

INTRODUCTION: ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE 'PEOPLE WITHOUT HISTORY'

Nicole Boivin and Michael D. Frachetti

The phrase 'the people without history' finds its way here from Marx and Engels via Eric Wolf. While Wolf did not thus invent the phrase, it is his usage of it, enshrined in his influential *Europe and the People without History* (1997), that captured broad academic attention. Wolf's use was ironic, and was meant to subvert the idea that only Europeans made history. While the latest global fluctuations, particularly repeated political and economic crises in the European Union and the growth of the Asian economy, increasingly challenge notions of Western hegemony, the idea that Europe and the West are uniquely responsible for creating the globalised and interconnected world we know today remains a pillar of mainstream and academic understandings of the world. It is the limited understanding of past connectedness and spatial transcendence that gives rise, as Prestholdt notes, to 'our wonder at a "globalised" present' (Prestholdt 2008: 1). Wolf was at pains to challenge this misreading of history, to demonstrate that the peoples outside Europe did indeed have a history that preceded European colonialism, and that it was a history in which broad-scale processes and interconnections across vast distances played a role.

This volume's use of the phrase 'the people without history' draws on these associations, but focuses in particular on those societies and communities whom history has most egregiously bypassed – those whose lives were mainly lived outside and beyond the urban, agrarian states that are the mainstay of books and courses on 'ancient civilisations'. These people often are in fact without history, in the canonical sense of the word, in that they frequently

lacked literate traditions and leave us with few or no direct textual sources. But their lack of ‘history’ in the strict sense belies their fundamental historical role in the broader sense. We speak here of the groups that occupied the spaces between the urban cores or centres (depending on one’s terminology), who were frequently much more mobile and dispersed, and whose political and social ‘complexity’ calls for rethinking of the traditional, social evolutionary sense of the term. As such, this book is concerned with nomads, pastoralists, fishers, foragers, pirates and traders of a variety of ilks. Its interest is in exploring their role in the creation of a world characterised by flows of knowledge, technology, people and things long before the era of European colonisation, and well after its onset.

GLOBALISATION

Along with those marginalised in historical accounts, this book also focuses on globalisation. Specifically, it is concerned with the role of people whose pasts have been most disregarded in the processes that increasingly began to connect up the ancient world. The book therefore offers the opportunity for exploring the interplay between those whose history has been placed at the margins and those historical processes that have been seen as most indicative of an advanced stage of civilisational development. It collides entities and ideas that have previously occupied separate spheres and in so doing suggests the potential for offering a fuller and deeper appreciation of the emergence of economic and social complexity over the *longue durée*.

If nomads, pastoralists, fishers, foragers and pirates occupy the very farthest margins of history, globalisation in many respects sits at the apex of conceptual schemes of social evolution. Indeed, globalisation is seen as such a hallmark of the modern and socially evolved world that its application as a term and a concept to understanding even the premodern historical era, let alone earlier periods of human history, has been deeply contentious. For some, reserving globalisation as a description solely of the hyper-connected, high-tech sphere of present-day planetary commercial, corporate and technological entanglement is critical to preserving the utility of the term. For such scholars, globalisation is a contemporary phenomenon that represents a ‘significant “global shift” in the social organization of human affairs’ (McGrew 2008: 36). It is ‘historically distinctive’ and ‘constitutive of new global structures and systems of transnational domination’ (McGrew 2008: 39–40).

