. One is to supply archival materials as evidence to his text. This is evident from the countless footnotes in *The Mediterranean*. Second, as Madame Braudel wrote, the unexpected materials found in archives strongly inspired his historical imagination. I have no direct evidence to show this point but am inclined to agree that for Braudel, archives were a constant sources of imagination for him. Again, unconventionally, he did not always use archival materials to verify a proposition or to strengthen his arguments, rather, he used archives as stimulants to depict his historical images.

In *The Mediterranean*, he used archival materials most extensively. The archives he consulted to prepare this book makes a long, impressive list in the Appendix. However, readers may be uncertain (1) whether he had all the necessary materials in his hand to present the main themes (i.e. if archival materials were fully used to prove his points); or (2) whether he simply used the materials in his hand to write the book (the book's directions and extent depend on the archival materials that have inspired him). In other words, was Braudel used the archives or was the archives guided Braudel? I believe Braudel resorted to the second type: he had no specific historical question to resolve, the materials in his hands were stimulants to plot his book. "...one understands perhaps, why in 1942 Braudel wrote that if he were not in the war prisoner's camp when he was drafting this book,

he surely will produce a different book.” (Paule Braudel 1992:244) We thus may understand better why he assigned great importance to archival facts, while simultaneously preserving the *longue durée* perspective; we also therefore understand better why he emphasized the importance of details: “Les détails, bien sûr, ont leur poids.” (*The Mediterranean* p. 516)

One final thing pertaining his writing style is his “artistic” method of composition, as can be seen from Madame Braudel’s telling witness:

... an approach which is not that of a logician nor of a philosopher. Perhaps that of an artist? For this point I would easily be in agreement with François Fourquet. In any case, it was about 20 or 25 years ago that I began to consider Braudel’s writing mechanism. When I was reading a passage in a book which had nothing to do with history, if I remember well, entitled *La perception visuelle*. The example given is a painter in front of the landscape from which he wants to paint a picture. He sees everything, looking at everything, injecting plenty of detailed materials into it. But what seduces him is the significance that was still not totally clear, insufficiently conscious even after he had perceived every detail in behind. For him, to paint is an attempt to translate this interior perception into his picture, to decipher a confusing mass into significant lines. When I read these sentences, they made me immediately think what I have observed unconsciously about Braudel’s interior approach. ... To conclude, let me add that, during these five years [of war prison experience], he had all the time (and that is his only distraction) to recommence the same painting, incessantly. And I think it was then that he contracted the malady that was never cured, the malady of successive versions, writing most of the time from memory, not taking the previous text for correction, but writing a totally new version. One day I criticized this kind of wasting time and energy, when he replied in smiling that he could not do otherwise. He said: “But it was you who told me that Matisse redrafted everyday the same portrait of the same model, and you were not critical of that at all. You told me that everyday he threw away regularly his drawings, until the moment he finally found the line he likes. And what I am doing is something like that.” (Paule Braudel 1992:244)

Braudel provided a similar explanation in the final paragraph of the Foreword to the second volume of *Capitalism*.

Another aspect of his writing style is his rhetoric: Braudel's sentences are often laden with poetic flavor. Since this point has been well analyzed in Carrard (1992:54-62), Chaunu (1992:71), Gemelli (1995:47-8, 78), Labrousse (1972:17) and Kellner (1979:204-5); I shall not repeat their arguments here.

6 Evaluation

6.1 Criticism

The main criticisms of Braudel's historiography can be grouped into two categories. First, he lacks theories sufficiently clear or strong to interpret his materials and subjects; second, he seldom attempted first-hand deep investigation on a specific topic.

In 1977 a conference on "The Impacts of Annales School on the Social Sciences" was held at the University of Binghamton (SUNY), and the proceedings were published in *Review*, 1978 (3/4). In the discussion panel Melvin Leiman of SUNY-Binghamton questioned Braudel:

It has been stated that the strength and defects of the Annales movement are intertwined; that the strength is the great respect for unearthing facts in minute detail in order to reconstruct history; but on the other hand, that there isn't an ordering of importance; and that is, that there isn't a theory by which some facts are considered of primary importance and other facts of secondary importance. In other words, it has been claimed that there isn't a theory of social change, a theory that tries to explain the discontinuities in addition to the continuities of history. I would like to hear your position on that. (*Review*, 1978:255)

Unfortunately Braudel's response was too vague to clearly answer this appropriate question.

Braudel invented some now famous notions (*longue durée*, *conjoncture*, *économie-monde* etc.), but he never offered a causal interpretation of history; he even avoided any possibility to be involved with historical theory. He made this position clear in the Introduction to *Capitalism*: "... I had deliberately set out to write outside the world of theory, of all theories, and had intended to be guided by concrete

observation and comparative history alone.” (p. 25) This is consistent with his attitude towards the role of definition, as quoted earlier.

Two possible reasons explain Braudel’s attitude. First, during the 1950s-60s when Braudel was in a leading position, both academically and administratively, a great conflict of theories prevailed in France (existentialism, structuralism, Marxism etc.). To avoid unnecessary complication (Braudel himself was controversial enough on his own account), he carefully avoided any connection with theoretical debate, especially in his own writings. A second reason is perhaps closer to the nature of his thinking, that he seriously doubted that history could be or needed to be theorized. As explained above, his writing style derived its inspiration from archives and the secondary literature; theory of any kind could be nothing but a fetter to him.

I support the second criticism of Braudel’s historiography, that he seldom attempted first-hand deep investigation of a specific topic, to resolve a certain question or to verify a proposition. Braudel’s orientation was to plot a historical image according to his “perception visuelle” (as Madame Braudel wrote), Braudel was well talented to paint tableaux crossing centuries (*longue durée*) and spanning large geographical areas. This method is inimitable by historians who are more specialized in certain periods, on certain topics, in certain fields.

But when Braudel handled a more restricted, a better-defined topic, such as the history of France and the history of Italian renaissance period (see Appendix 1 for a review of his *Le Modèle italien*), the disadvantage of his methodology became transparent. There are numerous experts on the subject, and the knowledge accumulated in the field is strong enough to resist Braudel’s new plot and interpretations. His *France* and *Out of Italy* (1991) therefore incurred severe criticisms. Braudel’s method is more suitable for subjects that are international and cross centuries; his talent is certainly unsuitable to deal with specific topics within a country, such as population history or price history in certain areas during certain periods.

6.2 Afterthoughts

Braudel’s five key concepts made significant contributions to the historical analysis of time and space. With historical time, he expanded the conventional single-speed, linear-movement of historical time into

a set of historical times that can be broadly divided into short- medium- and long-term: they co-exist, and each has its own speed, life and function; they are inter-related and inter-acting. His main contribution to historical space was *économie-monde*, a concept not well presented in *The Mediterranean* but finally clarified three decades later in *Capitalism*.

I also have an impression that Braudel never defined clearly the exact meaning of any of his concepts, the necessary and sufficient elements to satisfy their basic requirements, or tested them with historical evidence. On the contrary, he would begin with a fuzzy idea and when he applied such an idea to historical materials, he was often enlightened by coming upon unexpected archival information, which in turn enriched his initial notion or modified it. In this sense, his concepts are not rigid, always subject to new possibilities; and since they are fluid, one should not be surprised to see their variations in Braudel's different books. Conceptual definition in exact sciences are exclusive (all that do not fit are excluded), but Braudel's concepts are inclusive (all that are loosely related can be included).

In other words, Braudel's concepts are not analytically or logically rigorous, but are adjustable according to circumstances. Even if one grasps his ideas, it is still not easy to apply them to one's own research. A major advantage of this method is its flexibility, whereas its drawback is the misunderstandings that often result. Braudel believed that the use of this kind of loosely defined concept would generate more historical insights than rigorous ones.

In retrospect, the five concepts discussed in this chapter were fully recognizable in the first edition of *The Mediterranean* (1949) and Braudel faithfully used them throughout the rest of his life (*Capitalism* 1979 and *France* 1986), without adding new concepts during those four decades. When I evaluate the notion of total history in his three major books, I find its application is progressively less successful.

2

The Mediterranean (1949)

Braudel, F. (1990): *La méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II*, Paris: A. Colin (2 volumes), 9e édition. Translated from the French by S. Reynolds in 1972, Fontana (1995, 16th impression): *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, 2 volumes.

This famous work was initially published in 1949, and its second edition was to a great extent revised in 1966. At present, in 2004, nearly 60 years after the first edition, the book is in the 9th edition. However, only minor alternations were done after the fourth edition in 1979. The English translation of this book is based on the second edition of 1966, up to the 16th reprinting in 1995. Other translations are: Italian (1976), Spanish (1982), Polish (1977), Portuguese (1984), German (1985), Greek (1987), Romanian (1986), Japanese (1991-5), Chinese (1996), Korean (in preparation), and some others beyond my knowledge. In short, this masterpiece still has its new translations even after 50 years, and some other translations are still in (re)print. This is rather a rare phenomenon for such a difficult history book. Why is this book so magically attractive? What are its permanent contributions? Reading this book with the hindsight of 50 years, what can we contribute toward a better understanding of this work?

I discuss in Section 1 the book's novel design and Braudel's angles of analysis. I then discuss how Braudel "does history", what kind of problems he had resolved, why his analysis are sometimes puzzling, etc. These are all concrete issues mainly centered on his style: its advantages and disadvantages. As few economic historians have engaged in debates on this book, Section 3 summarizes the major criticisms previously published in professional journals, in order to realize how people from different disciplines and countries reacted to this book. Section 4 focuses on Braudel's economic interpretations, revealing that his economic logic is often unsound and his evidence is also not always convincing. The concluding section 5 evaluates the inspirations and the contributions of this famous work.

The long history in the making of this book, its reception both at home and abroad, main differences between the 1949 and 1966 editions, etc. have been discussed in Gemelli's (1995) biography on Braudel (chapters 1-3) in great detail. The page numbers referred to in this chapter are based on the English version of 1972.

1 Framework

This huge book is 1,375 pages long, divided into three parts: viz. geo-environment (*longue durée* perspective), collective destinies and general trends (*conjoncture* perspective) and events, politics and people (short-lived stories). The first part of the book is Braudel's favorite one and contains his most innovative contribution towards historical time perception. The second part is on economies, empires, civilizations, etc. which are familiar topics for socio-economic historians. Braudel was, however, not original in this part but contributes rich and interesting archival information. As for the third part, Braudel himself confessed that "It was only after much hesitation that I decided to publish this third section, describing events; it has strong affinities with frankly traditional historiography." (p. 901)

The framework of this book is impressively huge (20 lengthy chapters, each containing complicated facets), wherein each chapter is primarily divided into several main sections, and then further divided into several subsections (each of them can be, and rather should be, further developed into a full-length article or even a small monograph by other specialists). Braudel used a three-level (geography, socio-economic, and events) framework to organize his divergent data, and

in each level a particular conception of historical time (*longue durée*, *conjoncture*, and *événementiel*) has been assigned. This design is typically that of Braudel's, forming the most original and most inimitable part of Braudel's historiography.

To condense the material which he had collected from many archives over several years in the form of a book necessarily resulted in most issues being compressed within two or three pages, hence the readers often feel that Braudel just touched the beginning or surface of a topic and hurried on to touch another issue, thereby one can seldom see that a topic is analyzed in depth with comprehensive documents. Braudel's style is rather unconventional, in a sense that it does not present an issue first, then set hypotheses, and go on prove or disprove the propositions with evidence. He is not a thesis tester, but is a plotter, describing new historical images based on his archives and perceptions. In other words, a great plotter with a tremendous amount of detailed knowledge. What we need to appreciate from his work is his power of designing and the new roads that he illuminated, rather than pondering on his concrete points on some particular issues.

As Gemelli (1995:46-7) rightly observed:

Braudel sees the Mediterranean with its thousand visages which did not impose on him any prefigured or fixed image of the sea. The young historian met the Mediterranean space not as a system to be broken down or to be recomposed through analytical reasoning, but conceived it as sequential images, a changing spectacle that he could enrich voluntarily, without being too preoccupied with what historical forms this space would lead to.

That makes this book unusual and sometimes it is also difficult to grasp its subtle messages.

2 Style

In this section I present some stylistic problems which I observed, illustrated with an example. Braudel worked in many archives while preparing and revising *The Mediterranean*, had accumulated considerable material to be included into his book. Most historians use archive material as bricks to fill up and support their frameworks, or sometimes even modify their designs based on the unexpected material. Braudel, however, does not belong to this category.

As has been quoted in the final paragraph of section 1, Braudel initially did not have a prefigured framework for this work, he allowed the archives to stimulate him, lead him to a complicated and unexpected world, gradually he put all the elements together, forming a definite shape. His considerations of three types of historical time, the division of chapters into three parts, etc., came into his mind only in the latter stage of his preparation (during his war prisoner camp period). A major advantage of this particular process is that the images of the Interior sea are not bounded by any sorts of previous perception. Nevertheless, the main disadvantage is that it was not easy to mould all the huge and divergent material into a well shaped final product. In *The Mediterranean* the author was led by the material, rather than the material obeying the author's will. It was written from bottom to top, from patches to unified framework, very unconventionally.

This descriptive/narrative style puts more emphasis on historical facts rather than on the elaboration of some particular points. A side effect of this is that sometimes Braudel has a good insight on certain points but he simply touches it lightly and shifts away. We do not see many pages where he provides full-length arguments or counter-arguments. A notable exception is, however, in the very last three pages of volume I (pp. 578-90) "L'intrusion nordique et le déclin de la Méditerranée". This was added to the fourth edition in 1979, based on the literature published in the 1970s, hence it has not appeared in the English version. The core argument is based on that of Richard Rapp (1975): "The unmaking of the Mediterranean trade hegemony: international trade rivalry and the commercial revolution", *Journal of Economic History*, 35(3):499-525.

A previous conception about the decline of trade in the Mediterranean was that the commercial activities shifted from South to North since the Nordic countries offered higher profitability. Rapp provides a convincing counter-argument that,

all the competitive characteristics of the industrial exports brought to the Levantine market by the North Atlantic producers (led by England) in the first half of the seventeenth century were designed, in keeping with the best mercantilist practice, to supplant the pre-existing southern merchandise. To overcome the Italian industrial hegemony a consistent policy of cutthroat pricing was employed. This was made possible by the lower cost of labor in the developing North, by an absence of ingrained, restrictive practices, and by

state support (rather than heavy taxation) of exports. ... the explanation of north European economic growth is more clearly related to competitive success in established markets, not merely to changing trade routes. (p. 521)

This kind of argument is useful in the sense that it contradicted previous explanations. However, this kind of effect is rarely observed in *The Mediterranean*, and a few more striking effects of this kind will significantly increase the persuasive power of the book.

In some topics, Braudel was basically summarizing the work done by other scholars. Three examples in this regard can be found in the final part of chapter 7.2: "In the following pages I have drawn on two works by Felip Ruiz Martin..." (p. 500, note 263); "The following details are based on the description in Jose Gentil da Silva's forthcoming publication." (p. 507, note 292); "... I have closely followed his excellent analysis which is both soundly based and original." (p. 512, note 304)

Some sections of a few chapters are over-divided, for instance the last section of the final chapter in the first volume contains about 16 subsections, each comprising of less than two or three pages. They can be safely merged into less than five main sections (topics) to avoid over-segmentation and many secondary details, this will also sharpen the author's main focuses effectively. This is, however, an often observed design inefficiency.

Another more serious problem is the bias in information selection. Unquestionably, Braudel was very familiar with Italian, Spanish and French archives as well as their general backgrounds, but we often observe in some general topics (such as *Urban functions* in chapter 5.3) that he only refers to Italian and French cases, and readers are not sure if just the Italian and French cases are representative enough for a book dealing with the Mediterranean. This representation problem (with a highly biased selection of evidence) is not negligible.

In some cases one also comes across conflicting statements. For example, on p. 423 it has been stated that "2. Agriculture not only assured the Mediterranean of its everyday livelihood, but also provided a range of costly food for export, sometimes to a large volume..." But on p. 570 on the Mediterranean grain trade, he states: "The Mediterranean has never had a superabundance of grain: the scarcity of home-grown cereals and the constant search for substitutes has bred a kind of ingenuity. The study of the grain problem takes us to one of the

most vulnerable areas of Mediterranean life..." Which of the above statements is closer to the general situation? The overall impression gained from chapter 8.2 suggests that food scarcity in general is much more serious than one might have imagined.

Braudel seldom treated an issue by obtaining evidence from several countries and putting them in a comparative perspective. A rare exception is the state budget problem considered in chapter 9.2. We sometimes find that some topics are only perfunctorily analyzed, such as the section on "Mobility and Stability of Civilizations." (chapter 11.1, pp. 757-76) The heading suggests that he will first illustrate how civilizations are mobile and then demonstrate the stability of interactions. However, this chapter was a disappointing one, because the stories and mechanisms in these pages are rather easy to follow, not much above common sense.

In general, non-specialized readers are more interested in the particular mechanisms that govern this complicated world, and that is also what we expected from such a great historian because common people generally do not have such in-depth knowledge and penetrating insights to grasp its underlying mechanism. In this regard, however, Braudel was a disappointment because he was much more interested in describing details rather than revealing the inner logic of his subjects. His main insights are embodied in the entire framework of this book, in the design of chapters and sections, and a few are in the main text. The huge structure of this book contains excessive scattered details, but with insufficient hypotheses, propositions and arguments to support (or to govern) these divergent facts. This makes the readers feel that the intellectual stimulus is not strong enough when one reads page by page.

Some experts do not hide their disagreements, e.g. Harsgor (1986) in his notes 50, 77, 90, 94 offers some strong convincing counter-arguments. Putting all these details aside and taking each chapter as a unit of analysis, I think that the concluding chapter of Part II (chapter 13) disappointed me the most. Basically this chapter simply summarizes chapters 6-12 without adding much new insight. Braudel's main purpose here was to theorize his notion of *conjoncture*, but as an economic historian who is familiar with what the French word *conjoncture* means in economics, I do not feel that his extended usage of this word in explaining socio-economic history is successful, nor does it provide significant historical insights. I would not have minded

if Braudel had deleted this chapter. If he wants to keep this chapter in order to show his originality in historical time perception, I would say that I am more interested in seeing an independent chapter on the *longue durée* as the concluding chapter of Part I. Why did Braudel not think of such a chapter on this notion that he was most proud of?

3 Criticisms

In June 1965, while writing the conclusion of this book, Braudel states that: “This book has been in circulation for almost twenty years: it has been laiquoted, challenged, criticized (too seldom) and praised (too often)” (p. 1238) Thirty years later (1996), when I read the major criticisms on this book (as listed in the References), I agree that there are many praises, but criticisms were not as scarce as Braudel believed even in the 1960s.

