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The Interrelations between History and Geography at three points in time: Before the Neolithic Revolution, before the Industrial Revolution, and in the 21st century.

Introduction

Geography, mankind[1] and their histories are a consistent three-ring circus of interrelations. Those interrelations have been grand mastered by natural forces as well as human intellect and insight throughout the sphere of their respective known worlds. These spheres of influence encompass the entire planet and create new spheres for geography and history to play its parts in an ever-evolving world. While it is fair to say that certain local histories are known to their respective spheres, in the course of the our present space time compression they are incorporated into an ever increasing interrelated known world history and shaped by the use of developing technology and human understanding. The subsequent segments will explore those interrelations in the pre-Neolithic epoch, before the Industrial Revolution, and in our present time, the 21st century.

Pre-Neolithic Interactions

We begin with the pre-Neolithic epoch origins of human culture, when mankind was still confined to limited locales by technologies of hunting, fishing, gathering and nomadic herding. As these human beings formed their local societies, they looked at their

[1] Mankind refers to *homo sapiens sapiens*, and early hominids.

environment as an exterior, which contained their potential sustenance, in other words, they must fight to take from their natural world what they need to feed and shelter themselves. In a pre-Neolithic society migration would occur once there was not enough game to be killed, or fruit to be gathered, and the need for the society to migrate in search of food would be the foremost responsibility for survival.

Human communities were small and isolated from their neighbors, and the relationship between each group was the dominant concern. While tools for survival were created in these earliest communities it was the dominance over fire, which liberated these early humans. Fire began to break up the rigidity of night and day, and even the allowed control of the seasons. This control over nature allowed behavior to be less routine and automatic. Leisure was now a unique and a distinct possibility for these earliest groups. This exploitation of fire also led to the establishment of a home base. While it is fair to say that a home base may have been moved from time to time, yet it is this first fore ray into non-nomadic life that was uniquely non-animalistic. With the dawn of *Homo Sapiens Sapiens*, of which we belong, they began to spread to Eurasia within one hundred thousand years or so from the first appearances in Africa. From Africa they transgressed the Middle East, proceeding east towards Asia and eventually reaching Australia circa 40,000 BCE. At this time they were colonizing Europe and they lived beside the Neanderthals. It is believed that about 15,000 BCE *Homo Sapiens Sapiens* crossed a land bridge across the Bearing Strait and entered the Americas. The ability for these earliest humans to transverse the social constructed continents[2], as we may call them today, allowed for separate cultures and civilizations to emerge in different locales

[2] Martin W. Lewis and Karen E. Wigen, *The Myth Of Continents: A Critique Of Metageography* (Berkeley: University Of California Press, 1997), Chapter 1.

with specific natural selective traits.[3] These traits may include; melanin in the skin to protect from damaging sunlight, larger or smaller nostrils, and internal changes to assist in breathing in higher or lower altitudes, and larger brain sizes. These traits seemed to have an easier means by which to pass along due to the inbreeding in their respective local communities.[4]

Most experts believe that the Upper Paleolithic world was still an empty place.[5] During preceding ages and the Upper Paleolithic epoch, it would take thousands of years to transmit learning across barriers of geography and social division. A person may have lived his or her whole life without meeting someone from another group, tribe, or another culture. Most lived in isolation, which increased human diversity and distinction. This construct of human evolution would not occur until revolutionary changes in technology and political forces come about in recent times[6]. Geological changes such as Ice Ages, and land bridges in a cyclic receding and advancing manner shaped the globe.[7] This geological change is significant to human development is defined as Würm Glaciation, which compacted life into valleys and created temperate zones in order for plants, animals, and humans to congregate.[8] This may have been a factor in allowing the population to remain somewhat stable, growing and shrinking with the ever-changing environment. The last Ice Age ended approximately 12,000 years ago allowed for an

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[3] Charles R. Darwin, The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, 6th Edition (London: Penguin, 1968 (1859)), 459.
[4] Wikipedia, "Human Evolution", http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_evolution. Accessed 24 April 2006.
[5] J.M. Roberts, *Ancient History From the First Civilizations To The Renai*ssance, (London: Duncan Baird Publishers, 2002) 48.
[6] From the Neolithic Revolution circa 12,000 - 10,000 B.C.E. forward.
[7] Roberts, 54-60.
[8] *Pierre* Vidal-Naquet, *Harper Atlas of World History*, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992) 4-6.

environment in which *Homo Sapiens Sapiens* flourished by changing their means of food resources to from hunting and gathering to farming.