For others, however, the contemporary era represents not a state-change or a massive departure in the human experience (Stearns 2010: 2), but rather a culmination of processes that have unfolded over millennia (e.g. Curtin 1984; Bentley 1993; Hopkins 2002; McNeill and McNeill 2003; Gills and Thompson 2006). For many such scholars, ‘enchantment with the modern

world ... has blinded scholars and the general public alike to continuities between premodern and modern times' (Bentley 2006: 17; see also Goody 2012). Equally enchanting has been the West, as exemplified by the critique inherent in Wolf's (1997) opposition of Europe on the one hand and the people without history on the other. Views of European distinctiveness have prevented recognition of the role of other regions in the making of the global economy and world society (Pieterse 2006: 61). A range of studies in what Pieterse refers to as the 'oriental globalisation literature' challenge Eurocentric readings of history and profoundly reorient global historical narratives and agency to other regions and players (e.g. Chaudhuri 1985; Abu-Lughod 1989; Frank 1998; Hobson 2004, 2007; Pomeranz 2009).

Scholars who advocate a long chronology for globalisation do not of course agree on all points, but do tend to share a number of perspectives. They inevitably see long-distance, pre-modern trade as more than just the exchange of rare, luxury items (e.g. Bentley 1993). They argue for significant interregional interaction, and the linked emergence of shared cultural and consumer practices (e.g. McNeill and McNeill 2003; Stearns 2010). They see globalisation not as a linear process, but rather as a discontinuous set of network intensifications and ruptures (Frank 1993; Chase-Dunn and Hall 1997; Frank and Thompson 2005; Frachetti 2008; also Lilley, this volume). While there is much overlap between early globalisation perspectives and world systems theory (see also discussion in Jaffe and Flad, this volume), there is also a recognition that the 'specific power geometry of global capitalism' (Jennings 2011: 12) was not a feature of early globalisation. In place of deterministic models of core vs periphery, proponents of early globalisation tend to envision more dispersed power structures and greater agency on the part of 'peripheral' societies (e.g. Prestholdt 2008; Carter, this volume; Brosseder and Miller, this volume).

This volume embraces numerous, sometimes divergent perspectives concerning the application of the term 'globalisation' to the distant past. Contributors were not asked to commit to any particular view concerning this usage, or indeed any particular definition of globalisation. Accordingly, some chapters simply run with the term, while others begin with its careful dissection and methodical analysis. Likewise the specific geographic scope of globalisation is approached through different lenses across the chapters, though all commonly situate the concept in terms of emerging and evident interregional, large-scale phenomena. Perhaps the widest geographic scales are addressed by Hommel, who compares a tradition of early pottery across most of Eurasia (also Frachetti and Bullion, this volume). Hoogervorst and Boivin trace connectivity across thousands of kilometres of the Indian Ocean from South and Southeast Asia to the East African coast, while Morrison broadens this to an even wider historical geography that includes European colonial endeavours in Asia. The bulk of the chapters apply globalisation at

mid-regional scales (see chapters by Denham, Carter, Jaffe and Flad, Seland, Brosseder and Miller, Harrower and Dumitru), illustrating the influence of nested local realms within wider and wider social geographies (e.g. Frachetti and Bullion, Lilley, Wilmsen). Indeed, the authors here collectively illustrate that ‘global’ is a concept with historically contingent parameters, making their case studies all the more important for expanding our scalar comprehension of the term itself.

For most contributors, ‘globalisation’ as a concept serves at minimum as a useful heuristic device. For example Hommel (this volume) problematises the use of the term for the past, yet notes that it ‘has considerable potential as a heuristic and a way of re-focusing stagnant debates’. The use of a broad array of terms and concepts from the globalisation literature attests to this enlivening role – contributors address, for example, concepts such as the ‘global village’ (Carter), ‘participatory ecumene’ (Frachetti and Bullion), time–space compression (Carter, Jaffe and Flad), hybridity and ‘glocalisation’ (Brosseder and Miller, Frachetti and Bullion, Lilley, Jaffe and Flad) and small world networks (Brosseder and Miller, Carter). But authors also recognise a distinction between the intensively globalised world of today and the more loose configurations of the past, acknowledged through the use of such terms as ‘proto-globalisation’ (Denham, this volume), ‘cultural globalisation’ (Lilley, this volume) and the plural ‘globalisations’ (Hommel, this volume; see Jennings 2011). Carter prefers the phrase ‘globalising interactions’, what he defines as an early phase in which he seeks ‘the distant roots of the global networks that we see today’. The concept of ‘globalisation’, at a minimum, offers the opportunity for exploring more deeply the connectivities of the past, for thinking systematically about how globalising tendencies unfolded, and for considering what these transformations meant for people living in diverse types of societies (e.g. Frachetti and Bullion).

