

Guide on Self-Education in World History and Culture

Author: Kamil Rafikov

Email: mailbox@kamil-rafik.com

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Introduction

My education and self-education in humanities obtained in childhood and youth has been significantly distorted towards ex-USSR and Western countries due to obvious reasons. That's why at some point in life I came to strong necessity to fill these gaps quickly with the purpose to adapt myself better to the new globalized reality. In the process of reading random materials available online and corresponding them to my previous knowledge, I came to the idea that the best approach to self-education in the world history and culture should be based neither on scientific historiographic and culturological concepts, not on some chronology, but on the concept of so-called *entry points* explained further. Upon coming to this idea I have decided to share this approach for public use. English language as a medium of communication has been chosen because almost all readers interested in the topic have at least conversational knowledge of this language, as I suppose.

Definitions

The term *entry point* used in this article represents some aspect of social life that may be used as a basis for deeper immersion into understanding of global interaction of societies, cultures, economics etc. The main idea of entry points consists in formulating them in such way that upon reviewing topics highlighted in every entry point within reasonable amount of time (from several days up to several weeks) the self-learner would be able to understand core facts, concepts, theories, and reach other entry

points with building in the mind some “network/map” covering the whole development of humanity. Obviously, choice of such entry points may be very biased. Also, sometimes it may be more reasonable (and/or easier) to explore the topic from starting moment, sometimes from the results achieved by society, sometimes from side phenomena/regions where reviewed aspects of social life reach their maximum possible extent, and sometimes from the texts/images that are just most interesting for the reader. That’s why you should not consider the provided list of entry points as final one or the most correct one; you may construct your own with use of the same approach.

Entry points, general and for particular regions

I do not pretend that list of **390** entry points provided further is either exhaustive or objective. Partially, it is based on well-known and commonly agreed approach to learning history and cultures, and partially it is based on my previous knowledge of the topic and general life interests. I minimized number of entry points with 10-40 per region and chose those that highlight maximally the unique particularities of each region in comparison with others and in comparison with the general line of global development of humanity.

Summary by tags

Many items listed further may be classified from several points of view. That’s why to highlight general trends of structuring historical material in this guide I decided to use tags instead of groups, and then to calculate summary of used tags with grouping tags by semantics and frequency of use. Here are the very approximate results. You should understand that all these tags and groups of tags represent just my style of thinking based on previously reviewed historiographic materials, formal education, and global travels. And as you can see, I follow multidisciplinary historiographic approach primarily. You may tag all by yourself and your results may differ from mine significantly.

Group #1

economics (165)

Group #2

state building (100)

Group #3

wars (83)

Group #4

biogeography (71)

colonialism (65)

Group #5

regional particularities (59)

anthropology (58)

Group #6

religions and philosophies (53)

technologies (48)

Group #7

general social phenomena (36)

urbanization (31)

Group #8

agriculture (29)

arts (28)

healthcare (25)

sailing (22)

Group #9

crimes (22)

genocides (21)

Group #10

ethnocultural groups (18)

family (14)

linguistic aspects (13)

migration (12)

personalities (10)

sexology (10)

sports (7)

transport (7)

revolutions (6)

volcanism (6)

slavery in post-medieval world (4)

Table with entry points

Sorting of items is made with placing biogeographic items first, then listing others in chronological order, and finalizing with common regional cultural traits. But this approach is not followed strictly. Also, chronological ranges of many items intersect. Sorting of regions was made in alphabetic order initially, but then some regions have been renamed for clarity and the order was slightly broken.

Sonorous titles of some items are taken from articles in Wikipedia, but links to Wikipedia cannot be given due to legal/political reasons. Some of these titles represent widespread naming of different historical events/periods in academic literature, but even in these cases they may be misleading sometimes. And generally, if you have decided to use Wikipedia as the primary source of historical information, you should rely on it for no more than 50-90% in different complex cases, as I suppose.

I think it may be helpful to highlight role of chance and role of stable biogeographic factors in history. Color coding has been used for this purpose. Items that are tightly connected to actions of particular personalities, general human factor, and/or accidental biogeographic conditions are marked with red circles ●. Items that are tightly connected to mainly stable biogeographic conditions are marked with blue circles ●. Other items may be considered as inevitable sequential development of civilization into different directions not depending on personalities, matter of chance, or a play of nature. Also, globally unique items require special attention, they have been marked by green circles ●. (Note: I could make large mistakes in color coding because my knowledge of history is incomplete.)

