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Origines Gentium: Mythic Kinships as an Archive of Cross-Cultural Interactions in the Ancient World

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ABSTRACT

There is a perceptible gap between present-day historians and those of classical antiquity in their understanding of inter-cultural connections. While ancient historians tended to conceptualize inter-cultural connections in terms of common descent, present-day historians focus mainly on concrete materialist processes such as trade networks and 'actual' moments of diplomatic contact.

While the current neglect of mythic kinships is arguably justifiable given their largely fictitious nature, this paper argues that these sources are still very much relevant to the study of ancient global history as an 'archive' of cross-cultural interactions. Being discourses created to ideologically justify existing relationships within other societies and cultures, myths of ethnic origins constitute an important form of ancient diplomacy. This makes it extremely important for us to consider myths of ethnic origins as a mode of ancient cross-cultural interaction when writing a global history of the ancient world.

In order to demonstrate how exactly myths of ethnic origins might be read as an 'archive' of ancient cross-cultural interactions, this paper will engage in a brief philological study of some of the various mythic kinships that mediated relations between the Indic and Hellenistic worlds after Alexander the Great invaded India in 326 BC. Reading the myths told by each side as discursive strategies with a diplomatic imperative, I not only hope to emphasize the role played by myths of ethnic origins in Indo-Greek relations but also to develop a cohesive framework for a more complete and nuanced understanding of ancient cross-cultural interactions.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Joshua is an undergraduate history major at the National University of Singapore who specializes in global antiquity with a particular focus on ancient Chinese and Mediterranean societies. As of now, his research agenda is defined by two distinct trajectories. On one hand, he is interested in the history of pre-modern global interconnections. On the other hand, he is also interested in deepening his understanding of the relationship between history and literature by reading ancient historiography comparatively.

INTRODUCTION

In his review of Michael Scott's ambitious "global history of antiquity", Salvatore Tufano insightfully observes a perceptible gap in the way inter-cultural connections have been understood by present-day historians and historians from classical antiquity. On the one hand, historians in ancient China, Greece and Rome conceptualized "connections among cultures" by projecting their kinships, along with other peoples, into a distant (and often mythic) past.[1] On the other hand, historians "in our time" pay greater attention to the tangible aspects of "the interactions between classical civilizations and Near and Far Eastern cultures". In some cases, this entails "the specific study of networks of trade and discernible moments of contact (such as during the Persian Wars, or in cities like Palmyra)".[2] For the most part, however, the lack of actual contact means that connections between classical civilizations have to be artificially created through comparative studies.[3]

Ironically, Tufano himself does not seem particularly perturbed by this observation. Treating the ancient concept of inter-cultural connectivity merely as a foil to the modern one, Tufano goes on to praise Scott's work for both his masterful integration of "the comparative analysis of contemporaneous political revolutions" along with "the actual entanglements" among the various ancient 'worlds'.[4] Mythic kinships do not have any place in his so-called "global perspective in the study of ancient history".

Arguably, Tufano's perfunctory treatment of the mythic kinships contained within myths of ethnic origins is reasonable.[5] After all, claims of kinship with other foreign peoples should never be taken too literally as direct evidence of "actual entanglements" among ancient societies.[6] Notwithstanding, their

