Core-Periphery Notions[1]

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Introduction

The terms "core and periphery" have become a household concept in recent years. It is therefore useful to keep in mind that we are dealing with a specific model that forms the basis and point of reference for the use of those terms. This is the work of Immanuel Wallerstein developed at extraordinary length in three books perhaps more often cited than actually studied.[2] An alarming lack of clarity has spread regarding the meaning of the terms and the modalities of the approach.

This paper will briefly describe the constituent elements of the original model and the manner in which students of the Roman Empire have attempted to apply it. However, I will begin with a brief discussion of Greek and Roman images of the geography of the world and Roman views of the geography of their empire, to see to what extent this may have affected modern views of it, notably those dealing with "core and periphery". My argument is that those who claim to follow Wallerstein are using a model that is not suitable for the study of ancient empires and therefore freely adapt it to their needs without making this sufficiently clear. Next it will be argued that the model is mostly inappropriate for the study of ancient empires and, when applied, leads to confusion rather than deeper understanding. Then I will mention another model, developed more recently by Peregrin Horden and Nicholas Purcell in their major influential work *The Corrupting Sea*, where the proposition is offered that the Roman Empire has to be viewed as consisting of interconnected 'micro-ecologies', or 'virtual islands'.[3] Rather than dealing with all of the eight hundred pages of the book, I will discuss one concrete example of the application of this model and suggest some possible modifications and additional considerations.

Ancient Greek Views

In the archaic period Ionic geography assumed that the world was circular in shape and

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[1]   A partial and modified version of this paper was read in February-March of 2010 at a conference: 'Contact Zones of Empires in Europe and Japan,' Fukuoda, Japan (ESF – Frontier Science Conference).

[2]   Three of his works are particularly relevant: Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York and London 1974); *The Capitalist World-Economy* (Cambridge and Paris, 1979); *Unthinking Social Science: The Limits of Nineteenth-Century Paradigms* (Cambridge, 1991).

[3]   P. Horden and N. Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford, 2000).

surrounded by the legendary river Ocean.[4] This view was criticized by Herodotus, who ridiculed the idea of a river surrounding a perfectly circular world.[5] Herodotus generally preferred an empirical approach trying to base himself on facts, taking account of what was actually known in his days about distant peoples. He accepted the concept of a world population (οἰκουμένη) with Greeks in its centre and distant peoples living in remote regions (ἐσχατιαί) encircling this world. There are clear elements of environmental determinism in his approach:

> It seems as if the extreme regions of the earth were blessed by nature with the most excellent production, just in the same way that Greece (in the centre) enjoys a climate more excellently tempered than any other country.[6]

These remote regions, 'which surround the rest of the world and enclose it within, seem to possess the things we consider most lovely and rarest.'[7] Accordingly the centre and the periphery are the best parts. While the centre, of course, is populated by Greeks, the distant peoples living near the borders of the *oikoumenē* are idealized and have mostly legendary traits. Interestingly, Herodotus criticizes the Persians for their ethnocentric, chauvinist views, 'honouring most the peoples nearest to themselves … and holding in the least honour those dwelling farthest …'.[8] It has been pointed out that two opposing approaches may be recognized in Greek literature: the first idealizing the centre and disparaging the periphery, the second doing the reverse. Herodotus appears to represent a third possibility: idealizing both the centre and the periphery.[9]

It will be obvious that there is no trace here of the modern model which sees a direct economic relationship between the centre and periphery.

A century later such ideas found expression in Aristotle's claim that the Greeks, because of their ideal situation in between the cold lands of Europe and the gentle climate of Asia, live in the best part of the world and should therefore be capable of governing every other people — if only they could achieve political unity.[10] We see here

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[4]   J. S. Romm, *The Edges of the Earth in Ancient Thought: Geography, Exploration and Fiction* (Princeton, 1992), 9-31.

[5]   2.23; 4.8; 4.36-45; cf. D. Asheri, A. Lloyd and A. Corcella, *A Commentary on Herodotus Books I-IV* (Oxford, 2007), 256; 608-609; Romm (n. 4 above), 33-41.