If you see that I have listed some items one after another it does *not* mean that listed items have cause and effect relationship.

PRE-HISTORIC EPOCHS	
Homo sapiens	Last glacial period ●
Homo neanderthalensis	Last glacial maximum ●
Denisovans	First agricultural revolution ●
Homo floresiensis ●	Extended family
Aquatic ape hypothesis	Kinship
Hunting hypothesis	Quaternary extinction event ●
Eruption of the Toba supervolcano ●	Neolithic subpluvial ●
Alloparenting and grandparenting	Neolithic Y-chromosome bottleneck ●
GENERAL	
Birth of civilization	Colonialism
Sapir-Whorf hypothesis	Non-colonized buffer states (e.g., Afghanistan) ●
Tribal confederation	States constructed for a purpose (e.g., Panama)
Proto-city	Remainings of colonialism (e.g., French Guiana) ●
Proto-writing	Customary law vs state law
Copper Age	Nationalism in early cinematography
Bronze Age	Neocolonialism
Iron Age	Oceanology
Money	Whaling ●

Tributary vs territorial empires
World traditional music
Ancient and medieval world literature

Winds

Monsoons •
Trade winds •

Agriculture

Loess •
Hydraulic management
Seasonal transhumance
Alcohol
Rice vs wheat •
Latin American agricultural plants •
Tobacco
Guano •
Third agricultural revolution
Monoculture
Strategic grain reserves

Technology

Chariot
Firearm
Printing press
Steam engine
Oil, coal, and natural gas •
Electricity
Plastics
Submarine
Aircraft carrier
Nuclear weapon
DNA
Microelectronics
Mass media
Rare earths •
Military drone
Starlink •

Healthcare

Vaccinations
Iodized salt
Antibiotics
X-rays
Microscope
Anesthesia
Thalidomide
Sewerage

Jacques-Yves Cousteau
Commercial fishing •

Transport

Horse and camel •
Trains
Motorized transport
Container ships
Aviation

Economics

Guild
Port city •
Pilgrimage economics
Monastic economics
Pre-banking credit systems
Merchant diasporas
Silver vs gold
Bank
Insurance
Transnational/multinational corporation
Derivative
Shadow economics
Migrational remittances
Boomerang development
Private military companies
Post-disaster city development
Cryptocurrency

World organizations

United Nations
World Health Organization
Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement
Médecins Sans Frontières
International Organization for Migration
Amnesty International
Interpol
World Wildlife Fund
FIFA
NATO
World Trade Organization
World Economic Forum
International Monetary Fund
G7
BRICS
Bilderberg Meeting

General social phenomena Corporal punishment Death penalty Compulsory sterilization Female infanticide ● Sacred prostitution Harem Witchcraft Education Mountaineering tourism Demographic curves Same-sex relationship COVID-19 pandemic Smart city Olympic Games Small quiet states without “victorious history”	Biogeography Milankovitch cycles Global warming Anthropocene extinction
CHINA, JAPAN, KOREAS	EUROPE
Huang He and Yangtze ● Confucianism ● Dynasties of China Sinosphere Tibetan Empire ● Heian period Zen Mongol invasions of Japan ● Sakoku ● ● Industrious revolution in pre-colonial period Zheng He ● Opium wars Zaibatsu ● Japanese war crimes Atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki ● ● Cultural revolution in China ● 1980's in Japan ● Four Asian Tigers Urbanization of China ● Xinjiang (part of China) North Korea ● Sino-African relations WeChat	Gulf Stream ● Euskara language c. 1000 BC Hekla 3 eruption ● Ancient and Hellenistic Greek Philosophy ● Pax Romana Viking expansion ● Christianity Castle-based urban planning Magna Carta Black Death ● ● Hanseatic league Renaissance ● Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth Little Ice Age ● European theatre of 16-18 th centuries ● Peace of Westphalia Age of sail Pandemic of syphilis ● Aestheticization of sexual violence ● Classical music ● 1783-1784 Laki eruption ● Napoleonic wars Industrial revolution European literature of 19 th and 20 th centuries ● Ashkenazi Jews ● Eurocentrism, imperialism, nationalism, fascism, and nazism World War II

