

# 4

## Inter-civilisational engagement: imaginaries, power, connected worlds

Chapter 4 of *Debating Civilisations* outlines the conceptual framework of inter-civilisational engagement, thus establishing the groundwork for the deeper studies of Part II. The stress in Part II is on a new approach that critically harnesses the best research in civilisational analysis, history and sociology that focuses on interaction between civilisations. The new approach joins existing civilisational analysis with an appreciation of the imaginary creation of forms of interaction and a survey of critical paradigmatic alternatives. Some comments on the interaction and paradigmatic alternatives preface a fuller introduction of my principal concept.

To begin with, I emphasise the ties instituted by existing and coalescing imaginaries between different societies. Imagined connections and obstructions produce a remarkable diversity of linkages instantiated by exchange, adaptation and reform. Civilisations are made meaningful and therefore 'real' by the commerce of ideas, goods, aesthetics, political and legal models, sciences and techniques and by the movement of people. Mobile people, knowledge and practices shape interaction and transmission – in other words, how porous the boundaries and divisions are. Responsiveness to ideas, beliefs, methods and styles emanating from different traditions is a gauge of those traditions' porosity. 'Civilisations' understood in this way are given meaning in contexts of interaction, connection and exchange, which often involve power.

The counterpoints foregrounded in Chapter 3 matter hermeneutically to the current argument as paradigmatic alternatives to learn from. What do those counterpoints have to say? From the point of view of connected histories and post-colonial sociology, the links between societies are greatly neglected in dominant nationalist traditions of history writing and sociological research. In that line of argumentation, we can also see that globalisation theory is also vulnerable due to the absence of connections prior to

the nineteenth century that appear in its purview. Because of the presentism of the short histories of globalisation, global connectivity itself is not given visibility over the long term – though there are interesting exceptions at the margins of that paradigm that stress long historical processes. Marxist explanations of economic relations focus on the exponential accumulation of economic power in various ways, but are less well equipped when it comes to civilisations as large-scale complexes. Again, as we have seen there are interesting exceptions at its perimeters where there are openings to other enriching perspectives. Manifold links between societies of a longer pedigree are accentuated in global history and in the relational histories featured in the previous chapter. All of these paradigmatic points of view illuminate important insights. However, they fall short on critical questions that can be posed within civilisational analysis. None look deeply at the interstices or the connections between civilisations as such.

The aim in this chapter and the next is to address this gap by assembling a framework for comparative and historical research into deep relations between civilisations. In extending the interactionist current of contemporary civilisational analysis, I elucidate four dimensions of inter-civilisational engagement: migration, deep engagement in economic relations, cultural exchange and creation, and political reconstruction of civilisational models. The four dimensions are not exhaustively treated and are analytics for further substantive research, starting with the exploration in chapters in the subsequent part. This chapter features several examples that illustrate aspects of the argument. Most of them are remote from the twenty-first century and are chosen to illuminate what has generally been neglected: the very early development of large-scale connections in human history. The aim of the examples selected is to clarify the framework rather than to validate it as such. Subsequent chapters in Part II, on the other hand, aim for greater depth by exploring the modern case studies of the Pacific, Latin America and Japan.

## Dimensions of inter-civilisational engagement

As argued thus far, historians and sociologists have explored a host of civilisations sitting between the opposing poles of definitive closure and porosity. The historical record throws up quite distinct cases of trans-cultural and transactional closure. Given the diversity, a robust conception of civilisational diversity must incorporate less-inclusive formations that have existed. At one end of the continuum, histories and sociologies that trace inter-civilisational encounters pinpoint pivotal episodes of contact, communication and exchange. They have also

noted unusual cases of non-encounters, in a manner of speaking, where there is no contact or where civilisations are demarcated by detachment.

Notwithstanding important cases of closure, the transactions between civilisations are, on the whole, deeper than many of the major accounts in comparative sociology and world history have suggested. It is contended here that civilisations are made meaningful at points of intersection. Processes of creation of structures, beliefs, modes of learning, identities and forms of belonging gain impetus in the rhythms and tempos of interaction instituted by imaginaries. This is not to suggest that primarily endogenous modalities of life have no influence, but rather that those modalities are animated by cross-fertilisation and communication, however unequal, power-laden and conflictual that may be. Moreover, inter-civilisational contacts are not just 'cultural' in the thinner sense that Alfred Kroeber intended when he asserted that high levels of dispersed human contact characterised much of pre-industrial history (Kroeber, 1948). The significations of civilisations also lubricated the economic, political and demographic contacts and associations of the pre-industrial cultures that Kroeber explored. The most visible of the many routine connections and those that have lasting impacts are outright encounters (in the sense described by Nelson and Arnason). It is as a result of recurring relationships that encounters are possible and gain their importance in constituting civilisational dynamics. In the opening chapter, inter-civilisational engagement is defined as the regularisation of contact and encounter. To be sure, intense periods of deep inter-civilisational engagement should be scrutinised as ground-breaking inter-civilisational encounters in order to discern wider ramifications. However, inter-civilisational engagement is often more generalised and pervasive. It has a heavier gravity in the structures of daily existence. Regularised contacts and connections over long historical periods are of a different order to encounters. Where encounters are treated analytically as episodic and time-bound forms of interaction, inter-civilisational engagement can be applied as a problematic of the connectedness of world regions, societies and cultures over a longer duration. Of course, there are differing degrees of inter-civilisational engagement, just as encounters differ widely in the significance that the literature attributes to them. Be that as it may, there are precious few societies and civilisations that have been isolated from inter-cultural contact altogether or that have completely closed and fixed symbolic borders for lasting periods of time.

Engagement occurs and unfolds as a process in four discernible dimensions:

1. Migration leading to, in some instances, the creation of inter-cultural spaces. Conquest, warfare and occupation are particular spurs to migratory movements, flight, exile and enslavement.

2. Deep engagement in economic relations through commerce, the practices of trust-building, the growth of networks and, in the last five hundred years, the imaginary institution of forms of capitalism.
3. Cultural exchange and creation through practices of borrowing, blending, translation, imposition and fusion in science, the arts, architecture, religion and language.
4. Exchange may involve the political reconstruction of civilisational models.

States have some involvement across the board. Also, all dimensions are contexts of explicit power, though no dimension is over-determined in its entirety by the modes and dynamics of power. There is momentous evidence establishing engagement across all four dimensions in human history and plenty to suggest that more could be unearthed with further investigation, and indeed will be. Comparative sociology and world history has focused primarily on land-based civilisations. The civilisational perspectives on oceanic and seafaring empires featured in the next chapter show a different complexion of inter-civilisational engagement and thus they are considered also as zones of engagement.

### Colonists, pilgrims, missionaries, slaves, workers: migrants as bearers of engagement

It is a tenet of migration studies that all societies put out migrants (Manning, 2013). Under the influence of nationalist historiography historians have, until recently, consistently under-estimated the weight of migration in global history. By employing a civilisational perspective, some balance on historical trends can be pursued. A point to begin with is that nomadic movements and the invasions of marginalised peoples have been formative influences in the origins of civilisational bases. They were not related to trade or proto-state formation, but were *sui generis* one-way movements (Therborn, 2011: 35). Initial waves of exit from Africa formally ended with the invention of agriculture and animal husbandry and early manifestations of conflict. Since both manners of food production enabled human settlement, the seven (or nine, in some accounts) parallel inventions of agriculture laid the ground for the first civilisational bases between 11,000 and 4,000 years ago (McNeill and McNeill, 2003: 25–51).

Nomadic passages continued and indeed have been an abiding feature of global history. Since the formative phase of human expansion, nomads have also re-stimulated civilisational bases at different points (Cox, 2002: 144). Sea-bound movements were crucial (Gillis, 2013: 22–4). Voyaging brought distant ancestors of Australian Aboriginal civilisation through South-East Asia to the southern

continent. In the last primary migration, Lapita peoples consolidated the western Pacific and then spread to Fiji and Samoa before completing colonisation of the ocean basin by reaching the Polynesian islands and Easter Island (Rapa Nui). Four theories of the peopling of the Americas are still debated, but the Bering Strait land bridge is still considered the most likely route (Paine, 2013: 22–5). Further migrations around Ando-America and Meso-America stimulated processes of primary state formation and civilisational crystallisation. When states disintegrated (the Mayan being a prime example) further waves of migrants entered the major centres, often resulting in the foundation of new states. In sub-Saharan Africa early expansion of Bantu-speaking peoples into southern Africa is a different example of nomadic migration.

