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— M. Woesler, ed. —

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Cultural Intersections: New Perspectives on Chinese History and Global Connections

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▪ Intercultural Connections in Early Civilizations

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▪ Peichen, Wangchen, & Wangren: A Case Study of the Southern Tang

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▪ Missionaries as Transmitters of Chinese Classics to Europe

European Journal of Sinology 13 (2022)

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Cultural Intersections:
New Perspectives on Chinese History and Global Connections

Intertwined Origins:

A Reassessment of Intercultural Connections in Early Civilizations

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Abstract

This study examines intercultural connections between early civilizations in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, India, and China through an interdisciplinary analysis of archaeological findings and comparative historical studies. The research challenges narratives that present these civilizations as isolated developments by highlighting evidence of exchange networks for goods, technologies, domesticated species, cultural practices, and philosophical ideas dating back to the 4th millennium BCE. The paper critically examines how modern nation-state frameworks have influenced scientific interpretation of ancient cultural connections and argues for a transnational approach to understanding early civilizations. Based on documented case studies of material and intellectual transfer processes, a new paradigm is proposed that recognizes exchange and networking,

rather than isolation, as fundamental drivers of human civilization development.

Keywords

Intercultural exchange, ancient civilizations, transcultural archaeology, cultural transfer, history of science, nationalism

1. Introduction

1.1 Problem Statement and Relevance

Traditional historiography has often portrayed the early advanced civilizations of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, India, and China as largely isolated, independent developments whose achievements were primarily attributed to internal dynamics. This perspective was significantly shaped by the rise of the nation-state and nationalist ideologies in the 19th and 20th centuries (Trigger, 2006). Archaeology and other historical sciences developed in parallel with nation-building and often served to legitimize modern political entities through the construction of glorious pasts (Kohl & Fawcett, 1995).

Recent advancements in interdisciplinary research methods have led to a fundamental reassessment of these assumptions. This study analyzes the results of these new research approaches and argues that early civilizations were characterized by far more extensive and systematic connections than previously assumed.

1.2 Research Questions

This study is guided by the following central research questions:

1. What evidence do archaeological findings provide for cultural connections and exchange processes between early advanced civilizations in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, India, and China?
2. To what extent and with what systematicity did exchanges of goods, technologies, domesticated animals and plants, cultural practices, and ideas take place between these civilizations?
3. How have modern nation-state frameworks influenced and potentially distorted the scientific interpretation of ancient cultural networks?
4. What implications do these findings have for our understanding of cultural development and innovation in general?

1.3 Structure of the Work

After explaining the methodological foundations and the state of research, the main analysis is divided into five areas: a) evidence for population movements and interactions, b) material exchange of goods and technologies, c) transfer of domesticated animals and plants, d) spread of cultural practices and artifacts, and e) exchange of religious and philosophical concepts. A concluding section discusses the implications of these findings for historical scholarship and advocates for a

transnationally oriented exploration of early civilizations.

2. Methodology and Research Approach

2.1 Interdisciplinary Research Approach

This study pursues a decidedly interdisciplinary approach that integrates methods and insights from the following disciplines:

- Archaeology: Examination of material culture, trade networks, and settlement patterns
- Comparative Linguistics: Analysis of loanwords and language contact phenomena
- Archaeobotany and Archaeozoology: Investigation of the spread of domesticated plants and animals
- Comparative Mythology and Religious Studies: Analysis of similar narrative structures and religious concepts
- History and Sociology of Science: Critical reflection on knowledge production in the historical sciences

This interdisciplinary approach makes it possible to bring together different lines of evidence and paint a more comprehensive picture of intercultural connections than would be possible through a single discipline.

2.2 Data Sources and Analytical Methods

The study is based on the following primary data sources:

1. Archaeological Findings: Documentation of imported goods, technology transfer, and cultural borrowings from published excavation reports and syntheses.

2. Textual Sources: Analysis of ancient texts for indications of intercultural contacts, especially trade documents, diplomatic correspondence, and travel accounts.

3. Materials from the History of Science: Examination of the development of scientific paradigms for interpreting early cultures, especially in the context of nationalist movements.

