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Civiliations Galore

ROGER WILLIAMS WESCOTT

The title that I have chosen for this essay sounds not only frivolous but prejudicial. It suggests that Sorokin's insistence on the oneness of civilization can be summarily disregarded in favor of Toynbee's preference for plurality.\(^1\) In fact, however, no such disregard is intended. Sorokin's monism and Toynbee's pluralism are, I think, equally valid assessments of civilization and its manifestations. But they are valid, I would say, at different taxonomic levels.

To clarify this contention, I should state my belief that all of the non-physical sciences can, in their efforts at classification, profit from the example set by the two major life-sciences: botany and zoology. These biological disciplines have created detailed and exhaustive classificatory hierarchies, in which each taxonomic category subsumes all the categories beneath it and is in turn subsumed by all those above it.

The non-biological discipline which has most closely approximated biosystematics in precision and in the number of its taxonomic levels is probably linguistics, whose 18th century phylogenetic paradigm is at least as old as that of biology. The only way in which linguistics has fallen behind biology is in its failure to develop a consensual nomenclature for the levels in its classifications.\(^2\) Because of the absence of a standard classificatory nomenclature in linguistics, it seems reasonable to me to make use of the hierarchical terms already standardized in biology. If we do so when classifying the English language, for example, we produce a table such as the one below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>level</th>
<th>category</th>
<th>example</th>
<th>excluded equivalent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>class</td>
<td>speech</td>
<td>sign-language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>order</td>
<td>Nostratic(^3)</td>
<td>Khoisan(^4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>family</td>
<td>Indo-European</td>
<td>Semitic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>genus</td>
<td>Germanic</td>
<td>Italic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) Wescott: Civilizations Galore
\(^2\) Published by BYU ScholarsArchive, 1998
The cultural studies, such as ethnology and sociology, lag taxonomically even further behind biology than does linguistics. This is equally true whether it is literate or preliterate culture that is being considered. With regard to literate cultures — here called civilizations — we should concede that Toynbee does not treat his 43 civilizations as typologically homogeneous. He distinguishes, for example, between “abortive” and “arrested” civilizations, and he distinguishes both of these from full-fledged civilizations. The distinction between an abortive and a full-fledged civilization, however, is not comparable to the distinction between a species and a genus. It is comparable, rather, to the distinction between an extinct species and an extant species.

In an earlier publication, I applied the preceding schema to the literate culture of the city of Florence, Italy, as below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>level</th>
<th>category</th>
<th>example</th>
<th>excluded equivalent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>class</td>
<td>civilization</td>
<td>preliteracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>order</td>
<td>Western</td>
<td>Indic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>family</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>genus</td>
<td>Tuscan</td>
<td>Venetian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>species</td>
<td>Florentine</td>
<td>Pisan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In an effort to make these five levels more geographic in reference, I then characterized them as follows:

1. global
2. continental
3. national
4. provincial
5. local

Toynbee, it should be admitted, cited civilizations that fit into all four of the non-global categories listed above. His Chinese civilization is (sub)continental in scope; his Syrian civilization, national; his Chibchan civilization, provincial; and his Spartan civilization, local. Unfortunately, however, his own classification fails to hierarchicalize these categories. It is rather as though
a zoologist, in characterizing the mammalian status of human beings, were to equate the order primates, the family hominidae, the genus homo, and the species sapiens. Such a procedure would make people taxonomically indistinguishable from apes, monkeys, and even lemurs!

Let us return, however, to the topic implied by the title of this essay. To speak of "civilizations galore" is to suggest that there are, or at least may be, a huge number of civilizations on earth. In view of the fact that most enumerators of civilization have counted only eight to twelve distinct civilizations, such postulated multiplicity seems, at first blush, to be extravagant. But it seems so only because all of these enumerators, from Spengler to Quigley, have been operating exclusively on the second of the five levels above — that is, on the ordinal or continental level. (Sorokin, of course, operated exclusively on the first of those levels — that is, the classical or global level.) Most of the plausible examples of civilizations occupying the third, fourth, and fifth levels have been simply ignored. When not ignored, such likely civilizations have been implausibly squeezed into the second level, as noted earlier in the case of Toynbee's rather bloated classification.