Ancient migrations were expansionary. Early Egyptian hegemony set a maritime trajectory for the Mediterranean. In the Bronze Age, colonising impulses were a particular feature of sea-going peoples in the eastern Mediterranean, especially the Phoenicians and the early Greeks. Phoenician expansion occurred through creation of trade cities without the protection of an empire. The Greeks were more land-bound and bent on replicating cultural worlds through the establishment of colonies. They were roundly oriented to localised and autonomous coastal markets rather than a quasi-imperial thalassocracy of controlled trade like the Phoenicians. The Romans more fully subsumed colonisation under the logic of warrior conquest. In turn, the long warrior and maritime empire of the Romans suffered invasions from Huns, Vandals and Goths. The Han Empire also bore incursions into northern China. Invasions weakened the dynasty, which, in turn, became vulnerable to internal rebellion. Dynastic decline resulted and the greater empire disintegrated into rival regions. On the other hand, the Turkic steppe nomads who plagued the northern Chinese were also integrated into the caravan trade, making them distinct as a peripatetic people.

Nearly a thousand years later, the Seljuk Turks penetrated Islamic lands prompting cultural renewal amongst urban elites (McNeill and McNeill, 2003: 130–3). An unintended effect of their presence was to reconfigure the composition of Sunni and Shia forces. They gave effect to a cultural transformation through the shock of frontal conflict. Later weakened by the Crusades, an arm of the Seljuk Turks remained in Anatolia and became ‘Turkish’ through long-term occupation (Manning, 2013: 97–8). The nomadic empires emanating from Central Asia had a deep effect on South Asia, arguably demarcating new political regions and precipitating the formation of the Delhi Sultanate (Pollock, 2004: 268–9). Finally, the occupation of New Zealand and other islands in the Pacific by Polynesian voyagers pushed peoples at the edge of the eastern perimeter of the Asian littoral into extraordinary efforts of colonisation.

The above paragraphs suggest that the tempo of post-nomadic migration was highest in the second millennium. Taking the second millennium as a discrete time-bound problematic, Hoerder identifies five sub-periods (2002: 2–8). In the first, spanning the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries, Mongol unification of Central Asia shaped trade and demographic movements, giving way, at the end of this phase, to a new post-feudal unity in Europe. The long disruptions to continental migration subsided in the fifteenth century. For the second period (ending in the eighteenth century), Hoerder privileges ‘an intercivilisational comparative approach’ to examine increased rates of migration (2002: 3). Whether compelled by adversity at home, sent by state or religious authorities or forced through slavery, people moved from Europe and West Africa to the Americas, from East Africa to South-East Asia and from western India to China. Missionaries, pilgrims, labourers, peasants, officials, merchants, artisans and soldiers who moved to new lands confronted the economic and cultural universes of distant and sometimes unfamiliar civilisations. Labour migration included slaves forced into the flow of emigrants departing Africa, Europe and India. For them, the confrontation with the economic and cultural universes of other civilisations was bewildering, particularly if they had been transported by sea. Should they survive the torments of an ocean crossing, then the trial of adjusting to new climates, regimes of labour and violent social and racial hierarchies faced them next, an inter-civilisational experience distinct from that of free labourers.

In the third period, a more familiar story of industrialisation, urbanisation and the expansion of capitalism unfolded. Unprecedented waves of migration to and within the Atlantic world patterned the institution of American societies. Colonialism structured migration in Asia even more than in the second period. Tens of millions of indentured contract labourers moved. Some returned to their countries of origin; many joined new communities that became entrenched over time. Chinese and Indian traders were prominent in dealings with the new colonisers and lived in enclave communities of their own, whether within Asia and the Pacific or in southern or eastern Africa. Distinctly new migratory routes across the Pacific mostly ended at American destinations. The sheer numbers migrating were significantly higher. In the first half of the twentieth century – Hoerder’s fourth period – the acceleration of Asian migration was one driving trend. In contrast, migration to the Americas closed down abruptly in the 1920s. Stalinist Russia’s main passages were internal via forced relocation to the barbaric Siberian gulag. Post-war refugees fleeing war and totalitarianism coincided with migrants from newly decolonised states. In India’s case, decolonisation was spectacularly cataclysmic in its early months, producing unprecedented transfers of Muslim, Sikh and Hindu refugees. In the fifth period, post-colonial emigration to the metropolises of the former empires turned monochrome white societies

into multi-ethnic ones. Return migration brought former imperial servants back. For example, the aftermath of the Algerian War brought imperial cadre back to France as the starting point of France's most spectacular wave of post-colonial migration. Canada and the United States scrapped race-based restrictions on immigration to receive migrants from Asian and Pacific states and the Caribbean and Latin America. Labour and refugee migrations make up much of the rest of Hoerder's picture as it emerged before the end of the millennium.

If modern colonialism propelled experiences of migration, so also did pilgrimage. The first-millennium expansion of the world religions laid down many of the paths of pilgrimage (Therborn, 2011: 37–42). The practice of leaving a home community in response to a spiritual calling, with the expectation of returning, travelling often great distances and then completing the circuit with a return journey, thrust countless numbers of the faithful through different lands. Infrastructural support, waystations, accommodation and signposts sprang up over time on the most frequently used roads. As well as sacred acts, economic transactions occurred en route. The monotheistic religions regulated the pilgrim's obligations. The Hajj is the most encompassing and oldest of such movements. Since the late eighth century the Hajj has pulled pilgrims in vast numbers from Central Asia, North Africa, India and later South-East Asia. As the Hajj was on the long-distance trunk road between China and West Asia, it attracted traders on an annual basis. Islam was not alone in requiring pilgrimages. Before the Jewish Diaspora Judaism had included a duty to visits Jerusalem annually. Catholicism promoted pilgrimage successfully up to the fourteenth century, after which it declined in the face of Protestant denunciation of the practice. Major journeys were a lifetime inter-cultural event. Only one of three major destinations for pious peregrinators involved inter-civilisational experiences on a significant scale: travel to the Holy Land. The numbers travelling in a year counted in the hundreds and not the thousands that made pilgrimages within the European continent. The impact that pilgrims returning to Europe had was disproportionate to their numbers. Along with relics from the Holy Land, they returned with expensive and unusual goods sourced from the caravan trades. It is anachronistic to characterise this as medieval tourism. At the same time, sociologically speaking, pilgrimage involved so much more than fulfilment of spiritual commitment. Pilgrimage made energetic crossroads just as trade did.

Missionary ventures are a comparable kind of migration. Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam spread through South-East Asia through the collective labours of traders and migrants. Early Iberian missionaries to the Americas were the first to use emigration as a specialist vocation. The Jesuits launched worldwide missions in the sixteenth century. In the course of their vocation they amassed a significant archival store. Their encyclopaedic documentation of data about other

civilisations amounted to an inter-cultural record. Likewise, later British missionaries to the South Pacific also produced ethnographic records of customary practices. Missionary enterprises found in inter-civilisational spaces have often been established via a whole transfer of agents and beliefs. Missionaries are symbolically associated with conquest. But missions can also act as agencies of inter-civilisational engagement where their impact 'is not that of the direct shock of conquest but the slow accumulation of pressure upon an established order' (Cox, 2002: 144).

Iberian missions arose with the colonisation of the Americas. By the time of Columbus's intrusion into the Caribbean several empires throughout the world had occupied neighbouring territories and countries beyond them: for example, the conquest of Ando- and Meso-America by the Inca and Mexica (Aztec), the colonisation of north-western Africa by the empire of Songhai and the penetration of the Balkans by the Ottoman Empire, of southern India by the Vijayanaga Empire, of Indonesia by Majapahit and of Central Asia for a time by the Timurid Empire. The conquest of the Americas stands out for the violence wrought by colonial migration, as well as for the societies that it produced. Spain, Portugal, France and Britain allied their colonial bases in Africa with their American empires to fashion a tri-continental slave trade on a vast scale. Slavery was a legally codified form of migration, but its juridical form simply marked its barbaric practices rather than preventing them.

The exceptional asymmetry of transatlantic colonialism should not divert attention from the effects of migration on migrants. Large-scale migrations were highly transformative processes of inter-civilisational engagement. For expansionary civilisations, mostly European from the eighteenth century on, colonialism augmented trans-national cultural spheres (Anglosphere, Lusosphere and so forth). In conditions of political and economic domination, the emigration of Europeans escalated, assisted by improvements in transport and communications technologies and pushed by poverty and poor prospects in Europe. In the later nineteenth century, steamships cut travel times for people and their belongings. The telegraph brought synchronicity to communication. Whether as part of the nineteenth-century flood of colonists to the American New World, or to join émigré communities in British, Dutch and French colonies elsewhere, migration held out the hope of better life chances and inter-class mobility.