The Pre-Industrial Revolution Epoch

In order to understand the interrelations in this era we must first understand how human population exploded and began its fast track towards the Industrial Revolution. From the start of hominid evolution, roughly six million years ago as mankind began to walk upright, the period from about 12,000 B.C.E. to 1750 C.E. would be the greatest change in the interrelation between humans, history and geography. The great transformation would be around 12,000 B.C.E. when the climate would improve from the last ice age allowing for the Neolithic revolution to begin. The most intense change in human interrelations is the beginnings of the human control over nature with respect to the food supply. The surplus food produced led to larger populations living in smaller areas. This revolutionized the way societies survived and maintained their population by means of farming and herding. The changes in those societies allowed for the formation of permanent housing, local communities or cities, trading of goods across regional boundaries, and the invention of writing assisting in those commercial transactions.[9] From the first real city in Jericho, (circa 11,000 B.C.E.) to the ancient civilizations of the Indus Valley, Mesopotamia, and Egypt, location was the key geographic factor in the survival of those civilizations as well as its proximity to a viable water supply. It is not to say that all of early civilization as we classify them today all began only in these areas, it is the large concentration of these areas, and the long lasting effect that allows most

[9] Roberts, 54-60.

historians to use them for the demarcation as a starting point for the term “civilization”. While our own world today still has some foundations of these early civilizations, some of them have little or no influence on us today except in our perceptions and through archaeology and history as we continue to rediscover their past.

These early civilizations traded with each other, created technologies, and advanced their societies. They utilized their environment to their advantage such as the Egyptian civilization counting on the inundation of the Nile for harvesting, and for predicting times of drought for storing food for future use. It is this interrelation with the local geography and environment that allowed this civilization to flourish for over 3,000 years. While many civilizations have burgeoned in their own times such as the Minoans, Mycenaean, Dorian, Ionians, Mesopotamians, Phoenicians, Hittites, Assyrians, Aryans, Vedics, Brahmanas, Chinese, and many more, none from the ancient world have had a greater impact on the interrelations of geography and history than the Romans from our western perspective. It was their ability to conquer the environments they encountered that made theirs uniquely different. They initiated systems of irrigation such as the aqueduct for water delivery, which allowed for Roman and non-Roman civilizations to grow and prosper. Trade along roads built by the Romans, such as the Apian way, and throughout their known world brought ideas, customs, and commerce to an unprecedented level. While the ancient phrase “All roads lead to Rome” was popular even in Roman times, it is also conversely true that Rome was brought to most of the known world by these roads. These roads were so well traveled that it is still possible today to see ruts of the chariots and carts in the stones that brought armies and commerce all over the empire. While these civilizations did not live without wars between them, it

was this warfare that allowed for the development of newer technologies, and in return, those technologies conquered more of the environment with every community visited and every road traveled. Geographic boundaries were beginning to break down, armies could traverse great distances before the Roman Empire such as with Alexander The Great's trek to the east as far as India, but moving armies within the Roman empire became standardized with the 50,000 miles of roads. These key movements across geographic boundaries for transportation and administration became the means of support for the empire. [10]