It would be cumbersome to summarize these pros and cons here. It is also not necessary to laiquote these published opinions. Instead I will state the basic nature of these opinions. The points in this chapter, especially those in sections 4 and 5 below, are carefully chosen so as to avoid repeating what has been said before by other reviewers.

In general, previous comments on this book are of the half-praise half-criticism type. Basically, three types of comments are observed. First, the French history community enthusiastically received this work from the very beginning. In the March 1947 Sorbonne thesis defense, members of the Jury debated heatedly but also honored the author very highly (Labrousse 1972:8-10, Gemelli 1995:144-5). Afterwards, the receptions at home were basically highly positive ones (see the interviews of Pierre Chaunu and Le Roy Ladurie in *L'Histoire*, July-August 1992, No. 157, pp. 71-2). Gemelli (1995, chapter 4) has recorded the receptions of this book in some of the European countries, mainly the positive sides. There is a sociology of knowledge aspect that needs to be considered here. During the 1950s-70s the overwhelming reputation of Braudel and the Annales school might have hindered the publication of objections. Hence Braudel's claim to having received scant criticism. Perhaps some ten years later, new opinions will emerge, when the Annales would become less powerful.

Second, English-speaking historians are less critical about its framework, but greatly disagree on concrete issues such as the interpretation of archival information. For instance, Harsgor (1986) is

harsh about Braudel's interpretation of the Spanish decadence in the 16th century. A more balanced account is the lengthy article by Kinser (1981a) in which he emphasized two angles: geo-history and structural perspective.¹

Third, economic historians, especially American cliometricians, expressed quite negative opinions about Braudel's economic contributions. A representative piece is Bailyn (1951). Douglass North, the Nobel winner in economics (economic history) had once said:

Fernand Braudel's masterpiece, *Le Monde Méditerranéen*, is not a model on which one can build a school. It is a work of art which, when subject to the critical scrutiny of the cliometrician, becomes a lot of brushstrokes on a canvas. ... But if one accepts my standards, they [the Annales historians] provide no leadership to aid us in acquiring a more systematic and scientific understanding of the economic past. (North 1978:80)

4 Economics

Few critics have attacked Braudel's economic interpretations. Economic issues are mainly grouped in chapters 6-8, but some economic matters can be found in other chapters as well, although he has treated them only in passing. For example: financial difficulties in Spain are scattered in chapters 7 (pp. 510-7), 9 (pp. 681-701), 13 (pp. 897-9), and 14 (pp. 942-3, Figure 66 and pp. 960-4). A similar problem regarding the financial crisis in the Turkish empire is also very interesting. However, this is only sweepingly treated in less than two pages

¹ See Molho (2001) for a comprehensive account of the reception of *The Mediterranean* in the U.S., in which many penetrating comments can be found. A central question he addressed is: "How to explain the reluctance of American historians, most especially students of early modern European history, to recognize the book's importance and grant it the same reception that, at more or less that time, was accorded to other books written by European historians, even to books written by Braudel's disciples?" (p. 148) He concluded that: "Like a ship that crossed the archipelago of the American historical professions, Braudel's *Mediterranean* has largely been lost from sight. It certainly did not transform the landscape of historical writing in the United States. Nor does it appear to have changed many traditional, not to say stereotypical, images of the Mediterranean which prevail in the general American culture. It did not result in the creation of an American variant of a Braudelian school of historical writing." (p. 161)

(pp. 1195-6).

In my opinion the most valuable insight offered in Part II is the one given in chapter 7, wherein he discussed the economic impact of precious metals imported from North Africa and America. For non-specialized readers Braudel offers some enlightening observations and arguments, which are presented in the Introduction (pp. 462-3) for section 3 “The rise in prices” (pp. 517-24). Previous historians gave too much importance to precious metals in the 16th century. Braudel by contrast argued that

Money was not the universal driving force it was readily assumed to be. The role played by precious metals was determined not only by the stocks inherited from previous centuries, and therefore by accidents in the past, but equally by the velocity of circulation, by international relations, economic competition, the deliberate policies of state and mercantile communities, even by ‘vulgar opinion’.
(p. 462)

This suggests that Braudel disagreed with the simple-minded “quantity theory of money” in which the general price level is directly and proportionally related to the amount of money stock. The four points offered on pp. 522-4 effectively demonstrated Braudel’s insight: large quantity of precious metal imports were necessary to meet the operational demands of the monetarizing European economies. These metals certainly hastened inflation, but the maturing European economies also contributed far from negligible to inflation. Employing modern economic terminology, it was a demand-pull type of inflation plus a monetary-supply type inflation, and the demand side may had more than 50% responsibility.

There are many debatable economic contents in *The Mediterranean*. Given limited space I shall focus on one aspect with which I disagree. By using examples from Figures 56-8 I intend to show how Braudel’s economic logic is unsound.

Figure 56 “State budgets and the general price situation” (Les budgets suivant la conjoncture, p. 680) gives “an idea of the universal decrease in the financial resources of the European states [England, Brittany, France, Burgundy, Venice, Florence, etc.] between 1410 and 1423.” He concludes that

In general, the state seems always to have lagged a little behind changes in the economic situation, both during upward and down-

ward trends, that is to say its resources declined less quickly than others [such as the private sector] during a depression - and this was an advantage - and rose less quickly during periods of growth. Unfortunately such a theory ["hypothesis" in the French version] cannot be verified either from the document in question here, or from others cited below [i.e. Figures 57-58]. One thing is certain: the resources of the state fluctuated according to the prevailing economic conditions.

The last sentence is a kind of truism that requires no qualification. What can be debated is the hypothesis: "State controls lesser resources than other sectors during economic recession, and vice versa". The available imperfect statistical data of the 15th-16th centuries does not allow the verification of the hypothesis, but even with today's well-developed statistics I am afraid that it is not easy to reach such a net conclusion since the economic systems varied in their nature (centrally planned, socialist or market economies), the degree of economic development also varied (industrialized or developing), and the tax structure is also different (high progressive tax or low welfare tax structure). This hypothesis may be more suitable for an individual country case study rather than for cross-country comparison. What is more important is: even if this hypothesis were verifiable, how can it impart a better understanding of the historical phenomenon or of the economic mechanism? My knowledge of economics cannot offer a good answer on its usefulness.

The historical evidence related to this hypothesis can be found in the following Figure 57 "State budgets and the general price situation (Les budgets suivant la conjoncture)" which include the cases of Venice (1423-1541) and France (1498-1610, pp. 684-5) while Figure 58 with the same title illustrates the case of Spain (1550-1600, p. 686). In Venice's case Braudel uses three indicators viz. ducati correnti, zecchini and silver, to reveal the long-term trend of Venetian revenues. Although different in measurement units, all three curves reveal a similar trend. The problem is that they are expressed in nominal prices (not deflated). This was a period of "price revolution" so that if one accounts for the inflation rate, then the shape of these three curves would be very different. In other words, we cannot see long-term *real* state revenues from this figure. Moreover, one also does not know how to judge conjuncture from this figure: one needs other indicators such as an industrial production index or the unemployment rate, etc., to

estimate the degree of change in conjuncture between certain years. In other words, this figure cannot demonstrate what its title (*Les budgets suivant la conjuncture*) claims.

The figure representing the case of France is also confusing. Here Braudel uses two indicators (*viz.* livre tournois and gold) to reveal the trend of state revenues. He set index 1498 = 100. Although expressed in different way, the problem is same as that in the case of Venice: (i) it shows the nominal price, which is not deflated, and therefore does not allow one to estimate the “real income” of the state; (ii) the up(s) and down(s) of economic fluctuation (*conjuncture*) are not indicated, thus preventing us from estimating the magnitude of decrease or increase in state revenue during recession or expansion. The final statement in this figure that “these curves show that fluctuations in state revenues corresponded to fluctuations in the price sector” is also unsupported.

Figure 58 which represents the case of Spain (1550-1600) is much better in the economic sense. The left axis is the “Budget in million of ducatos” while the right axis is the price/silver index (between 70 and 130). Both axes suggest that the Spanish budget income remained more or less on the same level (or mildly increased) after deflation during this period. This time Braudel is correct: “... the trend in fiscal revenues is much clearer than in the preceding examples.” Although this figure is economically correct, it still cannot be used to verify his hypothesis (that the state controls lesser resources than other sectors during an economic recession, and vice versa), since evidence for other sectors is still unavailable.

From the above examples of Figures 56-8, I come to a conclusion that Braudel’s economic logic is not sound: since, one, the figures are visually impressive but severely lack economic persuasion; and, two, the hypothesis in Figure 56 is not supported by the relevant data. A more serious problem is that this is a kind of “false hypothesis” in a sense that, even if verified, it does not offer a better understanding about the economic past.

5 Conclusion

At the risk of making my own hazardous predictions, I believe that this book will still be read even in 2049, *i.e.* a century after its first edition, because the Mediterranean is a complicated object of study, which has been a subject of international and interdisciplinary studies. Whenever

the researchers would need to consult some major studies in this field in the 20th century, Braudel's *The Mediterranean* would certainly be one of them, for nearly 50 years after its first edition no comparable work (in broadness and in conception) has been carried out.

Its long-term importance in the field of economic history does not lie in the fact that Braudel had resolved certain puzzles or because he had proposed new facets or theses to be further analyzed, since all these concrete things could have been resolved by younger researchers. The uniqueness of this book lies in its heuristic value, in the perception of this tremendous, complicated, historically important Interior sea, wherein Braudel showed us how to perceive its changing faces and most importantly, how to formulate new historical conceptions (in his case, three conceptions of historical time). This kind of image perceptions, leading to the formation of new historical plots, ensures the long lasting importance of this inspiring work.

The first edition inspired some experts to conduct further investigations. A well-known example is Barkan (1954). Braudel did not have access to the Turkish archives, which made the passages on Turkey in the first edition (mainly in chapter 9 on Empires) unsatisfactory. Barkan (1954) was thus encouraged to work on Turkish archives with his collaborators and achieved some significant results on the issues pertaining to population, gold, silver, trade channels etc. Braudel gladly incorporated most of their findings in the second edition.

Another kind of inspiration to experts was that Braudel found some previously unused archives. Although he used some of them in his book, and noted that there were many interesting topics which can be further investigated he was not able to include them in his own work. In other words, for a curious researcher, this book is virtually a "topics bank" wherein one can find several subjects to work on. For example, in chapter 12.2 on Piracy (pp. 873-7) Braudel briefly explained the Christian pirate activities in Levant, and has confessed that this topic was not fully understood, and also indicated some archives sources that could be consulted (e.g. p. 875 note 275).

In this 1,375 pages book, not every page is highly readable. His descriptive style might discourage impatient readers who often find only one key point after several pages (or even none). For the non-specialist readers, there is an efficient way to read this book: From the Preface to the first edition, the introductions (or the first three paragraphs) to each part, each chapter, each section and each small section. This will

quickly familiarize reader with Braudel's major angles of analysis and his main points, whereas most of the details in small sections can be read when one needs to resolve doubts. We know that Braudel seldom gives conclusion, rather he puts more emphasize on "image description" and only in rare cases has presented a concrete proposition.

The second edition of *The Mediterranean* contains Braudel's all major historical concepts, for Braudel was aged 64 when it appeared. Although *Capitalism* (1979) and *France* (1986) were later works, the main concepts in both these books viz. *longue-durée*, *conjoncture*, *event*, *economic-world*, *changing gravity of economic center* etc. can be found in *The Mediterranean*. Although we do not have the first edition of this book to compare, Gemelli (1995) in her first three chapters has suggested that all these notions had been formulated in the early 1940s, although in less matured forms.

3

Civilization and Capitalism (1979)

Braudel, F. (1979): *Civilisation matérielle, économie et capitalisme, 15e-18e siècle*, Paris: Armand Colin. Translated from the French by S. Reynolds: *Civilization & Capitalism: 15th-18th Century*. Volume I: *The Structure of Everyday Life: the Limits of the Possible* (pp. 623); volume II: *The Wheel of Commerce* (pp. 670); volume III: *The Perspective of the World* (pp. 699). New York: Harper & Row Publishers (1981, 1982, 1984).

1 Introduction

The book of Fernand Braudel on the history of capitalism is so famous that one might expect numerous reviews in different languages. Indeed, one can find many two- or three-page reviews in the *Book Review Index*, but they are mostly for the general public, or more commercial than academic. Thirteen such reviews are abstracted on the back covers of the English version of Braudel's book. For professional review, from *Historical Abstracts* CD-ROM (1992) I found only eight relevant references in professional journals.¹ Such an important book deserves

¹ They are summarized and compared in Appendix 3.1. Several recent articles are related to Braudel's book; two examples are Dockes (1990) who

more than twenty reviews (given so many historical journals), and each review emphasizes different aspects so that this important and huge book can be better evaluated.

In Section 2 of this chapter I present the structure and contents of the entire book so that readers can grasp a simplified picture before entering my arguments. In Section 3, I comment on (1) Braudel's oversimplified theoretical framework, (2) his open notion of capitalism, (3) his excessive length and discursive style. In Section 4, I offer a detailed evaluation of each section of each chapter of each volume, as summarized in Table 1. I conclude this review in Section 5 by arguing that Braudel's history of capitalism is "more heat than light": he promised much more than he actually offered. In Appendix 3.1, I briefly summarized the key points of eight other reviews; in Appendix 3.2, I list ten examples to show why I think 1,000 pages could be largely sufficient to reach Braudel's goal.

2 Structure and contents

2.1 Structure

This work of 1,992 pages can be seen as a 100m x 50m fresco. One who reads this book cannot help but be impressed by its tremendous scale. Recollecting on its scope, readers can immediately feel the difficulties that the author must have encountered. Few scholars would dare to undertake this enterprise.

The first volume of this trilogy was proposed by Braudel's mentor Lucien Febvre (1878-1956) in 1952 for the collection *Destins du Monde* (World Destinies) that Febvre then just founded. After 25 years of reading, writing and revisions, Braudel finally published this trilogy in 1979. He offered an hierarchical view of economic activities as three levels; each volume occupies one level. The first level contains the elementary basic activities such as transaction of the shops, food markets and artisan production etc. that can be termed daily life or the material life level. These common economic activities are less formally organized and functioned in an area of only small radius: countryside or town areas. Braudel used historical evidence of some

traces Braudel's trading space concept in a history of economic thought perspective and Jorland (1987) who focuses on Braudel's discussion of the industrial revolution.

civilizations (Europe, Asia, Russia, America etc.) to show the forms and the realities of this infra-economic structure across continents during the era before industrialization.

The level treated in the second volume is the *market economy*. This term when translated into English occasionally confused people; here, it refers to the real-life transactions, and should not be understood as the *market economy system* (vs. central planning system). The economic activities at this level are dominated by the organized agents that channel goods and service among provinces and regions or neighboring countries.

The third level is the international and intercontinental level, or the world-economy level. This level contains central cities such as Amsterdam in the 18th century or Genoa in the 16th century which fostered world trade and production. The formation and progress of networks among these cities provided a fertile framework for modern capitalism.

Economic activities at these three levels do not compete but co-exist. The first level has existed for thousands of years. Formation of the market economy of the second level began first in Europe about the 15th century. The world-economy was embryonic only as late as the 16th-18th centuries. As the stages of economic development varied, the relative importance of these three levels also varied in different countries at different periods. In fact, Braudel tried to accumulate as much as possible the documents from different continents to provide a historical picture to show how the economic activities currently named capitalism were slowly changing in a non-linear form between 15th and 18th centuries.

2.2 *Contents*

In terms of complexity, the subjects contained in volume I are the most diversified, including food, housing, clothes, transportation, technology, money, town etc. Braudel's treatment of these diverse topics depends largely on second-hand studies, statistics and findings, compared to his first-hand mining in many archives of various countries when he was preparing his master work *The Mediterranean* during the 1930s. What is difficult is to knit these unrelated sources into a logical structure: how can one present "the structure of everyday life"? Braudel was aware of this difficulty and complained that histo-

rians avoided this problem. He insisted that if one seeks to understand well the economic activities of the era before industrial revolution, and really to feel its depth and thickness, this component of endeavor (painstaking) is unavoidable.

A key concern in volume I is as follows. In every epoch, economic activity has its own "bottom" and "ceiling", as the subtitle of the French version indicates, "the possible and the impossible". The idea is to investigate the limits of the possible and the impossible of each century. Human achievements can be regarded as pushing outward the frontiers of possibility. This point of view is meaningful. His research shows that during the 15th-18th centuries, the highest possible frontier was not reached although it could have been possible. He gave some examples of this failure, such as that the popularization of railway was realized only as late as the mid-19th century, long after the first utilization of railway: if railway had become popular much earlier, the socio-economic progress of Europe could have been more impressive. In volume I Braudel attempted to delineate the changes of these frontier lines (curves) to see how they were moved, in what directions and in what speed. What he really contributed is to remind us the importance of the often neglected level of "daily life", which is essential for the reconstruction of new perspectives in socio-economic history.

The aim of volume II is to analyze different forms of transaction: street markets, stalls, shops, fairs, market zones, etc., i.e. from basic exchanges to much more sophisticated capitalistic international trading. In 230 pages of the first two chapters he described detailed activities of exchange instruments and different forms of market. The next two chapters enter the core of the book: the meaning of capitalism (this topic is further discussed in Section 3.2 below), and its manifestations in the process of production and circulation at national and international levels. The final chapter presents Braudel's description of the interaction between social hierarchies and economic activities, the role of the State, and the impact on other cultures during the process of economic exchanges. An instructive finding is the degree of competition during the period of 15th-18th centuries: at the level of basic exchange in daily life (such as street and town markets), the competition was keen; at the second level (wholesale, long-distance trade, money trading), market domination, speculation and price control prevailed; at the third level (international and intercontinental trade, or

world-economy), franchise, or state monopoly were dominant (such as East Indian companies of the UK and Holland).

The French title of the final trilogy is *Le Temps du monde* which is not easy to translate into English (*The Time of the World*). The title of the English version *The Perspective of the World* is a good “translation” of the contents. Braudel was proud of this French title as he claimed in the first paragraph of his preface: “this is certainly a beautiful title, but it promises more than I can offer.” (the English version omitted this sentence) The unit of analysis in volume III is “world-economy”, and he wanted to match it with a “world time”. He used India to illustrate this idea in the preface (III:18): some parts of India were “lived at the same pace as the outside [capitalistic] world, keeping up with the traders and rhythms of the global”, but some parts of India still remained in economic activities of ancient type. Thus India can be divided into several economic time zones; the most advanced parts belong to the world time, and the retarded parts belong to the traditional time zones. With this idea in mind, one can redraw a world map according to “world trade time”. This proposition is certainly attractive. After proposing this concept in three paragraphs in the preface, he failed to substantiate this concept with historical evidence in this volume; we can find neither “world time” nor “temps du monde” in the indexes of the English and French versions. I conjecture that Braudel sought to use the concept of time as “the eyes of the dragon”, as the Chinese artists often said, but the eyes are pale.

