ONE

THEORIZING TRADE AND CIVILIZATION

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a theoretical framework for the formation of international trade and civilization during the Bronze Age after 3000 BC, while at the same time situating the various contributions within this theoretical context. The focus is thus primarily on the emergence of the constituting elements of trade, as they remained in force throughout history, and accompanied the expansion of trade and civilization. This introductory chapter thus forms a prologue to the book, while the two last chapters form the epilogue. Thomas Lindkvist and Janken Myrdal provide a global overview of trade routes as they had expanded to encompass most of the globe by the fifteenth century, while Jonathan Friedman provides a personal reflection on the historical and theoretical implications of the book, which forms a concluding statement. However, let me begin by looking back at an early contribution to our theme, as it illuminates the rate of empirical and theoretical progress.

More than forty years ago, in 1975, an influential book edited by Jeremy A. Sabloff and C. C. Lamberg-Karlovsky, *Ancient Civilization and Trade*, was published. In this book, archaeologists, social anthropologists, and ancient historians struggled to establish the nature of ancient trade, still deeply embedded in the formalist versus substantivist controversy of the economy initiated by Karl Polany (1947; Polanyi, Arensberg, and Pearson 1957) and spearheaded by Moses Finley (1973). It took several decades of research and the digging up of

new evidence, such as the Phoenician trade emporia in Iberia (Aubet 1993), as well as new interpretations of textual evidence from Anatolia, such as the Old Assyrian "Karum" trade (Gledhill and Larsen 1982), and that from Greece (Isager and Hansen 1975), to bury the theoretical illusion of a formalist versus substantivist dichotomy and the absence of private commercial trade in the ancient Near East and Greece (Ekholm and Friedman 2008: chapter 5; recent update in Morris and Manning 2005). Now, four decades later, scholars are in a position to tackle the question of the role of trade in the expansion of civilization from a new, more informed knowledge base, and with a more informed theoretical understanding of trade. In addition, answers can be expected for the questions posed about this relationship.

In the following, it is proposed that, with the rise of Bronze Age civilizations in Mesopotamia and Egypt from around 3000 BC, the early modern era begins, at least in part. From this moment on, the major institutions and technologies can be identified that were to continue and expand until the breakthrough of the modern industrial age. They included international commodity trade, the rule of public law, the rise of urban life, city-states, and sometimes empires. Therefore, the time period for this book has been set to end in around AD 1500 when a new era began. In the final chapter, Thomas Lindkvist and Janken Myrdal provide a global overview of trade routes at the dawn of this new era. During the intervening period, the book's contributors analyze, in sixteen case studies from around the world, the role trade played in the rise and expansion of civilization (as defined in the preceding text) between 3000 BC and AD 1500. Both concepts, that of trade and that of civilization, are contested. In this chapter, I will, therefore, provide a brief discussion of how the terms are employed in the book. The authors were not required to define *trade*, as it was preferable to let the case studies speak for themselves. In doing so, the heavy historical baggage of the old and now obsolete discussions of "formalist" and "substantivist" approaches in economic theory on trade were avoided (for a recent summary see Aubet 2013: part I). The goals for the book were expressed in the following text from the invitation letter to the speakers:

> One of the most enduring analytical structures of societies is the one between trade and civilization. The great ideological and religious systems tended to change simultaneously over Eurasia, and there were similar economic and demographic trends. What role did trade play in these cultural cycles? Trade is, however, not to be reduced to being identical through history. It is not an unchanging term. Instead the form and content of trade has differed. The role of the individual merchant, the role of the state and the technical conditions for land and sea transport have changed. This resulted in diverging systems of trade and in the development of global trade networks. These were not durable, and it is

of importance to discuss the establishment and decline of great trading network systems.

The two main and general themes are internal and external factors of trade in premodern societies, as outlined in the following:

1. **Internal factors**. The autonomy and institutions of trade seem to have been in place from the very beginning of civilization. The main goal is to explore these organizational structures and their development from 3000 BC to AD 1500. How do they relate to local elites who commissioned traders, and what is the historical role between bulk trade and trade in prestige goods? To what extent have these forms existed simultaneously? How do the institutions of trade relate to political power, and how far beyond the urban cores can their influence be traced?
2. **External factors**. Illuminating the role of trade in the integration of ancient world systems is key. The promotion of civilization and ideas through trade will be exemplified. Is trade a prerequisite for the making of stable political structures, or vice versa? What is the relation between trade and a predatory economy and, furthermore, between trade and war? Under what circumstances could trade networks promote the dissemination of religion, art, and ideology? An important question is also how long-distance trade affected production systems, and social and gender relations in a society.

