

# Book Review

- Valerie Hansen, *The Year 1000: When Explorers Connected the World—and Globalization Began*. New York: Scribner, 2020. Pp. xi + 308. \$30.00 (cloth)

Globalization is a phenomenon that eludes easy definition or description, even without the value judgements that are often ascribed to the economic, social, and cultural process. It is even more difficult, as with other complex historical processes such as the industrial revolution, colonialism, or the Renaissance, to assign a “start date,” and yet scholars continually try to identify the roots and origins of these complex historical phenomena. Valerie Hansen, an accomplished historian of Chinese and world history, does just this as she argues persuasively that rather than simply a modern phenomenon, the process of globalization began as early as the year 1000 CE. This is far earlier than most textbooks, which tend to locate globalization as concurrent with the early modern period and the European “age of discovery” from the late fifteenth century onwards. Hansen readily admits that, of course, globalization in the modern sense did not begin in 1000, but rather “globalization in the most fundamental sense” (3). For example, ordinary people were generally not able to travel freely long distances, and national borders and states nowhere existed in their modern forms. However, Hansen identifies a global pattern of movement (both volitional and coerced) that began around the end of the first millennium, the more widespread movement of goods and resources across great distances, the spread of what we can begin to call global religions, and, finally, the seemingly inevitable backlash against globalization that resulted in riots, destruction of perceived foreign material culture, and massacres of outsiders. In short, Hansen has identified a series of disparate and widespread historical processes around the year 1000 that are remarkable in their implications for the beginning of globalization.

Hansen identifies a number of trade and exploration routes that led to this period of globalization, including Viking journeys across the North Atlantic and eastward into what is today Russia; Chinese journeys across the South China Sea and Indian Ocean; the early slave trades between, for example, Africa and the Middle East; the trans-Saharan trade in gold and other luxury products, mainly from southeast to northwest; and the trade routes from southeastern China to Southeast Asia and beyond. She begins with a discussion of the Viking explorations across the north Atlantic. While these voyages did not result in long-lasting settlements in mainland North America, there were initial small-scale

settlements in “Vinland” that led to several voyages to harvest wood since the Vikings depleted their source of lumber relatively quickly in Iceland and Greenland. She notes that rather than forge brand new trade patterns, the Vikings “connected pre-existing trade networks on both sides of the Atlantic and so kicked off globalization” (52). This particular book is a fine example of previously separate parts of the first millennium world being connected, in however a limited way, but it is also an example of how Hansen’s argument can be overstated. The Viking presence in North America was extremely limited and fleeting, to the point that archaeologists are uncertain as to exactly where the Vikings made their settlements; the claim that this episode “kicked off globalization” is surely a bit of an overstatement, even if the arguments are generally sound.

Hansen continues tracing the origins of globalization by a review of trade networks that spanned the Americas around the year 1000. She identifies several networks that saw luxury goods and agricultural products travel, in some cases, thousands of miles. She cites evidence that the Cahokians and the Maya visited each other despite being far apart geographically, evidence that the peoples of Chaco Canyon consumed chocolate from Mesoamerica, and evidence that “intellectual property” such as metalworking spread widely in the early Americas, in this case metalworking knowledge from the Andes in South America to the Maya people in central America. Perhaps the most tantalizing glimpse of exchange from previously disparate geographical regions involves people who are represented with blond hair and blue eyes in Mayan artwork. At least a couple of scholars argue that it is not inconceivable that Norse ships were blown off course as they travelled across the North Atlantic and ended up in central America. The images not only depict peoples who look Norse, but also show ships that illustrate what Viking vessels of the year 1000 looked like. The verdict is still very much out on this theory, but, if true, it lends yet another strand of evidence to Hansen’s thesis that an era of rudimentary globalization was taking place as early as 1000 CE.

Other regions of the globe analyzed by Hansen include Central Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia, and the South Pacific, and in each case she identifies rather widespread trade networks in raw materials and commodities such as gold from west Africa and Chinese luxury goods as central Asian peoples such as the Khitan took the place of the Tang Dynasty in northern and western China. Hansen uses the Khitan royal tombs to illustrate these trade networks as those that remain intact contain luxury items from thousands of miles away. Similarly, she illustrates trade networks with Africa by using the example of Great Zimbabwe in which luxury goods are found from as far away as coastal China and Persia. She illustrates the massive amount of trade that emanated from western Africa by way of the caravan trade across the Sahara Desert, highlighting in particular the trade in salt and gold. Hansen cites the famous example of Mansa Musa, king of Mali in west Africa, who carried several tons of gold to Cairo and Mecca on one of his journeys, so much gold that the price of the precious metal on the Cairo market plummeted.