FINDING A PLACE FOR THE PEOPLE WITHOUT HISTORY

The people without history are at first glance a captivatingly motley crew: camel herders, forager–traders, sea captains and sailors, steppe nomads, pirates, pearl–fishers, forest-dwellers, coastal traders and elephant hunters count amongst their number. They tend to be written out of global histories, but when they do appear, it is through the eyes of others, usually authors from urban settings writing securely from within the conceptual boundaries of state-based polities. As Seland (this volume) writes of desert nomads in his chapter, ‘almost all accounts of them were made by outsiders, some of them hostile, some ignorant and some romanticising’, and the same is undoubtedly true of most other groups addressed here. Perceptions of nomadic or semi-nomadic peoples in particular, distorted by the lens of sedentism, shape views

of such groups as marginal and passive, and peripheral to the grand forces of history, which are seen as proceeding from the centre out (but see, e.g., Curtin 1984; Barfield 2001).

Archaeology, which has traditionally focused on the significantly more apparent remains of larger-scaled settled communities, has generally failed to rectify this situation. To be fair, recovering evidence for mobile communities does require extra effort, and forces of preservation and taphonomy often make this an extremely challenging enterprise. Yet archaeology, with its conceptual and methodological roots firmly grounded in the mundane, everyday material detritus of human societies, might at least be expected to lead the way in subverting mainstream, text-driven and elite-dominated perspectives on the human past. Yet this has occurred all too rarely in the case of the marginalised groups addressed here and archaeological discourse, particularly about trade, interaction and the forces of proto-globalisation, tends to be dominated by a concern with states, cities, empires and the prestige of social elites (but see, e.g., Morrison and Junker 2002; Rogers and Wilson 1993).

The chapters in this volume take important steps towards addressing this imbalance, drawing attention, through archaeological, historical and ethnographic sources, however imperfect, to the role and the importance of smaller-scale and more mobile social entities in the emergence of globalising connectivities and institutional resonances. Far from seeing these groups as the passive occupants of peripheries exploited for raw materials, the various studies broadly emphasise the agency and centrality of such societies. For example, chapters by both Morrison (this volume) and Hoogervorst and Boivin (this volume) stress that many of the key traded items of the Indian Ocean spice trade were obtained from forager-traders whose knowledge and activities were fundamental to the flow of spices and global capital over centuries if not millennia. Camphor, for example, was obtained in Borneo by tribes like the Punan who were recognised as experts in the challenging art of locating the substance, which was formed in the crevices of certain trees. Even as many ‘spices’ became integrated into colonial systems of cultivation and production, items like camphor remained the preserve of nomadic trader-foragers, with procurement undertaken by expeditions under experienced tribal leaders, and extending over weeks or months (Hoogervorst and Boivin, this volume). As Morrison (this volume) observes, ‘tropical forest spices, gums, resins, dyes, and aromatics, as well as ivory, were captured, grown, and gathered by those very foragers and farmers whose labor and knowledge are barely acknowledged in the voluminous historical literature’ on the Indian Ocean spice trade (see also Morrison and Junker 2002).

Other chapters stress a similar role for pastoral populations. As Seland (this volume) notes, camel-herders in the Syrian Desert, for example, possessed specialised knowledge and skills that enabled them to breed and handle the

camels that were so central to the caravan trade, as well as knowledge of how to survive and traverse the hostile desert environment. Carter's chapter explores the mobile pastoralist populations of Neolithic Arabia, noting the way that their mobility enabled the movement of exotic goods across vast distances.