In no way is this exclusively a European experience, though much of modern migration is traced to Europe's empires. The peak decades of the nineteenth century may have seen tens of millions of Europeans migrate, but the numbers moving across the Indian Ocean and much of Asia tally with the higher number of eighty million (Manning, 2013: 1). Much of the movement was related to growing Western colonialism. Chinese, Indian, African, Pacific

Islander and Japanese migrants coursed along new routes to South-East Asia, Australasia and across the Pacific Ocean to the Americas, often as indentured labourers, but some travelling as de facto slaves seized in so-called blackbirding operations (Matsuda, 2012: 219–25). Some two million Chinese left their homeland (nearly half of them headed for the goldfields of California and Ballarat in south-eastern Australia). Chinese migration slowed dramatically after that with the decline in gold mining and the constriction of demand for indentured Chinese labour. Indian migration continued unabated, however. Somewhere between thirty and forty million Indians were recruited to other parts of the British Empire between 1830 and the First World War (Castles *et al.*, 2014: 88–9). The decline of Indian industry in the face of favoured British imports created adverse conditions that pushed labourers overseas. Japanese labourers exported, in effect, to Hawaii, Peru and Brazil formed hybrid communities. Longer-term minority communities thus developed and, in some instances (like Fiji), were deployed for divisive purposes to stoke racial resentment. Significant improvements in transport and communications technologies supported voluntary migrations within and out of Africa, Asia and Latin America (Castles *et al.*, 2014: 5). Even amongst the voluntary migrations, not all migrations were equally voluntary as inequalities and discrimination often forced people to migrate (Castles *et al.*, 2014: 85). Liberal models of migration are in this respect an ill-fit for empirical patterns of modern labour migration. Even when migrants moved under compulsion, the collective experience of migration resulted in engagements of peoples of different cultural backgrounds from places with different histories.

Within some imperial communities migration was supported in the context of multinational empires. The cosmopolitan animus of civilisations opened passageways for subjects to move around (Aktürk, 2009). The Ottoman Empire promoted multinational migration within a framework of codified coexistence. Administrators within the de-ethnicised bureaucracy were significant beneficiaries. However, the picture is not all benignly cosmopolitan. One instrument available to Ottoman officialdom was the *sürgen*, a tool of forced migration of ethnic Turks designed to support colonisation (Hoerder, 2002: 111). Later the British Commonwealth, as the empire's heir, offered a global sphere of travel and migration for its subjects. Flows of people, ideas and artefacts in and out of the centres of multinational states could have a cosmopolitanising effect on the heartlands of such empires. All these migrations ran along the channels created by colonialism. Migration on the eve of the First World War – arguably the end of the apex of imperialism – is estimated to constitute 1.5–2.0 per cent of the world's population (Therborn, 2011: 111); those rates are not far short of current-day trends. It stood in stark contrast to the restrictive and discriminatory population and

migration policies of the interwar period enacted by the same countries that, prior to the First World War, had produced the highest rates of immigration.

Though modern global migration is hardly neglected in the social sciences, it would be remiss not to note regional and post-colonial trends. Multidirectional and multidimensional migration is evident across many regions. Many countries seen as 'origin' countries are in fact also 'receiving' countries that host their own immigrant communities (Castles *et al.*, 2014: 55–82). Diaspora, once a pattern of diffusion attributed to the Jewish experience, has been redefined to encompass the dispersal of many other peoples with strong cultural links to 'home' (Cohen, 2008). Southern migration to the North is a distinctive trend underpinned by the global restructuring of production and heightened insecurity. Refugees fleeing war, persecution or environmental loss are part of this. The greater number are the millions of guest workers drawn to the hotspots of global economic activity, those in the international trade in coerced and bonded labour and mobile professional and entrepreneurial elites. Needless to say, the experiences across that range could not be more divergent. A number of the patterns of migration into Western Europe follow the entanglements of empire created by European colonialism and continued in neo-colonial relations with independent states that were formerly colonies. The sheer cultural diversity resulting from the legacies of colonialism, foreign policy pursuits of the former imperial states and the fallout of post-communism is a reminder of the variety of modes of living constructed across the spectrum of societies.

## Economies as relational: long-distance trade

Like migration, economic relations are about movement. Inter-civilisational engagement constitutes economies as relational in the uneven and unequal spread of trade and money and in commercial networks based on practices of trust-building. Dense country-wide and intra-regional economic exchanges have been threads of sustained contact, communication and travel between communities to varying degrees throughout much of the history of state-based and proto-state societies. However, it is in zones of high-volume trade incorporating meeting points on long-distance routes that we find economic crucibles of inter-civilisational engagement.

In examining the patterns of pre-modern trade, economic historians often remark on the paucity of documentary evidence. Archaeology fills in gaps with other kinds of records, especially with trade over long distances. Archaeological finds suggest that exchanges over great distances have been taking place for at least forty thousand years (Goldin *et al.*, 2011: 16). Ancient civilisations

developed economic relations with one another. By necessity long-distance trade meant passing through different cultural universes while negotiating with agents and officials along the way. In itself, this did not create contact points between civilisations. However, long-distance trade deserves far greater prominence in connecting states, cities and civilisations in very ancient nexus of Mesopotamian and Indus Valley civilisations. Moreover, trade flowed far more easily and was consolidated in lasting webs of connections where empires could, under the right conditions, push back the frontiers of other states. The Greeks (under Alexander), the Romans and the Han Dynasty provided protection for more widespread trade. Cultures spread with all three empires; the Greeks laid down cities, the Romans expanded citizenship and law and the Chinese generalised language, science and the arts. Most certainly, short-distance travel has been the experience of many, while long-distance merchant migrations may have been the privilege of few. But the massing of inter-civilisational engagement through trade is more evident at the crossroads of long-distance routes and the consequences were momentous. Many routes and zones have left archaeological traces yielding evidence of inter-civilisational engagement around economic relations.

Five zones of long-distance trade illustrate uneven and unequal growth in contact and connections. Two are trans-Asian, one pushes into southern Asia, the fourth is a northern nexus and the last is the worldwide commerce of modern colonialism.

The first is the Monsoon trade. The Indian Ocean has the oldest track record of continuous human engagement of any major ocean. Over the last four millennia, the coexistence of many civilisations in this ocean environment has been shaped by seasonal cycles. The trade spiked as Islam spread from the end of the eighth century (Chaudhuri, 1985; Paine, 2013: 262–90). Monsoonal conditions dictated the timetables of merchant shipping from East Africa through the ports of the Arabian Sea, the Red Sea, the Bay of Bengal and the Java and South China Seas and then through to Japan and Korea. Experienced mariners knew how to navigate the oceanic ecosystem by predicting airstreams, tides and currents and knowing the right land sightings to seek out for navigational bearings. Regularity made transport reliable and predictable. Cargo and ships passed through transfer ports, travelling from one end to the other, even when their mariners did not. Ships could island-hop their way across the seas of the Monsoon trade. The winds would take mariners to intermediate destinations where they could pass their cargo on to associates and then complete the round-trip. The journeys were lengthy and took them through myriad cultural milieus. Commercial emporia emerged out of the punctuated patterns of trade in cities and intermediate ports along the chain of distribution. To differing degrees, cities such as Aden, Melaka, Muscat, Hormuz, Goa, Canton, Aceh and Surat were inter-cultural locations for

encounters with diversity. They were full of go-betweens, negotiators and agents for multiple interests. India's coastal centres on the eastern Coromandel Coast and over in Gujarat also turned out maritime communities of a like nature.

As well as India and China, Islamic civilisation was also favoured by this climate system and the segmented patterns of travel that it threw up. In fact, if there has been a force that enjoyed a premier position at any time in the Monsoon trade, it would be Islam. The consolidation of the Abbasid Caliphate gave commercial impetus and state protection to Muslim and Jewish merchants looking to the Indian Ocean trade. Development of rich coastal and oceanic markets compensated for downturns in the caravan trade. Islam's exceptional influence reached a high-water mark before the thirteenth century, but it did not survive external challenges and internal divisions (Curtin, 1984: 119–29). The long-term effects of the Crusades discouraged the ecumenical long-distance trade. Fractures within the dynastic figuration of the Caliphate weakened its position in ocean-going trade. With the Mongol conquest of Baghdad and the shift of the Caliphate to Cairo, the emporia trade opened up to others. The primary beneficiaries were Indian interests, particularly Gujarati traders. Chinese merchants were not far behind (Paine, 2013: 346–9). Commercial ventures from Canton under the protection of seven naval squadrons launched in the first third of the fifteenth century pushed Chinese frontiers to India and then on to Zanzibar.

Venturing into the Indian Ocean paid off for China. Other states recognised the Celestial throne and sent ambassadors. China's accumulation of worldly knowledge was permanently enhanced. The initiative to withdraw from the naval strategy came from an anti-mercantilist imperial court eager to regain control over its eastern ports and indeed over the state. The court bureaucracy may have been inimical to seafaring and to commerce, but coastal China remained porous enough and its lively eastern and southern seaports continued to ply a vibrant trade. Marginalised within the neo-Confucian universe, merchants in Fukien were able to augment overseas communities in a kind of 'undercover colonialism' (Fernández-Armesto, 2001: 345). They would be China's continuous seaward outlets. Despite Fukien's lively port and the volume of trade that flowed through it, the involvement of the Chinese Empire in oceanic ventures was over and it was left to traders to go it alone. The imperial state differentiated itself from maritime commerce. Chinese hegemony in the Indian Ocean was not possible, nor could other powers completely dominate the trade. Commerce in fact flourished with many powers, entrepôt cities, ordinary ports and merchant networks participating and none monopolising the balance of power before the nineteenth century (Hoerder, 2002: 164–86).