Biologists, to the best of my knowledge, never attempt to enumerate the taxa of organisms on earth without specifying the level of enumeration. When asked to enumerate biotic kingdoms, all include a minimum of two (plants and animals); most add two more (protists and fungi), to make four; and a few add two others (viruses and procaryotes) for a total of six. When asked to enumerate phyla, they list between 20 and 40; classes, around 100. Orders, families, and genera are numbered in the thousands and species in the millions.

These biologists who recognize a level above that of the kingdom call it the biospheric level. And, since there is, almost by definition, only one biosphere, this is the taxonomic level at which plurality yields to unity. The civil equivalent of the biospheric level is what, above, I called the global level. And, since there is, terrestrially speaking, only one globe, here too Toynbeean plurality yields to Sorokinian unity: world civilization is unique.

At the opposite end of the taxonomic scale, however, civilization must have a more-than-Toynbeean plurality. As I assess
civilization, the smallest unit that can have its distinctive attributes, including clearly differentiated religious, political, and commercial facilities, is the city. Demographers and other may disagree about the minimal population required for urban status, which might be as low as 1,000 or as high as 100,000. Nonetheless, it seems clear that, at this minimal local level, the cultural taxonomist is indeed confronted with civilizations galore!

The Ontology of Civilization

It may seem that, in drawing up a taxonomic hierarchy of civilizations before specifying the "substance" of civilization, we are putting the cart before the horse. But our scientific pace-setters, the biologists, have done precisely the same thing. While their general classificatory framework is almost universally agreed on, they have not yet agreed on what a species is. Ethologists tend to define a species as an intrafertile but extrasterile group — that is, as a population whose members interbreed with each other but not with outsiders. Yet not all definitions are so operational. Comparative anatomists prefer to describe species morphologically, in terms of skeletal or other structural characteristics. Geneticists, on the other hand, are suspicious of organ resemblances, which may result from evolutionary convergence. Their criterial preference is for blood-proteins and other less visible traits, which may be biochemically assayed with great precision.

Those who study civilizations comparatively are no less divergent in terms of the criteria that they employ, some of which are artifactual, some stylistic, and some vaguely attitudinal. Artifactual, we might describe a civilization as a culture that builds cities (as opposed to hunting camps); stylistically, as a culture that produces fine art (which is without immediate practical utility, and hence distinct from crafts); and attitudinally, as a culture that philosophizes (that is, theorizes systematically rather than simply repeating or elaborating traditional narratives).

But, whether we adopt one, two, or all of these criteria, it remains a question whether civilizations as such exist apart from the investigations of those who refer to their field of study as "comparative civilization." In terms used by linguistic theorists, are civilizations examples of "God's truth" or of "hocus-pocus?" That is, are they objective entities or merely analytic conve-
nences? In the field of linguistics this question is most often posed with regard to phonemes, or distinctive speech-sounds. In the field of biology, it is most often posed with regard to species, or reproductive groups. In the first case, one can argue that speakers behave as though phonemes were real; and, in the second, that animals behave as though species were real. In neither case, however, are behavioral similes of this sort conclusive.

There are two characteristics of cultures that ethnologists tend to look for when seeking to establish the identities of individual cultures. The first of these is integration, or their tendency not only to cohere but to exhibit interpenetration of their parts, such that individual behavior, family life, and communal activity show clear reciprocal influence on one another, as do the means by which their members feed, clothe, and shelter themselves. The second is delineability, or the tendency of each culture to exhibit boundaries, both physical and stylistic, which set it apart from other cultures.

For the most part, ethnologists have little difficulty establishing identities for the cultures of hunting and gathering peoples. One reason for this is that foraging societies are usually so small that all their members know one another and have a direct influence on each other. Another reason is that foragers need uninhabited surroundings as sources of forage. These unpopulated zones serve as readily perceived intercultural boundaries.

At the level of pre-urban farming, communities, though less eusynoptic, are still manageably small. And unoccupied areas between villages, while often narrow, remain discriminable.