Mobility emerges in Frachetti and Bullion's chapter as a key variable in the generation of participatory arenas amongst seasonal herders and village agriculturalists across Bronze Age Inner Asia. Here not only material goods, such as bronze or grains, but also ideas and modalities of practice, index the legitimacy of local burial practitioners within 'globalised' ideological institutions that engaged otherwise culturally different communities in a wider participatory ecumene.

Carter further stresses the contribution of Neolithic riverine and maritime transport systems to the opening up of the peninsula, highlighting the role of small-scale communities in eventually integrating and transforming the societies of the Gulf, southern Mesopotamia and northern Mesopotamia in the sixth and fifth millennia BC. The place of maritime peoples in the story of early globalisations is also foregrounded in the chapter by Hoogervorst and Boivin, who emphasise the multi-ethnic melange that likely characterised early maritime and riverine trading systems, bringing mobile communities together with more complex social and political entities to engender a variety of structural and economic relationships that facilitated the emergence and expansion of trading networks. The knowledge and labour of diverse maritime-oriented groups in Island Southeast Asia was also essential to the acquisition of marine resources for international trade, including such diverse products as pearls, tortoise shell, seaweed, trepang, sharks' fins and birds' nests (Hoogervorst and Boivin, this volume), whose efficient harvesting required a close understanding of marine ecosystems.

Not all of the chapters address mobile peoples, but most have at least an element of mobility. The Melanesian trading villages of Lilley's chapter feature port communities, hinterland 'middlemen' communities and interior villages. The first included specialist long-distance maritime traders who employed enormous sailing canoes to transport goods. Lilley's stress, however, is on the role of the various groups as producers of goods that entered into socially defined and shaped trading networks. Wilmsen (this volume) also focuses on small-scale producers and traders, whose networks of exchange enabled the movement of goods like ivory, rhinoceros horn, tortoise shell and leopard skins from deep inland to the East African coast, and exotic glass beads and ceramics in the opposite direction.

Similarly, the chapter by Dumitru and Harrower (this volume) sheds light on communities of ancient copper miners, smelters, metalsmiths and caravaners from Oman as well as obsidian quarrymen, flint-knappers and itinerant tradespeople from Ethiopia. Their chapter suggests that the early exploitation of

material like copper and obsidian in these regions was decentralised, with households or other local entities primarily structuring production and trade.

The foregrounding of nomadic, pastoralist or tribal agency is central to many of the chapters. Denham, for example, draws attention to the much over-looked agency and interactions of prehistoric Island Southeast Asian and Melanesian communities that were supposedly swept away by an Austronesian wave of advance. Brosseder and Miller argue that the numerous steppe groups within Eurasia that they describe in their chapter ‘were not marginal mediators of exchange but critical agentive nodes, with their own internal dynamics and interregional interactions, who helped drive and facilitate “global” exchange networks that spanned the entirety of the Eurasian continent’. Small-scale communities across Africa, the Middle East and Asia played key roles in building the increasingly complex networks that gradually linked up much of the Old World well before the age of European expansion. Their knowledge, labour, exploration, trade, travel and patterns of production and consumption were critical to the flows of not just trade goods, but also information, technologies and cultural practices that enabled the emergence of new, globalising spatial and temporal relationships by the end of the Holocene epoch.

MATERIALIZING GLOBALISATION

If archaeology has a critical role to play in foregrounding those who lie outside the boundaries of standard historical accounts, it also has an equally important role to play in materialising globalisation. While the cultivation, harvesting, production, transport and consumption of material things, together with the emergence of new forms of physical connectivity, are central features of globalisation, most research into its nature and history draws on documentation rather than material culture (though see Prestholdt 2008). Archaeologists, with their focus on the material remains of past societies, tend to foreground real physical and material things, offering new perspectives not only on the past but also human society more broadly (Boivin 2008; Olsen 2012; Malafouris 2013). The archaeological slant of this volume thus offers the potential to not only reshape our understanding of the agents of globalisation but also its processes, and particularly the material dimensions of these.