The importance of the Indian Ocean is debated, but a general consensus exists that, at the very least, it was the major world theatre of trade until the late

eighteenth century (Pomeranz and Topik, 1999). Even though Islamic trade had greater competition from the thirteenth century on, the three so-called gunpowder empires of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries benefited from falling production costs and expansion in production and elite consumption (Bayly, 2012: 17). Improved liquidity and shipping, particularly at the height of the Moghul Empire, aided seaborne trade. At that time, the tempos of the crowded basin began to alter with the intrusion of European states and mercantile interests.

Passage by land was less secure, though it was rarely closed off. The second illustration of long-distance trade is the so-called Silk Road. The well-known trunk route was in fact a trans-regional series of passageways running south into India as well as west to Central Asia, the Sahara and North Africa. Chinese goods were transmitted by portage through Eurasia as early as the first and second centuries BCE. Travellers, mariners and merchants on return journeys brought back knowledge of the worlds they had traversed, so starting a prominent and long civilisational learning process for China. China's reach was such that it became aware of expanding Roman hegemony at the western end of Eurasia, on the other side of the Armenian segment of the Silk Road. At one point, Roman merchant enterprise reached as far as the Ganges trade. Chinese merchants got to eastern India. The produce brought from the opposite ends of Eurasia went further than its carriers, however, providing a 'calling card' for both civilisations. Their comprehension of the known earthly world was tested and expanded as a result of economic relations. Long-distance trade left its mark on the internal development of both China and Rome, not least because it returned to Chinese and Roman centres an imagination of the totality of the known Eurasian land mass (Paine, 2013: 79–81). Mutual awareness may not have resulted in lasting direct ties between Rome and China. But on a regional scale various passages of the Central Asian trunk route were livelier because of long-distance trade runs.

The highways that criss-crossed Eurasia underwent a revival in the early second millennium (Hoerder, 2002: 2–3, 30–1). The east–west trade that moved more extensively along the joints of overlapping contiguous cultural zones from Song China to Islamic East Africa and sub-Saharan Africa also shows greater density of connectivity. Trade moved in many directions as north–south routes were augmented. Maritime trade was enhanced by the efforts of the Song Dynasty to consolidate a system of canal and river portage in support of its overseas commerce (Paine, 2013: 291–315). After a phase of conquest by the Mongol armies, the consolidation of a *pax Mongolica* provided cover for an increase in long-distance trade and distribution of a range of new goods and inventions, languages, fashion, food, maps and religion. Economic or cultural goods could not unify a trans-continental world. But it was part of a coalescence of Eurasia-wide

connections, particularly as long as Mongolian protection prevailed. Within the larger configuration, there were significant disparities of power between the seats of government in northern China and the zones of Inner Asia and the disparities spilled over into commerce. Furthermore, Mongol interests fashioned which goods, religious beliefs and ideas, plants and science circulated, particularly through its network of courts. But once the chains of exchange were secured, the traffic in goods at least was more uninhibited. Knowledge of trading conditions also grew under these circumstances. Merchants – along with scholars, post-masters and clerks – published compendia of countries, roads and cultures reflecting their manifold experiences of trekking trade routes. In all, the early second millennium was a phase in which processes of learning improved on the highways that criss-crossed Eurasia.

The degree to which Eurasia can be analysed as a macro-region prior to the fifteenth century remains a debating point (Arnason and Wittrock, 2004; McNeill and McNeill, 2003: 119–21). The questions in dispute suggest that inter-civilisational engagement was greater, but was also uneven and produced an unequal and diverse macro-region. As trade increased, so also did the inequality between regions. North–south trade began to supplement cross-Eurasian routes, the third illustration here. China and India oriented to South-East Asia with even greater vigour. China’s consolidation in the thirteenth century of an economic sphere gave it an advantageous tributary trade. During its historic phase of maritime expansion, Chinese commerce encompassed the South China Sea, reached Manila and connected Indochina with Java. The position of the Chinese in Melaka was also favourable given the city’s position on the cusp of north and south trade winds (Braudel, 1985: 524–9). Being able to manufacture paper currency on a significant scale helped. It also helped that Chinese merchants were well-protected militarily. Independent of the state, however, they fashioned a large and entrenched overseas diaspora in South-East Asia. China’s was not the only trade to shift direction. Indian traders too sought to augment strategic placement in the spice trade. Under the Delhi Sultanate, Gujaratis and Bengalis purposefully made further in-roads on the congested commerce of Asian ports. By the seventeenth century, it was evident that the caravan trade had begun to switch its axis. Possible decline in trans-Asian trade was mitigated by the intensification of multi-directional and intra-regional trades in Central Asia and the Indian sub-continent. Russian producers and merchants were incorporated into augmented north–south flows into central and southern Asia across the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, much to the advantage of Central Asia and China.

Some trades that also enhanced inter-civilisational engagement did not span one axis or other of the larger Eurasian land mass. A north-west sphere

of exchange between Byzantine, Arab and Swedish Viking traders emerged in the ninth and tenth centuries – the fourth illustration of long-distance trade. Viking trade enlarged a zone networking Scandinavia, the Baltics, Belarus and Ukraine with the Black and Caspian Seas via the Don, Dnieper and Volga Rivers (Paine, 2013: 244–6). The foundation of Rus cemented Viking colonisation. The occasional Viking war with Byzantium did not prevent the construction of commercial networks. By tapping Arab and Byzantine trade Swedish Vikings were able to draw goods and wealth through eastern Europe's riverine channels and into circulation in a far-flung chain of exchange leading north and west. Thus the eastern and northern states of Europe were linked with Rus and even further east. On several occasions in the late ninth and early tenth centuries, they raided ports on the Caspian Sea to reach Iran in extensive efforts to emulate their gains with Byzantium. Wealth ran, for a time, but the gains were less permanent. One important effect was to create channels of trade into eastern and northern Europe and through the trans-peninsular riverine network for rare goods from Central and East Asia. Today, popular culture may remember Vikings as a force of raiders. But they also stimulated the circuits of exchange across Europe even before they were 'Europeanised' in the thirteenth century.

The fifth and final illustration is the transfer of plant, food and animal species across modern empires and civilisations. The traffic in species started with force and conquest and then fell to commerce (Pomeranz and Topik, 1999: 81–115). Empires were the conduits of the circulation of species. The Americas have the most exceptional history of species transplantation, so much so that it has been characterised as an 'ecological exchange'. A good deal of this did not begin with commerce but scientific and cultural appropriation. New World artefacts were gathered by Europeans for display. Representations crafted for artistic and scientific purposes brought images of strange marvels to Europe. Actual artefacts were also collected and then housed and reassembled in museums, gardens and libraries. Exhibited for display purposes, they gave the appearance that the phenomenal diversity of the New World could be grasped and indeed possessed as though it were a commodity to own. When it came to plants, the volume of specimens imported and introduced grew, with vast collections accumulating in England's Royal Society and the Paris Academy of Sciences.

Commerce was never too far away from this traffic in cultural curios and scientific specimens. Foodstuffs soon followed. Maize, tomatoes, potatoes, papaya, custard apples, pineapples, tobacco and cacao and other varieties of beans circulated from the Americas via Europe to Asia and Africa. The linkages of long-distance trade between the Indian and Atlantic Ocean zones took consumables back in the other direction. Exotic stimulants such as tea (originating in China) and coffee (from Yemen) were initially banned by European governments and

then permitted for exploitation in plantation economies developed under the auspices of colonial authorities. Some got back as far as the Americas at the western end of the ecological exchange, where yams, sugar and wheat were also cultivated. Notably coffee and sugar were the boom products of slave-based production in the Caribbean and Central and South America. Europe's trading firms reaped monopoly profits for themselves and tax revenues for governments. At the height of British and French colonialism the transfer of species became more strategic. For example, in the nineteenth century, the British were able to transplant rubber and tea on a large scale from original sources in Brazil and China to Malaysia and the Indian sub-continent. Major relocations of species across the French and British empires had significant socio-economic and environmental effects, and they were lasting ones.

### Economies as relational: money, trust, networks, varieties of capitalism

Contractual and monetary instruments were not a single-civilisation monopoly of Renaissance Europe. Trust-based, long-distance credit had existed in antiquity. Moreover, finance was already part of Chinese networks well before Italian banking inter-linked economic movements. Chinese finance lubricated long-distance trade across Islamic civilisation by the time Italian bankers were beginning to aggregate money-lending practices for European economies. The more recent and influential zone of trust, Islamic civilisation, provided 'protected' status for non-Islamic communities in spaces of coexistence. Islamic cities magnetically drew a miscellany of pilgrims, intellectuals, traders, farmers and artisans to a multi-lingual world where Central Asian languages, Iranian, Turkish and Urdu were spoken (Braudel, 1993; 64–8; see also Arjomand, 2004). Of course, Muslim traders had much in common with one other. Arabic was a lingua franca. Merchants and travellers shared an intensity of faith and thus performed the same rituals and precepts of piety. Wherever they went, they could expect to live under Islamic law and taxation. Yet urban communities were also more generally inter-cultural and receptive of a profusion of languages. Cities of the eleventh and twelfth centuries under Islamic protection also had substantial export trades involving urban communities of foreigners. Italian merchants were one such community. Their long-term observation of Islamic practices, combined with engagement in caravan and seaborne trades, contributed to the Italian aggregation of commercial instruments.