The methodological approaches include:

- Comparative Case Studies: Detailed investigation of specific examples of intercultural exchange
- Discourse Analysis: Critical examination of scientific and public discourses about early civilizations

2.3 Limitations and Challenges

The study acknowledges several methodological challenges:

- Unequal Research Intensity: The different regions have been studied to varying degrees, which can lead to distortions in data availability.

- Preservation Conditions: Different climatic and geological conditions affect the preservation of organic materials.
- Chronological Uncertainties: Precise dating, especially for prehistoric periods, remains challenging.
- Own Positioning: Reflection on one's own perspective and potential biases is an ongoing process in research.

Despite these limitations, the multidisciplinary approach offers the possibility of drawing robust conclusions through the convergence of different lines of evidence.

3. State of Research

3.1 Traditional Paradigms of Isolated Development

The traditional view of early civilizations was significantly shaped by the concept of "hydraulic societies" (Wittfogel, 1957) and the theory of primary and secondary state formation (Service, 1975). These approaches emphasized the independent development of complex societies in geographically favorable regions, particularly along major rivers. Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Indus Valley, and the Yellow River Valley were considered primary centers of civilization development that emerged largely isolated from each other.

Childe (1950) defined specific criteria for the emergence of civilizations with his

concept of the "Urban Revolution," which supposedly occurred independently in different regions. This perspective was continued through influential works such as Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations" (1996), which conceptualized civilizations as distinct cultural units with their own developmental trajectories.

3.2 Paradigm Shift through New Research Methods

Since the 1990s, a series of methodological innovations has led to a fundamental reassessment of this view:

1. Reassessment of Archaeological Evidence: Researchers such as Wilkinson (2014) and Sherratt (2006) have systematically compiled evidence for extensive trade networks already in the 4th millennium BCE that connected the area from Western Europe to China.

2. Biomolecular Archaeology: New chemical analysis methods allow the identification of materials and their origins with unprecedented precision, enabling reconstruction of ancient trade routes.

3. Digital Archaeology: Computer-aided analyses of large data sets and geographic information systems have led to new insights into spatial relationships and distribution patterns (Knappett, 2013).

3.3 Current Research Perspectives

Current research is characterized by the following focus areas:

- Transregional Network Perspectives: Instead of examining isolated cultures, studies increasingly focus on the connections between regions (Kristiansen & Larsson, 2005).
- Postcolonial Critique: The deconstruction of Eurocentric and nationalist perspectives in archaeological interpretation is increasingly recognized as necessary (Gosden, 2004).
- Material Entanglement History: Concepts such as "entangled objects" (Thomas, 1991) emphasize the active role of material culture in transcultural exchange processes.

This study builds on these current perspectives but integrates them into a more comprehensive theoretical framework that specifically focuses on the connections between the major early civilizations.

4. Evidence for Population Movements and Interactions

4.1 Early Population Movements

Archaeological and linguistic evidence suggests significant population movements across Eurasia during prehistoric and early historic periods. These movements served as vectors for cultural exchange:

- The Mesopotamia-Anatolia-Egypt Corridor: Archaeological evidence

indicates intensive interactions between these regions from the 4th millennium BCE, including the movement of specialized craftsmen and traders.

- Steppe Corridor between Europe and Asia: Archaeological findings document migrations and cultural exchanges across the Eurasian steppe that reached both Europe and South Asia in the 3rd millennium BCE (Anthony, 2007).

- Mediterranean Region: Archaeological evidence from Minoan and Mycenaean contexts demonstrates that elites in the eastern Mediterranean were already highly connected in the early 2nd millennium BCE, with cultural influences from Anatolia, the Levant, and Egypt (Broodbank, 2013).

4.2 Cultural Elites and Merchant Communities

Trade cities and cultural centers serve as particularly important hubs of intercultural exchange:

- Trading Cities as Melting Pots: Archaeological findings from Bronze Age cities in Central Asia demonstrate the presence of goods and cultural elements from Mesopotamia, the Indus Valley, and Chinese regions—clear evidence for the existence of cosmopolitan trading centers.

- Specialized Groups as Vectors of Knowledge Transfer: The introduction of new metallurgical techniques often

correlates with evidence of specialized craftsmen moving between cultural regions.