One obvious dimension of the material world addressed repeatedly in this volume is technology, and particularly technologies of transport. Their role in shaping patterns of ancient trade, contact and interaction is addressed at numerous points across the chapters of this volume. While archaeologists these days largely eschew the extremes of technological determinism, recognition of the agency of the material world itself has played a role in reviving interest in the propensity of the material and technological world to both enable and constrain particular cultural and behavioural possibilities

(Boivin 2008; Bennett 2009). It is clear from many chapters that their authors see technological developments as critical to the creation of new, longer distance connections between regions, and an increasingly extensive and intensive flow of goods, ideas and people.

Jaffe and Flad, for example, view both the horse and pastoralism as critical ‘technologies’ that ‘compressed space and time’, promoting connectivity across and beyond eastern Asia during the second millennium BC. Carter argues for the same kind of space–time compression as a result of a dramatically increased familiarity with and reliance on watercraft throughout Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf from the late sixth millennium BC onwards. He points to a growing exploitation of both marine and inland waterways that offered a technological foundation ‘for the intensification of interaction and communication that is materially manifested as the ‘Ubaid horizon’ (Carter, this volume). Frachetti and Bullion, dealing with yet another region and time, nonetheless similarly refer to the ‘warping’ of time and distance stimulated by the participation of small-scale Bronze Age pastoralist groups in expanding institutional domains shaped by burial practices. This domain of ideology expanded through the deployment of a shared material-symbolic syntax that connected participant communities in both ritual practices and via channels of commodity exchange that linked Eurasia during the second millennium CE (see also Frachetti 2014).

Brosseder and Miller, meanwhile, draw attention to the need not only for technological developments like the horse and the wheel but also the socio-political framework essential to mobilising these technologies in novel ways, which for them points to the Iron Age as a key phase of archaic globalisation in the Eurasian steppe. Some of the terminology and ideas in these discussions are drawn directly from the globalisation literature, but the archaeological examples direct particular attention to the material causes and consequences of space–time compression.

The role of certain categories and styles of material culture in defining and reshaping identities as part of novel globalising processes is also a key topic addressed in several chapters. These explore, for example, the production of broadly distributed material culture repertoires as part of a process of creating shared understandings and expressions across cultures coming into contact through globalisation (e.g. chapters by Carter and Brosseder and Miller). Iron Age steppe elites, for example, drew on a shared assemblage of material symbols and goods that were both the outcome of and catalyst for an increasingly expansive flow of materials and globalisation of prestige systems across Eurasia (Brosseder and Miller, this volume). Frachetti and Bullion argue that the material and spatial syntax of Bronze Age burial across Inner Asia likewise reflects the expansion of a shared ideological framework in the second millennium BC.

But shared objects and symbols do not always imply shared ideologies. It is unlikely, for example, that ‘Ubaid material culture in Neolithic

Arabian societies functioned in the same way as it did in more metropolitan Mesopotamia, though Carter does consider a certain sharing of broader meanings and functions likely. The spread of ceramic technology across northern Eurasia through the interactions of hunter-gatherers from the terminal Pleistocene onwards (Hommel, this volume) likely also led to local interpretations and perceptions. These kinds of local re-orientations of meaning are part of a process that Prestholdt (2008) has referred to as ‘cultural domestication’, and that he has described in relation to the import of Western consumer goods into nineteenth-century Zanzibar on the eastern African coast. Such processes certainly continue today, with the reimagining of a wide variety of globalised technologies and objects a key characteristic of contemporary globalisation as well (e.g. Appadurai 1988; Hahn and Kibora 2008).