When cultures urbanize, however, interpersonal acquaintanceships are increasingly restricted to localities within or between cities. And, urbanized cultures — which we here call civilizations — have little if any uninhabited territory between themselves and neighboring civilizations. Often, in fact, civilizations overlap one another. Under such circumstances, how can investigators persuasively identify the ethos, or core values, of any individual civilization? And how can they draw cultural boundaries between civilizations without being arbitrary?

To the first of these questions, little progress in finding an answer has been made since the time of Oswald Spengler, who did not hesitate to postulate what American ethnologists later
called a "basic personality" for each civilization. For Spengler, the ethos of Western Civilization was best represented by the legendary figure of Faust, and that of Greco-Roman Civilization by the mythic figure of Apollo. To Spengler's kinder critics, such characterizations have seemed to be, at best, collective equivalents of psychoanalysis (what I have elsewhere called "ethnoanalysis"). To his harsher critics, they have seemed to be no more than modern mythopoeia.

To the second question — how to separate overlapping civilizations spatially — there may, however, be a better answer. This answer comes, surprisingly perhaps, from chromatonymics, the cross-cultural study of color terminologies. In their comparative study of color terms, Berlin and Kay discovered that, whereas boundaries between colors are unpredictably variable from language to language, color foci, which one might call archetypal hues, are surprisingly consistent in all known languages.

Analogously, it seems to me, one can argue with some persuasiveness that, while the spatial boundary between ancient Greco-Roman Civilization and modern West European Civilization is difficult to draw (falling rather arguably within Italy), the foci of the two are quite distinct. In the former case, I would locate the national focus in Greece and the urban focus in Athens. In the latter case I would locate the national focus in France and the urban focus in Paris.

But, for those who still prefer to draw their cultural boundaries in terms of peripheries rather than of centers, an alternative solution may prove feasible. Two of the most characteristic products of civilizations, at least in their later stages of development, are world-states (or empires) and world-creeds (or ideologies). Both creeds and empires usually manifest external boundaries that are sharper than those of the civilizations that produce them. If we were to arrange civilizations and their expansionist outgrowths in order of the decreasing blurriness of their boundaries, the sequence would almost certainly be:

1. civilizations
2. creeds
3. empires

The relative clarity of imperial boundaries, as compared with
cultural boundaries, is well expressed by most historical maps. As regards spatial boundaries, both the London Times atlas and Toynbee's atlas concur in the sequence above, treating empires as most sharply bounded and civilizations as most vaguely bounded. The Times atlas maps many empires, a fair number of religions, but few civilizations. Toynbee also maps more empires than non-political entities. And, although he maps as many civilizations as he does religious faiths, his civilizations are made vaguer by being labeled, in the cases of China and India, as "worlds" and, in those of Syria and Turkestan, as "roundabouts."

As regards temporal boundaries, the same sequence holds again. The Times Atlas recognizes Egyptian, Hittite, and Assyrian empires as clearly demarcated well before the spiritual domains of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism can be delimited. And the earliest entities which it labels as civilizations and explicitly distinguishes from states and religious communities are the Southeast Asian cultures of our era. Although (perhaps because of his political science background) David Wilkinson omits ideological areas and religious communities from his recent work on the origins and confluence of civilizations, he too sees the temporal boundaries of such polities as states and empires as being far clearer than those of civilizations and cultures. In diagraming "Alternations between States Systems and Universal Empires," for example, he dates the Minoan thalassocracy quite definitely to the early second millennium B.C.E. but the beginning of the Aegean Civilization which it dominated rather vaguely to the early third millennium; and he indicates that vagueness with five question marks.