4.3 Implications for Understanding Cultural Diffusion

The archaeological evidence demonstrates that population movements between early centers of civilization were more extensive than previously assumed. This has fundamental implications:

1. Cultural diffusion was often associated with direct mobility of people, not just the transmission of ideas and objects.
2. Mobility between the major centers of civilization was not a sporadic phenomenon but a structural feature of ancient societies, especially at the level of elites and specialized groups.
3. The "purity" or "isolation" of early civilizations, as often claimed in nationalist narratives, cannot be archaeologically confirmed. Instead, a picture of dynamic networking and exchange emerges.

5. Material Exchange: Goods, Technologies, and Artifacts

5.1 Earliest Long-Distance Trade Networks (4th-3rd Millennium BCE)

Archaeological evidence documents the existence of extensive trade networks as early as the 4th millennium BCE:

- Lapis Lazuli Trade: The systematic distribution of lapis lazuli from deposits in Badakhshan (modern Afghanistan) to Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Indus Valley documents an early transcontinental trade network (Herrmann, 1968).

- Obsidian Networks: As early as the 5th millennium BCE, obsidian from Anatolian sources was traded over distances of more than 1000 km, as Renfrew and Dixon (1976) demonstrated through geochemical analyses.

- Early Maritime Trade Networks: Ceramic findings document maritime trade contacts in the eastern Mediterranean from the late 4th millennium BCE, connecting Egypt, the Levant, and Anatolia (Broodbank, 2013).

5.2 Technology Transfer in Metallurgy

The technology transfer in metallurgy demonstrates the systematic nature of early intercultural connections:

- Spread of Copper Metallurgy: Copper metallurgy spread from Western Asia to Europe, Central Asia, and finally to China between 5000 and 3000 BCE, with not only the basic technology but also specific production techniques being transferred (Roberts & Thornton, 2014).

- Bronze Technology: Archaeological evidence indicates significant technical parallels between bronze production methods in Western Asia and early Chinese bronze artifacts, suggesting knowledge transfer (Linduff et al., 2017).

5.3 Luxury Goods and Prestige Objects as Vectors of Cultural Contact

The spread of luxury goods is particularly revealing for early intercultural connections:

- Indus Seals in Mesopotamia: Indus Valley seals found in Mesopotamian contexts indicate direct trade relationships in the early 2nd millennium BCE (Possehl, 2002).
- Egyptian Artifacts in the Aegean: The discovery of numerous Egyptian imported goods in Minoan and Mycenaean contexts documents intensive cultural contacts in the 2nd millennium BCE that went beyond mere trade (Panagiotopoulos, 2012).

These material testimonies document not only sporadic contacts but systematic and enduring connections between the early centers of civilization, which led to technological and cultural exchange that went far beyond the mere trade of raw materials.

6. Transfer of Domesticated Animals and Plants

6.1 Plant Domestication and Cultural Transfer

Archaeobotany provides numerous examples of the early transfer of domesticated plants between civilizations:

- Rice Outside East Asia: Rice, originally domesticated in China, reached India by the 2nd millennium BCE at the latest and spread from there to Western Asia (Fuller et al., 2010).
- Wheat in China: Archaeological evidence documents the appearance of wheat in China around 2000 BCE, indicating a direct cultural transfer from Western Asia.
- Plant Genetics: As documented by Larson and Fuller (2014), genetic analysis of domesticated plants provides evidence of specific routes and timelines for the spread of agricultural species across Eurasia.

6.2 Animal Breeding and Husbandry as Cultural Knowledge

The spread of domesticated animals illustrates the transfer of complex cultural knowledge:

- Horses in Egypt and Western Asia: The introduction of the domesticated horse in Egypt during the Hyksos period (ca. 1650-1550 BCE) transformed warfare and transport. Archaeological evidence shows that this introduction was associated with the adoption of complex training and breeding practices (Anthony, 2007).

- Pigs in Eurasia: According to evidence cited by Woesler (2018), domesticated pigs reached Mesopotamia and Europe from the region of today's China around 10,000 BCE.

- Chickens and Their Spread: Archaeological evidence suggests that chickens were domesticated in East Asia and spread westward by approximately 8,000 BCE, according to Woesler (2018).

6.3 Ecological and Agricultural Revolutions through Cultural Contact

The transfer of domesticated species led to profound transformations of local ecosystems and societies:

- Transformation of Mediterranean Landscapes: The introduction of the "Mediterranean trio" (olives, wine, wheat) from the Near East to Greece, Italy, and North Africa from the early 1st millennium BCE led to a fundamental restructuring of the landscape and economy (Walsh, 2018).

