Introduction

We know a great deal about how Europeans sailed in ships to the far reaches of the world, set in motion a process of world integration, and, from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries, established extended maritime empires. Strangely, we know much less about how Europeans circulated goods and people across the seas in the twentieth century, even though industrial societies, consumer societies, overseas empires, and mass travel could not have developed as they did without the European steamship lines, European ports, European merchant companies, European markets, and European intermediaries that made these things possible. Europeans did not monopolize the sea lanes, but they did control them for almost the entire century. Americans constructed formidable numbers of merchant ships during the two world wars, but the sum of the American merchant marine in sheer numbers belied its significance on the seas. Not until containerization in the last third of the twentieth century did American shipping pose a serious challenge to European lines. Japan built a very large merchant marine, but Japanese shipping integrated into a European-led shipping system, so that powerful growth made the Japanese fleet simply one of the largest of the world's fleets, but a modest one when set alongside the combined numbers of European ships. Only in the last decades of the century did Asian shipping reverse this relationship, although even then, at century's end, the largest containerized shipping fleet was still European (Denmark's Maersk), and the largest shipowning nationality was equally European (Greek). Europe's ships sailed to ports around the world, but most called at a European terminus, and in many cases at a series of harbors along the northwest or Mediterranean-European littoral. No continent possessed such a number of great ports as did Europe in

London, Liverpool, Hamburg, Bremen, Rotterdam, Antwerp, Le Havre, and Marseille. Many of the world's other ports were built or expanded by Europeans, who then directed traffic through them. This was most true of imperial ports in the British, French, and Dutch empires, including world hubs such as Singapore or Hong Kong.

Moreover, whereas these ports functioned as entrepots of regional trade, many of the goods that shipped out were mined or logged or grown on properties controlled and managed by Europeans, traded with or through Europeans, brokered by Europeans, and, at some point, marketed by Europeans. The river and coastal companies that carried people and goods into and out of these ports, and that joined local to world traffics, were mostly European. There were vital local and regional traffics run by non-Europeans, and at no point did Europeans possess exclusive ownership over the transport and commerce of foreign lands. Increasingly we are coming to realize the extent to which the medium of Asian economic development was Asian-conducted intra-Asian trade.[1] Chinese merchant networks, in particular, controlled short-sea or inland trading in eastern waters, and were persistent shipping competitors, trading partners, or organizers of migrant flows. One of the arguments of this book is that world transport and trade functioned largely through the overlay of one network on another. Generally, however, it was Europeans who assembled or interlocked those networks on a transoceanic scale.[2] If ports outside the imperial ring – in Latin America, for example – differed in sovereign details, shipping, import-export trading houses, foreign capital, and overseas markets and networks remained heavily European. Asian traders, including intra-Asian commerce, relied on a Western infrastructure of steamships and ports.[3] Even the North Atlantic was dominated by European shipping. Maritime history, or the overseas history of travel and trade, was, deep into the twentieth century, a European history. Even when things changed, the history continued to be in large part European, either because the reversals were caught up with the withdrawal from empire, because of legacy investments and networks,

[1] Kaoru Sugihara, ed., *Japan, China, and the Growth of the Asian International Economy, 1850–1949* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[2] For an exception, see Adam McKeown's discussion of Chinese overseas emigration networks in Hong Kong, although even here European (British) rule, as McKeown acknowledges, established the basis for this trade: Adam McKeown, "Conceptualizing Chinese Diasporas, 1842–1949," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 58 (May 1999): 313–321.

[3] Sugihara, *Japan*, 9–10, 270; Claude Markovits, *The Global World of Indian Merchants, 1750–1947: Traders of Sind from Bukhara to Panama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

or because the reverberations in Europe altered older shipping and port hierarchies.