Criteria of Civilization

As a cultural anthropologist, I am predictably inclined to follow Alfred Kroeber, himself a pioneer in the comparative study of civilizations, in preferring artifactual and institutional criteria to stylistic and ideological criteria when attempting to distinguish civilized from uncivilized societies. In teaching a course entitled "Comparative Civilization" at three different institutions during the 1980's, I employed the following list of civil traits in classroom hand-outs:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hinterland Traits (of Neolithic Origin)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. villages</td>
<td>4. tillage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. stone-polishing</td>
<td>5. weaving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. herding</td>
<td>6. pottery</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Protohistoric Traits (of Pre-Axial Origin) |
|-------------------------------------------|---------------|
| 7. towns                                  | 14. warfare   |
| 8. masonry                                | 15. bureaucracy|
| 9. irrigation                             | 16. standardization|
| 10. metallurgy                            | 17. class-stratification|
| 11. industry                             | 18. professionalism|
| 12. literacy                             | 19. schools    |
| 13. wheels                               | 20. science    |
| 21. fine arts                            |               |

| Fully Historic Traits (of Post-Axial Origin) |
|---------------------------------------------|---------------|
| 22. urbanism                               | 24. credalism |
| 23. imperialism                           |               |

There is, needless to say, nothing final or conclusive about the above trait-list. As a graduate student, I considered linguistic abstraction as a possible criterion of civilization. In terms of the Kroeberian preference for objective, as against subjective, criteria, abstraction turns out to be an ambiguous trait. This ambiguity is clearly manifest in the second of the following three phrases, all of which contain the morpheme good-, meaning "beneficial":
1. goods that were shipped
2. good that was done
3. goodness that was shown

In the first phrase, the pluralized noun *goods* is clearly concrete, in both grammatical and semantic terms. In the third case, the derivational noun *goodness* is just as clearly abstract, in both grammatical and semantic terms. In the second case, however,
the singular noun good, while grammatically concrete, is semantically abstract. Deciding whether to call the word good, in this context, concrete or abstract becomes, in effect, a choice between structure and meaning. A traditional philologist, with literary inclinations, would probably opt for meaning and call the word abstract; whereas an ethnolinguist, with field-work experience in the analysis of unwritten languages, would probably opt for structure and call the word concrete. (My guess is that Kroeber, who had both literary training and field-work experience, would have denied abstraction in the second, ambiguous, phrase above but would have accepted it in the third, unambiguous, phrase. In other words, the question for him would not have been whether English contains "civilized" abstractions but only which particular locutions fully manifest those abstractions.)

*The Chronology of Early Civilizations*

Following the decipherment of the Rosetta Stone by Jean-François Champollion in the 1820's, Egyptology experienced a boom that has continued to this day. One of the results of this boom was a strong tendency on the part of historians to date all ancient civilizations from Italy to India on the basis of real or supposed synchronisms with Egypt. Such synchronization might have been justified if Egyptological dating had itself been reliable. Unfortunately, however, chronologies of ancient Egypt came increasingly to depend on two "pillars," each of which has proven to be weak. One of these is the list of dynasties provided by the Egyptian priest Manetho, who wrote (in competition with his Babylonian contemporary Berossus) to prove Egypt the world's oldest civilization. The other is so-called Sothic dating, based on the assumption that the star which the Egyptians called Sopdet and the Greeks called Sothis was the same star that we now call Sirius.

Menetho's dynasties may be fact have been partially contemporaneous rather than entirely sequential. And Sopdet (alias Sothis) may have been a star other than Sirius — or may even have been the planet Venus, if, as various ancient writings imply, the pre-Achaemenid orbit of Venus was different from its present orbit.³⁷

Oddly, perhaps, 19th century scholars showed more aware-
ness of these uncertainties than did 20th century scholars. Between 1845 and 1917, 32 different Egyptologists gave estimates of the antiquity of the 1st pharaonic dynasty which ranged from 6,400 B.C.E. to 1,700 B.C.E. If we average these estimates, we get a mean of about 3,800 B.C.E., a median of about 2,850 B.C.E., and a mode of about 3,000 B.C.E. From these, in turn, we may derive an "average average" of about 3,200 B.C.E.

Despite warnings from a distinguished Egyptologist that "what is proudly advertised as Egyptian history is merely a collection of rags and tatters," most scholars since World War I have apparently found uncertainties stretching into millennia, along with astronomical identifications that depend on guesswork, to be intolerable. They have consequently treated chronological averagings, like those above, and "best guesses" on the part of astronomers as constituting a scientific consensus. If this is indeed a consensus, it seems to me to provide good reason for rejecting consensualism as a methodology. Such consensualism is, in fact, precisely what social historian Gunnar Heinsohn has rejected for the past decade.