- Rice Cultivation and Hydraulic Infrastructure: The spread of wet rice cultivation from China to Southeast Asia and later to South Asia was associated with the transfer of complex irrigation technologies that had massive impacts on social structures, division of labor, and political organization.

7. Spread of Cultural Practices and Artifacts

7.1 Writing Systems and Their Transfer

The development and spread of writing systems illustrate early intercultural connections particularly clearly:

- Cuneiform Script and Its Adaptations: The Mesopotamian cuneiform system was adapted and modified by numerous cultures in the 3rd and 2nd millennium BCE, including Elamites, Hurrians, Hittites, and Urartians. These adaptations involved not only the adoption of script characters but also complex administrative practices and literary traditions (Woods, 2015).

- Early Alphabets and Their Spread: The development of alphabetic writing systems in the Sinai and the Levant around 1800-1600 BCE and their spread to Greece, Anatolia, and beyond document intensive cultural contacts in the eastern Mediterranean (Goldwasser, 2012).

7.2 Calendars, Astronomy, and Time Measurement

Astronomical knowledge and calendar systems were transferred over great distances:

- Mesopotamian Influence on Greek Astronomy: Greek astronomy adopted fundamental concepts and observational data from Mesopotamia, as Neugebauer (1975) demonstrated through detailed text analyses. This

included the zodiac signs, the lunar calendar, and mathematical methods for planetary calculations.

- Astronomical Instruments: Sundials, water clocks, and other astronomical instruments show technical parallels between different centers of civilization, suggesting knowledge transfer.

7.3 Artistic Styles and Their Diffusion

The spread of artistic styles and techniques documents intensive intercultural connections:

- "International Style" of the Late Bronze Age: In the eastern Mediterranean of the 2nd millennium BCE, a transregional artistic "koine" emerged that combined Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Cypriot, and Aegean elements. Feldman (2006) demonstrated how this style actively contributed to the construction of a cosmopolitan elite identity.

8. Exchange of Religious and Philosophical Concepts

8.1 The "Silk Road of Archetypes"

Recent research shows that cultural exchange between early civilizations included the transmission of mythological motifs and cultural concepts:

- Flood Myths and Their Distribution: As documented by Woesler (2018), the

motif of a catastrophic flood appears in strikingly similar forms across Eurasian mythological traditions. From the Mesopotamian Epic of Gilgamesh (ca. 3000 BCE), versions of the flood narrative spread to Egypt, early Chinese texts like the Book of Songs and Shanhaijing, Biblical traditions, and later Indian texts. These similarities suggest organized patterns of cultural transmission.

- Mythological Prototypes: Common mythological motifs such as the world tree, cosmic cycles, creation myths, and dragon-slayer narratives appear in similar forms across Eurasian mythological traditions, suggesting historical connections and transmission networks.

8.2 Religious Practices and Their Transmission

The transfer of religious practices is documented through archaeological and textual sources:

- Spread of Religious Concepts: Woesler (2018) identifies parallels in cosmological ideas and documents specific motifs such as semi-divine rulers, transmigration of souls, and concepts of an underworld that appear to have spread between Mesopotamia, Egypt, Europe, and regions of modern China.

- Bidirectional Exchange: Contrary to traditional notions of a purely west-to-east cultural transfer, studies by

Woesler (2018) suggest a bidirectional circulation of cultural concepts, with ideas moving in multiple directions along ancient exchange networks.

8.3 Philosophical Currents and Knowledge Transfer

Abstract philosophical concepts were also transferred across cultural boundaries:

- Greek-Indian Philosophical Parallels: There are structural similarities between Greek and Indian philosophy, especially regarding epistemological and metaphysical concepts. McEvilley (2002) identified specific parallels between Greek and Indian concepts of transmigration of souls, atomism, and epistemology that suggest historical connections.

- Medical Knowledge and Its Spread: Similarities between Greek, Indian, and Chinese concepts of humoral pathology and correspondences between macro- and microcosm suggest the transfer of medical knowledge along trade and pilgrimage routes.