This book seeks to restore the sea to the center of how we think and write about modern history. It is a book about how "maritime" Europe ordered the flow of peoples and things around the world, but it is also, implicitly, about how Europeans lived, because little of what Europeans made, sold, or consumed in contemporary times was independent of overseas markets or sources of supply. At its basic level, then, it asks readers to take one step backward and ask not what mass industrial and consumer societies represented for European life and culture, but what infrastructures of trade and transport were essential for Europeans to create and run such societies in the first place. It thus denies an old but enduring tendency to particularize between maritime and interior – or continental – Europe.[4] It recalls that some of Europe's greatest cities were, and remain, port cities, and that far from peripheral, these functioned as national and transnational connectors. All were outward looking, but no less inward oriented, because all survived off hinterlands that reached deeply inland not only along the spines of waterways and railways, but also along the fashioned networks of human exchange. Ports were accumulated infrastructures, but also conduits and wealth generators. They were, too, bases for merchant fleets and merchant trading houses by which Europeans spread their influence, power, and grasp outward. They and the passenger ships that called at their harbors were no less the means – until late in the century nearly the only means – that enabled Europeans to travel across bodies of water. The history of migration, business, empire, and leisure in the twentieth century can no more be written without the history of maritime infrastructures than can the history of work, production, and possession. Not even the great-event history of the twentieth century, although much of it was acted out on the European landmass, operated independently of the sea. This book also argues that the ability to manage the complex logistics of merchant shipping was central to the outcome of the two world wars.

"Maritime" implies all things related to the sea, and although it is deployed broadly in this study, its use is not intended to be all encompassing. Left out are navies and sea power, as well as certain nonmilitary sectors such as fishing or oceanography. Dockworkers appear only infrequently, not because they were unimportant to the central subject of

[4] Paul M. Hohenberg and Lynn Hollen Lees, *The Making of Urban Europe, 1000–1950* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985); Edward Whiting Fox, *History in Geographic Perspective: The Other France* (New York: Norton, 1971).

this work, but because the material on them is potentially so vast that to include them would have made a long book much longer still. The central subject is those sectors engaged in transport and trade across the oceans, and for these purposes the net has been widely cast. The sectors begin, of course, with ports and shipping, but cannot be understood without including trading companies; the harvesting enterprises they created and operated abroad; the riverboat and coastal shipping lines that connected hinterlands with forelands at both ends of the great trunk routes; an appreciation of commodity chains and markets; and the extensive range of intermediaries – ship agents, forwarders, warehousers, migrant labor and commodity brokers, dealers, insurers, compradors, tasters, the waterfront services that included master porters and stevedore companies, but also local specialities like Antwerp's *naties* or Rotterdam's *vemen* – who provided essential services but also, in the case of agents and forwarders, acted as the essential coordinators in a well-constructed yet fragmented global system. Each of these, in its own right, requires exploration of how it worked, but the interest is in the combined effect, or the systematic calibration of all sectors into an infrastructure for moving people and goods around the world. Reconstructing how this occurred, how a maritime world operated and coordinated world flows, is one of the two principal goals of this study.

The other is to examine the exchanges between maritime history and the larger currents of the twentieth century. That is a somewhat lofty presumption, as this is a century still awaiting its "long," "short," or 100-year history. Indeed the project has scarcely been taken up,[5] because nearly all work has divided with the Second World War. This study, by contrast, begins with a maritime system in place at the start of the century and runs to the year 2000. There is no claim that maritime history explains twentieth-century history. Frankly, it cannot. Nevertheless, war, depression, empire and its disintegration, the circulation of people and their ideas, the rise of a new leisure society, the evolution of modern business, and globalization are also maritime themes, so the overlap is considerable. One result, therefore, is to cross between the hard and soft halves of the past century in order to understand impacts and influences. Mostly the flow is in the direction of the maritime: how the fates of port cities, or of trading companies, or of

[5] There are indications that this tide may be turning: Charles S. Maier, "Consigning the Twentieth Century to History: Alternative Narratives for the Modern Era," *The American Historical Review* 105 (June 2000): 807–831; Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through 20th-Century Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).

passenger travel, or of the way the system worked altogether were determined by the broader historical turnings of the century. Yet it is also an intention to interrogate how maritime business communities could shape the way in which twentieth-century people lived their lives. Such influences are implied in the basic premise of this work, that a commercial maritime world provided the infrastructure for modern production and consumption societies. But the effects came also from other directions, such as the circulations or transfers made possible by systematic sea communication, or the revolutionary ramifications of containerization.

