CHAPTER ONE

NEW PERSPECTIVES ON LONG-DISTANCE TRADE AND SOCIAL COMPLEXITY

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BACKGROUND

How an ancient object, artefact or commodity has moved over vast distances from one region to another, crossed major seas or travelled by land over extensive territories, has occupied and intrigued scholars in many disciplines over the years (Sabloff and Lamberg-Karlovsky 1975; Kristiansen et al. 2018). This subject becomes even more intriguing knowing that no textual evidence can give us a hint or a glimpse how this was organized. Since the beginning of modern humans in the Palaeolithic, migration and mobility have driven demographic expansion and the movement of material culture. At the same time, social interaction and intermarriage between groups constituted a basic institutional pattern among modern humans to prevent inbreeding, as demonstrated by ancient DNA (Sikora et al. 2017). New genetic evidence provides insights into patterns of human mobility and genetic admixture. However, the onset of trade and exchange as an institutionalized activity is still not well understood. The challenge increases once we move back in time before any written sources can inform us. How did pre-modern/pre-state societies organize themselves to engage in long-distance exchange? How did such societies communicate? How did such societies foster conditions and/or social institutions that facilitated long-distance exchange? Can the rise of social complexity be connected to long-distance exchange? Exactly how far did traders, raiders and visitors travel in prehistory and how were there distant exchanges

organized? All of these questions can be boiled down to two basic questions: when and under what circumstances did trade become institutionalized in pre-state societies, and what forms did such institutionalization take?

In this book, we illustrate early forms of trade in tribal Neolithic and Bronze Age non-state societies in western Eurasia and outside. We also present ethnographic case studies, which may help us to understand prehistoric cases and thus form another way of illuminating a deep past without access to written sources.

Recently, novel methodologies, new archaeological discoveries and, not least, innovative theoretical approaches have challenges prevailing assumptions and interpretations. This trend is however not new:

> I'm told that archaeology is changing in two ways. First archaeologists themselves are bringing to bear new physical, chemical and statistical techniques of analysis .... The second sort of innovation is conceptual rather than technical ... archaeologists are looking for new theories and concepts capable of powerful explanations of the societies, economies and polities they unearth.
>
> (Dalton 1975: 65)

How far has this development taken us since 1975? Most significantly, the science revolution in ancient DNA has dramatically changed our understanding of prehistory (Kristiansen 2014), by documenting widespread migrations during later prehistory, not least during the third millennium BC (Allentoft et al. 2015; Haak et al. 2015). Thus, the inclusion of bioarchaeological perspectives, prospection methods, systematically investigated archaeological sites along with emerging technologies are transforming our understanding of the role that long-distance exchange played in evolutionary processes (Cashdan 1980; Vanhaeren and d'Errico 2005; Crown and Jeffrey 2009). aDNA and isotopic studies of human remains as well as lead isotopes of ancient metals have revolutionized our understanding of mobility and long-distance exchange in prehistory. Recent research on ancient DNA sequencing now shows that mass gene flow took place from present-day Ukraine/South Russia to north and western Europe in the third millennium BC (Allentoft et al. 2015). By combining these results with strontium isotopic analysis, as well as historical linguistics, it has become possible to model the process of migration and its local impact (Kristiansen et al. 2017). Moreover, lead isotopes of ancient metals from the Scandinavian Bronze Age indicate that copper was imported from the Alps, Iberia and the British Isles (Ling et al. 2014, 2019; Melheim et al.2018). In short, new ideas, methodologies and results challenge many pre-existing ways of understanding the origins and development of social complexity and its connection to long-distance exchange. All of these new discoveries call for, if not a redefinition, then at least a reinterpretation and recontextualization of

