President’s Message

Featured Articles

The Rise of China and the Concept of Civilization: Constructing Conceptual Apparatus for Cross-Civilizational Comparisons

The Heritage of the Reincarnated Lama of the Gobi

Michael Boym: the Polish Marco Polo

Military Comparison of the Han Dynasty and the Roman Republic

From Compromise to Confrontation: The American Secretary of State James F. Byrnes and His Attempts to Mitigate Disagreements with the Soviet Union as the Cold War Began

Culture-Oriented Interpretations of Corporate Responsibility

Apotheosis of the State and the Decline of Civilization: A Systems Approach

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By “a comparative civilizational perspective” we mean (1) the use of evidence from more than one civilization (the various national traditions of the modern West being regarded, if so desired, as constituents of a single civilization) and (2) a method likely to throw new light either on the origins, processes, or structures of civilizations or on the problems of interpreting civilizations.

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The *Comparative Civilizations Review* thanks our former Digital Media Editor, now Editor Emeritus, Connie Lamb, and her colleagues at Brigham Young University for making this free public access and electronically searchable index possible.

Readers may also access all previous issues at [https://ojs.lib.byu.edu/spc/index.php/CCR](https://ojs.lib.byu.edu/spc/index.php/CCR).
After several years of faithful service, the ISCSC website has received a much needed facelift. The new site is more attractive, has more content, and is far easier to navigate. Here are a few facts and pointers about the new ISCSC website that we think may be helpful:

1. The “Home Page” is actually a bit bigger than your screen – scroll down to see all of the content. This goes for computers as well as phones. For viewing on your phone, it may be helpful to turn the phone so that the screen is horizontal. This is especially helpful for the “tabs” at the top of the home page.

2. If you want to join as a member, or refer someone else to join, follow this path: Select the “Administration” tag at the top of the “homepage” and then follow the drop down menu to “Membership – Joining ISCSC” and then you will find the membership information as well as the payment portal, which allows for “Individual with USA Address,” “Individual non-USA address,” and “Lifetime.” For institutional accounts – universities, etc., please use either “Individual” or “Individual non-USA address,” depending on the mailing address for the account.
President’s Message

Lynn Rhodes
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International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations
Explores Enlightenment, Security, Peace, And Wellness of Civilizations
In Recent and Upcoming Conferences

Throughout 2023 and into 2024, the International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations has been extremely busy in the furtherance of our vision. Here are some of the highlights:

The First World Congress

The first World Congress for the Comparative Study of Civilizations, entitled Crossroads of Civilizations, was held in Bucharest, Romania at Dimitrie Cantemir Christian University from July 3 to July 9, 2023. It was sponsored by three entities:

- The International Society for the Comparative Studies of Civilizations
- Dimitrie Cantemir Christian University of Romania
- The Asian Politics and History Association

The goal of the Congress was to provide a venue for scholars in the several fields of the comparative study of civilizations, cultural and social studies, history, and humanities to meet and exchange views. Innovative methods of research, plus multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary approaches, were particularly welcomed and featured.

This first World Congress was held in honor of Dimitrie Cantemir, commemorating three centuries since his death in 1723. Dimitrie Cantemir was a Moldavian prince and philosopher who represented the epitome of the Enlightenment. Bridging history and philosophy, policy and ethics, and cultural theory and ethnicity, his life and work created a bridge between East and West. It brought Oriental mysticism and wisdom into the pattern of Western civilization.

Great minds have always applied their vision and offered their responses to cultural challenges. The study of challenges and the confluences of civilizations illuminate the darkest of ages, and it simultaneously endeavors to engage for the well-being of humanity. You—our members, friends, and colleagues—are part of this engagement.
Current ISCSC scholar/members participated actively, mostly in person but also via video. There in Bucharest, we met new scholars, including the former president of Mongolia, Nambaryn Enkhbayar.

Finally, Prof. Joseph Drew and myself co-chaired a Culminating Debate, with participating speakers in English, French, Mongolian, Romanian, Italian, Spanish and Greek, on the topic: Are We on The Cusp of a New Enlightenment OR the Death of Western Civilization?

**Civilizational Security**

In the fall of 2023, the International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations held its 52nd Annual Conference at the War Studies University in Warsaw, Poland. The theme of the conference was "Civilizational Security: Clashes of Civilizations, Clashes within Civilizations and Stable Global Futures.”

Speakers and attendees examined the challenges and opportunities for civilizational security in the 21st century. Participants explored how different civilizations worldwide can cope with these challenges and enhance their security and resilience, while respecting their diversity and identity. The conference also addressed the role of dialogue and cooperation among civilizations in fostering peace and stability, especially in current conflict zones such as Ukraine and all impacted countries.

The theme was timely and relevant, as the world is facing unprecedented threats and uncertainties from various sources, such as terrorism, cyberattacks, climate change, pandemics and more. The conference opened with a gracious welcome from the Rector of the War Studies University, Brigadier General Dr. Robert Kosowski.

**Peace and Coexistence of Civilizations**

Following the conference in Warsaw, ISCSC President Lynn Rhodes and then Vice President Michael Andregg were invited to attend the 39th conference of the Japan Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations (JSCSC) in Nagasaki, Japan. The Japan Society is a partner organization of the ISCSC as a result of ties that were established in 1983 to foster the comparative study of civilizations in Japan.

The theme of the JSCSC conference was “Peace and Coexistence of Civilizations,” and the discussions concerned works which have focused on both historical and contemporary efforts to achieve peace among different civilizations.

The conference, held in Nagasaki, also commemorated the 75th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which marked a turning point in the history of civilization.
The conference was coordinated and led by the President of the Japan Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations, Prof. Sunji Hosaka, and by the organization’s Vice President, Prof. Hisanori Kato, who also serves as the Vice President for Asia and the Pacific Region of the International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations.

As part of the JSCSC conference, President Rhodes and Vice President Andregg also met with the mayor of Nagasaki, Mr. Shiro Suzuki. During the meeting they discussed the importance of peace and the elimination of nuclear weapons. Mayor Suzuki, who is a son of hibakusha (as survivors of the Nagasaki bombing are known), expressed his concern about the increasing dependence on nuclear deterrence and the risk of nuclear war. He urged the world powers to break free from the nuclear threat and to realize a world without nuclear weapons.

Mayor Suzuki also posted about this meeting with the ISCSC representatives on his X page (formerly Twitter), where he shared his hope for the future of civilization: https://twitter.com/suzuki46genki/status/1723600090634522639?s=43&t=0lkQsu5eC4H_urubOx_w

**Health, Healing and Civilizations**

Planning is now underway for the ISCSC’s 2024 conference with its partner and host, the University of Lethbridge, Faculty of Health Services, in Alberta, Canada. The theme of this conference will be “Health, Healing and Civilizations.”

Participants will explore the interrelationships between health, healing, and civilization from various perspectives, including insights from medicine, psychology, sociology, anthropology, religion, art, and literature.

Dates are May 21, 2024, through May 24, 2024.

A feature of this conference will be the recognition of the Indigenous lands on which the University of Lethbridge is situated. We will therefore acknowledge the contributions of the Indigenous peoples to the study and survival of civilization. Visits to UNESCO-designated World Heritage Sites of Waterton Lakes National Park, Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump, and Writing-on-Stone are also planned.

This designated “big picture” interdisciplinary and international conference — the organization’s second in Canada — will be structured to foster critical inquiry and new interpretation of issues pertaining to our contemporary and pivotal moment in human history.
The Future

Recent and future conferences, and the related themes of enlightenment, security, peace and the wellness of civilizations are important as we look at the current and future challenges and opportunities of engagement. We warmly invite all interested scholars, students, and members of the public to join our conferences, to engage in dialogue and the exchange of ideas on the comparative study of civilizations, and to attend these stimulating and enlightening scholarly conferences.

You are invited to explore the ISCSC website: https://iscsc.org. There, you will also find links to our social media platforms: LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, X, YouTube and a number of video presentations.

It is an honor to serve as the president of this distinguished, meaningful organization, one founded by researchers and scholars from around the world but focused upon the civilizations which have organized the population of our planet.

Lynn Rhodes
ISCSC President
The Rise of China and the Concept of Civilization: 
Constructing Conceptual Apparatus for Cross-Civilizational Comparisons

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Abstract

The paper argues that the rise of China to a position of prominence in the contemporary world offers Western scholars a greatly expanded comparative perspective and, thus, an opportunity to re-assess their fundamental view of social reality. This comparative perspective draws attention to supra-national cultural unities, “civilizations,” first suggested by both Durkheim and Weber.

There are deficiencies in the current understanding of “civilization” in the social science literature, among others exemplified by “civilizational analysis,” and so this paper proposes a new concept which adds to the conceptual apparatus of sociological theory a new — fully independent of others — variant of the cultural process.

This independence makes distinctions between civilizations the root cause of socio-cultural diversity. Combined with the idea of humanity as a culturally constituted reality sui generis, this concept allows the construction of the theoretical scaffolding necessary for systematic cross-civilizational comparison and comprehensive understanding of social life.

Introduction

The decision of China to turn its nationalist energies to competition with leading Western powers for prestige and economic and political hegemony redraws the boundaries of the empirical world on the basis of which scholarship in the social sciences and humanities, rooted in Western traditions, has developed its understanding of human reality so far. The rise of China represents a unique event in the history of the Western world, for only of the relationship between this colossal society with the West it can be said with confidence that for a very long time, running into millennia, the two have developed virtually independently of each other.

Since 2008, the need to take China into consideration has been undeniable.
This new relevance of a huge chunk of humanity, with its 5000 years history, previously almost entirely disregarded and never systematically considered within the essentially Western “human science,” not only adds an enormous new reservoir of data but also likely adds a new reservoir for evidence contradicting accepted theories, puts in question its fundamental assumptions. We may be faced with a need (as well as an opportunity) to reconceptualize the socio-cultural world. It is quite probable that our “world,” which we equate with humanity and social reality as such, is only a part of the world, representing only a part of humanity and a particular form of social reality.

Even the most powerful and generally applicable of our explanatory concepts we must now suspect to apply only to our particular form of empirical socio-cultural reality, instead of pointing to mechanisms operative throughout it. Running the gamut of all the Western social sciences, the rise of China undermines their claims to universality and objectivity.

Adding to the analysis of culture the ultimate level of comparison, the rise of China at last allows for a meaningful definition of “civilization.” For the first time, the problem core to the modern understanding of cultural evolution can be approached objectively: is civilization one? That is, is all of humanity interconnected in a common process of development, or are there fundamentally different civilizations, with parts of humanity following their own separate cultural paths, independent of the cultural trajectories of other parts?

This, in turn, for the first time, allows for a reliable answer to the question of whether the modern society centered in Western Europe and North America, which has long been believed to spearhead the development of humanity as a whole, is indeed a vanguard of a general cultural process, or is it (a part of) one separate and independent civilization among several, with its own first principles, not representative of and not shared by the rest of humanity.

Moreover, it allows for an objective definition of its essential qualities and its outlines, historical and geographical — establishing them on logical and empirical grounds, rather than subjectively and arbitrarily, as has been the case so far both in common parlance and in scholarship.

Were it undertaken, a systematic comparison of the socio-cultural system in the last 500 years centered on West European and North American societies with the socio-cultural system centered on China would open several possibilities for social science:

1) construction of a consistent conceptual apparatus, appropriate for comparative socio-cultural analysis on multiple levels that includes a meaningful civilizational dimension, which may revise the current understanding of humanity;
2) the development of a comprehensive understanding of the Chinese socio-cultural reality, contributing at once to the ability of outsiders to interpret the worldview and priorities of the Sino-sphere, the practical importance of which today could hardly be exaggerated, and to its self-understanding, and

3) the development of a comprehensive understanding of what is alternatively referred to as “European,” “Western,” and “Judeo-Christian” civilization — i.e., the understanding of the actual extent and sources of this — our — cultural family, so important for the self-perception, identities, of its constituent populations, and therefore, politics based on these identities, as well as for a self-reflective and self-critical attitude.

The main aim of this paper is to take the first step towards the realization of the first possibility: to propose and explicate a new, logically-sound and empirically relevant concept of civilization.

It is becoming increasingly evident that the differences between the Sinic and all other cases usually included in cross-cultural comparisons go far deeper than all the profound differences among these cases (Bond, 2010, Greenfeld, 2019, Nisbett, 2003, Roulleau-Berger, 2016, Seligman and Weller, 2012). These radical differences are observable on all the levels of the cultural process, from the individual subconscious (e.g., perception) to the collective macrosocial (e.g., nationalism).

This suggests that humanity may indeed be divided into enduring self-sufficient systems, which unite certain to-a-degree autonomous traditions and societies, despite the differences between them, and which separate these traditions and societies, render them independent, from other systems of autonomous cultures. Such enduringly independent systems can be meaningfully called “civilizations,” justifying the addition of the concept of “civilization” to the analytical inventory of the study of humanity because it captures an additional variant of the cultural process.

What makes civilizations such a variant is the characteristic of enduring self-sufficiency, the independence of each civilization from cultural processes around it, which goes much farther than autonomy. In order to understand any autonomous culture fully, it is, in fact, necessary to take the additional level of the civilization to which it belongs into consideration.

The juxtaposition of China and the West, specifically, allows us to define civilization as follows:
A civilization is a distinct, self-enclosed, self-sufficient, and self-generating variant of cultural reality, that — for all intents and purposes independently of other such variants with which it may coexist — has developed over generations, multiplying in the process its interlacing traditions. It is an enduring, self-sufficient culture, with codified first principles, resistant to outside influences; mega- or meta-culture; mega- or meta-tradition, allowing for the existence of numerous specific cultures and traditions within the same set of first principles.

In this context ‘enduring' means spanning many generations — at least five centuries; ‘first principles’ refers to binding, unquestioned values, ideas, and modes of thought that determine existential experience, and ‘codified first principles’ means principles embodied in the written language and transmitted through language itself. The more explicitly and consistently a tradition is formulated, the more durable it is. Written language allows for the most explicit and consistent formulations.

The juxtaposition of China and “the West” does not suggest a civilizational bifurcation of the world. There is little doubt, for instance, that Indic societies constitute a civilization of their own. No other existing “family of peoples” (Durkheim and Mauss, 1913) but Sinic and Western, however, can be claimed up-front to be essentially independent from each other in the course of millennia and thus mutually self-enclosed.¹

Comparative studies in the social sciences so far have been based on a very vague notion of socio-cultural process, and the idea of civilization, though occasionally used in them to great fanfare (Huntington, 1996) has not been of any conceptual help.

The term “civilization” has been brought back into scholarly discourse, after decades of banishment as antiquated and invidious, by a “promising” (Knoebl, 2011, Spohn, 2011) interdisciplinary trend of the past four decades, bearing the name of “civilizational analysis.”

Tracing its lineage to the research agenda in comparative historical sociology conceived as a general human science, set in the early 20th century in two short texts by Durkheim and Mauss (1913) and Weber (1920) but largely forgotten, civilizational analysis was inspired by dissatisfaction with the-then dominant in the social sciences structuralist-functionalist modernization theory, specifically its inability to account for the cultural diversity in the midst of convergent economic and technological development (Nelson, 1981; Eisenstadt, 1986), and, along with such theoretical reactions in particular disciplines as world history (including, among others, the “great divergence” one regarding separate developmental paths taken by China and the West, Pomerantz, 2000), global sociology, and new institutionalism in political science, catalyzed by the events following the collapse of the USSR.
The main goal of civilizational analysis has been to provide an accurate diagnosis of our time, replacing the uniform image of modernity presented by modernization theory with an understanding that would reflect today’s reality. Its promise, however, as I shall explain in greater detail later in the paper, was not fulfilled.

The “civilizational turn” has not produced the results its proponents hoped for. Throughout the course of the last two decades, they have voiced the need to rethink civilizational analysis (Arjomand and Tiryakian, 2004) and they have blamed the lack of return — on considerable intellectual investment — on the protracted youth of the approach.

The problem behind this delayed maturation has been the inability to produce a meaningful concept of civilization. Having made its discussion legitimate within the academy, civilizational analysis has continued to use the term exactly as it was used before and after the appearance and the oblivion of Durkheim and Mauss’s, and Weber’s, research agendas and during the time of its exile beyond the confines of reputable scholarship.

Seen as a bigger and more complex culture, “civilization” has referred to differentiated multi-societal frameworks (i.e., complex religions or societies) but also to the cultural development of humanity in general, often with the overtones of increasing differentiation and greater cultural sophistication of the later stages in this development over the earlier ones (Taylor, 1881; Elias, 1939; Toynbee, 1947-1957; Nelson, 1981; Eisenstadt, 1986; Huntington, 1996; Geertz, 2000; Arjomand and Tiryakian, 2004; Knoebl, 2011; Arnason, 2018).

As it recognized no new qualitative dimension in the phenomena under investigation, the term has remained analytically useless, and the lack of a meaningful definition of its central subject has prevented civilizational analysis from developing a viable research program.

The constitutive feature of a civilization, as has been used so far, appears to be its multi-societal character, which equally allows for the term’s application to particular complex cultures and to human culture as a whole. On the one hand, this has encouraged its use in reference to social groupings of any degree of differentiation (so that one can call any nation, any set of historical [e. g., modern] institutions, religion, or region a civilization, and any interaction between them an “inter-civilizational encounter”). This makes the term a synonym of any number of others. And, on the other hand, as a universal attribute it has been denied any place in comparative research.
As a result, civilizational analysis research, based on a vague intuition that civilizations are somehow important in accounting for human diversity, is divorced from theory and confined to the collection of various sets of data, however informative and valuable (Arnason, 1997, 2002; Eisenstadt, 1992, 1996; Arjomand, 2001, 2011; Nielsen, 1991; Huff, 2011, 2017), while civilizational analysis theory is reduced to the reiteration of its numerous contradictory statements and attempts, all unsuccessful without a meaningful definition of civilization as the first step, thus unable to resolve the contradictions between them.

The central failing of civilizational analysis is its inability to arrive at a meaningful definition of civilization. This, in turn, makes it unable to account for cultural diversity in the midst of global economic and technological development or to reach a reliable understanding of modernity, and it is at least partly due to the fact that until very recently systematic cross-cultural comparisons were in effect limited to about half of the human world, within which half societies of Western Europe and North America in the past 500 years (i.e., the modern period) constituted the center.

For the last 1500 years, since the emergence of Islam and long before they acquired their dominant position in it, these societies have been a part of a much larger social system, to other parts of which they have been connected by complex relationships, changing but uninterrupted. They and these other parts of the system have been the significant others for each other, always mutually relevant, always to be watched, whether as friends or as enemies, clients, or patrons. Islam evidently belonged, but East Asian societies did not belong to this system of relationships. East Asian societies were not significant, irrelevant for this system through most of the period, and for this reason not watched. The fact that they also represented a quarter of humanity in this system was hardly recognized and rarely kept in mind.

Because of the ultimate dependence of scientific knowledge, i.e., objective knowledge of empirical reality, on the logic of no contradiction, which makes contradiction by evidence the utmost check on proposed theories, all theories that go beyond speculations and descriptions, rather attempting to make sense of reality, must rely on comparisons. Only comparisons in the world that is relevant present themselves to us. Even when intentionally casting about for contradictions, scholars would limit themselves to that world.

Until very recently Sinic societies were not relevant for the social sciences and humanities: they were not a focus of attention, did not constitute a special category, and no distinction was made between them and other “others.” This was true of Western “human scientists” with very few exceptions; even Sinologists were not aware of the profound significance of the differences between East Asian and other cultures, more present to us. That is why “civilization” could stand for any complex “culture.”
The cultural confinement of the Western societies and their science of humanity within an interdependent, very large but still limited cultural system, has naturally encouraged them to substitute their half of the world for the world in its entirety. It has not only prevented the development of adequate knowledge about the other half, but also reduced their — our — ability of self-understanding. Lacking a similar — interdependent within but independent from our system — cultural system for comparison, we were doomed to repeatedly describe our limited “world,” never zeroing in on its organizing principles, always stressing one or another subjectively chosen characteristic. The oscillation between considering it the vanguard of the civilization coextensive with humanity or several to-a-degree autonomous civilizations was inevitable.

Likewise irresolvable was the debate over its name. It was impossible to adjudicate between and assess the commonly proposed alternatives: that Europe constitutes a civilization in its own right; that it is a part of a larger cultural family, conventionally referred to as “Western civilization”; that the essence of this civilization is Christianity with its source in the Hebrew Bible, making “Western” a synonym of “Judeo-Christian”; or that, rather, it is based on the Greek, and then Roman, pagan antiquity. The undeniable relevance of Islam to those who have called themselves Europeans, Westerners, Christians from the moment of its emergence 1500 years ago — against the background of China’s previous irrelevance — logically leads to the conclusion that the first principles of our civilization — its essential qualities — derive from monotheism and that it should properly be called “the monotheistic civilization.”

Thus, the rise of China, which brings a comparable self-contained world to our scholarly consciousness, forces us to regard our world as one among several possible worlds, and not as a necessary, natural development. And, for the first time, we are in a position to raise ultimate empirical questions about ourselves: Why does our world exist at all? What made it what it is? In other words, for the first time we can approach our own civilization systematically.

Current Understanding of Civilization

The first call for a focus on civilizations in sociological research is found in the famous 1913 Note sur la notion de civilisation by Durkheim and Mauss. Specifically, the note urges the recognition of the level of social structures and processes within “ideational [symbolic] frontiers” above the level of nations.

It may seem, Durkheim and Mauss write, that “collective life could not develop but inside political organisms, with definite [territorial] contours and clearly marked borders, that is, that national life is the ultimate form [of social life],” within which all the other “forms of social activity” are comprised.
But logic and anthropological research, they say, prove that “there are social phenomena which do not strictly correspond to a specific social organisms, they extend over areas which transcend national territories and/or develop over periods which transcend histories of any single society. They live a life which is in some sense supra-national.” The different facts or indices of this life constitute “complex and integrated systems, which, while not limited to a particular political organism, can nevertheless be located in time and in space. These systems of facts, which have their specific character, their own mode of being,” are civilizations (Durkheim and Mauss 1913).

Broadly comparative studies on nationalism — the nature of national consciousness and identity, and their political, economic, existential, and even psychosomatic implications — support the conclusion that there is a causally significant “form of social life” (to use Durkheim and Mauss’s phrase) above clearly, territorially, and historically, delineated societies. Further, a comprehensive understanding of social life — i.e., of the life of humanity, including the understanding of such societies and relations among them — necessitates taking this “supra-national” or civilizational level into consideration.

Specifically, it suggests that Eurasio-American societies belong to a separate “supra-national system.” Comparisons of England/Britain, France, Russia, Germany, the Netherlands, the United States, and Japan, for instance (Greenfeld 1992, 2001), prove that Japan differs from the very heterogeneous Eurasio-Atlantic societies studied more profoundly than all these societies differ among themselves, which is reflected, among other things, in Japan’s remarkable resistance to ressentiment.

A comprehensive study exploring the effects of nationalism on modern existential experience (the institutionalization of the psychological dynamics of love, ambition, happiness, and a dramatic increase in the rates of functional mental illness), Mind, Modernity, Madness: The Impact of Culture on Human Experience (Greenfeld, 2013), confirms this.

While the emergence of nationalism in Euro-American countries within a generation raised the rates of functional mental disease in them by an order of magnitude, nothing of the sort happened in South-East Asian societies, which is indeed considered “a persistent puzzle” in epidemiology (Hopper, 2007). It appears that these societies are immune to the ravages of anomie (of which ressentiment represents a special expression). Such differences in psychological dynamics — differences of existential significance, impacting the nature of satisfaction and suffering — between two groups of societies on the same level of development (Russia certainly being no more developed, in terms of its quantifiable, political and economic, characteristics, than Japan!) mean that they constitute separate, causally significant cultural unities.
One area of scholarship specifically preoccupied with the concept of civilization —
civilizational analysis — traces its lineage to the agenda set by Durkheim and Mauss in
their 1913 Note and in the 1920 “Author’s Introduction” to the Economic Ethics of
2004, Swedberg, 2010). With its two foundational texts written by founding fathers of
sociology and most of its practitioners coming from historical-comparative sociology
and macro-sociological theory, it advocates broad interdisciplinarity and claims
adherents in history, philosophy, and cultural and social anthropology.

It is closely associated with the agendas of world history (McNeill, 1998, 1999, Spohn,
2011) and global studies (Robertson, 1987, Joas and Klein, 2010, Lechner and Boli,
2014), related to the world-system and world-polity (thus global neo-institutionalism)
approaches (Wallerstein, 1974, Chase-Dunn, 1989, Boli and Thomas, 1997, Boli, 2006,
Schmidt, 2008, Hadler, 2015, Huff, 2016), and, like these latter, descends from the
“classical” (Marxist) modernization theory, dominant throughout the social sciences
between 1950s and 1970s. However reluctantly, it also admits its kinship to certain 20th
century philosophical (Spengler, 1918, 1922, 1932), historical (Toynbee, 1947-1957),
and sociological (Sorokin, 1937-1941) traditions, grouped into the “civilizational
approach.”

As an identifiable trend, “civilizational analysis” may be said to have begun in the 1970s
and 1980s with the work of two scholars, Benjamin Nelson (Nelson, 1971, 1973, 1974,
continues to orient civilizational analysis to this day and is the reference point of all its
current practitioners, active throughout 1990s, 2000s, and the recent years (Arjomand,

The “civilizational turn” of Nelson and Eisenstadt was inspired by the failure of the
structuralist-functionalist modernization theory (to which Eisenstadt, in particular, had
greatly contributed during his earlier career) to accurately describe — thus explain —
the state of contemporary society, modernity (Knoebl, 2011). The theory regarded
modernity as opposed to (in fact, as the opposite of) traditions, dividing the world into
the two categories of traditional vs. modern societies, saw the attrition of traditions as
an inevitable result of the essentially economic evolution of humanity, Western
societies as the end point of this evolution and the goal of history, and predicted the
imminent convergence of all humanity in a capitalist and democratic rational (free of
traditional influences) modern condition of the Western model.

The uncritical dismissal of traditions, which they saw persisting everywhere around
them, was what bothered both Nelson and Eisenstadt. To account for their continued
presence, i.e., the continued presence of diversity, which contradicted the elimination
of differences predicted by the modernization theory, in the midst of modernity, they
turned their attention to the grandest of all traditions — civilizations.
The understanding of “civilization” as a complex, exceptionally broad, and very durable tradition was common to the Anglophone general and scholarly discourse. The term entered Anglophone scholarship as a synonym of “culture” through E. B. Taylor’s 1881 *Anthropology: An Introduction to the Study of Man and Civilization*. It remained the preferred designation for differentiated multi-cultural complexes as opposed to simple, limited in their scope, cultures. (Kroeber, 1963, Geertz, 2000).

This understanding of “civilization” was consistent with the way Durkheim and Mauss used the term in their *Note*. Nelson, who in 1971 translated the *Note* into English (Nelson, 1971), took this consistency for the identity of conception, and believed he was realizing the agenda set by the pair. He, therefore, stressed their multi-societal character and historical durability as constitutive of civilizations (as what transformed a culture into a civilization) and, in his empirical research, focused on religious, philosophical, scientific traditions, in which “cultural productions” were of the “highest level” and which defined fundamental categories of thought. Such traditions were “civilizational phenomena” (Nelson, 1973, 1981, Nielsen, 2001).

This conceptualization did not separate “civilizations” from other cultural phenomena and left unclear why some traditions persist over prolonged periods of time and stretch over multiple societies, but simply postulated that they do. The only explanation was purely historical, that is, contingent, constituting in each particular case an *ad hoc* account of the kind “this is how it happened” and providing no analytical apparatus for systematic comparisons between civilizations and discovering the ways of life, the *modus vivendi*, peculiar to them.

Yet, it was this comparative analytical agenda that Durkheim and Mauss envisioned. One would “study what are the reasons for the variance in the areas of civilizations, why the spread of [civilizations] stops at certain points and not others, what forms they take and the factors that determine these forms. All the questions that...are posed regarding political frontiers can be posed regarding the ideal [symbolic] frontiers [of civilizations]” (Durkheim and Mauss, p. 6).

The fact that civilizations constituted larger frameworks which “dominated and enveloped” collective lives of nations implied that the causal significance of systematic cross-civilizational comparisons was enormous — finally, it was in civilizations that *the diversity of social life* was rooted.

Nelson misunderstood Durkheim and Mauss and, as a result, could not account for the persistence of diversity in the midst of modernity, which was what he wanted to account for. In fact, Nelson’s understanding of civilizations boiled down to the conception of *one civilization*, a “general march of the civilization,” moving through the “successive stages of human progress,” the view which Durkheim and Mauss specifically criticized in the case of Comte (Durkheim and Mauss, p. 5).
For Nelson it took the form of three successive “structures of consciousness”: 1) sacromagical structures, characteristic of archaic cultures, 2) faith structures, characteristic of the Middle Ages, and 3) rationalized structures, characteristic of the modern period (Nelson, 1981). Nelson arrived at this schema despite himself, it could be said, because he considered such social evolutionary approach “unhistorical” (Nielsen, 2001). His work was self-contradictory and, as a result, could not be further developed. He died in 1977, having profoundly influenced several students — current practitioners of civilizational analysis who continue to study the historical contingencies of the perpetuation of particular ideas, adding to the stores of knowledge very valuable information. (Huff, 2011, 2017a, Nielsen, 1984, 1989, 1991).

In concentrating on particular areas of culture in their historical research, Nelson and his students have followed the example of Max Weber. And it was Weber who was chosen as the model by the other pioneer of civilizational analysis, Eisenstadt. He modelled his work, in particular, on Weber’s comparative studies of world religions (Weber, 1905, 1915, 1916a, 1916b, 1920, 1921).

Weber’s 1920 “Author’s Introduction,” the second foundational text of civilizational analysis, distilled the ideas developed in the course of these studies into clear theoretical principles and a research agenda. Weber’s goal was to understand a particular — Western — “cultural world” (Kulturwelt).

For reasons that had to do with the old ideological “culture vs civilization” dispute going back to the early (German) Romantics and involving French and German national identities, in which the organic German “Kultur” was opposed to the artificial French “civilisation” (Greenfeld, 1992, 2017, Shaefer, 2001), the word “civilization” was (and still is) rarely used in German and never appeared in the “Author’s Introduction” (Swedberg, 2010).

Weber’s “cultural world,” however, would be recognized as a civilization by Durkheim and Mauss. Like them, Weber believed that specific, clearly delineated socio-cultural entities (with nations being the most comprehensive of these in the modern period) were subsumed under the cultural framework of civilizations. He maintained that it made no sociological sense to talk about one civilization coextensive with humanity, because such a concept had no explanatory purchase (and, specifically, could not account for socio-cultural diversity). Rather, civilizations in the plural, in contrast, had a great causal significance, for the most profound differences among human groupings could be attributed to them, and any civilization could be understood only in comparison with other civilizations.

Weber’s pervading interest was to understand his own civilization, which he called Western, especially its claim to universality.
Weber’s question as to why in the West and only in the West “cultural phenomena have appeared which (as we would like to think) lie in a line of development having universal significance and value” is generally misinterpreted as implying the reference to other civilizations’ recognition of such universal significance of the West or, worse, that Weber himself believed that Western civilization, as a matter of actual fact, had such universal significance.

The parenthetical remark “as we would like to think” strongly suggests, rather, that the question probed the peculiar Western conviction — the 
claim of Western civilization to universality. His comparative studies were undertaken to answer this question. Remarkably, while Eisenstadt explicitly modelled his own intellectual agenda on Weber’s, his thinking developed in a direction contradictory to the principles formulated in the “Author’s Introduction.”

Eisenstadt’s influence on civilizational analysis has been far more profound than Nelson’s (Arjomand, 2011, Arnason, 2007, 2017, 2018). It was undoubtedly due, to begin with, to the fact that he was a very active practitioner and one of the most active organizers of this trend of scholarship until his death in 2010. In addition to contributing to the literature a large number of his own essays and monographs (Eisenstadt, 1982, 1986a, 1992, 1993, 1996, 1999, 2000a, 2000b, 2001, 2002, 2003) he edited or co-edited several most influential collections (Eisenstadt, 1986b, Sahsenmaier, Reidel and Eisenstadt, 2002, Arnason, Eisenstadt and Whittrock, 2005), which helped to create among the authors the sense of participation in a common project and establishing civilizational analysis as a field in its own right, almost a discipline.

In the meantime, the current was gathering adherents. It was catalyzed by the events of the last 35 years: the end of the Cold War and the subsequent explosion of identity-related conflicts around the world.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union, a fixture in the social science imagination of the preceding 50 years (the discipline of Sovietology reflected its presumed permanence) proved a shock. Neither were social sciences prepared for the rise in the political importance of religion, in many cases replacing Marxism, which was discredited and losing its appeal as a political ideology around much of the world.

Modernization theory failed to predict any of this, even though the collapse of communism could be interpreted as the long-awaited convergence of humanity in the final evolutionary (capitalist and democratic) stage of development first reached by Western societies. Indeed, the discourse of “globalization,” which upheld the old idea of one civilization (Richardson, 1987), carried on the modernization paradigm (Arjomand and Tiryakian, 2004) and some even spoke of the “end of history” (Fukuyama, 1992).
But human diversity, freed from the effective restraints of the bi-polar order, reasserted itself vigorously and did not leave the ostensibly triumphant West much time to celebrate. Under these circumstances, “motivated by sociological ambitions to achieve an appropriate diagnosis of our own time” (Knoebl 2011, p.16), civilizational analysis in the 1990s acquired new appeal. Eisenstadt’s ideas on civilizations, already developing for some time and appearing in a succession of contemporary publications, provided a ready point of reference.

Unhappy with the modernization theorists’ obliviousness of traditions, Eisenstadt already in the 1970s replaced the dichotomy of tradition and modernity, the latter inevitably driving the former out, with the idea of traditions reconstituting themselves in the direction of modernity (Eisenstadt, 1974. This framework, in which modern societies could be viewed as “post-traditional,” led to the postulation of multiple modernities (Eisenstadt, 2000a, 2002, 2003, Arjomand, 2011).

To shore this new conception up, Eisenstadt turned to Karl Jaspers’ thesis on the “Axial Age” (Jaspers, 1953), the period between 800 and 200 BCE Jaspers identified as the time when a major breakthrough in human consciousness “towards reflexivity” occurred in a number of regions in Eurasia, laying the foundations for several world cultures, or civilizations. Perhaps to explain why this happened at that time, Eisenstadt then characterized certain combinations of factors (specifically, the combination of religion and politics, or of “ontological” ideas, state structures, and elites, Eisenstadt, 1982, 1993, 2001, Arjomand, 1993, 2004a, 2006) as “axial syndrome” or “axial constellation,” producing civilizations. By assimilation this led to the identification of religion and politics, in particular, as “axial components” and of civilizations produced by “axial constellations” as “axial civilizations,” whenever they emerged.

The emphasis shifted from an axial, that is, pivotal, turning period in history to pivotal mechanisms, responsible for the turn, the question — imperceptibly — pivoting from “what is a civilization (or any tradition) and how does it survive?” to “what constitutes (typologically, not historically) a pivotal, axial moment?” The project became one about the structural conditions of (any) social change, rather than about the character (contents) of a particular “world” (community, social grouping) located in time — or civilization, as in the research agendas of both Durkheim and Mauss and Weber.

A further complication resulted from the fact that “axial civilizations” could nevertheless also refer to civilizations that emerged in the “axial age” of 800—200 BCE and that the development that actually interested Eisenstadt and the increasing number of his followers was modernization. That all societies (and traditions) would modernize in the sense of becoming like Western capitalist, democratic, scientifically oriented and technologically advanced nations, i.e., that socio-cultural evolution was unilinear and teleologically directed, was assumed in civilizational analysis.
This assumption was reflected in another central Eisenstadt concept — the global “civilization of modernity,” organized around a distinct image of reality, its cultural ontological core, and its characteristic institutions (such as democracy). This concept directly contradicted the argument of multiple modernities, which, against its background, could no longer refer to the persistence of robust cultural (civilizational in the sense of the classics) diversity and was reduced to a very limited diversity in levels of development of the same cultural-institutional complex and at most emphases in interpretation of the same ontological vision.

Both Eisenstadt himself and his followers tried to resolve this contradiction.

“Although this civilization,” wrote the editors of Rethinking Civilizational Analysis (Arjomand and Tiryakian, 2004, p. 3), regarding modernity as a civilization, “originated in Western Europe, it has become a global civilization with the continual development, constitution, and reconstitution of a multiplicity of cultural programs of modernity and modern institutional patterns. It is thus a civilization of multiple modernities, both in the sense of containing totalistic and pluralistic cultural and political appropriations of the program of modernity, which stand in constant mutual tension, and in the sense of culturally specific adaptations to modernity of different countries and civilizational regions.”

But modernity either was a specific type of socio-cultural organization (a specific form of social life, to use Durkheim’s terms, or a specific cultural world, to use Weber’s ones) or was not. The belief that humanity was culturally one, following essentially the same path of cultural evolution directed towards a specific, predestined and predictable telos stood firm in the face of empirical evidence of undiminishing cultural diversity. Combined with this belief, civilizational analysis could no better account for this diversity than the theory of modernization, which explicitly denied diversity, or its direct descendants in world-system and world-polity analyses, globalization paradigm and various global approaches.

The concept of civilization was increasingly diluted. Meaning the development of humanity in general, it was deprived of any causal — and, in fact, any empirical — significance. At the same time, it was constantly used in the plural, but as a result of the inconsistency of such usage, as well as to avoid creating an invidious impression (which the concept of one civilization, led by Europe, definitely created, Elias, 1939, Arjomand and Tiryakian, 2004), it was felt, apparently, that any culture deserves the name. Any cross-cultural encounter became an “inter-civilizational” encounter. Every situation could be interpreted as inter-civilizational as well as intra-civilizational.

Thus, while every discussion that used these terms would be, by definition, considered broadly comparative, the concept became increasingly inapplicable to systematic empirical comparative research.
Methodologically, the result has been that, while constantly paying lip-service to the methods recommended by the classics (Durkheim and Mauss, and Weber), theory became increasingly separated from empirical research. Theory (especially macro-sociological theory) goes one way, manipulating concepts of civilization and modernity and unable to explain anything concrete, and empirical investigations (called forth by issues of the day) go in many directions, frequently using the terms of civilizational analysis as a professional identity marker, but independent of any theoretical orientation. Much rich information regarding diversity is accumulated in social and cultural anthropology, sociology, political science, and history, but all of it awaits synthesis and interpretation.

Logically inconsistent theories cannot develop. Just a decade after its emergence as the most promising direction for macro-sociological and general social science theory, the only one capable of accounting for human cultural diversity and making sense of our time (Knoebl, 2011), civilizational analysis reached an impasse. Calls were sounded for “rethinking” it (Arjomand and Tiryakian, 2004).

Its difficulties were explained in 2007 by the fact that it was “a paradigm in the making” (Arnason, 2007); in 2018 — after four decades since the beginning of its latest revival (Mazlish, 2001) and two since it reached the height of its popularity — it was described as “a project still in the process of defining its tasks,” the “state of the art” making it “premature to propose a systematic survey of its approaches” and its “program [being] still in an early stage of formulation” (Arnason, 2018, pp. xiv-xxi).

Theoretical discussions have been limited to reiteration of Nelson’s and (mostly) Eisenstadt’s statements, attempts to accommodate their shared and separate contradictions within the same framework (a task that, after Eisenstadt’s death mainly devolved to Johann Arnason, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2017, 2018), arguing sotto voce about who of the two recognized leaders of the revival was more seminal or more faithful to the classical agenda of Durkheim and Mauss and Weber, approval of Arnason’s slight deviation from Eisenstadt and its reticent criticism (Knoebl, 2011, Spohn, 2011), and claiming any scholar of repute who has ever used the word “civilization” in the last 70 years as a practitioner of civilizational analysis, if sometimes, like Clifford Geertz, a “reluctant” one (Arnason, 2018). One must conclude that the very promising “civilizational turn” has not advanced the understanding of human reality.

The root problem of civilizational analysis has been the inability to develop a logically consistent and empirically informed definition of “civilization.”

This problem was due, in the first place, to the lack of an articulate and systematically examined understanding of cultural and social reality in the social sciences and humanities, in general.
The other reason for this inability was the lack of an adequate comparative perspective because of the very limited familiarity with China, in particular — an obstacle that was eliminated by the recent rise of China to the attention of Western scholarship.

Taking advantage of these newly expanded comparative resources, as I have suggested earlier, we can, finally build a logically consistent conceptual apparatus for systematic cross-civilizational comparison, beginning with a logical definition of “civilization,” empirically informed by the existing specialist knowledge about world cultures and methodically tested against the knowledge gained in the comparison between the Chinese and the “Western” (“monotheistic”) civilizations, and embedded in the comprehensive understanding of cultural and social reality, already partly developed in the earlier comparative-historical and transdisciplinary examination of nationalism — and, more broadly, modern culture (Greenfeld, 1992, 2001, 2013). Such conceptual apparatus, in turn, would make possible the implementation of a new research program — the actual systematic cross-civilizational comparison, to be hopefully continued for a long time.3

This research program would lead to a reliable understanding of the overall character of both civilizations, establishing their spatiotemporal outlines and developing a set of hypotheses that could be continuously tested by scholars around the world, (who would expand cross-civilizational comparisons into areas only marginally touched at the initial stage and into other civilizations), specifically considering in an objective, non-Euro- or Western-centric manner the question raised by Weber, why in the West and only in the West cultural productions emerged believed to have universal significance, without presuming the factual nature of such universal significance or that Western societies are the model for others to follow invariably and that all roads inevitably lead to Western-type (capitalist, democratic, scientifically-oriented) modernity.

Conceptual Apparatus for Cross-Civilizational Comparisons

Systematic comparisons lie at the basis of all scientific investigations, constituting the essence of the scientific method in physics and biology as well as in the studies of humanity aspiring to objectivity. Systematic comparison is the only way to test hypotheses about empirical reality — a sine qua non of logical deduction, by means of which science advances, induction (i.e., inferences from data upward), as proven already by Hume, never being sufficient for the purpose.