Against Heinsohn and other chronological revisionists, it might be argued that, even if dynastic sequences and stellar identifications are uncertain, the divisibility of pre-Demotic Egyptian into Old, Middle, and Late linguistic stages is a strong argument in favor of the conventional chronology. This argument, however, depends on the assumption that the three vernaculars which have been labeled "Old," "Middle," and "Late" are in fact sequential stages of a single language or dialect, corresponding to the three major periods of Egyptian history known as "Old Kingdom," "Middle Kingdom," and "New Kingdom."

There are two major flaws in this diachronic argument. The first is the fact that the division of Egyptian history into three "kingdoms" does not come from Egyptian sources but is a modern periodization, analogous to the division of European history into Ancient, Medieval, and Modern periods. And the second is the fact that many close linguistic relationships that look as if they were diachronic in nature in fact are not. In the Baltic area, for example, modern Lithuanian looks and sounds as if it is an older stage of modern Latvian; and modern Finnish looks and sounds as if it is an older stage of modern Estonian. In each case, what we
are actually confronted with is a pair of closely related languages, one of which (Latvian or Estonian) has changed faster than the other (Lithuanian or Finnish).

If the distinction between Old, Middle, and Late Egyptian, so-called, is in reality analogous to the distinctions between the pairs of Baltic languages cited above, it could be treated as a synchronic contrast among regional dialects. If, on the other hand, it is neither diachronic nor regional in nature, it may be an example of what sociolinguists call diglossia (and, in this case, should perhaps be called "triglossia"). Diglossia is a situation in which social class dialects have become so divergent as to impede communication, both oral and written, between social groups within a single national community. One example is the distinction between the elegant and somewhat archaic Greek dialect called Katharevousa, increasingly confined to literary writing, and the popular and wholly contemporary dialect called Demotic, once purely colloquial but now journalistic as well. Another example is the distinction between Bokmal, the urban dialect of Norwegian, which is heavily influenced by Danish, and Landsmal, the rural dialect, relatively unaffected by other Scandinavian languages. (Till the 19th century, mutual intelligibility between the two was slight. When Norway gained independence, a merged vernacular called Nynorsk became the national language. But the inherited diglossia has not yet been wholly eliminated.) If the three forms of ancient Egyptian are neither diachronic nor regional, they may well have been expressions of social stratification.

Having rejected both dynastic sequencing and Sothic dating, on what does Heinsohn rely in his effort to create a new chronology for ancient Egypt? He relies on archeological stratigraphy, declaring illusory all historical periods for which there are no artistic or topographic strata. Consequently, he dates the First Dynasty of Egypt to the end of the second millennium B.C.E.

Moreover, because all other ancient historical chronologies were tied to that of Egypt, Heinsohn draws the logical conclusion that they are comparably inflated. But he does not stop with inference. He also examines all non-Egyptian civilizations stratigraphically and concludes that they too have been chronographically inflated. In the case of Mesopotamia, in particular, he finds
that attempted synchronization with Egypt have resulted not only in historical duplications but even in triplications. Among the duplications are: 2nd millennium Mitanni plus 1st millennium Medes. And among the triplications are: 3rd millennium Akkadians plus 2nd millennium early Assyrians plus 1st millennium late Assyrians. For Heinsohn, the Mitanni are the 1st millennium Medes; and the Akkadians are the Assyrians, both early and late, of the 1st millennium.32

Both east and west of these ancient core areas, similar chronological inflations have been generated on a Sothic/Manethonian basis. Of these, the most notorious is probably "the dark age" of Greece, ostensibly separating the Mycenean civilization, which ended about 1200 B.C.E., from the Hellenic civilization, which arose about 700 B.C.E. Not only was there no writing known from this period; there was no other artifactual activity detectable — nor even any human habitation! Only the dwindling prestige of early 20th century Egyptology could support such an otherwise improbable postulation.33

Heinsohn's conclusion is that the inception of civilization occurred no earlier than the late 2nd millennium B.C.E. anywhere in the world. By the same token, however, that inception occurred no later than the same period in most regions of literate urban culture from Greece to India and from China to Meso-America.34

If Heinsohn is right about the roughly simultaneous appearance of civilization in both hemispheres — as I am increasingly inclined to believe — a major question naturally arises: what global circumstance could have brought about this simultaneity?