'primitive trade' in tribal and ranked/chiefdom societies. We need to balance migration and mobility against trade in goods for purposes of barter and trade. While there are many forms of social and political interaction that may result in the movement of goods, especially prestige goods (Helms 1988, 1993; Kristiansen and Larsson 2005; Vandkilde et al. 2015), we need to define those circumstances and contexts when they are accompanied by or replaced by organized trade, which also includes barter. Thus, gift-exchange and barter/trade may be considered two sides of the same coin (Gell 1992). We define primitive trade/exchange (whether long-distance or short-distance – depending on definition) as the movement of goods (whether utilitarian or prestige items) beyond one's own group, in order to sell, barter or exchange with other goods or services to earn a 'profit'. Profit is normally based on value differences between points of origin and points of delivery but couched in diplomacy, to rephrase Sahlins (1972, chapter six). While forms of 'profit' vary, as do the social contexts of trade, we concur with Sahlins' analysis and definition of primitive trade in his final chapter of *Stone Age Economics* (Sahlins 1972). Here the geographical diversification of specialist production is seen as foundational for trade, similar to Ricardo's (1817) original notion of comparative advantage. Traders manipulate production and value systems to transfer value differences in geographical space and between different value regimes, for example, prestige goods and utilitarian goods. Here Weiner's notion of 'inalienable possessions' enters as an intermediate force in these processes (Weiner 1992). Since Sahlins' seminal work was published, we have seen important contributions dealing with the role of gifts and commodities (Gregory 1982; Humphrey and Hugh-Jones 1992; Godelier 1999; Brück 2015; Brandherm et al. 2018), as well as on the changing conditions of trade versus warfare in a historical perspective (Wiessner and Tumu 1998). Such discussions will be further explored later. As will be clear from the contributions in this book, it has increasingly become possible to define and sometimes quantify movements of goods that may fall under the definition of primitive trade. We believe this represents a foundation upon which to build more integrated theoretical models, also discussed in Chapters 16 and 17.

While much early research on the relationship between long-distance exchange and the rise of social complexity was predicated on quantitative top-down models (Renfrew 1975), the reaction against this pushed arguments in the opposite direction (Hodder 1982). More recently, we have seen attempts to balance these opposing strands by including both perspectives, in line with a multi-scalar approach (Feinman 2012; Neitzel and Earle 2014; Kristiansen et al. 2018: 16). In the following, we provide a historical overview of the different theoretical strands which dominated discussions on long-distance trade and the rise of social complexity, as to illuminate our present situation.

LONG-DISTANCE EXCHANGE AND THE RISE OF SOCIAL COMPLEXITY

The connection between long-distance exchange and social complexity has been a central issue in both archaeology and social anthropology. The seminal works of Boas (1911), Mauss (2016 [1925]) and Malinowski (1922), dealing with societal organization and long-distance exchange along the Northwest Coast of North America and among the Trobriand Islanders, became important theoretical cornerstones in later discourses within anthropology and archaeology. Moreover, aspects of social evolution and its connection to trade and social organization have been intensely debated over the years. This discourse has a long history that dates back to the works of Spencer and Morgan's Darwinist approaches that were later criticized by Boas, Malinowski and Mauss (Neitzel and Earle 2014: 182).

During the 1950 and 1960s, two theoretical perspectives came to dominate the discourse on primitive trade: the so-called *formalist* and *substantivist* approaches. Both perspectives had their origins in political economy, the formalist approach can be traced back to Adam Smith's liberal notions, while the substantivist approach can be traced back to Marx's views on political economy (Earle 2002). Embedded in this debate were also issues of social evolution and social complexity. Thus, it was the Marxist-inspired historian Karl Polanyi, who intensified the debate between these approaches (Polanyi 1968) when he criticized the formalist method for projecting industrialist economies onto non-entrepreneur/non-industrial societies. Polanyi favoured the ideas of Marx and Engels and Max Weber's functionalist approach (Dalton 1975). Polanyi's work became an important keystone for the structural functionalistic direction in anthropology, which Marshall Sahlins (1972) and Maurice Godelier (1977) expanded on.

The debate between formalist and substantivist perspectives intensified during the 1970s, and two influential books epitomized increased interests in explaining the role of trade in archaeology and anthropology. In 1975, *Ancient Civilization and Trade* brought together researchers from archaeology and anthropology. Here is George Dalton's extensive discussion of Karl Polanyi's analysis of long-distance trade (Dalton 1975), as well as Karl Polanyi's most quoted essay: 'Traders and Trade' (Polanyi 1975). Many topics that Polanyi outlined remain relevant (see this volume along with Kristiansen et al. 2018). Here we wish to mention the section that elaborates on motives for trade (such as status motives and profit motives) at individual and institutional levels in different societal and historical settings. Secondly, the section dealing with movable goods in relation to *types of trade* and *characteristics of trade interest*, including piracy-booty, staples-public policies and luxuries-class interest (Polanyi 1975: 146). Thirdly, the section dealing with *transportation routes, means*

of transport, and the political technological organization of trade are of significance. Perhaps the most influential section deals with the classification of trade: *gift trade, administered trade, and market trade*. In sum, Polanyi identified the social processes or forces linking long-distance trade with social evolution and complexity. He argued that individuals secured elevated social standing and subsequently control over society by securing and strategically distributing exotic goods and valuables (Polanyi 1975), also labelled prestige goods economies by Friedman and Rowlands (1977) and wealth finance by D'Altroy and Earle (1985).