Thus, for this project, certain structural constants in the persistent role of trade throughout history are assumed; however, it is also acknowledged that the balance of internal and external factors could vary. Therefore, whether or not recurring sets of conditions with similar effects can be identified throughout world history is of interest. The answers provided by the sixteen case studies strongly suggest that this is indeed the case.

However, there have been other constants or preconditions at work in the global expansion of trade and civilization since the rise of urban life and states during the late fourth millennium BC, some of which are addressed in the following text.

COGNITIVE GEOGRAPHIES AND TRADE NETWORKS

In order to reach an understanding of the scale and organization of ancient trading and traveling networks, at least three separate and demanding fields of research must be combined: the nature of the ancient knowledge of the world (including its cognitive maps, sometimes preserved in texts, but more often not), the nature of mobile technologies and their capacities (from ships to wagons and caravans, but also the infrastructure and logistics to support them), and, finally, archaeological and textual knowledge of the goods being

traded, as well as their origin and distribution. In addition, there is the difficult question of the quantities of goods being transported. Unifying these three realms of research demands the construction of relevant interpretative frameworks. To achieve this, it is first necessary to assemble as much comparative theoretical knowledge as possible about the role of travels, especially the kind of institutions needed to carry out long-distance trade (Kristiansen and Larsson 2005: chapter 2; Oka and Kusimba 2008).

Trade networks need agents who are motivated to travel, and who have technologies of mobility to support them and the institutions so that the institutions can provide social security (Bajamovic 2008; Kristiansen and Larsson 2005: chapter 2; Larsen 2015). All of these conditions are summarized in a mental template of cognitive geographies that makes distance and dangers, routes and destinations familiar to the traveler, and that were often preserved in mythology and oral traditions about distant geographies, from Odysseus to Pytheas (Cunliffe 2001; Dueck 2012; Duerr 2011; Fox 2008). In this way, they make the world seem smaller, as distant places become familiar, at least to the professional traveler, whether sailor, trader, tinker, warrior, or some mix of all that. Their profession is about transgressing traditional liminal borders and connecting distant places and their goods, making a profit in the process (Monroe 2011). A few citations illuminate this:

- From Malinowski (1922/1987: 298) on Kula mythology:

> Here we must try to reconstruct the influence of myth upon this vast landscape, as it colors it, gives it meaning, and transforms it into something live and familiar … I often observed how deep was their interest in sections of landscape impregnated with legendary meaning, how the elders would point and explain, the younger would gaze and wonder, while the talk was full of mythological features … Men say their true personality can only be expressed in the Kula. Kula men see their ceremonial exchange activity as their best potential avenue for immortality.

- Homer on trading and traveling, in the words of Menelaus:

> "But when it comes to men, I feel that few or none can rival me in wealth, for it took me seven years and great hardship to amass this fortune and bring it home in my ships. My travels took me to Cyprus, to Phoenicia, and to Egypt. Ethiopians, Sidonians, Erembians, I visited them all; and I saw Libya too…" (The Odyssey, Book 4, 75–85).
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> It covers a good deal of the round-trip of the Uluburun ship, although its cargo also contained objects from faraway places such as Scandinavia (amber), Italy (flange hilted sword), the Black Sea area (stone axe scepter), and Iberia/ Cornwall (tin) (Tas and Özbirecikli 2009).

Our interpretations must strive to reconstruct the conditions that formed the basis for cognitive geographies during later prehistory and early history (Bajamovic 2011). In this respect, the Old Assyrian archives from Kanesh offer the most striking evidence of day-to-day realities for traders four thousand years ago, the role of local taxes and inns for the caravans, and also attempts to avoid taxes. According to Barjamovic:

> the trade carried out by the Assyrians inside Anatolia represents a considerably larger financial and logistic challenge. Plainly, the process of the gradual establishment and permanent upkeep of an extensive network of inns, bridges and well-kept roads, which we know marked the turning point of early medieval trade in Europe, must have had a similar precursor in Anatolia in the Middle Bronze Age. Memoranda listing the fees paid by Assyrian merchants at bridges and inns abound in the corpus, offering a compelling impression of the extensive physical infrastructure and intricate political landscape needed to support a trade of this magnitude. (Barjamovic 2008: 94)