3 Comments

The comments below are centered on three themes. The first is the theoretical structure of the whole book; the second is Braudel’s notion of capitalism; the third is Braudel’s discursive writing style and his loss of control of historical data.

3.1 *The framework*

As summarized in Section 2, Braudel’s main framework is his division of economic activities into three levels. To this instructive framework nobody will object. My view is that - taking a warehouse as a metaphor - Braudel constructed a new warehouse with three floors; that is a significant advance compared to other previously constructed

designs having one floor. What is more significant is that Braudel was able to fill these immense floors with diversified commodities from different civilizations. This enterprise is spectacular, but one finds that the over-burdened floors are supported by insufficient pillars, and that the connections within the floors are not clearly indicated. It would be much more convincing if he had divided each floor into several sections, in each of which he had a small or middle-sized theory to grasp his materials; then readers would feel that the whole floor is much more solid. In other words, Braudel did not sufficiently theorize his data; even if he did in some cases, the effort was still far from sufficient.

For example, in volume I on the structure of daily life, he provided many historical facts, but he provided so little theory or perspective in proportion to the materials that he presented. One must ask why Braudel, who possessed tremendous historical knowledge, asked disproportionately so few questions: the rich material can be formulated into many attractive hypotheses and propositions. I am willing to believe that Braudel was able to do so, but unfortunately for all social scientists he did not! He defended himself in the introduction of volume I (p. 25): "... I had deliberately set out to write outside the world of theory, of all theories, and had intended to be guided by concrete observation and comparative history alone." I regret that he chose this strategy. I am inclined to think that all facts are laden with theory, facts that do not necessarily conflict with theory.

However, I suggest that social scientists and historians can be inspired from Braudel's rich materials, to formulate new propositions and hypotheses for different disciplines. Thus, hopefully, each field can benefit from Braudel's study, and in return this process could enlighten our further understanding of the history of capitalism.

3.2 *The notion of capitalism*

Capitalism could be a word most capable of stimulating blood pressure in intellectual debates since about 1850. In his history of capitalism, Braudel was careful not to define capitalism at all. He mentioned this key word not even once in volume I (see index). He used "capitalism" and "capitalist" on such minor occasions (see indexes of volumes II & III) that one might doubt this *chef-d'oeuvre* is misnamed. One cannot even find "capitalism" in the index of the French version.

In the first section of volume II “Capital, Capitalist, Capitalism” (II:232-49) Braudel discussed these key words, but he used less than two pages (II:234-7) on “Capitalist and capitalists”, and the same length (II:237-9) on “Capitalism: a very recent word”; most pages of this section are on “capital”. For the key word “capitalism”, he laiquoted the definitions offered by the *Encyclopédie* in 1753, by J-B Richard in 1842, by Louis Blanc in 1850, by Werner Sombart in 1902, and by many others. Most readers expect Braudel to have given a clear definition of capitalism, but there exists no such definition. Instead, what he offered is a notion, a kind of open definition, that readers have to read the entire text to find their own answers; after that one remains unsure what Braudel prepared to mean by capitalism. Put differently, Braudel offered his concept of capitalism much more by fact and by contents, rather than by properties. An open definition of this kind enables greater freedom of interpretation, but the disadvantage is that readers cannot distinguish between what they received and what Braudel really meant.

Why was he timid, avoiding, ambiguous in his presentation of the notion of capitalism? “[I]t has enabled me, by taking a new, and a somewhat more peaceful route, to avoid and by-pass the passionate dispute which the explosive word *capitalism* always arouses.” (I:25) I am afraid the result of this approach is not a “more peaceful route”.

This ambiguous attitude toward a clear definition of capitalism contrasts sharply to his previous attitude. When he discussed another interesting topic “civilization”, he said: “The second task is then to seek a definition of civilization, the least unsatisfactory, meaning the most convenient one, the easiest to manage for the pursuit of our task.” (*On History*, p. 200); and “Once the ground has been cleared, we can proceed to ask the question: what is a civilization? I know of only one good definition, good in the sense of being easily used for purposes of observation and sufficiently removed from any kind of value judgement. It can be found, ... in some article by Marcel Mauss, from whom I borrowed it without ever having to regret it.” (*On History*, p. 202) Regrettably, he did not have the same action in his history of capitalism.

Wallerstein skillfully summarized three features of capitalism presented in Braudel’s work. (1) “most liberals and most Marxists have argued that capitalism involved above all the establishment of a free, competitive market. Braudel saw capitalism instead as the system

of the anti-market.” (2) “Liberals and most Marxists have argued that capitalists were the great practitioners of economic specialization. Braudel believed instead that the essential feature of successful capitalists was their refusal to specialize.” (3) “Braudel viewed capitalism in a way that ... could only be termed seeing it ‘upside down’ .” (Wallerstein 1991:354)

By “upside down” I understand that previous histories of capitalism offered by Marx, Sombart, Schumpeter etc. emphasized capitalistic activities; Braudel put much more emphasize on the level of daily life and the “market” economy because Braudel thought that without these two levels, “capitalism is unthinkable: this is where it takes up residence and prospers.” (I:24) Wallerstein’s summary and interpretation helps many readers of Braudel to “dispel the clouds and to see the sun.”

3.3 *Essentia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem*

This principle known as Occam’s razor says: essences should not be multiplied beyond what we need for what we study. I argue that Braudel’s writing was contrary to this principle. One can easily deduce how much endeavor Braudel had invested during his 25 years of reading and writing: there are 40, 47 and 46 pages of notes and references in volume I, II and III respectively. In terms of erudition, no single work on the history of capitalism is comparable to that of Braudel, although perhaps Wallerstein will break this record when his four-volume work on the World System is completed.

In terms of efficiency, I feel that Braudel was not an “economic” writer; many examples and references can be deleted without losing his essential points. Consider his interesting section on wheat as an example (I:2:1): he did not pose such questions as how food production and the price of food were related to population changes at different economic stages. Instead, this section contains some irrelevant topics such as “To buy bread, or bake it at home?” (I:139) Another instance of his loose style, volume II:49-54 was intended to discuss the labor market. He touched nothing about the central topic between pages 49-51; instead he wrote about the land market. He entered the main topic on page 51 but to follow his logic and the relationships among the evidence is difficult. I feel that he noted what he had at hand, rather than offering a mechanism, or a systematic explanation.

Moreover, he touched so many topics, summarizing from so heterogeneous sources, that one feels that he could expand this volume *ad infinitum* or stop it wherever he liked.

This book contains so many topics that no single scholar can know each in depth. In many cases Braudel had to rely on the research of others. For instance, in III:2:101-106 on “the rise of Hansa”, he relied heavily on Philippe Dollinger (1964): *La Hanse (XIIIe-XVIIe siècles)*. There are 30 notes in that subsection (see III:638-639, notes 37-66), in which Braudel mentioned Dollinger at least 18 times. Similarly, in II:143-157 on Antwerp, he relied heavily on Van der Wee (1963): *The Growth of the Antwerp Market and the European Economy (14th-16th Centuries)*. In the notes of pp. 642-3, he cited Van der Wee in more than half the notes. A “summary” of this kind is made more clear in chapter 5 of volume III on ‘the rest of the world’ because he explicitly stated in the first note (p. 661) that: “Throughout this chapter I have been guided by two books, ...”, and in the conclusion of this chapter he confessed that: “Long though this chapter has been, the picture it gives of ‘non-Europe’ is clearly far from complete.” (III:533)

It would be easy to determine by whom Braudel was most inspired, or from whose works Braudel benefitted most, if the name index were good enough. However, both the French and English versions cannot meet this demand. For instance, we cannot find the name Dollinger in the index, and the name Van der Wee appears only twice. The indexes of both versions are not well prepared.

On occasion Braudel initiated a topic without terminating it properly. For instance, in III:266-273 on the decline of Amsterdam, he told us in great detail the financial crises that Amsterdam had encountered, but he omitted why and how the crises were caused; he reiterated that the financial crises occurred and how people had tried to save themselves. He failed to describe how Amsterdam declined and how it was overtaken by London - this important dynamic process is omitted, unfortunately.

By contrast, what amazed me most was his understanding of various theories of the business cycle. He was familiar with the major works on this subject, such as the writings of Joan Robinson, Heckscher, Kindleberger, Kuznets etc. From III:71-88 on business cycle, I think that he really grasped the main debates and major literature on this topic published before 1970.

On many occasions his data seemed beyond his control. He wrote

too many topics in too few pages, especially in the first volume. I find that he sometimes just stopped the subject; I can feel his helplessness, as he confessed elsewhere (Braudel 1977:3): "And so the years have passed. I have despaired of ever reaching the harbor." Also, ... "trying to look at things in as much detail as possible. I may have taken too many pleasure in these details, and some readers may find me a bit long-winded." (1977:20) One has to read the three volumes to understand what he really meant by this statement. He defended himself by writing: "But is it not a good thing for history to be first of all a description, a plain observation, a scrutiny, a classification without too many previously held ideas: To see and to show is half the historian's task." (1977:20-1)

We understand that he was defending his too descriptive style, but I totally disagree with his defense that it is "a good thing for history to be first of all a description, a plain observation ..." Historians must pass more than 70% of their time on data, but the purpose of historiography is above all to offer new perspectives and valuable propositions. Like money, historical materials are good servants, but bad masters. To conclude these diverse comments, I offer in Appendix 2 ten short instances to demonstrate why I think that 1,000 pages would be sufficient for Braudel's objectives.

4 Evaluation

4.1 Criteria

To evaluate Braudel's work in the following manner is bold, but the purpose here is, I think, much more suggestive than definite. As a subjective reader, I assign asterisks (*) of various number to each section. Evaluation is better at the level of section than of chapter because each volume (nearly 700 pages) is divided into five to eight chapters; each chapter contains three to six sections, whereas each section contains from seven to twenty subsections. Within this structure, I consider sections to be more representative. I summarize the distribution of these asterisks in Table 1 to show my preference. My evaluation is based on the following criteria:

(1) I give fewer asterisks to purely descriptive sections because I believe that historical materials do not mean historiography. Historical evidence is of course a part of the historian's craft, but materials with-

Table 1 Evaluation by chapter sections

Degree of commendation	Volume I	Volume II	Volume III	Total
*	2:3; 2:5; 3:2; 4:2; 6:3; 7:1; 7:2. (7 sections)	2:5; 3:5; 4:4; 5:4. (4 sections)		11
**	1:2; 1:3; 1:4; 2:1; 2:2; 2:4; 4:1; 4:3; 5:2; 6:1; 6:2; 7:4; 8:1; 8:3. (14 sections)	1:3; 2:4; 3:4; 4:2; 4:3; 5:1; 5:2. (7 sections)		21
***	1:1; 3:1; 5:4; 7:3; 8:2. (5 sections)	1:4; 2:3; 3:1; 4:1. (4 sections)	1:2; 2:4; 3:2; 4:2; 5:1; 5:2; 5:3; 5:4; 5:5; 5:6; 6:3. (11 sections)	20
****		1:2; 2:1; 3:2; 3:3. (4 sections)	2:1; 3:3; 3:4; 3:5; 4:4; 6:2. (6 sections)	10
*****		1:1; 2:2; 5:3. (3 sections)	1:1; 1:3; 2:2; 2:3; 3:1; 4:1; 4:3; 6:1. (8 sections)	11
Total	26	22	25	73

Remarks:

1. For example, 2:3 means chapter 2 section 3.
2. More asterisks (*) mean greater commendation.

out a central framework or proposition are only dead data. Exceptions are, for instance, III:2:2 (signifying volume III, chapter 2, section 2) on the belated rise of Venice contains no beautiful theory or hypothesis, but Braudel's elegant presentation and detailed relevant information can conquer every reader.

(2) I give greater weight to sections with new hypotheses, new explanations or new arguments, such as I:1:1 on the impact of climate on human economic activities. With this understanding, one can clearly see from Table 1 that I value most volume III because, except for chapter 5, it is better structured with more of his own arguments. Volume I is less appreciated because it is replete with detailed evidence but hardly structured, although Braudel claimed in the preface that this part of the entire undertaking is the most difficult.

(3) There is a preference for discipline. As an economist I appreciate his historical evidence for Say's Law (II:172-183), and his critiques on von Thünen's (location) zone theory (III:38-39), his critiques of various theories of the business cycle (III:1:3). I think that these parts are instructive to economists.

4.2 *An example*

Space here allows only one instance. Among several instructive arguments in the three volumes, what strikes me most is his challenge to the Weberian proposition that I ranked with five asterisks (II:5:3). Since Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* was published in 1904, there have been strong debates on the relationship between cultural factors (such as religion, confucianism) and economic development in various disciplines (sociology, history, economics) in different countries. The literature on this topic is so abundant that one reads many distorted forms of the Weberian proposition. This condition generated a "Weber phenomenon", and the Weberian proposition became a controversial issue in social sciences of this century. A "standard" assertion has the form: the rise of Protestantism after the Reformation is correlated with the rise of capitalism. Most debates centered on the "post-Weberian" proposition to prove or falsify this relationship. Few discussions were on the "pre-Weberian" propositions: (1) based on what historical evidence did Weber propose this thesis? (2) was his understanding of that history reliable? Braudel's objection to the Weberian proposition is on this ground, as

he discussed in II:159-160, 231-2, 566-78.

Hereunder I summarize Braudel's main arguments to show his insight. The basic fact was

it is true that after the sixteenth century there is a clear correlation between the countries which welcomed the Reformation and the areas in which merchant and, later, industrial capitalism pursued its successful career, from the glories of Amsterdam to the later glories of London. This condition must be more than mere coincidence. Was Weber right? His argument is rather disconcerting. ... Weber seeks to discover a Protestant minority inspired by a very particular ethic, the ideal-type capitalist mentality. (II:567)

Braudel then traced to the origin of Weber's inspiration:

A statistical survey carried out in Barden in 1895 has just established that Protestant are more likely than Catholics to be wealthy and engaged in economic activity. ... Popular wisdom sums this up as ... the Protestant prefers to eat well, while the Catholic prefers to sleep peacefully. (II:567)

Braudel escaped from the culture-capitalism framework, offering arguments forcefully from the viewpoint of the changes of geo-economic advantages. He argued

that Reformation Europe as a whole overtook the Mediterranean economy, brilliant as this was and already long-experienced in the ways of capitalism. (I am thinking Italy in particular). But such transfer are the common coin of history; Byzantium declined as Islam rose; Islam made way for Christian Europe; Mediterranean Christendom won the first race to conquer the Seven Seas, but about 1590, the center of gravity of Europe swung over to the protestant North which became the most prosperous region. (II:569)

The key concept here is the shifts of the centers of economic gravity.

Why and how did the center of gravity move to the North?

When the balance finally swung in favour of the North, with its lower wages, its increasing unbeatable industry, its cheap transport, its fleet of coasters and little sailing ships which would make voyages at low cost, this was a matter of pounds, shillings and pence, of competitive costs. Everything could be produced more cheaply in the North: grain, canvas, woolens, ships, timber, etc. The victory

of the North was undoubtedly in a way the victory of the proletarian, the underdog, who had eaten less well, if not less copiously than the South. To this must be added the economic downturn in about 1590, the crisis which, in the past as in the present, strikes first the most advanced countries with their more complex machinery. To the North, this brought a series of good opportunities, perceived and recognized as such, and seized by businessmen who flocked into Holland from Germany, France and indeed Antwerp. The consequence was the powerful rise of Amsterdam, bringing with it general good fortune for the Protestant countries. ... Protestant communities richer, more adventurous and sharper than the local merchants - just as the Italians had once seemed to the countries of the North, ... the unrivalled experts on trade and banking. I find this a persuasive explanation. (II:570)

Indeed, it is. But I have reason to doubt that the basic idea of this stimulating passage is inspired or based on Richard Rapp's 1975 paper "The unmaking of the Mediterranean trade hegemony: international trade rivalry and the commercial revolution", *Journal of Economic History*, 35(3):499-525.

5 Conclusions

To write a history of capitalism during the 15th-18th centuries is not an easy task for most brilliant historians in any century. To write such a history in a style of "histoire totale" is an even more difficult undertaking, the reason is that in addition to economic aspects one has to take into account social, political and all other aspects named "civilizations". Braudel was admirably brave enough to complete his task during a quarter of century of endeavor.

My overall impression is illustrated by another metaphor. Thinking of the electricity lamp bulbs that we use at home: when the lighting effect is inefficient, electricity is transferred into heat rather than into useful light. What we expect from a great historian is the light (insight) rather than the heat. I am inclined to consider Braudel's history of capitalism "more heat than light".

The history of capitalism will undoubtedly be rewritten again and again. Braudel's volumes will be repeatedly consulted for several reasons. (1) Among historians of capitalism in the 20th century, he is a significant figure who offered a unique perspective on the process of

the development of capitalism. (2) He also summarized major sources related to this enormous topic; later researchers will certainly benefit from his bibliographies contained in the endnotes. (3) The many maps, figures, statistics, tables, photos, paintings constitute a useful visual counterpart of the text; they are carefully presented, and they are sometimes more attractive than the text itself, encouraging readers to turn pages. I conjecture that, if Braudel's history of capitalism will be read in the next centuries, it will be more because of the encyclopedic content than its framework, concepts, theories and detailed arguments.

Appendix 3.1: Compare with other eight reviews

To contrast my own opinions, I briefly summarize the main points of eight other reviews, by the alphabetical order of authors. Dat (1980) started his review by making clear that Braudel's methodology is "resolutely atheoretical, ... the proper tools of the economic historian as opposed to the social theorist or the theoretical economist are non-educative models where the object is not the formulation of 'rules' or 'laws' but the organization of the raw materials of history into intelligible patterns bearing on specific problems." (p. 508) He presented Braudel's well known model of historical time: time of event, time of "conjuncture" and time of "longue durée". In his discussion of "The Uses of Theory" he mentioned so many names (Karl Polanyi, J.S. Mill, David Ricardo, Thomas Mun, Adam Smith and so on) and so many concepts (uneven development, invisible hand, monopoly, physiocratic idea, classic trade theory, historical materialism, etc.) in so few pages (pp. 510-3) that readers become lost. In his "Capitalism Redefined" (pp. 514-5) I expected his interpretation of Braudel's "capitalism", but what I read is one and a half pages of summary. The other two sections on "Cycles and Trades" (pp. 515-7) and "History and the Social Sciences" (pp. 517-8) contain Dat's scattered remarks. In short, this essay is not a recommendable review.