The use of systematic comparison allowed physics and biology to advance rapidly and persistently. If no such advancement has characterized human sciences, this has been due to the deficiencies in using the comparative method, the unmethodical (unsystematic) use of comparisons, as demonstrated, inter alia, by civilizational analysis.
A systematic comparison is a comparison between phenomena within the same category (i.e., Granny Smith apples and Red Delicious apples); distinct categories can be compared (as phenomena of the “category” category, for example, as apples and oranges in the “fruit” category) to distinguish one category from another, but phenomena belonging to distinct categories are incomparable.

This means that systematic comparison presupposes:

a) a clear definition of the category within which comparisons are made and
b) clear definitions of phenomena compared — to make sure that they belong to the same category.

Simply drawing on a number, however large, of phenomena, without a careful preliminary definitional work, does not qualify as comparative method: methodologically, this is nothing but haphazard jumbling of unconnected elements of reality — apples and oranges.

The study of humanity, in general, has been woefully impeded by the absence of a clear understanding of what separates this central subject matter itself from other categories of research (subject matters of biology and physics).

Instructively, so was biology by the absence of a similar distinction between life and matter before the appearance of Darwin’s theory of evolution through natural selection. Pre-Darwinian biology did not develop, it stagnated for centuries. It was confined, as natural history, to description and classification of enormous amounts of data, and unable to formulate testable hypotheses that would interpret them — between two theoretical possibilities: that life was reducible to the (physical) laws of matter (the materialist position), which empirical data consistently refuted, and that it was the embodiment of some élan vital (the vitalist position), which was not empirically accessible at all.

Darwin’s theory of evolution (Darwin, 1859) separated life from matter as a category of reality: it postulated a general law, applicable to all of life, which was irreducible to the laws regulating inanimate matter and yet existing within their boundary conditions, that is, logically perfectly consistent with them. This made possible the view of life as a reality sui generis — an autonomous emergent empirical reality — and enabled biology as the focused study of this reality (Polanyi, 1968, Corning, 2002, Chalmers, 2006, Clayton, 2006). Having been thus released from the dependence on physics, biology has developed at an ever-increasing pace.
Similarly to pre-Darwinian biology, the study of humanity is stuck between two unproductive alternatives: a reductionist position (based on the implicit belief that humanity is an essentially biological phenomenon, one biological species among others, better developed than others, and that human history is the continuation of the biological evolution of this species) and a position fundamentally claiming scientific inaccessibility of the causal factors in human reality, because of the inescapable subjectivity of this reality. The former cannot categorically separate humans from all other animals, recognizing only quantitative distinctions between the subject matters of human sciences and life sciences.

So, implicitly but decidedly, this makes the science of humanity a sub-discipline of biology, its poor and ill-informed relative, in fact (because so few practitioners of social sciences and humanities can claim any familiarity with even the basic notions of biology). The latter in advance admits the arbitrariness of every claim a social scientist or a scholar in humanities can make, implicitly but decidedly making the knowledge produced in these areas of scholarship unreliable and thus denying it authority.

In civilizational analysis, as in sociology and political science, in general, this position is expressed by the causally noncommittal stance and preference for the narrative approach (Arnason, 2018, Maines, 1993): the argument that all historical explanations are “just” “(theoretical) narrative[s], ‘theoretical’ stor[ies],” the construction of which “requires the selection of events and structures for setting up a convincing ‘plot’” (Knoebl, 2011, p.17).

Such narratives are only as good as their plots are convincing, but the degree to which any plot is convincing depends, besides the narrative skills of the storyteller, on the readiness of the audience to be convinced, i.e., on what the audience already finds convincing, i.e., on its prejudices. Not only do these criteria have nothing to do with logic or correspondence of the story to the facts (the two elements which make a proposition testable and the imparted information reliable), but they also obstinately favor established, conventional, wisdom and discourage further development.

Following Darwin’s example, the science of humanity can escape this predicament if it separates its subject matter from the subject-matter of biology, defines it as a category. All that is needed for that is the comparison, within the category of animals, of humans with other animals (analogous to the comparison of apples and oranges within the general fruit category). Comparative zoology, in other words, is the basis for objectively distinguishing humanity from non-human animals.

The comparison with other animals immediately highlights the astonishing variability — diversity — of human societies, human ways of life, against the relative uniformity of animal societies, i.e., ways of life, even among the most social and admittedly intelligent animals, such as wolves, lions, dolphins, or primates.
Keeping in mind the minuscule quantitative difference in the genomes of Homo sapiens and chimpanzee species, for instance, which does not even amount to 2%, it is clear that the enormous difference in variability of ways of life cannot be accounted for genetically, that is, in terms of biological evolution. Instead, it is accounted for by the fact that, while all other animals transmit their ways of life, or social orders, primarily genetically, within humanity ways of life are transmitted primarily symbolically, through traditions of various kinds. It is this symbolic transmission of human ways of life, to which the term “culture” implicitly refers, which radically, qualitatively, separates human beings from the rest of the biological animal kingdom.

This reliance on symbolic, or cultural, transmission allows the treatment of humanity as a reality *sui generis*, an autonomous emergent reality irreducible to the biological laws of the organic reality of life, even though obviously existing within the boundary conditions of these laws, just as life — as established by the law of evolution by means of natural selection — is treated as an autonomous emergent reality, irreducible to the physical laws of matter but existing within their boundary conditions.

Empirical reality in general then can be imagined as consisting of three layers, the upper two of which, the organic and symbolic layers of life and humanity, are emergent, as in the schematic representation below (Greenfeld, 2013):

1. The fundamental physical layer of reality: matter
2. The emergent layer of organic reality: life
   boundary conditions created by the physical layer of matter
3. The emergent layer of symbolic reality: humanity
   boundary conditions created by the organic layer of life

The argument made here is not ontological, but methodological: just as Durkheim advises in *Methods* (Durkheim, 1895) to treat social facts as things, without committing oneself to any ontological position, humanity here is treated as an emergent reality, irreducible to organic reality. Having categorically separated humanity from the subject matter of biology, we can focus on its distinguishing — autonomous — characteristics, leaving biology aside and establishing the study of humanity as an independent line of scientific (logical and empirical) inquiry.
Among other things, this argument suggests that the focus of several important subdisciplines in this study has been misplaced by nomenclature, that is, by (mis)naming them “social” sciences, since the distinguishing characteristic of humanity, which defines it as a category, is not society (society being a corollary of life among numerous animal species, beginning with insects), but the symbolic process of transmission of human ways of life accounting for their striking variability, culture.

A central implication of the view of life and humanity as emergent phenomena, autonomous but existing within the boundary conditions of layers underneath them (i.e., impossible without these boundary conditions) is that all regularities within these emergent realities must be logically consistent with the laws operating on the underlying layers.

This, in turn, presupposes that every regularity postulated about humanity (every generalization, every theory), to be seriously entertained and acceptable within a scholarly discourse pretending to any degree of reliability, must entail mechanisms that relate this regularity to the human animal organism, mechanisms of translation or mapping onto the organic world. The recognition that humanity is a symbolic reality implies such a mechanism: it connects every regularity in the symbolic reality to the human biological organism through the mind — the symbolic process supported by the individual brain.

The idea of the mind as the cultural process on the individual level — “culture in the brain” or “individualized culture” — was developed in *Mind, Modernity, Madness: The Impact of Culture on Human Experience* (Greenfeld, 2013).

This understanding of the mind, in particular, allows us to offer a comprehensive interpretation, heretofore lacking, of the functional mental illness (from depression to schizophrenia) which ravages Western societies, helping to explain the disastrous trend of the growing rates of such mental illness in them, which before that evaded all explanation. The reasoning behind this explanation becomes clear when one realizes that the idea of the mind as “culture in the brain” makes the mind analogous to the processing of external (independent from the body) stimuli, e.g., food or air, in the organs such as stomach or lungs, i.e., to digestion and breathing.

It is easy to understand that both could be obstructed by harmful external stimuli, leading to disease even in the case of perfectly healthy organs. This makes it understandable how problems in the surrounding culture (i.e., certain ideas and values) can affect the biological organism, leading to an actual, medical disease. Such translation of cultural processes into organic ones dramatically increases the importance of cultural analysis.
A number of other characteristics of the subject matter of human sciences follow from its recognition as a symbolic (cultural) reality. They are logically implied in the nature of symbols. Symbols are arbitrary signs; the meanings they convey are defined by the contexts in which they are used. A context changes with the addition of every new symbol to it, i.e., constantly: every present meaning depends on the context immediately preceding it and conditions contexts and meanings following, the changes thus occurring in time. This means that symbolic reality is a temporal phenomenon — a process.

It must always be remembered that the concept of structure in the discourse about it is only a metaphor: nothing stands still in culture, it is essentially historical, in other words. One of the central difficulties in civilizational analysis and in the social sciences generally has been the reification of structures, treating them as causes, and, as practitioners recognized, insufficient understanding of the processual nature of phenomena under investigation (Arnason, 2018).4

The symbolic process, that is, the constant assignment and reassignment of meanings to symbols, or their interpretation, is actually happening in the mind, which makes culture an historical and a mental process. This necessarily involves psychology in the interdisciplinary discussion of civilizations — another weakness of civilizational analysis, which, while insisting on interdisciplinarity, never considered the importance of the discipline taking the mind as its focus.

The very preliminary understanding of culture charted here, which is only the understanding of what aspects of it must be studied, implies both continuity and contingency, the recognition both that the mind is creative and that its creativity is necessarily oriented by cultural stimuli operating on it from the outside. The relative weight of continuity and contingency in every particular case must be established empirically, but the relationship between them is a central question within every process.

It should be pointed out that Durkheim and Weber, both of whom envisioned a unified science of humanity, analogous to biology, with numerous subdisciplines, understood that the focus of this science must be on culture. This understanding was explicit in Weber’s work (among other things, in originally defining the science he envisioned and eventually named “sociology” and of his own research agenda as “cultural history,” but also in the unhesitant use of the term throughout his writings) and only implicit in Durkheim’s, the word “culture” made problematic in France by the aforementioned, emotionally-laden and German-instigated “culture vs. civilization” dispute, pitting French and German national identities against each other.
Nevertheless, the cultural focus of Durkheim’s opus is made evident by his emphasis on collective representations, the centrally important concept of collective consciousness, the insistence that the vast majority of social facts were mental, the use of “moral” for social. The two classics were also in agreement that culture was a process, not a structure (both would think it ludicrous to separate history from sociology — this would amount to separating research from its data) and that the active element in this process was the individual, namely, the mind.

In this sense, both Durkheim and Weber could be characterized as sociological mentalists (Greenfeld, 2015). This, mentalist understanding of humanity, which, unfortunately, neither of them got the chance to develop further, underlies their programmatic statements for civilizational analysis — Durkheim and Mauss’s Note and Weber’s Author’s Introduction.

Reflecting the reductionist position of the social sciences in general, in turn however implicitly rooted in Marxism, practitioners of civilizational analysis from Eisenstadt on, though, for all their reverence towards the two founders, entirely missed that they were discussing cultural reality. Culture, within contemporary social science (and civilizational analysis which, ostensibly, regards civilization as a cultural phenomenon and tries to account for human cultural diversity) is understood as an element, a special aspect, of human social life like any other, political, economic, or whatnot. This is analogous to treating life itself as a special aspect of organic reality.

In civilizational analysis, if “structural” (mostly political) aspects of civilization or civilizations are not given equal weight with culture, the analysis becomes subject to accusations of “culturalism” (analogous to accusing the focus on life processes in biology of “biologism”), of which Spohn, for instance, accuses Arnason, who, under the influence of Cornelius Castoriadis (Castoriadis, 1975), in Spohn’s opinion, places an excessive emphasis on the cultural “element” of the problem (Spohn, 2011).

It is this fundamental misunderstanding, inability to recognize in culture the very category within which all specifically human phenomena belong, that does not allow civilizational analysis to develop a logical definition of civilization and, therefore, to conduct systematic comparisons that would deepen our understanding of the human world and enable civilizational analysis to answer questions it has posed to itself.

The clear categorical definition of the subject matter of human social sciences — humanity, approached as an emergent phenomenon — makes possible its logical and empirical (scientific) study with a justifiable claim to authority and to producing reliable, objective understanding of this subject. Among other things, this also frees the student of humanity from the recourse to the narrative metaphor, intended as an excuse for the inescapable arbitrariness and subjectivity of the proposed interpretations.
Instead, one is encouraged to employ another metaphor: the building of a case, as in (especially, criminal) law. In distinction to telling a story, convincing to the extent of the author’s skill and the audience’s credulity, a legal case is the ground for administering justice, and as such is expected to be perfectly objective, that is strictly logical and corresponding to the facts. It is specifically required to establish motive (answering the question why the crime/a trespass is committed) and opportunity (answering the question how this is done, i.e., establishing the mechanisms through which the cause is translated into the effect). Building a case starts with a conjecture as to why and how, a preliminary hypothesis, or a tentative outline, i.e., a definition (to be examined and tested empirically in the course of investigation). The definition must contain the possibility of answering the why and how questions.

Civilizational analysis at no point arrived at a definition of civilization that allowed for systematic comparative work. While both Durkheim and Mauss, and Weber intuited that this process was qualitatively different from others within the same (i.e., cultural) category, they did not postulate what the difference was. Later representatives of civilizational analysis lost sight of the essentially cultural nature of civilizations altogether and, therefore, of the logical requirement to distinguish them from other cultural phenomena as the first step in their analysis.

Without exception, they defined civilization quantitatively as “the ultimate tribe,” “the highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity people have short of that which distinguishes humans from other species.” (Huntington, 1996), a multi-societal grouping of any kind, taking purely descriptive remarks by Durkheim and Mauss for analytical statements and seeing them implied in exploratory (not systematic) studies of Weber.

This allowed for the common equation of civilization and religion, leading to the routine identification of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (as well as different forms of Christianity and Islam) as separate civilizations (Huntington, 1996, Arjomand, 2004b, 2010, Eisenstadt, 1992, 1999, Huff, 2017a, 2017b), for the view of modern society as a civilization as well as multiple modernities, of Europe as a civilization, Western society as a civilization, Eurasia as a civilization (Arnason and Wittrock, 2004, Arnason and Hann 2018, Hann, 2018a) and humanity in its entirety as a civilization, because all these are multi-societal groupings to one or another degree.

In fact, any nation can be regarded as a multi-societal grouping, beginning with such explicitly federal nations as the United States or Switzerland, and including Russia with its autonomous regions, China with its recognized minorities, and any other to any extent heterogeneous national collective. Indeed, even Japan — as close to homogeneity as a social grouping gets — has been considered a civilization by both Eisenstadt (1996) and Arnason (1997, 2002).
This, in turn, makes it possible to regard relations between the Mid-West and the coasts in the United States, between Switzerland and the European Union, between Japan and China, and so on as “intercivilizational encounters.” Everything without distinction becomes a subject of civilizational analysis, making it theoretically meaningless. But, on the basis of the methodological considerations above, it is possible to begin constructing the conceptual scaffolding for systematic cross-civilizational comparison, starting indeed with a methodologically-sound definition of civilization.

Let me reiterate: the focus of this definition is suggested by the new configuration of world politics and economics (as essentially cultural and processual phenomena as anything human, it must be remembered), which brings China, for a very long time generally regarded as irrelevant in the Western world (which never regarded either Russia or the Islamic world as irrelevant), prominently to the attention of Western scholarship.

The long-time irrelevance of China to the West implies that the West has developed independently from China (while it cannot be said that it developed independently from Islam or Russia from the moment these came into existence) and, therefore, justifies assuming that China too has developed independently from the West.

The very rare quality of (mutual) cultural independence makes possible a meaningful definition of civilization as qualitatively different from other cultural phenomena. Religions are autonomous but not independent, nations are autonomous but not independent, institutions are autonomous but not independent. All these cultural processes (or traditions, processes of symbolic transmission) are distinguished from each other by the nature of their autonomy. But civilizations, which are independent from each other, unite various autonomous traditions in cultural families and separate them from other cultural families.

Durkheim and Mauss refer advisedly to “familles de peuples” which are united in civilizations; practitioners of contemporary civilizational analysis equate these “families of societies” with any multi-societal groupings, forgetting that, to constitute a family, its members cannot be haphazardly thrown together but must be, as Durkheim and Mauss stress “issus d’une meme origine” (Durkheim and Mauss, p. 4) — be related to a common (in this case, cultural) source.

The cultural process is happening simultaneously on several levels, which can be analytically distinguished from each other, but cannot be empirically separated.

To begin with, there are the levels of the individual mind and the collective level, in general. But in the latter one can distinguish three levels (of processes of symbolic transmission, i.e., traditions), civilization being the most durable and causally significant level, subsuming the other two, which are:
a) the level of social institutions, that is, to use Durkheim’s original definition which underscores their cultural nature, in the sense of being both symbolic and mental, established “ways of thinking and acting” (Durkheim, 1895) in particular spheres of social life, such as economy, family, and politics, whose autonomy in each instance reflects the constraints of the sphere of life, and

b) functionally-integrated, geo-politically bounded systems of social institutions — in the past mostly religions, today nations — whose autonomy is a function of the historically-evolved characteristic image of reality, with the system-wide organizing principles (systemic tradition) reflected in every institution and — which is worth stressing — in the shared identity of their members.

Civilizations are family sets of such autonomous systems, sharing the same (civilizational) first principles and, although not systematically related to each other, interdependent in their development.

As pointed out earlier, functionally, culture is the process of transmission of human ways of life. The chief mechanisms of this transmission are institutions or institutional traditions, which are aspects of each other. Institutions, as already noted, are ways of thinking and acting; traditions are spelled out from institutions, prescriptions/premises for or summaries/narratives of ways of thinking and acting.

As explicit formulations of thinking and acting, traditions may be said to support institutions, while institutions, which are expressed in thinking and acting, perpetuate traditions, keep them relevant, alive, developing. When the relationship between institutions and traditions is recognized, it follows that both institutions and traditions may be either specific to a sphere of activity (family, science, literature) or else general to a community of identity (religious, national, civilizational) and cutting across spheres of activity in it.

Identity, as explained in Mind, Modernity, Madness, is the central process in the mind, essential for its adequate functioning, and therefore general institutions and traditions override the specific ones and inform them (i.e., religious, national, civilizational institutions and traditions would inform family, economy, and politics).

As argued before, the more consistently an explicit tradition is formulated, the more durable it is, and only written language allows for consistent formulations.

Traditions may contain elements specific to themselves only (whether they are specific to a limited institutional sphere of life — i.e., economy — or general to a community of identity).
In other words, original to a tradition; or they may contain such specific/original elements in addition to elements derived or borrowed from earlier or more general traditions in which the original elements are embedded or to which they are superadded.

Only written language ensures identification of these elements and tracing continuities between layers of tradition (and therefore understanding of the institutional structure and cultural character of any given society). Purely oral traditions necessarily present themselves as original, separate, and discontinuous from developments of longer duration. It is impossible to trace their history.

Roots of all the recent (last 500 years) written traditions are found in the three ancient, 5000 + year old traditions explicitly formulated in written language: the monotheistic, the Chinese, and the Indian. These ancient, explicitly and consistently formulated general traditions are the three civilizations coexisting in today’s world.

All the more recent written traditions, general and specific, can be traced back to them. They contain the first principles on which all the more recent written traditions are based.

Each collective level of the cultural process is the level explaining the similarities between particular processes on the level below it — despite the differences between these processes, explained by their autonomy. So, being part of the same institution would explain the similarities (despite the differences) between behaviors of particular individuals (the ways particular minds operate).

- Belonging to a nation would explain the similarities (despite the differences) between various institutions: e.g., family, economy, politics in the United States would share certain characteristics and differ systematically from family, economy, politics, let’s say, in France or Russia.
- Belonging to a civilization would explain the similarities (despite the differences) between different nations: the USA, France, Russia and Turkey or Egypt, for instance, would share certain characteristics, bear a certain family resemblance, and differ systematically from China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, all bearing family resemblances of their own.

Explanation of every institution/tradition must be based, first of all, on the consideration of the history of its original elements (elements which define the tradition in question and separate it from all the others), and then on the consideration of all the prior traditions in which it is embedded, down to the first principles. This applies even to traditions/institutions which are imported.
For instance, a doctrine, such as Marxism, should be expected to be interpreted differently — and motivate different actions — in the United States and in Russia or, even more so, in China.

Interpreting it uniformly from the American point of view, as if such an interpretation is objective, would, for example, lead to the misunderstanding of a geo-political context and positions of this nation’s geo-political rivals; indeed, it is quite likely that some of the most consequential conflicts of the Cold War, if not the Cold War itself, resulted from precisely such an “objective” view of the Communist ideology.5

The mind is the active element in the collective cultural processes on every level, constantly involved in their perpetuation and change, while being constantly affected, constrained and stimulated, by them. Civilizations constitute the independent and thus fundamental level of the cultural process on the collective level, in the sense of depending on no other cultural process on the collective level, but only on the mind in their origins, a framework subsuming all the others and subsumed in none, causally significant on every level below and ultimately responsible for cultural diversity in the world.

Conclusion

The definition of civilization proposed above may be reiterated here for convenience:

A civilization is a distinct, self-enclosed, self-sufficient, and self-generating variant of cultural reality, that — for all intents and purposes independently of other such variants with which it may coexist — has developed over multiple generations, multiplying in the process its interlacing traditions. It is an enduring, self-sufficient culture, with codified first principles, resistant to outside influences; mega- or meta-culture; mega- or meta-tradition, allowing for the existence of numerous specific cultures and traditions within the same set of first principles.

In this context ‘enduring’ means spanning many generations: transmitted over at least five centuries; ‘first principles’ refers to binding, unquestioned values, ideas, and modes of thought that determine existential experience, and ‘codified first principles’ means principles embodied in the written language and transmitted through language itself.

This definition fulfils the methodological requirement of possible answers to the questions of why and how a civilization exists, i.e., why and how it is independent — durably self-enclosed, self-sufficient, and self-generating. It is so because of its codified first principles, binding ideas transmitted through language itself and therefore determining existential experience, that is, forming the mind. It is this paramount influence on the minds within it that makes civilizations resistant to outside influences, erecting barriers of disinterest on the way of cultural diffusion.
The definition, therefore, makes possible the examination of the core question posed by Durkheim and Mauss: What determines the area in which a civilization can spread? What puts a stop to the spread of one or another civilization? It also makes possible the definition of the cultural family (i.e., civilization) to which European/Western societies belong as *monotheistic* civilization, including Russia and, most importantly, Islam, which, from the moment of their appearance, have been significant others for European/Western societies — thereby, in effect, answering Weber’s question.

References


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Endnotes

1 The conceptual framework based on this juxtaposition would provide for the understanding of limits to intercivilizational influences, allowing for the consideration of India. It should be applicable to all civilizations, past and present.

2 The extensive implications of this proposition for our self-understanding, i.e., for the understanding of the social world on which Western social sciences and humanities have been focused thus far – its mode of thinking, values underlying its social institutions, its psychological dynamics, and behavioral patterns in every sphere of life, from politics to family relations – will be developed elsewhere.

3 As a suggestion, one might begin with studies of genesis and evolution in the history of civilizations (Eichenbaum 1929; Tynianov and Jacobson, 1928; Greenfeld, 1987) and of foundational texts, channels of transmission, and contemporary conditions of the “monotheistic” and Sinic civilizations.

4 This, among others, necessarily affected policymaking relying on social science, encouraging policymakers to focus on the salient features of any immediate situation to the exclusion of its context, which could not but lead to misinterpretations of the significance of these salient features and mis-assessments of relevant realities. This practice could be likened to attempts to interpret a film on the basis of a randomly chosen still shot.
Today, in the context of geo-political competition between the US and China, policy-makers must pay careful attention to the meaning of nationalism and capitalism -- a Western form of consciousness and Western orientation of economic activity, respectively, lately imported into China: what these phenomena signify, the actions to which they lead may be dramatically different in the two countries, and an accurate assessment of the geo-political situation depends on the anticipation of such differences.

These considerations apply equally to geo-political analysis in the inter- and intra-civilizational contexts. The logically and empirically valid understanding of the cultural processes involved would enable policymakers to assess accurately the positions of a nation’s geo-political rivals within the civilization to which the nation belongs, as well as those in other civilizations, not to mention increasing their awareness of the nation’s actual interests and motives.
Who was Danzanravjaa?

In Mongolia’s Gobi desert, at the beginning of the 19th century, a remarkable boy was born. This boy was Danzanravjaa, the Fifth Noyon Hutagt of the Gobi. He became a man of extraordinary ability — a talented poet, a Buddhist teacher, a meditator and philosopher, the creator of a nomadic theater, a dramatist and lyricist, a composer of songs, a craftsman of religious objects, a natural scientist, and a traveler.

His father was an obstetrician when the boy was delivered, and he noted in his short biography that there came a stream of bright light in the sky at the time of birth. His mother died at an early age and, as he wandered from place to place with his father, his great abilities became clear.

At the age of five, whilst they were at an encampment attending a ritual for good fortune, a heavy rain suddenly started to fall. Drops fell from the roof of the gher, the nomadic dwelling, with its thin summer covering, yet none fell on the father and son, who were sitting at the door directly below the edge of the roof, such that the locals made fun of them.

In response, the young boy sang in a bright voice:

...When the clouds roll in and the rain falls,  
what difference is there between the door and the rear of the ger?  
When you’ve done your work and it’s time to die,  
what difference is there between old and young?

...Though there be many stars in the sky,  
one or two carry the essence of light.  
Though there be many creatures on the earth,  
one or two have special wisdom.

The people were amazed by the boy’s response, and from that time on, he began to reveal extraordinary talents.

At the age of six, he received monk’s vows, and at the age of nine he was recognized as a huvilgaan, or reincarnated lama.
Between the ages of eleven and fifteen, he studied Buddhist philosophy and tantric practice at the monastery of Badgarchoilin in what today is Inner Mongolia.

Many of the high-ranking teachers of the time — such as Janjaa Hutagt, Ajaa Gegeen, and Düinhor Pandit — introduced the exceptional young man to spiritual practice through the rare and profound teachings of certain secret texts.

These senior teachers had read these texts and practiced at advanced levels for many years, yet they were amazed how, after just five years, Danzanravjaa was able to return to his birthplace at the age of sixteen, having fully realized the wisdom of tantra. There he began work on establishing a monastery at Hamarin Hiid. It became the center of religious culture in the Gobi region subsequently.

In addition to the establishment of many religious schools, Danzanravjaa also established schools for the general public. There was also a children’s school where the young were taught language, natural science, the fine arts, and both song and dance. And there was a library housing about a million texts, as well as a theater and a museum with extremely rare artifacts.

In this way, the uneducated people of the Gobi were educated in general knowledge, art, and culture, rather than being guided merely by superstition. It was also, at that point in history, a way to oppose the ideology of the Manchu rulers, who wanted to keep their Mongolian subjects in darkness.

The Founding of Nomadic Theatre and Roles of Dadishura

Although Danzanravjaa established many temples and monasteries in the Gobi, he himself did not spend much time within the boundaries of these temples. He journeyed across Mongolia, spreading his operatic works such as The Legend of the Moon Cuckoo, and composing music for his poetry and spiritual songs. He also brought rain to fall on parched ground, and both literal and spiritual medicine to the exhausted.

Meanwhile he explored mountains and rivers, rocky areas and grasses, and he ceaselessly compiled volumes of his writings. He traveled in a caravan of a few dozen camels, accompanied by a similar number of his students, a nomadic movement which looked to the future of education. He was forbidden from entering certain areas when some reactionary individuals described him as “a disreputable monk who brings with him young women and girls.”

He wrote in his autobiography that he was prevented from entering Ih Hüree (the capital city of Mongolia, presently Ulaanbaatar) in 1840 when he reached the banks of the Tuul river (the river in the south of Ikh Khuree).
Danzanravjaa’s school taught children with a particular aptitude for the arts. Along with preparing actors and other kinds of theatrical artists, he also had some of them train in religious schools. The female artists were led by one such student, whose name was Dadishura. These artists not only acted, sang, and made the costumes for the plays and the masks for the religious cham dances, but they also developed Danzanravjaa’s activity by, among other things, reciting prayers and teaching reading and writing.

Among these female artists, Dadishura was the most famous. She was the secret companion, or spiritual consort, of Danzanravjaa and, since she was artistically talented in many ways, such as in acting and in musical composition, she was continually with him. People who misunderstood her position in relation to Danzanravjaa misrepresented her on many occasions as his wife or secret lover.

Danzanravjaa dedicated many songs to Dadishura, evidence of how he honored her as his closest student and creative associate, and of his very human love for her. Dadishura had an intimate connection with Danzanravjaa’s life and works and is the woman about whom Danzanravjaa composed his song “Perfect Qualities.” After Danzanravjaa’s death in 1856, she dedicated her life to protecting and promoting his work.

Among the approximately 400 poems, songs, and spiritual songs composed by Danzanravjaa available to us today, “Perfect Qualities” is one that Mongolians particularly love to hear, claiming that it grants a blessing.

**Perfect Qualities**

*Your perfect qualities
are like a clear mirror.
Oh, I see your beautiful
face, your body's wonder
has truly captured my mind.*

*As the cuckoo's song
thrills the sluggish mind,
Oh, as you sit and recite
your sweet and gentle words
so also my gentle nature.*

*As soon as we met, your body
struck me like a flowing river.
Oh, as red sandalwood and its scent
are created together intrinsically,
so you stimulate my mind.*
Just like the honey taste
spreads from amid the lotus flower,
Oh, so meditation
more and more multiplies joy
and pleasure insatiable.

In this human life,
our desires are fulfilled.
Let us be happy together, floating
on the ocean of ecstasy,
an experience of desired divinity.

Guru Rinpoche Statue Made from 10,000 Knives to Bring Peace to the Nation

During the mid-19th century, there was a band of thieves called Hui Hui, who began to create discord along the Mongolian border. At that time, beis Delegdorj of Ih Hüree repeatedly sent messengers to Danzanravjaa declaring, “Because of the military movements north and south, an escape route should be found immediately.”

On many occasions, in the presence of representatives from Tüsheit Han and Tsetsen Han, Danzanravjaa recited prayers to reverse any harm done to the military, and he enacted rituals to place obstacles before the enemy. In this way, Danzanravjaa allowed himself no respite in his meditations and rituals so that the army could overcome these obstacles.

At this time, too, he was considering the construction of a statue of Guru Rinpoche, while here and there in the Gobi there was a killer on the loose, stabbing a person to death. Danzanravjaa finally summoned the killer and collected his knife. Then he ordered the collection of knives from every family, such that there were ten thousand knives, and he had these knives melted down, pacifying the power of the blades by invoking protector deities, and so he created a statue of Guru Rinpoche which became known as “The Statue of Ten Thousand Blades.”

The people of the Gobi say that this is a statue, the blade of whose wise heart pacifies the knife of wrong thinking. So Danzanravjaa’s power started by pacifying the mind of a single person and reached as far as the destiny of a nation and the activity of armies. Thereby he attracted to himself, among all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, the power of Padmasambhava.
Padmasambhava expanded the vajrayāna, with its direct scriptural and practice connection to the Buddha and mastered the power of a secret mantra. He is famous today as the root teacher of the Red Hat sect of vajrayāna Buddhism. He is considered to have been reborn to King Indrabodhi’s family in Taksil, one of the cradles of Eastern culture, in the north of India on the 10th new moon of the Wood Monkey year of 732.

Danzanravjaa was one of the more recent practitioners to regard Padmasambhava as his supreme teacher, and so he passed on his tantric teachings. Padmasambhava, who perfectly mastered the power of the secret tantra yoga and left his blessing for future generations, and Danzanravjaa lived more than a thousand years later. Yet, they were believed to be connected by the transformative power of wisdom realized at an elevated level.

In 1937, during the period of Stalinist repression in Mongolia, O. Tüdev, who was responsible for safeguarding Danzanravjaa’s heritage, secretly stored the statue of Guru Rinpoche in a cave. During the 1970s, he took it from the cave and brought it to his home. After he had cleaned it of rust and soot, thieves stole it. The thieves, who removed it from a chest, actually took only the statue, leaving behind the base upon which it had stood. Tüdev was very upset by this, but because of the statue’s power, he said that because he still had the base, the statue would return to its base.

After his death in 1990, his successor Altangerel devoted himself to reviving Danzanravjaa’s temple and monastery complex at Hamarin Hiid. He was also searching for the lost statue. One day he was watching television when he noticed the statue in a news report about a cache of precious objects in the holdings of the Mongol Bank.
He met with the bank’s director and asked about the statue. He was told that a person had taken out a loan and had left the statue with the Mongol Bank as collateral. The director told Altangerel, “Bring the statue’s base. If you’re right, then buy the statue back for the price of the loan.”

So, the statue and its base were reunited. But there was something missing—the Buddha’s crown. Unfortunately, Tüdev had lost the crown somewhere as he was quickly carrying a chest containing the statue by night, protecting it from armed soldiers.

One joyful day, a smith must have made a crown for the statue, painted it, and brought it when he came to pray at the temple. It happened that one of the workmen helping to renovate the temple came to Altangerel and said:

“I got a scorpion sting on my hand.” The lineage of Danzanravjaa’s caretakers are excellent medical healers, and Altangerel had the man recite prayers and take medicine. He noticed that the young man was holding in his other hand something bright and shiny, something like a hat, made of gold-plated copper. It fit Guru Rinpoche’s head precisely.

“Where did you get this?” Altangerel asked.

“I was tired and went to sleep where I was, and the scorpion’s sting woke me up. When I looked, it was running away. As I was going after it, I passed something gleaming like gold, and there was this crown.”

This is how Guru Rinpoche’s body, base, and crown were, in three fortunate turns of fate, reunited. What’s also interesting is that the scorpion is a special symbol associated with Danzanravjaa’s esoteric power.
Shambhala and Magical Stones

Shambhala is a place where people live. At the same time, it is the power and absolute wisdom which turns the sun and moon and stars, and so the world, too. The name “Shambhala” (Śambhala, Ōambal) means “holder of peace.” It is said to be located in what is now the northern part of Asia, yet people are still searching for its physical location.

One of these people was Fift Noyon Hutagt Danzanravjaa, who did not in fact look far to find it. This is what happened.

From the age of 19, Danzanravjaa established many temples and monasteries and places of spiritual significance. He created Buddha statues, traveled to many places, compiled books, and developed dance and theater. It is hard to imagine all that he packed into his relatively short life.

But all of this can be understood in connection with the fact that he many times received tantric teachings. These for him constituted a shortcut to developing his ability, his essential wisdom, and his spiritual activity, and they enabled him to sharpen his senses by engaging in deep meditation.

Danzanravjaa had received empowerment and teachings from his teachers, and he had absorbed the essence of their wisdom, and he had a particularly clear understanding of the secrets of the natural world, especially in his own region. For instance, we learn from his biography how he was able to come ever closer to Shambhala.

He believed that he had discovered Shambhala after entering deeply into the Kalachakra teachings. He sat in one-pointed meditation in the form of the Buddha Khorlo Demchig. This is evidenced by the fact that he established Shambhala to the north of Hamarin Hiid. He also established three monasteries in the Galbin Gobi, of which Demchig Monastery is the most important.

During his search for Shambhala, he selected a place in the Galbin Hills, and it came into his mind to construct Shambhala’s Galava (bshalpa, yalba) Palace there. He was interested in the fact that the name of the Galbin Gobi and the Galbin Hills was so similar to that of the Galava Palace in Shambhala. With his great understanding, he chose places with particularly unusual natural structures and with considerable energy and spiritual power, and in such places he built monasteries.

Today, the presence of rare natural elements such as gold, copper, and uranium further mark these places as significant sites.
Large deposits of uranium have now been found beneath Danzanravjaa’s birthplace of Dulaanhar Hill, while at Oyyu Tolgoi, about 10 km. from Demchig Monastery in the region around the Galbin Mountains, even greater deposits of copper and gold have been found.

Information regarding the various magical stones connected with Danzanravjaa’s life has attracted considerable interest. In a manuscript of Danzanravjaa’s works kept in the Mongolian National Library, we read, “In the spring of the snake year, 1833, a piece of rock was broken with a wooden switch through the apparent power of my own Handchoijid, and inside we were amazed to find an unidentifiable precious stone.”

In his paper “Physical Artifacts Relating to the Study of Danzanravjaa,” L. Hürelbaatar described how he had spoken in Zünbayan, Dornogovi, to an old man named Samdangiin Zorigtbaatar about the preservation of ritual implements which Ravjaa took when he traveled. He mentioned that “there was a stone which fit nicely in the hand, but whose name was unknown, a gleaming reddish brown jewel.”

In a paper presented at a conference to mark two hundred years since Danzanravjaa’s birth, Danzanravjaa’s curator Altangerel mentioned the physical artifacts which had been newly discovered, and which were connected with Danzanravjaa’s life and work. He said, “There were regular cuboid stones near to one another, which might have been formed from igneous rock. According to the oral tradition of those who preserved them, they were the precious stones of Handchoijid, on whom Danzanravjaa was meditating, and this confirms that magical activity was performed in front of those who were in attendance.”

Altangerel with his collection of artifacts
In 2012, Altangerel told me, “In Ulaanbaatar in 2007, I met an Australian named Bruce Leon and his wife Sharon. They had contacted me on the Internet, saying that they had an important religious artifact to show me.

So, that July of 2007, they brought me a green jade-like stone which they described as a secret religious object from Shambhala. They said that there was clearly writing on this stone. It indicated where it had to go. And now the stone had come to the land of Shambhala.

Many people contributed money to pay for our travel to bring this stone to Mongolia, they said. They gave the stone together with $500. And there were old people who had been at Hamarin Hiid, who remembered a secret religious object such as this from the 1970s.” (What I saw was a dark green stone which could fit in a woman’s open palm, wrapped in an old offering scarf.)

In the summer of 2018, Altangerel showed B. Enkh-Amgalan, a member of Mongolia’s Parliament, and me something with a particularly unusual shape, like a rock bearing a design traced out in thread, and he said that this had been described in a written account as “a raindrop from Shambhala.” Unfortunately, I wasn’t able to get an image of this stone. That was the last time I saw Altangerel.

I recall that there were three stones connected to Shambhala in Altangerel’s care. These stones are most probably linked to the discussions about Shambhala stones mentioned in the accounts of Shambhala written by Nicholas Roerich. In one of these books, he somewhat obscurely describes how, “about forty years ago, this secret stone was placed in the safekeeping of a man in the Mongolian Gobi.” Elsewhere he says this had happened when he had been “in my 60s”, so it would seem that Roerich took these two sources from two different people.

One of the accounts regarding such amazing magic stones which, perhaps, come from the sky, and which are told about in legends all around the world, is told in connection with Shambhala.

According to Nicholas Roerich, Shambhala is the origin of these stones, and the stones which have come to this earth are linked, through a magnetic signal, with this original source. Magical dark stones of this kind are mentioned in Ferdynand Ossendowski’s book *Beasts, Men, and Gods* as having been left behind in the last Bogd Haan’s palace. So, both Roerich and Ossendowski indicate a strong likelihood that these stones of extraordinary power were directly related to the two stones kept by Danzanravjaa.

Events sixty years before in Roerich’s writings are closer in time to Danzanravjaa than are events from forty years before, Danzanravjaa having died in 1856.
It cannot be denied, then, that these objects have a connection to the lineage of Danzanravjaa’s curators. Roerich had heard in St. Petersburg in 1910 stories about Shambhala from the Buddhist abbot Agvaandorj. So, this history has a direct connection with Danzanravjaa. Moreover, there are stories and eye-witness accounts of magical stones which offer evidence of Danzanravjaa’s direct connections with Shambhala.

On the full moon day of the middle month of spring 1853, a large crowd gathered among the low-lying hills of Övör Hamar to meditate on the Kalachakra mandala, and to offer prayers that they would meet again in Shambhala. Today, travelers and tourists flock to this place in order to see the paths which lead to Shambhala, the meditation caves, and the so-called Golden Skull which is the place described as the “fontanelle,” the entrance to Shambhala. They believe that this place, with its strange natural formations and strong magnetic fields, can somehow stimulate the hidden workings of the human brain.

There are about 108 caves at Hamarin Hiid. The low-lying hills there are constantly shifting, their colors changing, and it has frequently been noted that those who go there sometimes have a unique feeling about time, as though they are experiencing an unusual dream. According to some accounts, Danzanravjaa located entrance points, which have some kind of umbilical link to Shambhala, and there frequently meditated on the Kalachakra.

Today there are stone circles to mark these places. The local people say that when Danzanravjaa entered into deep meditation, his body became stiff and unmoving, and his students would erect a small tent for him and guard him for two or three days. Suddenly, a white light would be shining, and he would emerge from his meditation. In this way, Danzanravjaa discovered in the Gobi a short cut to the high contemplative wisdom of Shambhala and established a point of contact with that invisible location.
The idea of envisioning such a world of peace and calm has been a constant among philosophers such as Danzanravjaa. He saw that the physical world is a complex interdependent system, but also a unified structure, which he clearly expressed in one of his poems when he wrote, “This fine world is I myself.”

Danzanravjaa’s experience of Shambhala was of a pure region which, by supporting the faithful understanding and practice of people of the natural world as an entwining of the sun, moon, stars, planets, and sky, was suited to the outer, inner, and secret practice of the Kalachakra.

In this way, we can remain with the faithful understanding that we can find the physical Shambhala, and travel there, and so manifest it.

Danzanravjaa’s Lineage of Curators

In the autumn of 1856, Danzanravjaa mysteriously passed away on his way to Beijing at the behest of the Manchu Qing state. But after he died, there was not much interest in his life. Since then, however, there have been caretakers/curators (tahilch) who have preserved for the future the heritage which constituted the experiences and material objects from Danzanravjaa’s life. These are the names of the caretakers/curators:

1. Balchinchoijoo, 1824-1865
2. Gan-Ochir, 1837-1889
3. Naryaa, 1861-1900
4. Ongoi, 1890-1931
5. Gombo, 1902-1937
6. Tüdev, 1912-1990
7. Altangerel, 1960-2019
8. Altan-Ochir, 1990-to date

He initially summoned his close student Balchinchoijoo, and made an agreement with him, giving him vows on a piece of white cotton cloth.

