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Balancing macro- and micro-scales in global-context understanding

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In our current era of decolonial reflection, scholarship continues to reckon with the legacy of the Graeco-Roman world. Our recognition of colonialist perspectives by past scholars, who sought parallels for Europe's own empirical activities, has been a substantial driving force for several decades now in changing how we reinterpret the nature and impact of Greek and Roman expansions from our material, visual and literary data sets. We have moved from regarding adoption and adaptation of Greek or Roman sociocultural features as cultural imitation, through a phase of considering variabilities in such alleged emulation as evidence of indigenous agency and hybrid cultural practices, rather than as erroneous practices, to one that seeks to rehabilitate both sets of evidence – those shared practices that were used to support colonial interpretations of aspirational cultural elevation as well as the practice diversities now regarded as evidence of blended, agentic developments.

This is the essence of current globalization theory as applied to our interpretations of the past. Its utility is predicated upon quantitatively substantial and qualitatively robust evidence, which is increasingly available to us, and it is driven by wider recognition of the importance of the past for economic, environmental, cultural and political understandings of and development in our present circumstances. It is one of the reasons why our interpretations pertaining to Mediterranean mobilities and their immediate and long-term impacts have evolved. Nevertheless, Riva and Grau Mira suggest that the Mediterranean of the 1st millennium B.C. is an outright casualty of this trend. They argue that while our consideration of the region during this period has matured to integrate areas marginal to the eastern-centric and Graeco-Roman focus of previous scholarly eras, our ability to understand the relationship of these regions from their perspectives has been put in jeopardy by current Big History studies of long-term Mediterranean trajectories, where the grand narrative's integration preference still favours the Graeco-Roman world, or eastern colonial undertakings (e.g. Phoenician settlement in the wider Mediterranean). They insist that the disparate quantity of material and built-environmental evidence around the Mediterranean basin reinforces the impression that the classical-world record is of higher quality, when in fact it is often more a reflection of long excavation history and investment. As a result, the authors contend there is a risk that global studies may reinforce prevailing Graeco-Roman exceptionalism.

For this reason, they emphasize the importance of micro-scale diversity, which often gets lost in Big Data-driven large-scale narratives. They believe that proposals for developing archaeological theories to explore multiple temporal and spatial scales have not paid sufficient attention to the micro-scale, nor integrated it adequately with the macro. They dislike the top-down perspective that a global approach suggests because of its macro-scale, they argue, which is often discussed alongside changes interpreted as evolutionary in nature. As a result, identifying causal links as distinct from correlative ones is challenging. To address the continuing elevation of the Graeco-Roman in our understandings, therefore, they propose to integrate the micro-scale with bigger data-driven perspectives, arguing that success for the latter depends upon the former. Their case study is citizenship in Iberia, for which they use the idea of global archaeology, in which the global aspect lies in perspective, analytical scale and an emphasis on connectedness.

Difficulties with most extant macro-level studies stem from a broad lack of meaningful engagement with globalization theory itself. Globalization is about much more than just the shared practices between disparate cultures that engage politically, economically and socially with one another (see Hodos 2017, with references). Social-science scholarship on globalization has long demonstrated that the shared practices and values that facilitate the one-placeness we associate with globalization has a counterpoint, which is increased awareness of and sensitivity to differences between those interacting cultural groups. This corollary is not just a feature of globalization but an outright function of it. Practically, it often manifests as a resurgence of local-identity practices that stand in explicit contrast to increasingly shared practices developing at the globally connected level. These local-identity expressions are commonly linked to divergent wealth, health and political power levels. One result is that globalization produces heightened contrasts between connected parties in the system, and in social-investment efforts to maintain cultural distinctions. The UK's Brexit vote is a contemporary example of how pressured this balance can be (Dowling 2021; Schalkwyk *et al.* 2021).

When discussing globalization in the past, there is a tendency to focus predominantly on shared practices that characterize macro-level connectivity (e.g. LaBianca and Scham 2006; Harris 2007; De Angelis 2013; Pitts and Versluys 2015). Such studies tend to use globalization as proxy for practice similarities across a particular scale of connectivity, and often too much at the neglect of detailed consideration of localized differences to be comparatively meaningful. One of the reasons for this is because in order for a micro-scale analysis to have meaning, the macro-scale in which it is integrated needs to be established: without sufficiently articulating the latter, adequate consideration of the nature of the former, including its causes, cannot be undertaken. As no comprehensive study has been available until very recently, these works have had to set the stage for their specific milieu. Addressing this has been the aim of my own recent application of globalization theory to the material culture of the Mediterranean in the early to mid-1st millennium B.C. (Hodos 2020). This work explicitly creates an interpretational scaffold on which to hang the complex nature of the interconnections between populations and communities around the Mediterranean on both the macro- and micro-scales. With macro-developments and dedicated micro-case studies set against them, it focuses on materials exchanged, urban development and the use of writing, because these have been major topics to date in comparative studies. Variability in the nature, rate and pace of practice developments within these topical arenas is evident both across place and over time.

