

# **WITHOUT THE GENERALIST, WE WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO FIND OUT THE TRUTH ABOUT WORLDWIDE CULTURAL DIFFUSION**

by Dr. Horst Friedrich

## **SUMMARY**

To raise prehistoric and protohistoric cultural diffusion to the status of a generally recognized science, we will first have to raise the generalist to the status of a generally recognized scholar, absolutely indispensable for such an interdisciplinary, multifaceted field of research.

o o o o

Quite obviously it is self-evident, and needs no further or prior special clarification or demonstration, that cultural diffusion constitutes an extremely interdisciplinary and exceedingly multifaceted field of research. For broader studies in cultural diffusion we will have to take into consideration research results respectively publications from all the following fields of knowledge:

- ° Geographical distribution of languages, interrelationships between them, scenarios provided by historical linguistics.
- ° "Racial" (to use provisionally that highly suspect criterion) distribution and interrelationships between ethnic entities worldwide.
- ° Studies in comparative religion, interrelationships between religions, "evolutionary trees" of religions.
- ° History of navigation and shipbuilding.
- ° History of the sciences worldwide, possible interrelationships between different civilizations, also with respect to calendar systems.
- ° Interrelationships between different shamanic traditions, e.g. problem if Taoism may have influenced Mexican shamanism.
- ° Manifestations of art, architecture, music (e.g. distribution of pentatonic music), horticulture, use of aqueducts, and other elements of civilizations.
- ° Affinities with respect to social organization worldwide.
- ° Geographical distribution of plants used by man, possible relationship to wild species, possible regions of domestication.
- ° Epigraphic studies, relatedness of alphabets and writing systems worldwide.
- ° Comparative mythology, studies of oral traditions, e.g. migration traditions of North

American Indian nations.

° Possible influence of catastrophic geological or impact events on prehistoric/protohistoric mankind.

Although all of these twelve fields of knowledge do indeed overlap, in our today's (somehow necessary but dangerous) compartmentalization of knowledge in the academic world they are delt with and regarded as if they were separate sciences. The "specialist" in one field most often has only very little knowledge (if any at all) of what his "colleague" in one of the other fields does, thinks or "knows". Even worse: in that system of compartmentalization of knowledge, each of these twelve fields of knowledge has several, or even many, sub-fields. And the "specialists" we find today pronouncing in the media about this or that (Diffusionism, Darwinism, Catastrophism, evolution of mankind etc. etc.) are most often knowledgeable, i.e. real specialist. in only one of those between 50 and 100 sub-fields of the above-mentioned twelve general fields of knowledge.

Under such circumstances it is of course obvious that statements by such kind of specialists can pose a problem. That does not necessarily mean that their contribution has to be worthless or irrelevant with respect to the problem at hand. Quite to the contrary, their comments will have to be taken into account. But, being specialists for only a relatively minor sub-problem, whereas research problems with respect to cultural diffusion are often of a far more comprehensive interdisciplinary nature, they cannot be expected to deliver more than one puzzle stone for a far greater jigsaw puzzle. One should not try to draw exaggerated conclusions from only one puzzle stone. And neither is it good scholarly procedure to extrapolate from only some known puzzle stones, what only the completed puzzle can show. Today we often observe the scandalous spectacle of sub-specialist scholars pronouncing via the media on this or that problem with a certainty, as if they had already knowledge of the whole puzzle picture, whereas in reality they have real knowledge only about (at most) some puzzle stones. This is kind of charlatanism.

ALL (or at least as many as possible) pieces of the puzzle have to be taken into consideration. Otherwise it would be a case of incomplete evidence and premature judgement. But the specialist quite obviously cannot take all the possibly relevant (for a certain problem at hand) puzzle stones into consideration, because he is only a specialist. For this task we need the competent generalist with a comprehensive outlook.

But in the "scholastic" worldview of our Establishment mainstream, the "true" scientist is the specialist, not the generalist. In this extraordinarily absurd worldview the generalist belongs decidedly to a minor category or rank of scholarship. The specialist is indispensable, the generalist is tolerated. This is the real status quo at our universities, occasional lip service to the contrary notwithstanding.

### **The generalist has to be recognized as a "specialist" in his own right**

The generalist in the field of cultural diffusion is also a "specialist": but his "speciality" is interdisciplinary comprehensiveness. The really interesting and promising fields of research and study today are all of an interdisciplinary nature. This is dawning on all of us. And therefore we find interdisciplinary study groups established at our universities. But this doesn't suffice any more. Because the old prejudice against the generalist is still present in

the minds of the mainstream. This rather strange prejudice seems to have as its ultimate (possibly unconscious) motive the absolutely unrealistic notion that the generalist will not be such a serious and hard-working scientist as the specialist. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Quite to the contrary, the generalist will have to be even much more hard-working, to acquire the necessary comprehensive knowledge which he needs to become competent.

**With only specialists, nobody will be there to discover the truth of worldwide cultural diffusion**

In the field of cultural diffusion it is virtually leading nowhere to give a judgement for a greater problem at hand (e.g. the peopling of the Americas) simply by using only research results from one facet of that greater problem. And when several specialists in sub-fields of the greater problem would choose this *modus procedendi* simultaneously, we would only get chaos and confusion. Cultural diffusion is a much too multifaceted field of research for such course of action: we would only get a highly unreliable version of what really happened in the past.

Besides, we have to get rid of the rather naive and unscientific notion that science has all the answers. Many details and facets will remain speculative for a long time to come. Often we can only try qualified speculation and select several scenarios which seem equally possible in view of our limited data base. There may sometimes even creep up in our mind the notion that - *terribile dictu!* - our "scientific method" could show a relatedness to the methods of astrology, where (besides the "exact" calculations) intuition in judging e.g. a nativity plays a great part. There is no necessity to be ashamed because of this. Intuition is not such a bad thing, provided it is counterbalanced (for the generalist scholar in the field of cultural diffusion) by decades of study in many fields and a sound knowledge of the epistemological basis of good science. After all, cultural diffusion is above all an ethnological problem, and as such not an "exact science" where, in the sense of a wide-spread notion, "truth" can be had simply by mathematical calculations and experiment.

One thing is certain, however: Only when the generalist in the field of cultural diffusion has been officially established as a recognized scholar of at least the same status as the specialist, will serious research in this field have become possible at our universities. Until then research work in the field of cultural diffusion will, obviously and by necessity, have to remain the task of non-Establishment scholars.

Correspondence address:

Dr. Horst Friedrich  
Hauptstr. 52  
D-82237 Wörthsee

Tel.: 0049-8153-7433