*When Chinggis ascended into Heaven,*

*his bondsman Borchi became his curator.*

*When I, melodious Noyon Hutagt Danzanravjaa, ascend to Heaven,*

*Balchinchoijoo will become my curator.*

“Go to your homeland and return your monastic vows and take a wife to the countryside. From Shambhala, I will send a sign to your child, and he will become my curator after you. And so, it will continue.”
And saying this, Danzanravjaa died. Those who were to take on the duties of curator, and safeguard the heritage of Danzanravjaa, were subsequently born with a blue, moon-shaped birthmark about the size of a hand, on their back. I saw Altangerel’s birthmark with my own eyes.

The existing curator prepares the next curator from the time that the boy who has the mark on his back is five years old. He is shown the Buddhist teachings. He develops an inner strength. He takes a vow to study Danzanravjaa’s heritage, to repair and revive it, to protect it from danger, and to keep hidden what should be kept hidden, and he hardens himself to face whatever difficulties might arise. He takes a vow also to continue in this preparatory work for twenty years and then, as soon as he reaches 25, to take over and become the next curator. At regular intervals, and at particular times, he connects and communicates with the spirit of Danzanravjaa.

In 1937, during the time of the sixth curator, Tüdev, there were the Stalinist purges, during which time monasteries and temples were destroyed. Tüdev took Danzanravjaa’s embalmed and gilded mummy, together with his material heritage and safely hid them among caves and rocks until 1990. I would note here that, although I never met Tüdev personally, he has come to me several times in dreams.

My dear friend Altangerel, who was almost like a brother to me, brought the objects which had been buried in the ground to Hamarin Hiid; he revived the blessed land of Shambhala, and placed in the monastery some of the precious items which had been buried. He established a museum, and until his death in 2019, he dedicated himself to spreading the memory of Danzanravjaa.

His son A. Altan-Ochir is now continuing the work of the curator. Danzanravjaa continues to bless the precious magic which exists between the curator in the physical world and the signs of wisdom coming from the peaceful land of Shambhala.

**Conclusion**

Over an extended period of time, ancient wisdom becomes preserved as a particular manifestation of understanding, and its results form an unbroken line of human understanding into the future. Today, because this wisdom has already been studied in terms of systems and quantum physics, there is no need to find it unusual.
The interpenetration of Buddhist understanding and contemporary scientific understanding offers something truly exceptional to human intellectual culture.

At this point, I would like to say that my 2012 novel *The Holy One (Gegeenten)* dealt with the life of the Fifth Noyon Hutagt of the Gobi, Danzanravjaa.

Danzanravjaa said, “I will return in a time when the world knows about me.” I pray that this brilliant poet and educator will be revealed in his works and return to us according to his clear and precise meaning.

*May there be perfect happiness,*  
*ten thousand experiences,*  
*fine wealth, and*  
*good fortune.*
Michael Boym: the Polish Marco Polo

Agnieszka Couderq
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Ed. Note: Agnieszka Couderq, an independent scholar who resides in Poland and America, is the stepdaughter of Prof. Andrew Targowski, long-time president of the International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations. Her extensive linguistic knowledge, including her fluency in Chinese, has enabled her to use primary sources for her research. Her recent two-book set, the cover of the first of which is depicted below, has aroused considerable interest in the cross-civilizational adventures of Father Michael Boym, S.J., in Poland and may soon appear in serialized form on television. In English, the title is: The Last Envoy of the Ming Dynasty. An Historical Novel in Two Volumes.
The following is a selection drawn from Ms. Couderq’s written proposal for a television series based on the book she has published. It offers a summation of the life of this remarkable cross-civilizational traveler.

**The Panorama of the Chinese Mission from its Beginnings**

...And then Saint Francis Xavier was sent with some of his companions to the Oriental Indies, and there with his work he led to the baptism of a million idolaters, after which he went to Japan, where, after his preaching many natives were baptized.

But the Japanese often spoke to him thus: “Although we ourselves do not find the right answer to your rationale, in China there are many enlightened doctors and scholars who can answer your doubts. So go to China and teach there, and when you convert the Chinese, you will see that we Japanese will also quickly convert to the Catholic faith.”


From the beginning of its founding in 1540, the Society of Jesus, the Jesuits, was oriented toward missionary activity. The first missionary sent by the order to Goa on the west coast of India, a city under Portuguese rule since 1512, was the closest companion of the order's founder, Ignatius Loyola. He was Francis Xavier, who, as Boym writes, stayed there for more than two years, then going to Japan in 1549.

After three years of teaching, meeting resistance to his teachings from the authorities and Shinto and Buddhist elites, who issued a ban on the propagation of Christianity, Francis went with the intention of teaching in the Middle Kingdom. His attempt to get into Chinese territory was unsuccessful, and he eventually ended up on Sanzao Island near the coast of present-day Hong Kong in August 1552, where he carried out missionary activities until his death in December of that year.

A year later his body was handed over to the Jesuits in Goa and buried there reverently in the Bom Jesus Basilica. Francis' fame and the missionary successes he achieved magnetically attracted crowds of young men to the Jesuit order, creating a human base for the development of missionary activities around the world. The methods developed by St. Francis during his stay in San Toma (now Chennai, on the east coast of India and capital of the southern province of Tamil Nadu) among the Indian Christians, who derived their roots of faith from the teachings handed down to their ancestors in the first century by St. Thomas, became the foundation for the Jesuit methodology of acculturation of rites.
The scope of the Chinese kingdom was so vast that in the end the emperors, as politicians unable to manage peoples so distant, decided to select from one hundred and fourteen subordinate kingdoms only those that could be merged into one unified Empire.

The location of the fifteen provinces that now constitute the territory of China contributes significantly to this. To the east and south, the sea protects them from all sorts of vulnerable forces. On the west side, flows a river of extraordinary length as well as width called the Huam (Huang He - Yellow River). On the north side, stretches a wall not four hundred as some maps state but six hundred German leagues long (1 league = 4828 km).

Each of them will be able to accommodate four thousand Italians. These two things provide the Chinese with extraordinary security. In addition, their monarchs have issued an edict strictly forbidding their subjects to leave the kingdom for trade purposes, and that none of them should dare to host any foreigner on their domain, under penalty of death. Whence the reason why we Europeans could not learn about their customs, wealth, and their politics.


The next attempt to penetrate Chinese territory was not made until almost thirty years later. During the reign of Emperor Ming Wan-Li (1572-1620) in China, Alexander Valignano, then visiting Jesuit missionary in Asia, selected two religious representatives of the Society for the Chinese mission: Michael Ruggiero and Matteo Ricci. The two fathers arrived in Macao, to which the Jesuit mission in China was then limited, and they took up Chinese lessons at Madre de Deus, a missionary preparation school founded by Valignano, later promoted to become the University of St. Paul's Collegium.

Between 1580 and 1582, Ruggieri made three missionary trips to Guangzhou (Canton) and one to Zhaoqing, in Guandong province, but to no avail. Only after Ricci's arrival in 1582 did their joint stay in Zhaoqing in 1583 result in the first invitation to the Jesuits by a Chinese official, the governor of Guangzhou province, mainly due to Ricci's fame as a mathematician and cartographer.

The two fathers developed a method of transcribing Chinese pronunciation into our alphabet using diacritical marks to indicate the key with which the character had to be pronounced.
Today, their method has proved so good that in the 1950s, after the establishment of People's China, it was adopted with some modifications by the Communist Chinese authorities under the name of *pinyin* and is now in widespread use among sinologists and in China itself.

Finding the right words to describe the most essential concepts of the Christian faith was also a problem. Initially, Ruggieri opted for a Buddhist vocabulary, but Matteo Ricci, mindful of the problems in Japan, understood that in order to legitimize the fathers' stay in China, it would be necessary to gain the support of the Confucian elite. To do that, one had to operate with concepts and vocabulary that they understood.

His strategy, therefore, was based on a thorough understanding of Chinese history and culture through learning the language of the elites and the Confucian philosophy they professed, and at a level of erudition that would allow him to debate with them. The Chinese turned out to be a nation that respected knowledge. And, at the same time, the more enlightened among them recognized the superiority of Europeans in mathematical, astronomical, and engineering knowledge, and for this reason they were willing to maintain contacts with them.

Therefore, erudition in key scientific fields was one of the most crucial factors in the selection of future missionaries to China by the Jesuit headquarters in Rome. Only the most gifted had a chance to be sent. Despite the great danger accompanying the crossing by ship from Lisbon to Goa and then to Macao, which involved a fifty percent risk of death, being among them was seen as a great honor.

...Another time a clock given to the emperor by his fathers broke down. One of them was called in to help. He was led to a room where the emperor could secretly observe it. To inspect the clock, the father took it apart. When he finished, he heard the emperor groan: “Oh, the clock has died!” The father, however, pretended not to hear anything and continued working.

When he put all the parts together and the clock began to work, the emperor was amazed and expressed great relief. He ordered his eunuchs to examine the mechanism of the clock and the principles of its repair. They, however, fearing that they were not up to the task, replied that the presence of our fathers at court was necessary for this purpose. And that's why they were finally allowed to stay.

In 1601, the clock donated by Father Ricci to the emperor and given to him by the Chinese Mandarins broke down, as Boym recounts in his *Brevis Relatio*, as the work is known in Latin. In fact, following Fr. Ricci’s repair of the clock, he and other Jesuits were allowed to establish a mission in Beijing, as well as contacts with the court and the emperor himself. Thus began their good fortune; it lasted until the early 1730s.

**How the Chinese Adopted the Teachings of the Fathers**

You may also be interested in what questions the Chinese are in the habit of asking our fathers. Do not think that they ask them primitive or simple questions, as is the case among other peoples. Their doubts are sophisticated and of a high degree of (theological) difficulty.

They ask, for example, about the nature of the Mystery of the Trinity and also the incarnation of God in the body of Christ. “How do you know,” they say, “that there is only one God in three persons? And that He has only one son and not two or three?” “And why, since the Holy Spirit is derived from the Son and the Father, is He not also the son of neither?” or “Since God is good and it was He who created the world as an expression of His goodness, why is there so much evil in this world?”. And also “If God knew that people are so wicked, why did He create them in the first place?” “Why are some so rich and others so poor? Some live so long and others live so short?”

They also ask: “If God could in one word forgive the sin of our first parents, why was it necessary for His son to be born a man? And if He was already going to be that man, why didn't He come into the world already in the prime of life as a handsome man? Why be born as an infant from a Virgin? And for what reason was it not enough for him to simply be born, but it was necessary for him to undergo all that suffering and the humiliation of death on the Cross? And finally, why wasn't He born in China, or why didn't He send the Teachers of His Law beforehand, so that our ancestors could avoid condemnation? Why did this gracious God allow their souls to be lost merely for lack of instruction?”

These are more or less the questions they usually ask, which must be answered satisfactorily. At the same time, they should be commended for their reasonableness, because if only the right answers are presented to them, they do not look for a hole in the whole but recognize the right and convert to the Truth.

**...and the pagans said to their priests:** “Look at these Western masters, who go on a three-year journey at their own expense to come here just to preach their law.”
For imparting to us their most sensible teaching, they want nothing in return, and yet you wouldn't even lift a finger if we didn't pay you for it.”


The Jesuits were not the first Christians in the Chinese empire. The first seeds were sown by the Syriac Nestorians during the Tang Dynasty between the 7th and 10th centuries, following their arrival in 635 during the reign of Emperor Taizong. This was followed by diplomatic contacts between the Mongol Khanate and the Vatican in the 13th century, thanks to a two-year legation by John Piano di Carpini, who was accompanied by a Polish monk, the Franciscan, Benedict Pole, after the conquest of China by the Mongol, Kubilai Khan, grandson of Genghis Khan in 1271.

During the reign of the Mongol Yuan Dynasty, parallel to the Nestorians, a small number of Catholic fathers were active in the empire with permission to spread Catholic teaching. However, the degree of evangelization, especially among the elite, was negligible until the arrival of the Jesuits.

Highly impressed by the Jesuits' knowledge of scientific and technical matters, their proficiency in Confucian culture and perfect command of the classical language, as well as appreciating the hardships they had to overcome on their way to China, the Chinese elite agreed to listen to their religious teachings.

The churches and Jesuit residences that were erected were built in the Chinese style. There were difficulties with the indigenous Chinese population, who, although baptized, still could not give up certain Buddhist, Taoist or Confucian practices. The force of habit was sometimes too much.

Eventually, some of their most important customs, such as paying respect to Confucius in temples specially built for him, veneration of ancestors and acculturation of their style of dress aroused the resentment of other orders competing with the Jesuits for influence in the Far East. These included the Franciscans, the Augustinians, but especially the Dominicans, among whom ill-will was combined with a misunderstanding of the essence of the matter.

As a result of their complaints to the Vatican and allegations, there was an ongoing controversy from 1630 onward known as the “Chinese Rites,” which finally ended only contemporaneously, on February 28, 1941, with the granting of the Jesuits' right and Propaganda Fide's decision “so that the laity could follow their consciences.”
The accommodationist dispute greatly impeded the process of what is known to Catholics and Orthodox Christians as “inculturation” (i.e., the adaptation of Christian teachings and practices to cultures) and the development of Christianity in China. Undoubtedly, the resentment against the Jesuits in the Vatican caused by it also contributed to the failure of Michael Boym's mission.

This led to the second grave mistake of the Catholic Church, which *de facto* nullified its ability to influence the development of Catholicism in this great country, an effect which is still evident today. Its echo is still heard in the division of the Chinese church into the “official” church faithful to the authorities and the “underground” church faithful to the Vatican. For it is a mistake to see this current division solely in the rift between religion and the Communist Party.

Also problematic was the sacrament of *reconciliation*, which the Chinese had not previously known. They were shy about confessing their sins because, in general, Easterners have a preponderance of shame over guilt, unlike Westerners, where guilt dominates over shame. Women were more willing to go to confession.

The Jesuits, rejecting Buddhism in favor of masculine Confucianism and the culture of literates, somehow preferred to establish good relations with influential people in the city, more with the fathers of the families than with women, who had no influence in the local society anyway. The Jesuits established private chapels for them, due to their natural piety, as well as the institution of separate confession for men and women.

Although men approached confession with a great deal of resistance, this sacrament helped to raise morals and especially morals in places where there were Jesuits. The Jesuits' contacts and friendships with the immediate community also led to pastoral meetings, spiritual direction, which was more frequent than confessions, and which the Jesuits, despite the fact that there were few of them, did not abandon, since every person willing to talk spiritually counted.

The Jesuits were newcomers in unfamiliar territory where Buddhism had been reigning since the first century A.D., with a strong presence and many followers. It was natural, therefore, for tensions to arise, for example, between Buddhist monks and Jesuits, and the *bonzas* (i.e. monks) were soon branded the main enemies of Christianity.

Therefore, the most important thing in the Jesuit Chinese mission was to win the favor of the emperor himself and make him a kind of “protective shield.”
The Conflict in China and Boym's Position in the Face of the Situation He Found There

Around the same time, news reached the court that a notorious robbery ringleader called Li, who had seized the provinces of Shanxi and Shaanxi during the famine, was coming with more than six thousand troops to lay siege to Beijing. This news was all too true: the notorious highwayman at first sent a few of his soldiers disguised as merchants to bribe those of the Mandarins and eunuchs loyal to the Emperor, who were in charge of his guards. So, they arrived on the spot without encountering any difficulties, and it was his silver rather than his troops that opened the gates to this important city.

The emperor, disgusted by such a cowardly betrayal in favor of one of his subjects, and at the same time a wicked and thieving man who had proclaimed himself the temporary ruler of Peking, after taking a few sips of wine, bit his finger, and with oozing blood wrote with a brush these few words: Let the mandarins be punished, and the people be forgiven.

Having then let his hair down and covered his face, he pronounced: I have lost my country, so, covered with shame, I go to join my ancestors. Having uttered these words, in the same hour he moved away to hang himself in a nearby forest, from long ago his favorite place of rest and now his death.


When Jin's Manchurian king, Nurhaci, declared war on China in 1618, the Ming dynasty's power over the Chinese people was already significantly weakened. The erosion of Ming power was caused by successive periods of drought, famine and disease that afflicted the provinces in the cradle of the Chinese Empire, along the Huang He or Yellow River. Another reason was inflation caused by shortages in silver supplies from abroad, which raised the price of silver relative to copper. Meanwhile, peasants had to pay imperial tributes in silver, and received only copper coins for their crops.

Such natural disasters were always a clear sign that the monarch had lost the Mandate of Heaven. Therefore, the laobaixing, or the people, viewed him as no longer fit to rule.

As a result of widespread complaints, peasant uprisings began to break out across the country starting in the 1620s. Two of these took on critical proportions. In the heart of China's Shaanxi province, Li Zicheng, the son of poor farmers in the 1630s, rallied support and built a sizable army.
After a series of victorious battles, in 1642 he established the Great Shun Dynasty (大順 Da Shun) in Xi’an, the former first capital of unified Qin China.

Simultaneously, but further southwest, in Sichuan, another ambitious Shaanxi peasant, Zhang Xiangzhong 張獻忠, known as the Yellow Tiger, began his struggle for the Mandate of Heaven. In 1644, he established his dynasty there, known as the Great Western Dynasty (大西 Daxi).

The Ming army, busy fighting the Manchurian invasion and disillusioned with its Ming rulers, could not effectively counter peasant revolts and defend the emperor. Finally, in April 1644, after the capture of Beijing by Li Zicheng, the last major Ming emperor, Chongzhen 崇禎, committed suicide in a very noble and traditional manner, hanging himself from a tree in front of the Forbidden Palace on a white silk scarf.

Around the same time, the ship on which the young and hopeful Michael Boym was traveling to his Chinese destination called at the port of Goa on the west coast of India.

The Beijing operation of dynastic change took another turn just a few weeks later, when Wu Sangui, the Ming Dynasty general in charge of defending the easternmost garrison of the Great Wall, decided to go over to the Manchurian side and open the gateway to China. Shortly thereafter, Manchurian forces led by Prince Dorgon, joined by Wu Sangui and his men, annihilated Li Zicheng's army. They seized Beijing and established the young Shunzhi Emperor as the first Qing ruler. The road to the Manchurian conquest of China stood open. At the end of the same year, Boym set foot on the Chinese coast for the first time.

In the wake of this historic change, Ming loyalists left without a leader fled in disarray to the south, where they attempted to re-establish the dynasty. After several years of fighting, under the onslaught of invaders who killed more pretenders, the last southern Ming emperor, Yongli, ascended to a throne that was only a shadow of its former Ming glory. He was young, inexperienced and unwilling to take on such a responsibility. However, he yielded to pressure and was crowned in 1647. Though weak and timorous, his personality served to centralize loyalists and attract new supporters.

Militarily, the original Manchurian forces technically could not compare with the Ming army in terms of weaponry. They were traditional cavalrymen wielding swords and arrows. The Ming army already relied on foot soldiers — musketeers and artillery. Thanks to exposure to Portuguese alloy techniques, the latter had developed considerably before the war. Had it not been for the discontent of many Ming generals and their men who followed Wu Sangui’s example, it would have been difficult for the aggressors to conquer China.
However, dissatisfaction with the Ming rulers proved strong enough that many former Ming commanders switched allegiance to the new power. On the other hand, most surprisingly, in the face of the Manchurian attack, those who once challenged the Ming regime now came to its aid. Military leaders drawn from the ranks of the rebellious forces of Li Zicheng and Zhang Xianzhong, meeting the Manchurian foe, opted for a new loyalty to the embattled Yongli emperor. And strangely enough, it was not so much thanks to the wayward Ming loyalists as to the exceptional military talents of several former rebels that Ming Yongli was likely to prevail.

A Great Opportunity for a Catholic China Opens

And then Father Xavier (Andreas Koffler), having given them three instructions as to the most important matters in our religion, baptized them in the presence of Chancellor Achilles Pang as their godfather according to the rite of the Roman Church, giving the Empress Widow the name Helen, the Queen Mother, Maria, and the Queen Emperor's wife, Anna. Also at the same time, all the ladies of the company at the Princesses' residence were baptized, to their great comfort.

As soon as the Emperor arrived the following day, the Empress Widow invited him to adore the image of Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary, and announced to him that from now on in this palace no idol of Tuo-e is worshiped, but the true God, Jesus Christ. The emperor praised this noble decision of the new Christian women and said that he himself also wished to follow in their footsteps. And indeed, he would have been baptized, had it not been for the fact that, due to certain conditions, it was deemed more advantageous for him to remain a catechumen longer. But he did not cease his daily prayers morning and evening reciting the oration of the catechism, laying fragrances before holy images, and may have already received baptism since I left.

As fate would have it, to conclude this story for you, I will only mention that as soon as the Princesses received baptism, the five provinces returned to imperial rule, and this by assuring him of their loyalty and by asking him to send them viceroyalties and other officials, which they were pleased to send.


It was the Yongli family and court that, thanks to the ingenuity of Austrian Jesuit missionary Father Andreas Koffler, embraced the Catholic faith.
This incredible conversion opened up a unique and unparalleled opportunity for the Middle Kingdom to embrace Catholicism, especially since the little heir to the throne, Cixuan, was baptized, and as the future Chinese Emperor Constantine, he was able to lead his country down the path of Christ.

Driven by great faith and a vision of a Catholic China, in the face of constant attacks by the Qing Manchurian dynasty, which controlled the northern part of China, the two Jesuits persuaded the emperor, whose personal name was Zhu Youlang, to send Boym to Europe to gain support for the Ming court. From then on, his fate was inextricably linked to his legation.

Boym as Emperor Yongli's Envoy to Europe

After leaving Macau, being the last Chinese port here, on January 1 of the year of Christ 1651 we viewed from the sea the island of San-Xeu (Sanzao), known for the fact that here the Apostle of the East St. Xavier died and was buried, to whose protection all those who undertake sailing and must sail through the southern waters called Golfo Hay-Nan pray.

Tonkin, Kochinchina and Ciampa remain on the right side. Then on the sailing route is Pedra Blanca, where the ends of the magnetic needle reverse the directions of the world. We crossed the Singapore Strait (Malacca) and happily reached Malakana (Malacca). There, two Fathers from the Society of Jesus, who arrived with the Malay Christians, were disguised as Portuguese soldiers before they could all move on due to various obstacles placed in the way of the Catholic missionaries.

The sailing route continued toward India. During the sailing we passed the island of Sumatra, which is believed to be the ancient Taprobana, as well as other islands known as the Nicobar Islands were bypassed during the sailing, not without the risk of dangers to which even monarchs who sailed there were exposed. The route also led to the Bay of Bengal and on to the island of Ceylon, where the famous cinnamon grows in the forests.

But due to a mistake, we lost an entire day and a whole night while docking off the town of Columbo, the last town where, due to opposing winds, we could not enter the harbor. Picking up later at Cape Comorin we arrived at Kollan. This is a fortified place in a kingdom known for the best pepper in India, which is harvested there in the months of February and March. Formerly in Palonetta, where the ears of St. Thomas are kept as relics, there is also a place where a cross offered by St. Thomas was placed nearby.
After leaving Kollan, also called Cochin in the literature, we arrived at the head of the Malabar fleet and were kindly received by the Fathers of Cochin and Craganor, as well as the learned and holy man of Serra Don Francisco de Garcia, Archbishop of St. Thomas Christians. With the help of a myoparonno called Armada de Goa, we finally arrived on shore in Maia.

And in this way, after nearly five months of sailing in Indian waters, counting from our departure from Macau that year, we arrived in Goa on an adventurous ship.

Excerpt from "Report on the itinerary of Fr. Michael Boym's journey from China to Europe"

As Father Boym prepared to leave China for a mission to Europe in November 1649, the southern Ming dynasty once again came under increased attack from enemy forces. Armies led by two former Ming commanders, Shang Kexi and Geng Zhongming, struck Jiangxi province from the northeast. They advanced south, successively seizing such important cities as Nanchang, Ganzhou and Shaoguan on their way to Guangdong.

Around the same time, another former Ming general, Kong Youde 孔有德, based in Changsha, attacked Guangxi. Moving south, he captured Hengyang and Yangzhou. Finally, in November, he seized Guilin, the stronghold of Qu Shisi — a Christian and one of the few Ming officials sincerely committed to the Ming cause.

A month later, when Boym's father negotiated with Macau port captain Joao Sousa Pereira for permission to board a ship bound for Goa, Shang and Geng's son Jimao laid siege to Guangzhou.

**Early November 1650**

Michael Boym, accompanied by Joseph K'o and Andrew Zheng, embarked on a mission as envoy to the Vatican and European courts.

Michael Boym's description of the preparations for the mission is described in his work *Brevis Sinarum Imperii Descriptio*. He carried with him letters to Pope Innocent X and to the General of the Jesuit Order, Francisco Piccolomini; Cardinal John de Lugo; the Venetian Doge and the King of Portugal, John IV, plus their translations into Latin along with information about conversions at the imperial court. Empress Helena's letters were written with a brush on yellow silk, and those of Chinese Chancellor Pang-Achilles, a convert to baptism, were written on red paper.
November 23, 1650

The envoy reached Macao, where he received certification before an ecclesiastical notary of the authenticity of the envoy and the letters he carries. The Visitator General of China and Japan, Sebastiao de Maya (1599-1664) entrusted Boym with open letters, confirming his identity and informing him that he was an envoy to the General of the Society of Jesus on the affairs of the Chinese vice-province.

November - December 1650

Boym's delegation encountered problems in obtaining permission from Macau's civil authorities to sail. Boym's message was controversial, due to the issue of political and commercial competition on the Manchurian question between Portugal and the Netherlands and pressure from the group favoring Portuguese agreement with the Manchus.

Historically, it is interesting to note that at about the same time, a rival mission led by the Jesuit, Martini Martini, set out from Beijing to convince the Europeans that the only legitimate option was to have a good relationship with the Qing Manchurian dynasty.

January 1, 1651

The ship with Michael Boym and Andrew Zheng (Joseph K'o stays behind) departed from the port of Macau.

May 1651

Boym and Zheng reached Goa. Here they met resistance from local Jesuit order authorities sympathetic to the Manchus and they were, therefore, banned from traveling to Europe by sea, de facto remaining trapped in Goa.

December 8, 1651

Michael Boym and Andrew Zheng, in defiance of the authorities, secretly left Goa and set off on a journey through India, Persia, and Armenia to Smyrna on the coast of Asia Minor, passing cities such as Hyderabad, Surat, Bander Abbas and Shiraz, reaching Isfahan, in Persia, from where they continued to travel through Erzerum and then Trabzon to Smyrna (now, İzmir).

End of August 1652

They finally reached Smyrna, a port on the Mediterranean Sea, today in Turkey.
September 29, 1652

Michael Boym, dressed in the garb of a Chinese mandarin, presented an account of the state of the Chinese mission and the purpose of his journey to Rome in one of the local churches on the feast of St. Michael. The text delivered at the time became the basis of the *Brevis Relatio*, cited above, and later published and translated into several languages. This text contrasted sharply with the *De Bello Tartarico Historia* written by the Jesuit of the “Manchurian” faction, Martin Martini, who, although setting out at about the same time as Boym, reached Europe more than half a year after Boym's arrival there.

Early December 1652

Michael Boym and Andrew Zheng arrived from Smyrna by ship to Venice, where the ban on Jesuits, imposed as a result of conflict between the Papacy, the Jesuits, and Venetian authorities, was still in force. In order to be able to fulfill his mission, Michael Boym asked the French ambassador, René de Voyer de Paulmy, second Marquis d'Argenson, to intercede with Doha. The ambassador took an interest in his case and eventually his intercession proved successful.

December 16, 1652

Michael Boym was granted an audience with the Grand Doge, Francisco Molino, and appeared on the Chinese question before the Senate of the Republic dressed in Chinese Mandarin garb, impressing the assembly and arousing interest. French assistance *post facto*, however, proved to be a curse, as in doing so Boym exposed himself to the Habsburgs, who were close to Pope Innocent X. Moreover, his referral of the work for publication without the permission of his superiors exposed him to their wrath.

Boym was thereupon accused by the order's authorities of publishing an account of China without the approval of the order's general, distributing to the rectors of European universities a treatise entitled *Ratio eorum*. In it Boym praised Confucius and defended the missionary methods initiated in the Middle Kingdom by Father Matteo Ricci, already recognized in Rome as “spreading pagan practices.”

December 21 and 28, 1652

The recently elected Jesuit General, Goswin Nickel, gave to Boym a written reprimand for his speeches as Ming ambassador to Venice. Michael Boym was placed in solitary confinement in Loreto. The Holy See of Innocent X was reluctant to send an envoy and questioned the authenticity of the writings Boym brought. An anonymous letter questioned the identity of the Polish Jesuit as a Ming envoy.
In March, he went to Loretto, where, among other Poles, he engaged in giving confessions at the Basilica de la Santa Casa — the Holy House — there. In December of the same year, he was summoned to Rome for a confrontation with his adversary, the Italian Martino Martini.

April 1, 1653

The first of four general meetings of the Pontifical Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith was held to discuss the case of Michael Boym and his ministry.

1654

The French version of Brevis Relatio, Referitur iter R. P. Michaelis Boym ex Sinis in Europam was published. (In English this is the “Report on the itinerary of Fr. Michael Boym's journey from China to Europe”). It was published in Paris.

January 7, 1655

Pope Innocent X died, resenting Boym. He had opposed the Jesuit practice of using Chinese vestments and rituals introduced by Matteo Ricci and he called them the “Chinese Rites” in the liturgy.

April 7, 1655

The Papal Conclave elected Cardinal Fabio Chigi as Pope Alexander VII.

Second Half of 1655

Confirmations of the identity and ministry of the Polish Jesuit arrived at the Vatican from Macao and Goa, along with the information that one-third of China was still under Ming Dynasty rule, while anti-Manchurian uprisings were multiplying in the remaining area.

December 7, 1655

Michael Boym and Andreas Zheng finally were received by Pope Alexander VII, but only after three years of waiting. However, Pope Alexander VII did not decide to give real support to the emperor but, rather, he instructed Boym to go back to China, once again, with letters containing only words of support and encouragement, assurances of prayers for the imperial family and gold medals with the pope's likeness made to mark the beginning of his pontificate.
Thereupon, Michael Boym, along with Andrew Zheng, who had managed to join the Jesuit order himself during his three-year stay in Europe, went to Lisbon to ask for help in the fight against the Manchus from King John IV of Portugal, known as the Fortunate King. The king decided to support the Ming and promised military assistance.

**Perilous Return to China, on March 30, 1656**

Boym and Zheng embarked on a return trip to China on the galleon Enxobregas. It was fraught with danger — four of the nine traveling companions died on the ship from disease and exhaustion.

Having left Lisbon, we turned our sails towards the East Indies on March 30, 1656. There were eight of us fathers — four Portuguese, one Pole, Michael Boym, (who is the superior), one Englishman and three Belgians, namely Fr. Francis Rougemont, Fr. Philip Couplet and me, the smallest of the Apostles - Ignatius Hartoghvelt.

We sailed for a full seven months. The reason for such a long voyage, the very numerous illnesses and misfortunes that many suffered, was partly due to the cruel silence of the sea, partly to the weak and generally contrary wind, through which we suffered continuously for almost 40 days from the heat between the first and second degree from the equator [I think the term "linea" refers to the equator]. The food mostly rotted, the wine soured, the bodies weakened, and the ship, with no wind, just the slight movement of the waves, as much as it moved east for one day, it turned back toward the west on the second day.

Seventy people or more on our ship died from the anguish of diseases of all kinds, but all of them happily (if Your Honor excludes two or three who died a sudden death), because they had time to confess their entire lives and, duly strengthened by all the sacraments, passed on to a better life.

Excerpt from a letter by Fr. Ignatius Hartoghvelt, Goa, East India, May 1, 1657

**On November 6, 1656**

Boym and Zheng reached the Portuguese port of Goa on the central west coast of India. Here Boym received information about the disastrous situation of the Yongli Emperor, whose troops already ruled only a modest part of the southwestern lands of the empire. He also received a letter from the provincial of Macao informing him that due to the trade relations established by the Portuguese with the Manchus, his return to Macao would be highly undesirable.
Early 1657

The port of Goa was surrounded by ships of the Dutch VOC trading company, making it impossible to leave by ship. Boym and Zheng, however, did not give up. They decided to travel through India on foot, following an unknown route, and having reached the east coast of India, boarded a Muslim ship bound for the Kingdom of Siam (now Thailand).

Early 1658

Boym and Zheng arrived in Ayutthaya, the capital of the Kingdom of Siam and a metropolis of over 1 million inhabitants. At that time, it was thus one of the largest cities in the world (for comparison it was bigger in population than Paris and Rome taken together). Here they received yet another letter - this time from the Macau Senate — asking them not to come to this city, where they are non-grata. Boym described his journey through the Malay Peninsula, including his encounters with tigers, elephants and rhinos, in a letter sent to Rome.

May 1658

Companions learned that the Ming court was now in Guangxi province, bordering Tonkin (today, northern Vietnam), so Boym decided to go there, and he shipped out on a Chinese pirate sailing vessel. The Polish Jesuit, although himself ready for the highest sacrifices, was aware that his mission posed a growing threat not only to himself, but also to the entire religious community and to the interests of the Portuguese Crown, which exercised patronage over the Society of Jesus in China, but loyalty and honor did not allow him to withdraw.

August 10, 1658

After two months of dramatic travel on a tiny ship around the Indochina Peninsula, Boym and his faithful Zheng arrived in Tonkin. Here, Boym sent his last letter to Europe, addressed to the Grand Duke of Tuscany, who had been his protector while waiting for a papal audience.

In this letter, dated November 20, 1658, Boym recounted with optimism the recent successes of the Ming troops and seemed to trust in the future ultimate triumph of the dynasty he served. For this reason, despite the insistence of Father Onofrio Borges, the superior of the Jesuit mission in Tonkin, to abandon further travel, Michael Boym and Andreas Zheng left Tonkin on foot.
February 16, 1659

With the permission of the local authorities, the wanderers crossed the border into China. In the course of their journey, upon hearing that more areas had passed under Manchurian rule, which cut them off from the court of the Yongli Emperor, the Polish missionary decided to return to Tonkin, and from there, via Burma, to try to reach the longed-for destination of their extensive journey. Adding to their worries was the news of the deaths of Chancellor Pang and Father Koffler, and then the ban on returning to Tonkin that Boym next encountered at the border.

On August 22, 1659

Michael Boym died of exhaustion and was buried by the only witness to his death and faithful companion, Andreas Zheng, somewhere near the royal road leading from Hanoi to Nanning, the capital of Guangxi province. A cross with an engraved Chinese inscription was placed on top of the grave. The burial site remains unknown to this day.

Boym’s Role in the History of the West, China Relations, and of the Catholic Church

Boym’s three most important works, which helped lay the foundation for relations between the West and China, are *Medicus Sinicus*, *Magni Cathay* and *Mappa Imperii Sinarum*.

*Medicus Sinicus*

*Medicus Sinicus* is Michael Boym's magnificent work on Chinese medicine and pharmacology. It was published posthumously in fragments as *Specimen Medicinae Sinicae* in 1682 and *Clavis medica ad Chinarum doctrinam de pulsibus* in 1686.

These were the first treatises in Europe on the Chinese method of diagnosing diseases by examining changes in the patient's pulse and based on the appearance of the patient's tongue. Thus, they contained the basics of the Yin and Yang concept, the principles of circulating Qi energy through channels called "meridians" in conjunction with the effects of acupuncture and Chinese natural medicines.

The first edition, however, was unlabeled with his name and was essentially a plagiarism of his work. The plagiarist was a certain Andreas Cleyer, employed as a German surgeon general by the Dutch East India Company in Batavia (now Jakarta, Indonesia, then a Dutch colony) from 1665 to 1697. Cleyer obtained Boym's original text from Boym's fellow Jesuit and Paris publisher Philippe Couplet, to whom Boym had entrusted it in 1656, while on his way to China.
Instead of delivering the text to Europe as soon as possible, as had been agreed, Philippe Couplet sent it to Batavia in 1656, where it fell into the hands of Cleyer, with whom Couplet was friendly, and who compiled, edited and published it on his return to Europe under his own name. As Boym died in 1659, he was no longer able to defend his authorship.

However, as early as 1686, Couplet himself re-edited the text and republished it in Nuremberg, but this time as Clavis medica ad Chinarum doctrinam de pulsibus autore r.p. Michael Boym e Soc. Jesu et in China missionario, that is, with Boymo's authorship correctly stated. Therefore, today the author of all the above medical treatises is unquestionably considered to be Michael Boym. In addition, some of Boym's manuscripts from Medicus Sinicus have been found in the Jagiellonian Library. There is a copy of the 1686 Nuremberg edition in the National Library.

These texts were based on materials collected by the Pole following his arrival on the island of Hainan in 1647, which in turn were created in China based on the famous, oldest (more than 2000 years old) Chinese medical book. That book was the so-called Huangdi Neijing or Canon of Internal Medicine of the Yellow Emperor, the legendary ruler of China. The canon itself dates from the period of the so-called "Warring Kingdoms," i.e., the fifth to third centuries B.C.E., and it is still the basis of Chinese traditional medicine in use today.

The Chinese therefore recognize Michael Boym as the first European translator of the Canon of Internal Medicine, although Medicus Sinicus was more than a direct translation, as it was an analysis of the original texts and an attempt to lay out the concepts contained therein in a way that Europeans could understand.

**Magni Cathay and Mappa Imperii Sinarum**

Boym the geographer compiled, on the basis of existing Chinese sources and his knowledge of the Chinese empire, the first comprehensive European atlas of China known as Magni Catay, containing detailed maps of the then fifteen provinces of the Chinese empire. It explained by plotting the main rivers and their tributaries, mountain ranges, cities previously unknown to Europeans and, importantly, the locations of major mines of strategic minerals like gold, silver, copper, iron, lead and tin.

This was therefore the first such economic atlas to be made on the European soil. The next economic atlas (this time published) appeared only over a century later.

He was the first geographer to correctly interpret the Korean Peninsula as a peninsula rather than as an island and he described the China Wall. He depicted the area of China with great detail, especially the hydrographic network and the relief of the surface. He also rendered the location of cities with relative precision.
In addition to the atlas, he also drew up a general map of the Chinese empire, which is known under the title *Mappa Imperii Sinarum*. The maps drawn by Michael Boym were a significant achievement, as at that time in Europe, knowledge of China came mainly from the colorful tales of Marco Polo. Moreover, only the coastline was well known, while the interior of the continent was unexplored.
The Middle and Late Roman Republic (264 BCE - 27 BCE) and the Han Dynasty (202 BCE - 220 CE) characterized two concurrent military superpowers of the ancient world. Anchoring opposite ends of the Eurasian continent, the two powers shared structural similarities that enabled their longevity and resilience to ruination.

Both states suffered crippling civil wars and recurrent external threats, causing robust government and military organizations to grow. They approached the competition continuum as differently as Latin script to Chinese characters (potentia vs. 力—power) but reached similar foundational deductions. Rome persistently expanded throughout its Republican period, requiring a flexible, adaptable military backed by the “excellence of their institutions.”1 After the initial reconquest, the Han inherited existing Qin structures, reforming and strengthening its bureaucratic-military system despite “Confucian pacifism and antimilitary bias of the scholar-official class.”2

Republican Rome and the Han dynasty shared similar characteristics of strong-rooted governmental institutions resilient to catastrophe enabled by their depth of manpower and dominant ideologies.

Founded in 509 BCE, the Roman Republic formed after deposing the last Tarquin king and carefully balanced power between the Roman patricians (nobles) and plebeians (commoners). The Romans observed the various Greek systems on which to base their newfound government, ranging from monarchies, oligarchies, and democracies. To Polybius, the Roman Republic echoed the finest features of the three, astutely picking and choosing the strengths of each system.3

Looking to adopt an official constitution, the Romans sent envoys to inspect Athenian democracy. They returned with a copy of Solon's laws, leading to the implementation of the Law of Twelve Tables, effectively the Roman Bill of Rights.4 The Tables enacted governing legislation that strengthened the concept of citizenship and lasted well into the Roman Empire.5

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The enfranchisement of Roman society birthed a structurally resilient, multifaceted system to buttress its military institution and mobilize massive reserves of manpower.6

The Qin dynasty united all of China for the first time in 221 BCE, gaining the Mandate of Heaven and laying the foundation for the successor Han dynasty.7 Only lasting for fifteen years, the Qin supplied the Han with precedence for ruling a unified Chinese state. The Qin rose from the Warring States period (476-221 BCE), employing effective reforms bequeathed by the philosopher Shang Yang (390-338 BCE). His changes included “programs of administrative efficiency, agricultural reform, and single-minded pursuit of political and military power.”8

Shang Yang’s systematic reforms strengthened the Qin state enabling it to unify China, which the Han subsequently inherited. The cruelty of the Qin discredited the ideal of imperial government, but after the Han, “it was accepted as the orthodox norm for organizing mankind.”9

The Han vilified the Qin emperor, Shih-Huang, to distance themselves from his cruelty.10 Imperial power centralized around the Emperor supported by the Mandate of Heaven — divine legitimacy — originating from the Qin's predecessors, the Zhou.11 Ultimately, the Mandate of Heaven enabled the establishment of a resilient state dependent on subservience that had astutely learned from the shortcomings of its predecessors.

Republican Rome rose from a single city to a multi-state power, unlike the Han, who inherited an entire empire after a brief civil war. Under the Han, China began seeing itself as a unified culture; in contrast, Rome mistreated its allied states, catalyzing rebellions, and resulting in the Social Wars, leading to the extension of citizenship to their Italian allies.12 Geographically, the Han held relatively secure territory, focusing on external threats at the northern and western borders from the steppe.