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1 Salvatore Tufano, "Review of Ancient Worlds: A Global History of Antiquity by Michael Scott", *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* (February, 2018) no. 37. < http://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/2018/2018-02-37.html>
2 Salvatore Tufano, "Review of Ancient Worlds". See for example the various works studying the Silk Road. For some recent examples, see Xinru Liu, *The Silk Road in World History*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010; Valerie Hansen, *The Silk Road: A New History*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Christopher I. Beckwith, *Empires of the Silk Road: A History of Central Eurasia from the Bronze Age to the Present*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).
3 Salvatore Tufano, "Review of Ancient Worlds". For some recent examples of comparative works on Han dynasty China and Augustan Rome, see Fritz-Heiner Mutschler & Achim Mittag, eds, *Conceiving the Empire: China and Rome Compared*, (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). See also Walter Scheidel, ed, *Rome and China: Comparative Perspectives on Ancient World Empires*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). For some comparative studies on 5th century Greece and Han dynasty China, see Siep Stuurman, "Herodotus and Sima Qian: History and the Anthropological Turn in Ancient Greece and Han China," *Journal of World History* 19:1 (2008): 1-40. See also Hyun Jin Kim, *Ethnicity and Foreigners in Ancient Greece and China*, (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd, 2009). For a more general comparative study between Ancient Greece and China, see Steven Shankman & Stephen W. Durrant, *The Siren and the Sage: Knowledge and Wisdom in Ancient Greece and China*, (London: Cassell, 2000).
4 Salvatore Tufano," Review of Ancient Worlds."
5 In this paper, the terms "myth of ethnic origin" and "mythic kinship" will hereby be used interchangeably to denote myths which establish fictive kinship ties with foreign peoples through the telling of the origins of the said peoples.
6 Take for example, Martin Bernal's controversial argument that Greece was once colonized by Phoenician

undeniably fictitious nature does not make them any less useful to the study of ancient global history. Though clearly unreliable as genealogical records, myths of ethnic origins are still very much an indispensable 'archive' of ancient cross-cultural interactions.[7] Being the verybasis of ancient diplomacy, mythic kinships have commonly been invoked to justify everything from alliances to declarations of war.[8] The Athenians, for instance, justified their claim to the island of Salamis by creating fabricated genealogies which connected the people of the island to other Attic cults.[9] Such discursive usages of mythic kinships meant that their textual histories could easily be mapped onto existing periodizations of cross-cultural interactions. According to Hall, due to the "occasional survival" of earlier elements which "coexist albeit uncomfortably" with later elements of the same myth, "contradictions" or "fracture points" can often be found within myths of ethnic origins. These "fracture points" help delineate "specific stages" within the discursive construction of mythic kinships which were in turn conditioned by the state of inter-ethnic relations during that specific time period.[10]

As of now, few have attempted to write a global history through the lens provided by mythic kinships. While many scholars have studied myths of ethnic origins in societies both within and outside the Mediterranean world, they have generally restricted themselves to the confines of isolated civilizational silos.[11] The only notable concerted attempt to break this trend was Mu-Chou Pu's recent study on attitudes towards foreigners in ancient China, Egypt and Mesopotamia. Even then, his work focuses more upon making comparison rather than identifying connections between these civilizations. Granted, the sheer

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settlers based upon the tradition that the Greek city of Thebes was founded by Camdus the Phoenician. Hall exposes the naivety of such a reading by pointing out that there is "a world of difference between saying that the Greeks were the descendants of Egyptians and Phoenicians and that the Greeks thought that they were descended from Egyptians and Phoenicians". See Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*, (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1987), 19. See also Edith Hall, Bernal's "Ancient Model," in Mary R. Lefkowitz and Guy Maclean Rogers, *Black Athena Revisited*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 344-347.

7 Here, my usage of the term "archive" specifically invokes Foucault's concept of the 'archive' as "the accumulated existence of discourse". That is to say, I am not interested in the content contained within myths of ethnic origins but rather how these texts "functioned in relation to their original situation". See Michael Foucault, *Foucault Live (Interviews, 1966-84)*, (New York: Semiotext(e), 1989), 25.

8 See especially Christopher P. Jones, *Kinship Diplomacy in the Ancient World*, (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999).

9 See Rosalind Thomas, *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 164.

10 See Jonathan M. Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity*, 40-51. See also Benjamin Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*, 42.

