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Toward a Global Community of Historians: The International Historical Congresses and the International Committee of Historical Sciences, 1898-2000

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Globalization presents major challenges to scholars of history. Different variants of global history and world history compete with, and transform, more traditional approaches of national, regional, and local scope, accompanied by new forms of international and transcultural cooperation. However, as this book shows, these transnational trends in the historical discipline are not without precedent. Based on painstaking research, this volume reconstructs the history of the International Congresses of Historians from the first one in The Hague, 1898, to the nineteenth in Oslo, 2000. It also tells the story of the International Committee of the Historical Sciences, the world organization of historians, which was founded, with much American support, in 1926 and today includes 54 national committees and 28 affiliated international organizations from all parts of the world. Karl Dietrich Erdmann, former president of this organization, covered the story up to 1985. Wolfgang J. Mommsen continued it into the twenty-first century.

This book traces and analyzes the changes of historians' problems, topics, and methods, as reflected at their International Congresses and in the work of their international organization. It describes the cleavages, debates, and forging of ties among historians from different parts of the world and ideological camps. It demonstrates how historians fought against academic nationalism–or succumbed to its seduction. It shows how the Cold War polarized the world of historians whereas the International Congresses offered a platform for bridging the gap. Since 1990, they have helped to redefine the relationship between historians from the West and from other parts of the world. The internationalization of the study of history is reaching a new quality.

Karl Dietrich Erdmann†'s book was first published in German in 1987. It has been translated, updated, and edited for an international audience of the twenty-first century.

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