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10 Bodde, The Cambridge History of China, 43.
Their primary nomadic foe, the Xiongnu, vacillated between unified confederations and internal conflict, which the Han approached in a Byzantine-like fashion, often expending capital instead of troops.\textsuperscript{13}

In comparison, the Romans faced other dominant empires during this period, nearly suffering catastrophe in the Second Punic War against Carthage. Still, subsequently, it quickly overcame the other western hegemons, such as the Greek Successor States. Geopolitically, Rome and the Han were at dissimilar stages in their rise to power but dominated their respective spheres concurrently. Ultimately, Rome remained in ascendancy while the Han focused on territorial control.

\textbf{The Roman Institutional Model}

The Roman political state continually evolved to balance its growing power and expand its citizenship base. The pillars of the Roman Republic revolved around the patricians — the consuls and Senate, contrasting with the plebeians — who fell within societal ranks based upon wealth. The first Roman census predated the Republic, enacted by the sixth king of Rome, Servius Tullius, and split the population into five military classes based on asses (Roman currency).\textsuperscript{14} In addition, citizens too poor to achieve placement in the fifth class were exempted from military service.\textsuperscript{15} Consequently, the census served as a tool for the government to collect taxes and register eligible men for the legions.\textsuperscript{16}

In the Republican era, the Roman government functioned as a continual clash between patricians and the plebeians, which provided a constant friction point in peacetime but reformed to enfranchise more of the population.

Two Roman consuls, elected for a year, served as the chief government magistrates in the Republic.\textsuperscript{17} Resident in Rome, they were “responsible for all matters of public concern, since all the other officers, except the tribunes of the people, (were) subordinate to them.”\textsuperscript{18} In war, they had almost unlimited power, able to “order allies around as they please, appoint military tribunes, levy troops, and select the best men for particular jobs; they have the right, out in the field, to punish anyone under their command; and they are also entitled to draw as much money from the public purse as they see fit.”\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{14} Livy, \textit{The Early History of Rome}, 81-82.
\textsuperscript{15} Livy, \textit{The Early History of Rome}, 83.
\textsuperscript{17} Polybius, \textit{The Histories}, 385.
\textsuperscript{18} Polybius, \textit{The Histories}, 380.
\textsuperscript{19} Polybius, \textit{The Histories}, 381.
Republican Rome “militated strongly against anything that could lead to the elevation of one aristocrat to a commanding position within the state.”\textsuperscript{20} Skepticism of unlimited lifetime power in one competent citizen, a result of the overthrow of the Tarquin kings, prevented the long-term centralization of authority until the fall of the Republic. In a crisis, the Romans chose a single dictator to replace the two consuls, serving a limited term but holding supreme emergency authority.\textsuperscript{21}

Ultimately, the Roman system paired executive power with legislative leadership, which enabled Roman consuls to act decisively in war, and the brevity of the office provided accountability.

In legend, the founder of Rome, Romulus, created the Senate with one hundred "fathers," or "Heads of Clans."\textsuperscript{22} Initially only filled by patricians, the Senate expanded to include plebeians, growing to three hundred in 509 BCE.\textsuperscript{23} Senators arose from experienced magisterial positions — aediles, quaestors, and other governmental offices — and served for life.\textsuperscript{24}

The Senate had the power of legal interpretation and drafting decrees, but the people ultimately decided whether “to pass any law to deprive the Senate of their authority, incomes, and privileges.”\textsuperscript{25} Its most critical job centered on managing the treasury and enacting taxes, thus controlling the capability of the state to conduct war.\textsuperscript{26} Lastly, the Senate served as a leadership pool filled with prior Consuls and war-experienced commanders, which tempered Roman foreign policy with realism.

The plebeians, by far the largest societal group in Rome, manned the legions and filled several critical political positions within the government. The people exercised institutional power through elected tribunes who retained a veto, able to temper patrician decrees.\textsuperscript{27}

Citizenship enfranchised the Roman plebeians, allowing them to vote for tribunes and guaranteed equal protection under the Twelve Tables. In 451 BCE, a temporary executive of ten \textit{decemvirs} replaced the consulship and developed the Twelve Tables, proposing them to the public.\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{22} Livy, \textit{The Early History of Rome}, 40.
\textsuperscript{24} Andrew Lintott, \textit{The Constitution of the Roman Republic}, 68-69.
\textsuperscript{25} Polybius, \textit{The Histories}, 383.
\textsuperscript{26} Polybius, \textit{The Histories}, 381.
\textsuperscript{27} Polybius, \textit{The Histories}, 385.
\textsuperscript{28} Livy, \textit{The Early History of Rome}, 235.
The plebeians reviewed, edited, and adopted the Twelve Tables, which became "the fountainhead of public and private law.” Ultimately, friction between the patrician and plebeian classes caused continual reform to the law system, but the solid foundation of the Twelve Tables buttressed Roman societal structures, giving plebeians of the five conscripted classes a stake in the state's survival.

The Roman institution controlled a complex network of bilateral treaties that tied allied Italian states to Rome, supplying armies when Rome beckoned. The allies suffered mistreatment as second-class citizens, causing the Social War, which broke out in 90 BCE but illustrated a shift in allied attitude as the Italian elite now preferred equality and citizenship over independence. The Italian allies supplied enormous manpower to the Roman war machine. For example, despite losing 120,000 men in the Second Punic War, more than half at the Battle of Cannae (216 BCE), “casualties that would have crippled most ancient states,” it managed to man multiple theaters concurrently to defeat Hannibal.

Furthermore, in 225 BCE, a Gallic invasion forced Italy to arms. By census, Rome determined it had 273,000 men available versus Italian allies’ 361,000, emblematic of their crucial role in the Roman military machine.

Moreover, practical accounting of available manpower enabled Rome to draw upon deep reserves from all classes of citizens and allies to serve in the legions, which created a system resilient to even multiple military disasters.

The Han Institutional Model

The Han dynasty had inherited and owed a deep debt to the Qin's imperial governmental models and practices, whom “they castigated as cruel and despotical.” Fundamentally, the Han established systems that prevented unlimited power by spreading the responsibility of offices amongst two or more officials of equal rank. Bureaucrats and administrators held power in the Han dynasty as part of the inherited Qin system. Bureaucrats formed a political entity, sometimes even becoming kingmakers, as in the case of the Second Emperor's demise.

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30 Sage, The Republican Roman Army, 125.
32 Sage, The Republican Roman Army, 125.
33 Sage, The Republican Roman Army, 125.
Imperial eunuch Chao Kao engineered the fall of the Qin dynasty after creating an illusion of insanity for the Second Emperor, who subsequently committed suicide. In addition, Chao Kao eliminated the two most competent Qin generals, Fusu and Meng Tian, by ordering them to kill themselves in the emperor's name, which they eventually did. Ultimately, bureaucrats held an outsized position of power in the Qin, which continued into the Han dynasty.

After Chao Kao's play for power, the Qin dynasty collapsed into civil war. Liu Bang, subsequently known as Emperor Gaozu, reunited the empire in February 202 BCE, founding the Han dynasty and ending the civil war. After regaining the territory of the Qin, the Han initially relied on force to govern but soon sought “a moral and intellectual justification which would legitimize their rule in superhuman terms” and thus regain the “Mandate of Heaven.”

The earlier Zhou dynasty (1046-256 BCE) introduced the concept of the Mandate of Heaven as the foundation of political legitimacy, which backed the emperor with divine will. Heaven, as the source of the emperor's authority, conferred inferiority to the sacred, which “is supposed to monitor the ruler, to caution him through portents and omens, and, in an extreme situation, to replace him with a new incumbent.” The temporary nature of the Mandate meant the subjective ability to lose divine will, tying the emperor to caution and, ideally, to benevolence.

Lastly, the dominant philosopher Confucius wrote that he understood the “Decree of Heaven,” suggesting he had embraced his destiny to guide the ordinary people through virtue, emblematic of the prevalence of divine determinism in Chinese philosophy.

When the First Emperor of the Qin consolidated power, he divided the empire into “thirty-six commanderies each subdivided in turn into an unknown number of counties,” establishing the basis for imperial control that the Han later adopted. Each commandery had a civil governor, military commander, and imperial inspector who ruled as an administrative triumvirate.

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36 Bodde, “The state and empire of Ch’in,” 84.
37 Bodde, “The state and empire of Ch’in,” 84.
38 Bodde, “The state and empire of Ch’in,” 85.
43 Bodde, “The state and empire of Ch’in,” 54.
44 Bodde, “The state and empire of Ch’in,” 54.
Alongside the commanderies, ten mini kingdoms ruled semi-independently in 202 BCE, but after six years, all but one king had been replaced “by a brother or a son of the emperor.” These administrative districts managed military recruitment and training, funneling available troops into the Han national armies as needed. A bureaucratic army of magistrates governed counties, meritoriously earning their positions, and could be recalled at any time by the central government, ensuring accountability.

Moreover, the Standard Histories implied that top-level positions such as chancellor or imperial counselor gained appointment by “the emperor's own act, and in formal and constitutional terms appointments were presumably authorized in this way.”

The Han dynasty followed the Qin model, maintaining a strong centralized government with three senior statesmen advising the emperor directly. In 177 BCE, this office was reduced to two positions, as “appointments to the office of supreme commander ... were exceptional.” Nine ministers controlled different branches of government, supported by an expansive staff of subordinates.

The separation of power between the imperial counselor and chancellor marked a fundamental truism across all positions of power in the Han dynasty, providing a system of checks and balances for each critical decision. For example, the superintendents of agriculture and the lesser treasury shared fiscal responsibility. Additionally, the garrison troops of the capital city likewise divided themselves between northern and southern barracks. Ultimately, the decentralization of decisions forced multilateral agreement amongst the bureaucracy but obstructed decisive military action in crisis.

After reunification, the Han enforced a demilitarization of society, and the new emperor proclaimed a general amnesty. For reconciliation, the emperor honored “the privileges due to those who had received orders of aristocratic rank and announced a general bestowal of these marks of social distinction,” which carried material advantages. The civil war had marshaled society, putting armies of hundreds of thousands in the field, numbers rarely seen mobilized for any external threat.

48 Loewe, “The structure and practice of government,” 120.
49 Loewe, “The structure and practice of government,” 120.
50 Loewe, “The structure and practice of government,” 120.
53 Loewe, “The structure and practice of government,” 120.
For example, prominent warlord Xiang Yu, king of the Western Chu, reportedly attacked the governor of Pei with 400,000 men who levied 100,000 in defense. Even reduced by half, the army sizes in the civil war illustrated the enormous manpower available to Han commanders, which needed reintegration into peacetime. Ultimately, the emperor had to demilitarize and reunify a fractured society, losing martial experience in the process.

Institutional Comparison

Republican Rome and the Han dynasty shared complex, resilient governmental structures at different political maturation stages. The Han exited a civil war in 202 BCE, while the Romans moved towards multiple internal wars in the first century BCE.

Rome and the Han shared skepticism of unbridled authority, resulting in similar checks and balances, albeit instituted differently. The Han having an imperial model, relied on the emperor for ultimate supremacy, whereas Rome only established a temporary dictator when an existential threat required unilateral control. Lastly, the divination of leaders did not exist in Rome until the end of the Republic, whereas the Mandate of Heaven provided the Han emperor with sacred legitimacy.

In the second century BCE, Rome ruled only a small piece of Italy directly but controlled the peninsula through a complex web of military alliances and appointed officials, which amounted to enormous, combined manpower. The Han divided dominion into commanderies and mini kingdoms, with individual military leaders similar to the Roman governor; however, the Han commanderies leaders could not raise armies without explicit orders from the Emperor, preventing private wars and unilateral action. The Han emperor personally controlled sixteen commanderies, empowering the other kings to be “responsible for raising and training armed forces.”

Roman patricians shared similar power structures to the bureaucrats of the Han, competing for important offices; however, attaining governmental positions in the Han varied from meritocracy to nepotism, whereas entrance to the Senate was mainly familial, with the censors ultimately controlling admission. Consequently, Republican Rome and the Han shared sophisticated political structures, enabling mass mobilizations of their population, but conflicted in the concept of citizenship and the relationship between the executive and commoners.

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The Roman Army

The Roman military began as a small-scale single-city militia defense force, growing through practical adaptation and imitation. The infantry-centric Roman army evolved through multiple iterations, generally in reaction to an external threat. It began with the phalanx, copied from the Italian Greeks or the Etruscans. The Romans later reformed it into a manipular system, described as a "phalanx with joints," to defeat the Greek-style phalanx through its superior maneuverability.

The Romans demonstrated an "uncanny ability to learn from defeat and to imitate the methods of adversaries if found to be more efficient than their own." This introspective quality led to the adoption of various equipment and tactics from enemies, including their renowned *gladius*, which they reproduced from the Spanish in the early fourth century BCE, emblematic of the practical views on military reform.

Rapid adaptation through adopting superior equipment and tactics developed from the temporary nature of Roman leadership. Consuls and military tribunes, easily replaced, provided immediate accountability and introspection over defeat. For example, the transition from the maniple (120 men) to cohort (500 men) system likely resulted from defeat at the hands of the Cimbri and Teutones.

According to Plutarch, the Romans lost an incredible 120,000 men against the Cimbri and Teutones at the Battle of Arausio in 105 BCE. Quickly reacting after this devastating defeat, the "consul in Rome hired teachers from a gladiator school to improve the soldier's dueling skill."

Additionally, in the First Punic War, despite having zero nautical experience, the Romans copied a beached Carthaginian quinquereme and, in the space of just four years, built and proficiently manned an amazing 330 ships (an estimated 140,000 men), defeating the hegemonic Carthaginian navy in the Battle of Cape Ecnomus. Thus, the reform after Arausio and victory at Ecnomus illustrate the dynamism of the Roman military, enabling it to defeat numerous warrior cultures and adapt to overcome multiple fighting styles.

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64 Santosuosso, *Storming the Heavens*, 21.
The Han Army

Due to geographical location, two dimensions dominated the Han military calculus — internal strife and border confrontations against nomadic confederations. The Han inherited the Qin infantry-centric militia system, which arose victorious from the Warring States period.

The Warring States produced well-armed large peasant armies that overthrew the warrior classes due to the preponderance of iron weapons. Shang Yang reformed the newfound peasant-dominated armies through practical adaptation. For example, he recognized the Kingdom of Wei’s superior military formations and imitated their elite units to form the Qin army. These heavy troops carried a large crossbow, halberd, and lamellar armor, providing the Qin with the era’s dominant army. Consequently, the chaos of the Warring States required innovative changes for ultimate victory, producing the tremendously successful Qin army, which the Han inherited.

Shang Yang’s reforms encouraged the Qin population to focus on agriculture and war, creating a culture of farmer militia warriors. To Shang Yang, “war serves not only to conquer enemies and seize their resources but also to consume any internal surplus that would otherwise destroy the state,” representative of the practical views Legalists held of war. Additionally, the Han militia required all “able-bodied males between the ages of twenty-three and fifty-six” to serve a mandatory two years and remain in reserve for recall in times of emergency throughout their adult lives.

The earliest surviving census from the Han dynasty, conducted in 2 CE, numbered 57,700,000 people. This incredible figure signified that the Han possibly had millions of men in active reserve. Shang Yang’s reforms involved the entirety of imperial society, providing massive depth to the Qin and Han armies.

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67 Bodde, “The state and empire of Ch’in,” 47.
Army Comparison

The Han dynasty and the Roman Republic developed large, efficiently run armies out of necessity, arising out of local conflicts as dominant powers.

Rome relied on flexibility and adaptation, whereas the Han depended on efficient control systems. Rome faced a diverse array of enemies while expanding, which forced its continual evolution to face different threats.

The Han struggled to defeat the nomadic border tribes, relying on the construction of walls, and directed their tactical focus on countering mobile missile-armed cavalry.73

Additionally, both powers utilized an infantry-centric military, depending on differing but early forms of citizenship to fill the ranks.

The closest census to the 2 CE Han figure for Rome occurred in 14 CE, numbering 4,937,000 residents, indicating the Han had twelve times the population of the later Roman Empire.74

Compared to the Roman Republic, the Han existed in a matured political state and drew upon the entirety of its citizenship base to fill its militia ranks. The Roman Republic initially only utilized citizens within its five societal classes until reforms enacted by the general Marius in 107 BCE tapped the enormous manpower of its lowest classes, signifying a significant shortcoming of the Roman system.75

Ultimately, the two superpowers relied almost entirely on militia forces, which marshaled their citizenry but created a high-turnover rate and lost institutional experience.

Roman Culture

In 435 BCE, the censors Gaius Furius Pacilus and Marcus Geganius Macerinus approved the construction of the Villa Public on the Campus Martius, which subsequently held the future censuses.76

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73 Bodde, “The state and empire of Ch’in,” 63.
74 Frank, "Roman Census Statistics from 225 to 28 B. C," 331.
75 Sage, The Republican Roman Army, 238-239.
Beyond conducting the census, the marshaling of Rome's armies occurred on the Campus Martius or “Field of Mars,” which sat outside the city’s boundary, and the crossing of which signified the ritual change into military service. Upon entering the army, military tribunes administered the Sacramentum, a sacred oath initiating recruits into service by holy ritual.

Deeply religious, Roman society strove to maintain peace with the gods, which meant a declaration of war required the gods' permission to embark on the risky venture. For example, the Romans sought to declare “just war” through a “ritual process conducted by special priests, the fetiales, thus ensuring that they did not offend their gods.” Roman theology embedded itself in every aspect of warfare, from enlistment to declarations of war, pre-battle sacrifices, and death rituals, illustrating the juxtaposition of religion and war in Rome.

Traditional values dominated Roman society, denoted by the concept of Mos Maiorum or the “customs of our ancestors.” Mos Maiorum constituted an unwritten “highly idealized version of the community's behavior,” which governed day-to-day actions and military virtue. Mos Maiorum aligned with the religiosity of the Roman populace and carried an embedded traditionalist respect for elders and military valor. Military integrity was essential to Roman societal status, reflected in primary source literature by hagiographic biographies of renowned war leaders.

Revered epics such as the Iliad enshrined warrior virtue, culminating in the later Roman Aeneid, emblematic of the high regard Roman society held for heroic virtue writ large. Additionally, Mars, the god of war and agriculture, “in importance second only to Jupiter,” portrayed the duality of war and agriculture to the Roman pastoral institution. The Roman army filled its ranks with its land-owning farming class due to wealth requirements, illustrating the societal connection between farming and war.

Roman culture rewarded the bravery of citizens through the public bestowment of symbolic crowns and victorious commanders with the highest honor in Rome — the triumph. Crowns came in various materials designating specific heroic achievements that the awardee could wear publicly.

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77 Goldsworthy, The Complete Roman Army, 33; Sage, The Republican Roman Army, 123.
78 Sage, The Republican Roman Army, 123.
80 Dillon and Matthew, The Roman Republic: Religion and Classical Warfare, 3.
81 Santosuosso, Storming the Heavens, 22.
82 Santosuosso, Storming the Heavens, 23.
84 Sage, The Republican Roman Army, 215-216.
Grass crowns for freeing besieged allies, gold for victorious commanders, a naval crown for victory at sea, oak for saving a citizen's life, and the olive crown, achievable without being in battle, each of which placed the wearer in a publicized glorified status. Moreover, the most prestigious Roman accolade, the triumph, rated the recipient commander a public parade through the capital and recognition for life as a hero of Rome. The state, religion, warrior virtue, and personal fame intertwined in Roman society to create an unparalleled western martial culture worshipping heroic deeds religiously.

Han Culture

In contrast, two primary philosophies dominated Han society — Confucianism and Legalism — both of which long predated the Han. The Qin state enforced Legalism through Shang Yang's reforms, preaching order and stability, and incentivized military action to retain peace. Legalists believed “that people should be socially regimented, bureaucratically administered, rewarded only for success in war and agriculture, punished for the slightest transgressions, and subject to the absolute will of the ruler.” Therefore, Legalism demanded strict obedience to the state and emperor. In the end, the Han blamed the harsh rule of Legalism for the fall of Qin, but the institutional bureaucracy installed by Legalism continued into the Han regime.

Still dominant today in Chinese doctrine, the philosopher Confucius (551 - 479 BCE) preached “humaneness and righteousness” and that individuals should seek their proper place within the ancient ritual order. Confucian schools developed in the fifth century BCE and gained supremacy in Han Wudi's reign (141-87 BCE). Confucius taught that order through punishment only led people to adapt to avoid danger but failed to imbue a sense of shame to act morally.

Instead, Confucius preached virtue, which he believed developed “a sense of shame,” causing the people to “reform themselves.”

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85 Sage, The Republican Roman Army, 216.
86 Dreyer, “Continuity and Change,” 23.
87 Dreyer, “Continuity and Change,” 23.
90 Confucius, The Analects, 63.
91 Confucius, The Analects, 63.
Confucian bureaucrats saw war as a “necessary evil” despite the “military skills of chariots and archery (being) two of the six skills of a Confucian gentleman.”\(^\text{92}\) Consequently, martial skills supported Confucius's idea of a “gentleman,” resulting in a conflicting stance on military practices.

In practice, Confucius made few comments about warfare, seemingly avoiding the topic. When the Duke Ling of Wei asked Confucius about military formations, he replied, “I have, indeed, heard something about the use of sacrificial vessels, but I have never studied the matter of commanding troops,” and pointedly departed the next day.\(^\text{93}\)

Confucians believed “that the need to use force was a sign of the failure of virtue, and in part from a desire to restrain the power of rival elites (such as military men and eunuchs).”\(^\text{94}\) Confucius made some general military statements in *The Analects (circa 496 BCE)*. For example, “to send the common people to war untrained is to throw them away,” and “after a good man has trained the common people for seven years, they should be ready to take up arms.”\(^\text{95}\) His few martial quotes demonstrate a base knowledge of warfare from living in the Warring States period and provide insight into his conscious omission of military ideology from his philosophy.

**Cultural Comparison**

The Roman Republic, bolstered by the Homeric epics, believed in the virtue of military valor, and thus sanctified military service. In comparison, Confucian Han bureaucrats, who rarely had military experience, governed with hostility towards militarism, reflecting their anti-military views in their writing.

The ideals of the Confucian classics (virtue) were very different from those presented in the *Aeneid* (power through conquest). In one instance, the Confucian administrator Lu Chia remarked to the emperor, “an empire could be conquered but not administered on horseback,” providing insight into the duality of Confucianism towards war, believing it necessary but inferior to administration.\(^\text{96}\) In Rome, military success paired with political prosperity for the patrician class and embedded martial virtues into the society through *Mos Maiorum*.

*Mos Maiorum*, Legalism, and Confucianism shared distinct attributes by some metrics. For example, *Mos Maiorum* and Legalism preached adherence to the social order and traditionalism, which enshrined military solidarity. Furthermore, *Mos Maiorum* and Confucianism believed in societal virtue but differed by definition.

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\(^{92}\) Dreyer, “Continuity and Change,” 22.


\(^{95}\) Confucius, *The Analects*, 123.

\(^{96}\) Kramers, “The development of the Confucian schools,” 753.
In China, from the earliest records, “we find the principle of wu (martial, military) in polar opposition to wen (literate, civil).”\textsuperscript{97} The Han had no martial theology comparable to pagan Roman religion. Confucianism and Legalism do not equate to a deity of war. Instead, war in the Han dynasty centered on allegiance to a god-like emperor who attempted to maintain control over a vast population while fending off nomadic raiders.

In contrast, Republican Rome, still in an expansionist stage, had not achieved its zenith of a unified empire and saw an opportunity for wealth and prestige through the subjugation of foreign states. When King Antiochus of the Seleucids asked Hannibal whether his richly adorned army was enough to defeat the Romans, he replied, “enough and quite enough for the Romans, however greedy they are,” implying the richly adorned Seleucid soldiers may be considered irresistible plunder to the Romans.\textsuperscript{98}

Republican Roman and Han warriors fought for near oppositional reasons, conquest versus stability, mirrored in their dominant theological doctrines.

**Roman Military Leadership**

In war, the consul had almost unlimited power, designating military tribunes, who commissioned centurions to form the Roman hierarchical command structure.\textsuperscript{99} The Republic relied on a militia system, meaning each successive army started from scratch in training and leadership positions.\textsuperscript{100} This turnover often led to initial failure, “from the middle of the 2nd century nearly every conflict began with Roman disasters, many of them humiliating.”\textsuperscript{101} However, the Roman system pairing executive consular power with generalship ensured bypassing bureaucratic roadblocks and enabled rapid reformation to learn from defeat.

Unlike the consulship, the office of the military tribune required prior military service, according to Polybius.\textsuperscript{102} Consuls appointed “fourteen with five years' service and ten others with ten years' service.” The requirement of military experience likely slackened into the first century BCE, filled by men who did not pursue a senatorial career later.\textsuperscript{103} Generally, six tribunes served with a single legion.\textsuperscript{104}

\textsuperscript{97} Niccolo Di Cosmo, *Military Culture in Imperial China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 4.
\textsuperscript{99} Polybius, *The Histories*, 381, 388.
\textsuperscript{100} Goldsworthy, *The Complete Roman Army*, 43.
\textsuperscript{101} Goldsworthy, *The Complete Roman Army*, 43.
\textsuperscript{102} Polybius, *The Histories*, 385.
\textsuperscript{103} Sage, *The Republican Roman Army*, 104.
\textsuperscript{104} Sage, *The Republican Roman Army*, 104.
They conducted the organizational duties of the camp, levying troops, determining daily camp locations, administering military justice, and occasionally commanding detachments or legions.\textsuperscript{105}

For example, Polybius wrote of a tribune taking the initiative during the Battle of Cynoscephalae (197 BCE), “one of the tribunes who was with them having twenty maniples with him and, perceiving on the spur of the moment what needed to be done, contributed greatly to the success of the entire battle.”\textsuperscript{106} This tribune brought a flank's victorious troops to crash into the rear of an overextended Macedonian phalanx, winning the battle.\textsuperscript{107} Ultimately, the tribune served as a critical administrative figure in the legion, chosen for competence, and occasionally contributed to battlefield leadership through initiative.

Next, in the command, the tribunes selected sixty centurions to act as a “crucial link between the high command and the common soldier.”\textsuperscript{108} Centurions served as non-commissioned officers and, as their name implied, commanded around one hundred legionaries. Two centurions led a single maniple, providing redundancy in the chain of command to ensure the maniple never went without leadership.\textsuperscript{109}

According to Polybius, “the ideal centurion, from the Romans' point of view, is a natural leader, with a stable and resourceful cast of mind, rather than being a daring risk-taker.”\textsuperscript{110} Furthermore, centurions held tactical command of their units in battle and generally had a prior service background before assignment. Consequently, the Roman meritorious command hierarchy system encouraged the appointment of proficient, able leaders but relied on retaining men with previous experience due to militia turnover.

**Han Military Leadership**

Leadership in the Han military had no fixed component of general officers; instead, the government appointed generals to lead expeditions as the need arose.\textsuperscript{111} They had numerous titled open positions in wartime, from General of the Van to General of the Rear.\textsuperscript{112}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{105} Sage, \textit{The Republican Roman Army}, 105.  \\
\textsuperscript{106} Sage, \textit{The Republican Roman Army}, 106.  \\
\textsuperscript{107} Sage, \textit{The Republican Roman Army}, 106.  \\
\textsuperscript{108} Sage, \textit{The Republican Roman Army}, 106.  \\
\textsuperscript{109} Polybius, \textit{The Histories}, 388.  \\
\textsuperscript{110} Polybius, \textit{The Histories}, 389.  \\
\textsuperscript{111} Loewe, “The structure and practice of government,” 480.  \\
\textsuperscript{112} Hans Bielenstein, \textit{The bureaucracy of Han times} (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 103.
\end{flushleft}
Like in every other institution relating to power, the Han split responsibility amongst sometimes even several generals for a campaign with “disastrous results.” The Han officer corps, originally “semi-independent commanders of the military elite of the civil war and early decades, were gradually supplanted by agents of the court with no military experience.” The central government began appointing military leaders based on obedience rather than experience. Despite bureaucratic historian bias, generals in the Han unquestionably held significant power, demonstrated by the fact that “some of the most prominent commanders were kinsmen of imperial consorts,” and further illustrated it as a pathway to an authoritative position.

Han emperors rarely led troops personally outside civil wars, and overly militaristic emperors gained hostile biographies from the bureaucratic elite. No records exist of the first Qin emperor commanding troops despite the enormous terracotta army found in his tomb. The emperor Wudi, described as the “Martial Emperor” (156-87 BCE), never personally led soldiers but earned his title by initiating a massive campaign to conquer the nomads.

Ultimately, the Han military leadership centered on appointed commanders, whether in the commanderies who trained and equipped the militia or the named positions of campaigning generals. Consequently, leadership competency fluctuated due to politics, hampered by the fear of internal revolt.

114 Bielenstein, *The bureaucracy of Han times*, 114.
118 Scheidel, *Rome and China*, 42.
120 Dreyer, “Continuity and Change,” 23.
Leadership Comparison

The Roman and Han military leadership shared qualities when the need for competency arose.

Republican Rome sometimes suffered incompetent commanders due to politically connected appointments but occasionally caused by a simple lack of practical experience.

After the reunification under the Han, military competency degraded due to the long phases of peace.

The rank of general existed in both armies, and the position of colonel may have conferred a similar position of a military tribune; however, the Han had no documented non-commissioned officer rank like the Roman centurion.

Unsurprisingly, wartime experience enabled the deployment of well-led armies, a truism of any military institution. Ultimately, the variable that separated the Han and Roman militaries from their competitors centered on their ability to learn from defeat enabled by their massive numerical reserves.

Roman Recruitment and Training

Recruitment in Republican Rome began with consuls submitting a numerical estimate of required troops for a campaign to the Senate. The Senate then issued a decree drafting men and distributing them into the army. According to Polybius, the standard size of a legion numbered 4,200 men, 5,000 “in times of exceptional danger.” An enlistee had to appear on a specified day or face severe punishment but could ask for excusal for reasons including “physical incapacity and political or religious office, or a record of exceptional service.” Consuls also opened the rolls to volunteers, resulting in some famous commanders attracting thousands of enlistees. For example, after a revolt in Spain in 134 BCE, “Scipio, the conqueror of Carthage, was able to attract 4,000 volunteers,” further emblematic of the cult of the warrior in Rome.

After levying the army, the tribunes divided the troops by class.

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123 Sage, The Republican Roman Army, 120.
124 Sage, The Republican Roman Army, 120-121.
125 Polybius, The Histories, 386.
126 Sage, The Republican Roman Army, 121.
127 Sage, The Republican Roman Army, 121.
128 Sage, The Republican Roman Army, 121.
They chose “ten men of suitable caliber from each of these divisions (except the youngest) to serve as company commanders (centurions).”Polybius selected the velites (skirmishers) from the youngest men, hastate (first line) from the next age group, principes (second line) from “those in their prime, and the triarii third line) from the oldest” who formed the most experienced reserve of the army.

The three lines of legionaries generally wore similar equipment, bronze helmets, breastplates, greaves, “Iberian swords,” shields, and two throwing spears per man. More affluent men wore chainmail instead of a breastplate, and the triarii carried thrusting instead of throwing spears.

Polybius saw the “superiority of the Roman formation in its flexibility, especially its capability to adapt itself to any terrain, and its ability to meet an attack from any direction.” Consequently, the maniple system enshrined class division but created a resilient infantry-centric block.

During the Roman Republic, the legions did not consist of the popularized professional soldiers of the later imperial army; instead, military service interrupted the sedentary life of levied citizens. On average, a Roman citizen saw six years of military service, and an estimated half of all males would see some time in the army. To compensate, the government paid a minimal wage. The regular infantryman received two obols a day, a centurion four, and a cavalryman a drachma. Six obols equated a drachma, and a drachma equaled an estimated ten asses.

Additionally, the property values to qualify for service correlated to 100,000 asses for class one, 75,000 for two, 50,000 for three, 25,000 for four, and 11,000 for five, meaning a basic infantryman required 3,300 days of pay by that estimate to qualify for the fifth and lowest class. Therefore, the meager income paid by the Roman government did little to incentivize the legionaries to serve; however, the distribution of spoils from a victorious campaign provided a powerful inducement towards service and later resulted in loyalty to their commander over the state. According to the historian Dr. Antonio Santosuosso, the late Republican legionary became a “pillager” willing to put “his own life in jeopardy only if the potential loot justified the risk.”

133 Sage, *The Republican Roman Army*, 86.
136 Sage, *The Republican Roman Army*, 141.
137 Sage, *The Republican Roman Army*, 141.
139 Santosuosso, *Storming the Heavens*, 42.
The Roman allies supplemented, sometimes doubling the citizen army with legions that, over time, became more synonymous with the native Roman armies. The “allies usually provide the same number of infantry as the Romans, but three times more cavalry and a third of their cavalry and a fifth of their infantry are withdrawn to make up the *extraordinarii* (elite in Latin).”\(^{140}\)

In other words, the Romans siphoned off the best-allied troops to form independent hard-use units. Furthermore, by the first century BCE, native Roman cavalry had entirely disappeared, replaced by allies. Unfortunately, Roman leaders exposed the allied troops to more dangerous military positions, leading the front and covering the army's rear on the move.\(^{141}\) Roman leaders shortchanged the allies with battle loot and treated them like second-class citizens, causing the outbreak of the Social War in 90 BCE.\(^{142}\)

Rome incentivized martial virtue through a complex reward and punishment system. According to Polybius, “for wounding an enemy, a man receives a spear, and for killing an enemy and stripping him of his arms and armor, a medal (if he is an infantryman) or a harness-medallion (if he is a cavalryman).”\(^{143}\) In a siege, “the first man to scale the wall during an assault on a town receives a golden crown” and would receive the same reward (an oak crown) for saving a friendly life.\(^{144}\)

Additionally, disciplinary power rested with the commander, who could punish and sentence as he saw fit.\(^{145}\) Stealing, failure to pass necessary orders, and leaving one’s post all warranted beating with a club (often to the death) by the members of the camp to involve as many soldiers as possible in the punishment.\(^{146}\) In the worst case, for a legion requiring a stiffening of resolve after cowardice in battle, commanders used the practice of decimation, meaning every ten men drew lots, resulting in one of the ten being beaten to death by the other nine.\(^{147}\)

Despite the enormous amount of primary source Roman military literature, no written evidence exists for a standardized training scheme for the legions before the first century BCE.\(^{148}\)

\(^{140}\) Polybius, *The Histories*, 390.
\(^{141}\) Santosuosso, *Storming the Heavens*, 31.
\(^{142}\) Santosuosso, *Storming the Heavens*, 31-33.
\(^{143}\) Polybius, *The Histories*, 399.
\(^{144}\) Polybius, *The Histories*, 399; Sage, *The Republican Roman Army*, 216.
\(^{145}\) Sage, *The Republican Roman Army*, 225.
\(^{147}\) Sage, *The Republican Roman Army*, 229.
\(^{148}\) Sage, *The Republican Roman Army*, 229.
Therefore, training methods fell to the commander's initiative but likely followed a similar methodology to Vegetius' military manual De Re Militari from the fourth century CE, where he divided training regimens into physical conditioning, weapons training, and group formations.¹⁴⁹ Few prior examples exist, but in one instance we know that after the catastrophic loss of the Battle of Arausio, the consul Rutilius Rufus brought in gladiators to train the legionaries in swordsmanship, where they instructed a “more flexible method of giving and avoiding blows.”¹⁵⁰

In another example, Scipio Africanus implemented a strict training program in Spain during the Second Punic War. He sent his men on long marches in full armament and set aside specific days for missile weapon practice and sword exercises.¹⁵¹ The training of pre-professional legions relied on commander aptitude. Still, it was taken seriously as it “was seen as giving the Roman soldier the advantage over the enemies he faced, particularly the barbarian peoples of Europe.”¹⁵² In contrast, in cases where soldiers lacked the training to operate with one another, disaster could occur, like at the Battle of Cannae.¹⁵³

**Han Recruitment and Training**

The Qin military earned victory in the Warring States period by utilizing an effective militia-type system, gaining practical experience through numerous campaigns. The Qin gained its experience through routinely warring with non-Chinese “’barbarians,” which gave its people a “reputation for ruthlessness in war.”¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, their freedom from the traditions of the “more purely ‘Chinese’ states made it easier to institute radical innovations.”¹⁵⁵

As inheritors of the Qin militia system, the Han military consisted of “conscripts, volunteers, and convicts,” but conscripted peasants formed the army's core.¹⁵⁶ The Han system required “all able-bodied males between the ages of twenty-three and fifty-six, or for a short period between twenty and fifty-six” to serve in the army for two years and stay in reserve for times of emergency.¹⁵⁷ The forced conscription of the entire male populace provided the Han with enormous manpower and enabled the addition of pre-trained reserves in times of crisis.

¹⁵⁰ Santosuosso, *Storming the Heavens*, 21; Sage, *The Republican Roman Army*, 232
¹⁵¹ Sage, *The Republican Roman Army*, 231.
¹⁵⁴ Bodde, “The state and empire of Ch’in,” 47.
¹⁵⁵ Bodde, “The state and empire of Ch’in,” 47.
Upon entering the army at age twenty-three, a Han conscript spent a year training at home, the type of which depended on the locality.\textsuperscript{158} The Han inherited the Qin's infantry-centric army, equipping their soldiers with spears, swords, shields, bows, and crossbows.\textsuperscript{159} Their crossbow's sophisticated trigger latch mechanism “was a closely guarded state secret.”\textsuperscript{160} According to historian Edward L. Dreyer, “even though infantry bearing shields, swords, and spears existed, there is no trace of either a ‘phalanx’ or a ‘legion’ style of infantry fighting.”\textsuperscript{161} Contradicting Dreyer, historian Peter Lorge said, “(Han) military writers had long stressed the importance of combining long and short weapons, along with long-range missile weapons. Ordinary soldiers, therefore, learned to cooperate in interlocking formations that took advantage of each weapon’s strengths.”\textsuperscript{162} Consequently, according to Lorge, something resembling a basic shield well may have existed in the Han military, recognizable to a western military.

After a year of training, Han conscripts served as Garrison Conscriptions for a year, either as Guards “under the Commandant of the Guards in the imperial capital, or as Guards at the courts of kings, or as troops in the commanderies and at the frontier.”\textsuperscript{163} Afterward, the soldiers returned home, entered the militia, and trained every eight months (starting in the Later Han times.\textsuperscript{164} At age fifty-six, they exited the militia, retiring from possible service except in dire emergencies.\textsuperscript{165}

Consequently, the \textit{Southern Army} consisted entirely of conscripts, and due to the high turnover rate, they struggled to gain lasting organizational experience. In contrast, the \textit{Northern Army} “unquestionably consisted of professional soldiers, forming a standing army at the capital.”\textsuperscript{166} Furthermore, from 85 BCE onward, the government offered land in exchange for frontier service to build a self-sustaining professional garrison army.\textsuperscript{167} Ultimately, the Han employed its levy primarily to stabilize its internal provinces; however, in hotspots and the capital, the government recognized the benefit of professional soldiers to ensure organizational competence.

Despite the Confucian abhorrence of militarism, Han societal structures encouraged martial valor through a complex reward system and twenty-rank hierarchy.\textsuperscript{168}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{158} Bielenstein, \textit{The bureaucracy of Han times}, 114.
\item \textsuperscript{159} Dreyer, “Continuity and Change,” 27.
\item \textsuperscript{160} Dreyer, “Continuity and Change,” 27.
\item \textsuperscript{161} Dreyer, “Continuity and Change,” 27.
\item \textsuperscript{162} Peter A. Lorge, \textit{Chinese Martial Arts: From Antiquity to the Twenty-First Century} (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 70.
\item \textsuperscript{163} Bielenstein, \textit{The bureaucracy of Han times}, 114.
\item \textsuperscript{164} Bielenstein, \textit{The bureaucracy of Han times}, 114.
\item \textsuperscript{165} Bielenstein, \textit{The bureaucracy of Han times}, 114.
\item \textsuperscript{166} Bielenstein, \textit{The bureaucracy of Han times}, 114.
\item \textsuperscript{167} Bielenstein, \textit{The bureaucracy of Han times}, 116.
\item \textsuperscript{168} Scheidel, \textit{Rome and China}, 32.
\end{itemize}
For soldiers, “all social status was a direct reflection of military performance.” ¹⁶⁹ For example, promotions required the captured heads of slain enemies for the regular soldier. ¹⁷⁰ Furthermore, if someone died in battle, their descendants gained the rank he would have received. ¹⁷¹

A head equated one level on the social ladder, and officers, who could not cut off heads themselves, relied on the heads cut off by subordinates. ¹⁷² Interestingly, not a single officer in the terracotta army of the Qin emperor had a weapon, lending evidence to officers going disarmed. ¹⁷³ Incredibly, the head-cutting rank tradition continued for fifteen hundred years into the Song dynasty, outlasting the ancient dynasties as a practical martial reward system. ¹⁷⁴

Han military disciple originated in military law, which governed every action, and in the view of intellectuals, “there was, practically speaking, no distinction between warfare and punishment.” ¹⁷⁵ Shang Yang’s reforms had divided the army into “tens and fives” to supervise one another and “be mutually liable.” ¹⁷⁶ In this squad system of mutual accountability, soldiers “were responsible for each other's behavior and were obliged to denounce a fellow member's crime; otherwise, they would be held equally responsible for the crime.” ¹⁷⁷ Ordinary soldiers kept detailed logs of their daily activities, which required some degree of literacy for the average conscript. ¹⁷⁸ Furthermore, imperial inspectors conducted “regular tests in archery to which officers were subjects, and of the inspectors' reports on the state of efficiency of sites and equipment.” ¹⁷⁹ As written by Han bureaucrats, the military maintained strict disciplinary standards held accountable by military law and regular inspections.

**Recruitment and Training Comparison**

The Han dynasty and Republican Rome employed a militia system primarily, which drew upon massive manpower reserves and involved most of the male population. The Han utilized its entire manpower base, whereas possibly only half of Romans served, marking a deficiency in the Roman system.