[6]   Hdt. 3. 106: αἱ δ' ἐσχατιαί κως τῆς οἰκεομένης τὰ κάλλιστα ἔλαχον, κατά περ ἡ Ἑλλὰς τὰς ὥρας πολλόν τι κάλλιστα κεκρημένας ἔλαχε. See also 3.114-116. Cf. Asheri et al. (n. 5 above), 496-7; 500; 608-9; Romm (n. 4 above), 38-9. For Herodotus on the Ethiopians: Romm (n. 4 above), 54-60; for his description of the northern Hyperboraeans: 65-7.

[7]   Hdt. 3.116: αἱ δὲ ὦν ἐσχατιαὶ οἴκασι, περικληίουσαι τὴν ἄλλην χώρην καὶ ἐντὸς ἀπέργουσαι, τὰ κάλλιστα δοκέοντα ἡμῖν εἶναι καὶ σπανιώτατα ἔχειν αὗται.

[8]   Hdt. 1.134; cf. Romm (n. 4 above), 54-5. Herodotus then continues to describe a hierarchical organization in the Median Empire which is imaginary: cf. Asheri et al. (n. 5 above), 169. If this is imaginary all of the chapter may not be reliable with its report about Persian chauvinism.

[9]   Romm (n. 4 above), 38-9 and 46-7. For Herodotus on the Ethiopians: 54-60; for his description of the northern Hyperboraeans: 65-7.

[10] Arist. *Pol.* 1327b. The idea was later taken over and applied to Italy by Roman authors: Vitr. 6.2; Strab. 6.4.1 (c286); Verg. *Aen.* 1.2; cf. B. Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (Princeton, 2004), 70-71; 82-87.

elements of environmental determinism in combination with geography and ethnography formulating an imperialist ideology which was later taken over by Roman authors. Whether Roman authors also speak in terms of a core and periphery is another matter.

Roman Views

Appian (*Praef.*1.1) gives a broad and general description of the geography of the Roman Empire:

> Intending to write the history of the Romans, I have deemed it necessary to begin with the boundaries of the nations under their sway. They are as follows:[11] In the ocean, the major part of those who inhabit the British Isles. Then entering the Mediterranean by the Pillars of Hercules and circumnavigating the same we find under their rule all the islands and the mainlands washed by that sea.

Then he describes, going around the Mediterranean counter clockwise, the peoples living on the coast and those farther inland, starting with the coast of North Africa: 'The nomad tribes whom the Romans call Numidians … other Africans'. Beyond Egypt there is Ethiopia. Beyond Syria-Palaestina is part of the Arab regions. Beyond Phoenician territory there is Coele-Syria, and the parts stretching from the sea as far inland as the river Euphrates, namely Palmyra and the sandy country round about …'. This should suffice for present purposes. The Empire is described as if it were an oval dinner table.

Does Appian, in his first sentence, mean boundaries, as the Loeb translation has it, or territories? From the text it is clear that he must mean 'territories' for he does not, in fact, indicate any boundaries or borders. He does not describe the boundaries of the empire, but he lists its subject peoples and a few seas (note: Syria-Palaestina, a region, but 'Phoenicians', the people, and Coele-Syria, again a region). He mentions first the territories which encompass the empire along the sea and then those further inland. That is to say: he first lists the peoples and the seas under Roman control: the Mediterranean, North Sea, Black Sea. Then he lists the outer circle, the peoples and a few features that are not contiguous with any of those seas: these include the river Euphrates, the Caucasus, the rivers Rhine and Danube. By way of exception he mentions that some of the Celts across the Rhine and some of the Getae across the Danube, 'called Dacians', are subject to Roman rule. He does not mention any frontier of the empire.

Essentially the empire is seen as roughly three concentric circles: Rome in the middle, then the Mediterranean and Black Sea, with peoples around it, and finally the peoples, regions and natural features farther removed from the Mediterranean. These form the outer circle. Generally speaking, the farther away peoples are, the less they are worth incorporating into the empire. For instance, Appian says: 'Crossing the Northern Ocean to Britain, which is an island greater than a large continent, they have taken possession of the better and larger part (i.e., the South), not caring for the remainder (i.e. the North). Indeed, the part they do hold is not very profitable to them' (*Praef.* 5). Another way of looking at this description is to note that the first part essentially represents a traditional *periplus*, a geographical document that lists, in order, the ports, peoples and coastal landmarks, with approximate intervening distances, that the sailors

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[11]   Τὴν ῾Ρωμαϊκὴν ἱστορίαν ἀρχόμενος συγγράφειν, ἀναγκαῖον ἡγησάμην προτάξαι τοὺς ὅρους ὅσων ἐθνῶν ἄρχουσι ῾Ρωμαῖοι. εἰσὶ δὲ οἵδε.

would find along a shore.[12] Appian quite explicitly gives his description the form of a voyage along coasts. Parts of the empire that have no coastal sections or rivers as points of reference are located in relation to those that have.