Early Transoceanism

The effort to explain the origin of cultures, including civilizations, has been dominated, during the past century, by an increasingly polarized debate between two schools of thought currently termed inventionism and diffusionism. Inventionists tend to emphasize the cultural autonomy of human societies, while diffusionists tend to emphasize their cultural interdependence. The polarization of schools in the debate is unfortunate, since to any non-partisan it seems obvious that no invention can become effective till it is diffused to others than the inventor,
whereas no cultural loan can be adapted to local conditions without considerable inventiveness on the part of its borrowers. Nevertheless, polarization persists, even in the study of civilizations. Spengler, for example, was an inventionist, insisting that each high culture was essentially autonomous. Toynbee, by contrast, was a diffusionist, regarding most civilized societies as being affiliated to earlier “apparentative” societies.

In the broader arena of intercultural studies, involving preliterate as well as literate societies, the debate has not centered on diffusion in general, since the diffusion of such traits as farming or literacy is almost universally accepted. It has centered rather on early transoceanic diffusion, because there is as yet no conclusive evidence of transoceanic migration prior to the Scandinavian settlement of Newfoundland in the late 10th century C.E.

For earlier periods, most scholars prefer to deny diffusion between hemispheres except over the intermittent Bering Strait land-bridge (or ice-bridge). I, however, perceive too many cultural correspondences between the ancient civilizations of the New World and those of the Old World to believe that these can be attributed either to coincidence or to an inherent tendency among foragers everywhere to develop civilization. Among these cultural correspondences are: pyramids, temple observatories, arches, lost-wax casting, cylinder stamps, hieroglyphs, paper, and the zero concept.

Moreover, a recent development in evolutionary thinking has made it far easier to think of early peoples as sea-farers than it used to be. Those who regard oceans as having been insurmountable obstacles to the migration of pre-Viking humanity have sometimes pointed to the fact that primates generally and our close kinsmen, the great apes, particularly are averse to wading and swimming. But there is growing evidence that the striking anatomical, physiological, and behavioral differences between our species and the other hominoids are due to a protohominid Pliocene sojourn in the shallow waters of rivers, lakes, and estuaries. To an aquatic, or even a semi-aquatic, primate, seas and oceans may well have seemed more inviting as migratory routes than did jungles and mountain-ranges. And if, as seems probable, improvements in metallurgy were paralleled by improvements in nautical technique, civilization might rapidly
have spread transoceanically from the Old World to the New.

Quantalism and Culture

There is an alternative to the theory that civilization diffused rapidly by both land and sea in the late 2nd millennium B.C.E. The alternative theory is that there was some global event or condition which permitted, if it did not actually precipitate, the virtually simultaneous development of civilization in both hemispheres. This theory, which has usually been referred to as catastrophism, is one which I prefer to call quantalism, because it has as many saltatory, or constructive, aspects as it does catastrophic, or destructive, aspects.

The quantal view of evolution treats the development of both species and behavior-patterns as having been abrupt and discontinuous rather than gradual and continuous. As regards human cultural development, it depicts most of the Quaternary Period (consisting of the Pleistocene and Holocene Epochs) as having been physically tumultuous on an immense scale, characterized by orbital dislocations, global seismicity, wide-spread volcanism, frequent flooding, and, of course, glaciation, as the term Ice Age indicates. From a quantalistic standpoint, hunting, farming, and urbanization may be seen as successive efforts on the part of a battered humanity to gain increasing control over a natural order — or disorder — perceived as unpredictable at best and hostile at worst.