Both militaries suffered an experience drain due to the high turnover rate of conscripted men, causing the Han to use professionals in critical positions and Rome to search out men with prior service for leadership. Harsh Han military law and Roman military punishments installed strict discipline, with cowardice punishable by death.

Due to its constant military readiness, the Han army utilized a formal year-long training period. In contrast, Rome required a decree to marshal legions, limiting training time by necessity to respond to threats and ultimately relying on the martial nature of its society to remain in perpetual readiness.

Thus, the Han maintained a constant higher readiness level, with the ability to draw upon its enormous reserve, superior to the Roman system in that regard; however, the tendency of Rome to appoint experienced leaders surpassed the skeptical bureaucratic appointments of the Han.

**The Roman Army in Distress**

Long-term military success did not occur without occasional setbacks, and how military systems reacted to defeat served as an indicator of institutional strength. For example, Republican Rome suffered catastrophic losses at the Battle of Cannae in the Second Punic War. The censuses recorded by Livy of 234 and 209 BCE show an incredible decrease of 133,000 available manpower (270,713 to 137,108), illustrating the tremendous losses suffered by the legions against Hannibal.¹⁸⁰

Rome’s loss of half its recorded potential manpower would’ve crippled a lesser state. Hannibal racked up successive major victories against Rome, Trebia (218 BCE), Trasimene (217 BCE), and culminating in Cannae (216 BCE). In *The War with Hannibal*, Livy described the slaughter of 15,000 men at Trasimene:

> Some 6,000 of the leading column succeeded by a vigorous effort in breaking through and got clear of the pass without knowing anything of the situation in their rear; they halted on an eminence, whence they could hear shouts and the clash of arms, but the mist was too thick for them to see the progress of the battle or to know what was happening. All was nearly over when at last, the heat of the sun dispersed the mist, and in the clear morning light hills and plains revealed to their eyes the terrible truth that the Roman army was almost totally destroyed.¹⁸¹

Horrifically, the losses at Cannae dwarfed the losses at Trasimene. According to Livy, the Romans lost nearly 50,000 men at the Cannae, and Polybius placed the number higher at 70,000, making it one of the bloodiest battles of human history.

This catastrophic loss left an assault on Rome within possibility for Hannibal. Polybius remarked, “no other nation in the world could have suffered so tremendous a series of disasters, and not been overwhelmed.” In reaction, Rome fortified its city, lowered the recruitment age to seventeen, and brought 8,000 slaves willing to serve in the army.

Furthermore, it shifted its strategy, avoiding a decisive battle in Italy. Instead, it sent an expeditionary force to Spain under Publius Cornelius Scipio to strip away the Carthaginian external power base. The campaign in Spain provided Scipio with the experience needed to face Hannibal and culminated at the Battle of Zama (202 BCE) in Africa with the final Roman victory of the Second Punic War. Despite repeated disasters, Rome demonstrated an unparalleled resilience to catastrophic loss, pragmatic introspection to shift strategy, and martial boldness by assaulting the Carthaginian homeland.

The Han Army in Distress

The Han dynasty had the unfortunate geographical military position bordering the great steppe, which bred warlike nomadic equestrian societies like the Xiongnu. Without stationary homes, the Xiongnu provided an elusive moving target for the sedentary Han. Quick to raid and retreat, warfare against the Xiongnu relied on defense in depth and the expansion of stationary defenses; consequently, “the Chinese, throughout their history, have been more wall-minded than any other people.”

The Xiongnu, as boys, learned “to ride sheep and shoot birds and rats with a bow and arrow. If the battle is going well for them they will advance, but if not, they will retreat, for they do not consider it a disgrace to run away.” Their ability to “shoot arrows accurately while riding their horses at full gallop gave them an enormous tactical advantage over the huge armies of infantrymen that Chinese generals often fielded against them.”

In the time of the first Han emperor, Gaozu, the Xiongnu invaded in force, capturing the king of Han's capital city — Mayi.

182 Livy, *The War with Hannibal*, 149.
185 Livy, *The War with Hannibal*, 408.
189 Wright, “The Northern Frontier,” 60.
Emperor Gaozu rushed north with 320,000 men, immediately falling into a trap, where the Xiongnu emperor Maodun surrounded him on a mountain with 400,000 horsemen. “Gaozu (Liu Bang), was defeated in a major battle with the Xiongnu and narrowly avoided capture.”

Consequently, the Han “feared and respected the Xiongnu after this,” and for many decades, attempted bribery instead of warfare. The Xiongnu, dependent on the strength of their confederation, exacted significant tribute and raided Han territory at will despite multiple peace treaties. In 158 BCE, 30,000 Xiongnu invaded the Shang and Yunzhong province, killing and carrying off inhabitants. The Han armies mobilized to the border in reaction but arrived too late to catch the quick-moving horsemen.

Eventually, the Han decided on a military response instead of tribute, sending increasing-sized forces under different generals. Finally, the Han commander Wei Qing mobilized six generals and over 100,000 cavalry to attack the Xiongnu. Wei Qing defeated them by adopting cavalry warfare tactics, “capturing or killing over 50,000 of the enemy.” Thus, Han success against the Xiongnu relied on horses, failing when using only infantry-centric armies; however, for the Han, “horsemanship was an acquired skill, not second nature as with their opponents.”

In retribution, emperor Wudi launched a massive reprisal campaign against the Xiongnu, lasting three decades, and intelligently enticed their enemies, the Yuezhi and Wusum, to join, which weakened the Xiongnu and caused a civil war amongst the tribes. Furthermore, the emperor Wudi “began to remake the imperial army, employing large corps of mounted troops as well as professional soldiers during his campaigns.” Large mounted armies of Han horsemen proved critical to defeating the Xiongnu but came at an enormous financial and logistical burden.

192 Wright, “The Northern Frontier,” 64.
193 Wright, “The Northern Frontier,” 64.
194 Qian, Records of the Grand Historian: Han Dynasty II, 146.
196 Qian, Records of the Grand Historian: Han Dynasty II, 148.
197 Qian, Records of the Grand Historian: Han Dynasty II, 151.
198 Qian, Records of the Grand Historian: Han Dynasty II, 179.
201 Scheidel, Rome and China, 44.
The Han never entirely solved the nomadic border crisis but partially stemmed it through practical reforms, professionalizing segments of the army, improving stationary defenses, and creating a well-trained mounted component that matched the steppe horsemen's range.

**Concluding Comparisons**

The Han dynasty and Republican Rome fought numerous external threats. The nomadic menace continually reappeared despite multiple costly campaigns into the steppe. In contrast, Rome suffered catastrophic losses against Hannibal and feared an existential siege of their capital city after Cannae, nearly bringing the Republic to its knees.

Congruent with their superpower positions, the Han and Rome approached crises with temperance, looking for practical actions after careful deliberation. For example, Rome deprived Hannibal of further decisive battles on his terms and instead picked away his weaker allies and satellite states. The Han, in turn, expanded its cavalry core when the infantry-centric Han military could not engage the Xiongnu. Ultimately, the incredible numerical depth of the Han and Roman levies enabled initial mistakes so that subsequent commanders could learn and apply lessons to adjust military strategy.

The professional reforms of Marius and Wudi fixed the rapid turnover of experience within the militia system. However, in Rome, the professionalization and privatization of armies led to unilateral actions, such as, for example, Caesar's conquest of Gaul. In contrast, the peasant-led Yellow Turban revolt in 184 CE supplied an opportunity for Han generals and governors to establish themselves “as regional warlords who fought one another for dominance while paying little more than lip service to the authority of the emperor.”

Accordingly, in both Han and Roman cases, the decentralization of command enabled military success but led to political instability and civil war. The interchange of reverence for the Republic, in Rome's case, and the emperor, in the Han's, led to fundamental shifts in the established power paradigms.

In producing this comparison, deciphering historical Han military sources proved a far more challenging task than the plethora of classical Roman books.

Han historians approach military history from the top down, in contrast to bottom-up Roman writers.

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The antimilitary bias of the Han bureaucrat bled through their records and ignored the specifics of battles; however, despite the non-martial tendencies of the bureaucratic historian class, the Han empire focused an incredible amount of effort on producing an effective military.

Occasionally reverence for effective commanders appeared in the *Records of the Grand Historian* (91 BCE) by Sima Qian, as in the case of the death of general Li Guang, “the day he died all the people of the empire, whether they had known him or not, were moved to the profoundest grief, so deeply did men trust his sincerity of purpose.”

The Han had recognized the valor and sacrifices Li Guang had made fighting the Xiongnu, but Sima Qian reduced his fame to his “sincerity.” Nonetheless, any mention of reverence from the historian Sima Qian spoke volumes.

Historically, the Romans and Han appeared aware of one another through foreign trade; however, the Parthians purposefully blocked them from making direct contact for centuries to maintain their control of the silk trade.

In 166 CE, envoys from the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius arrived at the Han court, offering gifts to the Han emperor. The Han called the Roman Empire the Ta Ch'in (the Great Ch'in) named so because “its people and civilization were comparable to those of China,” demonstrating an awareness and respect for Rome’s cultural hegemony in the west. Still, the Han took it in course that a foreign king should provide gifts of subservience to the Han, illustrating their hubristic introversion. In contrast, the Romans looked to open a direct silk-trading route to the Han to cut out the middlemen Parthians. As a consequence, this distant bilateral awareness illustrated the magnetism of might the two powers held occupying opposite ends of Eurasia.

The Han and Roman militaries maintained supremacy until institutional decay catalyzed external invasion and internal collapse. Ideologically, the Roman *mos maiorum* and polytheistic religion upheld and revered the cult of the warrior. In opposition, Confucianism abhorred military violence, seeing it as a necessary evil; however, Legalism preached strict adherence to the social order and obedience to the god-like emperor.

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205 Ying-Shih, “Han foreign relations,” 461.
206 Ying-Shih, “Han foreign relations,” 379.
207 Ying-Shih, “Han foreign relations,” 460-462.
Ultimately, Republican Rome’s external focus incentivized further war, in opposition to the Han’s internal fixation, which mostly ignored foreign campaigns of conquest and centered on territorial control.

Despite ideological differences, the two systems mirrored one another in many ways and reached similar conclusions due to external pressure. In Rome, combining executive consul power with generalship gave it a mighty war tool, contrasting well against the Han’s largely ineffective distribution of authority amongst generals. Nonetheless, the Han more effectively marshaled their entire populace, levying more men by not relying on a property-based class system like Rome.

Additionally, their differential ideologies enforced governmental obedience, easily transferred to battlefield discipline. Both sides fought for a complex reward system, whether for awarded crowns or severed heads; both conferred a gain in societal status. Whether the Han bureaucrat wrote it or not, the Han military served as an opportunity for political advancement, although less so than in the Roman system.

Republican Rome and the Han similarly used a warrior-farmer militia, which organized large segments of their societies requiring effective government institutions. This numerical depth enabled them to suffer multiple defeats, reflect on shortcomings, and adjust to the threat. Furthermore, both states eventually professionalized at least segments of their militaries, adopted tactics from their enemies, and rightly feared the power of victorious generals to displace central authority.

Ultimately, the Han and Republican Roman systems involved most of the society in collective defense, providing a sense of unity and a stake in their governmental institutions. The eventual fraying of that unity through the decentralization of authority led to internal collapse, destroying the Han Dynasty, and causing the fall of the Roman Republic.

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From Compromise to Confrontation:
The American Secretary of State James F. Byrnes and His Attempts to Mitigate Disagreements with the Soviet Union as the Cold War Began

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James F. Byrnes as United States Secretary of State pursued a policy based on compromise with the Soviet Union during the first year following the end of the Second World War. He was determined to use his political skill for engineering compromise in order to bring about an agreement with the Soviet Union which would lead to an era of peace. While the crucial question facing American policymakers in the wake of World War II was the creation of a new world order, a most important part of this question was the future of American-Soviet relations, the two nations that had emerged from the war as the dominant powers of the international system.

Byrnes was always hopeful that a basis for agreement with the U.S.S.R. existed because he perceived Stalin as pursuing national rather than ideological goals. Byrnes felt that although the Russians were tough negotiators, it was possible to reach meaningful agreements with the Soviet Union.

The high point of the period of Byrnes' policy of compromise was the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers in December 1945. The Secretary of State returned home, however, to find that his position had been undermined. The Communique of the Moscow Conference had come under strong Congressional attack. In Byrnes' absence, the President had become more open to the influence of those who counseled an anti-Soviet American foreign policy. He had decided as President to exert a stronger influence on the direction of United States’ foreign policy.

The requirements of a bi-partisan foreign policy imposed sharp limits on his maneuverability, but Byrnes continued to seek a modus vivendi with the Soviet Union within these limits. He thought he could fashion agreements acceptable to both the United States and the Soviet Union; it is clear that the period of Byrnes' tenure as Secretary of State was one during which both American and Soviet policies were fluid. But Byrnes resigned in January 1947, and with his departure the doctrine of containment was accepted as United States policy. As long as Byrnes had remained as Secretary of State, the view that it was possible to negotiate with the Russians had a powerful advocate in policy-making circles.

How had the chances for a more amicable relationship between the two countries unraveled in the brief period from the Moscow Conference in December of 1945 and the Byrnes resignation in January of 1947?
During this year Byrnes increasingly felt growing restraints on his flexibility in dealing with the Soviets. His major concern in early 1946 was the completion of peace treaties ending World War II. So, in mid-February 1946, the Secretary took two steps to ensure the success of the next meeting of the Foreign Ministers, which would allow the proposed Peace Conference to begin on schedule, by May 1, 1946.

The first of these was to propose to the U.S.S.R. a treaty which would guarantee German demilitarization for a period of twenty-five years. The idea of such a security treaty had been in the Washington air for almost two years. Byrnes’ intentions were to maintain Allied solidarity. This is demonstrated by the manner in which the Secretary of State went about writing to Molotov concerning the security treaty.

Byrnes knew that the security treaty might arouse opposition within the American government. He therefore decided to pursue discussions on this sensitive matter without the knowledge of the rest of the State Department. The cable which he sent to Molotov was marked “No distribution, No stencil” and Byrnes refused to circulate copies of the draft treaty in the department. Moreover, when the Secretary discovered that the news of the dispatch of the treaty proposal was included in the top secret “Summary of Events,” he attempted to restrict the distribution of the “Summary.”

At the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers in December 1945, the Foreign Ministers had agreed to meet in Washington on March 15, 1946. As of early February 1946, Byrnes had concluded that since the Soviet Union would not withdraw its troops from Iran by March 2, a meeting of the Foreign Ministers in Washington would draw Congressional and public attention to the state of American-Soviet relations, thus exacerbating tensions between the United States and Russia. Accordingly, he cancelled (with Molotov's approval) the planned meeting for March 15 in Washington.

The Iranian Crisis

By early March 1946, Byrnes and his policy of seeking an accommodation with the Soviet Union were on the defensive. The Secretary of State was under attack both because of the substance of the agreements reached at the Moscow Conference and because he had failed to keep Truman fully informed about his efforts at compromise with the Soviet Union.

1 Byrnes believed that American participation in such a treaty might reassure the Soviet Union about the intentions of the United States, thus assuaging Russian fears and thereby inducing the Soviet Union to be more amenable to agreement in the forthcoming talks.
2 Senator Arthur Vandenberg, R-Mich, who had been actively promoting the creation of the United Nations, had proposed such a treaty in his “conversion” speech in January 1945.
3 The purpose of Vandenberg, however, was to expose Russian perfidy.
4 The Secretary wanted the next meeting of the Foreign Ministers to be held under circumstances as propitious as possible.
Byrnes had turned to public diplomacy to gain support for his policy of arranging a *modus vivendi* with the U.S.S.R. Although the Secretary was somewhat critical of the Soviet Union, in a speech on February 28, 1946, he had not lost hope of seeking agreement with the U.S.S.R. on a broad range of political and economic questions. Although on the defensive, Byrnes revived the credit of $1 billion to the U.S.S.R.

Events in Iran in the spring of 1946 were to further reduce Byrnes' flexibility and undermine his policy of cooperation with the Soviet Union, thus preventing a continuation of the spirit of the Moscow Conference throughout the new year. The Secretary of State continued with his policy of “never anticipating trouble” in the first days of March.

The question of the continued presence of Soviet troops in Iran had been pushed from the public light during February by the bilateral negotiations between the Soviet Union and Iran. The public position held by Byrnes, that the U.S.S.R. would adhere to its treaty commitment to withdraw from Iran by March 2, was shattered by a Russian announcement on March 1 of a partial withdrawal of Soviet troops from Iran. The troops in Azerbaijan would not be withdrawn “pending examination of the situation.”

Byrnes' initial response is instructive. The Secretary did not immediately request a meeting with the President to design a strategy to deal with the crisis. Instead, Byrnes waited until his regularly scheduled Monday morning meeting with Truman. As a result of his meeting with the President, Byrnes dispatched a note to the U.S.S.R. which he termed “rather strong medicine.”

His note stated that the decision of the Soviet Government to retain Soviet troops in Iran beyond the period stipulated by the Tri-Partite Treaty of 1942 had created a situation over which the Government of the United States as a member of the United Nations and as a party to the Declaration Regarding Iran of December 1, 1943, could not remain indifferent.

Byrnes had pursued a strategy of compromise with the Soviet Union despite considerable opposition from Congress and from several figures in the White House, primarily Admiral William Leahy, FDR’s Chief of Staff. However, the personal aspect of the Secretary's motivation ought not to be overemphasized.

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5 The Iranian Ambassador in Washington immediately requested American diplomatic assistance in obtaining the withdrawal of Soviet troops.
6 The Secretary noted that the decision to maintain Soviet troops in Iran was “not in accordance with the principles of the United Nations” and expressed the “earnest hope” of an immediate Russian withdrawal.
Byrnes agreed with the rationale for the American response later set forth by Ben Cohen, then Counselor of the United States in the State Department. The Secretary had sought to prevent Iran from becoming a source of discord among the Allies. Now his options were limited, and no private deal could be made.

On March 6, Brynes explained his view of the Iranian situation. The United States was a party “to the Declaration of Teheran and that therefore we cannot remain indifferent to the failure of the U.S.S.R. to withdraw its troops.” The Secretary of State had his next action planned. Should the response from the Soviets with regard to Iran not prove satisfactory, the United States would ask the British to join in presenting the matter to the Security Council.

Byrnes realized that the question of the continued presence of Soviet troops in Iran might represent an irrevocable turning point in American-Soviet relations. Further, should the Soviets decline to appear before the Security Council on this issue, thought Byrnes, the United Nations might well expire as an organization, and a different world could be in the making. Further, if these events happened within the next three weeks after the Americans had spoken, it would mean the end of cooperation with the U.S.S.R.

Byrnes was not seeking an issue over which the United States could force a break with the Soviet Union. The Secretary had not forsaken his policy of cooperation and did not believe that the period of cooperation had ended. On the contrary, the Secretary was attempting to minimize the resulting tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union.

At the same time, Byrnes returned to a theme which he had sounded frequently in the fall of 1945, that “our rapid demobilization” was having a “deplorable effect” on a number of specific problems, notably the situation in Venezia Giulia (northeast Italy, near Trieste). Byrnes wondered about slowing down the rate of demobilization and he told his colleagues that he could not go on talking to the Soviet Union as he had been, in defense of our basic foreign policy if the United States was going to continue its rapid demobilization.

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7 But whereas before a public event such as the retention of Soviet troops beyond the treaty date in Iran had occurred, it had been possible to arrange matters in dispute privately, once a public event such as in this case had occurred, the issue had to be met in light of public opinion, and it was impossible then to settle such things on the basis of any deal.

8 Because Iran was nominally an ally under the terms of the Teheran Declaration, Byrnes said that “we could not agree to the maintenance of foreign troops in Iranian territory on the grounds that the government was a hostile one.”
Byrnes was caught between a desire to improve his bargaining position, which was being weakened by the rapid demobilization, and his desire to continue to search for a *modus vivendi* with the U.S.S.R. The Secretary felt that having the President issue a statement explaining the reasons for stopping demobilization would be very unfortunate and might just inflame the situation. Many will say we were getting ready for war, he thought.

Since ending demobilization might jeopardize relations with the Soviet Union, Byrnes concluded that the United States must speed the building of a new army instead. The thrust of his recommendation was to concentrate on the renewal of the Selective Service Act rather than to alarm the world. Thus, Byrnes' desire for a stronger negotiating position was subordinated to his fear of inflaming the situation.

At the meeting of the Secretaries of State, War and Navy on February 28, 1946, Byrnes agreed to a proposal that an American task force be sent to the Mediterranean as a display of American power. But soon after, the Secretary of State concluded that such a display of force could have an unfortunate effect on Soviet-American relations. He told his fellow Secretaries that “any plans for the assembly of this (Task) Force must be postponed.” They then arrived at a compromise in which only the U.S.S. Missouri was sent to the Mediterranean.

Byrnes’ policy of restraint may be contrasted with that of Former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. Churchill, who had wanted the American task force sent into the Sea of Marmara as a display of force, was gloomy over the change in plans. The Secretary of State was not willing to jeopardize the prospects of cooperation with the Soviet Union despite his distress “at the way Russia had treated him.”

Shortly, reports reached Washington (and were published in the *New York Times* as well) that Soviet troops were moving on Teheran. Byrnes concluded that “military invasion was being added to political subversion” and announced that he would “give it to them with both barrels.” However, the Secretary of State did not respond as he had indicated he would. The American note on the movement of Soviet troops was in fact restrained and the Soviet Union was left with a graceful way out, the opportunity to deny the movement of Russian troops in Iran.9

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9 Bertram D. Hulen, "Heavy Russian Columns Move West in Iran: Turkey or Iraq May be Goal," *New York Times*, March 13, 1946, p. 1. It is not known who gave the story to the *Times*, but there is no question that Hulen had access to the cables from the State Department’s Robert Rossow. In fact, the note read: The Government of the United States desires to learn whether the Soviet Government, instead of withdrawing Soviet troops from Iran as urged in the Embassy's note of March 6, is bringing additional forces into Iran. In case Soviet forces in Iran are being increased, this Government would welcome information at once regarding the purposes therefore.
Byrnes continued with his efforts to avoid exacerbating the international situation in the week before the opening of the session of the Security Council, scheduled for March 25. The position taken by the Secretary during the discussions of the testing of the atomic bomb shows Byrnes' position quite clearly. The Army and Navy had scheduled tests of the atomic bomb at Bikini Atoll for May 1946. Secretary of the Navy Forrestal was not averse to this display of American power and argued strenuously against any postponement of these tests. The Navy wanted to determine the effects of the atomic bomb on ships at sea.

The position of the Secretary of State was very different. Byrnes argued at the Cabinet meeting of March 22 that “from the standpoint of international relations it would be very helpful if the test could be postponed or never held at all.” The Secretary of State's position was unequivocal. He argued that holding the tests as originally planned might have an adverse effect on an already disturbed world situation and in particular on the United Nations Security Council meeting scheduled for March 25.10

On March 19, the President agreed to postpone the Bikini tests until 1947. Byrnes agreed to the postponement date of July 1 because he “thought the Security Council's problems would be solved one way or another” by then. In addition, he expected it would be clear by early July whether or not the United States and the Soviet Union could successfully collaborate in writing peace treaties for the former German satellites.

Although Byrnes attempted to minimize the tension between the United States and the Soviet Union by postponing the Bikini tests, events in Iran were drawing the United States and the Soviet Union deeper into conflict. On March 18, the Iranian Ambassador to the United States requested that the Security Council hear Iran's complaint about the continued presence of Soviet troops in Iran. In response, Soviet representative Andrei Gromyko requested a postponement of the discussion of Iran’s complaint. On March 24, with the meeting of the Security Council scheduled for the next day, Moscow radio announced that the Soviet Union would evacuate Iran within six weeks, “if nothing unforeseen should take place.”

When the Council opened, Gromyko continued to press for the postponement of consideration of the Iranian case until April 10. The Soviet representative insisted negotiations in progress were nearing completion and that all Russians troops would be withdrawn “unless unforeseen circumstances arise.”

Byrnes rejected this démarche for several reasons.

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The Soviet commitment to withdraw was conditional. Secondly, the Secretary had become aware of the course and substance of negotiations in Moscow between the Iranian Prime Minister and the Soviet Government. The reports reaching Byrnes made it clear that the Soviet Union sought a sphere of influence in northern Iran. Stalin's statement that Soviet interests demanded the presence of Russian troops in Iran suggested that Stalin was interested in more than access to oil.

Byrnes was not opposed to Soviet oil concessions in principle, according to State Department functionaries, but it was also reported that there was very little oil to be found where the U.S.S.R. actually sought concessions. This served to reinforce the Secretary's doubts about Soviet policy in Iran. Moreover, the Secretary of State believed that the Soviet Union had enough oil for its own needs.

Byrnes had done his best to prevent Iran from becoming a source of discord between the United States and the Soviet Union, to little appreciation from the Soviets. The Secretary, in discussing the issue with Edward Stettinius, then the Ambassador to the United Nations, on the day before the Security Council opened, “stated that he had nursed the Russians (for) the last time.”

The second reason for Byrnes' rejection of the Soviet proposal relates to the decision of the Government of Iran to retain the Washington law firm of Covington, Burling to assist in the preparation of its case in the Security Council. John Laylin, one of the attorneys working on the case, later described his strategy. According to Laylin, “Our then Secretary of State, James Byrnes was a master of compromise. Our problem was to draw an issue which precluded compromise.” It was reported that the State Department was helping the law firm.

With the issue drawn so narrowly, Byrnes was forced into a corner. The Secretary could not oppose hearing Iran on the proposed postponement of its complaint, since doing so would undermine the United Nations. Gromyko walked out of the Security Council and the Council turned to the Iranian complaint. Byrnes saw Iran as relatively unimportant to the United States and as a Russian or British problem. So, he attempted to limit the extent of the break with the Soviet Union after Gromyko left the Security Council.

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12 They were received with “some assistance from the Russians” as well as the continuous day-to-day help from the State Department's Office of Near Eastern Affairs (all of whose members unequivocally supported Iran), and thus Laylin and O'Brien pursued this strategy. The initial issue before the Security Council centered “on the right of a member (of the United Nations Organization) to argue for its right to be heard on the proposed postponement of its case. See also, George Allen, "Memoirs," pp. 10-13, Allen MSS. Allen had copies of the Iranian Ambassador's speeches prior to their delivery. Allen was at this time Deputy Director of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs.
At the suggestion of Byrnes, the Council limited the Iranian representative to “a statement concerning the question of postponement.” When Hussein Ala, the Iranian Ambassador, proceeded into a discourse on the substance of the Iranian complaint, the Secretary broke in to suggest that Ala “confine himself to the procedural question before the Council.”

After an exchange between Ala and the Polish representative, the Secretary stated that “the crux of the matter” centered on whether Soviet assurances were “unconditional.” Byrnes therefore proposed a five-day postponement of the issue to allow information on the status of the negotiations between Iran and the U.S.S.R. to be brought before the Council. The Soviet Union would either have to state that it was using the presence of its troops to force concessions from Iran or that the March 24 announcement of withdrawal was unconditional.

Despite his absence from the Security Council, Gromyko responded to the Byrnes’ motion in a letter to the Security Council on April 4, 1946. This letter left unclear the essential question of whether or not the withdrawal of Soviet troops was unconditional. The Secretary used the Soviet response after eliminating its ambiguity and introduced a resolution which would postpone formal consideration of the Iranian complaint until May 6, 1946. It is important to note that Byrnes “overlooked” the statement by the Iranian representative that as far as he knew the Soviet assurances were conditional on an oil concession being granted to the Soviet Union and on provincial autonomy for Azerbaijan.

Iran had been heard on the question of postponement, but neither the problem of interference by the U.S.S.R. in the internal affairs of Iran nor the question of Azerbaijan was really settled by this resolution. Keeping the Iranian issue on the agenda until May 6 would provide some assistance to the Iranian negotiating position but would probably allow the Soviet Union to emerge from the bilateral negotiations with most of its goals intact.

For American purposes, the Security Council “agreed on a solution” to the Iranian question. Byrnes wrote that he hoped that by May 6, when the Security Council would again consider Iran, “there would be nothing to discuss.”

Indeed, on April 5 a joint communique was signed by the Iranian Premier and the Soviet Ambassador, issued in Teheran. Complete agreement had been reached on all questions. The Soviet Union would unconditionally withdraw all of its troops by early May.

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The U.S.S.R. and Iran would establish a joint stock company to drill for oil under terms which followed “closely” those of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. In addition, the situation in Azerbaijan, where secessionist forces were still in power, was termed an “internal problem” but the Soviet Ambassador promised to use his “good offices” to help reach a settlement. The Soviet Union was left with a sphere of influence in Azerbaijan and the prospects of considerable Russian influence in the areas to be controlled by the joint oil company.

The Soviet Union then made what must be regarded as a major tactical blunder. On April 6, Gromyko insisted that the Iranian complaint be removed from the agenda. While this position was consistent with the initial Soviet position that Iran ought not to be heard, the Soviet motion was pointless since the U.S.S.R. had already obtained what it wanted from Iran. Thus, there was no longer any reason for maintaining Russian troops in that country.

Byrnes instructed Stettinius to approach Gromyko with the promise that the United States would let the issue die. The Secretary publicly stated his position on April 8: “There is no reason for reopening the case.” Byrnes announced that he would not return to the United Nations and promised that the Security Council would take no action if a satisfactory report came from the Governments of Iran and the U.S.S.R.

Byrnes had defended the right of Iran to be heard on the postponement of its complaint while discouraging Iran from getting into the substance of its complaint. The Secretary had broken with the Soviet Union publicly over a major issue and had emerged from the debate on Iran with increased prestige and public support. His critics had been silenced and there was no reason for the Secretary to press the issue further.14

However, with the new Soviet motion to remove the question of Iran from the agenda, a second battle began in the Security Council. The reasons for the Soviet decision to reopen the debate on Iran are unclear. Trygve Lie, Secretary General of the United Nations during 1946, later wrote that Soviet pride was hurt, and that Gromyko wanted to prove the U.S.S.R. innocent of the charges leveled against it. An alternative explanation is that the hard-liners in the Soviet Union argued in favor of renewed debate in the Security Council on Iran to demonstrate the “hostility” of the Western Powers and particularly of the United States and to end the chances for post-war cooperation.15

As a result of this debate (as well as the earlier, shorter and less acrimonious one), the Soviet Union destroyed most of the goodwill which the status of an ally during World War II had brought to it.

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14 See Stettinius to Byrnes, April 8, 1946, Ibid., pp. 410-411, enclosing Gromyko's letter of April 6, 1946; Byrnes to Stettinius, April 8, 1946, FRUS, 1946, VII, p. 411; and Secretary Byrnes' Press Conference of April 8, 1946, found in Byrnes MSS, File 557.
The Secretary of State had sought to warn the U.S.S.R. that he would have to oppose the continued presence of Russian troops in Iran. Byrnes did not seek a confrontation with the U.S.S.R. Rather a public event had forced the Secretary to bring differences with the Soviet Union into the public light.

The Russian decision to seek the removal of the Iranian complaint from the agenda again stirred up the passions which had been calmed by Byrnes' resolution postponing consideration of Iran's complaint. Neither the Soviet Union nor the United States would back down since doing so would entail an admission of error.

On April 23, the Security Council defeated (with American support) the Soviet resolution calling for the removal of Iran's complaint from the agenda. On May 10, the date to which the question had been postponed, the United States declined to press the Soviet Union on the question of withdrawal from Iran. In the midst of a critical period of the Council of Foreign Ministers' meeting Byrnes decided not to press the Soviet Union. Instead, Stettinius was instructed to postpone consideration until May 20, 1946, when further information would be available.16

The issue of Iran was dropped from active consideration by the United Nations. Byrnes reached this decision despite strong representations made by Judge John Lord O'Brian, the Iranian counsel with Covington, Burling to Ben Cohen. O'Brian pleaded that the United States should not consent to the Iranian complaint being dropped from the Agenda but should insist on an investigation.17

While O'Brian had argued that the situation in Iran was a “straight moral issue” and that “the country was opposed to any appeasement,” he failed to sway the Secretary of State. Byrnes had defended Iran because the principles of the United Nations had required him to do so. However, he declined to wage a battle in the Security Council against the U.S.S.R. to defend the interests of Iran or to use the Iranian issue as the basis of a propaganda contest with the Soviet Union.

This Iran matter created an impact on American-Soviet relations that was out of proportion to Iran's importance to the United States. Byrnes told French Foreign Minister Bidault on May 1, 1946, that as a result of the Iranian debate, “Russian popularity in the United States had been completely dissipated by the Soviet Governments' policies.” Iran was the “most critical issue” in the evolution of American-Soviet relations.18

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16 Ibid. The British, however, wanted to press the matter further. Campbell and Herring eds., The Diaries of Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., (May 10, 1946), p. 470.
17 See Van Wagenen, The Iranian Case, 1946, pp. 72-74. See, also, the Cohen memo of discussion with Judge O'Brian, May 28, 1946, Records of the Department of State, Filed with 501BC.
18 Bohlen memo of conversation between Byrnes and Bidault, May 1, 1946, FRUS, 1946, II, p. 204.
Byrnes' policy of compromise with the Soviet Union had come under strong attack in Washington. The Secretary of State had concluded that public diplomacy was necessary to defend and explain his diplomacy toward the Soviet Union. He had not ended his pursuit of a *modus vivendi* with the U.S.S.R., as his rejection of Kennan's cable #511, the famous “Long Telegram” calling for containment of Soviet expansionism, and his reopening of negotiations on loans to Russia, both indicated.

With the eruption of the Iranian issue in March 1946, Byrnes was forced to publicly take a stance in opposition to the Soviet Union. Byrnes told Bidault that American opinion was no longer disposed to make concessions on important questions. Nevertheless, despite his limited flexibility, the Secretary of State continued to pursue a diplomacy of compromise with the Soviet Union, but within considerably circumscribed limits.

**The Paris Foreign Ministers Meetings**

Despite the failure of the Soviet Union to withdraw its troops from Iran, Byrnes did not intend to allow Iran to slow the process of peace-making. Similarly, the Secretary of State was prepared to overlook what he later termed “Stalin's tactics in London,” when the Soviet Union turned the United Nations into a propaganda forum and gratuitously abused the veto power in the dispute over the Levant. There were, Byrnes believed, “differences on which the deputies will not reach agreement.” The Secretary therefore concluded that the “Foreign Ministers must make an effort to reconcile the differences that exist.”

On March 5, 1946, the day before the note to the Soviet Union on Iran was dispatched, Byrnes had proposed that the Foreign Ministers meet on April 15, 1946.¹⁹ British Foreign Minister Bevin opposed such a démarche “until we have had some moderately satisfactory reply to our remonstrances regarding Persia.”

The Secretary of State, although rejecting Bevin's argument, accepted the British Foreign Minister's position, writing: “However, if you are opposed to meeting, I shall not communicate with the other Foreign Ministers.”

With the introduction of his resolution postponing the discussion of Iran's complaint until May 6, Byrnes hoped to clear the air in time for a meeting of the Foreign Ministers. By May 6, as the Secretary wrote, he hoped “there would be nothing to discuss.” Accordingly, on April 4, with the Iranian issue apparently disposed of, Byrnes suggested that the Foreign Ministers meet in Paris on April 25, 1946.

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¹⁹ See Byrnes memo of conversation with the British Ambassador, March 6,1946, FRUS, 1946, II, p. 25; Byrnes to Dunn (Assistant Secretary of State and Deputy in London), March 5, 1946, Ibid., pp. 22-23; Halifax (British Ambassador) to Byrnes, March 9, 1946, Ibid., pp. 27-28.; and Byrnes to Gallman (U.S. Chargé in the United Kingdom), March 22, 1946, Ibid., p. 35.

https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/ccr/vol90/iss1/17
Byrnes outlined the problems facing the United States at a Cabinet meeting on April 19. The Secretary felt that the “most immediate” problem was Italy. Byrnes believed that the Soviet Union did not want a peace treaty for Italy now, since “delay works in their favor.” The United States was most anxious to restore Italy both economically and politically; a failure to do so would create conditions conducive to the growth of the Communist Party in Italy.

According to Forrestal's record of this meeting, Byrnes believed that the Soviet Union was prepared to hold out for American concessions in the form of trusteeships over the Dodecanese Islands and Tripoli. Such concessions to the U.S.S.R. would be the price of Soviet consent to a peace treaty for Italy. The Soviet Union could afford to wait, while the United States could not allow any delay of the peace treaty for Italy.

The Secretary of State said that he was not hopeful of much success in getting peace treaties written now for the reasons he had outlined. Byrnes, however, wanted to avoid the alternative with which he was faced, a separate peace treaty with Italy.

The implications of a separate treaty with Italy were very serious; such a decision would mean the end of Byrnes’ hope for an arrangement with the Soviet Union. Moreover, Byrnes feared that the Russians might occupy portions of Italy (including, but not limited to, the area around Trieste), a move which could lead to war with the U.S.S.R. Byrnes was therefore determined to return to the conference table to seek a negotiated settlement.

The Soviet Union, however, would not let the Iranian issue die in the Security Council, but insisted on reopening the question. Thus, when Byrnes met with Molotov and Vyshinsky in Paris on April 28, 1946, he discovered that he could not escape the matter of Iran. The Secretary explained that once a “public event” had occurred, he had little choice but to oppose the Soviet Union. Byrnes regretfully noted in his memoirs that because this meeting of the Foreign Ministers opened on a note of discord, his later discussions on the treaties and the American proposals on Germany and Austria met with little success.

In addition to facing an atmosphere poisoned by the dispute over Iran, Byrnes faced another problem, namely, Senator Arthur Vandenberg.

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20 Forrestal Diary, April 19, 1946, Forrestal MSS.
Vandenberg had heard Byrnes say:

I know how to deal with the Russians. It’s just like the United States Senate. You build a post office in your (their) state, and they’ll build one in your state.22

The Senator thought that Byrnes' attitude was naive.

Not surprisingly, Vandenberg and Byrnes were at odds during the first months of 1946. As the Senator observed in early April 1946, Byrnes “still hopes for local negotiated settlement of outstanding issues” with the Soviet Union. Byrnes and Vandenberg did not share the same perspective on the Soviet Union because the Secretary of State believed it possible to negotiate with the U.S.S.R.23

When the Council of Foreign Ministers opened in Paris in late April 1945, the Secretary of State took Vandenberg with him. Byrnes told his Cabinet colleagues that he had to take into the conference with him both Vandenberg and Senator Tom Connally. Senator Vandenberg, by virtue of his position as the ranking Republican on the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, had a “veto” over any agreement that Byrnes might make.24

During the first session of the Council of Foreign Ministers, Vandenberg was impatient, bored, and sought a means to end the conference. The senator could not escape attendance at the Foreign Ministers' meetings because his absence could be used as a political issue against him and his party. Vandenberg held “little hope for the resolution of major controversies” and in his Diary he outlined his strategy for the second session of the Council of Foreign Ministers. “If possible, we shall seek an early showdown.” 25 The Secretary of State continued to resist the senator's efforts to provoke a break with the Russians by opposing any compromise with the Soviet Union. In light of Vandenberg's attitude, what is most notable about the Paris Council of Foreign Ministers is that these meetings did not lead to a separate peace with Italy.

After several days of fruitless discussions on Italian colonies, the future of Trieste, and Italian reparations at the Paris Council of Foreign Ministers, the lines of disagreement were clearly drawn.

24 Interview with Ben V. Cohen, October 31, 1975, Washington, D.C.
25 See Vandenberg Diary, May 11, June 15, 1946, Vandenberg MSS. Also, see Byrnes to Truman, May 12, 1946, Records of the Department of State, Filed with 740.00119 Council. This accurately expresses the position which Molotov had developed over a period of weeks in Paris.
Byrnes wanted to hold the peace conference as soon as possible in order to bring about the normalization of life in Western Europe. The Soviet Foreign Minister was determined to use the unwillingness of the United States to pursue a separate peace in the Russian interests. Byrnes found that Molotov had revealed what the Soviet delegation regarded as fundamental questions which must be settled before a conference could be called.

Molotov indicated that differences of opinion on the Balkan peace treaties were not serious enough to delay the peace conference. However, in regard to Italy, he (Molotov) made it clear that the question of Trieste and reparations were, from the Soviet point of view, the only fundamental questions which must be settled before the (peace) conference date could be set.

The Secretary of State decided to revert to private diplomacy on May 5. Molotov suggested that if the United States agreed to the outright cession of the whole of Venezia Giulia, including Trieste, to Yugoslavia, “it would be possible for him to take a more favorable attitude toward Italy’s desires in regard to the colonies and reparations.”

Byrnes reiterated his previous position that the boundary between Italy and Yugoslavia must be determined along ethnic lines. Then the Secretary pressed for an elaboration of Molotov's suggested trade. The Soviet Foreign Minister was suggesting that Yugoslavia and Greece renounce their claims for reparations from Italy, but he indicated that the Soviet Union did not intend to renounce its claims against Italy. Molotov’s offer was not as generous as first appeared and as Byrnes cabled Truman it became “apparent” that the “suggested trade” offered no basis for agreement. At least that is how Byrnes reported his conclusions about his meeting to the President.

The Secretary decided to pursue Molotov's proposal with Vandenberg to see if an agreement could be reached along the lines proposed by Molotov. To avoid giving the impression that he was appeasing the Russians, Byrnes approached Vandenberg indirectly, using Connally as an intermediary. The Secretary soon learned that Vandenberg unequivocally rejected the basis of Molotov's proposal and refused to consider giving Trieste to Yugoslavia. An immediate prospect for agreement on Trieste and reparations from Italy was vetoed by Vandenberg's refusal.

Senator Vandenberg soon decided that he should return home and that the United States should pursue a separate peace with Italy, opinions which he informally conveyed to members of the press. Vandenberg urged Byrnes to “find a good excuse to go home.”