11 For examples of scholarship covering myths of ethnic origins within the Mediterranean, see Erich S. Gruen,. *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011). See also Benjamin Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Jonathan M. Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity*. For examples of scholarship covering myths of ethnic origins outside the Mediterranean: See Romila Thapar, "Indian Views of Europe: Representations of the Yavanas in Early Indian History," in Romila Thapar, *Cultural Pasts: Essays in Early Indian History*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 536-555. See also Wang Mingke, *Huaxia Bianyuan: Lishi jiyi yu zuqun renting*, (Taipei: Yunchen wenhua shiye gufen youxiangongsi, 1997). See also Stella Xu, *Reconstructing Korean History*, 15-43. Nicola Di Cosmo, *Ancient China and Its Enemies: The Rise of Nomadic Power in East Asian History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 297-304.

geographic and temporal distance between ancient China and these two near-Eastern civilizations makes the existence of any form of cross-cultural connection highly unlikely.[12] Nevertheless, as I will later argue, myths of ethnic origins can in fact be taken as evidence of connections between civilizations, if they are taken as a form of cross-cultural interaction rather than just any representation of the 'Other'. Such an approach would make myths of ethnic origins an extremely important source in the study of ancient global history.

In order to further illustrate the workings of this 'archive', my essay will briefly consider the role mythic kinships played in mediating relations between the Indic and the Hellenistic worlds after Alexander the Great's invasion of India in 326 BC. By situating myths of ethnic origins told by each side within the larger context of Indo-Greek relations, I hope to emphasize the function of these myths as discursive strategies with a diplomatic imperative. This allows us not only to appreciate the importance of myths of ethnic origins in mediating Indo-Greek relations, but also the dynamic character of cross-cultural interactions in general. Such an approach to myths of ethnic origins would be of great relevance to the study of global antiquity. Being a cohesive framework for integrating these highly problematic, albeit important, sources into global historical narratives, this approach develops a much more complete and nuanced understanding of ancient cross-cultural interactions.

WHEN EAST MEETS WEST:
MYTHIC GENEALOGIES IN THE HELLENISTIC
OEKUMENE AND MAURYAN EMPIRE

Writing in the first century BC, the Hellenistic historian Diodorus Siculus presents two different accounts on the origins of the Indians in his voluminous universal history *Bibliotheca historica*. In his first account, Diodorus connects the Indians to the mythic Greek past by claiming that the Dionysius once invaded India with "a notable army" before he was apotheosized. After having settled upon the hill-country of northern India, Dionysius reigned over the region for 52 years and blessed the Indians with the various benefits of Greek civilization. This included everything from cities and law-courts to wine-making. According to this first account on his death Dionysius's sons reigned over India until they made way for "a democratic form of government" many generations later.[13]

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12 See Mu-chou Poo, *Enemies of Civilization: Attitudes toward Foreigners in Ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, and China*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 2005).
13 Diodorus, *Bibliotheca historica*, 2.38. See translation in Diodorus Siculus. *Library of History*, Volume II: Books 2.35-4.58. Translated by C. H. Oldfather. Loeb Classical Library 303. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935), 12-13

In his second account Diodorus writes of the Indian belief that Heracles was "born among them". Displaying the same strength as the figure in Greek myth, he did India a great service by clearing "both land and sea of their wild beasts" and founding great cities. At the same time, he married several wives and begot many children whom he appointed as rulers over India. As in the case of Dionysius's children, the kings of the Heraclean bloodline likewise ruled for many generations until the emergence of 'democracy' in India.[14]

At first glance, the apparently fictitious nature of these two accounts seems to suggest that they were nothing more than a fantasy dreamt up by Diodorus from the comfort of his writing table. While these myths of ethnic origins tell us much about Diodorus's intellectual priorities, they appear to have relatively little to do with any actual contact with the Indians. On one level, Diodorus's focus upon connecting the stories of the Indians to that of the Greeks reflected his cosmopolitan tendencies. In common with many other writers of universal history, Diodorus aspired to marshal all men into the "one and the same orderly body" of "human society as a whole" (πάντας ἀνθρώπος).[15] On another level, Diodorus's decision to include these two mythic accounts in his universal history had much to do with his project to ideologically justify the deification of Julius Caesar, a Roman politician he admired greatly. Being mortals who were later deified as gods for having brought the benefits of civilization to all mankind, the figures of Dionysius and Heracles both serve as convenient metaphors for the Hellenistic ruler cult.[16] By framing the exploits of Caesar in contemporary times within the context of these earlier "cultural heroes", Diodorus invites the reader to draw parallels between the two.[17]