Colin Renfrew put forward a somewhat different perspective in his attempt to formulate a typology of modes of trade and the evolution of trade through the definition and quantification of distance curves of traded objects (Renfrew 1975; Hedeager 1978). His point of departure is the Early State Module (ESM) which connects central place theory to the evolution of the ESM while moving from reciprocity to redistribution. Many of his models and concepts are still useful, as summarized in 'Modes of trade and their spatial implications' (Renfrew 1975: figure 10). Furthermore, his critique of Polanyi´s scepticism of pre-state market exchange remains relevant (Larsson 2005; Warburton 2018; Kristiansen and Demps and Winterhalder 2019). While human social activity is somewhat lost in Renfrew's subsystems and quantitative models, they remain useful for archaeological theory building, an approach that has seen a recent revival (Demps and Winterhalder 2019).

In 1977, another influential book on trade appeared: *Exchange Systems in Prehistory* by Earle and Ericsson. Here the application of new science-based methods of chemical characterization of raw materials and their source was introduced as well as comparative models of exchange. Thus, during the 1970s, trade and exchange figures prominently in archaeological theory and interpretation (Adams 1974; Kohl 1975; Rowlands 1980), in parallel with new methods to characterize the exchange of goods, as evidenced in the interest in geographic methods in archaeology (Hodder 1978).

The interest in trade and exchange lessened since the mid-1980s with the introduction of post-processual theories in archaeology (Hodder 1978; Agbe-Davies and Bauer 2010), focusing more on contextual studies of local communities rather than their distant interactions. We cite from Agbe-Davies and Bauer (2010):

> Of the 625 articles that appear in the Anthropological Literature database when doing a keyword search of 'archaeology' and 'trade', only 127 were published in the 1990s, compared with numbers almost double that in both 1970s and 1980s

Also, the theoretical framework of social evolution developed during the 1960s and early 1970s (Sahlins 1958; Service 1962, 1975; Fried 1967) was scrutinized

critically by post-processualists (Shanks and Tilley 1987) and radically demeaned as essentialist. We quote:

> We suggest that evolutionary theories, of whatever kind, need to be abandoned in favour of a theoretical framework that can adequately cope with the indelibly social texture of change within a framework avoiding both reductionism and essentialism.
>
> (Shanks and Tilley 1987: 138)

From the late 1980s onwards, studies on long-distance trade and its evolutionary significance were downplayed in favour of local interaction by individual agents. The pendulum had taken a full swing from essentialism to individualism, corresponding to changes in global ideological climate. During the 1990s into the early 2000s, these conflicting paradigms were increasingly replaced by applications of world system theory and postcolonial theory, at least for later prehistory. Much of this approach relives the early political economy concerns. Inspired by Wallerstein's world-systemic approach, many scholars applied core and periphery models to analyze unequal relations between communities in prehistoric Europe (Sherratt 1993; Sherrat and Sherratt 1993; Kristiansen 1998). Due to critique of its system-based top-down perspective (Stein 1999; Wilkinson 2018), a more contextualized world system approach was developed and applied to the Bronze Age (Kristiansen and Larsson 2005; Warburton 2018), even if not accepted by all (Harding 2013).

Partly as a reaction to world system theory, the postcolonial movement emerged as a response to grand narratives in Western history writings in the humanities and social sciences (Vandkilde et al. 2015). A key point was the re-institution of local agency during processes of colonization and following from that a more balanced understanding of the dialectic forces between colonizers and colonized in their local contexts, not least in the ancient Mediterranean (Hodos 2006; Dietler 2010; Van Dommelen and Knapp 2010). Researchers in anthropology and archaeology began applying ideas from this approach to prehistoric trade and interaction (Agbe-Davies and Bauer 2010; Vandkilde et al. 2015), which also included the popular concept of 'hybridity' resulting from meetings and merging of traditions (Van Dommelen 2005; Stockhammer 2012). However, a growing critique of post-colonial discourse pointed to its inability to account for exploitation (Monroe 2018) and that the vagueness of some core concepts from this discourse, such as hybridity, ambiguity and liminality, tends to conceal patterns of dominance and social inequality (Silliman 2015). Others, however, have pointed to ways of reconciling Marxist and post-colonial approaches (Sinha and Varma 2015).