Quantalism and Transoceanism

It may not, of course, be necessary to make an invidious choice between transoceanism and quantalism. One could reasonably infer that catastrophized peoples, lacking a global purview, might believe that distant regions were safer or more bounteous than their own and so set forth across both land and sea in search of better life.

In any case, quantalism accords well with the abrupt onset of civilization postulated by Heinsohn. Likewise, the interconnectedness of civilizations implied by transoceanism accords well with the unity of civilization implied in our earlier comparison of civilizations within civilization to species within the biosphere.
Globalization: The End of Civilization?

The phrase “end of civilization” may mean either “termination of civilization” or “goal of civilization.” In the former sense, members of individual civilizations have, on occasion, feared that barbarians would put an end to their way of life, depopulating cities and burning books. Presumably, however, re-barbarization has rarely been the goal of the members of any civilization.

On the other hand, just as barbarism may be said to end when it is incorporated in civilization, civilization might be said to end if it were transformed into something culturally more advanced. But what would this “something” be? Since the end of World War II, several scholars have observed what they interpreted as the beginning of a change of cultural phase from a severely city-centered order to a “global village” society, in which power is diffused by increasingly universal access to information. Communications theorist Marshall McLuhan called this new phase “post-literacy,” sociologist Daniel Bell called it “post-industrialism,” and theologian Paul Tillich called it “post-Christianity.” Preferring a less committal and more general characterization, economist Kenneth Boulding called it simply “post-civilization.” My own preference, however, is for the equally general but more descriptive term “globalization.”

Yet, whatever name is eventually accepted for this increasingly evident process and its result condition, important questions remain to be answered about it.

First, how old is globalization? Most scholars who treat it as a recognizable phenomenon grant it an antiquity of no more than two centuries, starting some time between the de-colonization of the Americas and the foundation of the United Nations Organization, and contemporaneous with the Industrial Revolution. Since all three of these developments were undeniably West European in inspiration, it seemed reasonable to refer to Western Civilization, in Matthew Melko’s phrase, as “the civilization to end all civilizations.”

Nonetheless, I am inclined to look even further back in time for the incipient stage of globalization. And I find it in the Mongolian Empire of Genghis Khan in the early 13th century C.E. This world-state, united by a military intelligence system unparalleled outside its borders, dominated all of Eurasia between...
Germany and Japan. Culturally, it merged substantial portions of Chinese, Indic, Islamic, and European civilizations, serving as what might be called the first effective laboratory of world religions: Christian, Moslem, Buddhist, and Confucian. And many of those empires which succeeded it — Manchu, Mogul, Ottoman, and Muscovite — remained comparably multicultural between the time of imperial Mongol fragmentation and that of European world colonization. In other words, I view globalization as a process that has been going on for nearly eight centuries and is now superseding civilization — if, indeed, it has not already done so, at least in those core areas that control the world's technology, economy, and communications. But I would add that globalization is no more likely to obliterate civilization than was civilization to obliterate the farming culture on which it was built.

Remembering that the "end" of civilization may mean its objective as well as its conclusion, we might ask whether globalization is the objective of civilization. In the light of R. G. Collingwood's reminder that the results of human action are rarely the same as its goals,42 I would opine that, while the outcome of civilization is indeed globalization, its goal was probably nothing more than self-perpetuation.

But what of the "end" of globalization? The goal of globalization has hardly been formulated. And its conclusion cannot yet be described. One of its outcomes is likely to be interplanetary exploration and settlement, though what the terrestrial consequences of this might be remains still more unclear (much as I have elsewhere enjoyed speculating about it.)43

**Cultural Systems**

I concur with David Wilkinson, who holds that "civilizations are systems." And I follow the cultural evolutionists in seeing each stage in the development of culture as a system capable of giving rise to a more extensive system that eventually engulfs it. Most of the Paleolithic foraging system has been incorporated into the Neolithic farming system, which has in turn been incorporated into the civil system of the Age of Metals. As noted above, the civil system itself seems to be in process of incorporation into the emergent system of globalization.

https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/ccr/vol39/iss39/8
A world-system of the type postulated by Immanuel Wallerstein is difficult to equate convincingly with either of the latter two stages. The extraordinary vagueness of the term "world" only exacerbates the difficulty. Like Wilkinson's Central Civilization and Kroeber's Oikumene, it seems to me to fall between civilization in the incipiently historic sense and globalization in a sense that remains futuristic. But I leave it to world-systems theorists to resolve the difficulties in conceptual translation posed by worldliness, systemicity, and their intersection.