Nonetheless, these two myths of ethnic origins were in fact the product of decades of cross-cultural interactions between the Hellenistic and Indic worlds. Indeed, most scholars generally agree that Diodorus lifted his information about India entirely from the *Indica*, an ethnography written by Megasthenes who was the Indo-Greek Seleucid Empire's envoy to the Mauryan Empire. Though the exact dating of this work is uncertain, Kosmin has convincingly argued that the *Indica* was written sometime after Megasthenes was appointed as an envoy representing King Seleucus in the court of Chandragupta in 304/5 BC.[18]

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14 Diodorus, *Bibliotheca historica*, 2.39. Diodorus Siculus. *Library of History*, 16-19.

15 Diodorus, *Bibliotheca historica*, 1.1-3. See translation in Diodorus Siculus. *Library of History, Volume I: Books 1-2.34*. Translated by C. H. Oldfather. Loeb Classical Library 279. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933), 5-7.

16 The so-called "Hellenistic ruler cult" was a political ideology commonly adopted by rulers that legitimized monarchial rule on the basis of the monarch's worship as a living god. Commonly adopted by rulers in the Hellenistic East, this ideology proved to be popular among successive Roman leaders like Julius Caesar and later Augustus. See Helmut Koester, *History, Culture and Religion of the Hellenistic Age*, 2nd ed, (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1995), 34-40.

17 See Charles E. Muntz, *Diodorus Siculus and the World of the Late Roman Republic*, (Oxford: Oxford University press, 2017), 133-189. See also Iris Sulimani, *Diodorus and the Pagan Mission: Historiography and Culture-heroes in the First Pentad of the Biblotheke*, (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2011), 229-335.

18 See Paul J. Kosman, *The Land of the Elephant Kings: Space, Territory, and Ideology in the Seleucid Empire*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2014), 261.

Based upon this reading, Kosmin interprets Megasthenes's ethnography of India as work shaped by Seleucid imperial priorities. For example, Megasthenes's unusually disproportionate focus on the city founding activities of both Dionysius and Heracles reflects the importance of city building to the Seleucid imperial project. At the same time, they also legitimized the territorial retreat of the Seleucid Empire after it signed a peace treaty with the Indians in 304/5 BC. Just as the lack of cities made prehistoric India an easy target for Dionysius's mythic army, the ever-increasing presence of cities indicates an acknowledgement that Mauryan India was now unconquerable.[19]

Other scholars focus upon interpreting these two mythic accounts as an act of *interpretatio graeca* on the part of Megasthenes. To them, the Greek gods Dionysius and Heracles were the means through which Megasthenes made sense of the unfamiliar religious systems he encountered during his travels.[20] Lassen, for instance, argues that Megasthenes identified the Indian supreme god Krishna as Heracles.[21] Similarly, Goukowsky believes that the Greeks identified the Indian god Shiva as Dionysius.[22]

Dahlquist, however, points out that Megasthenes was not the first Greek to frame Indian gods as Heracles and Dionysius. This identification was already made during the course of Alexander the Great's Indian campaign in 326-323 BC.[23] Writing elsewhere in the *Bibliotheca*, Diodorus tells us that one of the first peoples that Alexander met during his Indian campaign were the Sibians. In a clear example of astute ancient diplomacy, the Sibians immediately made peace with Alexander by claiming that they were descendants of the soldiers who came with Heracles to unsuccessfully lay siege to the rock of Aornus. Undoubtedly aided by the various "magnificent gifts" heaped upon Alexander, according to Diodorus this claim of common ancestry convinced Alexander to let spare the Sibians as he marched against the next tribes.[24] While one can never know whether that such an event actually occurred, it is possible that instances of Indian cities surrendering were imaginatively reinterpreted by chroniclers travelling alongside Alexander to burnish his name. After all, the Macedonian royal house, to which Alexander himself belonged to, also claimed descent from Heracles himself.[25]