In contexts considered interpretively global, which thereby directly take into account the paradoxical duality of globalization noted above, the connections between interacting groups are complex in terms of experience, communication modes and impact (Hodos 2020, 25–29). The communicative abilities of objects and practices between different groups mean that one's experience of globalization depends upon who, where and when one is (Hodos 2020, 210–12). Therefore our understanding of the micro-level cannot be divorced from macro-scale developments. This means that we cannot neglect to consider – even if to reject – the role played by those

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groups that drove and maintained broader, regular connections. In the case of the earlier part of the 1st millennium BCE, these are predominantly, but not exclusively, the Phoenicians and the Greeks. In addition to their longer-distance networks, they also established regional and local networks, thereby operating on multiple scales concurrently, and intersecting not only with one another but also with the networks of other cultural groups that seem to have been less widely geographically dispersed. In mediating between macro- and micro-level analyses, scale variations and the heuristic value of historical anomalies come to the fore.

Riva and Grau Mira assess this balance at a micro-scale level in a case study that explores citizenship as a feature of urbanism in south-eastern Iberia between the 6th and 4th centuries B.C. Scholars have tried to define urbanism primarily through varied criteria that include physical features and economic capacities, although without agreed consensus (for an overview see Horden and Purcell 2000, 90–108). Instead, here the authors take a social approach, considering the Iberian evidence internally to unshackle developmental interpretations from Athenian ideals that have hitherto largely informed our perspectives of citizenship, a fluid and dynamic process that forges ties and obligations, and emphasizes religious more than political participation. They present burial ritual patterns to show how forms of aggregation expressed united bilateral and metaphorical kinship components across a number of settlement cemeteries in their study zone. They take into account culturally specific processes which also inform our understanding of developments that we interpret as changing forms of membership with an urban community; they reject these developments as anomalous or poorly performed examples of a broadly held standard that is dominated in Mediterranean scholarship by, specifically, the Athenian model.

Their study zone did not exist in social isolation from other communities, however. Therefore they should not reject assessing the extent to which shared ideas may have circulated in their region during their period of consideration. For example, the authors observe that a marked decline in cemetery use in the study region correlates with the establishment of extra-urban sanctuaries dedicated to territorial guardian deities. What they do not address is why these sanctuaries were established at this time. What dynamics changed to necessitate the introduction of such landscape protection measures? The sites in question are not far inland from the coast and are situated along well-connected routes, including those where Phoenicio-Punic settlements served as connection nodes to the wider Mediterranean. The Attic material in their cemeteries evidences a connection with the wider Mediterranean world to some degree, although more likely indirectly given the nature of the evidence, such that the pattern is better explained as identity expressions between indigenous communities themselves, as the authors suggest. Direct indigenous responses to Punic interactions and activities, which are better evidenced slightly south of the study zone, nevertheless may have influenced changes in this region through existing inter-indigenous communication and competition. It should be noted that expansive necropolises are a feature of Phoenicio-Punic Iberian settlements between the 6th and 4th centuries B.C. as well, for which they attest socio-economic diversity among these settlements' mixed populations, including what are regarded as Phoenician citizenship ideals, based upon comparison with other Phoenicio-Punic communities elsewhere in the western Mediterranean (e.g. López-Castro 2019, 593). Communication between groups is of a complex nature as well: for an individual site, certain practices may communicate shared knowledge on a global level and explicit meaning for the local context. Without consideration of the nature of the micro–macro interactions from the micro-perspective, however, the causation of changes in social practices at the micro-level remains unexplained (Hodos 2020, 212).

In short, the balance between macro and micro scales remains essential to understanding local-level sociocultural developments as expressed through material, visual and literary evidence. If we are not careful about assessing local changes in light of the connected framework in which a past society operated, as well as its own internal terms, we continue to risk not maximizing the multi-scale understanding that global archaeology can enable.

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