Mercantile travels in the Mediterranean and Near East, however, were often hazardous. The Amarna letters refer to a number of incidents of traders being attacked and murdered (Bryce 2002: 89–90). In one letter, the king of Babylon, Burna-Buriyash II, complains to Akhenaten about his merchants having been murdered in Canaan by subjects of the pharaoh and demands that the perpetrators be punished. The Hittite kings also tried to encourage the authorities of the districts located on the trading routes to put greater efforts into protecting traveling merchants against crime and to assume responsibility for the merchants' safety. When they failed, they were forced to pay substantial compensation to the traders or to their families and business associates. A merchant could claim compensation for damage to his cargo or equipment as well, whether caused accidentally or through negligence. These efforts to create a legal framework for trade and to protect merchants, even if often unsuccessful, highlight the importance attached to their role in the network of international communication during the Late Bronze Age, as well as afterward. This form of communication demanded technologies of transport and institutions to support travelers and traders.

THE RISE OF MOBILE TECHNOLOGIES AND INSTITUTIONS

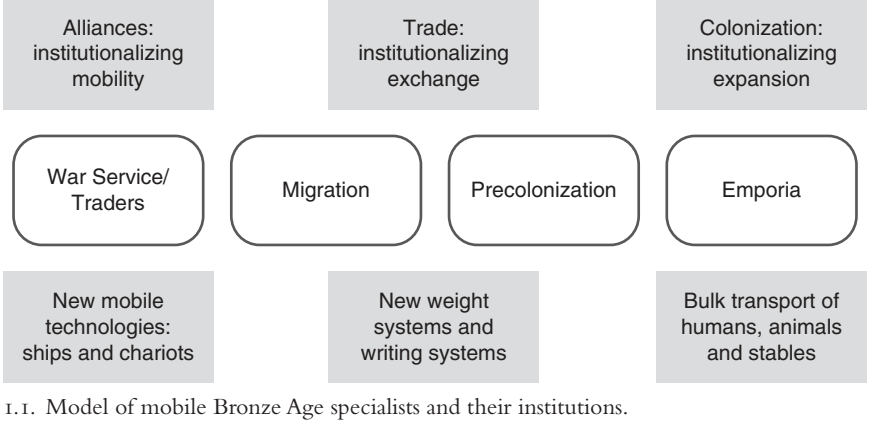
Products that were needed by all, and yet could be monopolized in one way or another are at the heart of international trade. Therefore, the beginning of international trade coincides with the rise of metallurgy and woolen textiles. The Bronze Age was a mobile world for the very simple economic reason that copper and tin, or bronze in finished or semifinished form, had to be distributed to all societies throughout the known world from a few source

areas. Systematic trade in staples such as copper and tin (Bartelheim and Stäuble 2009; Bell 2012; Shennan 1993), woolen textiles (Algaze 2005; Monroe 2009), and salt (Harding 2013; Kern et al. 2009) formed the backbone of Bronze Age economies. The control of copper and salt mines and the subsequent trade in these commodities had the same economic significance as the control of and trade in oil and gas resources have today.

During the Bronze Age, this trade was couched in political alliances where prestige goods played an important role in forging such relationships, whether in Barbarian Europe or in the Near East, as exemplified in the *Amarna Diplomacy* (Cohen and Westbrook 2000). One precondition for the operation of this economic and political system that was based on a dialectic between staple and wealth finance (Earle 2002) was the rapid development of new maritime technologies during the third and early second millennium BC, which for the first time allowed safe sea journeys over longer distances and provided larger ships that carried bulk cargoes across open waters (Broodbank 2014; Needham 2009). Likewise, the chariot symbolized a new speedy transport for warfare that had long-term historical consequences in the use and breeding of horses for transport. Pastoral societies at the peripheries of ancient states provided them with well-bred horses, as well as caravans across the steppe that connected the civilizations of eastern and western Eurasia, the beginnings of the Silk Road (Kristiansen 2011; Mair and Hickman 2014).

These technological revolutions expanded the potential for long-distance mobility and trade on a systematic basis from the beginning of the Bronze Age, as demonstrated by Toby Wilkinson in his chapter (see also Wilkinson 2014). By combining sea- and land-based journeys, new regions could suddenly be connected. In addition, the multitude of routes promoted competition. They also expanded the demands for specialists, which included shipbuilders and navigators, and constructors of wagons and trainers of horses and camels for land transport. New specialized social groups or classes, with a new institutional framework to support them, emerged, and, at the same time, these specialists expanded the cognitive geographies of Bronze Age communities by tenfold or more. The recent demonstration of the geographical knowledge that the Old Assyrian trading families mastered in order to organize and control the metal trade in Anatolia is staggering (Bajamovice 2011).