It is also the objective of this study to present a European history. That objective can be met only partially, because not all of Europe was "maritime," nor can all of its maritime peoples fit easily or equally into a single monograph. Mainly, research for this book was conducted in the collections of five nations – Great Britain, Germany, France, the Netherlands, and Belgium – because within these countries could be found the main ports of the continent as well as a very steep percentage of Europe's merchant fleets and overseas trading houses. For other significant shipping communities, such as the Norwegians or Greeks, I have relied on secondary literature in accessible languages. Some histories, therefore, will predominate over others, but in sum the approach has been to write about maritime Europe as the overall actor in this text. At multiple points this has meant gravitating toward comparative history, or the effort to explain influences, staying power, or declines by setting one experience against another. The comparative fates of ports, for instance, has been one challenge to explain, and one means of measuring the temporal outcomes of historical change. Antwerp and Rotterdam retained main port status throughout the century, Hamburg demonstrated remarkable resiliency in the face of crippling losses after both world wars, London and Liverpool dropped out of contention following containerization, and Le Havre and Marseille, while experiencing ups and downs, never fulfilled the promise of positions established toward the middle years of the nineteenth century. To understand why, this study sets one port's history against another's to investigate how national contexts – but also the tensile strength of individual port networks – account for differences in port city destinies.

Throughout, however, I favor a transnational approach to a strictly comparative one.[6] The transnational history of the seas is almost

[6] See the discussion of both approaches in Deborah Cohen and Maura O'Connor, eds., *Comparison and History: Europe in Cross-National Perspective* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

redundant in its expression, but an additional purpose of this book is to underscore the degree to which even in this most nationalistic of centuries European history was cosmopolitan. Europeans ran the maritime world and that world ran on transnational connections. Its basic component, networks, nearly always ignored land or sea borders. Shipping companies and ports were incessant assemblers of transnational linkages. Freight forwarders could not organize shipments without correspondents in distant lands. Trading houses, by tradition, sent their sons to train with other firms, often in foreign countries, so that professional cosmopolitanism was built into formational experiences. Expatriate merchants and agents had one foot planted in their new host territories, the other in their home communities. After several generations abroad some possessed dual national identities and could be as Brazilian, say, as they were German. Shipping conferences institutionalized private, transnational governance. At interfirm levels they and shipping networks exhibited the cosmopolitan, trans-state behavior today customary for NGOs.[7] Maritime culture, while national in one regard, was no less cosmopolitan in another. British houses competed with German ones, but old ties also prevailed in the resurrection of German shipping and trading firms after their obliteration in two world wars.

This book, therefore, is about European businessmen interacting with each other or with multiple other parties, including non-Western business communities, rather than about competing national outcomes. Built into its narrative will be the dynamics of cross-national exchanges such as the dissemination of Western tourism and consumerism, or the transport of populations to harvesting centers in tropical lands, or the entry of European profit-seeking companies into the Hajji carriage trades. At a broader level, its transnationalism will capture the common European experience that cannot be contained within a purely comparative approach. The aim is to understand how Europeans, not necessarily British, French, Germans, or Dutch, organized and managed world flows.

The transnationalism of global transport, however, cannot be separated from local and national identities or realms of action. Port networks, if multinational, also coalesced around home interests and civic engagement. Shipping and trading companies were well connected abroad, but no less embedded in home communities. Maritime culture, while strongly cosmopolitan, was simultaneously impregnated with national affinities.

[7] Wallace J. Campbell, *The History of CARE: A Personal Account* (New York: Praeger, 1990), 40, 93–94, 175, 177, 183, 203–204.

The transnationalism that appears in this book will therefore be a transnationalism of interplay, indeed complementarity, between local and global that could be found within companies, port communities, and personal experiences, and that accounted for the ability of each to organize and manage world flows. A critical argument is that hybridity of identities and realms of action translated not into rootlessness, but connectedness and the ability to mobilize networks and resources at both ends of the local-global spectrum.