Parallel with these developments, the early 2000s saw a revival of theories connecting the role of long-distance trade in prestige goods with elites,

inspired by earlier work of Mary Helms and others (Helms 1979, 1993; Hayden 1995; Marcus and Flannery 1996; Kristiansen 1998). The role of travellers, traders, warriors and their institutions in the Bronze Age was highlighted by Kristiansen and Larsson (2005), and this was followed by publications on maritime institutions and agents operating in Bronze Age Europe (Monroe 2011, 2018; Ling et al. 2018a). A growing corpus of literature has illuminated the intimate relationship between trade and warfare (Chacon and Mendoza 2017; Horn and Kristiansen 2017; Dolfini et al. 2018; Roscoe et al. 2019).

Other theoretical advances of relevance for long-distance trade are linked to collective action theory (Hardin 1982; Blanton and Fargher 2007). Collective action refers to the coordinated actions of individuals toward a common goal (Hardin 1982; Feinman 2017). More specifically, such a 'common goal *can only be attained* if individuals contribute toward the objective' (Chacon and Hayward 2017: 223, emphasis added). Thus, Chacon and Hayward (2017) show how the securing exotic trade goods and/or valued commodities can establish incipient social hierarchies in a trans-egalitarian setting. They also document how the presence of an incipient social hierarchy, particularly during a military crisis, fosters coordination, which facilitates collective action. When onerous for actors (in terms of resources, time, labour, effort, etc.), collective action may fail and it is in that failure that collective action problems arise (Hardin 1982). Additionally, one of the most persistent problems hindering collective action is the coordination of group activities (Simpson et al. 2012). Such coordination problems arise in any collective action scenario where actors benefit only if sufficient numbers of others also act (Chwe 2001). Collection action theory may be considered an attempt to bridge agency theory with forces and motivations leading to trade among other practices (see Hayden and Earle; see also Chapter 16).

The said developments led to a theoretical revival of theories on long-distance exchange and the role of political economy, social formations and social complexity, evidenced in a series of articles, books and proceedings (Blanton and Fargher 2007; Bauer and Agbe-Davies 2010; Hansen and Müller 2011; Vandkilde et al. 2015; Chacon and Hayward 2017; Chacon and Mendoza 2017; Kristiansen et al. 2018), as well as reformulations of Marxist theory on modes of production, social evolution and comparative advantage (Rowlands and Ling 2013; Earle and Spriggs 2015; Earle et al. 2015; Ling et al. 2017; Müller 2017; Rosenswig and Cunningham 2017).

The earlier volume *Trade and Civilization* (Kristiansen et al. 2018) put forth a variety of new theoretical aspects on trade, from the origin of prices and values to a deconstruction of traditional definitions of civilization. Kristiansen (2018: 16) identifies three major strands in the current discourse of exchange that can be summarized as follows:

- 'Big Histories': top down, macro perspectives; elite-based structure of exchange within a framework of an expanding world system.
- 'Human lives': bottom-up, micro perspectives; heterarchical and network and agent-based aspects of trade focusing on materiality.
- 'Multi scalar approaches' which seek to integrate macro and micro perspectives; hierarchical-heterarchical, agent-based materiality studies with quantitative perspectives.

Most theoretical strands can be found now in *Trade Before Civilization*, even if it deals with non-state societies that were involved in gift-based exchange systems connected to elite driven ritual practices of consumption (via hoarding and burial goods). In this way, elites define new ideologies and values. When such practices expanded, this may have spurred the formation of 'globalized' trade networks of shared gift economies. These new theoretical trends have been facilitated by the return of a comparative approach in anthropology and archaeology especially.

THE RETURN OF A CONTEXTUALIZED COMPARATIVE APPROACH

One of the main objectives of our conference was to transcend geographical boundaries in order to stimulate intellectual debate and to promote the cross-fertilization of ideas. We find ourselves here in line with recent attempts to revitalize the comparative approach in anthropology and archaeology (Smith 2012). This revitalization is less quantitative than in the 1960s and 1970s, and it is rather based upon a theoretically informed contextualized approach that combines anthropology and archaeology, such as Cameron (2016) on the role of captives in pre-state societies or comparisons through time between Bronze Age and Viking Age societies in south Scandinavia (Ling et al. 2018a). Also, the role of specific institutions has been the object of recent comparative research. Examples of institutions which may have facilitated the formation of long-distance networks are secret societies (Hayden 2018), Bronze Age maritime institutions (Ling et al. 2018b), and Xenia, as discussed in Chapters 2, 8, 13 and 14. 'Secret societies were able to transcend kinship, community, and ethnic boundaries by establishing regional networks that provided members with safe passage, lodging, preferential trading status, and access to ritual activities far beyond their local communities. Members could be recognized as initiates at distant locations by means of arcane and enigmatic physical symbols. The dispersed, regional widespread nature of these networks also likely facilitated the diffusion of particular artistic styles and motifs' (Chacon 2020).