The regular connectivity between Bronze Age communities meant that knowledge could be obtained about faraway places on a regular basis. Traders were the new specialists that provided such knowledge and had the organizational skills necessary to connect distant places and their goods. In addition, warriors became widely sought after as mercenaries in the eastern Mediterranean during the Late Bronze Age, from the fifteenth century onward, as is well attested in texts and on stelae, especially in Egypt (Morkot 2007). It explains how new sword types could spread rapidly from the Mediterranean



1.1. Model of mobile Bronze Age specialists and their institutions.

to Scandinavia probably within a few years. Thus, the combination of trade in metal and, possibly, weapons, as well as traveling warrior groups and their accompanying specialists, created an interconnected, "globalized" world without historical precedent.

It was a world whose social and political complexity spanned from city-states and palace economies in the eastern Mediterranean/Near East to chiefdoms of varying degrees of complexity in the western Mediterranean and Europe (Papadimitriou and Kriga 2012; Parkinson and Galaty 2009). However, certain commonalities in social organization existed that allowed metal to flow between these communities. The question then arises: What were the social mechanisms that facilitated this flow of goods and metal? Which social categories of people could travel and for what reasons? Which institutions facilitated their travels? And, finally, which technologies supported their travels, over land and at sea?

TRADERS AND THEIR INSTITUTIONS

Figure 1.1 lists the relevant categories of people/social groups and their institutions during the Bronze Age.

The categories of people who traveled were traders and smiths, warriors and mercenaries, migrants, and diplomats. Among the examples from the Bronze Age, the Uluburun and Cape Gelidonya shipwrecks should be mentioned as examples of the maritime technology that allowed bulk trade and that also carried warriors or mercenaries to distant courts, while they protected the cargo. On the other hand, the sea-peoples exemplify migrations and colonization during the twelfth century BC, and were later followed by directed migrations during the eleventh century BC (Sandars 1978).

Agents – whether traders, mercenaries, or merchants – can only travel if routes, harbors, and institutions exist to facilitate and protect travelers. The

institutions or social processes that allowed such movements are political alliances, and linked to these were the rules of guest-friendship for merchants, emporia and colonies, and treaties and contracts. Historical examples include the Old Assyrian Karum trade to Anatolia during the nineteenth and eighteenth centuries BC, as demonstrated in Barjamovic's contribution, which presents a model followed throughout the Bronze Age (Monroe 2009), and supported by international diplomacy (Cohen and Westbrook 2000). The textually well-documented Near Eastern trade (Larsen 1987 and 2015) and the Uluburun sunken cargo (Pulak 1998) – a single unsuccessful journey out of probably dozens of similar successful annual maritime transports – exemplify the severe problems scholars face when trying to interpret the scarce material evidence of the lives of traders. This group mostly left scant archaeological evidence (Cline 2007), perhaps with the exception of their burials (van Wijngaarden 2012). In comparison with the Near East, it is justified to ask whether so-called Mycenaean pottery and settlement evidence in the western Mediterranean in Sicily and south Italy, and later, also further north in the Adriatic, are indications of small groups of private traders or families that created a form of Karum trade, embedded within local kingdoms/chiefdoms, such as the Assyrian traders in Anatolia, leaving only scant traces of their presence (Cazzella and Rechhio 2009 and 2012; Tanasi 2009; but see Blake 2008 and Jung and Mehofer 2014 for a skeptical view). This example might be called a maritime parallel to the land-based Near Eastern trade, forming a kind of precolonization (Ruiz-Galvez Priego 2008), to be followed up during the subsequent centuries by Phoenician and later Greek colonization (Celestino, Rafael, and Armada 2008), as demonstrated in Christopher Monroe's contribution.

In his article, ***Rahul Oka*** creates a model for how specialist traders and their institutions adapt to changing political and economic environments in East Asia, called the Trading System Model (TSM). It appears, however, that this model can be applied more widely. He argues, "since the Bronze Age until the 18th century CE, the trade and commerce that transpired even at a global level depended upon the adaptive resilience of hundreds and even thousands of overlapping regional trade networks maintained by trading specialists who negotiated with local elites, producers, and consumers. The overlap of these networks enabled goods, services, and peoples to travel across Afro-Eurasia." The new technologies and institutions of mobility that were in force since the Bronze Age thus created an interconnected world where long-distance travels could be carried out under relatively safe conditions, whether by traders or warriors and their companions, including women and children (Frei et al. 2015). Consequently, trade routes and resources became a new arena of conflict, leading to competition, and even wars. These were also an important element in the concept of comparative advantage.

COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE AND REGIONAL DIVISION OF LABOR

The rule of comparative advantage, as defined by Ricardo in 1817, describes the rationality of specializing in the production of something to enter into an exchange relationship, rather than trying to be self-sufficient (Ricardo 1817). Advantage is taken of differences in environment, recourse, skill, know-how, social power, and social organization and is then transmitted into specialized labor and information in order to create a surplus (Rowlands and Ling 2013). The Ricardian model depends on a universal theory of labor as a commodity for the extraction of accumulated wealth through unequal exchange. A pure idea of commodity value would not apply in pre-capitalist contexts (nor, as many would argue, in modern capitalism) so a more polycentric value of labor must be imagined, which differs qualitatively on the basis of, for example, status, age, and gender, consistent with Marx's criticism of Aristotle's household theory of value as incapable of taking into account the value of slave labor. Unequal exchange is therefore likely to be embedded in varying social and cultural contexts through which the value of labor is filtered and transformed.

Thus, comparative advantage relates to modes of production and trade in at least two different ways. It defines the vertical relations within societies and the horizontal relations between regions. The term is useful in describing the horizontal relations of production within a regional system, regional inequality, and differentiation. The term is also useful in terms of distinguishing the nature of the specialized trade among the European regions in the Bronze Age, and relations between the center and margins. Thus, the notion of comparative advantage concretizes the total sum of social reproduction, i.e., the mode of production. As such, it is at the heart of ancient World Systems since they are based on a regional division of labor, as discussed by ***Philippe Beujard*** in his contribution to this volume. One may indeed propose that ancient World Systems represented a dominant mode of production. Thus, metal trade (in copper and tin) would be the driving force behind a Bronze Age mode of production or World System. Later Iron Age or early medieval World Systems would see other influences. The following provides an example of how it applied to Bronze Age Europe.

Simply put, a comparative advance implies that every region in Europe was able to enter the Bronze Age metal trade by providing goods that they controlled, but others needed or valued, such as amber from the Baltic, tin from Cornwall, salt and silver from the Carpathians, and wool from Hungary and the Po Delta. Thus, the Nordic region more or less stopped consuming amber with the beginning of the Bronze Age, because it was more profitable to use it in exchange for copper and tin. Consumption moved in this way to regions where amber was in the highest demand: Wessex, south Germany, and, especially, the Aegean and the Near East. It illuminates how mechanisms of value

differences worked as economic instruments of growth and wealth accumulation. Thus, the universal need for copper and tin stimulated the development of new needs and values in other fields, which in turn supported an economic division of labor in Europe. It granted some regions specific economic opportunities, but, in the long term, it stimulated every region to specialize in providing products that other regions demanded, and which, in time, would also include warriors, slaves, and horses (Earle et al. 2015). In a larger geographical perspective, Warburton has exemplified how comparative advances in terms of control over precious materials of high value such as amber, lapis lazuli, and jade played an important role in shaping the early Bronze Age international trade system or World System that connected Northern India and Central Asia with the Middle East and Europe (Warburton 2011: Figure 10.5–10.9)

During the Bronze Age, bronze – or, rather, copper and tin – made the world go round, similar to oil and gas today; every community needed bronze for their social and economic reproduction, but copper and tin would only be provided in sufficient quantities from a few large mines. Consequently, the metal trade provided a commercial base upon which other products could be added. The existence of this trade also implies that it is difficult to talk about centers and peripheries; instead, it reflects the continuous and expanding trade networks from China and India to the Mediterranean, which gradually also included Europe. In the process, previous peripheries became integrated into the system, and when some regions fell out, others were added to keep it going. However, when bronze was gradually replaced by iron as the motor in the global system during the first millennium BC much of this international trade collapsed, because iron could be provided locally in many regions. It was only later when specialized iron products and steel took over that the international commercial drive to connect all regions was re-established. This re-establishment of a global World System from the beginning of our time is the main theme of ***Philippe Beaujard's*** contribution, which summarizes part of his magnum opus, *Les mondes de l'ocean Indien*' (volume 1), from 2012.

AGENTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE NETWORKS

During the Bronze Age, vast networks of communication connected the European continent with the Eastern and Western Mediterranean, the Near East and Central Asia, transforming physical geography into social and economic geographies. Social networks consisted of interpersonal relations and diplomatic alliances, established and maintained through the exchange of extraordinary objects. Increased connectivity fostered the emergence of political alliances, treaties and the rule of guest-friendship, allowing the agents of social interaction to travel to distant places and acquire knowledge, both geographical and technological (Kristiansen and Larsson 2005, particularly