	Sexual revolution Revolutions of 1989 European Union Yugoslavia Nuclear family
LATIN AMERICA	MIDDLE EAST AND SURROUNDINGS
Pre-Columbian transoceanic contact theories ● Maya civilization ● Aztec Empire ● Inca Empire ● Yanomami Mapuche Spanish colonization Portuguese colonization 1600 Huaynaputina eruption ● Jesuits ● Golden age of piracy Artistic works of Jean-Baptiste Debret Latin American wars of independence Haiti ● ● Monroe Doctrine Economic/cultural core-periphery interactions Amazon rubber boom ● Illegal drug trade in Latin America Fascism in Latin America Favela Crime in Brazil Cuba ● Gender rights in Brazil Taxation laws in Brazil Plurinational state Venezuela ●	Ancient Egypt ● Luxor ● Mesopotamia ● Phoenicians ● Assyria Achaemenid Empire Alexander the Great ● ● Carthaginian Empire Zoroastrianism ● Sasanian Empire Byzantine Empire Quran and hadiths ● Sufism Islamic Golden Age Al-Andalus Madhhab Timurid Renaissance Islamic gunpowder empires ● Legal pluralism in Islamic empires Silk Road Maritime Silk Road Arabic language Pan-Turkism Armenian genocide Mustafa Kemal Ataturk ● Kibbutzim 1973 Oil crisis 1979 Iranian revolution Gulf war Arab Spring Taliban Arab-Israeli conflicts Yemen civil wars Morocco ● ● Dubai ● Consanguineous marriages in Islamic countries Sex reassignment surgery in Iran Female sex tourism to Turkey and North Africa ● Desertification

	Arab League
USA, CANADA, GREENLAND	PACIFIC REGION
Potlatch Mississippian culture ● Dutch colonization French colonization ● Protestant work ethic ● American revolutionary war American frontier wars ● Gold fevers ● American literature of 19 th and 20 th centuries Great Depression Normandy landings End of gold standard in the US Racial segregation in the US Immigration to the US and Canada ● Mormons Bible Belt Hollywood ● Folk music Law of the US Healthcare in the US Car-based urban planning Fertility control program in Greenland (part of Denmark) NBA NHL American football Baseball National debt of the US ● Ideas and movements of partitioning of the US	El Niño ● ● Temperate and boreal rainforests ● ● Languages of Papua New Guinea ● ● Songlines Polynesian migration ● Cannibalism ● Easter Island (part of Chile) ● New Zealand wars Hawaiian Islands (part of the US) Genocide of Indigenous Australians Immigration to Australia and New Zealand ● Nauru ● Bougainville Island (part of PNG) ●
RUSSIA AND SURROUNDINGS	SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA
Eurasian steppe ● ● Altai (part of Russia) ● Ukraine Route from Varangians to the Greeks ● Volga Bulgaria ● Eastern Orthodox Church Pax Mongolica Ivan the Terrible ● Chukotka (part of Russia) ● Kamchatka (part of Russia) ● Cossacks Peter the Great ●	Great Lakes region ● Khoisans African rainforest hunter-gatherers ● Bantu expansion ● Madagascar ● ● Islam in Africa Ge'ez script Precolonial kingdoms and empires in Africa Swahili language Atlantic slave trade Scramble for Africa Boer kommandos

Germanization of the ruling class Crimean peninsula (part of Russia, disputed by some countries) Critical change in Napoleonic wars ● Russian literature of 19 th and 20 th centuries Chechnya (part of Russia) Great Game October Revolution ● Joseph Stalin ● Critical change in World War II ● Cold War Soviet urban planning Deficit Chernobyl disaster ● Boris Yeltsin Kyrgyzstan, since 1990's till present	Ukubuthwa Apartheid DRC Rwandan genocide Amhara self-identity African Union Christianity in Africa Wildlife tourism Neglected tropical diseases ● Sahel ●
SOUTH ASIA	SOUTH EAST ASIA
Indo-Gangetic plain ● Bhagavad Gita ● Jainism ● Yoga ● Kama Sutra Indian cultural sphere Ashoka Gupta Empire Chola Empire ● Rajput ● Sati Vijayanagara Empire ● Bhakti movement Sikhism ● Mughal miniature Aurangzeb ● Bengal region (part of India and Bangladesh) ● India's textile industry British East India Company rule British Raj South Asian urban planning Kerala (part of India) ● Bollywood ● Call centers and software outsourcing Religious violence in India Concept of guru in Indian culture ● Scheduled castes ● Nuclear weapon tests of India and Pakistan	Strait of Malacca ● Austronesian maritime trade network ● Srivijaya Empire ● Buddhism Khmer Empire ● First Toungoo Empire Languages of Philippines ● European colonization of the region 1815 eruption of Mount Tambora ● ● 1883 eruption of Krakatoa ● Seven Sisters States of India (partially disputed by China) ● Vietnam War Conflicts in Myanmar Economics of Singapore ● Islam in Malaysia and Sumatra (part of Indonesia) ● Pancasila Male sex tourism to Thailand and Philippines ● ASEAN