Clearly, the myths of ethnic origins told by the Greeks about the Indians cannot be divorced from the history of cross-cultural interactions between the

19 Paul J. Kosman, *The Land of the Elephant Kings*, 44-46.
20 For more on the practice of identifying foreign gods as Greek ones, see Robert Parker, *Greek Gods Abroad: Names, Natures, and Transformations*, (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017).
21 Christain Lassen, Indische Alterthumskunde. II. (Bonn: H.B Koenig, 1852), 1107. Cited in Allan Dahlquist, *Megasthenes and Indian Religion: A Study in Motive and Types*, (Uppsala: Montilal Banarsidass, 1962), 9-10.
22 Paul Goukowsky, *Alexandre et Dionysos*, Essai sur les origins du mythe d' Alexandre, vol.2, (Nancy: Annales de l'Est publiees par l' Universite de Nancy, 1981), 27-28. Cited in Robert Parker, *Greek Gods Abroad*, 185.
23 Allan Dahlquist, *Megasthenes and Indian Religion*, 29-30.
24 Diodorus, *Biblioteke* 17.99.2. Diodorus Siculus. *Library of History*, Volume VIII: Books 16.66-17. Translated by C. Bradford Welles. Loeb Classical Library 422. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), 396-397.
25 See Christopher P. Jones, *Kinship Diplomacy in the Ancient World*, 7.

two peoples. As I have demonstrated in the preceding philological study, there are unmistakable parallels between the textual history of these myths and the general development of Indo-Greek relations. This makes the mythic accounts in Diodorus's *Bibliotheca historica* an extremely valuable source in the study of global antiquity. While such accounts tell us very little about the history of the Indians themselves, their discursive nature as royally sanctioned 'propaganda' implicitly reveals the changing concerns and priorities of the Greeks during their interactions with the Indic world.

In the same way, the myths of ethnic origins told by the Indians about the Greeks were also influenced by the historical development of their cross-cultural interactions. However, they differ from those of the Greeks by being mainly concerned with defining ethnic boundaries between the Indians and the Greeks. For the Indians, the Hellenistic Greeks (referred to as *Yavanas*) belonged to the wider social category of *Mleccha*, a term for non-Sanskrit speaking foreigners. This invariably implied the permanent exclusion of the Greeks from the four castes (*varna*) of Indian society.[26]

It is thus unsurprising that the Sanskrit epic poem *Mahabharata* emphasizes the impure status of the *Yavanas*. In an episode accounting for the origins of the various *Mleccha* peoples, the Mahabharata states that the *Yavanas* were initially born of urine from the all-powerful Cow of Plenty. Created specifically to defend the Cow of Plenty from being seized by the army of a powerful king named Visvamitra, the Yavanas constituted one of the "manifold hosts of barbarians" produced from the cow's various bodily excretions (dung included).[27] By associating the origins of the *Yavanas* with urine, such a narrative etiologically explains their unclean, and by extension, lowly status in Indian society. At the same time, the Mahabharata's characterization of the *Yavanas* as a barbarian army arguably originated with the encounter with Alexander the Great's invading army in 326-323 BC. The antagonistic nature of such a contact could hardly have endeared the Greeks to the Indians. Diodorus, for instance, notes that Alexander the Great showed absolutely no mercy to Agalasseisi who foolhardily attempted to resist him during his Indian campaign.[28]

In spite of this, increasing cross cultural interactions between the Hellenic and Indic worlds seems to have gradually softened the initial Indian hostility towards the *Yavana*. With the establishment of Hellenic kingdoms in West Asia in the aftermath of Alexander's death, ambassadors like Megasthenes started visiting the Mauryan court more frequently. At the same time, territorial exchanges with the Seleucid Empire as part of the so-called "Treaty of the Indus" left