Fritz (1986) is basically a summary of Braudel's work. In the first section (less than two pages), he explains what the *Annales* school is, and in the next section, also two pages long, he talks about Braudel's method of analysis, especially about the three sorts of historical time that most Braudel readers already know. Section 3 summarizes the contents of his work in four pages, the final section contains two para-

graphs of criticism. As a whole, I do not consider Fritz's piece as a good review: he has no argument at all.

By contrast, Howard's review is full of arguments. He takes the point of view of a Marxian economist. His review "concerning only upon Braudel's treatment of capitalism from a particular perspective, that of economic theory." (Howard 1985:469) What he means by "economic theory" is the Marxian theory of capitalism. In his review he hardly touches on any historical facts; instead, he focuses wholly on the abstract discussions of the theory of the development of capitalism. He starts with Braudel's definition of capitalism, criticizes the defects of such a definition: "So summarized, Braudel's thesis on capitalism appears to be definite and distinct, but in actual fact these properties are absent to a distressing degree. Instead, there is an all-pervading vagueness of terminology so that there are few firm propositions, and exposition is frequently indecisive. Misinterpretation of alternative theories is also common, while inconsistency is rampant. Substantive criticism is thereby hampered, and the ground is fertile for provoking sterile controversies whose only force is confusion coupled with ill-feeling. Thus, many of Braudel's central concepts are left undefined. ... Braudel's undisciplined habits even flow into critical discussion of his competitors." (Howard 1985:471)

These are harsh accusations, but I am not surprised to see this kind of criticism from Marxian economists. Braudel clearly defended himself from the very beginning of the book: "... I had deliberately set out to write outside the world of theory, of all theories, and had intended to be guided by concrete observations and comparative history alone." (see the introduction of volume I, p. 25). What Braudel did not explicitly state is that he had no intention to argue with Marxists about the theory of development of capitalism. Despite this claim, Howard still uses Marxian language to attack. It is legitimate for him to do so if and only if he can support his criticism with concrete historical examples. But I find very little evidence of this kind in his review. In short, this pure theoretical review does not hurt Braudel and his followers. Moreover, Howard's arguments are not always easy to follow by non-Marxist.

Kinser (1981b) gives more profound analysis of the framework and arguments of the book. This essay is highly recommended. I was also very impressed by his long and penetrating review (Kinser 1981a) on Braudel's masterpiece *The Mediterranean*. In contrast, in

his second review of *Civilization & Capitalism* published in the same year (Kinser 1981b), we find his many complaints that “[t]here is little first-hand research in these volumes” (p. 675); “[t]his work is a diligent and impressive compilation of the research of others. ... By choosing to compile everything rather than to investigate selectively, Braudel is condemned continually to resort to illustration more than to analysis, to exhibit more than to critical interpretation...” (p. 676) He concluded his review by writing: “And after the travel, as one relaxes and recounts its difficulties and its pleasure, as one hefts the volumes and scans their endless pages a last time, one rubs one’s reddened eyes with admiration at the stupendous reach of this historian’s search for totality.” (p. 682) I think that Kinser was honest and polite.

The subtitle of Lovett’s review is quite in despire: “total history for beginners.” In his seven pages review, Lovett is in fact summarizing the contents of Braudel’s book, as well as unsystematically commenting on randomly chosen points. His main criticism is focused on England (pp. 751-2), with the intent of showing that Braudel had no convincing arguments on the history of England; Lovett adds one page of references to supplement Braudel’s book. I think this is not a good way to write a review article, especially to publish it in the prestigious *Historical Journal*. Counter-arguments are more useful than simple bad-intentioned criticism.

A long review critique appeared in Braudel’s home country. To publish such a review in France requires courage in relation to the Parisian atmosphere of intellectual tension and Braudel’s “hegemony” in France. Morineau (1988) first explained his personal relationship with Braudel and Braudel’s reaction to his critiques; then he selected a few instances and offered detailed counter-arguments. A distinctive feature of Morineau’s review is that he provided his arguments with different historical evidence and statistics, for instance, on the movement of the price of between 1756 and 1790 at the national, “providence” and “average” levels. In brief, this review combines personal recollection and detailed technical evidence on selected topics.

To my best knowledge, Perrot’s review (1981) may be the only review article published in the official journal of the Annales school *Annales ESC*. The main text of this review is about ten pages long. Perrot uses four pages (pp. 3-6) to summarize the book with short comments, but he does so in an unsystematically manner. As I see it, the only place where he offers a counter-argument is on the concept of

historical time (from page 7 on), and he sticks to this point throughout the rest of his review.

The concept of historical time is the core of Braudelian history, it encompasses: time of event, time of "conjoncture" (business cycle time), and the trade mark of Braudel: la longue durée. Perrot was right to point out that Braudel used this framework throughout all his works, applying the same framework to different topics, in different forms with different materials. In the second half of his review (pp. 7-12), Perrot compares the economists' time concept with Braudel's concept of historical time. I feel uncomfortable about this approach. The first time concept used by economists, as Perrot illustrates, is one of a year by year base: t , $t+1$, $t+n$. Can one contrast this with Braudel's "time of event"? Certainly not. The t , $t+1$, $t+n$ approach is used by neo-classical economists, learned from Alfred Marshall on the economic effect of the short-run changes. Yet Braudel time of event refers to historical events such as war, flood, etc. The two are simply incompatible.

Perrot does not touch the long durée because he could not find an equivalent time unit (taking a century as the unit of analysis) used by economists. He concentrates on the concept of "conjoncture" on which he could find abundant literature on business cycle economics. If the concept of "conjoncture" equals "business cycle", then Braudel cannot compete with economists both at the level of analytical tools, and on that of historical facts. In fact, Braudel relies heavily on the concept, terminology and empirical findings of economists, as one can see from the references that he cited so extensively in the related chapters.

Perrot cites a great amount of economics literature in his footnote 33, and this makes it clear that he is using the economists business cycle theories (the more mathematically inclined models), and compares them with Braudel's historical results. He cites even articles published in *Econometrica* (notes 40, 43), I think this is mis-directed because Braudel's concern is on the historical movement, while papers published in *Econometrica* are heavily mathematically and statistically oriented; Braudel uses a century as his unit of analysis, while *Econometrica* authors perhaps never heard of Braudel, and have little concern in the longue durée.

Wallerstein (1991) offered a selective review by concentrating on Braudel's concept of capitalism. While I (and most readers as well,

I believe) am disconcerted by Braudel's notion of capitalism, Wallerstein's interpretation shed some light on this complex key concept. This issue has been discussed in Section 3.2.

Appendix 3.2: Uninteresting parts of the book (10 instances)

Remark: Instances are concentrated on volumes II & III, one can find many more instances in the first volume.

1. II:194–204, on “precious metals”. This chapter is on “Markets and the Economy”; precious metals have nothing to do with the chapter. His discussion on sugar (II:190-4) is also strange because he stopped suddenly the subject on page 194, and jumped to precious metals.
2. II:216–9, on “Overall balances”: trade balance among the nations. This interesting topic was treated in a unsystematic way, he touched a theme quickly and soon skip to another one.
3. II:455–7, “Back to a Threefold division”. Here he repeated what was already clearly stated above the economic activities of capitalism on three levels: material life, economic life, world economy (see the preface of volume I). The repetition here contains no new idea, and was loosely written.
4. III:57–61, on “War and the zones of the world-economy”. He tried to explain the relationship between wars and the world-economy, but the contents are more on “the art of war” (see especially page 58) than the claimed subject. An irrelevant digression.
5. III:287–9, on “The nation-state, yes-but the national market?” I confess that I am completely lost in his diversified paragraphs. He ended this sub-section by asking two questions: “But what were these thresholds? And above all, which were the crucial turning points?” He offered no answer, nor single hint, and I understand neither the meaning nor the importance of the questions.
6. III:314–5, on “Visible continuities”. He wrote about the GNP level and the rise of the state in one page; I fail to see its relevance to the chapter “National Markets”.
7. III:347–51, on “The French interior”. A digression on the French interior problems, no central theme, no interesting idea, not organized.

8. III:413–7, on “Spanish America reconsidered”. The contents are mainly on the smuggling of Spanish America. Completely irrelevant.
9. III:595–9, on “The industrialists” and “British economy and society by sector”. Two huge subjects in less than four pages!
10. III:605, 611–8. He inserted much irrelevant historical information when he discussed industrial revolution; it is difficult to discover his main points.

4

Identity of France (1986)

Fernand Braudel: *Identité de la France*. Vol. 1: *Espace et histoire*, vol. 2: *Les hommes et les choses*, Paris: Editions Arthaud, 1986. Pocket edition: Editions Flammarion; collection Champs: Nos. 220-222 (1990). Translated by Siân Reynolds: *The Identity of France*. Vol. 1: *History and Environment* (432 pages, 1988); vol. 2: *People and Production* (781 pages, 1990), New York: Harper & Row.

“There is, as we shall see, much in this book which is redundant, irrelevant, cryptic, strongly biased, paradoxical, or otherwise unhelpful or even harmful to understanding. When all this is set aside, there still remains enough to constitute, by a wide margin, the most constructive, the most original, the most learned, and the most brilliant contribution to the history of the analytical phases of our discipline which has ever been made.”— Jacob Viner (1954, *American Economic Review*, 44:894-5)

1 Setting

The opening excerpt is from the first page of Viner’s review of Joseph Schumpeter’s *History of Economic Analysis* (1954, Oxford UP). That Schumpeter is well-known in social sciences needs no introduction. Although Viner’s work is less famous, the economics community is

indebted to him for his Envelope theorem, his research in microeconomic theory and international trade, and his writings on the history of economic thought. In short, Viner combined a brilliant mind such that while most readers were perplexed by Schumpeter's massive volume, Viner was able to reveal Schumpeter's ingenuity.

In this chapter Viner's two main ideas as presented above are used to express my opinions about Braudel's *Identity of France*. It is proposed that the first idea of Viner's judgment ("much in this book which is redundant, irrelevant, cryptic, strongly biased, paradoxical, or otherwise unhelpful or even harmful to understanding.") fits more or less to Braudel's *France*, and that the second idea ("there still remains enough to constitute, by a wide margin, the most constructive, the most original, the most learned, and the most brilliant contribution to the history of the analytical phases of our discipline which has ever been made.") is unsuitable.

Section 2 analyzes the framework of the two volumes, not on the individual chapters but on each part (containing several chapters) *en bloc*: exploring its key concepts, design, the aspects treated and the basic characteristics of the work. Section 3 investigates some less obvious facets of the book. Section 4 accounts some positive aspects and my overall evaluation of the work. For page notations, I:123 indicates page 123 of volume one, and II:321 for pages 321 of volume two (English version).

2 Framework

2.1 Novelty

Braudel mentions many classic and modern works on the history of France, explaining why he is unsatisfied with their approaches. His major criticism is that most authors write only of modern or contemporary history of France, and thus arbitrarily split France's history. Braudel proposed to address history of France by using his notion of *longue durée* to write a new history thus "opening up longer perspectives and freeing us from the endless recital of events" (I:17), because

for those of us beyond childhood, another kind of history, one that is attentive to longer time-scales, enables us to distinguish the extraordinary accumulations and amalgams, the surprising repetitions of the human past, to perceive the huge responsibilities of

a multiseular history, that prodigious mass that bears within it a living but often unconscious heritage, discoverable only by that deeper-probing history, much as psychoanalysis in the early twentieth century revealed the depths of the subconscious. ... But to attempt such things, one needs the raw materials: a plentiful record of lived time. We have no choice but to work with *la longue durée*. (I:18-9)

This is a repeated Braudelian manifesto since the 1950s.

However, despite the tremendous appeal of Braudel's *longue durée* idea, a careful investigation of these two volumes reveals major flaws in his attempt to demonstrate its validity. Braudel develops a long perspective investigation in the first three chapters of volume II: the first two chapters on the demography of France from prehistory to the 10th century (using 126 pages), and on the population of the 10-15th centuries in chapter 3 (36 pages). However, in all the rest of the chapters in both volumes, more than 90% of pages are on the post-16th century period. The reason is quite simple: documents and research from the 16th century are relatively abundant, and his specialty is between 15-18th centuries (as we can see his *The Mediterranean* was around the 16th century and *Capitalism* spanning the 15-18th centuries). This is supported by the tables and figures: over 85% are covering post-16th century period. My reading finds no real *longue durée* product from which to assess the validity of Braudel's promising project.

Quite on the contrary, the reader is left with a vivid impression after reading this work that it is largely a portrayal of the people, things, and events, i.e. essentially another kind of event history, full of details and trivial. Braudel was not only fond of events but also expressed a keen interest in the details of daily life (examples are the details on Metz and Toulon: in chapter 10 of volume I). It is difficult to see a connection of long passages of this kind with the *longue durée* perspective. Their topical structure is too unpredictable to give us a *longue durée* perspective.

Braudel criticizes other works on the history of France for their one-dimensional perspective, either from military or diplomatic or dynastic change point of view. He advocated to use tools offered

by the various social sciences — geography, political economy, demography, politics, anthropology, ethnology, social psychology, cultural studies, sociology. History has allowed light to be shed

on to it from all sides, and has accepted a multitude of newly-formulated questions. ... we are all under an obligation to speak in terms of the global, of 'historical totalization', to reaffirm that 'total history [is] the only true history', ... (I:17)

This total history ambition remains unproved. The open ended advocacy of the use of tools from different disciplines leaves the task undefined. It should be stressed that the way Braudel uses these three disciplines (geography, demography and political economy) in the first two volumes is superficial, consisting essentially of references to terminology rather than applications of chosen key concepts from various disciplines. Braudel offers no new concepts and suffers from a misuse of old ideas (*longue durée* and total history) that Braudel readers are familiar with since decades.

2.2 Structure

Turning to the problem of overall design. Part I of volume one (chapters 1-3) is a historical account of France's diversity in geography, language, customs etc.; Part II (chapters 4-6) discusses the three patterns of settlement: villages, bourgs and *villes* (towns and cities); Part III (chapters 7-10) discusses France's transportation, frontiers, i.e. the role of geography in the shaping of France. Overall, this volume is a geo-history of France.

The second volume contains four parts treating three major topics. Part I (chapters 1-2) on France's population from prehistory to the 10th century; Part II (chapters 3-5) on population and demographic problems of the 10th century up to 1980s; Part III (chapters 6-10) on the infrastructure of France's economy: the peasant economy, until the 20th century; Part IV (chapters 11-15) on the superstructure of the economy: circulation, industry, commerce, money, banking, and state finance. Finally, conclusions to these two volumes are drawn (II:669-79).

The pages devoted to *villes* (town and cities) are unreasonably high. This is the topic of chapter 6 in volume I (I:179-262), and again the title of chapter 11 in volume II (II:415-59); these two chapters contain 128 pages, or 8.23% of both volumes. It doesn't seem appropriate that this topic deserves such a high proportion of the history of France, a possible reason for this result is that the abundance of documents than other topics. It is difficult to see the rationale for placing

this topic as the first chapter in Part IV of volume II whose subject is superstructure of French economy. Chapter 11 (of volume II) is also rather loosely structured with no main focus or deep analysis. For instance, II:415-9 discusses the rate of urbanization, II:419-21 the growing role of towns, II:421-3 the relationship between town and crown, II:423-5 on the choice of site. Thus, within 17 pages five large topics are presented without significant structural depth or analysis which would seem a necessary component of any *longue durée* perspective or total history analysis. Examples of this kind are abundant and flaw Braudel's claims.

A second indication of inadequate structural definition is that under each chapter there are only sections, i.e. no sub-sections are found; the consequence is that the connections between sections are not always evident. For instance, the same chapter 11 of volume II on Towns (II:415) discusses the rate of urbanization, but after turning to other topics we are returned to "The rate of urbanization" once more (II:444-5).

A third example is in chapter 15 of volume II: "At the pinnacle of the hierarchy: capitalism". The main materials covered in this chapter are France's monetary, banking, state finance and taxation. Money and banking are related to capitalists, but not necessarily with capitalism because under capitalism the relations are much more complicated including the process of production, financing (at the firm level), marketing, etc. Another inappropriateness in this chapter is that Braudel presents "The role of the bill of exchange" and "Did the bill of exchange create 'intra-European links'?" in II:620-33, but fails to discuss any role of France. Unlike her European neighbors Italy, Spain, Holland and the UK, France before the 19th century was not deeply involved in "capitalism activities"; France was, as he said in volume I, an inland-looking country, retarded in sea power. So France's capitalism is only a recent sparkle if we see the course of her history.

3 Perplexities

If we follow the principle of Occam's razor (*essentia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem*), more than one-third of the writing could be deleted without damage to Braudel's central messages: there are too many scattered facts supporting too few arguments, hypotheses and causalities. The following two examples will be sufficient to

illustrate this point. Chapter 6 of volume I contains 85 pages on Towns (I:179-264), of which Roanne occupies 25 pages (I:204-229). If this middle-size town requires such lengthy discussion we might speculate that it has outstanding significance (in the same chapter only eight pages (I:251-9) are allocated to Paris). However, the pages on Roanne are largely factual without *longue durée* or total history analysis. Two-thirds of these pages could be eliminated without changing reader's understanding. A similar pattern occurs in chapter 10 of volume I on Toulon, "the only French naval base in the Mediterranean." (I:351) The chapter is a historical catalogue on names, dates, events, war, as Braudel confessed: "This time I have not avoided exciting events, ..." (I:351) This chapter of events is incompatible with the *longue durée* perspective.

A striking feature of this book is that the author is not at all problem-solving oriented. Given his general style is summarizing documents in offering his opinions, we rarely (if at all) see that he has investigated a topic in depth. The structurally predictable result is that unanswered questions are raised again and again in the end of sections or chapters. For example, "Revolts before 1680" (II:387-9) is the issue of revolts "when popular uprisings were wide-spread in response to the excess of the tax-collectors"; and "between 450 and 500 'sparks of revolt' in Aquitaine alone, between 1590 and 1715." (II:387-8) This is a highly relevant topic because these revolts occurred repeatedly, forming a noteworthy social structure problem. In the final paragraph Braudel writes: "Such geographical concentration [in Aquitaine] requires an explanation: but are we in a position to provide one?" (II:389) Braudel then offers four obvious hints for further research and ended the topic. The subject of revolts is not easy to handle within a limited context, but many of other easier questions that Braudel asks in the closing paragraphs might easily have been resolved within the format he chose, but these were left to the reader as he continued with his easy summaries.