Instruments developed coextensively in Islamic and Byzantine law provided frameworks for contracts and insurance before the outgrowth of Italian banking

brought security to the Mediterranean economies (Paine, 2013: 223–8) and indeed in the emporia trade of Asia (Chaudhuri, 1985: 210). The *commenda* was a major instrument of contractual obligation. The body of laws that included the *commenda* enshrined principles of inter-faith partnership, as well as bilateral agreement. For the Armenian network of communities, the *commenda* was an especially important commercial bond (Aslanian, 2011). Moreover, the body of instruments that includes the *commenda* inscribed in juridical form the conditions in which the risks of long-distance ventures could be shared. In this climate of engagement, Italian finance synthesised a range of instruments. Bank notes, bills of exchange, promissory notes, cheques, insurance contracts, scriptural notes and letters of credit affirmed and certified fulfilment of commitment. Measures such as these, taken to secure credit and realise value in circulation, added to the long-distance chains of exchange.

The proximity of different systems of finance and risk-sharing operating in the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean meant that monetary forms and insurance could be developed consubstantially through mutual learning. Increased confidence and the objectification of trust enhanced cross-civilisational networks. The expansion of mediated economic relations symbolised by money, value and wealth brought greater connection. By the seventeenth century, the world economy that centred on terrestrial Eurasia, South-East Asia and the Indian Ocean had begun to feel the effects of the influx of specie from the Atlantic world zone. The rise in quantities of silver resulting from mass mining in Spanish-America's *encomienda* economy increased purchasing power in East Asia, the Middle East and India (Chaudhuri, 1985: 17; Pomeranz and Topik, 1999: 179–80). Since specie began to flow persistently eastwards through the capillaries of large regional economies in more definitive forms, greater liquidity applied in long-distance relations. Far from common in everyday economic matters, money increasingly mediated long-distance trade. The velocity of exchange increased in many world economies over the long term, notwithstanding short-term secular downturns. The more liquid commerce was, the greater was the impulse for further monetarisation. States were crucial guarantors of the value of currency. Some were better at it than others. Islamic states had a strong tradition of legal tender (Chaudhuri, 1985: 215). By contrast, South-East Asian regimes took few initiatives in minting regnal coins. Overall, the pattern of state guarantees emerged unevenly.

American specie filled the gaps in credit by becoming the material manifestation of money. In explaining the symbolisation of wealth that money brings, Marx distinguishes the material manifestation of money from value itself (Marx, 1973: 145–6). He may have gone too far in attributing the emergence of 'world coin' to 'the circulation of American silver from West to East', but the long-term

outcome is clear enough (1973: 227, emphasis in original). Later, gold as a metal acquired the quality of a 'world coin' while at the same time materially enhancing the imaginary of money.

Joint-stock and multinational companies have given corporate form to long-distance economic relationships since the sixteenth century. Before then, merchants plied their trade through family and associate networks, by means of business alliances sealed through marriage, and via overseas co-religionist or compatriot merchant communities. Family networks hosted travelling kinfolk while en route to their final destinations. Merchant families pioneered key migratory routes (Manning, 2013: 119). I have suggested above that instruments of objectification of trust have lubricated commerce relations over much of the millennium. Where legal regulation failed – and it frequently would – the informal solidarities of merchants have often succeeded. As co-religionists share established moral precepts, as fellow nationals are known and share language and memory, and as family members are kin – all are more easily integrated into extended coalitions. Known agents in mercantile communities are also important lubricants in chains of exchange. Communicating information and business intelligence helped to maintain the integrity of existing relationships. Merchants vouchsafed the reputation of agents, negotiators and administrators. They communicated the conditions in which the network operated and spread news on the trustworthiness of a spectrum of agents far afield. By dint of their acts, corresponding traders created an ethic of responsibility as very few agents could afford to gain a reputation as untrustworthy or deviant (Aslanian, 2011: 86–119, 177–81). There is no reason why such webs of trade should not be considered capable of the complex multi-functional aspects of business, such as handling and warehousing freight, negotiating with local agents and municipal officials and with mariners.

Robust historical networks such as these are defined by Philip Curtin as 'trade diasporas' (Curtin, 1984; see also Pomeranz and Topik, 1999). Curtin perceives a general pattern. Breaking off purposefully to settle in another city as strangers, traders learned languages, customs and techniques of local trading that they could utilise in negotiations between the host and original communities. Furthermore, almost everywhere communities were created in separate spaces, according to Curtin. Aslanian's deep research into the Armenian merchants in New Julfa casts doubt on Curtin's typology. In a persuasive case, he utilises extensive archival records to develop an economic sociology of trust, identity and community organisation (Aslanian, 2011). The Armenian merchants of New Julfa serve as a good illustration of cross-civilisational organisation that facilitated inter-civilisational engagement in economic relations. They were a network with extensive reach in trans-Eurasian trade. Aslanian finds little relevance in the

trade diaspora paradigm for the picture of the Armenian trade communities that he constructs. In order to answer questions about the mode of organisation and trust that this stateless network instituted, he turns to theories of social capital. Four factors underpinned trust: the insularity of the network; the web of information, espionage and news that traders maintained; the coercive grip on family members when merchants were abroad; and courts and tribunals that could curb malfeasance. Comparison with Sephardic Jewish and Multani merchants shows that trade networks spanned a spectrum of polycentric to monocentric organisation and insularity. The Armenian network was tightly insular, while the Sephardic one recruited outsiders and incorporated cross-cultural commerce more readily. Aslanian's research provides insight into the breadth of merchant networks tied up in early modern long-distance trade, a breadth too great for the category of 'trade diaspora' to bear.

The worldwide Armenian web was uniquely inter-civilisational. Its political links accommodating relationships with states is a notable feature, particularly the Ottoman state and the Safavid Empire. As carriers of the overland trade Armenians stretched further, migrating into southern and north-western Europe. The network traded across Eurasia with all the European powers. Indeed Armenian communities had a presence in all the major early modern empires (Hoerder, 2002: 175–7). The trans-imperial Armenian nexus included China, Russia and the gunpowder empires (Aslanian, 2011). Their far-flung reach from Manila to London meant that the network was a bearer of inter-civilisational experience insofar as it was a singular force. Armenians cemented ties across a large macro-region without recourse to significant state power of their own. Beyond the spheres of influence in their range, they were talented in other diplomatic negotiations that enhanced their wider reputation as brokers.

The variation of outstanding historical communities is the most salient point of Aslanian's inquiry. Fukienese, Genoese, Gujarati traders (with their genial Jain traditions), Jewish, Arabian, Portuguese, Parsee, Dutch, Indonesian and Sudanese merchant communities are better defined as organisational webs more or less involved in inter-civilisational trade. Wherever merchants settled as strangers, they encountered different grades of compromise and accommodation. Hospitality towards visitors and new arrivals in a city, at a crossroads or in a village was a test of worldly orientation. Crossroad cities where cultural and economic traffic routinely passed through stand out as examples of both inter-civilisational engagement and cosmopolitan spheres of contact. A whole spectrum of sociabilities, ranging from the most welcoming to the ambivalent to the hostile and barely tolerant, influenced conditions of life. Distance from communities of strangers always continued, but in the most porous of commercial cities there were also public spaces of coexistence where differences were not crushed

or suspended but subject to inter-cultural possibilities (Murphy, 2001: 13–14). Such spaces open up cosmopolitan encounters of the most routine and immeasurable kind that accumulate as patterns of cities and societies. Long-term habitation of places fostered sociabilities in which there is distance and distinction, but also inter-cultural exchange. Conversely, deep suspicion towards strangers or tight restrictions on their participation in the city or even xenophobic expulsion can be various grades of obstruction.

In two long passages on economic relations, I argue that the transformation of patterns of long-distance trade, the growth of money, the codification of trust and the expansion of imagined connections provided complex and early spurs to the imaginary institution of capitalism. As a general view, there is widespread recognition that the great transformation of modern capitalism emerged from political and inter-imperial rivalry as well as from economic movements. But modern capitalism is distinctive in other ways also. The counterpoints to civilisational analysis raised in Chapter 3 call for further remarks on capitalism in light of the examination carried out here of inter-civilisational engagement in economic relations.

