

Phrygians – Tocharian  
– Baleful signs –  
Ebola – The Islamic  
Empire – The temple  
of Kellis – Buddhism  
in Gandhara – The  
Lost City of Salt –  
The Udruh Project

Aspects of  
globalisation

Mobility, exchange and the development  
of multi-cultural states

**Most people will consider globalization as a 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century phenomenon. Today's world is one of unprecedented connectivity, trade and mobility. There is no doubt that globalization has made a significant impact on contemporary society, in both positive and negative ways. It has brought greater wealth to many countries and a far wider availability of foreign goods that were hitherto difficult to obtain. People have greater mobility and economic freedom than ever before, and the ability to seek out better job opportunities or living conditions in other parts of the world. But globalization and the increased entanglement of local economies, cultures and state institutions, has also resulted in an increased exposure to economic woes, social troubles, or state collapse elsewhere. The banking crisis, the current migrant crisis, a growing distrust in the capacity of political leaders and state institutions to deal with local or national problems, and a wide-spread sense of losing one's cultural identity and the ensuing need to 'take back control' (think of Brexit, or the election of Donald Trump in the USA) are all directly related to global connectivity; to globalization.**

All this, of course, is not new, and aspects of globalization have been extensively studied. What few people realize, however, is that many of the results of globalization and indeed the phenomenon itself are no recent developments but instead hark back to much earlier times. Economic crises engulfing vast parts of the world, massive population movements resulting from and leading to social unrest and even state collapse, civil wars and even a sense of 'taking back control'; it all happened before. Looking at the effects, benefits and drawbacks of connectivity – then and now – may provide us with some much needed references as to why things happened, where we come from, and where things may be heading to. By looking back, we may see the future, or at least may understand how to handle what is coming towards us.

Leiden University has an international – indeed, a global – reputation for excellent research in the Humanities. In this publication, some of the University's most promising scholars in the Humanities present their research into various aspects of the 'entangled' world. This booklet is divided into three sections, each highlighting distinct aspects of globalization.

Papers in part 1 focus on the mobility of people and the resulting spread of the most elementary identity markers of all; language and script. Even though many of us today may think of our language as something that belongs 'here' and that helps define who we are –Dutch, British, French, German, or even 'European', most of the languages that are spoken by the majority of people in the Netherlands and indeed, in Europe and America, did not in fact originate in those parts, but may well have come from the Russian steppe. Moreover, languages that are related to, say, English and Dutch, were for a long time spoken in western China, as well as in Turkey. How did these languages arrive here and there, where they spoken by people akin to us, or adopted by local societies? Similarly, the letters that are used in this book, although they are frequently described as the 'Roman' alphabet, have a far more complex and foreign pedigree than most of their users may think. Leiden-based research is now questioning old assumptions regarding the origin of our script, and may provide new answers to the questions how, why, when and where our script was first developed. But we are also investigating how that script is used in contemporary society, with the rise of new (social) media, such as Twitter.

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Part 2 includes two papers that highlight how some of the first empires dealt with multiculturalism, especially how various population groups, with their own traditions, histories, and religions could be accommodated within a single political body. One example comes from the Dakhla Oasis in Egypt, where Leiden-based researchers have uncovered the remains of a shrine dating to the Roman period, which incorporates Greek, Roman, and Egyptian architectural and pictorial elements – suggesting a flexible and inclusive approach to local faith and religion. The other case study also comes from Egypt, this time in the early Arab period. By analysing numerous 7<sup>th</sup> century AD papyri, this study highlights how the new Arab rulers and the local Greco-Roman-Egyptian populations communicated and (re)negotiated their respective positions within the newly formed Islamic Empire. The new overlords accommodated their subjects by, e.g. using Greek alongside Arabic in the administration, and by allowing many local customs and identities to endure, whilst at the same time stressing the authority of the new religion (Islam) over the realm. Under the Arabs, religious practice was perhaps less malleable than in previous eras, but its absorptive potential could (and did) serve as a unifying factor throughout the empire, conferring a common identity to all believers.

