



# Braudel's Concepts and Methodology Reconsidered

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## INTRODUCTION

This study 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 and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, 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 fig. 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



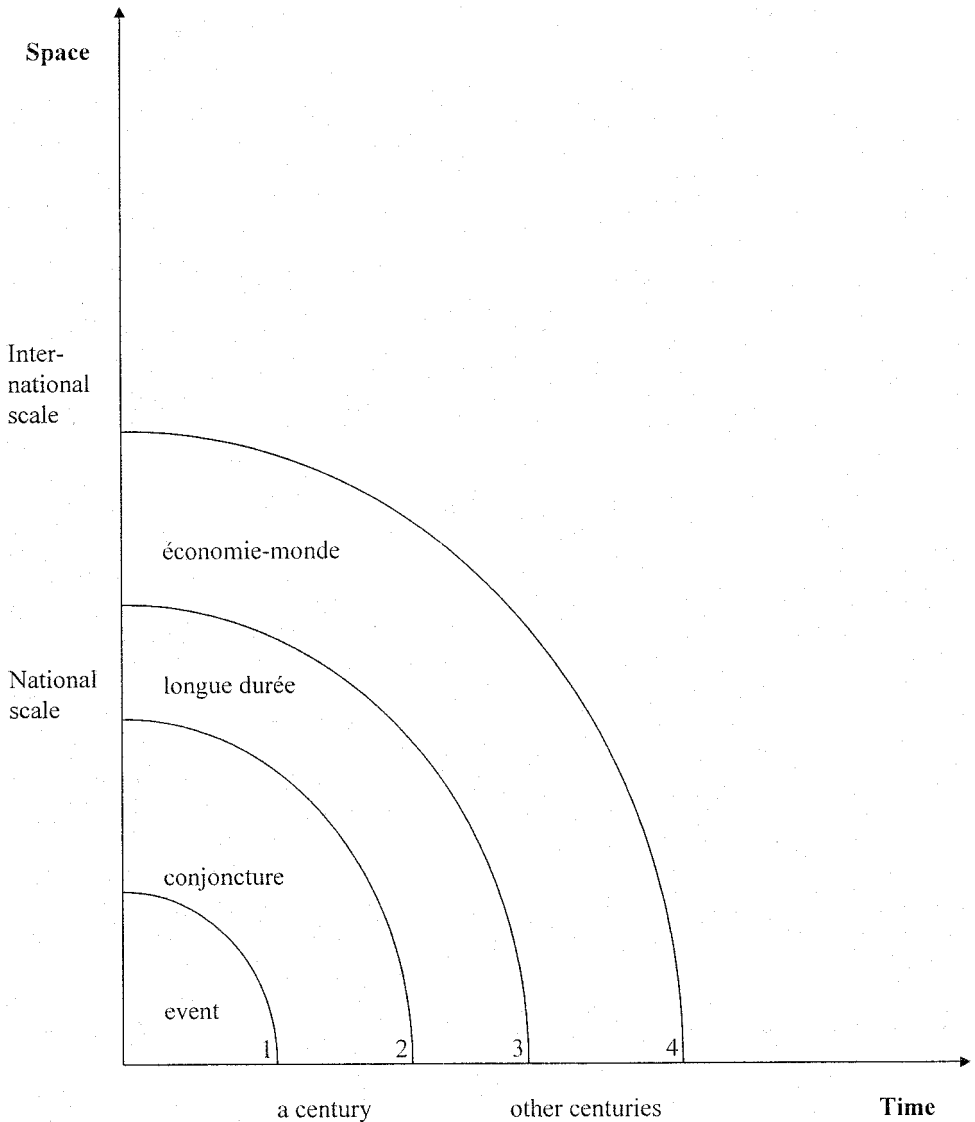


Fig. 1. Braudel's notion of total history. Total history is a fifth notion that Braudel designed to grasp and to explain in a holistic manner the above four kinds of historic "units": event, conjoncture, longue durée and économie-monde.

(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 fig. 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 the section "Total History" may clarify this concept. Finally, the "distance" between each curve on fig. 1 is only schematic.

The most well-known Braudellian concept is his three types of historical 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*, 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.

The section "Longue Durée, Conjoncture, Event-History" reviews Braudel's concept of historical time; "Économie-Monde (Economic-World)" examines his concept of historical space (économie-monde); "Total History" discusses his concept of total history; "Methodology" his method of historical writings; some evaluations of Braudel's concepts and methodology are made in the concluding "Evaluation." 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.

### 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. (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; *conjoncture* 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.

## LONGUE DURÉE

On 20 February 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 n. 1, 94). This indicates that *longue durée* had been conceived around 1940–44 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 (1940–45). 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 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*, 272–5) Braudel stressed the importance of climatic changes, stating that from the end of the sixteenth 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 in III, 620–3 “Capitalism and the Long-Term” (*La longue durée*). But ever since the sixteenth 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 1972–74 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.

#### 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* may be 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 the “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; 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*, 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 it 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, 27, see 29 for a similar statement)

Among Braudel's writings, Part II of *The Mediterranean* uses conjuncture most frequently: on economies (chaps. 6–8), on empires (chap. 9), on societies (chap. 10), on civilizations (chap. 11), on the forms of war (chap. 12) and the concluding chapter (chap. 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 fifteenth to seventeenth 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*, 893)

Although one understands that these dates “are only very approximate,” 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 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 1972–74 [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 (1981a, 676 n. 11, b, 92–4) and Hexter (1972, 498–504).

#### 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 1936–37. 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*, 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 1981b, 94–8), as can be seen in his restatement of this position on the final two pages of *The Mediterranean* (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 Philip 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 *Écrits 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).

### 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 pages 387 and 418–19 (see below for detail). Most readers did not even notice its existence and moreover, the term is not even listed in the index.

#### 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 n. 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 pages 418–19; (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 1970's).

#### 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*, 418–19)

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, 418–61), the longest chapter-section in this book. The section contains seventeen 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 (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 the 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 tendancielle*s) 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, 38–9). 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.

#### 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 n. 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 *économies-mondes* and you have finally convinced me. Today, I accept the existence, before the 16th century, of these *économies-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*, 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 *économies-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.

#### 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 economic-worlds.
- (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*, 131–2). To this, one may add an amendment: for the *économie-monde* before the fifteenth century, the change was slow from a geographical point of view; but the change speeded up from the sixteenth century onwards, as one can see from figs. 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.

## 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.

## 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.

## 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" (Stoianovitch 1978, 20). Although Stoianovitch (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 intend to describe everything, every aspect of the subject; rather, it is intended to “make it appear an organized structure rather than a ‘mere heap’.”

#### 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 fifty 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 this 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 fig. 1 are fully illustrated in *The Mediterranean*. It is from this sparkling work that Braudel sees 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*, *conjoncture*, 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 fig. 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 “Basic Features of *Économie-Monde*.” 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 fig. 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*.

## METHODOLOGY

### PERSPECTIVE

During his undergraduate education at the 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 1996–2000).

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, *Écrits 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 his *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 two to three 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 pages 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, 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.

#### 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 conjuncture 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 "conjuncture" 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 Paule 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, had Braudel used the archives or had 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*, 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.

## EVALUATION

### 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* no. 3/4, 1978. 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" (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 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.

## 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 essay 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.

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