Long-distance commerce may well represent latent capitalist forms of economic organisation and orientation, as Weber and Braudel contend. But capitalism is a modern imaginary relating to political, imperial and cultural patterns of the last five hundred years. One perspective suggesting varieties of capitalism is discussed in Chapter 2 (Arnason, 2005). Arnason's injunction that inter-civilisational problematics connect with the origins of capitalism is an important point about the salience of long-distance trade (Arnason, 2003: 296). Marxist perspectives are even more emphatic that modern capitalism represents a significant rupture with prior formations integrating trade amongst other things. The mainstream of Marxist political economy attributes the energisation of accumulation to transformed social relations. The specific Marxist perspectives discussed in Chapter 3, on the other hand, concern themselves with the pluralities of capitalism and the varying cultural, legal and political orientations to accumulation and regulation (Cox, 2002). In this view, varieties of capitalism have resulted from two related processes. In the first process, the confrontation between tendencies of capitalist expansion and the interaction of civilisations generates variants of accumulation. Second, the capitalist quest for resources, markets, money, growth and profit confronts resistance stemming from other dimensions of modernity.

The two processes operating in concert give rise to different relationships between states and forms of economic power. For example, the chartered trading firms of Europe's modern empires are instances of the interpenetration

of capital, colonialism and state, though they never collapse into one another. A greater differentiation can be made in later variants of capitalism. Though he rarely expresses them as variants, Cox distinguishes three dimensions of power in modernity in a manner quite consistent with the distinction of diverse figurations of capitalism. His three dimensions are: the economic realm of capital, welfare, labour, production and consumption; the political realm of states, trans-national non-state actors and social movements; and the ontological realm of civilisations where large-scale varieties of capitalism are shaped. In a Polanyi-inspired statement, he argues that civilisations 'confront the economic imperatives of capitalism and move social economies in different directions' (Cox, 2002: 167). Cox's account logically paves the way for an analytic that reveals a number of combinations of business and labour, work ethics and capacity to appropriate cultural critique. Actually-existent combinations and forms of accumulation produce more diversity than can be properly accounted for in the typologies of institutionalist explanations in the 'varieties of capitalism' literature in political economy.

A contemporary example is the surge in Asia's modernities at the end of the twentieth century. Pieterse has an astute understanding of modern Asia's entanglements that throws into relief cultural and economic dimensions of inter-civilisational engagement (Pieterse, 2010, 2012). Asia's pre-nineteenth-century lead over the West has been revived and mobilised as a cultural force in 'new modernities'. The new modernities have surged on the basis of a careful renovation of 'traditional life worlds' at a time when Western modernity is subsiding (Pieterse, 2010: 95). Asia's modernities with reflexively constructed traditions mesh well with other economic cultures. They have interacted with traditional Anglo-American philosophies of capitalism, creating new political-economic and cultural fusions in the process. Strategic economic invention and the creation of new styles of consumer taste and cultural representations emerge from the consequent fusions as patterns of renewal and outgrowth. What Pieterse also shows is how civilisational heritages and different regimes of accumulation can be inventively harnessed to engage the capitalist imaginary and produce a proliferation of connections (see also Arnason, 2005; Katzenstein, 2010a).

Here is a contemporary case of inter-civilisational communication. In the twenty-first century, new models of development made possible by the eruption of fresh inter-cultural interpretations deepen the economic engagement of different world zones with variable civilisational legacies. Far from declining with globalisation, civilisations provide important reference points for major non-Western projects of globalisation; in particular, China and Japan as competing epicentres (see Arnason, 2002; Robertson, 1992: 85–96). In the different modes

of late Asian capitalisms, we find fusions in culture and political economy epitomising inter-civilisational engagement.

Braudel as a historian of modern capitalism who is outside all of the frameworks discussed above had something in common with them. He pointedly cautioned against positing capitalism as a single system unresponsive to cultural patterns and social orders. He thought that cultural mixes were the most plentiful in early modernity where trade flowed. What I have discerned in the economic histories surveyed here is that many of the routine contacts and connections in economic relations were also inter-cultural exchanges. Perhaps the traffic in cultural goods was never far away from the trade in commodities?

### Cultural traffic in the centres and at the crossroads of knowledge

There are occasions and phases when inter-civilisational engagement is economic, cultural and peripatetic all at once. Travellers and migrants are recipients of culture, as well as its bearers; they borrow as well as carry. The innumerable acts of bearing and borrowing have nurtured creation in religion, science, language, myth, philosophy, architecture and the arts. Cultures change through practices of borrowing and blending, creolisation, combination and synthesis, translation, absorption, detached or embedded learning, mediated contact and representation. The practices are processes. Where practices of learning and reinvention attract intellectual, religious and aesthetic practitioners of different civilisational traditions, it becomes possible to speak of inter-civilisational engagement of cultural and symbolic form and content.

Because Randall Collins's helpful theory of relational processes of cultural exchange is important to the elaboration of this dimension of inter-civilisational engagement in these pages, it is treated at greater length. Collins defines civilisations as magnetic 'zones of prestige' that draw people to their outwardly radiating brilliance (2004). Thick connections are made in the major centres of science, philosophy, theology and art. The principal ideas, practices and styles of creative centres make their way through networks to other world zones. In his historical sociology of philosophy, Collins finds that the centres of philosophical thought strengthen themselves through large networks that reach out to wider circles to become generally known (Collins, 2000). The most radiant of such centres become admired even in other civilisations. The processes by which philosophical traditions are created pertain also to other domains of cultural activity,

according to Collins, for example architecture and music. Philosophical schools working at new epistemological and ontological abstractions have advanced cultural, moral and scientific inquiry. By dint of possessing such prestige, academies and universities are able to attract proponents of inventions, axioms, faiths, moral precepts, techniques and styles.

The bearers of abstractions and particular cultural products enter prestigious centres which encourage diversity, rivalry and coalitions. Through argument and experimentation, they consolidate extensive chains of diverse people in the orbit of centres of cultural brilliance. By privileging and protecting agonistic principles of intellectual collaboration, host academies, universities, monasteries and cities encourage 'rival positions, variations in stance' in opposition to one another (Collins, 2004: 133). Creativity ensues from intellectual strife and debate. Creative centres then tend to export teachers and evangelists of different cultural currents to the margins of civilisational zones. The intellectual currents formed in the most animated centres radiate outwards beyond the formal boundaries of states and empires and in doing so become civilisational.

These are the most general of factors discerned from an immense variety. There is a larger conclusion to infer from the register of diversity Collins establishes: there is no singular meta-historical patterning of the relationship of political, economic and cultural factors. The variety of figurations of political and economic power and cultural crystallisation comes to light in Collins's sizeable survey. The main generalisation he makes is that multi-centred civilisational zones are eminent. Japan's polycentrism is a strong example, particularly around the historic Kansai region. Islamic schools in Basra, Baghdad, Cairo, Damascus and Cordoba were rich crossroads of philosophical, artistic and religious translation, experimentation and thought. It is not because they were blessed by geography. Rather, they generated cultures of fusion that absorbed and transformed 'the rich traditions of art and learning conserved in the Greek, Roman and Persian worlds [that] fell into Muslim hands, enriching the legacy transmitted from Arabia' (Fernández-Armesto, 2001: 331). Neo-Confucian schools of philosophy in East Asia generated cultures of deliberation that were variously interactive. Europe's so-called scientific revolution embroiled multiple centres in debate and a contest for intellectual autonomy with the Papacy. Europe's philosophical schools could be single-centred also – the Vienna Circle and Paris's 1950s existentialists communicated outwards through channels of prestige. One example shows a variation of patterns quite starkly. The history of first-millennium Buddhism illustrates the potential disentanglement of cultural hypertrophy from political hegemony. Chinese and Japanese travellers were drawn to India to acquire the teachings of Buddhism. Missionaries emanating outwards spread Buddhism to East and South-East Asia. However, the extension of the structures of monastic

life to Japan, Tibet, Sri Lanka and China did not bring a transfer of political and economic institutions. Cultural goods and religious practices progressed via this centuries-long movement; political and economic institutions did not.

In summary, civilisation, according to Collins, is a process of interaction. Cultural development at the crossroads of civilisations is too prominent to ignore. But there are conspicuous omissions from his scholarship. Plainly omitted are those civilisational interactions not involving 'high civilisations'. Another limitation is symptomatic of much of civilisational analysis. Collins preoccupies himself with land-based empires and landlocked cities that draw different peoples and high volumes of traffic in culture, theology, science and philosophy. Lincoln Paine argues to the contrary that seas and oceans are highways of cultural transmission more so than terrestrial paths, at least prior to the nineteenth century (Paine, 2013). Oceanic civilisations can also be cultural conjunctures, even though they don't depend on the same topography and materiality as mainland zones of prestige. Their land-based sites are obvious enough. However, the paths of their cultural 'radiance' around coasts and rivers and across seas and oceans endow them with a different outlook. Their responsiveness to other civilisational influences is informed by shoreline and saltwater horizons. A framework for addressing this lacuna is the purpose of the next chapter.