With our book, we wish to revitalize interdisciplinary and comparative perspectives, which so productively expanded our understanding of trade and exchange during the 1960s and 1970s, but now with the advantage of

having a larger corpus of contextualized, comparative theory, as well as evidence from new science-based methods, such as strontium isotopes and aDNA at our disposal.

THEMATIC ORGANISATION AND CHAPTER SUMMARIES

Despite the fact that this volume comprises case studies from different time periods and different geographical regions, chapters share a common research agenda which focuses on the important role that political economies have played in the rise of social complexity. This work analyzes how the procurement and use of prestige objects from afar (exotica) were used to forge and maintain power relationships within transegalitarian, ranked and/or chiefdom level societies. These chapters enhance our understanding of the economy of stateless societies, the role that comparative advantage played in the ascendancy of certain polities and the role played by specific institutions, such as secret societies and Xenia, but also how individual agents played a role in generating surpluses and expanding exchange networks beyond the local group, of how feasts were used to create debt and to forge wide-ranging alliances in the process, the various forms of transport technology used to secure trade goods and how aggrandizers were able to use exotica for political purposes by strategically controlling the key bottlenecks in the transport and access to such goods.

These strands are explored and analyzed by Hayden and Earle in Chapter 16: 'Political Economy Perspectives in Trade before and beyond Civilizations'. Hayden and Earle connect and comment on individual contributions in this volume and address them against the backdrop of five steps that explains the ties between social exchange, social relations and the rise of social dominance and centrality. Their discussion provides a roadmap for understanding the role that political economies have played in the rise of social complexity. More specifically, they posit that local and regional economic institutions were linked to some distant (inter-regional) trade in exotic goods and that control of key bottlenecks contributed to the rise of social complexity. They emphasize that understanding trade in pre-state societies requires an understanding of the contexts in which distant trade evolved and, in turn, influenced the development of political institutionalized contexts and individual practices within those contexts.

Lastly, a review of the literature reveals that some edited volumes focusing on the rise of social complexity appear to endorse certain theoretical approaches over others. Contrastingly, the goal of the present volume is not to promote a particular theoretical standpoint; rather, the goal is to put forth case studies written from a wide variety of theoretical perspectives. However,

since the chapters in this volume span many approaches and themes, we organised the contributions according to four major theoretical strands:

- Exchange and social evolution; forms of trade in egalitarian, transegalitarian, and chiefdom societies;
- The role that specific institutions and agents played in long-distance exchange;
- The role of political economy and elite control in long distance exchange;
- Marxian and post-colonial approaches as well as world system theory in relation to gift exchange and macro-regional exchange.

Exchange and Social evolution: The Role of Trade in Egalitarian, Transegalitarian and Chiefdom Societies

In Chapter 2, Johannes Muller investigates the North Central European and South Scandinavian Funnel Beaker phenomena of the Neolithic period. The archaeological examples he puts forth support the position of anarchic oriented anthropologists, who hold that a society without rulers does not constitute an exception but rather a main line in human history. It stands in some contrast to models of social evolution and social complexity put forth by Hayden (1995) and by Earle and Spriggs (2015). In its place, Müller argues that innovations, knowledge and new materials were obtained by long-distance contacts. When merged with ideology, they stabilized and solidified non-hierarchical governance over and over again, a process that lasted more than forty generations.

Mike Parker Pearson (Chapter 3) argues for the co-existence of both egalitarian and transegalitarian social structures being involved in the transport and exchange that took place in association with the megalith construction of Stonehenge in Neolithic Britain. Thanks to isotope analysis, archaeologists are now uncovering the complex networks of labour and livestock exchange associated with the building of Stonehenge. The case for Stonehenge as a monument of ancestral unity, linking the people of western Britain with those of the south and east, is a strong one. Ethnographic studies of living traditions of megalith construction reveal exchanges between wife-giving and wife-taking lineages, between women of different lineages and clans, between quarry-workers and tomb-builders and between hosts and mobilized labour.

In Chapter 4, Johan Ling, Richard J. Chacon and Yamilette Chacon explore the internal and external processes that favoured the rise of ranked maritime polities in Scandinavia during the Bronze Age. The authors put forth the supra regional interaction hypothesis to explain how elite households were able to consolidate political power through financing maritime ventures based on timber extraction, boat building, slave raiding and colonization. These elite households were organized into supra-regional political sodalities that controlled political power, surplus production, debt, exchange, feasts and warfare