Such a perspective passes perforce into the history of globalization, and in this book I hope to clarify how a globalizing process did in fact proceed over the course of the last hundred years. Chronologically, I begin with the commonly held presumption that at the turn of the nineteenth into the twentieth century it is possible to speak of a highly coordinated world. The most recent statement to this effect is Jürgen Osterhammel's monumental work on the nineteenth century. Although our books are very different in time and focus, there are a number of parallels between Osterhammel's approach and mine. Both concentrate on globalizing patterns and the networks through which they occurred. Both see European centrality as a basic fact of globalization, even if they might dispute when that centrality faded away. Both insist, nonetheless, on the indispensability of non-Western networks in the globalizing process, and both stress the significance of port cities, shipping, and merchants in carrying it out.[8]

In this regard the current, almost endless literature on globalization is a source for considerable reflection,[9] but within it there are strains with

[8] Jürgen Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt. Eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2009), 13–17, 20, 112, 381–384, 402–412, 1011, 1031–1037. A second fundamental work on global connections in the nineteenth century is C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780–1914* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).

[9] This is a very large literature. Those works that have been particularly useful for this study are: Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000); Jeffrey A. Frieden, *Global Capitalism: Its Fall and Rise in the Twentieth Century* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006); David Held et al., *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics, and Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); Paul Hirst and Grahame Thompson, *Globalization in Question: The International Economy and the Possibilities of Governance*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1999); A. G. Hopkins, ed., *Globalization in World History* (London: Pimlico, 2002); Harold James, *The End of Globalization: Lessons from the Great Depression* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001); Geoffrey Jones, "Globalization," in Geoffrey Jones and Jonathan Zeitlin, *The Oxford Handbook of Business History* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2008), 141–168; Michael Lang, "Globalization and Its History," *The Journal of Modern History* 78 (December 2006): 899–931; Kevin H. O'Rourke and Jeffrey G. Williamson, *Globalization and History: The Evolution of a Nineteenth-Century Atlantic Economy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999); Jürgen Osterhammel and Niels P. Petersson,

which I must disagree. It is not a foregone conclusion that expanding transnational bodies or networks have obviated the significance of either state power or national experiences. In nearly every instance where globalizing processes can be identified, it is possible to locate a state presence or the advancement of the state. Again, what strikes one repeatedly in the history of maritime communities was the synergy they manufactured from world and home connections.[10] It is difficult, moreover, to comprehend how one can write transnational history in modern times without first being conversant with national historiographies. Furthermore, there is no advantage in distinguishing between "international" and "global" as a means of explaining what globalization was or is. Such distinctions simply return us to the national-transnational dichotomy at the expense of focusing on interconnectedness.

In particular, I break with the definition of globalization as market integration on a worldwide scale. Nor am I sympathetic to the consequent static view that measures globalization in the twentieth century strictly against a Belle Epoque equivalent, or its dynamic doppelgänger that defines globalization as the world of difference by the 1990s.[11] The market integration approach, largely posited and held by social scientists, has the advantage of a systematic and time-ordered understanding of what can be labeled as true "globalization." Where capital, labor, trade, and information moved fluidly across the world, as occurred in the decades before the First World War – "the closest thing the world had ever seen to a free world market for goods, capital, and labor"[12] – we can glimpse the arrival of globalization. When substantial barriers made such flows difficult, at times even impossible, we can identify an era of deglobalization. When a reconstruction process restored integration of global markets, or so rapidly surpassed all earlier levels of global interchange to

Globalization: A Short History (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); Saskia Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); Pierre-Yves Saunier, "Globalization," in Akira Iriye and Pierre-Yves Saunier, eds., *The Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History* (Houndsmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 456–462.

[10] This is not quite the same point as made by Alan Milward about European integration, but the consequences were not dissimilar. Alan S. Milward, *The European Rescue of the Nation-State*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2000).

[11] The framework is pervasive. See, as examples, Michael D. Bordo, Alan M. Taylor, and Jeffrey G. Williamson, *Globalization in Historical Perspective* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Frieden, *Global*; Held et al., *Transformations* (especially pp. 422–425); Hirst and Thompson, *Globalization*; O'Rourke and Williamson, *Globalization*; and Osterhammel and Petersson, *Globalization*, although with some interesting hedging.

[12] Frieden, *Global*, 16.

create something distinctively new, we can grasp what is implied when one speaks today of "globalization." That cohesiveness of perspective has made market integration and its chronological procession – the first global economy to 1914; deglobalization between the two world wars; and the second global economy from the 1970s/1980s to the present – the paradigm, or "master narrative,"[13] by which we chart globalization across our times.