Reciprocal engagement of the kind that Collins elucidates is reminiscent of the 'continual mutual borrowing' that Braudel sees as an inescapable feature of civilisations (1993: 8). Braudel perceives the interactive composition of lasting 'cultural assets' and material infrastructure. World historians have enumerated the historical loans, as it were, of distant civilisations to Europe before it established great inequalities of global power in the nineteenth century (see Bayly, 2012; Hodgson, 1993). Yet those historical borrowings intermingled with other processes of mutual borrowing taking place in the multi-civilisational zones of Europe centred on the Mediterranean world and creations that were exported with Europe's empires. For example, early Renaissance universities were centres of cosmopolitan knowledge-sharing, especially given that a significant minority of the academy and the students were foreigners (Hoerder, 2002: 118–19). Universities as multinational communities have been a force for universalist cultures. Epistemologically, they have been conduits of borrowing and sharing of knowledge and cultural goods. They have been part of a larger pattern of cross-regional borrowing that has been combined with Europe's inter-continental appropriations and impositions.

The most complex of reciprocal engagement is evident in linguistic and symbolic abstractions that moderate communication. Languages travel, including mathematical ones. Alternatively, as is often enough the case, they are part of a conquest and then impose themselves. The Arabic transmission of mathematical

devices (especially algebra and trigonometry), the diffusion/emanation of symbols from India and alphabetical script from the Levant are historical illustrations of the processes of transfer of cognition and communication. More deeply engaged societies can also undergo semantic and grammatical intermixing, cross-language fertilisation and appropriation, creative adaptation of words and concepts, and phonological transfer. It is rare for invasion and migration to not have an impact in spreading languages. The Arab tribes of the Fatimid and Abbasid Caliphates commemorated in Ibn Khaldun's historical accounts are one example. A large example is the impact of Europe's modern colonial empires. Portugal, Spain, France, Britain and the Netherlands imposed languages as a lingua franca for elites that could become a demotic idiom (as French did in north-west Africa). Where wholesale adoption of a language did not occur, terms could still spread through different languages, with the coloniser's tongue also quietly adopting new words (as English did in the long occupation of India). Linguistic blends were more particular. Creole syntheses in the Americas were consequences of protracted inter-civilisational contact in the context of imperial dominion and slavery. Swahili originated in the vibrant thalassic environment of coastal trades between Mogadishu and the Comoros. Later it expanded into the interior.

The argument made here has focused on efflorescent intersections that are often bilateral spaces between civilisations, so to speak. According to Salvatore, a macro-sociological scope can bring trans-civilisational processes that are based on multi-civilisational inputs into the picture (Salvatore, 2007). In trans-civilisational processes, cultural techniques, concepts and abstractions circulate more densely by means of mutual sharing, teaching, transfer and translation. Salvatore highlights those patterns in the historical context of Islamicate civilisation. What happens if we take the unit of research as 'multi-civilisational regions'? The examples of trans-oceanic empires that exerted extensive imperial hegemony and a cultural sphere demonstrates trans-civilisational processes. Discussion of these formations takes place below following examination of the fourth dimension of inter-civilisational engagement.

## Models of polity and politics in inter-civilisational engagement

Transfer, communication and political reconstruction of civilisational models constitute a fourth dimension of engagement. Civilisations are frequently associated with empires (Aktürk, 2009: 59–61). When it comes to transmission of civilisational models, the association is situational. In the epoch of modern colonialism, this dimension of engagement almost invariably involves imperial hierarchies of relations between states and broad-ranging constructions of power

(Katzenstein, 2010b). Moreover, the articulation of engagement is often from central to peripheral elites. Empires exercise particularly hierarchical techniques of political communication and exchange with other states and with elites within their own territories. I start this passage with comments on modern empires.

Steady entanglement of the Western hemisphere with the Indian Ocean basin over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries expanded the spaces of European empires and the range of encounters that they had. Furthermore, overseas enterprises had a profound impact on state formation and relations between European states. Diplomacy, treaties, alliances and the enlargement of spheres of influence conspicuously formalised the coexistence of modern states. In Europe, nation-states enshrined active mutual recognition in the Treaty of Westphalia. The Westphalian nation-states were empires, as well as nation-states, and they recognised each other as such. Mutual recognition did not negate the competition of empires. Modern inter-imperial rivalries produced particularly power-saturated and asymmetrical episodes of inter-civilisational engagement. The fierce rivalry of empires has been a feature of modernity that could be more fully unpacked.

Historical examples show significant variation in political and legal reconstruction. Civilisations emerging in contexts of a dominant power have often been squeezed into typologies of 'primary' and 'derivative' civilisational and state formation. They can be reinterpreted without the constraints of categories of primacy and derivation. To do so requires harnessing case-specific histories of particular civilisations and how they radically reconstruct models of polity and law in distinctive regional processes. Three can be briefly recounted here. The first, China, shows how close empires and political models of civilisation could be. The second, the first-millennium Sanskrit order of India and South-East Asia, illustrates partial differentiation of the agency of empires from the model of civilisation. The third, Iberian colonialism, exemplifies a simultaneous creation and extension of a model of trans-civilisational rule.

China is a very particular instance of civilisational emulation where models of polity were more or less borrowed without compulsion. Korea, Vietnam and Japan adopted the centralist organisation and culture of Chinese bureaucracy. Confucian knowledge and learning became models of government and law during the Tang Dynasty for Vietnam, Japan and Korea. Scholars who have compared the three trajectories of state formation modelled on the Chinese example find that the innovative modification of borrowed institutions quickly follows their adoption (Arnason, 2003: 295). Talk of Sinicisation during this historical phase over-simplifies the picture of uneven, partial and transformative processes. Even so, the long and original engagement with China furnished Japan and Korea with a paradigm of intellectual, religious, linguistic and artistic involvement. Both

countries carried the historical memory of engagement with another civilisational force. In both sets of emulation, the relationship of components of Chinese state culture was radically redefined and relativised through comparison with existing indigenous culture and political traditions.

Chinese civilisation itself has a history of collecting, learning and adapting. Trans-Eurasian links were important to China in creating civilisational learning processes. Dense engagement in the main dynastic phases where China grew and connected entailed a political 'flow of information back to China: the compilation of a remarkable archive of knowledge of the world, unmatched in any other civilisation' (Fernández-Armesto, 2001: 223). 'Unmatched' is a strong word, but do not let it divert attention from the historicity that emerges from accumulation of such a store of civilisational heritage. Civilisational heritage and interaction become an orientation when knowledge is accumulated thus over a long historical trajectory. In this regard, China can be taken as an example of a civilisation with an imaginary of greater porosity than older Eurocentric perspectives on it would suggest. It is a civilisation that 'takes in' as well as it emanates and imposes.

A second illustration of the political expansion of a civilisational model through transfer and translation over a large macro-region is the millennium-long Sanskrit order described by Pollock (1998, 2004; see also Arnason, 1997b). His periodisation is based on civilisation-making that occurred through a body of cosmopolitan aesthetic practices. Eurasian patterns include inter-regional outgrowth of cultural-institutional figurations. Through the use of Sanskrit in inscriptions, courts mobilised literary and cultural form as a power to cosmopolitanise a civilisational model over a number of political centres:

What is created in the period that covers roughly the millennium between 200 or 300 and 1300 (when Angkor is abandoned) is a globalized cultural formation ... characterized by a largely homogenous political language of poetry in Sanskrit along with a range of comparable cultural-political practices (temple-building, city planning even geographical nomenclature) throughout it. (Pollock, 1998: 12)

Sanskrit spread rapidly from North India across the sub-continent and to South-East Asia as a cultural idiom of courtly power and model of behaviour. It was a civilisational high culture that widely transmitted implicit power. No empire, army regiments or religion acted as a vehicle of Sanskrit when it expanded into South-East Asia. There was a linguistic-cultural power that 'gave voice to imperial politics not as an actual material force but as an aesthetic practice, and it was especially this poetry of politics that gave presence to the Sanskrit

cosmopolis' (Pollock, 1998: 15). Reflecting a pluralist imaginary, the aesthetic practices in question culturally represented a universe of plurality of gods, kings and heroes. Sanskrit's spread occurred through maintaining a certain distance from other local idioms, avoiding confrontation with them and establishing conditions of easy coexistence. The impact on other languages was significant, whereas Sanskrit itself was unaffected. The energy of such processes involves an interplay of cosmopolitan and demotic cultural forms across a multi-state macro-region.

As Pollock reveals, larger commonwealths forged out of inter-civilisational interaction are not always centralist (Pollock, 1998). Regionalising impulses dogged the Sanskrit order. Trans-regionalisation of cultural practices in South-East Asia ended when regional court states turned to demotic languages (Pollock, 2004: 258–9). Pollock's hypothesis of the 'vernacular turn' at the start of the eleventh century articulates a new phase in which local languages supplanted Sanskrit. Vernacularisation coincided with the differentiation of a literary mode of cultural production in which the authorisation of the 'right to write' distinguishes the author-intellectual from other cultural producers (Pollock, 1998: 8). The choice of intellectuals to use one language and not another was a choice of communication; 'they chose to write in a language that does not travel – and that they know does not travel – as easily as the well-travelled language of the cosmopolitan order'. Processes of re-localisation of language, cultural forms and power were animated by the use of authorised idioms in high literature at the local level and at the expense of cosmopolitan language. Facilitated by the implicit power of aesthetic practices, other institutions of state were created at the regional level. By the end of the fourteenth century, regionalisation fragmented the field of high culture producing a localised political order. Thus ended the Sanskrit millennium and its cosmopolitan culture hospitable to interaction.