Comments on implementation

1. As you can see, rather clear “portrait” is given to every listed region. It is difficult for me to understand how objective or stereotypical such “portraits” are, you should recheck it in academic literature by yourself. Further I just give you short descriptions of these “portraits” for a case if your education in history is close to zero and you do not understand meaning of listed entry points completely.
 - a) China, Japan, Koreas: accent is made on change of periods in social development, economical development, and conflicts with external societies.
 - b) Europe: accent is made on climatic fragility, expansion, pandemics, artistic development, and unification.
 - c) Latin America: accent is made on diverse development as global civilization center until 19th century, and then on deterioration under influence of the US and due to local issues.
 - d) Middle East and surroundings: accent is made on raising as the center of global civilization, and then on gradual deterioration due to many factors.
 - e) USA, Canada, Greenland: accent is made on raising as the center of global civilization, relations between immigrants and indigineous populations, complexity of modern society, and possible risks of deterioration.
 - f) Pacific region: accent is made on relations between immigrants and indigineous populations, and on influence of local climatic phenomena on neighbor regions.
 - g) Russia and surroundings: accent is made on critical instability in the ruling class and on expansion of territory.
 - h) Sub-Saharan Africa: accent is made on problems, diversity, and uniting aspects of the region.
 - i) South Asia: accent is made on development of Dharmic religions, changes in ruling class of the subcontinent, regional aspects, and interreligious clashes.
 - j) South East Asia: accent is made on diversity of the region and influence of regional volcanism on global social development.
2. Frequency of used tags is almost equal in groups from #4 to #9 which may push you to different conclusions about some relation between listed aspects of social life. But as I wrote above, it is just particularity of my style of thinking and your conclusions may be incorrect. You may freely extend your self-education into any direction.

3. Soviet historiography (which may be still taught in schools of some Post-Soviet countries due to social inertia) gives much attention to the topic of revolutions. But from my personal point of view revolutions are just symptoms of issues, so if we concentrate at global history they should be reviewed in rare cases only. That's why I do not write much about revolutions in this guide.
4. Attention to linguistic aspects is given only in cases where language is more than language, for example it is sacred or represents single uniting factor for large territories.

Notes on possible enhancements

1. Themes highlighted in groups of tags from #5 to #10 may need more attention for about 15%-30% even within the used historiographic approach. Moreover, you may shift the focus of the article to these themes completely, and try the opposite historiographic approach in comparison with one chosen by me.
2. Topic of "Dynasties of China" may need more attention and may be restructured into about 5 separate entry points. Also, about 5 additions on modern Chinese internal political system may be made. Regional ethnocultural particularities of South of China may be covered in about 5 additions too.
3. Regional particularities (like minor ethnocultural groups, socio-economic activities of some castes, minor branches and practices of religions) may be especially important in case of South Asia, and up to 10 more items may be added.
4. You may dive much deeper into the topics of Sub-Saharan Africa from anthropological point of view (with up to 10 additions).
5. The same anthropological immersion (with up to 10 additions) may be made for Papua New Guinea and neighbor islands.
6. It may be reasonable to highlight historical prerequisites (with 2-5 additions, as I suppose) that may be crucial for independent development of Latin America in case of dissolution of the US.
7. Economical aspects in spite of being used extensively are not deep enough and may be extended for 5-10 items more, but it requires qualification on professional economist level.
8. More artists working in socio-ethnographic style (similar to Jean-Baptiste Debret, not just sketches of daily life which are very common) could be found (5-10, I guess).
9. More attention may be given to sciences where discoveries are not applied to regular life immediately and directly, like quantum physics, for example (5-10 entry points, probably).
10. And finally, completely different approach may be used by choosing the most important factors for every 10-50 years of the world history. It probably will be more systematic than all I did, but may have too many unnecessary details.