A further great interrelationship of geography and history is the conquest of the seas beginning with the earliest times to the great age of exploration in the 15th, 16th and 17th and first half of the 18th centuries. The early Greeks thought sea adventures were a death-defying feat. This is reflected in the story of Odysseus in which storms, shipwrecks, and mythological creatures like the Sirens of whom Odysseus's sailors avoided their demise by plugging their ears in order to avoid the Siren's singing.[11] This story emphasizes the social anxiety of sea travel that would change with the successes of other great sea fairing traders and explorers in antiquity. The Phoenicians from an area around present day Lebanon were great traders throughout the Mediterranean and during the 5th century B.C.E., Etruscans, Greeks, and Phoenicians all battled on land and sea for the sea trade routes all over the Mediterranean.[12] The conquest of the seas and over sea geography was well underway. During the time of Imperial Roman, the Mediterranean was politically and economically united for the first time and last time in history.[13] Vast

[10] Roberts, 405.
[11] David Abulafia, ed., *The Mediterranean in History (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003),* 96.
[12] David Abulafia, ed., *The Mediterranean in History,* 116-125.
[13] David Abulafia, ed., *The Mediterranean in History,*126-127.

harbors were maintained and sea pirates were put down during the Roman period. For the known world at the time the Mediterranean was conquered and became an integral part of everyday life and commerce. Even during the post-Roman period, Byzantine, and medieval periods, the Mediterranean although fractured politically did not give up its trading links. It was the incursion of the Islamic world in the 7th century C.E., which severed the trading routes to the eastern and western Mediterranean.[14]

The next great leap in the interrelation of history and geography came with the Age of Exploration in the 14th century and the subsequent two centuries. With an one exception during the Age of the Vikings from 800 C.E. to 1100 C.E., when the long ship ruled the north seas, the command of the seas and over the geography of the seas did not encompass a world view until this new age of sea exploration. The merchant city-states of present day Italy such as Genoa, Pisa, Venice, Naples, Palermo had trade routes for spices on the Black Sea towards the east and the Silk Road. [15] This is why it is important to understand the interrelations of the geography and history of the Mediterranean. It was specifically this grab for trade routes that led the Portuguese and Spaniards in the 14th and 15th centuries to explore for more routes to the east, by sailing west. Historians note that Christopher Columbus new that the world was round, and that the flat world concept was a falsehood since the world was proven to be round by Eratosthenes around 240 B.C.E., and most Kings are depicted holding a sphere of the earth on many coins of the day.[16]

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[14] David Abulafia, ed., *The Mediterranean in History,*142-148.

[15] Lynn H. Nelson, Department of History, University of Kansas, 24 February 1998, http://www.ku.edu/kansas/medieval/100/sections/17discov.html, Accessed 24 April 2006.

[16] Lynn H. Nelson, Department of History, University of Kansas. 24 February 1998.

The Age of Exploration and the discovery of the “new world”, which already was inhabited, and of course “not new” to the people who lived there, began a new page for the interrelations of geography and history. It bridged the gap between the inhabitants of the “so-called” new and old worlds. At times it was one-sided whereas the old world was developing the new world in its own image instead of learning from the local histories of the cultures they encountered. It would not be until the age of industrialization and specialization that the British Empire would monopolize trade within most of the existing spheres of influence throughout the world. It will be said during the Age of Imperialism; “the sun never sets on the British Empire”. The phrase in its original form was by penned by Christopher North's 1829 in his work *Noctes Ambrosianae*. The actual words used were “His Majesty's dominions, on which the sun never sets”, has been used to describe the vastness of the economies of the British Empire and to enthrall the notion that the world had been conquered.

The 21st Century

Today it is said that we live in a world that is much smaller even though the earth occupies the same space. Why is this? The global events such as the; Neolithic Revolution (12,000 B.C.E.), Scientific Revolution (1543 – 1687 C.E.), Industrial Revolution (1750 – 1900 C.E.), Transportation Age (1850 – 1960 C.E.), and Information Age (1960 -1998 C.E), allowed for maximizing the interactions between humankind, history and geography. People in the most developed countries as well as some people on the least developed countries can utilized the functionality of the Internet to communicate