- 9. The Role of Nationalist Paradigms in the Study of Ancient Cultures

9.1 Nationalism and the Construction of "Pure" Ancient Cultures

The study of ancient cultures has been strongly influenced by nationalist ideologies since the 19th century:

- Classical Studies and Nation Building: The institutionalization of archaeological and classical disciplines occurred in parallel with the formation of modern nation-states in the 19th century. Díaz-Andreu and Champion (1996) documented how archaeological research was instrumentalized to legitimize modern national identities through reference to "glorious pasts."

- Construction of Cultural "Purity": Archaeological research in the 19th and early 20th centuries often constructed narratives of cultural "purity" and "authenticity" that served modern nationalist agendas. Jones (1997) analyzed how these constructions of ancient ethnic identities projected modern concepts of nationhood into the past.

9.2 Case Studies of Nation-State Distortions

Concrete examples of nationalist distortion of research on ancient cultures include:

- Mycenaean Greece and European Identity: The exploration of Mycenaean Greece was strongly influenced by European identity discourses. As Morris (1994) demonstrated, the Mycenaean Greeks were constructed as "first Europeans,"

with their connections to non-European cultures being systematically undervalued.

- China and the "Cradle of Civilization": 20th-century Chinese archaeology strongly emphasized the autonomous development of Chinese civilization. Von Falkenhausen (1993) documented how Western influences were systematically marginalized to construct a narrative of cultural continuity and independence.

9.3 Disciplinary Boundaries as Mirrors of Political Boundaries

The organization of scientific disciplines often reflects political and cultural boundaries:

- Regional Specialization versus Transcultural Perspectives: The academic organization into regionally specialized subdisciplines (Egyptology, Sinology, Indology, etc.) makes it difficult to explore transcultural connections. As Bernal (1991) argued, this fragmentation leads to a systematic underestimation of intercultural exchange processes.

- "Methodological Nationalism" in the Historical Sciences: The implicit assumption that the nation or culture is the natural unit of historical analysis has led to systematic distortions in the study of ancient societies. Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2002) documented how this "methodological nationalism"

shapes social and cultural scientific research.

9.4 Overcoming Nationalist Paradigms

In recent decades, various approaches to overcoming nationalist paradigms have been developed:

- Postcolonial Archaeology: Postcolonial approaches in archaeology have critically questioned the ideological foundations of traditional interpretations of ancient cultures. Gosden (2004) developed methods for decolonizing archaeological interpretations that are particularly relevant for the study of intercultural connections.
- Global Archaeology and Transcultural Perspectives: More recent approaches of explicitly global or transcultural archaeology deliberately overcome nation-state boundaries. Hodder (2012) outlined methodological foundations for an archaeology that focuses on networking and exchange rather than isolation and originality.

10. Discussion: Implications for Understanding Cultural Development

10.1 From Isolated Civilizations to Entangled Networks

The evidence compiled in this study requires a fundamental reconceptualization of early civilizations:

- Network Perspective Instead of Container Model: Instead of understanding early civilizations as isolated "containers," a network perspective proves more appropriate. As Knappett (2013) argues, cultural phenomena are better understood through their embedding in transregional networks than through reference to supposedly autonomous cultural units.

- Cultural Hybridity as the Norm: The archaeological and cultural data demonstrate that cultural hybridity was not the exception but the norm. Stockhammer (2012) developed the concept of "entanglement" to capture the continuous processes of cultural mixing and transformation that characterized early societies.

10.2 Cultural Innovation through Exchange

The evidence suggests that cultural innovation was primarily promoted through exchange, not isolation:

- Creativity at Interfaces: The most productive phases of cultural innovation systematically coincide with periods of intensified intercultural exchange. Rogers (2003) identified cultural "contact zones" as primary centers of technological and artistic innovation.

- Transfer as a Creative Process: The transfer of cultural elements across boundaries was not a passive process of imitation but a creative act of transformation and appropriation. Burke (2009) developed the concept of "cultural translation" to capture this active, transformative character of cultural transfer processes.

10.3 Resilience through Diversity

The networking of early societies contributed significantly to their resilience and adaptability:

- Diversification of Resources: Integration into transregional networks allowed societies access to diverse resources and technologies, increasing their resilience to local stressors. Halstead and O'Shea (1989) documented how early societies diversified risks through transregional networking.

- Knowledge Transfer and Problem Solving: The exchange of knowledge and techniques enabled innovative solutions to local challenges.