26 Romila Thapar, "Indian Views of Europe: Representations of the Yavanas in Early Indian History," in Romila Thapar, *Cultural Pasts: Essays in Early Indian History*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 537-539.
27 Mahabharata 1: 165:30. Translation from J.A.B Van Buiten,trans,ed, *Mahabharata I: The Book of the Beginning*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973),333.
28 Diodorus, *Biblioteke* 17.99.3. Diodorus Siculus. *Library of History*, Volume VIII: Books 16.66-17.

Mauryan emperors in charge of large Greek and Aramaic populations.[29] In order to deal with these changes, the Yavanas had to be fitted into the caste hierarchy by ascribing to them an Indian origin.[30] Unfortunately, as much as the Indians would have liked to draw closer to the Greeks, their contemptible status as impure *Mleccha* continued to haunt them. This tension was once again reflected through the *Mahabharata* which listed the *Yavana* (Greeks) as one of the many descendants of *Turvasu* who was in turn the son of *Yayati*, a famous king from the legendary Lunar dynasty.[31] While such a noble lineage seems to have placed the Greeks within the exalted *Ksatriya* caste of warriors and rulers, the very fact that *Turvasu* was their ancestor made the Greek's exact status within the caste hierarchy highly ambiguous. Having insolently refused his father's request to borrow his youth, *Turvasu* was cursed by King *Yayati* to "rule over people" who were essentially *Mlecchas*, "whose customs and laws are corrupt and whose walks of life run counter to decency". More tellingly, *Turvasu* was cursed with a lineage which would ultimately go extinct, suggesting that the *Yavana* did not really partake of his *Ksatriya* caste status.[32]

CONCLUSION

To conclude, this essay has briefly demonstrated how myths of ethnic origins might be read as an 'archive' of ancient cross-cultural interactions. Even as the content of such accounts is likely fictional in nature, myths of ethnic origins can still be read as discursive artifacts left behind by actual contact between cultures. By situating the textual histories of these narratives within the historical development of Indo-Greek relations, myths of ethnic origins can be readily integrated into the study of global antiquity as both a mode and window into ancient cross-cultural interactions. This enriches the overall field of ancient global history in several ways.

Firstly, myths of ethnic origins broaden our concept of "cross-cultural interactions" beyond that of concrete materialist processes like trade and migration.[33] Even as they still made treaties, alliances and wars with each other, mythic kinships were the main vehicle through which people in antiquity understood and justified such relationships. Consequently, by analyzing myths of ethnic origins as a mode of cross-cultural interaction on its own, rather than

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29 Romila Thapar, "Indian Views of Europe", 540.
30 Romila Thapar, "Indian Views of Europe", 542-543.
31 Mahabharata 1: 80: 25. Translation from J.A.B Van Buiten, trans, ed, *Mahabharata I*, 194.
32 Mahabharata 1: 79: 10. Translation from J.A.B Van Buiten, trans, ed, *Mahabharata I*, 192.
33 See Patrick Manning's argument for the need for historians to "allow the meaning of "cross-cultural interaction" to extend to a range of issues beyond mass migration, imperial rise and fall, and commerce". See Patrick Manning, "The Problem of Interactions in World History," The American Historical Review 101:3 (1996): 780.

an unreliable literary document of the past, we would be able to obtain a much more complete picture of how people in antiquity related to one another. Such a phenomenon was unique to neither the Greeks nor Indians. The Han-dynasty historian Sima Qian, for instance, claimed that the ancestor of the nomadic Xiongnu antagonists were from the Xia dynasty, one of China's earliest ruling houses.[34] Though a seemingly improbable scenario, Xu points out that Sima Qian's curious attempt to give the Xiongnu an illustrious Chinese ancestor could be profitably interpreted as a justification for Chinese imperial expansion. By suggesting that the Xiongnu were once Chinese, Sima Qian implies that these unruly 'barbarians' were ultimately civilizable and by extension a natural part of the Chinese cultural and political order.[35]