I cannot implement all these enhancements because of lack of time necessary to read 10-30 heavy books on all aforementioned topics. You are free to do it by yourself.

Upon completion of the enhancements the total number of entry points will be close to **500** which is completely enough for 5000+ years of the world civilization history (that starts from unification of Egypt around 3150 BC).

Summary of the most persistent trends

What can we do with this list of entry points in addition to deeper immersion into the history of the world? I think, we can speculate a little and try to find general trends in development of humanity that would be present in any case not depending on particular regions, cultural traits, and personalities. Here is the short summary constructed by me (probably, incomplete as all listed above).

- Regular periods of extensive glaciation and cooling caused by volcanism and oscillation of Earth's axis.
- Regular shifts in precipitation caused by previous trends and changes of oceanic currents.
- Gradual discovery of all technologies and agricultural techniques.
- Migrations along coastal/steppe/river corridors and winds/currents patterns.
- Development of agricultural civilizations in subtropical and tropical areas of the planet.
- Urbanization.
- Pandemics caused by previous trends.
- Multiple wars and Y-chromosome bottlenecks.
- Demographic explosions caused by introducing Latin American agricultural plants to other parts of the world and by discoveries in medicine.
- Regional authoritarianism and genocides.
- Regional egalitarian, liberal, plurinational societies.
- Stratification of society.
- Balancing on the edge of total devastation after construction of nuclear weapon.
- Artistic, philosophic, and religious development covering all aspects of social life and human mind.
- Anthropocene extinction.

Summary of the most peculiar alternative paths of history

For writing this section I have consulted with one AI system and requested step by step 70+ scenarios for multiple cases and combinations of cases. I will not copy-paste all the responses because a) they are too large, b) you can ask AI by yourself, c) some of these responses may be socially non-acceptable in different countries. I will give you here just the scenarios with the most peculiar consequences.

Scenario	Consequences
No Toba supervolcano eruption.	No genetic bottlenecks, co-existence of multiple human species, multiple civilizations starting several tens thousand years earlier, biologically stratified society, much more regular and more severe pandemics due to higher diversity of humans.

No Last glacial maximum.	Civilization starting several thousands years earlier, different agricultural and domestication patterns.
Gulf Stream turns to Greenland.	No Europe. Higher development of Mississippi center of agricultural civilization.
Gulf Stream turns to Sahara.	Permanently green Sahara. Afroeurasian civilization.
Gulf Stream stops.	No Europe.
No Alexander the Great.	Much smaller Roman empire, no Christianity as a global religion.
No destruction of Roman empire.	The speed of world development is higher for several hundreds years. No colonialism with the large technological/cultural gap, just integration of remote territories into the Roman sphere of influence.
No Mongol invasion of Islamic countries.	Islamic Renaissance continues, the world is developed around Indian ocean primarily.
Black Death mortality 80%-90% instead of 30%-50%.	Egalitarian democratic Europe, no imperialism. More balanced multipolar world.
Mongol invasion of Japan succeeds.	No unique Japanese culture and economics. More strong East Asia that cannot be easily colonized.
China continues maritime expansion after Zheng He.	More strong East Asia that cannot be easily colonized.
No Little Ice Age.	European colonial expansion starts earlier. But it meets almost equal rivals in the East.
No Ivan the Terrible and/or Peter the Great.	Russia resembling Osman Empire and/or Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth by trajectory of development. Siberia and Far East resembling modern Central Asia and modern Middle East by social situation and role in geopolitics. Generally, more authoritarian world.
No Aurangzeb.	More liberal and more powerful Indostan, no British colonization of Indostan, no religious separation of Indostan.
No Napoleonic invasion of Russia.	Higher speed of industrialization, no German empire, no World Wars, no discrimination and genocide of Jews, no migration of Jews to Middle East.

Conclusions

The only correct conclusions that you may come to upon reading this articles are the following:

- a) schematization of global history of humanity in reasonable number of items (several hundreds) is a feasible task;
- b) reading general materials on all listed topics within reasonable amount of time (1-3 years) is a feasible task too;
- c) any provided schematization is flexible and can be varied by topics reasonably for about 30% (very rough estimate).

The current edition of this article is probably the final one.