Referential Postscript

Between February, 1995, when this article was hand-written and the following month, when it was typed in a campus office, two publications appeared that advanced ideas nearly identical with two views expressed in the article.

The possibility that "Old," "Middle," and "Late" Egyptian were not diachronic stages of the Ancient Egyptian language was discussed by Jesse E. Lasken in his article "Egyptian Language Anomalies." This article was published in The Workshop of the Society for Interdisciplinary Studies, Leeds, England. (Though dated December, 1994, the periodical did not reach overseas subscribers till March 1995.) Of the three supposedly sequential stages of the language, he wrote, on p. 13, that they "probably were regional dialects." To this I would now add the more specific possibility that the three regions involved were those of Upper Egypt, Lower Egypt, and the Delta, whose dialects were known, in the Coptic Christian era, as Akhmimic, Sa'idic, and Bohairic, respectively. (See Egyptian Grammar by Alan Gardiner, 3rd, edition, 1957/1976, Oxford University Press, pp. 3-4.) Lasken does not, however, consider the alternative possibility that the three forms of Egyptian may have been social dialects, distinguishing, for example, aristocrats, priests, and scribes.

In the Spring 1995 issue of The Journal of World History (vol. 6, no 1, p. 128), David Christian reviews S. A. M. Adshead's book Central Asia in World History. According to the reviewer, "Adshead argues that the first truly global event was the "Mongolian explosion", which created durable links between the different parts of Eurasia. Indirectly, the Mongolian explosion also triggered changes that helped incorporate Africa and the
Americas in a larger world history." Christian further notes that Adshead's argument here echoes that of "his mentor Joseph Fletcher."

What this sequence reminds me of is a time, in the 1940's, when I believe that I had coined both the term "sociatry" and its definition as "psychotherapy for an entire society." A decade later, I discovered that an older colleague had thought the same thing in the 1930's — only to learn that one of his teachers had preceded him in this coinage by a decade!

To find that one has been — as one academic wit phrased it — "pre-plagiarized" need not be a cause for regret, any more than it should justify formation of a mutual admiration society. As observed above, in the segment entitled "Early Transoceanism," invention and diffusion are mutually inextricable. In his classic introduction to the study of man, previously cited in footnote 24, Alfred Kroeber included a section entitled "The Meaning of Simultaneous Inventions" (pp. 341-343). In it, he asserted that, given an intellectual climate and a set of problems to be solved in terms of it, various individuals will almost inevitably reach similar conclusions and propose similar solutions.

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NOTES

3. "Nostratic" is the name proposed by Holger Pedersen and his successor for a linguistic phylum that subsumes Indo-European, Uralic, Altaic and other Eurasian language groups.
4. Khoisan is the name of the group of languages spoken by the Bushmen and Hottentots of southern Africa.
6. Roger W. Wescott, "The Enumeration of Civilizations" (as in ref. 1, above)
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.


25. The "Axial Age," between 800 and 300 B.C.E., was held by German philosopher Karl Jaspers to separate the mythic or mystical era of civilization from the historical and scientific era.


28. Gunnar Heinsohn and Heribert Illig, *Wann Lebten die Pharaonen?* Reihe Scarabaeus, Eichborn, Frankfurt am Main, Germany, 1990


30. Gunnar Heinsohn, *op. cit.* (ref. 28)

32. Gunnar Heinsohn, *Die Sumerer Gab es Nicht*, Reihe Scarabaeus, Eichborn, Frankfurt am Main, Germany, 1988. (The title is misleading. The author does not deny the existence of the Sumerians but does assert that they were identical with the Chaldeans.)


41. Matthew Melko, “Is Western Civilization Unique?” *Civilizations*, v. 21, no. 1, 1971