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26 Byrnes to Truman, May 6, 1946, Records of the Department of State, Filed with 740.00119 Council.
The Secretary of State disagreed with the Senator's recommendations and told Vandenberg that he did not "wish at present to confess that the Potsdam and Moscow program had broken down."\(^{27}\)

Byrnes continued to seek other avenues of approach. On May 11, the Secretary made a proposal which was the mirror image of that presented by Molotov. Italy would get Trieste and Byrnes promised that the settlement of other questions would not be too difficult.

The Secretary specified that "other questions" included reparations from Italy, Italian colonies, the Dodecanese Islands and navigation of the Danube. There is indirect evidence as to the nature of Byrnes' package deal. Jefferson Caffery, the American Ambassador in France, sent a cable to Under Secretary of State Dean Acheson stating:

> Secretary desires data to consider feasibility of possibly offering to credit Soviet in reduction of amounts due in settlement, certain reductions Soviets might make in reparations claims against Italy and other countries.\(^{28}\)

To reach an agreement with the Soviet Union, Byrnes was thinking in terms of reducing United States claims against the Soviet Union, resulting from Lend Lease (including Section 3 (c)) and the transfer of merchant ships to the U.S.S.R. The United States would in effect, finance reparations from Italy to the Soviet Union under this proposal but would do so indirectly.

Byrnes had other ideas which might provide the basis for an agreement with the Soviet Union on Trieste. In early April 1946, the Secretary had requested a study of the effect on the United States if Russia were granted bases in Tripolitania and the Dodecanese by the United Nations, thus suggesting that such a concession was under consideration. On May 15, 1946, a cable from the American delegation at the Paris Council of Foreign Ministers "urgently requested" the results of a study the State Department had made of "possible sources of Italian reparations" including the "cost of reconditioning the (merchant ship) Saturnia."\(^{29}\)

The first session of the Paris Foreign Ministers meeting ended in failure, but the meeting resumed several weeks later, in June 1946.

\(^{27}\) See Vandenberg Diary, May 6, 1946, Vandenberg MSS. Vandenberg also viewed Trieste as the key to a settlement. Ibid., May 11, 1946. See, also, John C. Campbell, The United States in World Affairs, 1945-1947, pp. 124-125.

\(^{28}\) Caffery to Acheson and Clayton, May 11, 1946, Records of the Department of State, Filed with 740.00119 Council.

\(^{29}\) Byrnes to Acheson, May 15, 1946, Records of the Department of State, Filed with 740.00119 Council. Byrnes had long been opposed to substantial reparations from Italy. Byrnes' Press Conference, October 10, 1945, Byrnes MSS, File 554.
It was clear to Byrnes that Trieste could not form the key to a trade over the remaining issues. Stalin refused to consider a solution other than a transfer of Trieste to Yugoslavia. The Secretary therefore sought an agreement on Trieste which would provide for the internationalization of that city.

When Byrnes first sounded out Vandenberg, certain of the Hearst newspapermen were seeing Vandenberg and stirring him up, “thereby encouraging his intransigence.”30 The Secretary was equal to the task, and he decided to counter the Hearst journalists by using newspapermen who were “more interested in peace than in war with Russia.”

As Byrnes told his Cabinet colleagues on July 16, 1946, he used this part of the press corps to convey to Vandenberg the argument that if there were not some type of internationalization of Trieste, it would only be a matter of time until the Russians and the Yugoslavs moved in and took Trieste away from Italy.

Under this prompting Vandenberg came out with a proposal for the internationalization of Trieste in essentially the same form as that advocated by the Secretary of State. Byrnes promptly accepted the Senator's proposal and to ensure that Vandenberg would not change his mind, he issued a joint press release giving Vandenberg most of the credit for the idea.

An agreement in principle was reached on the internationalization of Trieste. The U.S.S.R. surrendered its claim to the Italian colonies and agreed that the Dodecanese islands should be awarded to Greece. Byrnes agreed that the Soviet Union should receive $100 million in reparations from Italy. Much of this sum would come from current production, with the U.S.S.R. providing the raw materials.

Despite Byrnes' complaint about his difficulties in keeping Arthur Vandenberg in line, the Secretary managed to gradually persuade Vandenberg to come around on Trieste and “deferred” reparations from Italy.31

The only major question left to settle on the satellite peace treaties was that of the specific terms of the internationalization of Trieste. Molotov kept making specific proposals for implementing the agreement in principle on Trieste, which effectively left control and sovereignty with Yugoslavia.

The Paris Peace Conference nearly broke up over Trieste. A war of nerves ensued after two American planes, lost in harsh weather, accidentally crossed the Yugoslav border and were shot down by Yugoslavian planes. Byrnes succeeded in restraining the military and the hard liners in the State Department.

When an ultimatum drafted in the State Department was sent to the Secretary in Paris for his approval, Byrnes changed the threatening phrase. The note to Yugoslavia, outlining the American complaint in considerable detail, closed with the following sentence.

If, however, within that time (forty-eight hours) these demands are not complied with, the United States Government will call upon the Security Council of the United Nations to meet promptly and to take appropriate action.\(^\text{32}\)

The Secretary of State prevented those who opposed his policy of compromise with the Soviet Union from increasing the level of tension. Yugoslavia, in the face of Byrnes' conciliatory response, complied with the American demands.

After the Paris conference had concluded, Molotov refused to accept the recommendations, regardless of whether they were approved by a simple or a two-thirds majority. The Soviet Foreign Minister demanded the United States accept its position despite the essentially trivial nature of the disputes. Byrnes used the tactic of threatening to end the New York Council of Foreign Ministers meeting without agreement. The Secretary's strategy succeeded and complete agreement on the peace treaties for the former German satellites was reached.

Despite the decision of the Soviet Union to maintain its troops in Iran past the March 2, 1946, deadline, Byrnes was determined to continue to seek agreement on the peace treaties with the Soviet Union. The Secretary had called for the meeting of the Foreign Ministers to expedite the holding of the Peace Conference as soon as he thought the Iranian question was settled. The decision by the U.S.S.R. to reopen the issue on April 6 poisoned the atmosphere in which the Foreign Ministers met.

Nevertheless, Byrnes had continued to pursue his policy of compromise within the limits allowed him by the President and existence of Vandenberg's “veto” over his diplomacy. Over a period of two months, the Secretary explored a variety of proposals which he hoped would form the basis for agreement with the Soviet Union on Trieste and reparations from Italy.

Byrnes compromised with the Soviet Union, agreeing to the internationalization of Trieste and at the same time, managed to “keep Vandenberg in line.” The Secretary used the press corps and effectively co-opted Senator Vandenberg for his policy of pursuing an accommodation with the Soviet Union.

\(^{32}\) Interview with Ben V. Cohen, June 20, 1974, Washington, D.C. Note to the Yugoslav Chargé, August 21, 1946, DSB, XV, pp. 417-418
Byrnes' Departure from Washington

After the United States and the Soviet Union reached agreement and successfully completed the peace treaties for the former German satellites, Byrnes again sounded a hopeful note in a speech given on January 11, 1947. The Secretary admitted that he had been deeply discouraged by the constant rebuffs of his efforts to seek agreement.

Today I am happy to say I am more confident than at any time since V-J Day that we can achieve a just peace by cooperative effort if we persist with firmness in the right as God gives us the power to see the right.33

Byrnes had not given up hope of reaching an arrangement with the Soviet Union.

In December 1946, Molotov agreed that the deputies should begin work on a peace treaty for Austria. The Secretary took note of this move, stating that agreement on the five peace treaties for the former German satellites “does give hope they (deputies) will soon be able to agree upon a treaty for Austria.” Byrnes' observations on the prospects for a peace treaty with Germany were guarded. However, the Secretary noted that the discussions on Germany “will start under much more favorable circumstances than seemed possible until last month.”

Byrnes' January 11 speech contained a repetition of a theme which characterized his diplomacy. “Nations like individuals must respect and tolerate one another's differences.”

After he had finished the peace treaties for the former German satellites in December 1946 (treaties which recognized the predominant rights and powers of the governments in occupation), Byrnes was prepared to go to Moscow to begin work on the peace treaties for Austria and Germany. However, Byrnes felt that he “couldn't start negotiations unless I was willing and able to carry through until the end — probably not less than eighteen months for the German, Japanese, and Austrian treaties.”34

Byrnes did not have the opportunity to remain as Secretary of State for the eighteen months which he felt would be required to complete these peace treaties.

Relations between Truman and Byrnes never fully recovered from the low reached after the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers.

33 105 Byrnes' speech, January 11, 1947, DSB, XVI, p. 88.
In December 1945, Truman decided that George Marshall should be the next Secretary of State and he told Marshall that “if Byrnes quits me, I want you to be Secretary of State.” The President, however, did not tell Byrnes of his intentions and, moreover, Truman did not act immediately to replace Byrnes.

In April 1946, Byrnes, as a result of medical examination, appeared to be in ill health, and he tendered his resignation to take effect with the completion of the satellite peace treaties. At this time, the President formally asked Marshall to succeed Byrnes at the conclusion of his mission to China. However, a second physical examination, including another electrocardiogram, demonstrated that Byrnes was in good health and could remain in office indefinitely.

Nonetheless, this latest information did not cause Truman to change his mind about replacing Byrnes with Marshall. The relationship between the President and the Secretary of State remained under strain despite the fact that the President was regularly informed after the Moscow Conference about the direction of Byrnes' policy. Although Byrnes and Truman “were drinking companions dating back to their Senate days,” their relationship had been irrevocably altered by Byrnes’ failure to keep Truman fully informed.

Loy Henderson has stated that Byrnes “did not have a high opinion of Truman's intellect.” The Secretary of State, as Turner Catledge has written, “disdained his (Truman's) talents.” Byrnes’ attitude toward the President and his envy of Truman for occupying the White House led Byrnes to “quit dropping over to the White House for those long intimate chats in the cool of the afternoon.”

In addition to the deterioration of the friendship between Truman and Byrnes, the absence of the Secretary from Washington also contributed to his departure from office. Byrnes, in the course of attending four separate meetings of the Council of Foreign Ministers and the Paris Peace Conference, was away from Washington 350 out of 562 days during which he was Secretary of State. As Walter Brown observed, during Byrnes' absence from Washington “there was quite a bit of rivalry between those around the President and those in the Secretary’s office.”

During 1945, Walter Brown had made it a point to stay in close touch with a number of key figures in the White House. After Brown's departure at the end of 1945, there was no one around the Secretary to keep in close touch with the White House.

35 Quotes are from author’s interview with Loy Henderson, March 20, 1975, Washington, D.C.; Catledge, My Life and the Times, p. 71; Letter from Walter Brown to author, June 16, 1975; and from Truman comments on February 11, 1947 that “now” he had a “completely loyal White House Staff and Cabinet” found in the Davies Diary, February 11, 1947, Box 24.
36 Letter from Walter Brown to author, June 16, 1975.
Although Under Secretary of State Dean Acheson did visit the White House occasionally, no one with a primary loyalty to Byrnes explained the Secretary's policy at the White House.

In mid-December 1946, Byrnes discovered that Truman had committed himself to Marshall as his successor and that he was holding office only until Marshall's return from China. Byrnes was extremely sensitive and would not stay in office as a caretaker Secretary of State. He, accordingly, resigned as Secretary of State. Reasons of health, which Byrnes used to explain his action, were only a pretext to cover his anger.37

Coincident with the deterioration in the relationship between Truman and Byrnes, the President had begun to have second thoughts about a policy of cooperation with the Soviet Union. As Arthur Krock wrote in March 1947:

> There is good reason to believe that as long ago as the London Conference of Foreign Ministers, the President began to abandon real hope of effectiveness for enduring peace and security, of a continued policy of appeasement and official treatment of the Russians as a government friendly to the United States. He (Truman) made up his mind that when a fitting opportunity arose...he would proclaim the new (Truman) doctrine.38

The President had, however, been dissuaded from altering the direction of United States foreign policy before the Truman Doctrine by “some of his more important advisors.” He began to take a more active role in foreign policy in January 1946 in the wake of the Moscow Conference as Byrnes’ diplomacy came under heavy criticism.

The Iranian crisis swept away most of Truman's remaining doubts about Soviet intentions. The keystone of American diplomacy was that Stalin was a man of his word and that he would keep his agreements. The failure of the Soviet Union to withdraw its troops from Iran by March 2, 1946, upset that theory and led the President to conclude that he had been wrong about Stalin.

Byrnes' position on the Truman Doctrine must be considered to complete the consideration of his attitude toward the Soviet Union.

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37 Interview with Loy Henderson, March 20, 1975, Washington, D.C. According to Harry Vaughan, Truman told a staff conference that “Jimmy got mad.” — Interview with Harry Vaughan, March 22, 1975, Washington, D.C. Further evidence of Byrnes' anger is found in Forrestal's observations that "it will take some urging to get Byrnes to brief George Marshall on the diplomatic front." Forrestal Diary, January 28, 1947, Forrestal MSS. Byrnes' later career as Governor of South Carolina would suggest that he was in good health.

“The Truman Doctrine was properly understood at the time as a full break with the policy of hoping for a *modus vivendi* with the Soviet Union.” The Truman Doctrine also involved financial assistance for Greece and Turkey.

The Secretary of State early on had considerable doubts about support for the Greek Government. Byrnes’ initial attitude in mid-1946 was explained by Joseph Alsop. Byrnes pressed upon Bevin’s people at Paris, in the strongest terms, the embarrassment and wastefulness of investing any energy or resources in such a government as now exists in Greece.

Yet, by November 1946, Byrnes had changed his mind about aid in Greece. The Secretary had concluded that the United States must “pull British chestnuts out of the fire” because American interests could not allow forces friendly to the Soviet Union to gain control of Greece and with it control of the eastern Mediterranean.

On November 1, 1946, Byrnes initialed a memo prepared by the State Department’s Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs. This memo stated that “Greece and Turkey form the sole obstacle to Soviet domination of the Eastern Mediterranean which is economically and strategically an area of vital importance.” Greece, as Byrnes agreed, “is becoming the focal point in strained international relations.”

By December, Byrnes was seriously disturbed since he believed that the Russians were behind the situation in Greece. The Secretary of State expressed his views unequivocally on December 18. “Greece is our problem today. Greece and Turkey are our outposts.” Since Byrnes felt “we want to help Greece all we can,” the Secretary had informed the British that “we will assist Greece in its economic rehabilitation and that the British should furnish Greece arms to the extent of its ability.” Those arms which the “British are unable to furnish” would be provided indirectly by the United States.

Byrnes had not embarked on a policy of confrontation with the Soviet Union. Instead, the Secretary had taken up with Molotov the problem of trying “to get Bulgaria and Yugoslavia to refrain from stirring up trouble” in Greece. The situation in Greece was not a reason to embark on a policy of confrontation with the U.S.S.R., but it was a problem to be discussed in the same fashion as the situation in China had been discussed at Moscow. Although Byrnes had “gotten nowhere” in discussion of Greece with Molotov, he had not despaired. Future meetings might bring an agreement.

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40 State Department memo, approved November 1, 1946, FRUS, 1946, VII, pp. 242, 240 n.
41 Minutes of the meeting of the Committee of Three, December 18, 1946, Records of the Department of State, Filed with 811.0200.
Byrnes did not give up hope for an accommodation with the Soviet Union. Thus, he did not agree with the ideological (as opposed to the economic) half of the Truman Doctrine. Byrnes did not surrender hope of improving American-Soviet relations.

The first speech given by Byrnes after he left office clearly illustrates this point. On May 15, 1947, Byrnes expressed his perspective on relations with the Soviet Union, demonstrating his disagreement with the portion of the Truman Doctrine which meant an end of diplomacy with the Soviet Union:

I deny that conflict is inevitable. On the contrary, I believe we can make the peace and we can keep the peace. I realize the difficulties. But we can overcome the difficulties. We have made clear to the Soviet Union that it cannot dictate the terms of peace. We must also realize the United States cannot dictate the terms of peace. (I continue) to believe in the value of compromise with the U.S.S.R.

He admonished his audience that there “is no place for a ‘take it or leave it’ attitude.”

Byrnes tenaciously held to the view that an agreement with the U.S.S.R. concerning Germany could be reached. On November 6, 1947, in a speech given to the House of Bishops of the Protestant Episcopalian Church, Byrnes outlined his plan for writing a peace treaty with Germany.

The United Nations “should honestly try to reach a unanimous agreement.” If the Soviet Union refused, then the United States and the other members of the United Nations Organization should proceed without the Russians. Byrnes denied that he was recommending a separate peace with Germany:

It is my conviction that when the Soviets see that the rest of the Allied nations intend to proceed with a settlement with Germany, after making many protests, they will attend the peace conference and make the best settlement possible from their viewpoint.

The former Secretary of State realized the obstacles to negotiating quickly with the Soviet Union, but he advised that “we must always leave open the gates of understanding.” “Time, tolerance and the return of the world to economic health” were prerequisites for an atmosphere conducive to successful negotiations.

Byrnes was out of step with much of the thinking of official circles in Washington on the question of relations with the Soviet Union. He told the assembled clergy:

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In view of what I have said, you may ask if I still cling to my policy of patience as well as firmness and whether I think it is possible for us to get along with the Soviets. To both questions, I answer 'yes'. Certainly, we must try to do so.\textsuperscript{43}

Even within the context of the Berlin blockade, in August 1948, Byrnes still believed that an accommodation with the Soviet Union was possible. Byrnes' response to an invitation from Secretary of State George Marshall to join the American delegation for a meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers, then scheduled for mid-September 1948 (but never held), is instructive. Byrnes wrote that if the meeting is held then “it will be the turning point in our relations with the Soviets, either for better or worse.” Byrnes felt that it was still possible to have a good relationship with the Russians.

After the summit of Byrnes’ diplomacy of compromise at Moscow, the Secretary’s policy of seeking a \textit{modus vivendi} with the Soviet Union came under attack as Byrnes was placed on the defensive. The Secretary of State lost flexibility in his negotiating position as he turned to public diplomacy to defend himself against his critics. Despite this tactical move, Byrnes continued to plan for cooperation with the U.S.S.R. in the postwar world. The decision to revive a loan from the Export-Import Bank to the Soviet Union is a demonstration of Byrnes' confidence that the economic policies of the United States and the Soviet Union could be made compatible and complementary.

Despite Byrnes' successes, Iran became a major obstacle on the road to maintaining the alliance between the United States and the Soviet Union. The decision to maintain Soviet troops in Iran cut sharply into public support for a policy of compromise with the Soviet Union. Similarly, the failure of the Council of Foreign Ministers quickly to reach agreement on the satellite peace treaties further undermined support for Byrnes’ search for accommodation with the Soviet Union.

Although the Soviet Union later withdrew its troops from Iran and agreed to the internationalization of Trieste, these moves came too late. By the time of the Truman Doctrine, American opinion and the leaders of the United States were prepared for a policy based on rejection of the possibility of negotiated agreement with the Soviet Union.

\textsuperscript{43} Byrnes expressed similar views in two letters written to personal friends in September 1947. The Soviets, Byrnes believed, “are a disagreeable people to deal with because of their inferiority complex and their suspicion of us.” The United States “must be firm but we should not encourage the frequently expressed belief in the inevitability of conflict.” “We must continue our efforts to live with them (the Russians) in peace.” Byrnes to Josephus Daniels, September 1, 1947, Byrnes MSS. File 653. Byrnes to Mark Ethridge, September 25, 1947, Byrnes MSS, File 654.

https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/ccr/vol90/iss1/17
From the perspective of the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers in December 1945, however, it had appeared that Byrnes had succeeded in solving the major problems that threatened American-Soviet relations. During 1946, Byrnes was on the defensive as his search for an accommodation came under attack.

The failure of this policy rested not with the Secretary of State, who did his best to concert policy with the U.S.S.R. within the limits prescribed for him by his relationship with the President, by the constraints of domestic politics, and by opposition from those who had never reconciled themselves to the 1917 revolution in Russia.

Further, the causes of Byrnes' inability to create the arrangement he sought rested with Stalin, but not because of the Soviet leader's expansionist desires. The Soviet Union, after all, had backed down in Iran, despite the inability of the United States to counter Russian military force exerted in that part of the world. The modest concessions which the U.S.S.R. obtained as a result of the negotiations in 1946 at the Council of Foreign Ministers meetings and at the Paris Peace Conference must be weighed against the loss of Russian good will in the United States and Britain.

The Soviet leaders, in effect, postponed discussion of the more crucial questions relating to the future of Germany and Austria until after Byrnes had left office, until a time when the one man who possessed both the will to work with the Soviet Union in Germany and Japan and with the possible influence to ensure the success of a concerted policy had departed from the center of power. Whether even Byrnes could have succeeded in determining the future of Germany and Japan with the U.S.S.R. is unknown.

But with Byrnes' resignation as Secretary of State, all hope for such a concerted policy disappeared. The responsibility for the failure to maintain the alliance between the Soviet Union and the United States rests in part with the seeming shortsightedness of Soviet diplomacy. It rests in part with the apparent Russian failure to understand that if the Soviet Union did not demonstrate a willingness to work with the United States, then the political positions of those who favored a policy of compromise with the Soviet Union would be undermined and American leaders would lose their desire for a concerted policy.

In other words, Soviet diplomacy probably played into the hands of the hardliners in the United States who argued that an accommodation with the U.S.S.R. was not in the best interests of the United States.
Culture-Oriented Interpretations of Corporate Responsibility

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Abstract

Classical narratives of corporate responsibility reflect the cultural values of Western industrialized countries. Meanwhile, the understanding of corporate responsibility has been disseminated by globalization and this has resulted in culture-oriented interpretations of corporate responsibility from non-Western contexts.

This article aims to investigate the multidimensional relationship between corporate responsibility and globalization and outline culture-oriented corporate responsibility interpretations as a global phenomenon.

Keywords: Corporate responsibility; globalization; cultural values; glocalization

Introduction

Previous literature recognizes that the modern idea of corporate responsibility (or corporate social responsibility) as a Western phenomenon (Blowfield and Frynas, 2005; Katz et al., 1999; Barth and Wolff, 2009; Macleod, 2011). The efforts of business magnates such as Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller, and John Cadbury trying to eliminate the negative effects of industrialization constituted early corporate responsibility practices in the modern sense.

The Industrial Revolution awarded the private sector a primal role in society. With the effects of globalization, such as liberalization and privatization, free markets expanded rapidly towards the end of the 20th century. Potential and actual effects of businesses on society, environment and economy thus were magnified. As a result, expectations of society towards business have been heightened enormously, inducing corporate responsibility as an inseparable part of global business.

Currently, corporate responsibility is used as an umbrella concept.

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1 I prefer to use “corporate responsibility” in order to not emphasize the responsibilities of the companies in the social realm more than in other areas, namely environmental, ethical or economic responsibilities. Despite this nuance, “corporate responsibility” (CR) and “corporate social responsibility” (CSR) are generally used interchangeably.

2 According to The Economist (2008), it was unthinkable in 2008 for a big global corporation to be without a corporate responsibility policy.
On one hand, it comprises the overall recognition, definition and negotiation of the responsibilities of business towards wider society; on the other, it also implies managerial practices for the implementation of relevant policies (Blowfield and Murray, 2014). Both dimensions of the concept of corporate responsibility are still evolving and the main theoretical comprehension of the subject has not concluded yet.

Differentiating shareholders and stakeholders is a fundamental characteristic for the theoretical comprehension of corporate responsibility. According to the traditional view, a company should be predominantly accountable to its shareholders. Corporate responsibility, on the other hand, endorses the idea that companies should be accountable to all stakeholders including but not limited to employees and their families, neighbors, suppliers, educational institutions, even rivals and society at large.

According to this new outlook, corporations are not only profit-oriented economic entities; they also actively participate in the social realm, thus contributing to advance social, environmental and economic sustainability.

Milton Friedman famously opposed this new paradigm in the 1960s, stating that companies exist to create value for shareholders, not stakeholders, under legal constraints. There is one and only one social responsibility of business, according to him, which is to increase its profits. If they do so, he argued, they would eventually contribute to the public good, creating jobs and supplying goods and services, which means they would ‘indirectly’ satisfy society’s expectations towards businesses by focusing on shareholder accountability. The theoretical views regarding corporate responsibility still focus on this concern.

In any case, corporate responsibility has become a global phenomenon. It urges companies to actively pursue better and more responsible ways of doing business. Whether it is under the title of “corporate responsibility” or other interrelated concepts, such as “corporate governance,” “ESG” (environmental, social, governance) performance, or corporate sustainability, the genie is out of the bottle. Corporate responsibility has become an inescapable reality of the contemporary relationship of business and society.

This article focuses on the interaction between the idea of corporate responsibility and its repercussions on the cultural domains outside of the industrialized Western regions. This special interaction enables the formation of culture-oriented corporate responsibility interpretations. The following points aim to explain how these culture-oriented interpretations emerge and to examine their shared characteristics.

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3 A well-known definition defines stakeholder as a person, group, organization, member, or system that affects or can be affected by an organization's actions.

4 or perhaps infamously.
Finally, potential benefits and drawbacks of these culture-oriented interpretations are mentioned.

Cultural Globalization of Corporate Responsibility

Corporations — the dominant organizational form of capitalism — are under social and political scrutiny. Citizens, governments and business leaders themselves increasingly have been acknowledging that corporations have social, environmental and economic responsibilities.

Although much of the history and development of the modern concept of corporate responsibility has been related to Western countries, with the rise of multinational companies and intensified globalization, the concept has been disseminated internationally. In most of the countries outside the West, the concept of corporate responsibility has been introduced by international organizations or global companies as part of their international corporate responsibility agenda.

However, although corporate responsibility has been introduced worldwide by globalization, the recipient countries sometimes resist acknowledging this concept as a totally new or imported idea.

Every cultural context has norms, values and teachings regarding good business practices, and these historical-cultural notions easily correlate, generally, with the idea of corporate responsibility (Argandona and Hoivik, 2009; Coombs and Holladay, 2012; Blowfield and Frynas, 2005).

In this way, a wide range of cultural and historical values affect the idea of corporate responsibility and tend to constitute culturally themed corporate responsibility modes or discourses, which may be called here “culture-oriented corporate responsibility interpretations.”

The discussion of culture-oriented corporate responsibility interpretations is closely related to the impact of globalization on culture. Globalization literature has two camps on interpreting this impact. The first camp expects that in line with the integrative power of globalization, especially in the economic and social realms, local cultural differences will disappear over time, resulting in a ‘cultural convergence’ (Robertson, 1992). The second camp, on the other hand, observes that globalization generates a sophisticated cultural structure in which the local and global aspects somehow coexist together, resulting in a ‘cultural hybridization.’
In line with this observation, Ritzer defines *glocalization* as the “interpenetration of the global and the local, resulting in unique outcomes in different geographic areas” (Ritzer, 2003). Culture-oriented corporate responsibility interpretations herein provide good examples of glocalizations.

**Examples of Culture-Oriented Corporate Responsibility Interpretations**

Some of the most visible examples of culture-oriented corporate responsibility interpretations are given below. It is important to note that culture-oriented interpretations of corporate responsibility are not limited to these examples. An extensive literature review will show many more varieties containing the approaches of different authors towards various countries, historical aspects, philosophical and religious notions.

**Asian and Chinese interpretations of corporate responsibility**

Wang and Juslin (2009) agree that the Western corporate responsibility concept cannot fit the Chinese market well. Therefore, they maintain, corporate responsibility in China should take the Chinese cultural context into consideration. Authors define a Chinese-style concept of corporate responsibility, called “the harmony approach,” inspired by Chinese culture and philosophy. Whelan (2007) evaluated the lack of harmony between the Western corporate responsibility concept and local cultural values over a wider geography, and he proposed that Confucian ideals can help modern Asian companies to practice more responsible and ethical practices.

**Corporate Responsibility based on Gandhian ethics**

Various authors (including Chahoud, et al. 2007, Mitra, 2012; and Rishi and Moghe, 2013) have claimed that the idea of corporate responsibility was not new for the Indian context. These views especially idealize Mahatma Gandhi’s philanthropic approach as the correct source of contemporary India’s corporate responsibility. Mitra, for example, has criticized the vast gap between the extant literature on corporate responsibility and the social reality of India. He has offered a more culture-centered approach, based on Gandhi’s ethics and India’s socio-economic realities, to align Indian corporations with their corporate responsibility.

Rishi and Moghe (2013) similarly have concluded that social and cultural values should be integrated by Indian companies with the corporate responsibility policy. Only then, they maintain, will corporate strategy contribute to maximally to Indian society.
Aztec-inspired corporate responsibility

Chavarria (2007) has argued that the origins of Mexico's long philanthropic tradition could be traced back to the pre-conquest era of the Aztecs. The author emphasizes the importance of national culture in the understanding of corporate responsibility and advocates the inclusion of regional values in corporate responsibility approaches.

Turkish corporate responsibility inspired from the Ahi-Order

Various authors have associated the traditional Turkish guild system, the Ahi-Order, as the predecessor to corporate responsibility practices and philosophies in Turkiye (Aydemir and Ates, 2011; Ertuna and Tukel, 2009; Ulger and Ulger, 2005). The idea of corporate responsibility, therefore, is not new to Turkish culture. According to these views, business ethics and traditional philanthropy in the Turkish culture is deeply rooted in the Ahi-Order. Teachings, traditions, and cultural heritage of the Ahi-Order can inspire contemporary Turkish companies to generate more ethical and responsible corporate practices.

Islamic corporate responsibility

Culture-inspired interpretations of corporate responsibility can also be formed on the basis of religion. There are many examples in the West, where various organizations such as the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility, the Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility or the Task Force on the Churches and Corporate Responsibility all have developed approaches to corporate responsibility in line with religious values, particularly with Christianity. These organizations aim to raise public awareness and launch initiatives to align business practices with religious values.

The idea of Islamic corporate responsibility, on the other hand, rests on the proposition that the Islamic interpretation of the notion of corporate responsibility would generate better business practices for Islamic businesses. Islam's strong emphasis on being ethical, honest and fair in business and rules for strengthening social solidarity (i.e., zakat and sadaqah) underpins these approaches.

Islamic corporate responsibility interpretations have two prominent assertions. These interpretations, in a very similar fashion with other culture-inspired frameworks of corporate responsibility, claim, first, that the modern concept of corporate responsibility is not new for Islam and on the contrary, beyond being completely compatible with the notion of corporate responsibility, Islam has higher standards in many respects (Williams and Zinkin, 2010; Basah and Yusuf, 2013).
Secondly, these interpretations argue that rather than the secular perspective of mainstream corporate responsibility, an Islamic approach could create a more relatable and spiritually satisfying paradigm for Muslim people (Dusuki and Abdullah, 2007; Darrag and E-Bassiouny, 2013; Al-Ali, 2006; The Financial Express, 2011).

**Shared Rhetoric of Culture-Oriented Corporate Responsibility Interpretations**

The narratives of culture-oriented interpretations of corporate responsibility have some common characteristics. This section aims to summarize some of these commonalities.

*We already have it.*

Despite the modern/mainstream concept of corporate responsibility being disseminated with globalization to non-Western countries, culture-oriented corporate responsibility interpretations deny corporate responsibility as a new or imported idea from the West. They, rather, assert that the essence of corporate responsibility has already integrated within the local culture.

*Corporate responsibility is substantial but not sufficient.*

Culture-oriented interpretations are convinced that corporate responsibility may have been brought to the global agenda by Western companies and international organizations. However, this mainstream-Western form of corporate responsibility is inadequate to fulfill its premises. The proposed cultural interpretations are therefore considered as a necessary upgrade for the idea of corporate responsibility to realize its ‘true’ potential.

*Companies should be good corporate citizens.*

The mainstream-Western interpretation inherently aspires to self-interest as the conclusive aim of corporate responsibility. In this respect, activities related to corporate responsibility are expected to bring positive financial outcomes eventually. In contrast, culture-oriented interpretations distinctively emphasize moral outcomes of corporate practices more than financial gains. Away from the shareholder-stakeholder dilemma, these interpretations consider companies as active corporate citizens in the social realm and expect them to contribute to community, environment and moral standards. Accordingly, culture-oriented corporate responsibility interpretations claim to offer a more authentic and improved understanding of corporate responsibility, defining the ultimate goal of corporate responsibility to be ethical in business, rather than obtaining financial outcomes.
Cultural Values Inducing Culture-Oriented Corporate Responsibility Interpretations

In addition to not being located in the West, there are other similarities among cultures where most of the culture-oriented approaches emerge. In this regard, Hofstede’s cultural dimensions theory provides a convenient basis for analyzing these cultural characteristics.

Cultural dimensions theory proposes six dimensions\(^5\) to understand and compare cultural values of different countries (Hofstede Insights, 2023). Through each of the cultural dimensions, various assumptions can be made regarding business life and the understanding of corporate responsibility.

To give an example, long-term-oriented countries are more capable of anticipating problems that may arise in the future. As a result, long-term-oriented countries probably put more emphasis on environmentalism than short-term-oriented countries. It is not a surprise, consequently, to see that the corporate responsibility agenda of long-term-oriented countries often highlights environmental responsibilities of companies.

The cultural dimension of “individualism vs. collectivism” has a significant impact on shaping business relations and the understanding of corporate responsibility.

In collectivistic cultures, which prioritize the interests of the community over the individuals, workplace relationships may take on an emotional character. It is expected that loyalties will form between people working in the same place, which cannot be explained solely by individual interests.

In such societies, the workplace acquires a family personality. Therefore, the common interest of the workplace is considered as more important than individual interests. On the contrary, in individualistic societies, personal interests shape work life.

Seeking self-interest and accordingly following an individualistic mentality are located at the core of the culture of capitalism. These cultural characteristics that enabled the development of capitalism in the West also shaped the concept of corporate responsibility. On the other hand, most of the above cited examples of culture-oriented interpretations of corporate responsibility originated in countries which are classified as collectivistic cultures.

\(^5\) These cultural dimensions are proposed as: Power distance index, individualism vs. collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity vs. femininity, long-term orientation vs. short-term orientation, and indulgence vs. restraint.
The following table compares individualism vs. collectivism scores of five Western industrialized countries and five other countries associated with culture-oriented corporate responsibility interpretations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Individualism score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Western industrialized countries</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>85.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture-oriented corporate responsibility interpretations</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>India</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Türkiye</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>34.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison-tool

It is clearly evident that the Western industrialized countries and the countries where culture-oriented corporate responsibility interpretations emerge are quite different from each other in terms of their cultural dimension of individualism vs. collectivism.

To put it another way, culture-oriented corporate responsibility interpretations arise from countries with collectivistic cultural characteristics, unlike the individualistic Western countries, where the modern/mainstream concept of corporate responsibility emerged.

Figure 1 demonstrates how the concept of corporate responsibility as a phenomenon catalyzed by globalization may be interpreted in individualistic and collectivistic cultures.7

In the individualistic societies — i.e., Western countries — corporate responsibility activities are implemented with the expectation of self-interest (financial gain).8

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6 The cultural dimensions score of Arab countries are very similar to each other. United Arab Emirates is selected to illustrate the Islamic corporate responsibility approach.

7 This figure was previously published in Orhaner (2023).

8 In this sense, corporate responsibility is nothing but seeking an ‘enlightened self-interest.’
These practices ultimately highlight good-business practices such as accountability, transparency and corporate sustainability. These virtues proliferate globally through the integration of international markets. Consequently, this process induces more integration on a global level, illustrating the cultural assimilation effect of globalization.

**Figure 1: The Cultural Assimilation and Hybridization Effects of Corporate Responsibility**

In collectivistic societies, larger companies or companies which are engaged in international markets cannot remain independent from the realities of the global market; they act in line with the mainstream-Western corporate responsibility narrative, as in individualistic cultures.

For local companies or small-medium enterprises (SME) in collectivistic societies, the notion of corporate responsibility is perceived through a lens of local-cultural values. This perception generally highlights moral priorities such as practicing philanthropy and being a good corporate citizen. As a result, the local-cultural aspects are (re)discovered and reframed to be compatible with global trends. In this sense, provoked by globalization and inspired by local culture, culture-oriented interpretations of corporate responsibility generate a cultural hybridization.

**Benefits of Culture-Oriented Corporate Responsibility Interpretations**

Developing a culture-oriented corporate responsibility interpretation could be seen primarily as a political or ideological attempt to invent "authentic" and localized ethical business frameworks. In this way, the concept of corporate responsibility can be prevented from being perceived as a neo-colonial element.
Governments would also probably endorse culture-oriented corporate responsibility interpretations, since through these discourses they call on the private sector to develop responsible practices using a more ‘domestic’ and ‘national’ tone. Intrinsically, local ideas create a greater sense of belonging than merely global ones.

These culture-oriented interpretations can also provide significant advantages for the communication of corporate responsibility. Rather than the jargon-filled language of mainstream corporate responsibility, adopting a more authentic narrative that includes local-cultural elements would be more understandable and convincing for large audiences. Both companies and organizations that aim to accelerate corporate responsibility practices can benefit from this advantage. In this way, the statement of the purpose of corporate responsibility activities could be transformed from “conforming to the requirements of global supply chain” to “walking in the path of Confucius.”

The communication advantage mentioned above is especially relevant for the corporate responsibility of SMEs. As a possibility, SMEs can develop a corporate responsibility approach without the need for any incentives. Apart from this potentiality, there are mainly three external factors that may lead an SME to develop corporate responsibility practices:

1) larger companies they supply may expect SMEs to comply with their corporate responsibility standards,
2) they can develop corporate responsibility approaches to comply with the international market norms, and
3) there may be national rules regarding corporate responsibility in relation to government policies depending on their sector.

Many SMEs may view these factors as mandatory rules and in terms of corporate responsibility practices, they may constrain themselves not to do “more than is required.” Additionally, there are many other SMEs that operate independently of these factors. In any case, a culture-oriented interpretation can persuade more SMEs to develop responsible practices. In order for corporate responsibility practices to make a serious contribution to sustainable development, as well as larger companies, participation of SMEs is essential.

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9 The inspiring personality varies depending on the context; Gandhi, Jesus Christ, Prophet Muhammad, or perhaps “our ancestors.”
Drawbacks of Culture-Oriented Corporate Responsibility Interpretations

In addition to the benefits mentioned in the previous section, culture-oriented corporate responsibility interpretations may confer two primal risks. Over-romanticizing cultural aspects may transform the concept of corporate responsibility into propaganda or a useless narrative. Moreover, nationalist or fundamentalist discourses may easily infiltrate into the narrative of corporate responsibility and evoke a kind of ‘indeed, we are better than everyone else’ perception.

Secondly, culture-oriented interpretations may recompose the content of the corporate responsibility with an overly selective approach. In that way, the culture-oriented interpretation reconstructs the mainstream-Western version of corporate responsibility through an ideological lens.

In this way, culture-oriented interpretations spotlight their selected issues, while moving unembraced ones off the topic. For example, most of the articles promoting the view of Islamic corporate responsibility emphasize philanthropy and doing charity to a great extent. However, they lack content on issues such as women's participation in the workforce or gender equality (See, for example, Dusuki and Abdullah, 2007; Basah and Yusuf, 2013; or Al-Ali, 2006).10

Both risks may reduce the benefits that both companies and society in general can derive from the concept of corporate responsibility.

Summary and Conclusion

This article is intended to outline corporate responsibility as a globalization phenomenon and how this concept stimulates culture-oriented interpretations as a glocalization experience. Culture-oriented corporate responsibility interpretations usually emerge outside of the industrialized West, (re)discover historical, moral and cultural aspects and associate them with the concept of corporate responsibility. In this regard, they reframe the local values, compatible with global trends and thus create a cultural hybridization.

Unlike the individualistic cultural values of the West, where the mainstream concept of corporate responsibility originated, the culture-oriented interpretations developed from countries which are characterized by collectivistic values. The rhetoric of these cultural interpretations contains other similarities. They generally claim that the idea of corporate responsibility is already integrated in their cultural domain in a better way; and they idealize companies as corporate citizens, rather than economic apparatuses eventually seeking self-interest.

10 Another article related to “Islamic roots of corporate social responsibility in the Middle East” (Darrag and E-Bassiouny, 2013) does not even mention the word “woman.”
Culture-oriented interpretations of corporate responsibility offer significant benefits, especially for the local communication of corporate responsibility. In this sense, the idea of corporate responsibility can be articulated in a more understandable and convincing way. Over-romanticization or selective reconstruction, however, appear as two significant risks of culture-oriented interpretations; they may lead to a disabling of corporate responsibility, to a failure to fulfill its premise, that is, to be part of the solutions to ever-increasing current global social and environmental problems.

References


Apotheosis of the State and the Decline of Civilization: 
A Systems Approach

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Abstract

Humanity is undergoing a second Axial Age. The first, as described by Karl Jaspers, brought transcendence into the vision and self-understanding of humans and the world. The rise of secularism and “Death of God” is dissolving and fragmenting that transcendence — a vital subsystem of the civilization system. Economy, knowledge and government comprise three additional subsystems and have coalesced to form the modern sovereign state, diminishing the traditional place of religion, art and philosophy in civilizations. An example of a state lacking common institutions of transcendence was the Mongol empire. Ruling Russia for a quarter millennium, its state form was a template for the Bolshevik regime. The relative success of the Communist state became a template for the Chinese Communists. While the U.S. was excluded from eastern Eurasian politics until the late nineteenth century, secularization and the growth of three material subsystems are signs of movement towards a dominant state system.

Keywords: state; systems; Axial Age; transcendence; Mongols; Russia; China; United States

Introduction

When did civilization begin? Barbarism begat civilization, and civilization begat the sovereign state which begat contemporary nihilism. Can this be an “Arc of History”? As a metaphor “arc” captures a recognizable image of linear human development. In more than a century of science and war, an arc of secularization has become the trajectory of civilizations. Albert Camus captures the essence of this change in The Rebel. Advanced humanity denies a divine presence in the historical arc and has replaced it with worship of the state — an effective usurpation that has occurred simultaneously with great wars and greater progress. The French Revolution put into practical shape a torrent of ideas that, finding fault with God’s management of the cosmos, demanded “a limitless metaphysical crusade.”

