The Global Transformation of Time: 1870–1950. Vanessa Ogle. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015. ISBN: 0674286146

In her book about the creation of universal twenty-four hour time zones, Vanessa Ogle examines a larger issue of how people understood and debated globalization during the late 19th century into the early 20th. She contends that the abolishment of local times based on the sun and agricultural rhythms to a standardized, global time involved a larger debate about what it meant to be modern as well as the extent of national authority and its intrusion into local lives. While there are some intriguing examples to distill from this work for teaching purposes (such as the origins of daylight savings time or the debate involving Easter and a uniform calendar), the book is not designed for an undergraduate setting. However, for the practitioner of world history, including graduate students, this book is a valuable addition to the historiography, and underscores how globalization was a nuanced, and uneven, historical process.

Ogle begins her book by examining the reasons for a transition to global time. Until the 19th century, time was solar, local, and approximate. But with the rise of new technologies, particularly railways but also telegraphs and steamships, the need to standardized time became linked to the economy. Political leaders in the Western world understood time as a national issue, and many believed an international time would facilitate the spread of peoples and goods in an era of global migration and manufacturing.

The change to a national time created a debate about social time. In her second chapter, Ogle examines how people began to worry about the division of work, leisure, and recreation, and in particular the rise of those who were concerned about the wasted time as people slept while the day had begun. The irregularities that eliminating local solar time created led to debates about the establishment of daylight savings time. Proponents of daylights savings time argued that it would allow people to have time for leisure and recreation after work during the summer months, allowing them to stay healthy. Attempts to implement it into law, however, were controversial, and it was not until the First World War that Germany, Great Britain, and France introduced daylight savings time under the rationale that it would save the nation-state money and resources because there would be less need for artificial lighting. In her account of the fierce controversy surrounding a universal time, Ogle directly counters E.P. Thompson's argument that the increase in factory work led people to abandon "task orientation time." Instead of time becoming monetized and a key facet of daily life early in the 19th century, Ogle argues that the debates over daylight savings time, and the move away from solar time, reveals that the transition to a new daily life based on the clock was more nuanced and took longer than Thompson's thesis. Indeed, Ogle emphasizes how people continued to resist a standardization in time well into the 20th century.

After examining time reform in Western states, Ogle turns her attention to the imperial world in chapters three and four, revealing that the adoption of universal time was delayed, and even more significantly was an uneven, haphazard, process. Crucially, time reform was not imposed by the metropole. Although some argued against it on

anticolonial grounds, time reform was a regional effort pushed by local leaders as well as scientific societies. Here, Ogle is a bit more scattered, providing some examples from South America and Africa, but focusing primarily on the British Empire in India. For example, in Madras, resistance to time change went on for decades, and led to confusion as the city maintained a local time while many businesses and railways had switched to follow the lead of Bombay and the adoption of Indian Standard Time. It was not until 1950 that India adopted a universal time, yet because of the earlier debates, even today Indian Standard Time is staggered by thirty rather than sixty minutes. Ultimately, Ogle argues that the need for clarity and to be connected to the global economy necessitated the transition to universal time.

In chapters six and seven, Ogle turns to what she labels the Islamic world, but which focuses primarily on a few parts of the Eastern Mediterranean, and debates over time and the calendar. Ogle examines Ottoman Beirut, which she defines as a global port city, and examines how it was embroiled in the global debates surrounding time reform, yet how this connected to the Ottoman state is left underdeveloped. More significantly for the Islamic world, debates about calendar reform focused on the holy month of Ramadan, the concept of universal time for all Muslims, and the role of technology. For instance, could a telegraph be used to announce the sighting of the first new moon to end Ramadan, or must it been seen locally by a human's eye? At the crux of the issue was if the technology of the telegraph could be trusted. This chapter brings into light the sharp and divided debate about the rapidly expanding use of technology and science in society, how lives should adapt to it, and what should remain constant.

In a fascinating last chapter, Ogle looks at Western calendar reform, which was debated extensively alongside time reform. The movement to create a more uniform and standardized calendar focused on eliminating the irregularity to the amount of days in a month and stabilizing the date of Easter. The reform began with attempts to push Orthodox societies to adopt the Gregorian calendar and evolved into discussions to create a 13 month calendar that even involved the League of Nations. Ogle argues that although it may have generated more debate and had more supporters than time reform, calendar reform ultimately failed because religious objections shaped public opinion against it and led national governments to drop the issue.

Ogle's book about time reveals a rapidly globalizing world. People began to imagine global communities, and thought about the world as such. She concludes that North Americans and Europeans saw the world as far smaller and interconnected by the mid 20th century. Other peoples of the world, however, saw a shrinking world that was being snatched up by imperial powers. In the end, Ogle's work is about how people wrestled with the idea of being contemporary, which in part meant being global, during their age. In turn, it also reveals how nationalism offered a way to balance the uneasiness of the reforms and changes of globalization. As such, it makes an important contribution to world history.

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