"As detached an 'observer' as possible, the historian must take what might be termed a personal vow of silence." This is what Braudel declares in the first page of the Introduction (I:15). But we see on many occasions in which he offers his personal testimony that he contradicts this rule. Examples can be found in the following pages, I:64, 120, 123, 126, 143, 260, 282; II:361, 366, 496, 529, 644, 675-7. For instance, in II:496 Braudel says: "But it is not very long ago that I

was myself marveling to find that São Paulo in Brazil was linked to Paris by direct dialing: I hastened to call up an old friend whom I had first met in 1936, when Brazil was still over two weeks from Europe *by boat!*” Among the formal books on the history of France, this one could be the most causal in style.

Braudel’s discussion of Hoffmann theory (II:535-7) is unclear and the evidence used is inappropriate.

Hoffmann’s theory, formulated with reference to Britain after the industrial revolution, but which could safely be applied to France in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Formulated as a general proposition, it can easily be extended beyond its already generous chronological limits. Rather than a theory, it is a rule, indeed for once I will hazard to say a law. For Walter Hoffmann, *any* industry, whatever its location and purpose (and I would add whatever its period) follows a parabolic curve from its inception, with a comparatively rapid rise, a ceiling reached over time, and a downward phase that may be vertical. We need not dwell on the examples he cites, which prove the point. In another book, I tried out ‘Hoffmann’s law’ on a few quantifiable examples, alas only too rare, from the sixteenth century. But one thing stands out: the days of any industry are numbered, even if its beginnings are spectacular, even if at the height of its powers it seems to be in perfect health. All industrial activity will sooner or later obey this predestined curve, whatever the ups and downs of fortune on the way. (II:535)

As presented, Braudel argues that Hoffmann’s main point is that any industry, regardless of time, location and their nature, obeys a parabolic curve that Hoffmann described, the only differences are that each curve may have different slope and length. But for economic historians this general statement can hardly be called a theory. In *Civilization & Capitalism* II:346 we find a better explanation as follows:

any given industry (and the exceptions merely prove the rule) will pass through three stages: expansion, plateau, decline, or to be more precise: “(i) the stage of industrial expansion which is characterized by a rising rate of growth of output; (ii) the stage of industrial development, when the rate of growth is declining; and (iii) the stage ... when there is an absolute decline of output.”

This renders Hoffmann thesis clear. Let us examine how Braudel tested this theory with evidence from France. In Figure 70 (II:537) is

a reproduction of Markovitch's *L'Industrie française de 1789 à 1964* with three curves: "dynamic new industries", "progressive older industries" and "declining old industries", where the vertical axis represents "Millions of francs 1905-13". However, the Hoffmann thesis is based on individual industry statistics and Markovitch's evidence represents an aggregation (e.g. grouping all "dynamic new industries" together). In so doing we lose the ability to know which individual industry's parabolic line is different from other industries. Figure 70 is simply inappropriate as a test of Hoffmann's theory.

4 Contributions

Two related examples may reveal the qualities of Braudel's work: the first example is instructive because of its rich information, the second example has no evidence to support but it is instructive because of its thought-provoking hints.

II:288-94 presents summary of a 1817 *cadastre* (register, originally for tax purposes, of land division and ownership). "It provides, for each of the 86 *départements* France then contained, the income per hectare for the various sectors of production (arable land, vineyard, grassland and woodland). A fifth figure gives the income in francs of the average hectare in the *département*." This is a nation-wide census which allows inter-regional comparison. For instance, in the poorest *département* (the Basses-Alpes), the average income per hectare for ploughland was 13 francs, vineyard (30), grassland (57), woodland (2) and the overall average income per hectare (6.38). For the richest *département* (the Seine), the first four figures were: 100, 112, 84, 108, while the fifth overall average was unavailable.

Braudel dug this document out from Archive Nationale (A.N., F²⁰560), explained its background and significance, then transformed its major results into Figure 35 (II:291-3). The drawer of this figure is skillful and presents this complicated information in clear and elegant maps.

This informative document and the inspiring nature of Figure 35 remind us that if the available land does not significantly change, and there is no major breakthrough in agricultural production, two factors might affect the above five statistics. Firstly, the rise or fall of population will change population density (i.e. man/land ratio), that will lead to different food pressures. For example, when population

density increases and food supply is in shortage, then grassland, vineyard, and even woodland will be transformed into ploughland. On the other hand, when there is no food pressure, ploughland will be shifted to more profitable activities such as vineyard or grassland to produce higher value wine and meat. Secondly, other things being equal, when the business cycle is in the rising segment, general prices also rise, the demand for good wine and meat will be increased; and vice-versa.

In other words, population density and business cycle will affect the allocation of land for different purposes. Braudel did not offer this mechanism, but it reveals the real idea behind what Braudel is discussing in II:247-8, 257-8, namely the competition for land between man and animal:

sometimes it was a choice between people and animals, between wheat and pasture. Often what man needed for food animals needed too — some foodstuff were interchangeable. ... Sir Thomas More (1478-1535) noted in his *Utopia* that domestic sheep, since pastures were being extended at the expense of wheat fields, “eat up and swallow downe the very men them selves”, depriving them of food and even work ... In France, Cantillon (1680-1734) tackled the same question: “The more horses a state maintains, the less subsistence there will be for the inhabitants”; “it is either horses or men”. ... in the whole of Basse-Normandie much later, by about 1780-1820, as more fields were set to grass, the cow too became an innocent enemy of man. (II:248-9)

Braudel offered no evidence to test the validity of this man/animal competition for land hypothesis, nor did he offer evidence to demonstrate the presence of this competition for land among grain, wine, meat, wood (mainly for construction and fuel) in France. Instead, in Figure 31 (II:259) he offered four curves showing statistics of (1) rural population, (2) cattle (including oxen), (3) pigs, and (4) horses for nearly two hundred years (1790-1980). This is an informative figure in itself but unfortunately it does not provide useful information to test the above hypotheses (the man/land competition for land thesis, and the land allocation for competitive sectors of agricultural production thesis). We may conjecture that these kind of statistics could be in existence for the period of 18-20th centuries and leave this interesting topic to French economic historians.

We are obliged to Braudel for offering such rich and detailed bibliographical references in the massive notes in the end of the two vol-

umes. These references demonstrate that Braudel prepared for a total history writing with a wide information on geography, political economy, demography, linguistics, folklore, military, politics, etc., much of it acquired from the Archive nationale. Braudel's passion for archives, not only for their useful information, but also as the sources of inspiration and imagination is clearly evident in his work. In II:724 note 209 he mentions the Moscow State Archives, showing that his passion for archives extended beyond the borders of France. Readers may find some elegant passages and scattered insights, some related page numbers are offered: I:31, 52, 119, 125, 183; II:237, 317.

Some typescripts of Volume III of *Identity of France (État, Culture, Société)* remain unpublished in the 1980s, they are now collected in pp. 417-506 of *Les ambitions de l'histoire* (1997) which is volume II of *Les écrits de Fernand Braudel* (3 volumes), Paris: Editions de Fallois (1996-2001). Although a brief table of contents is listed in p. 419, but this volume III remained largely incomplete that makes evaluation premature.

5

History of Civilizations (1963)

Fernand Braudel (1995): *A History of Civilizations*, Penguin Books, xl + 573 + index.

1 Contents

This book was originally written as a high school (final year) textbook of history of civilizations, collected in the series *Le Monde actuel, histoire et civilisations*, edited by S. Baille, F. Braudel and R. Philippe, published by Librairie Eugène Belin in 1963. The teachers' council agreed in 1964 that Braudel's book was "too hard for students"; in 1965 the Ministry of Education truncated the "civilization" syllabus; in 1970 Braudel's book was withdrawn from sale (p. xxvii). It was republished in 1987 after the author's death in 1985 with a new name *Grammaire de civilisations*, by Editions Arthaud in Paris. The translator of this English version is Richard Mayne, who prepared a 20-page introduction to present the author, his historical works and major concepts, the Annales school, and Braudel's unsuccessful reformation in historical education. This English version appeared in 1993 by Viking Penguin, and by Penguin Books in 1995 upon which this review is based. It had been translated into Spanish in the 1960s (for university students), and into Italian in pocket book form, regularly reprinted,

as Mayne told us (p. xxviii). Mayne should refer to Maurice Aymard's preface to the French edition from which a lot of information was drawn in his translator's introduction.

The first chapter explains the notion of civilization, on its various meanings used by different authors in the past centuries; then Braudel told us in chapter 2 how and why it is necessary to apply different social sciences (geography, sociology, economics, psychology [mentality]) to study history of civilizations. In chapter 3 he advocates the "structure analysis" as an important way to examine each civilization; and not surprisingly, he suggests that the *longue durée* (taking century or longer as unit of observation) is a superior method to study this subject. In short, the first three chapters are the author's views on the subject and his methodology of analysis. In the last paragraph of chapter 3 he announces that "[a]ll the rules and definitions that we have outlined so far will be clarified and simplified by the examples that follow" in chapters 4-25. This part is further divided into two groups: civilizations outside Europe (chapters 4-15) and European civilizations (chapters 16-25).

2 Is there exists a grammar in the history of civilizations?

The French title is very attractive: this famous historian will tell us an internal grammar derived from the evolution of civilizations! I was attracted to see how he applied the *longue durée* approach to different civilizations and reached new instructive results. I must confess that from chapter 4 to 25 I did not see this effect. In other words, the methodology he claimed in chapters 2-3 are not really applied to his materials: he did not show us the advantages of *longue durée* analysis with concrete examples: there exists an obvious gap between what he announced and what he really offered. This is my first disappointment.

Braudel explained that "civilizations continually borrow from their neighbors, even if they 'reinterpret' and assimilate what they have adopted. ... every civilization looks rather like a railway goods yard, constantly receiving and dispatching miscellaneous deliveries." (p. 29) He continued to elaborate the importance of contacts, refusals, assimilation, transformations among and within civilizations in pages 30-1. I was attracted to see how he applied this dynamic interaction framework to history of civilizations to derive a grammar of civilization evolution. What he actually did in chapters 4-25 was basically

discuss each civilization separately, he did discuss the changes within in most cases but I do not see how he inter-connected these civilizations to offer a picture of dynamic exchange mechanism or the process of contact, fusion, rejection, transformation among civilizations. This is my second disappointment.

A third disappointment is that he did not apply the four claimed fields (geography, society, economy, mentality) effectively to his materials in a balanced manner. It suffices to see from the table of contents that geography is the most applied angle of analysis. The other three are used rather unsystematically and quite unbalanced. For instance, he applied the four aspects quite well in the case of Islam (chapters 4-7) but sweepingly for the case of India (chapter 13). This depended certainly upon the knowledge he possessed about that civilization, and we cannot demand anyone to have full knowledge of all these civilizations. But the point is that if he applied his framework (*longue durée* plus four social sciences) to each case consistently, readers would find it easier to grasp his main messages more concretely. His presentation was unbalanced not only in page distribution, but more seriously, in some cases he was sweeping or even perfunctory.

An interesting way to study history of civilization, as I conceive it, is to observe the interactions among civilizations, and upon which we might learn the nature and characteristics of their rises and falls. I do not understand and do not know how to apply Braudel's *longue durée* "method" exactly in this field, but I doubt what we can really learn if we only extend the unit of observation to centuries. I was curious but Braudel did not show us how to apply his magic notion. So, is there exists a grammar in the history of civilizations? Braudel did not show us, and I guess there exists no such thing. Even if one derives some rules or regularities, I think this kind of grammar could be full of exceptions (that do not confirm the rules), and with a lot of irregular verbs. A systematic grammar with internal structure for the history of civilization is improbable. I think the English title of this book is more appropriate than the French one.

3 History of civilizations and current affairs

The most famous message in Braudel's historiography is the emphasis of *longue durée* and the rejection of traditional history on events, military, politics, biographies etc. To our surprise, he devoted sev-

eral chapters on current socio-politico-military affairs and events of the early 1960s, placed after the discussions of each civilization. This is incompatible with his (and the *Annales*) research agenda as well as the framework he announced in the first three chapters. Pages on these current affairs occupy about one-fifth of the book, as one can see easily from the table of contents: Islam (chapter 7), Black Africa (9), China (12), India (13), Japan (15), Europe (19), Russia (25). Perhaps someone will defend this by saying that the comparison of past history with current affairs is suitable to reflect the insights of *longue durée*. I confess that I do not see this connection and feel, again, he discussed them rather separately.

Reading these current affairs of the early 1960s thirty years later in 1995, I soon realized that Braudel's insistence is right: events are just like bubbles on a speedy river, they are fragile and without structural depth. The feeling of reading these chapters now is not much different from reading *Time* or *Newsweek* of that period. Why did this *longue durée* great historian bother with these superficial events and put them in a history of civilization book? A sympathetic explanation is that this book was part of the series *Le Monde actuel, histoire et civilisations*, so it was not totally incompatible to incorporate actualities in it. Moreover, it does no harm to let high school students read past and current things together, and that in so doing he might help them to understand the power of history better. A unsympathetic comment will say: good high school students can read this kind of information from an international perspective newspaper like *Le Monde* easily; active students can read *Le Monde diplomatique* every week, why bother to put them in the textbook? Despite these different views, we may ask: did Braudel write well about this stuff? I do not feel so, he was mostly expressing his opinions than writing insightful analysis.

The translator says in the last paragraph of his introduction: "I happened to be completing the chapter on the Soviet Union and its centrifugal tendencies just when the plot against Mikhail Gorbachev was hatching. It was as if Braudel were looking on. ... in those dangerous moments, how *la longue durée*, in the hands of a master, can help explain the most dramatic convulsions in the past, the present, and the future." Happy reader! But I do not see that he "predicted" the collapse of the socialist block in the early 1990s nor the unification of Germany. Good historians do not predict, because this is not their profession, and they are not qualified to do it because they are

not prophets, they are only historians, no matter how great they might be. There is no economist who won the Nobel prize because of his forecasting ability. A good historian needs not to be a fortune teller of our common destinies; what we expect from a good historian is that his insights may help us to understand the underlying mechanism and driving forces of the past, that we common people have not perceived or understood. This expectation is not fulfilled in this book.

4 A high school textbook?

Was this a suitable textbook for high school students in the early 1960s? Three passages from pp. 15-6 will suffice to show the difficulty: “Hence the first inevitable question: was it necessary to invent the word ‘civilization’ and encourage its academic use, if it remains merely a synonym for ‘society’? Arnold Toynbee continually used the word ‘society’ in place of ‘civilization’. And Marcel Mauss believed that ‘the idea of civilization is certainly less clear than that of society, which it presupposes’.” “Every civilization, Goldmann explains, draws its essential insights from the ‘view of the world’ it adopts. And in every case this view of world is coloured, if not determined, by social tension.” “The tragedy of their fate, their awareness of it, and their intellectual ascendancy all combined to imbue the period with their own dominant mood.” I must have a hard time to explain if I was one of the teachers. Moreover, this textbook contains 573 pages!

A textbook is better to be balanced both in materials and points of view. It would be more helpful if the writer is able to simplify some key concepts, and apply them on selected topics to show students the importance and powerfulness of concepts: an effective concept or notion allow us to understand unexpected meanings from ordinary materials. That would be an instructive way to transmit the central message, but I do not see this effect in this “textbook”. What I see is that the first three chapters are typically Braudelian style, with tremendous but somewhat scattered knowledge of each civilization in chapters 4-25; and the connection between the two parts is not evident.

Why did Braudel want to write a textbook of this kind? From his personal testimony (*Ecrits sur l'histoire II*, p. 14) we know that during 1935-7 he taught at São Paulo University (Brazil): “I was in charge of a course on the general history of civilizations, I had some charming students, some of them are argumentative, alive around me,

forced me to engage on all topics". I guess he had accumulated certain materials and outlines that permitted him to write out such a thick textbook quickly in the early 1960s when he was in full charge of administration, research, and the journal *Annales ESC*. I also guess that he wrote it quickly.

5 On Chinese civilization

Among the civilizations he discussed I know best the case of China. Reading this chapter cost me 30 disappointing minutes. I have in mind that this chapter was written for high school students, but he was just so sweeping, unsystematic and had no framework; his *longue durée* and the four social sciences applications are not seen here. This chapter is a quick summary from the works of Marcel Granet, Henri Maspéro and Demiéville, as he mentioned their names in the text (no references are listed in the original French version). I do not know what students will retain after reading this chapter, perhaps some causal facts, some funny and strange names. I do not know how the experts of Islam, India and Japan would react if they read their respective chapters (at high school level).

On the contrary, I like his "An introduction to the Far East" (chapter 10) much better, especially the first section "What geography shows" (pp. 155-64). It contains some sharp observations on such as why in Asia meat was scarce: China "a nation of too many people, forbidden to raise beef cattle – which is gross waste of calories – tries to use everything that we let slip away." (p. 158) Because "in these circumstances, to feed on meat would be a fantastic waste. The animals would have to be fed on grain, which human beings themselves prefer to eat." (p. 159) He did not elaborate further but the underlying meaning is this: when the population pressure is high, people try to produce as many calories as possible per acre of land.

An acre of land cultivating rice produces many more calories than the calories produced by an acre of land in raising hog or beef cattle. It is not that Asian people do not like to eat meat, it was because the total calories that whole population required made rice drive out meat production, given the limited cultivable land and over-population. So if "they ate snakes, frogs, rats, dogs, bats and so on" (p. 18), that is because those "meats" do not compete with rice for land to produce calories. Meat (such as beef) that compete with rice for land is neces-

sarily expensive and prohibitive. This is not a full explanation and not an appropriate place to continue on these questions, but his observations (and quotations) in this section are inspiring, a rare case for me in this book.

6 Conclusion

I certainly will vote against this book to be used as a high school history of civilizations textbook, but I will encourage university students to list this book among the readings of this subject. For professional historians and students whose major is history, I will not recommend this book as an instructive work. I do not believe there exists such a thing as grammar of civilizations, I also do not think Braudel's magic *longue durée* is a useful notion or powerful method to advance our understanding of history of civilizations (readers interested in Braudel's other views on history of civilizations are referred to the final chapter of his *On History*, University of Chicago Press, as reviewed in the next chapter).

6

On History (1969)

Fernand Braudel (1969): *Écrits sur l'histoire*, Paris: Flammarion (Champs No. 23). Translated by Sarah Matthews: *On History*, University of Chicago Press, 1980, pp. ix + 226.

1 Introduction

This book collects Braudel's non-empirical writings. As he wrote on page 133: "It is never too late to speak of important works", *On History* serves as an important reference to evaluate Braudel's methodological contributions.

