

Transnationalism in Ancient and Medieval Societies: The Role of Cross-Border Trade and Travel

By Michael C. Howard

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While scholars have long documented the migration of people in ancient and medieval times, they have paid less attention to those who traveled across borders with some regularity. This study of early transnational relations explores the routine interaction of people across the boundaries of empires, tribal confederacies, kingdoms, and city-states, paying particular attention to the role of long-distance trade along the Silk Road and maritime trade routes. It examines the obstacles voyagers faced, including limited travel and communication capabilities, relatively poor geographical knowledge, and the dangers of a fragmented and shifting political landscape, and offers profiles of better-known transnational elites such as the Hellenic scholar Herodotus and the Venetian merchant Marco Polo, as well lesser known servants, merchants, and sailors. By revealing the important political, economic, and cultural role cross-border trade and travel played in ancient society, this work demonstrates that transnationalism is not unique to modern times.

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Editorial Review

About the Author
Michael C. Howard is a professor of international studies at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver. He has conducted research and written extensively on Southeast Asia, Australia, and the South Pacific. He is editor of the series Studies in the Material Cultures of Southeast Asia and author or editor of more than 30 books.

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