My third example involves an important phase of entanglement of the two Iberian monarchies. In unifying the crowns of Portugal and Spain, the Habsburgs created a 'world-encircling empire' for a time (Subrahmanyam, 2007). Portuguese maritime and political influence in Asia and Africa partnered with Spanish possessions in the Americas, the Philippines and Europe to form a short-lived but extensively global Iberian force. However, the interchange of institutional and conceptual components between Portuguese and Spanish models of polity had two lasting effects. First, both Iberian partners took from the common fund of experiences during the sixty years of union. All the reforms to administration that they enacted responded to a rationalising impulse. Since they possessed territories across the world, it was not hard for them to take an Apollonian perception of the extent of Iberian reach, a global Ibero-sphere as it were. Changes like these reverberated in their imperial imaginaries.

Second, they pioneered a mode of imperial world view for Europe's empires that echoed in the cultural Gallo-sphere of the second French Empire and the Anglosphere of the British Commonwealth at its height. Previous areas of distinction between Portugal and Spain were blurred during the course of the union. They transferred skills in political diplomacy and the government of religious orders across the two monarchies. Both were shaped by shared imperial experiences and engagement with other civilisations. The urge to territorialise possessions in the manner of large colonies or the Spanish *encomienda* had not been especially familiar to the Portuguese. It was so after a 'terrestrial turn' after 1570 (Subrahmanyam, 2007: 1372). The Spanish desire for long-distance trade in Asia was prolonged by the deep dalliance with Portugal. Furthermore, the active coordination of colonisation in the Western hemisphere was linked to operations in Africa and the closely connected regions of Asia through an international fiscal system run by both states. Reasonably uniform fiscal practices emerged to buttress administration and trade in American domains and through allied Asian colonies. The union ended with a difficult disentanglement of conjoint imperial institutions and merging outlooks. As conventional historiography would have it, both were destined for decadence. When recounted as a phase of political modelling and expansion the trajectories look decidedly more complex, contingent and based on shared engagements.

The fourth dimension of inter-civilisational engagement is particularly context-dependent and no single pattern dominates. For instance, culture can travel without political institutions pursuing, as Buddhism did originally in its emanation from India. On the other hand, we have the prominent experience of modern colonialism, where systems of administrative practice are often replicated or transferred in part from the larger imperial order, but the institutions and values of democracy are not. The subjugated stand formally as common subjects of an imperial order, but do not have the opportunity to participate in a common culture of equals. In recognising that this is a formative experience of modernity, a nuanced overview must also incorporate other variants. Examination of the broad variation in the confrontation of non-Western worlds with Western colonialism occurs in coming chapters, where cultural and political exchange and resistance are explored.

As noted above, the long discussion of dimensions of inter-civilisational engagement would be incomplete without qualifying the overall argument with remarks on countervailing limitations and opposites. As Marcel Mauss observed, civilisations are known by their 'non-borrowings' as well as by their combinations. In other words, acts and episodes of aversion and conflict are counterweights to

engagement. There are noteworthy historical encounters between civilisations that have generated *enmity*, *dissonance* and *conflict*. The impact of acts and episodes of struggle against connection is per se self-defining.

In contexts of modern colonialism, non-borrowings can sit alongside conflict-ridden relationships of power and inter-imperial rivalry. For example, inter-civilisational dissonance was a characteristic of Britain's conflict with China during the so-called Opium Wars. China and Britain's mutual refusal of each other in the context of superior British naval power and greater imperial ambition fuelled the conflict. British demands for economic access made sense within the universe of British imperial ambition that worked from an anglicised map of Asia. At the time, opium was the most profitable export staple of the East India Company's Asian trade. In turn, opium facilitated the highly profitable trade in tea for the British domestic market. Of course, the trade was skewed to British interests. Both sides interpreted circumstances according to conflicting values. What mattered to Britain was wildly at odds with what was valued by China's imperial court. China's refusal to accede issued from a world view at complete variance with Britain's, as well as from a desire in Peking to stem the depletion of silver that enabled China to trade. Subsequently, the conflict with Britain shaped the intense resistance to the emergence of Christianity and the later crackdown on the Taiping Rebellion. China's military defeat did not result in 'free trade', but the transformation of trade practices and patterns in China to the benefit of British interests, especially with the acquisition of Hong Kong as a spoil of war. Other Western powers crowded into eastern China and Canton demanding similar access. A dissonance of world views had led China and Britain to conflicting purposes and stimulated the move to war with an outcome that completely improved Britain's strategic position in Asia against its French, Dutch, Spanish and Portuguese rivals. For China, the setback was devastating and it heralded the beginning of large-scale emigration of Chinese labourers to countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

If dissonance produces cultural resistance, distance from alien traditions can be benign in other scenarios. The *maintenance of geo-spatial distance* between civilisations leans on differentiation as an inter-cultural condition. Enervation in successful states can produce retirement from the deep engagement that propelled their success originally. Distance between civilisations may emerge in conditions of international and regional transformation as well as from those of stable dominance. Such conditions have a differentiating quality; that is, civilisations and states radically 'other' each other. Japan's withdrawal from regional events in the early period of Tokugawa rule and Korea's Koryō dynasty's retraction from Sung China in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries are examples of considered self-distinction from the dominant state. In the case of Japan, historians have

situated the regime's retirement within a modernisation meta-narrative as a turn to autarky. It is more adequately understood as a strategic response to changing circumstances initiating a political and cultural dynamic of its own, a phase of 'world watching' (Robertson, 1992: 85). Its adventures with detachment were self-shaping from a vantage-point of safe separation. Blockages to engagement such as this are also a kind of engagement, inasmuch as they can be culture-forming against a distanced outside model. In other words, refusal to interact may still be remote engagement with the alterity of other cultures.

But symbolic differentiation can result in refusal and repulsion as well as benign detachment. *Repulsion* can postpone engagement indefinitely and this is most evident in cases where minorities are persecuted, removed and made refugees or where violent acts of dispossession occur. The forced conversion and steady expulsion of Jews and Muslims from the Iberian Peninsula between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries brought an end to inter-cultural *conviviencia*. During the same period Jews were forced out of England and Central Europe in a process that similarly recomposed a population and expunged a climate of coexistence. Brutal modern episodes of expulsion that abruptly bring an end to coexistence have a genocidal streak to their logic. The forced removal of five First Nations by the United States in 1830 from their ancestral lands, Japan's massacres in Nanking in 1937 and the scorched-earth purge of peasants that ensued and the blood-letting and expulsion of Palestinians (*al-Nakbah* in the Palestinian collective memory) that precipitated the formation of modern Israel are a sample. Whether slower expulsion or sudden relocation or massacre, the refusal to accommodate ethnic and racial others redefines dispositions to the histories and ontologies of other civilisations.

*Civilisational fragmentation and collapse* is much celebrated in Gibbon-esque histories. Some cases involved the use of strategic ambiguity in refusing alliances and negotiating other options. Byzantine civilisation in the Late Middle Ages faced a choice between tactical reconciliation with the Papacy and the risk of losing Constantinople to the Turkish Empire (Braudel, 1993: 29–30). Relations between Latin and Byzantine Christendom overshadowed by mutual suspicion plagued the dilemmas facing Constantinople. Major initiatives to reform state structures and fiscal practices failed along with efforts to prosper on the back of economic growth, which left the empire vulnerable and internally fragmented. Refusal of Latin Christendom's gestures of reconciliation precipitated the Venetian-led invasion of 1204 and the dissolution of the Byzantine Empire for several decades. The ornamental heritage of Byzantine civilisation was violently desecrated. When the empire was formally reinstated, one last cultural flourish took place in the diminished city of Constantinople. Caught between the Latins to their west and the ascendant

Ottomans to the east, the inhabitants of the city were isolated. The end came finally more than two centuries later. When Rome's conditions for reuniting the two churches were refused, the way was paved for the decisive Ottoman siege in 1453. The civilisational legacy was dispersed following the collapse of the state and capture of control of the eastern Mediterranean by the rising Ottoman Empire.

## Conclusion

In the course of this chapter, the ties instituted by human imaginaries are plotted analytically across four dimensions of inter-civilisational engagement. The examples given should serve to clarify variations. They also accentuate the importance of connections prior to the centuries often associated with the so-called global age. I see this as a corrective to the picture of high connectivity in modernity portrayed in many studies of globalisation. In conducting this survey, I have been broad. I continue to be so in the next chapter, which launches Part II. The world's waterways, coasts and seas, so much of the biosphere we inhabit, are neglected realms of civilisation-making and interaction. I aim to correct that in the next two chapters.