A portion of Hansen's book is taken up by the discussion of the early inter-regional slave trade, mainly the trade in human beings between the Vikings who became known as the Rus and the Byzantine Empire, the slave trade between sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East, and the trade between central Asian kingdoms and the major Middle Eastern slave markets such as Baghdad and Cairo. The slave trade was so pervasive in Eastern Europe and Central Asia that the very word "Slav," referring to the ethnicity of the peoples of this region, became synonymous with the word for slave, a remnant of which remains in the English language. Scholars estimate that perhaps as many as 11.75 million slaves crossed the Sahara Desert alone between 650 and 1900, and this is quite apart from the slave trade in other regions such as central Asia. Thus, the slave trade in this early period was on a similar scale with the trans-Atlantic slave trade, which accounted for around 12.5 million African captives.

In a chapter entitled "Surprising Journeys," Hansen details the fascinating travels of Polynesian peoples across the Pacific, often times sailing thousands of miles using nothing but knowledge of the seas and celestial navigation. She details Captain Cook's encounter with a sailor named Tupaia and a modern encounter with another sailor named Pailug, both of whom demonstrated the feasibility of accurate navigation across long stretches of open ocean using two canoes lashed to a wooden frame. Another journey she highlights around the end of the first millennium was that of the Chinese Buddhist monk Yijing who traveled from China to India and back again by sea through the Strait of Malacca. This journey serves as a backdrop to the extensive and far-flung trade in luxury goods, illustrated nicely in a book by Zhou Daguan in which he tells of Southeast Asian exports of exotic feathers, elephant tusks, rhinoceros horns, beeswax, aloe wood, spices, and other goods, mainly to China. She notes that around the year 1000 Southeast Asian trade, which had largely been with the Indian subcontinent hitherto, shifted dramatically to China after this date. In fact, she notes without exaggeration that "the entire region reoriented so that it could supply China" (197).

The final chapter is dedicated to China, which Hansen calls in the chapter title, the most globalized place on earth. She notes that "The Chinese had more extensive trade ties to foreign countries than any other people in the world in 1000" (199). The Song Dynasty, which ruled China at the end of the first millennium, used the tribute system to encourage political submission and trade from places in Southeast Asia. Many foreign merchants lived in the southern coastal cities where international trade was located, mainly at Quanzhou and Guangzhou in the south and Ningbo to the north, whence trade with Japan and Korea took place. Evidence of this foreign presence can be seen in the form of foreign cemeteries for Arab merchants as well as a mosque for Muslim worshippers. Hansen details the trade in goods such as aromatics, which were in enormous demand in China, as well as trade in Chinese porcelain and coins, which made their way across the Indian Ocean world to the west and Japan and Korea to the east. The culminating exhibit for China's globalized

world is a book written in the early thirteenth century by a trade commissioner stationed at Quanzhou named Zhao Rukuo. In his *Record of Various Foreign Peoples*, Zhao lists all of the foreign lands he knew about as well as a comprehensive list of trade goods entering and leaving China, a bewildering array of goods from all over the known world. Zhao even describes in detail the slave trade between Madagascar and the Arabian Peninsula, a trade in which China was not directly involved.

Summing up her argument that the long process of globalization began around the year 1000, Hansen draws a few conclusions that we might find useful in our era. First, she notes that, in general, societies that remained open to “the unfamiliar” did better than societies that instinctively reacted negatively to novel ideas and peoples. She notes at several points in her study that the process of globalization can and did lead to backlashes that often proved bloody, for example, the Massacre of the Latins in the twelfth century in which thousands of Italians living in Constantinople were killed, the slaughter urged on by Orthodox clerics. These tensions often boiled over in times of stress and the target for local frustrations were often peoples who looked or believed differently than the local populace. Another takeaway from this study is that modern scholars would do well to study this earlier era of globalization in order to better “tackle the future that lies before us” (233). Hansen’s argument that globalization started in 1000 should be taken as it is probably intended: as a thought-provoking exercise to get the reader to realize that interregional trade and movement of peoples are not new, modern phenomenon, but phenomena that have been taking place for a long time. After all, a few Viking captives who were blown off course towards what is today northern Mexico is not exactly globalization, and neither necessarily is the trade in commodities even over long distances. Hansen admits as much in her introduction, but nevertheless, her arguments are sound and are backed up in every instance with textual and archeological evidence. This volume is a welcome addition to the expanding literature on globalization and global studies and serves as a timely reminder that in premodern times as well as in our own, China and South Asia have been and will continue to be the major drivers of a globalizing economy.

*The Year 1000* is written in an accessible style, but also meticulously researched and footnoted so that students from high school through graduate school, scholars and casual readers of history alike will find this volume eminently useful. The book is organized in such a way that it can be assigned as a whole or by chapter depending on the needs of the course, although if the book is assigned by chapter, it would be advisable to assign the short first chapter, which provides a thorough overview of the book.

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