A first review of this collected essays appeared in *History and Theory* (1971, vol. 10, pp. 346-55). J.H.M Salmon wrote his review soon after the publication of the French version. His method of review was to "restate the themes that recur in *Ecrits sur l'histoire* with all the objectivity at my command." (p. 354) He offered his criticisms in the last two paragraphs: "Yet I feel obliged in conclusion to remark that Braudel's hesitation about the wisdom of publishing these pieces was well founded." (p. 354)

Twenty years later, after reading the entire book with attention, I have different feelings. My strategy here is not to restate the themes with complete objectivity, but to state my observations on the structure

and arguments of each chapter. As a general rule, it is preferable for readers of a review to take into account the following differences: the generation gap, the gap of the states of art in social sciences, the perspectives of historical analysis, and the cultural differences between the author and the critic. This rule is applicable here.

This book contains 12 chapters, including an abstract from the preface of *The Mediterranean* (chapter 1), his inaugural lecture given to the Collège de France in 1950 (chapter 2), his most famous article on the *longue durée* (chapter 3), three articles on the relationship between history and other social sciences (chapters 4-6), five book reviews (chapters 7-11), and a long critical survey on the history of civilization (chapter 12); these writings were published between 1944 and 1963.

2 Comments

The short chapter 1 (two pages) is taken from the second part of the preface to his masterwork *The Mediterranean* (first edition, 1949). The points to explain are that the book contains three main parts, and more importantly, introduces his distinction of historical time of three kinds: event time (short *durée*), social time (*conjoncture*) and *geo*-time (*longue durée*). Retrospectively, these two pages already laid the corner stones of his lifelong methodology of historical analysis. The prefaces of the three consequent editions (1966, 1976, 1979) contain editorial remarks of minor analytical interest.

Chapter 2 "The Situation of History in 1950" is his declaration of dissatisfaction with the current historiography in France, especially the analytical methodology. He attacked this deficiency implicitly (he was polite and careful on this occasion) in the first two sections, as he declared: "It is precisely our task to get beyond this first stage of history... [Previous historical analysis] necessarily entails enormous errors of perspective and of reasoning" (pp. 11-2). Then in section III he began to argue why total history and *longue durée* are necessary and useful tools: "[i]n order to have a new history ...[and] to be able to answer the new questions" (pp. 12-3). The final section IV is essentially in praise of his mentor Lucien Febvre from whom Braudel had just succeeded the Chair. All in all, the contents of this chapter (especially section III) serve to clarify and to intensify the same arguments as in chapter 1. Braudel had similar methodological claims in these two chapters because they were published about the same date: 1949

and 1950.

The above concepts are fully developed in chapter 3: “History and the Social Sciences: the *longue durée*”. This article is the most original in this book and may be Braudel’s most important paper. At age 55, he finally presented a full version of the concept *longue durée* that he initially formulated in *The Mediterranean* during the 1940s. He reformulated this concept more elegantly, adding further arguments in a more philosophical style. To be received as a sophisticated historical concept in France, and to be accepted by other social sciences, it should be so expressed. Braudel finally completed this requirement in 1958, after a long process of deliberation.

He had two targets in mind, one that the prevailing analytical tools in history were obviously insufficient to interpret the rapidly changing world especially since the Second World War, and the other that history became a “debtor” of analytical concepts vis-à-vis the rapid growth of other social sciences, such as sociology, anthropology, economics. Under such a double threat, Braudel proposed that there is one aspect overlooked in all social sciences: time. Sociology lacks a dimension of social time; geography needs to explore geo-time; demography, psychology, linguistics etc. have to investigate their own “time”.

If this assumption were acceptable, he proposed that among time duration (*durée*) of various kinds the most penetrating is the *longue durée*. The event short-time is too obvious, the middle-range time (10-25 years) is not too difficult, but the long-run underlying movement (a century or longer as the unit of analysis) is an important aspect commonly neglected or underestimated; only after full analysis of this aspect can one understand the deeper structure of history.

It must be admitted that this 30-page article makes heavy reading. Braudel was a distinguished salesman, demonstrating his erudition and self-confidence, repeating similar arguments in different forms, on occasion convincing but on other occasions confusing as well. It would be of interest for somebody to undertake research to investigate the origins of this concept, to evaluate the impact of this article on historiography both at home and abroad, and to predict the probability of its survival in the *longue durée*.

In contrast, chapter 4 “Unity and Diversity in the Human Sciences” is a simplified version of the previous article. In eight pages it offers no new arguments; moreover, the style is plain. This paper was first published in the *Revue de l’enseignement supérieur* (No. 1) in 1960.

Experience indicates that papers by famous scholars appeared in the first issue of new journals generally lack originality; this is a fitting instant. He had just published in 1958 his previous serious article; how can one expect so soon to read important new things? I wonder why this article is collected in this book.

The next chapter on "History and Sociology" proposed a closer relationship between history and sociology based on their common interest: the need to explore the aspect of "time". This was written at the invitation of Georges Gurvitch (Professor of Sociology, University of Paris) for his *Traité de sociologie* (1958-60). Braudel and Gurvitch had two properties in common: they were close friends since their years as prisoners of war, and both were fascinated by the application of the analysis of "time" to their own disciplines. Gurvitch "distinguishes a whole series of time: the time of the *longue durée* and slow motion, time the deceiver and time the surprier, time with an irregular beat, cyclic time running in place, time running slow, time alternating between running slow and fast, time running fast, explosive time." (p. 79) He was a sociologist obsessed by time. This piece is "friendly" by comparison with the "fighting" ambiance sensed in chapter 2.

I have two brief comments. The arguments and main points in this chapter were essentially the same as those expressed in previous chapters. On the other hand, until the late 1980s, the main streams of history and main currents of sociology did not cross; the *Journal of Historical Sociology* started from 1988 may serve well as a bridge between the two disciplines.

"Toward a Historical Economics" in chapter 5 disappointed me most. As an economic historian I expected an instructive analysis because he had abundant experience in socio-economic history. This paper was originally published in the first issue of *Revue économique* in 1950. When I looked at this issue, I saw that Braudel was a member of the editorial committee. My previous rule (i.e. that articles by important scholars in the first issue of a new journal are in general unoriginal) applies again! For such an interesting and important topic, he used less than eight pages and two notes to complete this article having three sections. Frankly, I fail to follow his arguments, and I cannot imagine how economic historians can benefit from this paper. How could he have been so perfunctory as a professor at the Collège de France?

Chapters 7 to 11 are book reviews. I think chapter 7 "Toward a Serial History: Seville and the Atlantic, 1504-1650" is the best, in the

sense that Braudel knew the subject almost as well as the authors, his arguments were powerful, and his criticisms contained much insight. Pierre Chaunu is a prolific historian in the community of French history; his 12 volumes (with co-author Huguette Chaunu) of *Séville et l'Atlantique* (1955-60, 7,343 pages) is a notable example of long-series quantitative history (*histoire sérielle*). He reconstructed the dynamic movements of the economy and society based on series of long-term statistics. Hence Braudel praised him highly at the beginning and in section III (pp. 97-100).

In Section I “Structure and Conjuncture” Braudel made the criticism that Chaunu’s study “is an arbitrary expanse” (p. 92). I am unable to judge this criticism, nor do I know any response from Chaunu, but sections I and II (pp. 92-7) seem replete with strong arguments on this point. Braudel’s main criticism was in section IV (pp. 100-2): “The Stake: The History of Production”. He argued that Chaunu beautifully depicted the curves of various prices but neglected the movement of production; arguing that in fact production is more essential than price when one is detecting long-run economic changes.

I consider that this is an expert-to-expert review. Braudel appropriately pointed out the weakness of Chaunu’s framework, his use and abuse of historical data, the formulation of the problems, etc. In short, he demonstrated with insight some other possible dimensions of the topic. To be perfect, an expert-to-expert review should offer his counter-framework and counter-logic, but Braudel simply argued in one page that *longue durée* and global history are better tools to improve Chaunu’s works (p. 96).

Sorre’s book *Les bases biologiques de la géographie humaine*, reviewed in 1944 is collected here as chapter 8. Braudel was then in a German camp for prisoners of war. I guess that he wrote this review and mailed it to his mentor Febvre who was the editor of *Mélanges d’histoire sociale*. This surmise is confirmed by Febvre’s note 5 (page 117). This journal was *Annales* by another name during the war period.

Why did Braudel review a book about “biological bases of human geography”? I conjecture that the theme human geography attracted him first. Febvre and Braudel were geo-historians at earlier stages of their careers, this book that interprets human geography from the point of view of biology certainly caught their attention. As Braudel wrote in the first paragraph: “It is a work of cardinal importance, of commanding interest, and one which poses a good many problems, ...

It is an exploration, ... a series of trial contacts.” (p. 105)

Overall, I can feel his excitement in summarizing interesting parts of this book, side by side with his comments. He passionately introduced this “biological book” to his fellow geo-historians, hoping thereby shed new light on historiography. Braudel was however a layman in this field, the contents of his review are interesting even for current historians. But in terms of style it contrasts sharply with the previous review of Chaunu's work, in which he offered strong arguments and expert insights. Why is it collected here? Perhaps as a souvenir of his prisoner days.

Otto Brunner's *Neue Wege der Sozialgeschichte* (1956) is reviewed in chapter 9. On the first three sections in which Braudel summarized the book together with his unstructured comments, I have no comments. The title of the final section 4 is: “What is Social History?” (pp. 128-31) This is of course an attractive proposition; Braudel's answer to this self-posed question must be significant. I am disappointed to find that Braudel was, in less than two and one half pages, advertizing again the superiority of *longue durée* and total history.

Three books on historical demography are reviewed in chapter 10. It seems that Braudel was angry at Ernst Wagemann's research: “Works which are, true to tell, hasty, written narrow, unfinished, fevered, amused, amusing, if not always entirely reasonable.” (p. 134) I find my background in this field made me difficult to follow his arguments in eight and one half pages (pp. 133-41).

By contrast, I think I can follow his points in his review of Alfred Sauvy's work. As a demographer with international reputation, the logic and rationale of Sauvy (1898-1990) the economist was easier for me to understand. A main difficulty when one reads these pages is that Braudel the historian started to speak the neo-classical economics language - total, average, marginal productivities - and to use these terms to comment on Sauvy's findings. I confess that I am totally lost in this controversy (pp. 142-4), and I doubt that most historians can understand Braudel's points without the help of a conventional geometric diagram that appeared in basic economics. Did Braudel forget his *longue durée* and total history? Certainly not (see pp. 148-9). It will be interesting to see Sauvy's response; I have no hint in this regard.

The third book under review was Louis Chevalier's *Classes laborieuses et classes dangereuses à Paris dans la première moitié du XIXe siècle* (1958). Braudel confirmed that “assuredly a fine subject

and equally assuredly a fine book. I have read it and reread it.” (p. 149) I agree totally with him. “Dangerous classes” is an interesting and important topic touched upon by little serious research. Among other matters, Chevalier analyzed the problem from the points of view of suicide, infanticide, prostitution, insanity, concubinage, death among the workers and the “criminal army” (p. 157). I feel that Braudel had strong affinity with the issues treated in this work. He also had something relevant to write; in fact he also offered some delightful arguments. In terms of size and weight, I believe that this section is qualified to be an independent review. In my opinion, this is the best review second only to that of Chaunu’s work in chapter 7.

The final review was on Marvin Harris (1956): *Town and Country in Brazil*. The book “is exclusively concerned with a journey and then a stay made in a small Brazilian town.” (p. 165) The subtitle of this chapter is: “the present explains the past”, a famous “slogan” of Marc Bloch.¹ My first reaction is that this book must have been written with historical perspectives. In Braudel’s summary (the first three sections, pp. 165-71), I find the contents to be much more ethnological than historical. My second doubt is why a strong advocate of the *longue durée* and total history like Braudel was fascinated by a book “exclusively concerned with a *journey* and then a *stay* made in a *small town*”? He contributed 12 pages on this review originally published in *Annales ESC* (1959) and collected it in this book. I am perplexed.

In page 173 he told us that “in 1974, in quite another region of the vast country of Brazil, I made a less poetic trip than Marvin Harris’s, but one that was in its own way no less revelatory.” In this entire page I read his Brazilian recollections rather than historical analysis, if any. From the point of view of “Brazilian revelation”, Claude Lévi-Strauss’s *Tristes tropiques* (1955) was much more abundant in many respects. Then, why was the book of Marvin Harris significant? Did this book recall to Braudel his Brazilian days (1935-7, 1947)? Moreover, is this book a good example of “the present explains the past”? I doubt it.

The first half of the final chapter 12 is basically a critical survey of the historical analysis of civilization(s), its meanings, definitions, and interpretations by major scholars. The second half contains Braudel’s opinions on how to achieve a better understanding of this subject, in which he did not neglect to remind us of the necessity of dialogue

¹ See his *The Historian’s Craft*, chapter 1, sections 6 & 7. It is rumored that this is Lucien Febvre’s formulation, not Bloch’s.

between history and the social sciences, and of course, "that civilizations are realities of the extreme *longue durée*." (p. 209) The subtitle of this chapter is "the past explains the present", appropriate for this topic. His erudition in this subject was impressive in the long first section (pp. 179-200). His comments on Spengler (pp. 186-9) and on Toynbee (pp. 189-97) were remarkable. This is the major part of this chapter. Although sections 2 and 3 contain 19 pages (pp. 200-18) this part is, I feel, much more opinion than instructive argument.

3 Evaluation

I list the topic of each chapter in Table 2, and assign them different asterisks (*). More asterisks reveal my stronger preference, as a summary of the above comments, but I intend not to convince anybody in this regard.

As quantified in the last column of Table 2, I think that three chapters (3, 7, 12) can survive in the *longue durée*. Three are so perfunctory (4, 6, 11) that they cannot survive even in the short *durée*. The other six chapters are indifferent. Is this a "normal distribution": three good, three bad, six between? Unquestionably, this symmetry is *ex post*, not planned *ex ante*.

Braudel generally judged the work of other scholars from his *longue durée* standard, and criticized their erroneous analysis of events and in the short *durée* context. Among the five book review chapters, I think that, except for chapter 7 on Chaunu's Atlantic, the other four reviews were easy for him because he was stating that this part and that part were not good enough, and what should be added and deleted. A better way to convince authors and readers is to demonstrate that, when this concept and those materials are added, there will result some predictable significant changes in the whole work. We expect this from a great historian. He failed to offer much instructions of this kind.

The present review enters no technical argument, i.e. I have offered no counter-arguments to Braudel's concept nor judged any controversial issue. Rather, I have emphasized the aspects of structure and framework of each chapter. The disadvantage of this strategy is that, even if I point out some weakness, I do not convince readers with my own arguments. I have chosen this method because I am not equipped with comparable knowledge to quarrel with Braudel; moreover, if I treated any technical problem, then this review would have been too long.

Table 2 Evaluation of each chapter

Chapter & pages	Themes	Evaluation
1 (3-5)	Abstract from the Preface of his <i>The Mediterranean</i> (1949), on the contents and methodology of this masterwork.	**
2 (6-22)	Inaugural lecture given to the Collège de France, on "The Situation of History in 1950".	***
3 (25-54)	His most important essay "The <i>longue durée</i> " (1958).	*****
4 (55-63)	"Unity and Diversity in the Human Science" (1960), repeating similar points of chapter 3 in different forms.	*
5 (64-82)	"History and Sociology" (1958). Proposing more dialogue between the two disciplines.	***
6 (83-90)	"Toward a Historical Economics" (1950).	*
7 (91-104)	Review of Chaunu's <i>Seville and the Atlantic, 1504-1650</i> (1963).	*****
8 (105-119)	Review of Sorre's "biological geography" (1944).	**
9 (120-131)	"On a Concept of Social History", book review (1959).	**
10 (132-161)	Review of three historical demography books (1960).	***
11 (165-176)	Review of Marvin Harris's travelling record of a small Brazilian town (1959).	*
12 (177-218)	A survey of the studies of civilization(s), plus his opinions on this topic (1959).	*****

Taken as a whole, the papers collected in this book revealed Braudel's methodology of historical analysis between 1944 and 1963. As we have seen repeatedly, his three magic weapons are: the *longue durée*, total history (*histoire totale* or *globale*) and dialogue with other social sciences. The *longue durée* was his favorite tool that cast its shadow everywhere except in chapters 8 and 11. He already had all these three tools in the late 1940s, and he used them repeatedly in *Civilization* (1979) and in *France* (1986). For such creative scholar as Braudel, why did he wear the same clothes always and everywhere?

Écrits sur l'histoire II (1990)

Fernand Braudel (1990): *Écrits sur l'histoire II*, Paris: Flammarion (Champs No. 304), 314 pages.

1 Contents

Braudel's *Écrits I* was published in 1969, appeared in English by University of Chicago Press (*On History*, 1980) and received wide attention; several reviews were available in professional journals. This *Écrits II* was first published in 1990 by Editions Arthaud after Braudel's death in 1985. In 1994 it was reprinted as a pocket book with some adjustments in contents and a new one-page preface by Madame Braudel, upon which the present review is based.

It contains five texts, three of them were previously published in English and two in Italian, so for most Braudel readers this book is not really new. The first paper was appeared in *Journal of Modern History* in 1972, volume 44(4):448-67 as "Personal Testimony". The second paper was printed in *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, volume 4, pp. 374-86 in 1967; the title in English was "Prices in Europe from 1450 to 1750", co-authored with Franck Spooner (who worked out the calculations and Jacques Bertin did the 35 impressive figures; Braudel was responsible for the text). It was abridged by the editor because the original text was too long: the full French text here contains

135 pages. The next are two biographies on Spanish kings Charles V and Philippe II, which appeared in Italian in 1966 and 1969 respectively. The French text on Philippe II was lost and it was Madame Braudel who translated it back from Italian. The final text is a preface that Braudel wrote in 1978 for the reissue of Alexis de Tocqueville's *Souvenires* in Gallimard's pocket book collection *Folio*, the English version of *Souvenirs* including Braudel's Preface was published by Transactions Publisher (New Jersey) in 1987 for the first and in 1990 for the second edition.

As Madame Braudel informs us, this 1994 edition deleted "a series of short notes that Fernand Braudel wrote for *Corriere della sera* for pleasure in 1983, but they are dated now"; the preface to *Souvenirs* is added instead. She also told us that the French text of an English paper "European Expansion and Capitalism, 1450-1650", which appeared in a collective volume *Chapters in Western Civilization* by Columbia University Press (1961) is also lost, the style of this English translation was quite different from the French one and it is hard to translate it back, hence not included. In terms of novelty, this book is nothing new, simply a publishing of the original French texts; it is not expected to create significant echoes from professional historians, but it offers an opportunity to evaluate another part of Braudel's historiography.