Modern revolutions have ended in reinforcement of state power.
In 1776 a collection of colonies transformed into a sovereign state; 1789 brought Napoleon; 1917, Stalin; the Italian disturbances of the twenties, Mussolini; the Weimar Republic, Hitler.\footnote{1} Mao Zedong, Pol Pot and Kim Il-sung followed the totalitarian arc with a fury familiar to Hitler and Stalin. These regimes were not outliers, and they represent a common theme — an omnipotent state to replace an omnipotent deity. Modernism’s mission was that God had to be replaced with unity based on self-worship and construction of human institutions, culminating in semi-deification of the state. Cancelling divinity in history has also degraded humanity’s higher possibilities as existence is reduced to discernible and measurable inputs and outputs.

Practically, this anti-crusade, sometimes disguised as deconstruction, hit high gear in the schemes and crimes of twentieth-century totalitarianism — a mutant form of impatient transformation to modernity. Modernization can be summed up as industrialization + urbanization + secularization + knowledge differentiation under the rational state — rational because it is a form of human engineering, expecting that policy actions have predictable consequences. Claimed effects have the Promethean outcome of placing man, not God or gods, as the fabricator of human existence.

The secular state abandons civilization’s past consensus on transcendence. Power then in all its human forms takes command of society and circumscribes the freedom inherent in natural right, proclaiming the necessity of voluntary or forced conformity.

This break with past elements of civilizations means that modern humanity no longer rails at God for his fate but replaces Him as creator and perpetrator. In place of a Supreme Being, there is nothingness as society is atomized into isolated individuals and these are dissected into mere neural dynamics. Individual actions are motivated by a combination of fantasy, unconscious primitive residues and rational practicality, made easier by debasing the past. Camus saw totalitarianism and apocalypse as a psychological consequence of our abandonment the divine element in civilization.\footnote{11}

Much of traditional Western literature and philosophy addresses the trinity of God, man and nature. Is there a connection between the modern preferences for dualism over past inclusion of a godhead? By including God or gods, religion, philosophy and art into human expression of transcendence and noting its diminishment as core elements in the human condition, we can comprehend a wide-angle view of civilization’s present crisis.

As a four-subsystem system, civilization does not exist without transcendence. Moreover, human existence is devalued when transcendent morals are replaced with pragmatic ethics. Here is a vital difference — true morals originate in acceptance of a transcendent realm, while ethics is based on rational calculation of relationships among people and as a guide to proper behavior. Ethics is pragmatic; morality presumes a higher power.
By reducing the presence of transcendence in civilization, modern society has opened the door to nihilism, the belief that limits on behavior are constructs and thus artificial to be modified or eliminated. Nihilism negates civilization and removes the restraints painfully added over centuries. Machiavelli’s trope of “the end justifies the means” may have been the point of departure on the road to creeping nihilism as the "end" is never reached and justifies human destruction without limits.

Yet somehow humans have been able to survive disastrous wars and resume a path of material progress, contrary to predictions of apocalypses of famines, global freezing and desperate shortages. Western civilization and its allies claim to have built an updated version of civilization based on expanding government, economic prosperity and rational scientific knowledge which has averted material collapse. These three subsystems comprise the state and have succeeded in building a material likeness of civilization without the element of transcendence.

The missing element is devalued yet tolerated as long as it does not seek to reclaim its former power. In reality, the major states no longer exist in civilization but in multiple states claiming to comprise rational unity superior to older forms.

**Jaspers and the Axial Age**

Ours is an age similar to what Karl Jaspers defined as the Axial age — when human self-consciousness first matured into higher understanding and awareness of our commonality.\(^1\) It marked the beginning of society with meaning beyond material survival, as religion, philosophy and art refined the human concept. With that consciousness embedded in civilization’s leading members and institutions, modernity revealed and advanced rational thought and action. Appeals to fate, divine forces or *fortuna* were less and less an accepted mode of thought, action or discourse.

The Axial Age\(^{III}\) gave birth to new philosophies and religions that turned human attention from localized concerns to transcendence and humanity as a unity. Greek, Indian, Jewish and Chinese thinkers guided humans to consider man’s fate and morals above the sensible and substantial phenomena of direct experience or inherited superstition. It was an age roughly from 800 to 200 BCE illuminating a transformation from pre-history to world history, stressing the addition of metaphysics and self-consciousness to understanding life and human survival as it progressed. This transformation structured institutions and individuals through the present and may now be converging to become a global civilization.

Jaspers’ theory hinges on the introduction of transcendence into human consciousness—essentially a psychological and metaphysical revolution.

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1 See Ken Baskin “The Mything Link” for a discussion of Axial Ages, 103-104
He further saw mankind entering into a new age where science and technology would further complete human destiny and potential. While this vision resonates with observable developments, other scenarios are possible and less optimistic. I will examine an alternative possibility here.

**A Second Axial Age**

We are entering a Second Axial Age where modern states shatter past transcendence into fragments and harmless institutional niches. This turning point in history is negating the First Axial Age. The French Revolution’s “Cult of Reason” repressed traditional religion. Soviet ideology had little tolerance for any transcendence outside the state. The Maoist Cultural Revolution was a clear iteration of this drive to eliminate traditional transcendence. Each of these sought to establish human reason for past revelation and beliefs which defied verification. Reason replaced transcendence in modernity, with the spread of nihilism a collateral outcome.

To better understand the importance and direction of these developments, I propose a systemic and structural approach. World history, civilization and state form a triad of mega-concepts to describe the discernible structure of human origins, conditions and fates.

Civilization is a structure, constructed by humans to improve survivability in a hostile world.²

It is not a standing edifice that, once built, retains its dimensions and functionality. It draws energy and purpose from living persons who create, maintain and ultimately dissolve it, either from outside forces, or from exhaustion of material resources, or from dysfunctional choices.

A civilization is not an unchanging structure but a living system of interacting units and parts. The elemental units are individuals and groups. The parts are mutually connected subsystems, not dissimilar to the human body in which failure of one can negatively affect the other parts and the whole.

Figures 1 and 2 summarize how institutional evolution has structured the prehistoric population into discrete civilizations or pre-civilization tribes.

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² The concept of civilization has been discussed and described in numerous articles in the *Comparative Civilizations Review*. Barbara Tuchman has famously criticized the “big thinkers” who look for “a particular explanation of history,” and this author must confess that as a non-historian interested in the evolution of the modern state, the theories of Toynbee and others resonate with a quest for understanding. See Palencia-Roth, 32.
Figure 1: World History, Civilization, State

- **Society, Civilization, State**
  - **Pre-civilization, undifferentiated human population**
  - **World history - the View of mankind evolving within an “Arc of History”**
  - **Civilization – Adaptation to environment to maximize life security**
  - **State – negates transcendence, places humanity at the center of creation**

Figure 2: Co-existence of Pre-civilization and Civilization

- **Co-existence of pre-civilization and civilization**
  - Formation of civilizations enhances human survival, establishes frontiers, hierarchies, and division of labor.
  - Multiple civilizations, differentiated human populations:
  - Each consists of four subsystems (Economy, Government, Knowledge, Transcendence)
  - Tribal societies remain outside civilizations’ frontiers, though assimilation also occurs
Ancient society and empires improved post-Neolithic survival by (1) organizing complex governments to manage defense and maintain order, (2) expanding the division of labor for production and distribution of goods, and (3) encouraging knowledge growth with written language and record-keeping. The Axial age inserted (4), an envisioned spirit of transcendence, into society which inspired men to work together for a common purpose beyond survival. These functional parts can be termed subsystems within the civilization system.
Civilization is a system of four interconnected subsystems: economy, government, knowledge and transcendence.

The first three were present in ancient societies as they mastered technology and expanded control over contiguous territory and peoples. Egypt and Assyria were such societies but lacked the universal consciousness that marked empires of the Axial Age.\footnote{Mesoamerica illustrated that transcendence was manifested in the observed material world through astronomy, time and space. See Sugiyama.}

A further characteristic of the three rational subsystems is their purposeful development to deal with the challenge of life survival. They improved observation, experimentation, communication of facts and modification — processes that have accelerated with modernization.

Transcendence, in contrast, originates in inspiration, speculation and revelation. It is more fragile and depends on voluntarism more than on proof. We can term the first three as rational subsystems and transcendence as an organic subsystem. Subjectivity distinguishes it from the rational subsystems that value objectivity.

![Figure 5: Four Subsystems in the Axial Age](image)
Science, especially Darwinism, formalized religion as a profession of faith rather than loyalty to secular authority — a development that intensified since the mid-nineteenth century and led to increased hegemony of the modern state as a coalition of three subsystems.

The increased gap between the rational subsystems and the transcendent subsystem contributed to primacy of the state and is ushering in a second Axial Age — reversing the transcendence-affirming institutions of the past two millennia. The transformation is incomplete, but the direction is clear: Much of mankind is determined to build a completely rational world where transcendence is personal indulgence with minor institutional status.

The character of our present (second) Axial Age becomes clearer when we explore the sources of the modern state, which I suggest began with the Mongol empire, nourished the Russian empire and blossomed in the Soviet state. The Chinese Communists adapted the Soviet state, in both its Stalinist (national) form and Trotskyite (international) vision. Some features are becoming visible in the American state as well.

**Pax Mongolica: a State without Civilization**

The beginnings of the modern state can be found in *Pax Mongolica*. Not unique among nomadic tribes in Central Asia, the Mongols subsisted on herding and hunting, augmented by raids on other tribes and sedentary farmers. A powerful leader, Temujin, emerged, defeated rivals and unified the tribes under a single banner. Their skills with horses and powerful archery refined their approach to warfare against which agrarian societies were ill-prepared. They had no system of writing, no organized religion, and no cities. They fought each other for women, horses, and grazing lands.

China’s Great Wall had kept the Mongols on the steppe and some tribes were assimilated and even established minor dynasties over parts of the empire. The Mongols resisted assimilation and were subject to the traditional Chinese policy of “using barbarians to control the barbarians.” After subduing kingdoms and tribes of Central Asia, the Mongols invaded and occupied the lands that would become Russia, ruling for over 250 years.

Ivan IV lifted the Tatar yoke but could not erase effects of a multietnic state that began with little recognizable civilization⁴ to commend it.

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⁴ Like many tribal societies, the Mongols had a form of religious belief based on shamanism and all-embracing Heaven. Unlike Islam or Christianity, they had little motivation to convert conquered peoples and did not disturb existing faiths, a policy that facilitated their rule.
Bolshevism: The Mongol State Template

*Pax Mongolica* imposed a state without a foundational civilization and demonstrated that a unifying religion was not essential. Like Jews of ancient Israel, Russian clerics bemoaned that their sins were the cause of God’s wrath. Seven centuries later Lenin, Stalin and the Bolsheviks dissolved traditional Russian civilization, established a new state based on force and a form of rational materialism, creating a secular ideology that substituted for transcendent religion. Sheer force replaced piety-induced voluntarism. Stalin later demonstrated how a watered-down Orthodox religion could be summoned as a positive force in World War II, when national and sacred symbols were temporarily restored as national symbols. After the war, churches again were demoted to be museums of religion.

When the Soviet state collapsed, optimists hoped that democracy had conquered its greatest adversary, and that autocracy had no future. Yeltsin chaos gave way to growth of Putin’s soft dictatorship and restoration of Russian operations to secure and expand its borders. The post-Soviet oligarchy sealed the coffin of Soviet communism and nationalism has re-emerged.

Evolution of the Chinese State

Modern China illustrates another case of Axial reversal. When the Communists came to power in 1949, much of the Confucian legacy was denounced as feudal and an obstacle to modernization. Ancient family values were pronounced to be oppressive and the class structure that esteemed learning above production was attacked. Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought, materialism and revolution replaced the transcendence expressed in Buddhism, Daoism or Christianity. Art and literature had to serve the revolution.

As Mao proclaimed at a Yenan meeting:

> The purpose of our meeting today is precisely to ensure that literature and art fit well into the whole revolutionary machine as a component part, that they operate as powerful weapons for uniting and educating the people and for attacking and destroying the enemy, and that they help the people fight the enemy with one heart and one mind.

Denigrated during the Maoist period, Confucianism enjoyed a partial revival under the umbrella of Deng reforms, though more for its ethical content, cultural identity and attraction among Overseas Chinese and foreigners than as a supplement to socialism.
Contemporary China demonstrates how the four subsystems of civilization have divided and coalesced into a modern state where traditional transcendence has been reduced to a cultural source of identity from a source of morals and philosophical unity. In its place the communist regime has made “socialism with Chinese characteristics” a centerpiece of state legitimacy.

The process of state-building has demoted the preceding civilization to weakened culture as identity in modern China. Chinese communism has several times claimed to engage in building a new and improved civilization based on non-sacred transcendence and is today facing new challenges that may require reformulation of ideology — the vision of China and its place in the world.

**On Chinese Civilization**

China’s civilization system was of unparalleled durability since the days of ancient Egypt. Both were based on agriculture and maintained productivity by water management. China ascended into the Axial Age when political fragmentation gave birth to multiple schools of philosophy and the search for universal meaning. The statecraft of Legalism facilitated unification but addressed only one stratum of reality: construction of an effective government. Confucianism and Mohism addressed universal questions of ethics and morals, human conduct and governance, enlightenment and ignorance and equality v. inequality. Daoism, and later Buddhism, addressed cosmological and transcendent questions. Symbolic language gave continuity and accumulation to knowledge, though largely the possession of a specialized class of literati. China suffered periodic breakdown, and new dynasties restored order and civilization in a cyclical timeline.

The last high point of Chinese civilization was in the early nineteenth century, although most inventions had occurred by the Song dynasty (960 to 1279). Western intrusion in the late Qing and internal dysfunction began a decline which was not arrested until after World War II. Internal rebellions and centrifugal regionalism accelerated decline, during the period when Japan adapted to the new world order of sovereign nation-states and industrialization, becoming the chief predator in China. Beginnings of a revived China with democratic tendencies appeared with establishment of the Nanjing Republic in 1927 but were dashed by Japanese military invasion. A dispirited Nationalist government lost the Civil War and escaped to Taiwan, allowing the victorious communists to establish the People’s Republic of China in October 1949.

The new communist regime had the opportunity to restore a renewed civilization based on the example of the Soviet Union.

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5 The philosophy of Mozi (c. 470 BC – c. 391 BC) advocated universal love, in contrast to Confucianism’s love distinctions, with family claims of affection having greater priority than non-family.

https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/ccr/vol90/iss1/17
With Soviet advisors, the Chinese economy changed from a war footing to state central planning, with a focus on heavy industry and financed by squeezing the agricultural sector. The new state, proclaimed as a “New Democracy,” was heavily influenced by the Soviet Union and the Communists accepted a degree of bourgeois development in order to transform the economy from a largely agricultural one to an industrial-based form, accepting that this was necessary to create a foundation for socialism.

By 1956 the Communist Party was confident that the state was sturdy enough to tolerate some criticism. The self-assured leadership encouraged intellectuals to speak out freely and even to criticize inadequacies of government. Surprised at the volume of criticism, the party attacked dissenters as reactionaries and "weeds" and nearly half a million critics were condemned as Rightists. Many were exercising the traditional Confucian right of criticizing the government when it erred.

Maoism took a radical direction in the anti-Rightist campaign following the Hundred Flowers Movement and viewed the post-Stalin Soviet Union as revisionist and bureaucratic. The Maoists abandoned the Soviet model of development and launched the Great Leap Forward to overtake the industrial countries by mobilizing the countryside and restructuring the economy into People’s Communes — an utter failure that saw tens of millions perishing from starvation and associated causes.

Backlash against radical excesses pushed Mao into the background until his comeback in launching the ruinous Cultural Revolution. Totalitarian in scope and method, it forced the population to study and live by the Maoist ideology loosely based on Marxism-Leninism. Human Will would overcome material obstacles. In retrospect, it was the culmination of promises to create full communism by elimination of private property and submergence of individual will into the work unit and People’s Communes.

The Maoists created an artificial and unsustainable version of transcendence, a Rousseauian concentration of human voluntarism into a powerful General Will that could overcome all obstacles.

The Maoist iteration of the state sought to decentralize the economy, make ideology the criterion of knowledge and create new institutions of government with reduction of party power. The attempt to restructure the national economy failed, as the country approached bankruptcy. Most farmers remained aloof from the largely urban political turmoil, and food production remained adequate. What followed was anathema to the Maoists.

Deng Xiaoping took control of the party and introduced a pragmatic approach to state-building, with the Communist Party once again in command. Foreign investment was permitted and accelerated modernization.

The Deng reforms forged an alliance of the party with business, science and technology to strengthen the state. From the communist standpoint, there could be no dissent that might call their legitimacy into question.\footnote{Even the massive floods of August 2023 were camouflaged to avoid any hint that “Heaven is displeased with the rulers” – an echo with imperial times.}

Political persecution, economic failure and outright lies had soured many Chinese away from communism, especially as knowledge of economic growth in the market economies of South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Japan trickled into the relatively closed society. Deng announced that without legal and economic reforms, the Communist Party and the country faced new crises. People had lost faith in socialism, and radical change was necessary. Reforms which were considered capitalist found their way into the new economy — including private plots and a greater market-orientation. Foreign participation was included with joint enterprises and joining the World Trade Organization. The reforms may have changed too fast and brought inflation that was blamed for the 1989 uprising at Tiananmen.

A nation cannot cohere without a shared ideology — a common set of values and goals expressed as material and transcendent vision.

At the culmination of the revolution’s military phase, the communists faced the problem of governance and adapted Soviet-style institutions with adjustments for Chinese conditions. That path of modernization led to bureaucratic statism and promised to suffocate the energy generated by revolution.

A period of class struggle saw the apotheosis of radical mobilization and dominance of conflict as an agent of change. It not only negated the goals of economic modernization but generated social conflict making common purpose difficult. Under Deng Xiaoping, economic reform created inequalities, corruption and conflict threatening progress. The party introduced the concept of the "harmonious society" (hexie shehui) as the necessary environment for economic development and peaceful governance. The concept conformed to the Confucian utopia of Datong, or “Great Unity,” and embraced not only China but all of humanity. China still finds her particular civilization to be a source of ideological inspiration as long as it does not threaten socialist hegemony.
The American State

...the idea of soft despotism was first expressed by Alexis de Tocqueville in his book Democracy in America. In simple terms, it amounts to people freely giving more and more power to the government in return for which legislators promise them a world of perpetual security. VI

The United States has been relatively immune to the growth of the secular and authoritarian state experienced in eastern Eurasia. Hemispheric separation by two oceans kept the Mongols, Russians and Chinese in their own spheres of interaction. Until the closing of the continental frontier, America remained separate from Eurasian history.

The Spanish-American War ended the splendid isolation enjoyed since independence when the U.S. replaced Spain in her former territories — more as a political and economic force rather than as a colonial overlord. An important exception was the Philippines, which were envisioned as an entrepot for trade with the Far East. But it brought about friction with Japan’s mounting ambitions in China after annexation of Taiwan (1895). T.R. Roosevelt further involved the United States with his brokering peace between Russia and Japan in 1905.

At the outset of the twentieth century, American involvement in the economic, political and military complexities of Europe and Asia grew apace. After World War I, Washington set out on a path to impose a Wilsonian vision of international justice and later to stop German and Japanese aggression in World War II, when government mobilization of economy, diplomacy and knowledge stimulated massive expansion of the administrative state. The Soviet threat became dogma in the Korean War, and this continued until its collapse in late 1991.

The anticipated peace dividend was short-lived as new threats and emergencies claimed continuation and expansion of the now-embedded bureaucratic state. Covid, global warming and revived Russian expansion have moved the American state into a pale imitation of the centralized states of Eurasia, with greater penetration of government into society than in the past. Visual surveillance and a plethora of electronic monitoring have made individual movement and thought open to private and government entities, making past accumulation of typewritten records and handwritten dossiers seem primitive by comparison.

America’s founders purposely avoided the religious issues that had characterized Europe for centuries by distinguishing between church and state. As a society founded in large part by religious dissidents, Americans preferred toleration and no favorites in the matter of faith.
In place of a common transcendent religion, the emerging American vision was secular and based on a paradoxical spiritual materialism — a belief that the pursuit of happiness in this world was more attainable than an imposed religion promising glory in the next world. Application of rationality, science and technology to problems of this life and personal choice of faith or non-faith was best left to individuals, not government.

The Soviet collapse reinforced the belief that the American Dream was universal and the desire for democracy was liberated in former autocratic regimes. Global markets, electronic communications and cheap energy combined to realize a vision of freedom and prosperity. Signs of democracy appeared in Russia and China. The groundswell of reform and revolution surged in the 1990s.

The secular democratic state seemed to be the one size that fits all, with rationality infusing governments, market economies and emanating from the sci-tech knowledge elite. Islamic societies like Iran and Saudi Arabia declined to join the apparent mainstream and North Korea dug in its heels against any change. China’s repression of democracy in 1989 and Russian expansion in Crimea and Ukraine announced that the honeymoon was over. Election of Donald Trump (2016) on a wave of populism portended curtailment of the momentum of state expansion. His defeat in 2020 signaled a return to statism with special attention to climate change and continued Covid emergencies.

Conclusions

The modern autocratic state, with China as a leading example, has demonstrated an ability to adapt to change and opportunity. It can adopt a democratic façade without compromising central control or tolerating opposition to its monopoly of power. Law, order, technological advance and limits on alternative approaches have proven successful in such states, at the expense of the American democratic model’s ideals.

A large part of the appeal of autocracy is that, under enlightened leadership, it can be rational and effective, with few detours pressured by interest groups or occasional visionaries. Freedom of speech is considered perilous to political order and severely limited. Transcendence is replaced with secular materialism that aims to satisfy the general population. In China, those who embrace transcendent Christianity or Falun Gong are often persecuted. Islam and Buddhism are tolerated as long as they do not encourage non-compliance with state direction.

The triad of government, economy, and knowledge work in tandem to dominate society where religion, art, culture and philosophy once occupied autonomous partnership. At one end of the state spectrum is Iran and Saudi Arabia, where Islam establishes transcendence as a meaningful component nourishing a continuous though highly modified civilization.
At the other end we find North Korea, with total state control emanating from party government, planned economy and a highly restricted knowledge subsystem. The constructed ideology of Juche has characteristics of a religious framework with a pseudo-morality based on the Kim dynasty’s personality cult, in contrast to South Korea where nearly a quarter of the population is Christian.

The modern autocratic state emerged with Pax Mongolica, enveloped Russia until Ivan the Terrible, was revived by Lenin and adapted by China. It is now showing symptoms in modern America. It bodes a trade-off of human freedom for greater life security and is a fundamentally rational construction. As such, its embrace will not be reversed, although its over-promise to deliver life security to billions of humans will likely engender crisis and necessary modification.

Coming crises will no longer be national but regional and global. Sovereign states will expand their reach to confront crises, deploying laws, material resources and sci-tech knowledge in their search for solutions. The juggernaut of state power may overwhelm societies where transcendence has desiccated, where freedom is trivialized as consumer choice, and where individual agency is replaced with victimhood and the heritability of repressive tendencies.
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Reading A Global Landscape

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Abstract

It seems a truism that while our grasp of the world is at best inconclusive, it is attended by a pressing desire to articulate the ultimate context in which our lives are set. Here, my remarks focus on the limits of our ability to explicate that context or landscape, suggesting that any attempt to de-confuse our world will be inherently inconclusive, indeterminate, and undefined. In other words, I want to encourage a little cognitive dissonance regarding our ability to make sense of the globe.

Keywords: Consciousness, Subjectivity, Reification

Introduction

Perusing the announcement for the 52nd International Society for the Study of Civilizations (ISCSC) conference prompted my recollection that a couple of years back I authored an article lamenting the demise of Western Civilization courses on college campuses. In “Humanistic Inquiry: Reconciling Reality, Knowledge, and Imagination,” published in the journal Academic Questions in 2020, I said:

It should come as no surprise that the number of students taking part in Western civilization, humanities, and classics courses has declined precipitously. In fact, in 2011, Inside Higher Education reported: ‘Survey courses in Western Civilization, once a common component of undergraduate curriculums in the United States, have almost disappeared as a requirement at many larger private research universities and flagship public institutions.’

While I lament the demise of the humanities and by extension Western Civilization courses, in contrast, Professor David Wengrow of University College London reports, “Civilization is back.” Wengrow, a professor of comparative archeology, argues, “Civilization is a way of talking about human history on the largest scale…it binds human history together.” So, which is it? Is civilization back, or are we about to see the end of the humanities and by extension civilization studies?

Many people assume that reading a global landscape requires that we focus on those things that either bring humans together or motivate dissension and discord.
For example, Wengrow points out that 20th century French anthropologist Marcel Mauss’s claims that “civilization is what happens when discrete societies share morally and materially across boundaries, forming durable relationships that transcend differences.”

On the other hand, the Ayatullah Murtaza Mutaharri in Man and Faith appraises distinct conceptions of The Book of Genesis that, he argues, set the Christian and the Islamic worlds apart.

Though I concede the importance of considerations such as technical advancements, aesthetic awareness and cultural attainment, religious conflict, scarce resources, and misunderstanding in deciphering the ultimate context in which we live out our lives, I nevertheless maintain the need for an appreciation of specific notions that suggest any attempt to de-confuse our world will be inherently inconclusive.

Suppose, as is the case in much of the modern world, that social complexity, confusion, anxiety and dissonance are ruling states of mind. In a recent newspaper article, French physicist, philosopher, and astrophysicist Étienne Klein warns that although we may be part of the same society, we don’t all live in the same world. In the U.S., one need look no further than QAnon conspiracy theorists, election deniers, neo-Nazis, white supremacists, and radical right wing political pundits to support this thesis. Given it appears that many have lost their grip on reality, Klein offers suggestions for de-confusing and re-constructing our world.

Yet, psychologists Susan Blackmore’s survey Consciousness: A Very Short Introduction suggests that any attempts to de-confuse the world may be futile. She delves into the problem of experience itself. Blackmore asks whether divergent ways of seeing the world may be a product of an added extra that we humans possess, one that comes along with our evolved skills of perceiving, thinking, and feeling. She asks, how do subjective experiences arise? What is consciousness?

Consider, since February 24, 2022, when Russia attacked Ukraine, thousands have died, millions have been displaced, and swaths of Ukraine has been turned into rubble. It has followed that journalists, pundits, aid workers and civilians have offered thought-provoking interpretations of how we should think about Russia’s actions or read the current global landscape.

For instance, Jane Burbank of the New York Times in “The Grand Theory Driving Putin to War” contends that “a revitalized theory of Eurasian empire informs Mr. Putin’s every move,” while David Brooks of the same newspaper argues, “Globalization is Over. The Global Culture Wars Have Begun.” In addition, New York Times op-ed contributor Ross Douthat insists, “Yes. There is a Clash of Civilizations.”
And New York Times editorial page editor Serge Schmemann writes “Things in Russia Aren’t as Bad as the Bad Old Soviet Days. They’re Worse.”

While Russia’s war against Ukraine has been called the most documented war in history, no single interpretation commands anything close to universal acceptance. What does all this unsureness demand? In addition to being a living, thinking, feeling creature, is our sense of self, our subjectivity, or consciousness something?

For example, in his recent book Singular Pasts: The “I” in Histography, French historian Enzo Traverso writes:

Recognition of the subjective dimension implicit in historical research, of the fact that historians inject a part of themselves into their works, has been far more frequent in the past twenty years. This admission that once seemed almost obscene, like the violation of a taboo or the confession of sin, has gradually been accepted as a form of intellectual honesty…the fact remains that history is an invention to which reality contributes its own materials. An invention, however, not arbitrary.

By making this comment, Traverso reminds us that historical facts are always the subject of differing interpretations.1 In fact, Blackmore and Traverso, by embracing subjectivity seem to confirm limits on our ability to interpret a global landscape.

In a recent Washington Post op-ed, Fareed Zakaria asks, “Why are so many democracies unwilling to condemn Russia?” Zakaria concedes that while many of the world’s democracies are supporting Ukraine, so too some of the world’s largest democracies such as India, Indonesia, and South Africa have reserved judgment concerning Russia. Even though many would simply remind us that the behavior of these democracies is a matter of “national interest trumping idealism,” Zakaria insists the problem is with the way the West has characterized the Ukrainian conflict. He says it has been mistakenly defined as a “grand ideological crusade against autocracies.”

In contrast he explains that “A much better way to frame the division of the world is between countries that believe in a rules-based international order and those that don’t.” “Russia,” he continues, “has revealed itself to be the world’s leading rogue state, intent on attacking the heart of this order: the norm that borders do not get changed by force.” Zakaria offers good reason to believe that this standard is one that many of the outliers (including countries like China) could rally around.

1 Along the same lines Philosopher of Science Bruno LaTour, in Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climatic Regime questions the classic division between reality and imagination. Latour argues that even scientific facts are not just out there waiting to be discovered. While the “view from nowhere,” or seeing things objectively or from the outside, is a common sense understanding of knowledge, Latour contends, we cannot leave out the subjective.
Of course, the problem is not just a matter of overcoming divergent interpretations of the global landscape or framing acceptable responses when conflict arises. There is also the fact that humans are easily misled. Zakaria complains that the actions of the United States in the Iraq War appeared to be on a par with Russia’s actions in Ukraine. During the war in Iraq, thousands died, millions were displaced, and swaths of that country were turned into rubble. And much if not all of this death and destruction was based on the lie that Saddam Hussain was developing nuclear weapons. In addition, he urges, there was a failure of global politics.

Through various means, nation-states were strong-armed into supporting the actions of the United States in Iraq. Hence, Zakaria warns we cannot simply preach the importance of adherence to a rules-based international system.

In her book Red Famine: Stalin’s War On Ukraine journalist Anne Applebaum writes that, not unlike Stalin,

> The current Russian government also believes that a sovereign, democratic, stable Ukraine, tied to the rest of Europe by links of culture and trade, is a threat to the interests of Russia’s leaders. After all, if Ukraine becomes too European — if it achieves anything resembling successful integration into the West — then Russians might ask, why not us?

Hence, the words of others as well as our beliefs can predispose us to misinterpret reality when, ideally, reality is supposed to serve as evidence upon which to base our beliefs.²

Moreover, Professors of Sociology Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann caution us against accepting the products of human activity as “facts of nature, results of cosmic laws, or manifestations of divine will.” They call this the reification of social reality. Reification, they insist, “implies that man is capable of forgetting his own authorship of the human world.”

Take for example, an April 22, 2022, article by Dr. Jeffrey Mankoff, who is a Senior Associate with the Center for Strategic & International Studies. In his article, “Russia’s War in Ukraine: Identity, History, and Conflict,” he insists that Putin’s policies toward Ukraine and Belarus assume their national identities are artificial. Conversely, what is a fact of nature or a manifestation of divine will is the organic unity of the Russian Empire and its people. Historian Timothy Snyder calls this the “politics of eternity, the belief in an unchanging historical essence.”

² Indeed, individuals are misled by others and by their own beliefs. For instance, in Dying of Whiteness: How the Politics of Racial Resentment is Killing America’s Heartland Professor of Sociology and Psychiatry, Jonathan M. Metzl demonstrates how conservative dogma has mislead poor and working-class whites into supporting policies that are not in their self-interest.
The 52nd ISCSC conference flyer asked attendees to “reaffirm our vision that civilizations matter; to encourage new research; to elicit new thoughts and approaches; to renew discussion of what makes a ‘civilization,’ and why some are resilient but some not; and to reach a wide range of disciplines.” In contrast, throughout these remarks, I’ve emphasized the importance of delving into factors that limit our ability to undertake or to resolve these concerns.

Susan Blackmore claims “it is no good learning about perception, memory, intelligence, or problem solving as purely physical processes and then claiming to have explained consciousness. If you are really talking about consciousness, then you must deal with subjectivity.”

My concern then, is with what this level of complexity demands of us. Ultimately, one could see these remarks as encouraging a critical grasp of civilizations, or what I might call a “minimally dogmatic” understanding. ³ Conflicting perceptions, feelings, interpretations of facts, and beliefs that guide our living challenge attempts to make out the ultimate context in which our lives are set. They make it difficult to give meaning to social milieu, institutional changes, and struggles that influence us.

And finally, all this brings me to humorist Mark Twain’s famous admonition: “It ain’t what you don’t know that gets you into trouble. It’s what you know for sure that just ain’t so.”

³ Such a grasp would be inherently inconclusive, indeterminate, and undefined. And yet, this is not to support relativity. Philosopher Daniel Dennett argues “the model of constructive and competitive interaction is the key to knowledge . . . the most reliable path to truth is through communication of like-minded and disparate thinkers who devote serious time to trying to get the truth – and there’s no algorithm for that.”
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Esra Özyürek. *Subcontractors of Guilt: Holocaust Memory & Muslim Belonging in Postwar Germany*  
Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2023

Reviewed by Stefan Gunther

As early as 1995, James E. Young, referring to the “social effects of public memorial spaces” (p.20) in Germany, stated that “Holocaust memorial work in Germany today remains a tortured, self-reflective, even paralyzing preoccupation.” (p.21) He continues with a series of questions: “How does a state recite, much less commemorate, the litany of its misdeeds, making them part of its reason for being? Under what memorial aegis, whose rules, does a nation remember its own barbarity? Where is the tradition for memorial *mea culpa*, when combined remembrance and self-indictment seem so hopelessly at odds?” (p.22)

Özyürek’s book seeks to provide updated specificity to the contours and rhetorical guardrails inscribed in the definition and exercise of German memory culture, with specific reference to “members of society who are not ethnically German” (p.1). She argues that German memory culture “regarded racialized groups, such as the Muslim-background Germans who helped to build postwar Germany, as both external and irrelevant to the postwar public German narrative of democratization.” (p.1)

In order to demonstrate the exclusion of Muslim-background Germans from the performative script of Holocaust memorialization in Germany, Özyürek commences her discussion with a condensed history, after World War II, of the genesis and chronological development of Germany’s (both East and West) memory culture.

She locates the origin of today’s memory culture — as well as the current inclination by the majority of the German population to project unparalleled progress towards atonement for the Holocaust — within the propensity by the US occupying power for crafting a “narrative that would explain Nazism as a psychocultural problem specific to German culture” (p.9), which “ignored contemporaneous social and economic explanations for the rise of National Socialism.” (p.9)

This approach, according to the author, resulted in a conception of democracy as “a personal journey one must make” that included the “possibility of learning to empathize with past victims” (p.13).

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However, “[u]nlike ethnic Germans, immigrant-background Germans do not have…Nazi stories to discover in their family history” and, as a result, have no “path forward …to demonstrate they, too, are atoning for the crimes their ancestors committed in the name of the German nation.” (p.19)

Given that the majority of Subcontractors of Guilt consists of a close ethnographic reading of programs around Holocaust memory designed by and for Germans with Muslim background, this introduction feels occasionally argumentatively somewhat foreshortened; a more detailed diachronic approach to the evolution of discourse in Germany around the Holocaust would account for the complexities of this discourse over the last 75 years.

However, Özyürek’s exploration of the positionality of Muslim-background Germans as different from ethnic Germans relative to the commemoration of the Holocaust, is trenchant, especially when she discusses the provisional nature of admission to the German social contract for the former group, unless they participate in the majority-culture discourse around the Holocaust.

Chapter 2, “Rebelling Against the Father, Democratizing the Family” sets up a type of isomorphic relationship between the post-World War II reeducation efforts required of ethnic Germans, which resulted in what some commentators have termed the civic religion of Holocaust remembrance, and a putatively necessary transition Muslim-background Germans have to negotiate — replacing the “authoritarian fathering practices of Muslim families [which] result in violent, paranoid and antisemitic adolescents fit only for, and therefore uniquely vulnerable to, authoritarian ideologies” (p.36) with tolerant attitudes around ethnic and religious diversity, sexuality and violence.

Thus, the implicit argument is that “the ethnic Germans of today have reached the final destination of their seventy-five-year journey toward democratization and may at last unburden themselves of the sins of their Nazi fathers: now Muslim minority groups are ready to take on the democratization mantle and walk in their shoes by rebelling against their own fathers.” (pp.68-9)

Chapter 3, “Export-Import Theory of Muslim Antisemitism in Germany” addresses the widely held assumption in Germany, which underpins the Heroes and Muslims in Auschwitz programs ethnographically analyzed by the author later in the book, that while antisemitism’s origins are to be located in Europe, it is indeed the essential “inadequacies of Turkish and Arab cultures” (p.101) that constitute the main impediment “to a proper, or properly European, repentance.” (p.101)
This theory of course ignores that the vast majority of antisemitic crimes are committed by “right-wing, white Christian background Germans” (p.71) and that the positing of a disjuncture between historical (and ostensibly overcome) ethnic German antisemitism and contemporary antisemitism exhibited by Muslim-background Germans is problematic (not to mention that the implicit diachronic progression between these two modes ignores that aspects of both varieties, to some extent, do coexist currently).

Özyürek concludes that the “most pernicious outcome of understanding antisemitism as a malignant ideology exported from and then imported back into Europe by Muslims is that it makes perpetrators out of marginalized, racialized, and disadvantaged people. Once it is discursively established that Muslims are antisemitic — or worse, that they do not atone for their antisemitism—it becomes difficult to recognize their position as victims in relation to European racism” (p.102).

The second half of the book begins with Chapter 3, “Wrong Emotions/Wrong Empathy for the Holocaust,” which further analyzes the constituent elements of German memory culture (replete with a description of how West and East German memory cultures merged towards the West German model after reunification) and the demands made of Muslim-background Germans for the “right emotional identification.” (p.121)

The author’s fieldwork documents, for instance, the experience elicited by Holocaust memorial sites for Muslim participants, whose reaction, in distinction to their ethnic German counterparts, is one of fear of being discriminated against and persecuted. She argues that when Muslim-background Germans accentuate their own marginalized status as one possible reaction and contribution to Holocaust remembrance, that speech act automatically is in conflict with the expected model of the “repentant German perpetrator.” (p.121)

Drawing on Husserlian concepts of intersubjective connectivity and empathy, she adds that “the emotions triggered by standing in someone else’s shoes begin and end in the shoes one already has on. Beginning and ending their journey in very different shoes, an ethnic majority German and a racialized minority German will feel quite differently when putting themselves in the shoes of the victims.” (p.129)

The remainder of Subcontractors of Guilt consists of Chapters 4, “Subcontracting Guilt, Policing Victimhood” and Chapter 5, “Visiting Auschwitz as Pilgrimage and as Shock Therapy,” and discusses the author’s ethnographic approach to the Muslims in Auschwitz program that seeks to address the question of mitigating the existence of antisemitism amongst some immigrant background German youth.
Through theater projects (whose design includes their immigrant background German youth actors) and visits to Auschwitz for whom participants are meticulously prepared, *Muslims in Auschwitz* aims to examine the “many and varied forms of discrimination towards Jews — everyday slurs, violence toward Jews, vandalism of Jewish symbols, antisemitic propaganda used by Hamas” and how discrimination “can potentially turn into something like fascism and eventually lead to something like the Holocaust.” (p.134)

In this context, Özyürek argues that the project establishes a linkage between antisemitism and genocide and provides its participants with tools to recognize and address those touchpoints, but that it also falls short in not highlighting a nexus between racism and fascism, thus missing an opportunity also to address the “ongoing discrimination against Muslims in contemporary Germany.” (p.134)

She furthermore considers programs like *Muslims in Auschwitz* as a tangible corollary of minority youth’s commitment to the societally sanctioned rhetoric around the memorialization of the Holocaust in Germany and thus a conduit towards acceptance into the larger societal contract via the performance of the proper script.

This script “enables them to insert themselves into public German Holocaust discourse as authorized and acceptable members” (p.152); indeed, these successfully performed narratives give the youth a chance to present social performances of their commitment to German history.” (p.153)

Despite embracing this rhetorical role, however, the author maintains that participants gain “only partial and conditional entry into the German social contract” (p.158), due to institutionally codified racism against racialized minorities and habitual accusations of antisemitism and sexism, notwithstanding their involvement in the program.

Chapter 5, against the backdrop of a group of Muslim-background German youth visiting Auschwitz, charts both the participants’ emerging self-identification as Germans as a result of their visit and the transformative impact their positionality in German society has on the future development of Holocaust memorialization in Germany at large.

The author states that, “[w]hereas family trips [by members of the group] to Turkey, Lebanon, or Iraq made them think about the complicated ties they have with these countries as part of the diaspora in Germany, the trip to Poland made them aware that for the first time in their lives they were being perceived not as Turks, Arabs, or Kurds but as Germans.” (p.186)
While these elements of identity formation were external, participants also spoke eloquently about the internal dynamics resulting from their visit. Özyürek describes participants as having the “strongest feelings when they identified with the victims and likened them to their own family members, their own status of religious minorities, and their own feeling of being German but not accepted as German.”

“Engaging with the Holocaust made them reflect on being German, but it did not always lead them to identify with the white German majority position.” (p.201) Combining a metalinguistic awareness of the defining elements of prevailing Holocaust memorialization discourse in Germany thus allows minority youth to gain the social capital to locate themselves within the German social compact (however tenuously), while at the same time transforming what the author calls “German memory theater” through their unique positionality and experiences qua their minority and racialized status.

As Özyürek states, “genuine critical engagement with the Nazi past [by minority youth], when done … seriously, authentically, and faithfully, opens space for talking about German society as a whole and a unique opportunity to legitimately critique it.” (p.208)

Esra Özyürek’s *Subcontractors of Guilt* is a valuable contribution to the literature about Holocaust memorialization in Germany; the role Muslim immigrants in Germany take on in performing its societally sanctioned script; and the impact their actions will have on transforming this very discourse. It is recommended reading for anyone interested in the “state of Holocaust memory in multicultural Germany.” (p.131)
Professor Amanda Podany’s massive survey of ancient Near Eastern history reflects her commitment to interpreting and presenting the information revealed about the ancient history of this region by the cuneiform script etched on clay tablets and other mediums, the oldest examples dating back to 3000 BCE. She has endeavored to shed light on the details of the lives of ordinary people and day-to-day events by inserting microhistories of beer brewers, laundrymen, gardeners, slaves, as well as diviners, scribes, and priests into accounts of the rise and fall of kingdoms, empires, and their rulers. She declares that her book “…has been held together by cuneiform records.” (p. 536)

According to Podany, cuneiform, the oldest form of writing, was first developed in the Sumerian town of Uruk, in southern Mesopotamia, which she considers having been the world’s first urban settlement. Cuneiform tablets served originally to record commercial transactions. Over a 3000-year period cuneiform writing was adapted to a broad spectrum of languages and purposes. It was etched onto clay tablets that when sunbaked or fired acquired a hard permanence that other mediums developed later — papyrus, parchment, and leather — did not have. Very early on, cuneiform inscriptions were chiseled onto stone plaques and statuary.