While the material world constitutes a variety of human-made objects, it also includes biological and ecological elements that factor in as key components of globalisation and that are of interest to archaeologists. As chapters by Denham, Hoogervorst and Boivin, and Morrison in particular make clear, for example, a variety of natural products and species were circulated through early trade networks, with a range of implications for global ecosystems. Spices, broadly conceived to include a variety of wild and cultivated plants, resins and aromatics, as well as an array of products from diverse marine, forest, mountain and arid ecosystems, were harvested, often by small-scale social groups, and fed into global networks of commercial trade for thousands of years. Their procurement in some cases led to an increasing scale of ecological transformation through time (Máñez and Ferse 2010; Boivin 2017).

As documented by archaeologists, the ancient management of plant and animal species led to processes of evolutionary change that culminated in biological domestication, manifested in the creation of new plant and animal forms. These not only saw spectacular distributional changes as part of a broader circulation of species through trade, travel and transport that led to the creation of cosmopolitan assemblages of organisms across almost all landmasses well before the European era (Boivin et al. 2016), they also enabled new types of globalising processes. For example, the domestication of sheep and goat, and a subsequent secondary products revolution, led to new economies structured around trade between increasingly socially differentiated but economically integrated pastoral and sedentary populations, in the Bronze Age Near East and elsewhere (Porter 2012; Rouse and Cerasetti 2014; Frachetti 2013).

The domestication and cultivation of crops like grapes and olives enabled the emergence of market-oriented agricultural systems that saw long-distance trade in products like wine and olive oil (Boivin 2017). The domestication of the one-humped camel enabled nomads to make use of new parts of the Arabian and Syrian deserts, laying the foundation for a fully nomadic lifestyle and the linked emergence of caravan trade routes (Seland, this volume). The

various dimensions of the material world, technological, biological and ecological, are all part of the story of the world's increasing globalisation, from ancient times up to the present day. Archaeology's inherent foregrounding of these dimensions offers myriad opportunities, as demonstrated in this volume, for deepening our understanding of globalisation and the processes that both drive and shape its particular trajectories.

DE-URBANISING GLOBALISATION

If taking an archaeological perspective has the potential to clarify our understanding of globalisation and its material and technological facets, turning our attention also to those outside the sphere of traditional historical analysis offers similar opportunities for rethinking or reorienting our perceptions about globalisation, not just in the past, but also today. Globalisation's link to the emergence of cities, empires and complex socio-political forms is taken for granted, in discussions of both historical and contemporary globalisation. LaBianca and Scham (2016) offer a typical assessment when they note in the introduction to their volume *Connectivity in Antiquity: Globalization as a Long-Term Historical Process* that '[a]ncient empires were the original globalizing forces along with the spread of the world's great religious traditions'. Even Jennings, whose book *Globalizations and the Ancient World* attempts to challenge conventional understandings of past connectivity and interaction, offers a very standard understanding of the role of urban forms. For him, cities drove the emergence of exchange networks, and '[p]eople outside of these cities reacted to these flows by creating their own networks' (Jennings 2011: 3).

The chapters in this volume challenge this understanding of both the catalysts and forces behind globalisation. They do not discount a role for cities, but do challenge scholars to deepen their understanding of globalisation as a process by recognising the role of non-urban players and processes. Jaffe and Flad criticise the 'tendency to assume the existence of a center, the city, from which globalizing powers emanate and influence surrounding regions'. Their chapter challenges scholars to 'consider the ways that communities that were engaging in cultivation and pastoralism, and engaged to different degrees in trade and long-distance networks, contributed to long-term processes of technological change'. Lilley's chapter similarly focuses on moving beyond state-centred perspectives, exploring the complex systems of trade and interaction that can and have evolved, for example in precolonial Melanesia, in the absence of political complexity. In his and numerous other chapters, the globalising forces described existed not just outside of and beyond cities and states, but prior to their emergence. Hommel's discussion of broad flows of knowledge and technology between early Eurasian foragers, for example, also focuses on processes that begin well before urbanisation was underway anywhere globally, let alone in the steppe zone of Eurasia (see also chapter by Frachetti and Bullion).