Religion did not only spread through conquest and empire building, but often spread – and still spreads – as a consequence of trade. Part 3 includes contributions that highlight the role of trade and trade routes in the spread of religions and cultures. Trading contacts were not only of pivotal importance for the spread of faiths, but often had an impact on their iconography and related rites. Buddhism, for example, spread as a consequence of early trade routes that connected India to the Far East, but many early depictions of the Buddha also betray early contacts with the Hellenized Kingdoms of Central Asia. We see similar patterns of cultural mingling as a result of trading contacts in other regions. In collaboration with local partners, archaeologists from Leiden University are uncovering the remains of important trading centres in Jordan and Saudi Arabia, bringing to light remarkably advanced, but culturally hybrid societies that thrived in seemingly uninhabitable landscapes. These remote places were inhabited not because of the local resources, but because they were part of a wider world; they connected different regions and were vital conduits, not only of goods, but also of ideas and people.

Connectivity, entangled worlds, globalization. These are buzzwords that have dominated political and academic discourse over the past decade. But they matter, because they provide us with a framework to better conceptualize the ways in which societies are shaped, how they rise and fall, change and endure. On behalf of Leiden University and its Knowledge Exchange Office, LURIS, we hope that the studies presented in this publication may inspire the reader to rethink aspects of our own society. Aspects that strike us as familiar and 'modern', but that are as ancient as human society itself.

**Ivo de Nooijer,  
Director of Luris**

*Luris is the Knowledge Exchange Office of Leiden University and Leiden University Medical Center (LUMC) and connects academics of both organisations with the market and society at large, in order to make the most of their scientific knowledge.*



# Contents

## Mobility and language



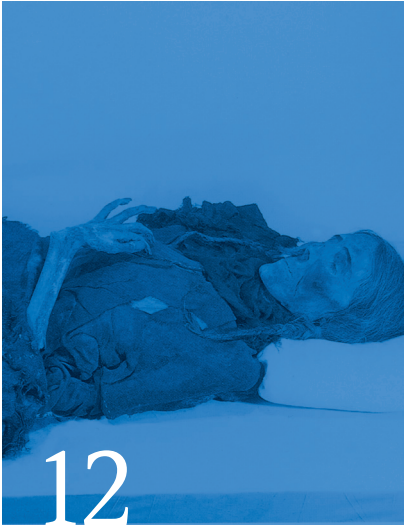
06

**Alwin Kloekhorst**  
In the footsteps of the Phrygians.



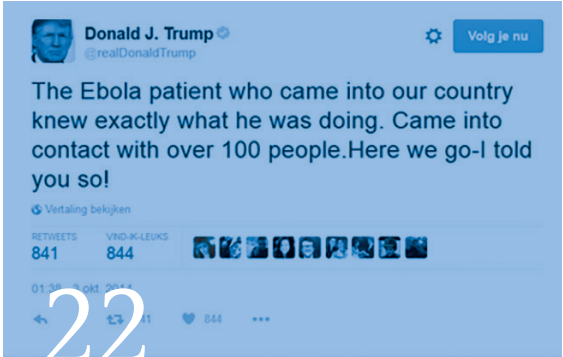
18

**Willemijn Waal**  
In search of the baleful signs.



12

**Michaël Peyrot**  
Tocharian:  
An Indo-European language from China.



22

**Sara Polak**  
Ebola in the American Imagination.



26

**Petra M. Sijpesteijn**  
The success of the Islamic Empire.



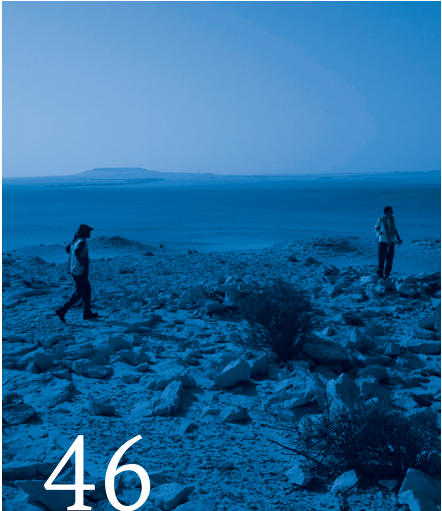
32

**Olaf E. Kaper**  
The temple of Kellis at the crossroads between East and West in the Roman Empire.



40

**Marike van Aerde**  
Buddhism in Gandhara and beyond.



46

**Ahmad Al-Jallad**  
Searching for Ancient Arabia's Lost City of Salt.



36

**Mark Driessen**  
Trade-routes through the steppe.