2 Historical apprenticeship and personal testimony

This is a well-known paper to Braudel readers and historians in general, in which Braudel told us about his family background, his school education; how he entered Sorbonne to study history, his ten years of teaching traditional history in Constantine (Algeria); how he conceived his thesis project and collected archive documents with a pre-modern micro-film technique; how and why he shifted the focus of his thesis from Philippe II to the Mediterranean; how he taught at São Paulo University in Brazil for three years, and met Lucien Febvre (his mentor) on the way back to France; how Febvre encouraged him to work on Mediterranean, and how he did that thesis in the war prisoner camp in Lübeck (Germany); and most importantly, how he perceived his famous concept of three kinds of historical time. I read the English version some ten years ago but still feel refreshed in re-reading this most interesting Section 1 in French, and I enjoyed Braudel's vivid writing style.

But this biographical section was too self-controlled. At age 70, he only told us what happened before 1950 (his "formative" stage),

usually with less than three sentences for each point. Interesting indeed, but he told us nothing about his golden age (after the publication of *The Mediterranean* in 1949, his professorship at Collège de France, his other historical writings, his interactions with the French history profession, and the important journal *Annales ESC*, etc.), that is a major aspect of postwar French historiography in which he was a major player. We do need further details on these aspects. Madame Braudel wrote an interesting paper on how *The Mediterranean* was prepared (see *Annales ESC* 1992, pp. 237-44 “Les origines intellectuelles de Fernand Braudel: un témoignage”), but this satisfied us in only a small part of the Braudel legend.

As Braudel stated in the beginning of this paper that it was the editor of *Journal of Modern History* who “forced” him to write this personal testimony, but he was reluctant to do it. Why was he so cautious about his personal history? Perhaps because he was too much involved in the history profession, in academic administration, in disputes with other persons and groups which alerted him to avoid unnecessary complications after he retired in 1968. As he quoted Alexis de Tocqueville’s words in the final page of this book: “It is difficult to talk about oneself well”, and “one is too close to see himself well.” (p. 270) This reveals that he was conscious about his role in postwar French historiography.

The next two sections of this 1972 paper are his personal testimony on the fountain sources of the *Annales* school: the influence of Henri Berr on Febvre and Bloch; on how Febvre was separated from the Berr group in person and in research agenda; how the *Annales* encountered hostilities when it was appeared in 1929, etc. But all these are already available from other historians’ memoirs or studies, except for perhaps some personal information such as that the heir of Berr destroyed all the letters from Febvre such that we are deprived from studying Febvre’s vision of history in his young days. In the concluding page wrote he was sorry that he did “evidently did not tell all, did not explain all about the persons and works that create the *Annales* and make it alive.” We are even much more sorry that such an important figure was so self-controlled.

3 Price history in Europe, 1450-1750

This nearly a small monograph long article describes and analyzes three centuries’ price history before the industrial revolution, including fluctuations in the value of major currencies (in silver gram), price

trends of wheat, textile, wine, meat and the trend of wages, rents, industrial production index etc. in Europe in general and in some countries/cities in particular. The most impressive part for me is the 35 figures grouped together at the end of the long explanatory text, they are striking because the authors of these figures did fascinating data mining work and elegant figure presentations before computer technique was available to cartographers.

This study fits Braudel's taste of history very well: three centuries of observation, a remarkable case for his *longue durée* preference. It also not limited to certain commodities or certain countries, but Europe as a whole with all kinds of price statistics available. Such a grand scale *longue durée* study of European price history is not an easy task because secondary studies are largely insufficient, there are too many lacuna in this field, and the reliability of statistics is also doubtful, hence the room for interpretation must be large. It is necessarily a controversial subject. Braudel was very conscious about all these barriers, as he admitted in the concluding remarks (p. 131) that there are many problems remain unresolved, but excused himself that "history never only writes once for all." He was proud of giving a general picture about this important topic and set out the orientations for future studies. Yes, this is an ambitious project and Braudel counted it seriously among his writings.

If someone offers me these 35 fascinating figures and invites me to write an interpretive text, I will of course be attracted but will decline this opportunity because I simply do not know how to design a well-structured framework to grasp these statistics together to offer a meaningful story. For economists, these figures suggest something like an N-country by M-commodity vector, which is too big to be analyzed with current economic knowledge. Braudel was not unconscious about this difficulty, but he put major emphasis on the trends of price. Economic historians are certainly interested in the trends and changes, but they are even more interested in the underlying causality, the mechanism that may explain these changes. Trends are only superficial "stylized facts", no deep knowledge will be generated if one remains at that level. His analyses in the first two sections are mainly explaining the historical background and describing individual figures, without offering a historical or economic mechanism that economic historians do not yet understand.

In the third section of this long article he tried to identify if these trends are Kondratieff type (about a 50 years cycle), or Juglar type (10-year cycle), or other types of cycles. In other words, he was doing

a work of classification: types of price movement cycle. This is not a difficult job: observing the changes of wheat, salary, meat price, and classify them into different patterns of cycle. The question is simple: what was he wanted to prove? I confess that I do not see his answer to this point. What we want to see, again, are the underlying forces or mechanism or historical events, or climate changes that made prices fluctuate, and explain why in some regions or for some commodities prices fluctuated stronger than others.

4 Two biographies

Braudel was famous for using *longue durée* as unit of historical analysis, and was strongly against the studies of events and political, military, diplomatic histories. He nevertheless published two biographies on two Spanish kings [one on Charles V (1500-58), the other on his son Philippe II (1527-98)] in 1966 and 1969. They are standard biographies: from their family backgrounds to the political situations of their times, their education, their difficulties, careers, their later years and end in their deaths. In short, they are a kind of conventional emperor biography that the Annalists rejected since Febvre and Bloch. He was aware that if both biographies were published in France it might cause him a lot of explanations. But why did he do it?

From his “personal testimony” (p. 13) we know that the first thesis project he conceived was “Philippe II, Spain and the Mediterranean” in about 1926, and Sorbonne accepted his proposal. It was in 1927 when Febvre suggested to him that instead of Philippe II, it would be more passionate to understand the Mediterranean. The influence of Henri Pirenne in 1931 made him decide to adjust the focus of the project. But before that time he had already accumulated considerable documents, I conjecture, including a lot of material on the two kings. As he also told us that during his ten years teaching in Algeria, “I was a historian of event, of politics, of illustrative biographies.” (p. 11) His Sorbonne education plus ten years of teaching in this line must have equipped him with a solid foundation in traditional history, which the Annalists and he himself later denied. His talent and learning in this aspect was unfortunately “wasted”.

Did he write well? No doubt, of first quality in that line: full of exact dates, names, events, inter-connections, well described, detailed and telling; with his vivid command of the French language he made both texts highly readable. Perhaps he already wrote them in drafts long before but was embarrassed to publish when he was still

“on duty” as a leader of the *Annales*. In short, he was well qualified to reject the traditional history: he could do even better at it than conventional historians!

5 Preface to de Tocqueville's *Souvenirs*

Madame Braudel told us in the last paragraph of her preface that Braudel was a grand admirer of *Souvenirs*, and wrote this Preface “with a very particular pleasure”. In reading this preface, I had no particular feeling of being instructed. Braudel explained his admiration at the outset, then laiquoted some passages from here and there, adding his comments and told us how Tocqueville's observations are full of insights and still fit well to most situations in France in 1978 when he wrote this preface. For readers who are not familiar with French political and social history, this preface is not inspiring, but why did Braudel write it with a particular pleasure?

I think the pleasure came from the fact that Tocqueville spoke out about many things that Braudel always wanted to say about politics and politicians in France but had no occasion to express. A typical comment is like this: “Rereading these lines: did France really change?” (p. 259) Braudel wrote nothing about politics in his professional works, but during his career he was deeply involved in academic administration, in the reformation of historical teaching, in establishing the famous *Ecoles des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales*, *Maison des Sciences de l'Homme*, etc.; he certainly had sharp observations about French politics and politicians, but was unable to put them into words. Tocqueville's *Souvenirs*, in a sense, released his long-time oppressed sentiments, it gave him a lot of pleasure to write that preface.

6 Conclusion

This second volume of his collected papers is less stimulating than the first one, in which his major papers on the *longue durée*, his *Collège de France* inaugural lecture and his main historical concepts are included. This second volume does not advance our understanding of his historiography, although it does supply some supplementary materials to see Braudel's other facets.

Appendix 1

The Italian Model (1974)

Fernand Braudel (1991): *Out of Italy*, Paris: Flammarion, 236 pages.

This book was first published in Italian translation by Einaudi in 1974 as the conclusion to the second volume of the *Storia d'Italia*; then as a separate volume in 1986, under the title *Il secondo Rinascimento. Due secoli e tre Italie*. The original French version first appeared in 1989 (after Braudel's death in 1985) as *Le Modèle italien* (Paris: Arthaud), then collected in pocket series, Champs No. 612 (1994), 220 pages. The English version is translated from the 1989 French version by translator of Braudel's other books, Siân Reynolds.

If you wish to buy a handsome history book with colorful illustrations as a Christmas present for someone interested in European history (Italian history in particular), then I will recommend this English version positively for the following reasons. (1) It is elegantly produced, half the pages are carefully selected art works and photos by the editors to strengthen the visual effect of the text. For instance, *The Trial of Galileo*, by a 17th century anonymous Italian artist, presented on pp. 186-7, vividly shows the tension between new scientific concept and conservative religious power. If one reads the text only French version, the degree of tension would be largely weakened. Appropriate pictures are essential to historical works, and this book fully

develops this point. (2) Beautiful picture books are often shallow in contents but this is not the case here. The numerous pictures in this volume comfort readers significantly when reading Braudel's serious sentences, and the readers relax when absorbing Braudel's sometimes heavy messages. (3) The two centuries covered in this book (1450-1650) are a sparkling époque in Italian history: the splendid Renaissance era and the age of glorious capitalistic activities. Braudel covered not only politics, economy, society, but also opera, ballet, poetry, science and technology, among other topics. In other words, one reads in a few pages a brief history of an interesting topic, with Braudel's explanations, judgments and insights. In short, it will make a beneficiary reading in Christmas/New Year Holidays.

Was Braudel a writer for Christmas present picture books? Yes, after his retirement in early 1970s, he produced some audio-visual works: *La Méditerranée*, in 12 television films (1977), then transformed into two picture books with texts from six other authors; *L'Europe*, 1982 (transformed from eight television films); *Venise*, with photographs of Folco Quilici, 1984; *Le monde de Jacques Cartier* (a history on the French navigator Cartier, 1491-1557), 1984. I am inclined to put *Out of Italy* in this category because it was initially written for general readers. He did not plan to publish it in a separate volume, and would be surprised to see it being transformed into the current picture book form.

Another point is that *Out of Italy* largely overlaps with his *The Mediterranean* (1966) and *Capitalism* (1979). Pages covering literature, arts, architecture, opera, Baroque etc. astound Braudel readers, and I am impressed by his tremendous knowledge in these fields. But pages covering politics, economy and society can also find their twin-sisters in *The Mediterranean*. This is understandable because Braudel revised this *Lebenswerk* in 1966 in which Italy dominated the scene. In preparing this *Italy* in early 1970s for general readers, he borrowed from *The Mediterranean* freely. He was aware of this, and was therefore reluctant to publish it in a separate volume during his lifetime. Similarly, the important economic role played by Venice, Genoa and Florence in both *The Mediterranean* and *Italy* are further developed systematically later in *Capitalism*. A Braudel reader who is familiar with *The Mediterranean* and *Capitalism* will find this 1991 *Italy* strange: given that the central messages had been well conveyed in other works, why bother to print this 1974 text in a volume? I can defend this for Braudel: he might not allow this re-publication if were he

alive, but transforming it into attractive picture book to create another reader group is a smart strategy of the publisher.

In addition to introduction (pp. 9-18), the book contains three chapters. (1) "A series of overall perspective" (pp. 19-192), which contain two sections "What the world looked like to an Italian in 1450" (pp. 20-51) and "1450-1650: two centuries, three Italies" (pp. 52-192). (2) "Looking back from 1633 or 1650" (pp. 193-212), and (3) "Is Italian decadence a discernible process?" (pp. 213-26)

Braudel broadly explains in the introduction why the two centuries covered in this book is a sparkling but also an unstable period, the inner difficulties that Italy envisaged and the hidden factors that made her decadence after 1650. He made himself clear. The long first chapter (174 pages) covers so divergent topics that I think his desire for "histoire totale" must have been satisfied. Personally I am insufficiently educated in European performing art history, his explanation about the usage and functions of masks in *Commedi dell'arte* in pp. 136-49 impressed me. Although he was knowledgeable, I think the experts in each specialized topic may have critical comments to make on his explanations.

Chapters two and three are his evaluations of these two centuries, and this should be a major part of the book; but we find that only 34 pages are allocated to them, a strange proportion in design. Chapter 2 contains two main themes, one is to explain the rise of the Northern countries (pp. 194-202): I dare say that he did not explain well here, but fortunately we can find elegant and powerful arguments for this issue in *Capitalism* (volume II, pp. 566-70, which I consider as one of Braudel's most brilliant passages). Another theme is on the decadence of Italy after mid-17th century, here Braudel repeated his commentary in the second part of *The Mediterranean*, hence is uninteresting.

Chapter 3 is most disappointing. I raised my eyebrow when Braudel announced in the first sentence that "The section that follows is probably the most contentious in the book. It seeks to propose a framework for tackling the major questions already considered in such a way as to integrate them into a valid model of Italian grandeur and decadence between the fifteenth and the seventeenth centuries." (p. 213) I expected to read some controversial propositions, hypotheses and arguments, but was discouraged after reading his descriptions of the historical backgrounds of Italy's rise and fall, the struggles for sea power in the Mediterranean and Atlantic by Spain, England, United Provinces etc.; then on "Capitalism and sectors of the economy", on

“Greatness and culture”. Almost all these messages have been appeared in the introduction and chapter 1, his style is so descriptive that it can hardly evoke debates, and it certainly did not “integrate them into a valid model of Italian grandeur and decadence.”

Although the contents are disappointing, the title of chapter 3 suggests an interesting issue: Is the decadence of a (great) nation discernible? Braudel seems affirmative about this point in chapter 3, but one derives a very different message in chapter 1 (p. 181): “Just as surprised as I would have been in 1935, when I was teaching at the University of São Paulo, alongside my colleagues ..., and the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss: if someone had asked us a question about the decline of Europe or of France, we should no doubt have smiled disbelievingly.” He was too close to see things clearly.

Out of Italy is certainly not an original deep investigation, Braudel proposed no new concept, new notion or new hypothesis, nor did he dig out new evidence from archives (among 196 notes he mentioned nine archival sources, but I have reasons to suspect that they were already used in *The Mediterranean*). Braudel showed his great talent of synthesis from his old notes and from other scholars' publications, he is knowledgeable, elegant, reader-friendly and an excellent story teller. But when we think one step deeper about Braudel's contribution to the whole issue, we are surprised to find that he is quite conscious of this question: “The outcome of this decline and fall has often been studied. We could do with more detail, but the result is already apparent.” (p. 223) I fancy that to experts in Italian history the central message of this volume did not create a striking effect.

Appendix 2

Memories of The Mediterranean (1996, 1998)

Fernand Braudel: *Les écrits de Fernand Braudel*. Volume I *Autour de la Méditerranée* (1996), volume II *Les ambitions de l'histoire* (1997), volume III *L'histoire au quotidien* (2001), Paris: Édition de Fallois.

Fernand Braudel: *Les mémoires de la Méditerranée: préhistoire et antiquité* (1998), Paris: Editions de Fallois (English translation by S. Reynolds: *Memory and the Mediterranean*, New York: Knopf, 2001).

Braudel's miscellaneous writings were published by Éditions de Fallois in four volumes between 1996 and 2001. The first three volumes have their respective subtitles under a common title *Les écrits de Fernand Braudel*, the fourth volume is an independent monograph on the ancient history of the Mediterranean (1998). Volumes II and III of *Les écrits* contain Braudel's various essays that are, in my opinion, of secondary importance, on which I have no particular points to offer. On the other hand, there is a common subject between the first and the fourth volume that may be of interest to Braudel readers and scholars of the Mediterranean studies.

Braudel's *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* (first edition 1949) is a masterpiece that is still in print. There is another less well-known book on the Mediterranean that he edited *La Méditerranée, l'espace et l'histoire* (volume 1); *La Méditerranée, les hommes et l'héritage* (volume 2), Paris: Arts et Métiers Graphiques (1977); reprinted by the Édition Flammarion, 1985-6 in the Collection Champs Nos. 156, 167. There are 12 articles in this handsomely illustrated two-volume set (often used as Christmas gift), in which Braudel contributed five: "La terre", "La mer", "L'aube", "L'histoire" and "Venise".

Yet, Braudel had some other writings (about 850 pages) on the Mediterranean, a major part of which is unfamiliar to many specialists of the Mediterranean studies and unknown to most Braudel readers. They were published more than ten years after his death in December 1985. We shall begin with *Autour de la Méditerranée* of 1996.

Autour was edited by Roselyne Ayala and Madame Braudel, with a Preface by Maurice Aymard, and a detailed index (pp. 511-32). This volume collected writings of Braudel on the Mediterranean, including his early project proposal, unpublished manuscripts, published texts and many reviews. It contains three parts: North Africa (4 chapters), the Spanish Empire (4 chapters), Italy and the Mediterranean (6 chapters).

Among the abundant text, "Charles Quint" (pp. 171-212), that had already appeared in his *Écrits sur l'histoire II* (1990), should not be reprinted here. Another article, "Philippe II" (pp. 213-57), also appeared in *Écrits II*, but it was retranslated from the Italian version, the original French text is included here for the first time. For Braudel readers, neither of these add any new information, except for being the "original version".

The first two chapters of this volume attract me particularly. The very first one entitled "The early researches" (pp. 15-28) has an old story. In 1927, Braudel (aged 25) proposed a subject of doctoral dissertation to the Sorbonne, entitled *Philippe II, Spain and the Mediterranean*. At the same time he used this proposal to apply for a research scholarship from the Bourse Jules Ferry, which he obtained in 1928. On March 29, 1929, he reported to the Bourse explaining his work in progress and what he was going to do that summer. This report could be found in the Archives municipales de Saint-Dié and had never been published before. It reveals significant information about the young Braudel: his eagerness, his ambitions, his methodology, his

initial ideas about the Mediterranean, and we can see how the initial project was so diverged from the finished book that was published in 1949.

A few things stand out. There is no room for diplomatic history, showing that Braudel was already taking a different path. Surprisingly, he was very interested in the religious life in Spain (p. 16). The great varieties of documentation that he consulted also manifest his unique ways of selecting information from the sea of archives in various Spanish cities (as listed on p. 16). He complained about the chaotic arrangement of files in the archives, he would have been greatly relieved had there been a photocopier, but he was wise enough to use a movie camera to film the files and project them on the wall to retrieve the information he needed. The zeal for the project that Braudel showed in this report is evident, for instance, from the Naples papers alone, he took 800 pages of notes. In the concluding paragraph, Braudel stated that in early 1928 he had explained to his thesis supervisor Prof. Pagès about the progress of his project, some of his preliminary findings, and the questions to be studied; he would be glad to mail the same document to the Bourse. If I were to review the project, I would have endorsed it enthusiastically.