Secondly, myths of ethnic origins offer a privileged window into the dynamics of "global integration" in the ancient world. The Hellenistic and Indic worlds were, in a sense, two distinct civilizations with almost nothing in common. Not only did the Greeks and Indians have their own separate cultural identities, the ethnocentric nature of their worldviews meant that each side perceived the 'other' as 'barbarians' far removed from the realm of civilization. For the Indians, the world was divided into the ritually pure lands of the Sanskrit speaking *Aryas* and the impure lands of the non-Sanskrit speaking *Mleccha,* including the Greeks. For the Greeks, India was generally considered to be nothing more than an exotic land in the distant Orient. Yet, when Alexander the Great's Indian campaign in 326-323 BC brought the two peoples into an uncomfortable proximity with each other, Indo-Greek relations did not devolve into Huntington's proverbial "clash of civilizations".[36] In fact, the boundaries between the two started to become less rigid and impermeable. For instance, myths of ethnic origins told by the Indians which started to ascribe an Indian ancestry to these once contemptible *Mleccha* as Indo-Greek relations warmed and intensified. While events like the landmark "Treaty of the Indus" in 304/305 BC already indicate the thawing of diplomatic relations between the Indo-Greek Seleucid Empire and the Mauryan Empire, it is only through myths of ethnic origins like those told in the *Mahabharata* that we are able to find evidence of shifts in civilizational attitudes towards the Greek 'other'. The ability to analyze "global integration" on the level of mentalities is especially important for the study of global antiquity given the scarcity of extant sources available. By adding another dimension to the study of ancient global connections, we would go beyond ascertaining the mere fact of their existence to assessing their quality and impact. This would in turn allow scholars of ancient global history to effectively situate their work within the wider

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34 Sima Qian, *Shiji*, 110.1. See translation in Sima Qian, *The Records of the Grand Historian: Han Dynasty II*, Burton Watson, trans, revised edition, (New York & Hong Kong: Columbia University Press, 1961), 130.
35 See the argument made by Stella Xu, *Reconstructing Korean History: The Formation of Korean-ness in the Shadow of History*, (London: Lexington Books, 2016), 36-37.
36 Here, I use Huntington's concept of "clash of civilizations" as shorthand for a permanent state for primordial antagonism between conflicting civilizational units. See Samuel Philip Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?," *Foreign Affairs* 72: 3 (Summer 1993): 22–49.

process of "global integration".[37]

In an article discussing the state of scholarship on "contact and exchange in the ancient world", Mair bemoans the presence of "a strong intellectual bias" towards the notion of ancient civilizations existing in complete isolation from each other. Even as there was a "plethora of detailed data" attesting to the existence of "contact and exchange among early peoples", current scholarship had become so specialized and nationalistic that such evidence was ignored. In the rare event that scholars decided to go beyond their narrow geographic and temporal specialization, they usually ended up retreating to the safety of the comparative rather than risk disrepute by discussing cultural parallels and connections.[38] Though the field of global antiquity has certain made much progress in the decade after Mair wrote this essay[39], the initial scholarly neglect of mythic kinships as a valid mode of cross-cultural interaction suggests that the project to dismantle this "strong intellectual" bias is still very much on-going.

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37 See Sebastian Conrad's argument for the need to go beyond "a focus on connections" to an analysis of the quality and impact of connections". See Sebastian Conrad, *What is Global History?*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 90-91.
38 Victor H. Mair, "Kinesis Versus Stasis, Interaction Versus Independent Invention" in Victor H. Mair, ed, *Contact and Exchange in the Ancient World*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), 3-7.
39 See for example, Michael Scott, *Ancient Worlds: An Epic History of East and West*, (New York: Random House, 2016). See also Peter Frankopan, *The Silk Roads: A New History of the World*, (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015), 1-44.