with people in places that were completely inaccessible to the masses. While the Internet has far-reaching capabilities and spans many regions, certain exceptions are evident to this wide-open scheme. China, Bahrain, Burma, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates are just some of the countries who use Internet filtering so that their populace does not have open access to websites and information their governments believe unfit for viewing.[17] While these governments suppress information available on the Internet, companies that exist in other countries such as Google in the United States, are allowed to operate in content blocking countries by allowing them to filter Google's content.[18] It is a complex problem in a time when Google allows access to its network and content blocking by foreign countries, but will not allow the United States government access to it's networks to assist in terrorism monitoring.[19] One of the most important developments is that local histories are no longer local in the Internet realm. People can read stories obscure to one person yet relative to another. People displaced by natural disasters or for employment can communicate with family or friends, and find security long away from their original domicile. During the current conflict in Iraq, United States military personnel are put in a total communications blackout when a soldier in their unit dies.[20] This is to insure the proper notification of next of kin for the deceased. It is evident for this blackout to occur, the ability to communication vast distances can be achieved at a blink of an eye. Likewise some sixty-five years ago, it took days, if not weeks to notify the relatives of a soldier during WWII.

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[17] The Citizen Lab at the Munk Centre for International Studies, University of Toronto; the Berkman Center for Internet & Society at Harvard Law School; and the Advanced Network Research Group at the Cambridge Security Programme (Centre for International Studies) at the University of Cambridge. http://www.opennetinitiative.net/studies/china , Accessed 24 April 2006.
[18] OpenNet Initiative, http://www.opennetinitiative.net/studies/china/#toc4h , Accessed 24 April 2006.
[19] OpenNet Initiative, http://www.commondreams.org/headlines06/0121-05.htm , Accessed 24 April 2006.
[20] Capt. Dan Sukman, Fox News, Iraq, 26 April 2006.
http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,193214,00.html , Accessed 26 April 2006.

In this new millennium, geography and history have had a profound impact on the cultures of humanity. A Natural disaster such as the Sumatra-Andaman earthquake[21] which had caused a devastating Tsunami in Thailand in 2004, and surrounding Indian Ocean region, was both a wake-up call for those people living in Tsunami prone areas and an overwhelming achievement for organizations around the globe assisting in the disaster for humanitarian relief and recovery. Not only was humanity consciously assisting fellow humans in need, but was assisting devastated countries as a part of the global economy from the effects of globalization.[22] In another example of political globalization, after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, we saw NATO activate Article V of the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949. That part of the treaty declared that if a terrorist attack received support by any state, and that attack occurred against any NATO member state, it would be considered an attack against all the NATO member states. [23] This was the first time in NATO's history that the defense obligation in the treaty was activated, which was one of the main reasons NATO was founded in the first place albeit against the former Soviet Bloc and former Soviet Union. A new political role for NATO would develop with respect to terrorism as an outtake from the 2001 attacks. These effects of geography and history are so interrelated in these examples that it is almost impossible to separate one from the other. The effects of globalization are having substantial impacts on the future of those interrelations and of the future course of humanity.

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[21] Wikipedia, Indian Ocean Earthquake, 24 April 2006, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2004_Indian_Ocean_earthquake, Accessed 24 April 2006.
[22] Wikipedia, Globalization, 24 April 2006, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Globalization , Accessed 24 April 2006.
[23] Wikipedia, World Political Effects arising from the September 11, 2001 Attacks, 24 April 2006, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_political_effects_arising_from_the_September_11%2C_2001_attack, Accessed 24 April 2006.

Conclusion

While there are numerous other examples of the interrelations of geography and history, the preceding ones have been significant enough to tie them into a series of events without which our world would have been a much smaller place than it is today. From the earliest times of humanity's conquest over nature, to its fascination with exploration and at times exploitation of previously unknown localities by roads and seas, to the multitude establishment of information and communication technology, and a world bound together with the fabric of globalization, humanity has never been more specialized in its endeavors and more global. The mere fact that humankind is aware of this globalization and its causes and effects is one of the most important social aspects of humanity. This kaleidoscope correlation of interrelations at times may have positive or negative outcomes while traversing its meandering river like course, but it is our ever-increasing awareness of these associations that may have its own effects for our future generations of humanity.

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