This view of globalization is not altogether as tidy as it might at first seem. Cultural historians and postmodernist critics, keenly attuned to globalizing influences, may align their arguments with economic transformations. Yet their concentration on identity, "de-territorialization," time-space hierarchies, compression, modernity, or homogenization versus heterogeneity frame globalism within a perspective that ranges far beyond market integration.[14] Moreover, market compression in the interwar years runs counter to the unrelenting reach, at world levels, of cinema or advertising, or the intensified circulation of ideologies such as communism, or the exchange of knowledge and culture that accompanied refugee movements, or continued population flows, or the growth of transnational and nongovernmental organizations that persisted through the 1920s and 1930s. Even a strictly economic approach produces a more complex picture of the supposed march of deglobalization. Business historians have already remarked the resiliency of international business in the face of closing markets. Mira Wilkins's work on multinationals not only has pointed to the continued expansion of multinational investment throughout the interwar years, but has shown how the very act of restriction generated responses – jumping tariff walls, opening triangular trades for supplying markets – that increased as well as contracted world presence.[15]

[13] Saunier, "Globalization," 458. James, *End*, 1–2, 7 provides a good example of how the narrative has been adopted by historians.

[14] Alys Eve Weinbaum et al., *The Modern Girl around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008); Mike Featherstone, *Undoing Culture: Globalization, Postmodernism, and Identity* (London: Sage, 1995); David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1990).

[15] Jones, "Globalization," 141–142, 148, 161; Saunier, "Globalization," 458; Adam McKeown, "Global Migration, 1846–1940," *Journal of World History* 15 (2004): 155–190; Akira Iriye, *Global Community: The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 20–36; Mira Wilkins, *The History of Foreign Investment in the United States, 1914–1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); idem, *The Maturing of Multinational Enterprise: American Business Abroad from 1914 to 1970* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974); Weinbaum et al., *Modern*.

I join with those who have sought to complicate the paradigm by offering a different interpretation of what we mean by globalization and its progression over the past century. My treatment of globalization begins, therefore, as a more expansive one, where globalization entails primarily global interchange and connectedness, for which integrated markets can be fundamentally constructive but not indispensable. Globalization, in this view, is about the exchange of ideas, people, and goods across oceans and civilizations; mounting world presence; and the hybridity that comes when local and overseas are coupled on a global scale.[16] The degree or intensity of that connectedness, to use the formula of one major contribution to the literature,[17] may change over time, but globalization from a historical point of view is about linkages that have a long pedigree, and that cannot be conflated with the workings or effects of what we call globalization today. Most of all I seek to return historical thinking about globalization to historians, rather than leaving it to the social scientists who have dominated the production of thought on this topic.

In this book, the history of globalization occurs in two ways. First, globalization is presented not as a meta-narrative with "globalizing" (in the French sense of the word) explanatory powers, but as a reality of relationships – in this case by sea – that formed the building blocks of modern societies. Those that I identify were not the only ones, but they were, as I argue, essential to the making of modern material culture. Regardless of how far one projects back into time the sighting of globalization, shipping and commerce lie at the center of that vision. If globalization preceded the Europeans, then a Muslim ecumene spread and cohered through mercantile networks on sea and land.[18] If the origins of globalism are dated to the sixteenth century, then it was the voyages of discovery and conquest, creation of seaborne trading monopolies, and overseas migrations – voluntary and forced – that initiated the process. To place the first true global moment in the nineteenth century is to write about the effects of the steamship and its business organization into world-ranging liner networks. As one leading study of this period has argued, "The globalization that took place in the late nineteenth century cannot be ascribed to more liberal trade policy. Instead, it was the falling transport costs that

[16] In the context of globalization this book therefore uses the term "hybridity" somewhat differently from those who use it to rebut global homogenization. See, as an example, Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *Globalization and Culture: Global Mélange*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009).

[17] Held et al., *Transformations*, 15–16, 433.

[18] Amira K. Bennison, "Muslim Universalism and Western Globalization," in Hopkins, *Globalization*, 74–97.