10.4 Reassessment of "Originality" and "Authenticity"

The documented exchange processes require a critical reflection on key cultural concepts:

- Myth of Cultural Originality: The notion of cultural "originality" and

"authenticity" proves problematic in light of empirical evidence. Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) deconstructed these concepts as modern projections that serve to legitimize nationalist narratives.

- From Diffusion to Transformation: Instead of binary models of "invention" versus "diffusion," more nuanced concepts of cultural transformation are needed. Latour (2005) developed the concept of "translation" to capture how cultural elements are actively transformed in the process of their transmission.

11. Conclusion and Outlook

11.1 Summary of Main Results

This study has painted a new picture of early civilizations by integrating archaeological, linguistic, and cultural studies evidence:

1. The archaeological data document extensive interactions between the early centers of civilization that fundamentally challenge traditional notions of isolated, "pure" cultures.

2. The material exchange between early civilizations was far more systematic and comprehensive than previously assumed, with established trade networks connecting large parts of Eurasia as early as the 4th millennium BCE.

3. The transfer of domesticated animals and plants between centers of

civilization led to profound ecological and economic transformations and documents the circulation of complex agricultural knowledge.

4. Cultural practices, religious concepts, and philosophical ideas were transferred over great distances and locally adapted, resulting in complex transcultural hybrid forms that cannot be classified as either "purely foreign" or "purely indigenous."

5. Nationalist paradigms have systematically distorted the scientific study of early civilizations by projecting modern concepts of cultural authenticity and national identity into the past and systematically undervaluing intercultural connections.

These results require a fundamental reassessment of early civilizations not as isolated containers but as nodes in extensive networks of exchange. Cultural development is revealed primarily as a result of exchange, transfer, and creative appropriation, not isolated originality.

11.2 Implications for Historical Science and Archaeology

The results of this study have far-reaching implications for the historical sciences:

- Methodological Reorientation: The systematic investigation of transcultural connections requires new methodological approaches that transcend disciplinary and

regional boundaries. Knappett (2011) developed specific network methods for archaeology that enable such transregional analyses.

- Critical Reflection on Academic Structures: The organization of historical sciences into regionally and temporally specialized subdisciplines must be critically questioned, as it often projects modern political boundaries into the past. Said (1978) analyzed how academic disciplines are shaped by political and cultural power structures.

11.3 Social Relevance in a Globalized World

The perspective on early civilizations developed here has immediate relevance for contemporary debates:

- Beyond Notions of Cultural Purity: The recognition that cultural hybridity and exchange were central in earliest civilizations can help deconstruct contemporary purity ideologies. Chakrabarty (2000) argued for the necessity of a "provincialization of Europe" and the overcoming of essentialist cultural notions.

- Historical Depth of Current Interconnectedness: The documented historical depth of transcultural networking contextualizes contemporary

globalization as part of longer-term historical processes. Appadurai (1996) developed the concept of global "scapes" that understand modern cultural flows in historical perspective.

11.4 Outlook: Overcoming National Frameworks in the Study of Early Civilizations

Finally, this study advocates for a fundamental reorientation in the study of early civilizations:

1. Transcultural Research Agendas: The systematic promotion of explicitly transcultural research projects that transcend disciplinary and regional boundaries is necessary to do justice to the reality of ancient networking.
2. Critical Dialogue Between Disciplines: Natural science methods must enter into a critical dialogue with qualitative cultural studies approaches to avoid reductionist interpretations.
3. Public Communication of Complex Cultural History: Communicating a more complex, networked view of cultural development to a broader audience is crucial to counter nationalist simplifications.
4. Ethical Responsibility of Science: The historical sciences bear a special responsibility to contribute to the deconstruction of essentialist and

nationalist historical images that are used to legitimize exclusion and conflict.

The systematic study of early transcultural connections promises not only new scientific insights but also valuable perspectives for navigating an increasingly interconnected global present. The recognition that cultures have developed through exchange, not isolation, since earliest times could contribute to a more inclusive, nuanced understanding of cultural identity and development.

As Kwame Anthony Appiah (2006) aptly formulated: "Cultures have always traded with one another -- this is not the result of globalization or progress; it is a fact about culture." The evidence compiled in this study confirms this insight with empirical depth and underscores the necessity of overcoming nation-state frameworks in the study of early civilizations to do justice to the complex reality of ancient cultural entanglements.

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