Writings on various subjects, contracts, receipts, property leases, court records, inventories, hymns, and royal correspondence that have been discovered thanks to the numbers of archaeological expeditions that have been undertaken in the Middle East since the late nineteenth century, all have greatly broadened contemporary knowledge of the region, well beyond what had been traditionally gleaned from Biblical, Greek, and Roman sources.

Understanding of cuneiform was lost during the very early years of the Common Era. The late seventeenth century German explorer, Engelbert Kampfer, named this script that he could not read “cuneiform” owing to the wedge shape of its signs that writers, thousands of years earlier, had pressed into soft clay with a stylus or had chiseled into rock. In the early nineteenth century, Georg Friedrich Grotefend and Henry Rawlinson began to decipher the trilingual Bisitum Inscription, expressed in old Persian, Elamite, and Akkadian, chiseled onto the faces of a cliff in Western Persia, to celebrate the victories of the Persian king, Darius I (522-416 BCE). They accomplished for the understanding of cuneiform what Jean-François Champollion had accomplished in 1822 for the understanding of Egyptian hieroglyphics.
Professor Podany has structured her book so as to blend a number of micro-histories of people and events into the narratives of the rise and fall of a succession of ancient Middle Eastern city states, kingdoms and empires as well as accounts of the actions of the big men and women who were associated with them.

The first words of the title of the book, “Weavers, Scribes, and Kings” are tropes for the varieties of status and occupational categories represented by the individuals who are brought to life throughout the text.

The “weavers” represent working people, the ordinary people, from many diverse backgrounds and occupations, even slaves. The “scribes” represent those persons who could read and write, a relatively small number of elites in largely non-literate societies, men and women who wrote and read for those who needed written records of their transactions but could not generate or read them themselves. Within this group of literati, translators formed a crucial subgroup whose importance grew as evolving Mesopotamian polities increased diplomatic and trading relations not only among themselves but also with societies and polities well beyond the Mesopotamian nucleus — ancient Egypt, for instance.

Finally, the “kings” in the title (including a few queens), many if not most of whom were literate, provide the dynastic and chronological framework of the text that supports a coherent narrative regarding the better-known actors and events of the region.

The second part of the title, “A New History of the Ancient Near East,” reflects Professor Podany’s efforts to present and to utilize the results of the latest excavations that have yielded caches of cuneiform tablets. They are what have enabled her to pen microhistories of the day-to-day activities of ordinary and some lesser-known elite people, bringing them and the societies of which they were a part back to life.

She clearly understands that newly discovered caches of tablets and long-lost inscriptions can overturn previous understandings of the history of the region and of the evolution of its polities and societies. The Bibliography lists 559 references, some of them published very recently. The 53 figures scattered throughout the text, most of them photographs of writings and scenes etched on cuneiform tablets and chiseled on sculptures, portray different periods and people from varying walks of life.

Professor Podany has brought back to life, after some thousands of years, the daily lives of people who would otherwise be forgotten and the more mundane events in the lives of elites. She wants her readers to understand that these people, having lived so long ago, had hopes, fears, ambitions, successes, and failures like us today. And she cautions her readers that “Ancient Near Eastern history is more of a weathered mosaic than a grand narrative.” (p. 3)
Professor Podany has grouped her 541 pages of text into seven principal sections — parts — as she labels them:

1. The Uruk Period (3500-2900 BCE);
2. The Early Dynastic Period (2900-2300 BCE);
3. The Akkadian and Ur III Periods (2300-2000 BCE);
4. The Early Second Millennium (2000-1750 BCE);
5. The Old Babylonian Period (1792-1550 BCE);
6. The Late Bronze Age (1550-1000 BCE); and
7. The First Millennium (1000-323 BCE).

Parts 1 and 2 concern themselves with the development of the Sumerian city-states in the southern part of Mesopotamia, beginning with Uruk, the city-state that “…created the mold for all Mesopotamian cities to come.” (p. 16) By focusing on the construction of the Stone Cone Temple, which began approximately in 3500 BCE, Professor Podany presents the skills of a still non-literate society able to bring construction materials from a relatively distant place, build temple walls using a form of proto-concrete, and waterproof the floors with bitumen, also from far-away.

Archaeological excavations have suggested that Uruk had a head start in the development of centralized rule, initially by priest-kings, art forms, and most particularly, theology, which would characterize Mesopotamia as a whole. She declares that for Mesopotamians “An un-questioning belief in the divine was the only way to account for pretty much every occurrence in one’s world.” (p. 58)

Writing on clay tablets evolved slowly. First came a system of clay bullae (bubbles, spikes) with tokens to keep track of the dispatching and delivery of construction materials, and then came proto- and developed cuneiform. At this point, Professor Podany offers the reader a short account about “Kushim: Controller of the Barley Warehouse.” (pp. 58-49) He is one of the first individuals in history whose name is known today, thanks to clay tablets dated about 3000 BCE. One can infer from these tablets that Sumerians had already become avid beer drinkers and had developed an arithmetical system based on 60.

The 600-year period following 2900 BCE witnessed the full maturity of the Sumerian city-state system and the corresponding development of kingship.

The period gave rise to numbers of clay tablets and other inscriptions, many of which were brought to light by the excavations of the royal tombs of Ur by the archaeologist, Leonard Wooley, in the 1920s.
To illustrate rivalries and cooperation among the Sumerian city-states, Podany describes the establishment of a “brotherhood,” probably a peace pact, between King Enmetena of Lagash and King Lugal-kinesh-dudu of Uruk (c. 2400 BCE). The pattern of peace-making and peace-upholding diplomacy exhibited by the two kings would be replicated many times in the region for almost two millennia.

The 700-year period, 2300-2000 BCE, witnessed the rise and fall of the Akkadian domination of Mesopotamia and a portion of the Fertile Crescent. The two big names associated with this period are those of Sargon (c. 2316-2277) and his grandson, Naram-Sin (2264-2218), the first Mesopotamian ruler to claim divinity for himself. Professor Podany introduces one of Sargon’s daughters who became a major priestess in Ur dedicated to Nanna, the moon god. She had numerous religious and diplomatic duties.

Soon after Naram-Sin’s death, an invasion by Gutians from Western Persia led to rebellions that enabled the various Sumerian city states to regain their autonomy until the rise of Ur-Namma (2112-2095 BCE), an Urukan who took power in Ur, founded the Third Dynasty of Ur, and inaugurated what has been called the Sumerian Renaissance.

Some 350 years before Hammurabi’s time, Ur-Namma ordered the drafting of a set of laws that, as Professor Podany reminds the reader, were not new inventions but compilations of laws that had existed for centuries. To illustrate how the justice system operated at the time, backed as it was by the making of formal oaths in a society permeated by overwhelming belief in the presence and the power of the gods, Podany describes a court case involving a problem of debt between two women, Geme-Suen and the wife of Ur-lugal. (pp. 181-185)

The following 250 years was a transitional period between the decline of the domination of Sumer by Ur; it came after the death of Shulgi, its last strong ruler. Before moving ahead to the rise of Babylon and Assyria, however, Professor Podany describes the evolution of a trade route that linked Larsa with Babylon, Ashur, the town from which the Assyrian Empires arose, and Kanesh in central Anatolia. Kanesh sought tin and textiles; Ashur sought silver and gold. To illustrate the functioning of the trading system, she describes the activities of an Assyrian trading family led by Ashur-ididi, the father, and Ashur-nada the son.

Moving on to the rise of the first Assyrian Empire, Professor Podany describes the career of its founder, Shamshi-Adad, a warrior but also a ruler who could use peaceful means to increase his power and influence. He placed his son, Yasmah-Adad, on the throne of Mari, at that time a subject kingdom, and married him to Beltum, a princess of Qatna, a kingdom extending west from Palmyra in Syria over which he wished to have increased influence.
She details the complicated marriage preparations and ceremony and then describes the work of two female court musicians, Bazatum and Rishya. She also includes a detailed description of the Mari palace that after being destroyed became, nearly four thousand years later, a major site for the recovery of cuneiform tablets.

Professor Podany has devoted much of Part V of her book to King Hammurabi of Babylon, a conqueror but also a reformer who is particularly remembered for his law code, one that like the code of Ur Namma was mostly a compilation of existing laws. Micro-histories detail the tasks of two royal officials, both of whom were literate and reported directly to Hammurabi. One of them, Sin-idinnam, was the appointed governor-general of Larsa. The other, Shamash-hazir, had the very complicated and arduous task of settling claims regarding both privately held and royal lands worked by tenants and by soldiers compensated by the allotment of farmland.

Professor Podany also describes the role and activities of certain unmarried women, *naditums*, from wealthy families who, after taking vows of service to the god, Shamash, lived in designated communities known as *gagnums*. In addition to their religious duties, they became expert businesswomen whose activities contributed greatly to the economies of the towns where such communities were located.

Turning to House F in Nippur, an old Sumerian city then under Babylonian rule, Podany describes the operations of scribal schools that taught the art of writing cuneiform both in the current language, Akkadian, and in Sumerian, a language that although not spoken at this time remained the major literary language. The writings that the apprentice scribes studied included an early version of the Epic of Gilgamesh.

The concluding chapter in Part 5 surveys the slow decline of Babylon following the death of Hammurabi, the strengthening of Hana and its capital, Terqa, in what is now Syria, and the rise of the Hittite Kingdom of Hatti on the Anatolian Plateau in what is now Turkey.

Regarding Hana and Terqa, they being of particular interest to Professor Podany, she has analyzed twelve tablets pertaining to a chief barber, Gimil-Ninkarrak who lived in Terqa, to detail the work of barbers in Mesopotamian society. They trimmed the hair and, in some cases, shaved the heads and faces of elite men. Given that barbers worked with sharp copper blades, they were trusted by and held in high esteem by rulers.

The 550-year period encompassing the Late Bronze Age witnessed the rise of a new power, Mittani; the increasing power of Hatti; Egypt’s expansionist efforts in the Levant; the resurgence of Babylonia under its Kassite dynasty; and, somewhat later, the resurgence of Assyria.
After several devastating wars at the start of the period, the rulers of Egypt, Mittani, Hatti, and Babylonia elaborated a set of peace agreements. These reflected the diplomatic alliances, brotherhoods, dating back to the early history of Sumer, and gave the region a relative degree of peace for around 200 years.

Correspondence among the participants was conducted exclusively with cuneiform on clay tablets mostly in Akkadian, the diplomatic language. The Amarna Tablets uncovered in Akhenaten’s capital in Egypt and tablets found in other locations reveal a great deal about this brotherhood. It was based on shared interests, exchanges of envoys and expensive gifts, and on royal marriages.

One of these marriages was contracted between a daughter of King Burna-Buriash of Babylon and the Egyptian pharaoh, Akhenaten, better known for his marriage with Nefertiti. The Brotherhood survived the collapse of Mittani brought about by the aggressiveness of King Suppiluliuma of Hatti and permitted a restored Assyria under its king, Ashur-Uballit I, then to be recognized as a great king and full member of the Brotherhood.

The development of this diplomatic system and indeed the multilingualism required for kingdoms having different languages to collaborate closely necessitated the development of a corps of translators and interpreters. To illustrate the tasks of translators, Professor Podany has described the work of an Egyptian translator and scribe, Hane, who was fluent both in his own language and its scripts and in Akkadian. For purposes of communication, Egyptian, at that time, was sometimes written with the cuneiform script.

The end of this period was marked by a breakdown of authority in the larger kingdoms for distinct reasons — political, social, and environmental. However, the ruling dynasty of Assyria survived, and in the interregnum, a few small but historically significant kingdoms, Israel among them, arose.

The final part of this book, covering 677 years, is centered on the rise and fall of the three major empires of the period: the Assyrian Empire, the neo-Babylonian Empire, and the Persian Empire. It concludes with the death of the founder of a fourth empire, that of Alexander the Great, in 323 BCE.

The period is well-documented not only by cuneiform records but also by surviving documents in alphabetic scripts derived from Phoenician, particularly writings in Aramaic that became the lingua franca in the Near East after 1000 BCE. The Phoenician alphabet was also the ancestor of the Hebrew, Arabic, Greek, and Latin alphabets.
Around this time, the Israelites began to record their chronicles that would become the Hebrew Bible. But Professor Podany reminds the reader that since these languages were written on perishable materials, most of their day-by-day writings have been lost.

As with the previous periods, Professor Podany weaves accounts of people from various occupational and status categories into her narrative. For instance, she focuses on the artists and sculptors, most of them nameless, who produced the massive and intricate stone and gypsum friezes that adorned the walls of the palaces of the Assyrian kings starting with Ashurnasirpal II (883-859).

Concentrating on the portrayals of the victims of the Assyrian conquests and deportations, she finds that the unnamed sculptors humanized these people. Her descriptions of the friezes offer a contrast to the Assyrian reputation for brutality as does what she has to say about the bookishness of both King Ashurbanipal and his wife. Ashurbanipal was proud of the library housed in his palace at Nineveh. It was destroyed in 612 BCE but when excavated in the mid-nineteenth century CE, it yielded a very large number of clay tablets including what is believed to be the latest and most complete version of the Epic of Gilgamesh.

After the Medes and the Babylonians led by King Nabopolassar of Babylon destroyed the Assyrian Empire, his son, Nebuchadnezzar II (604-562) presided over what would be a golden age in Babylon.

Although he greatly embellished the city, he probably did not order the construction of the Hanging Gardens, a project traditionally attributed to him, or the writing instructing their building has never been found. Professor Podany suggests that Sennacherib (705-681), a previous king of Assyria may have ordered the construction of something similar in Nineveh, the capital that he established. And a Babylonian ration list suggests that King Jehoiakim of Judah was well cared for in captivity in Babylon.

The destruction of Assyria (612-609) and the rise of Babylon is partly evoked through the account, possibly an autobiography or a biography, of the life of Adad-guppi, a priestess from Harran, an Assyrian sacred city, who dedicated her life to the goddess Sin (the Moon God). Born in 649 BCE, she lived for 102 years and was taken to Babylon with her son, Nabu-na’id, when Harran fell to the Medes.

Through a series of fortuitous circumstances arising from the instability in Babylon that followed the death of Nebuchadnezzar, Nabu-na’id, named Nabonidus by the Greeks, became the ruler of Babylon. He would be dethroned by Cyrus of Persia in 539 BCE.

For this period too, Professor Podany introduces micro-historical accounts about ordinary people typical of the era.
After explaining that persons of means in Babylon and elsewhere in Mesopotamia had their laundry cleaned professionally, she introduces Ina-teshi-etir, a professional laundryman (p. 500). She details the many professional activities of Bel-uballit, a prosperous oil presser who was also a beer brewer and a temple official. And she describes the life and the tasks of Ishunnatu, a female slave who became a successful innkeeper while remaining enslaved.

Professor Podany brings her survey to a close by focusing once again on Uruk, now under Persian overrule, where the Sumerian scribal tradition still survived. She introduces Rimut-Anu, a scribe, exorcist (ashipu), and re-copier of old texts written in the Emesal dialect of Sumerian, a language that had been dead for many centuries. He and others like him dedicated themselves to keeping cuneiform, clay tablets, the old religion, and the old written languages alive.

In writing the Preface to this book, Professor Podany noted that people today know much more about certain “other ancient cultures that shared the same general region of the world — Egypt, Israel, Greece, and Rome” (p. 4) than they do about the cultures and histories of the peoples, states, and cultures that she has covered.

Her hope is that her efforts will serve to reduce the disparity. She has certainly demonstrated what archaeological discoveries and the careful collection and decipherment of the writings and inscriptions appearing on the 500,000 or so clay tablets and statuary that have so-far been unearthed can tell us about ancient Near Eastern civilizations.

But Professor Podany has clearly shied away from offering more than a few comparisons of biblical accounts with what is revealed by cuneiform writings. One would have appreciated, for instance, some comment about a legend that arose about Sargon of Akkad, many years after his death, that his mother, a priestess, had set him afloat in a Mesopotamian river in a reed basket and that he was rescued and raised by a “drawer of water” (p. 145). Is there a link between this legend and the Biblical account of the rescue of Moses from a basket placed in the bushes beside the Nile?
Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990

Reviewed by Joseph Drew

According to the famous French philosopher and revolutionary, the Marquis de Condorcet, we can look back to history and discern therein a number of phases, stages through which the human mind evolves. The number of these is fixed as is the succession of them; progress and human perfectibility always dominate the movement. The progress of the human mind, Condorcet wrote in the *Tableau des Progrès Historiques de l’Ésprit Humain*, is reflected invariably in the successive stages of society. We move upward and onward, ineluctably.

From that point of view, Jewish civilization can be viewed as passing through a series of stages, most of them (but not all) upward moving, toward rationality and equality, away from idolatry. These stages of Jewish life and their corresponding religious manifestations have arisen from the very beginning. They have adjusted for external affairs and domination by invaders and conquerors, especially ancient civilizations, with many impacts reflected internally in the religion. So, the religion has evolved, through stages, never remaining static. It has incorporated, *mutatis mutandis*, imports from other faiths and cultures.

In his book *The Hebrew Goddess* (Third Enlarged Edition), the anthropologist and biblical scholar Rafael Patai has revealed how the tableaux of Jewish history are reflected in various scholarly and popular religious emphases. When the Jewish people arrived in Canaan, they found that gods and goddesses were ubiquitous, widely worshipped. The Hebrews, however, brought with them the first five books of Moses, the Torah, and with it, the fundamental assertion that God is one: monotheism. These works reported how God had appeared to Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses.

Confronting this Hebrew library, however, was the presence in Canaan of many popular and, from today’s perspective, somewhat primitive religious trends, most coming from nearby lands and cultures. Since the Jewish religion had never had a monolithic structure, as opposed, for example, to Roman Catholicism, there was no body for worshippers to secede from if some Jews decided to adore one of these newfound deities; thus, says Patai, from early on there were divergent faith variants.

However, and as opposed to what we might think, the exclusive nature of monotheism was introduced to the Jewish people continuously but slowly. It became the *sine qua non* of the religion as a result of the preaching of the Prophets — not, the author argues, from the much earlier encounter at Mount Sinai. It was the Prophets who turned God’s voice into a Hebrew demand for justice and mercy.
Unlike the deities of neighbors, God to the Jews grew to be depicted, and remains today, as pure spirit, a-physical, omnipresent. Even though referred to in the Hebrew language as a masculine noun, he has no body, no physical attributes, no sexual traits, and is neither male nor female. As the later Talmud maintains, God sees but cannot be seen.

In addition, God is more central to Judaism than is ritual observance, much more so than is the case in most other religions. The religion therefore calls for constant study of holy texts, for scholarship. From the period of the destruction of the Temple, and from the Babylonian exile onward, the religion evolved into an intellectual and moral one. Literacy became a central demand, as from Judea and Israel and then Babylon poured forth work after work based on the fundamental principles of Jewish monotheism. This was because, after the fall of the Temple, God was detached from perceived residency in the Temple; he was now omnipresent, accessible wherever the Torah was read and studied. So, all Jews increasingly were called upon to read, and study, the many holy texts.

Shakespeare wrote: He that hath never fed of the dainties that are bred in a book, he hath not eaten paper, as it were, he hath not drunk ink; his intellect is not replenished; he is only an animal, only sensible in the duller parts.” Or, as Lord Macaulay said, “I would rather be a poor man in a garret with books than a king who did not love reading.” And, as William Wordsworth wrote, “books are a substantial world wherein solid happiness can grow.” But the British acquaintance with books began with Beowulf, written down in about 1000 CE. If a great British civilization arose from the library beginning with Beowulf, it was nonetheless 2000 years behind the times for Judeans.

As the Jewish people were becoming increasingly literate post-exile, how, then, could this monotheistic faith handle the challenges which had been presented by various gods and goddesses encountered by the Jewish people on all sides during their various sojourns?

The answer is: editing. The rabbis and scribes after the exile to Babylon, as editors, increasingly excised much in order to keep the Biblical God ineffable, unrivaled, strictly spirit, sole. With the Temple destroyed, all idolatry was to cease. This was unusual and not easy, especially given the widespread and long-running presence of gods and goddesses in neighboring cultures. After all, the Roman god Jupiter had his origins in the Greek Zeus Pater, who himself is derived from the Sanskrit Dways Pitar; we can trace the Virgin Mary back as far as predecessor female deities such as the Greek Athena. Archeology seems to show us today that the old Canaanite gods of others had been widely worshipped by the Hebrews until the end of the Monarchy and the destruction of the Temple, argues Patai.
Commoners and those who were illiterate and had followed the practices of neighbors were now instructed to give up such worship, to become completely monotheistic.

Some remaining elements nonetheless survived. For example, Yahweh, after the exodus from Egypt, had taken on some aspects of the male Canaanite gods. Importantly, especially for this book, there also had been many female deities encountered in the ancient world. What happened to them? The answer is that these early figures influenced both popular thought and, in some cases, were only very gradually weaned away from organized Judaism, taking centuries to disappear.

The book begins with a discussion of the major female divinities found in ancient days in the Near East, including among the Israelites. These include the Goddess Asherah, then Astarte-Anath, then the Cherubim, then the Shekhina, then the Matronit, then Lilith, then the Sabbath. Goddesses had been in fact ubiquitous in human history, with the evidence going back to such statues as that of the Venus of Willendorf and to myths in which goddesses of almost every culture played a large role.

Asherah was recognized as an object of worship by many Jewish people for roughly six centuries. She and others lasted until the destruction of the Temple in 586 B.C.E. Objects such as statuettes representing these goddesses were brought to public display when foreign princesses (married for alliance purposes) carried them into their new homes. The author reports that of the 370 years that Solomon’s Temple stood in Jerusalem, for at least 236 years the representation of Asherah was likely in the Temple. She was generally seen as the consort of Yahweh. In addition, the goddess Astarte (Anath) was worshipped by commoners with the ceremonial presentation of cakes, perhaps, suggests the author, a precursor of the eating of the wafer in Holy Communion activities of many Christian denominations.

The cherubim — the word “cherub” comes from the Akkadian language — constituted a major exception to aniconic official Judaism, as they were male and female “graven images.” It is thought that they were representatives of the male and female aspects of God. In any event, these cherubs apparently were part of the Temple ritual, depicted in the Temple, until at least 70 CE. Perhaps they were supposed to be symbols of reason, or intermediaries between humanity and God, but they were occasionally seen in ceremonies as being locked in sexual embrace, says the author.

Unsurprisingly, Josephus, the military leader who lost a major battle against the Romans and then became a great writer of Jewish history and faith, defending his people to the Romans and others, did not want to report on these dubious depictions actually being in the Temple.

Much of the book addresses the female term “Shekhina.” This was often used throughout early and Medieval Jewish history to mean the presence of God.
Since God is seen by Jewish authors as beyond all sense perception, not present as a person, it is possible that the idea of the Shekhina arose, representing wisdom, as the more tangible, approachable wife of God, or his female side.

The term Shekhina, not found in the Bible, derives from a female noun meaning the act of dwelling. To me, I think it was used as the term “Holy Ghost” is often employed in Christianity. Given the characteristics this “presence” represents, perhaps we could say that Shekhina is to God as polytheism is to monotheism.

Over time, the Shekhina changed for many, especially common people, from a “presence” to a “substance.” It became seen as the female, personified presence of God. Where the people of Israel dwelled, the Shekhina was there with them. By the third century of the common era, the idea of the Shekhina as a discrete divine entity separate from God grew in popularity. There were obvious parallels between the Shekhina and goddesses of the ancient Near East, present everywhere. To this day it is startling to find amulets for good luck or life goals of diverse types on sale in Israeli shops, typically engraved with various mysterious symbols.

Moving on, the author also discusses the rise of the Kabbala, a term for the esoteric teaching of Judaism and for Jewish mysticism which arose as a major force in the 12th century (on foundations laid in the 7th and 8th centuries) and which lasted for centuries. There are elements common to Kabbalah and both Greek and Christian mysticism, and even historical links between them, notes the Encyclopedia Judaica. Over the centuries its greatest hold has been with the Hasidic movement and with the various Sephardic communities. The most significant work of this movement was the Zohar, written in 1286 by Moses de Leon in Castile, Spain.

Patai indicates that medieval Jewish religious development exposes the lack of a dividing line between mystical symbolism and mythical narrative. Sometimes, old polytheistic myths are transformed into mystical theological ideas and thereby fitted into the framework of the narrower, more rigidly monotheistic religion.

Jewish scholars of the Kabbala and Jewish mysticism typically do not want to draw parallels with polytheistic paganism. Judaism is monotheistic, and there are seen to be two mutually incompatible realms: to most of these scholars, mythological polytheism has been seen as lower than the supposedly a-mythological Jewish monotheism, the latter therefore a higher manifestation of the human religious spirit. But the author says that he opposes this view.

Patai explains the Kabbalistic tetrad (myths of the four divinities, mostly coming from Egyptian and Mesopotamian religions) and the significant role of the feminine element in Kabbalistic thinking.
He discusses the Matronit — relatively illiterate Jews adored her — and similarities between her and other Near East goddesses such as Ianna, Ishtar, Anat, and Anahita. All were seen to possess particular qualities: chastity, promiscuity, motherliness, and bloodthirstiness.

There are many parallels between the depictions of the Virgin Mary of the Christians and the Matronit of the Jews. He notes that the Matronit, like the Virgin Mary, was held by believers to have children and yet was still a virgin. Like other female deities, including the Matronit, the Virgin Mary was a war goddess; her portrait is found on Christian shields. And they were closely related to God; thus, St. Bonaventure called Mary “the Spouse of the Eternal Father.”

Patai discusses parallels between Hinduism and Judaism in terms of the feminine aspects of deity; the Goddess Kali is one very similar to the Matronit. Note that the Song of Songs begins, “I am black and beautiful.”

Certain prayers and practices in the Kabbala, Hasidism, and other mystical tendencies related to the anthropomorphization of God into two parts — God and his Shekhina. There also arose in medieval times the figure of the “maggid,” a sayer or teller of revelations, who indulged in mysteries, with angels, heavenly forces, those who reported on dreams. Can we see a logical connection between the prevalence of such mysteries and the lack of power in the real world available to the Jews?

Patai reviews the role of Lilith, originally a female deity of Sumer in the third millennium BCE. She evolved into an evil she-devil but eventually corralled a position as a queen consort of God. She was depicted by followers as an evil female, the rival of the Shekhina.

Worshipped by the Jews of Ethiopia was the Sabbath, a virgin, a bride, a queen, and a goddess. Unlike the others Patai reviews, this female divinity was not foreign in origin. The commandment to honor the Sabbath goes back to the Ten Commandments, and those who honor the Sabbath are as if they served God, according to Commandments of the Sabbath, a Jewish book written in Ge’ez.

The framework of the book is the story of Creation, and it deals with the glory of the Sabbath. Both male and female aspects are found in the Sabbath and the Zohar sets her up as the rival of Lilith. Most Jewish services to this day include a song honoring the Sabbath, welcoming her metaphorically as a bride.

Patai says that the religion of the Jews was never without at least a hint of the feminine in its God concept. He finds that the female element has subsided in recent times and doesn’t play a role in Reform, Conservative or non-Hasidic Orthodox religious culture.
However, among the Sephardim, the Oriental Jews, and the Hasidic Ashkenazi group, the concept of the Shekhina still exists.

Moreover, great real Jewish women have been constantly praised throughout Jewish history. My own heroine is Hannah Senesh, a poet who left a safe life on a kibbutz to become a parachutist, trying to save Hungarian Jewry from the Holocaust. She was executed for her bravery by the Nazis, just before Budapest was liberated.

Perhaps the most fascinating part of the book appears at the end, when Patai discusses an unearthed fortress of Dura Europos (near the Iraq/Syria border today). Preserved in sand and earth since its destruction in 256 CE, it contains a synagogue built in 245 CE. A mural depicts a naked woman drawing a divine child, Moses, from the river; she appears to be the Persian Goddess Anahita. The author explains that at that time certain popular features were used in painting.

So, he shows us, the nude goddess turns out to be the Shekhina, the supposed divine wife of Moses who followed him from cradle to grave. A miniature temple carried out of the river by Moses is the Tabernacle, the Sanctuary where the divine female was present.

Overall, this probing book shows that monotheistic religions, like all others, draw from the environment in which the worshippers reside. Judaism evolved from a religion centered on a powerful God not unlike others in the Middle East into a universalistic faith no longer tethered to a Temple where the deity had been thought to reside. It is based on tenets laid down in a book, the Holy Scriptures. Following the Babylonian Exile, the religion increasingly emphasized analysis and discussion, charity, scholarship, human rights and upright behavior, under the rule of law. Nonetheless, ideas and images of neighboring civilizations over the millennia were respected and, on some occasions, transmuted and incorporated in popular practice, always keeping monotheism as the supreme dominating element, nonetheless.
An Atlas of the Tibetan Plateau is a masterful melding of science and art created by British architect and cartographer Michael Farmer. Based on extensive contemporary data painstakingly woven from satellite imagery, the intrepid and apparently indefatigable Farmer has, over decades, produced a unique and indispensable reference work.

Farmer’s Atlas offers a panoramic garuda’s eye view of the vast Tibetan plateau—“the largest and highest plateau in the world,” an inhospitable area inhabited by humans for 40,000-plus years, birthplace of an ancient and unique civilization that has long magnetized the curiosity of outsiders. Detailed understanding of the characteristic geography of this high-altitude region is available for the very first time with the potential to enlighten and inspire a wide readership.

Indeed, the socio-political and scientific challenges that can be inferred from the information collected here affect us all. Farmer’s Atlas belongs in the hands of cartographers, bibliophiles, librarians, comparative civilizationists. It is for policy wonks, international relations gurus, boundary-negotiating diplomats, anthropologists, archaeologists, Tibetologists, Sinologists, revisionists and visionaries, climate change scientists, students, teachers, adventurous curmudgeons, and the cadre of tourists seeking the exotic who find themselves drawn to the Tibetan area newly renamed “Shangri-la.”

An Atlas of the Tibetan Plateau is a sustainably produced object that is both beautiful and beautifully made. It was produced as one of the remarkable series called Brill’s Tibetan Studies Library, edited by Henk Blezer, Alex McKay and Charles Ramble. At 5.32 pounds and 393 pages, it is a weighty tome that carries moral weight, as well. Almost impossible to put down, this atlas turns out to be, well, an actual page-turner, thus achieving a wondrous star-quality this reviewer had not previously associated with atlas-reading. Yes, it’s true; here am I, waxing lyrical about an atlas. Shamelessly singing its praises, I mean to praise not only what Farmer has done, but how he has done it.

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1 A garuda is a powerful bird-like creature based in Buddhist and Hindu mythology.
2 Perhaps an example of the Sinicization of branding and marketing?
An atlas, it is said, is just a collection of maps. However, the 120-full color maps featured here are not just any old maps: they’ve been drawn according to a graphical aesthetic that operates in the service of clarity.

The maps are as eloquent as they are elegant: a single glance suffices to reveal multiple levels of meaning. Each graphic element — color, shape, line — is set down in perfect balance, not flooding the reader with too much information, nor too little, but gracefully treading the middle way.

**Map 1:** The key depicts an overview of the various politically defined areas on and bordering the Tibetan plateau. This map outlines the prefectures of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) in dark violet, within which each prefecture is a distinctively colored area: Ngari (violet), Xigaze (light blue), Nagqu (pink), Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (light green), Haixi Mongol Tibetan Prefecture (light beige), Golog Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (lighter green), and so on, with additional colors.

The plateau areas are shown surrounded by other polities in light grey: CCP China provinces (*Yunnan* and *Sichuan*), independent border countries (Myanmar, India, Bhutan, Nepal), with disputed border areas shown as well.

The first of 108 main maps, it presents a rendition of the whole Tibetan plateau with its constituent parts and is overlaid by a series of rectangles running north to south and then east to west. Each rectangular area outlines and numbers in scarlet a close-up map that will follow. Within many rectangles are very small rectangles, bordered in black. These denote the location and numeration of maps covering the outlined details in even finer detail. These small sub-area map squares are numbered in scarlet, making it easy to find the area you want, note its map number, note the map number of the detailed map, then turn to each one further on in the atlas, an easy and logical process. There is a consistent and generous overlap from one map to the next, which creates a smooth, natural join that makes the visual flow seem seamless.

Turning to the main maps themselves, the topography of each section forms the background of each map. These subtle sepia/white graphics show clearly very specific geographic contours known from extensive satellite imagery. This formidable yet unobtrusive background creates there a visual space to hold a host of additional information as to borders, hydrologic features, geology, rail and roads, urban areas, and a myriad of religious structures characteristic of Tibetan civilization. Miraculously, the two fact-filled layers manage not to compete for readers’ attention but enhance one another.
The next page shows the legend, presenting icons denoting specific features. Borders have four icons: lines marking national borders, province borders, county borders, and disputed territory. As to roads, there are nine marked features, eight in pairs: expressways and expressway tunnels, highways and highway tunnels, secondary roads and secondary road tunnels, tertiary roads and tunnels.

Last is a line of brown dashes denoting “tracks.” There are three icons for rail lines; one icon marks airports. There are icons to denote hydrologic features: fresh lakes, salt lakes, salt pans, reservoirs, glaciers, rivers, visible streams, and intermittent streams. Topography icons include black triangles for high peaks and inverted parentheses to mark high mountain passes.

There are six icons for settlements according to size, from national capitals to villages. There are sixteen different icons denoting religious centers, according to sect, and 3 denoting buildings (stupas, ruins, and fortresses). Names are written in simple Tibetan phonetic spelling where possible, followed up by names written in Han Pinyin or Zang Pinyin.

Everything comes together in Map 2, page 33. Against the sepia-beige contours of rugged mountains are black triangles marking the location and altitude of high peaks such as Liushu Shan (7,167 m.). A curved outline colored blue-grey stands for a salt lake called Kotra Tso (4,998 m.).

In darker blue, we can see to the south a freshwater lake called Tsokar Tso (5,115 m.). In this region, the light blue coloration marks the location of very many glaciers and a number of border areas claimed by both India and China. As to roads, in this desolate area there are few: one is G219, a highway marked in burnt orange that slashes through the frigid wilderness on a north/south axis. Three tracks are marked in brown; all of them run along an east-west axis.

In this whole mapped region, in all that is encompassed by Map 2, there is a township, Gyipug, nestled between two salt lakes, virtually attached to the highway. The only other township, Dongru (Dongruxiang), is next to a track, more like a path than a road. No monasteries, no ruins, no chortens. No salt pans here, no airports, no tunnels. Peaks, lakes, and glaciers.

Fast-forward past 108 such maps; arrive at two maps on facing pages, denoting the population density across the plateau. One map shows the sparsely settled west; the next shows an increasing density the closer one gets to CCP China proper. Maps 111 and 112 show the density of religious locations, gompas spread across the west to the east. Maps 113 and 114 show the distribution of nine lineages of Tibetan Buddhist culture as they appear from west to east.
Maps 115 and 116 show the distribution of climatic features from west to east, according to the Kloppen Classification. Maps 117 through 120 present satellite views of the whole Tibetan plateau, in all its complexity.

A detailed index of place names and physical features follows, given in Tibetan transliteration, in Tibetan u-chen script as well as in Zang Pinyin, Mandarin phonetics, Hanzi and Han Pinyin.

This section of the atlas is arguably the most crucial of all. It helps to keep names and religious traditions alive, resisting the civilizational erasure that continues to threaten Tibetan civilization and culture — through dilution, through neglect, through the swollen oblivious ego of a polity currently in power, through zero-sum racism, through overt genocide and covert Disneyfication, not to mention the naturally debilitating effect of time and protracted thralldom on memory. And meaning.

There is more, much more in this excellent atlas. Pick it up. Take a look. See what has happened.

Ask yourself, why are there so many airports built and planned at such very high altitudes? Why do some of those walled monasteries look from the air not like gompas but prisons? Why did a peaceful and flourishing community of thousands of meditation practitioners pose such a threat to the CCP that the party had no choice but to make it (poof!) disappear? Why does CCP China see itself “a model for social governance?” Why does Xi Jinping wish to have his empire strike back and “promote the Sinicization of Tibetan Buddhism”?

What does that even mean? — Never mind.

*An Atlas of the Tibetan Plateau* by Michael Farmer is a spectacular achievement, deserving of our attention, appreciation, and grateful support.
Acceptance
This is a peer-reviewed and peer-edited journal, issued twice per year: a spring volume and a fall volume. A manuscript will be accepted for publication only after it has been reviewed by our credentialed Peer Review Committee. Alternatively, if a paper is accepted by the Program Committee for delivery at the Annual Meeting of the International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations, it will qualify as peer-reviewed, and acceptable, ab initio, assuming that it meets all other quality standards of the journal and has not been published previously elsewhere. Please note that the Comparative Civilizations Review holds the right to reject any submission with, or without, explanation. The manuscript becomes the property of the CCR once it is accepted by the journal for publication.

Submission
Manuscripts must be written in English. Submit only ONE COMPLETE DOCUMENT—i.e., no attachments and no subsequent submissions, instructions, or corrections. Send your paper to Managing Editor Peter Hecht (peter.hecht@iscsc.org). If you belatedly discover an egregious error or omission in your submission, email Editor-in Chief Joseph Drew (joseph.drew@iscsc.org) and Managing Editor Peter Hecht (peter.hecht@iscsc.org). We will attempt to address your concerns, provided our printing schedule permits intervention. Once a manuscript is accepted, alterations are at the discretion of the Review staff.

Print Schedule
The reviewing and editing process normally takes three to six months. Typically, we put the spring volume together in January or February and the fall volume together in July or August.

Format – Document
Submit your manuscript, including tables, figures, and appendices, as a single Microsoft Word file. Page size should be 8.5 x 11 inches. All margins (left, right, top and bottom) should be 1-inch, including placement of your tables, graphs and illustrations. Single space your text. Use a single column layout with both left and right margins justified. Main body text font: 12 pt. Times New Roman. Use high-resolution images when possible. Maximum length of the article should be thirty pages including endnotes, bibliography, etc.

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Do NOT indent paragraphs. A line space should precede and follow each paragraph. Subheads are in bold, flush left, separated by a line space above and below. Long quotations should be placed in a separate paragraph with a .5-inch left indent, no quotation marks, and should be preceded and followed by one-line spaces.

Except for common non-standard English terminology, the use of non-standard English terms should be avoided. Authors should use proper, standard English grammar. Suggested guides include The Elements of Style by William Strunk, Jr. and E. B. White, and The Chicago Manual of Style, University of Chicago Press.

Underlining and bold-face type in the text are discouraged. Whenever possible use italics to indicate text that you wish to emphasize. Use italics for book titles, movie titles, and for foreign terms. Using colored text is prohibited. However, we encourage authors to take advantage of the ability to use color in the production of graphs, maps, and so forth.

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In October 1961, in Salzburg, Austria, an extraordinary group of scholars gathered to create the International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations. Among the 26 founding members from Austria, Germany, France, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Spain, Italy, England, Russia, the United States, China and Japan were such luminaries as Pitirim Sorokin and Arnold Toynbee.

For six days, the participants debated such topics as the definition of “civilization,” problems in the analysis of complex cultures, civilizational encounters in the past, the Orient versus the Occident, problems of universal history, theories of historiography, and the role of the “human sciences” in “globalization.” The meeting was funded by the Austrian government, in cooperation with UNESCO, and received considerable press coverage. Sorokin was elected the Society’s first president.

After several meetings in Europe, the advancing age of its founding members and the declining health of then president, Othmar F. Anderle, were important factors in the decision to transfer the Society to the United States.

Between 1968 and 1970 Roger Williams Wescott of Drew University facilitated that transition. In 1971, the first annual meeting of the ISCSC (US) was held in Philadelphia. Important participants in that meeting and in the Society’s activities during the next years included Benjamin Nelson (the Society’s first American president), Roger Wescott, Vytautas Kavolis, Matthew Melko, David Wilkinson, Rushton Coulborn and C.P. Wolf.

The presidents of the ISCSC are, in order: In Europe, Pitirim Sorokin and Othmar Anderle; in the United States, Benjamin Nelson, Vytautas Kavolis, Matthew Melko, Michael Palencia-Roth, Roger Wescott, Shuntaro Ito (from Japan), Wayne Bledsoe, Lee Daniel Snyder, Andrew Targowski, David Rosner, Toby Huff, and current president Lynn Rhodes. To date, the Society has held annual meetings, most of them in the United States but also in Salzburg, Austria; Santo Domingo, The Dominican Republic; Dublin, Ireland; Chiba, Japan; Frenchman’s Cove, Jamaica; St. Petersburg, Russia; Paris, France; New Brunswick, Canada; Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Suzhou, China; Bucharest, Romania; and Warsaw, Poland.

More than 30 countries are represented in the Society’s membership. Its intellectual dynamism and vibrancy over the years have been maintained and enhanced through its annual meetings, its publications, and the participation of such scholars as Talcott Parsons, Hayden White, Immanuel Wallerstein, Gordon Hewes, André Gunder Frank, Marshall Sahlins, Lynn White Jr., and Jeremy Sabloff.

The Society is committed to the idea that complex civilizational problems can best be approached through multidisciplinary analyses and debate by scholars from a variety of fields. *The Comparative Civilizations Review*, which welcomes submissions from the Society’s members as well as other scholars, has been published continually since its inaugural issue in 1979.

Prof. Michael Palencia-Roth
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