The second essay entitled “The Spanish and the North Africa, 1492-1577”, was published in the *Revue africaine* in 1928 (Nos. 2-3, pp. 184-233 and 351-428). Henri Hauser (then professor of economic history at the Sorbonne) wrote a comment on this long essay in *Revue historique* (1930): “for the historians of the sixteenth century, this excellent study, with solid documentation, has a rare value of critique and is remarkably suggestive.” This long essay served as the “secondary thesis” (a kind of supplementary work to show that the doctorate candidate’s view is not too narrow) when Braudel presented his thesis in 1947. To his honor, it was Maurice Bataillon, then professeur au Collège de France who examined this secondary thesis (see editor’s note on p. 31).

What strikes me in this 1928 essay (Braudel was aged 26) is that, although the topic is quite general in nature and very broad in scope, it is easy to see that Braudel was quite mature in writing this kind of traditional history. He was able to present an overall structure of the topic and showed the masteries of the rich documents that he consulted. What is even more attractive is his talent to depict the historical scene with big and powerful brushes, the key issues were organized systematically and the overall flow of the essay was conquering. In

short, in this essay Braudel clearly manifested a kind of sophistication in the writing of traditional history, he would have been bored had he remained any longer in this old camp. It is therefore unsurprising that he soon switched to the new history camp, known as the *Annales* school, advocated by Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch in the early 1930s.

These two 1928 writings are particularly interesting because they allow us to see how the young Braudel was shining. But they also serve as bad mirrors reflecting that, except for the ingenious *The Mediterranean* (1949), Braudel's work on the Mediterranean in his more mature stage was not any more brilliant than those written when he was a high school teacher in Algeria before 1932.

* * *

Les mémoires de la Méditerranée: préhistoire et antiquité (1998) was edited by Roselyne Ayala and Madame Braudel, with a Preface by Jean Guilaine (a professeur au Collège de France) and Pierre Rouillard (a directeur de recherche au CNRS). The book contains eight chapters, divided into two parts, with 42 color plates and 15 maps (pp. 352-70); the index of names and places is well prepared (pp. 371-93). As the book is printed directly from Braudel's manuscripts, the editors should be acknowledged for the many editorial footnotes which provide updated information and corrections on Braudel's inexact knowledge of archeological matters.

Why did Braudel write this volume and why was it published posthumously? The publisher's Foreword tells us that in early 1968 the famous publisher Albert Skira in Geneva planned a series of illustrated books on the Mediterranean, from its antiquity to the seventeenth century. Skira asked Braudel to do the first volume for the series, Braudel complied and wrote it with great pleasure. He soon completed the task (no more than 18 months), as we can see from his Acknowledgements (in four brief paragraphs) dated July 28, 1969. But Skira's health was declining in 1970 and he passed away three years later. Some hesitations arose about the whole project when considering the high printing costs, the publisher finally aborted the plan. Braudel was then quite involved in the writing of the second volume of *Capitalism*, it would have cost him a lot of energy to do supplementary work in preparing maps and illustrative materials on that Mediterranean book. He put the typescript aside and forgot all about it.

But Madame Braudel and some other people did remember this almost completed book. It would have been difficult to publish the manuscript as such because many archeological discoveries and new techniques had rewritten the prehistory of the sea since the 1970s. The solution is simple but arduous: publish the manuscript as such, but seek clarification from specialists for ambiguities, update the related literature, and offering supplementary evidence in the form of footnotes. Readers are therefore reading Braudel's original writings along with new evidence provided by modern specialists.

How could Braudel complete 350 pages of writing so quickly? As we do not see a long list of archives or references that he consulted, one wonders if this is an original profound research or if this is a work of synthesis based on unidentified secondary literature. In his Acknowledgments, Braudel stated that "my own real researches covered only the 1450-1650 period. . . . The present volume, designated for the general public, allows me to undertake a fantastic voyage to travel into the very *longue durée*. I seized the occasion."

So, should we read it as a masterpiece or as a synthesis of the state-of-the-field (1960s) by a great Mediterranean historian named Braudel? One realizes that what is interesting in this volume would be Braudel's views of the topic, his ways of selecting the materials, but not his opinions as an expert so far as the archeological aspect is concerned. His ambition was to describe a pre-fifteenth century history of the Mediterranean such that it can be connected to his already famous book covering the 1450-1650 period.

The table of contents reveals another message. In the eight chapters that were divided into two parts we see again Braudel's famous tripartition of historical time (the *longue durée*, *conjoncture* and event). One may think that in this book that covers so many centuries, perhaps only the *longue durée* is the appropriate notion. This is the case for the first five chapters (Part I), in which the sea, the island, the catastrophes, in short the geography has the central role. Most Braudel readers are familiar with this in all his books, so we shall not be surprised to see that the second notion "*conjoncture*" plays a central role in Part II. For instance, the section in entitled "Face aux *conjonctures*" (pp. 223-5) begins with the statement: "Living in the Mediterranean, the Carthaginians were necessarily sensible to the overall movement of the sea, to its *conjoncture*. History of the city follows step by step the rhythms of the Mediterranean life." By "*conjoncture*", Braudel meant the political, religious and economic crises of the era.

Is there room for the history of events, Braudel's third notion of historical time? Yes, Section II of Chapter 7 entitled "Error of Alexander the Great" (pp. 277-83) is an example. But Braudel was alert enough not to have a Part III for the history of events alone, he combined the history of conjuncture and events in Part II. How about Braudel's another important notion, the "economic-world (*économie-monde*)"? He had not forgotten it, as can be seen from Map 15 "L'Empire Romain sous Septime Sévère (193-211)" and the related pages (mainly in Chapter 8). If I am shown this table of contents without knowing who is the author, I would guess that it is by Braudel or by his imitators. The same framework of *The Mediterranean* (1949) was simply applied to an earlier period.

As a general reader, I find the book intriguing, the scale and scope are broad, and the story is attractively told; it expands my knowledge about the Mediterranean. Although I have, as most general readers, no sufficient background knowledge to judge the contents, I do have some feelings about the book. The writing style is basically synthetic, there is no central argument to be defended and no new concept is offered. Under the same Braudelian brushes, I find the ancient history of the Mediterranean much less interesting than that of the Philippe II period.

Experts may have other complaints: the nature of the topic is not Braudel's specialty, little archeological insight is added, and no new historical proposition is offered. Perhaps it is in this sense that Braudel was not totally wrong to abandon the typescript. For him and the general readers, this is merely a "popular" book, it should not be a representative volume among his lifework; for specialists, it was wise for Braudel not to publish what he did not really know about the pre-fifteenth century Mediterranean.

Appendix 3

Two Biographies (1995)

Giuliana Gemelli (1995): *Fernand Braudel*, Paris: Odile Jacob, 376 pages.
Pierre Daix (1995): *Braudel*, Paris: Flammarion, 565 pages.

The central axis and the most valuable part of this biography is that Gemelli uses two sets of archives to portray Braudel's legendary life (1902-85). The first source is the Archives Fernand Braudel, still unopened to the public. It contains Braudel's correspondence, his unpublished manuscripts and notes that he took when he was in the war prisoner camp in Lübeck in the early 1940s. Gemelli has the privilege to use it, with permission from Braudel himself, since the mid-1970s and the people around Braudel were helpful in providing printed material or oral information to support her project.

She was fortunate because in early 1970s Braudel retired as the chair of Collège de France and was discharged from the duty as editor of the journal *Annales ESC*, that he assumed some 20 years before, and he was kind enough to answer Gemelli's questions frequently which led to Gemelli's dissertation on Braudel. A revised form of that work appeared in Italian as *Fernand Braudel e l'Europa univérale* in 1990, the present French version is further developed from the 1990 Italian version, translated by Gérard Jorland.

Using Braudel's archives Gemelli derived two main conclusions. One, through Braudel's correspondence, she reconstructed his relationships with other scholars at home and abroad; through his administrative documents she is able to explain his administrative career and the heated debates between Braudel and his rivals. It is the second result that I consider most significant: with the help of Braudel's notes taken in Lübeck Gemelli successfully tells us how *The Mediterranean* was made, and explains how Braudel conceived and adjusted his framework. The most surprising thing is that Braudel's key concepts, the tripartite of *longue durée*, *conjoncture* and *événement*, were inspired from German *Raum* (milieu, environment), *Wirtschaft* (economy) and *Gesellschaft* (society). His *économie-monde* which influenced Wallerstein's World-System also has a German source (*Weltwirtschaft*, pp. 92-5).

In retrospect, the intellectual heritage of Braudel was due much more to German geography masters than to French geographers like Vidal de la Blache or Albert Demangeon. On the other hand, his major concepts were only slightly influenced by his mentor Lucien Febvre or Marc Bloch, another founder of the *Annales* school. This important message is not in apparent from Braudel's published works, I am grateful to Gemelli to reveal this point from Braudel's unpublished notes.

Madame Braudel (1992:237-44) told us about the life and research of Braudel before 1945, i.e. a period of "Braudel before Braudel". Readers are grateful to this telling witness, which is much richer than Braudel's "Personal Testimony" published in the *Journal of Modern History*, 1972, 44(4):448-67, where Braudel has talked about himself but in a very guarded manner. Readers are not told by Madame Braudel's story about how *The Mediterranean* was really written in the camp. Gemelli did not cite this article in her book, but in the first two chapters she was able to trace Braudel's genealogy, his activities in primary school, lycée, the Sorbonne, Algeria, Brazil, and most importantly, to tell us Braudel's research and academic activities in the camp, how his notes differed from the published 1949 version, how he conceptualized the framework, and how his mentor Febvre encouraged him unflinchingly. The first two chapters alone make this biography valuable.

The second set of archives Gemelli used are from Rockefeller and Ford Foundations. She visited the United States to find how both Foundations were (among their many projects on European reconstruction

after W.W.II) trying to help France develop social science studies, especially economics. Braudel was then (in the early 1950s) professor at Collège de France and president of the VI section of EPHE (Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes). He planned to establish a new Faculty of social sciences for inter-disciplinary research, but his “imperialism” was boycotted by his rivals, mainly from the Sorbonne. The American foundations, especially the Rockefeller, were hesitant under this conflicting situation. In the third part of this biography Gemelli devotes three chapters on this slow and painful battle. In about 120 pages she tells us how Braudel disagreed with others, how he negotiated with people from various disciplines, and how he visited America to explain the feasibility of his project, among other interesting episodes.

Most Braudel readers are impressed by his research productivity; the three chapters of Part III remind us that if Braudel was not involved in this long and bitter battle, he certainly would have had much more intellectual products to offer. On October 20, 1955 Raymond Aron was interviewed by the vice-president of Rockefeller Foundation K.W. Thompson, in which Aron expressed his admiration of Braudel’s *The Mediterranean*, but blamed him for remaining idle after that book, and was doubtful of Braudel’s “imperialist” tendency (p. 306 note 1). Readers interested in the history of postwar French social sciences will find Part III useful, but I should point out that there are many pages are not directly related to Braudel; especially the first chapter which is on the background relationship between American foundations and French social sciences, can be omitted safely.

The second part of this biography also contains three chapters: (1) on the history and the functioning of the journal *Annales ESC*; (2) on the receptions of *The Mediterranean* in Europe (mainly focused on Italy and three pages [pp. 175-7] on Poland; nothing is said about Germany); and (3) on Braudel’s academic relationship with American scholars and universities. Gemelli’s method of analysis runs like this: she extracted elements from published materials (journals, books, conference proceedings etc.), organized them into topics, then added her explanations and opinions. Taken together, without the support of “secret documents” from archives, these three chapters are much less attractive, mainly because Braudel readers already known many things she is saying, and easily fall into disagreement with her opinions. Again, the first chapter of this Part II is on the history of the *Annales* school, dating from 1929 to early 1970s, but the passages directly related to Braudel cover less than three pages.

A serious structural problem of this biography is that the link between Part II and Part III is missing. This biography describes Braudel life in a satisfactory manner, but for Braudel's intellectual products, only *The Mediterranean* is analyzed, and in great detail: on the history of its making, its revisions and its receptions. Gemelli touched upon Braudel's *Capitalism* only in a few passages (e.g., p. 121), and totally neglected *France*, let alone his two collected papers *Écrits sur l'histoire I & II*, and his other minor writings (such as *Out of Italy*). I am sure that this important aspect deserves three chapters. In other words, this biography stops at mid-1970s, Braudel's activities and writings thereafter are absent; this is a strange lacunae.

Basically this biography is written by an defensive admirer. The author uses most testimony from pro-Braudel's people, and only some selected information from his rivals (from archive documents rather than from personal testimony). This is hardly a balanced way to present a highly controversial figure like Braudel. The good point is Gemelli provides a lot of useful information from various archives, helps us to understand Braudel much better. I think an efficient writer would be able to present the same quantity and quality of information within 200 pages. When Gemelli explains how Braudel tried to borrow concepts from economics (mainly from François Perroux), economists will find some of her understandings discussible, but this should be forgiven for a philosophy-trained author. Her one folly is inexcusable: she uses *longue durée* several times (e.g. p. 137), which is a Braudelian notion to indicate structurally immobile history during centuries. How could this term be used in a biography, especially in a historian's biography who considers kings, wars, revolutions etc. as mere bubbles in history?

* * *

Pierre Daix is a prolific writer (in novels and essays) and a historian of modern art, familiar with Braudel's work since his student days, and kept in good terms with Braudel since decades, followed his activities closely until Braudel's death in November 1985. Madame Braudel actively supported Daix's project, provided private files, family history and photos to make this biography seem "authorized". Daix invested tremendous energy to interview Braudel's family members and colleagues, collected published information from newspapers and public magazines, spent two full years (July 1993 to June 1995) to work out this book.

Daix's book is a reader-friendly conventional biography, even for college students the contents are easy to follow; for professional historians, the rich information and some telling anecdotes the author provided help understand better Braudel's intellectual activities, and the driving motives that are not easy to detect in Braudel's published writings. It is conventional because the materials are organized in chronicle manner: from Braudel's ancestors down to his death. An overall impression is that Daix provided very detailed evidence on Braudel's life and administrative activities, his strong, uncompromising and sometimes "unreasonable" character.

This aspect of life is very successful; the weaker side is on Braudel's thoughts and historiography. Unlike Gemelli, Daix devotes chapters or sections to discuss Braudel's work, but in a quite uniform manner: he exposed Braudel's motives, angles of analysis, then selected some passages that Daix finds interesting, ends with his comments (almost complimentary). This fixed style and summaries may be regarded a comfortable service to some readers unfamiliar with Braudel's work, but readers familiar with Braudel's writings may feel uneasy with such superficial exposure: they expect deeper counter-arguments and insights. I feel Daix does not change or increase my understanding of Braudel's historiography.

This is a copious biography, I think some chapter sections can be omitted safely. For instance, chapter 6.3 on "Febvre's attitude under Occupation and the continuity of the *Annales*" is not directly related to Braudel (he was then in the war prisoner camp); chapter 7.1 on "Liberation and the return to Paris" is a relevant topic, but the contents are not closely related to Braudel; chapter 8.3 on Braudel's "Inaugural lesson at Collège de France" is rather pale. There are some others (such as chapter 10.1), I think all these can be deleted or merged into other chapters without hurting the essential message.

Both life biographies are highly successful and complement to each other. To this remarkable historian, thanks to Gemelli and Daix, we know enough about Braudel's life; what we now need is his intellectual biography.

Further Readings

The *Historical Abstracts* CD-ROM and some other databases contain updated publications on Braudel in various languages. Some websites are also useful (for example: *alapage.com* or *chapitre.com* or *amazon.com*) to find other French/English works by/on Braudel.

Conferences on Braudel. He actively attended the first two (1979 and 1985, see 1 and 2 below) and provided debating comments; conferences held after his death are named as “Journée Braudeliennes” (see 3 and 4 below).

1. On May 13-15, 1977, the Fernand Braudel Center for the Study of Economies, Historical Systems, and Civilizations (Binghamton University, SUNY) held its Inaugural Conference on the theme “The Impact of the Annales School on the Social Sciences”. The proceedings were published in the 1978 Winter/Spring issue of *Review* (a publication of the Fernand Braudel Center) as volume 1 Number 3/4. Braudel’s concluding comments “En guise de conclusion” (pp. 243-53) is highly readable.
2. *Une leçon d’histoire de Fernand Braudel* (Châteauvallon, Journée Fernand Braudel, 18-20 octobre 1985), Paris: Arthaud-Flammarion, 1986. Proceedings of a conference devoted to Braudel’s three main areas of study: The Mediterranean, Capitalism, and History of France. Braudel actively debated with the participants, he died one month after that conference.
3. The first “Journée Braudeliennes” was published as *Primera jornadas braudelianas*, Paris: Maison des sciences de l’homme, 1995.

4. The fifth “Journée Braudeliennes” was hold in Binghamton University (SUNY, October 1-2, 1999), on the theme “Braudel and the U.S.: Interlocuteurs valables?” Ten papers from this conference were appeared in *Review* (2001, volume 24, number 1).

Several publications listed below deserve attention.

1. Eight papers on Braudel’s works, *Lire Braudel*, ouvrage collectif, Paris: La Découverte, 1988.
2. Another collected papers on Braudel: *Fernand Braudel et l’histoire*, Paris: Hachette, 1999 (Collection: Pluriel, présenté par Jacques Revel). It contains 12 papers, grouped into five sections, all previously published. Several texts from English were translated into French. Most texts are in abridged form.
3. “Braudel dans tous états”, *EspacesTemps*, Nos. 34-35, Winter 1986. It contains about 100 pages, collects some 20 short pieces on Braudel’s works and some recollections on the man; they are grouped into three sections: événement, conjoncture, structure.
4. Two biographies on Braudel are very informative about Braudel’s life and activities, Giuliana Gemelli (1995): *Fernand Braudel*, Paris: Editions Odile Jacob; and Pierre Daix (1995): *Braudel*, Paris: Falmmarion. See my review in Appendix 3.
5. In addition to the works commented in this volume, Braudel’s other writings (selected papers and earlier articles) are collected in *Les écrits de Fernand Braudel*, Paris: Editions de Fallois (1996-2001), 3 volumes (see my review in Appendix 2). Braudel’s complete bibliography (1922-2001) can be found in Volume 3 (pp. 555-82).
6. A 4-volume set of critical assessments on *The Annales School*, edited with an introduction by Stuart Clark (London: Routledge, 1999), is a good source for an overview of this important milieu in which Braudel was one of the central figures.

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