At the end of this description we recognize the well-known image: 'They surround the empire with great armies and they garrison the whole stretch of land and sea like a single stronghold.'[13]

There is, then, the vague notion of a cordon around the outer circle that functions like a wall around a city. This may have given some modern authors the misguided idea that a model of core and periphery is somehow recognized also in ancient texts. It is not. Many Roman texts differentiate between the various remote parts of the empire. There are a number of authors, mostly Greek, who resisted imperial expansion in regions which, they thought, were not profitable and worth having. One encounters such statements in the work of Strabo, Appian, already mentioned, and Cassius Dio.[14] They were against wars engendered by 'a quarrel in a far-away country between people of whom we know nothing', as emphasized by a British prime-minister in 1938, a politician who, of course, had been well trained in the Classics.[15] The point, then, is that some far-away countries are not worth conquering, but others are. There is no sense of a coherent outer zone. This is far from a view of the empire as consisting of a core and periphery. Appian's description very much resembles the ideas of Aristides, who also speaks in terms of a circular structure, defended by the Roman army, as is discussed below. We have here undoubtedly the equivalent of the Latin *orbis*.[16]

The next idea, prevalent in Roman authors, that has to be considered here is related, but represents a shift in emphasis. It is the claim that the Roman Empire encompasses the entire inhabited world, the *oikoumenē*. According to Vogt it is Greek, not Roman in origin. Of course, *oikoumenē* is a Greek term, in frequent use already in the work of Herodotus.[17] It is true also that traditionally, there was a sense that the *oikoumenē*, seen as an island surrounded by the Ocean, was thought to be somehow circular in shape. Yet Vogt's precise statement is implausible. It is worthwhile briefly to trace the development of the concept. A genuinely Greek idea was indeed that of the world having an exact

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[12]   Well-known examples of texts that have survived are the *Periplus of the Black Sea* by Pseudo-Skylax (fourth-third century BC), the *Periplus Maris Erythraei* (mid-first century AD) and the *Periplus Ponti Euxini* by Arrian, second century AD. On this manner of describing the world, see: C. Nicolet, *Space, Geography, and Politics in the Early Roman Empire* (Ann Arbor, 1991), 58.

[13]   App. *Praef.* 7: τήν τε ἀρχὴν ἐν κύκλῳ περικάθηνται μεγάλοις στρατοπέδοις, καὶ φυλάσσουσι τὴν τοσήνδε γῆν καὶ θάλασσαν ὥσπερ χωρίον.

[14]   Cf. B. Isaac, *The Limits of Empire: the Roman Army in the East* (Oxford, revised ed. 1992), 26-28, 388-9.

[15]   This is not to suggest that Neville Chamberlain, at Rugby School, read the texts of Strabo and Appian where these authors argue that Britain is a far-away place, worth subjecting only partly or not at all.

[16]   Cf. J. Vogt, 'Orbis Romanus' in *Orbis: Ausgewählte Schriften zur Geschichte des Altertums* (Freiburg 1960), 151-71 at 152-6 and 159. See on this: P.A. Brunt, 'Laus Imperii' in: P.D.A. Garnsey and C.R. Whittaker (eds.) *Imperialism in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, 1978), 162-78.

[17]   For *oikoumenē* in Herodotus' work: Romm (n. 4 above), 37.

centre: the *omphalos*, the navel of the world, located in Delphi.[18] This was later taken over by Jews and Christians who transferred the centre and navel of the earth to Jerusalem.[19] *Oikoumenē* is the Greek equivalent of the Latin *orbis terrarum*. This then is relevant for the present paper.

Polybius claimed that by 167 BC the whole, or virtually the whole *oikoumenē*, or its known parts, had come under Roman dominion. However, this does not mean that the idea as such was Greek, as Vogt seems to imply.[20] Polybius echoes a Roman view of the empire.[21] Polybius, indeed, emphasizes that there had been empires in the past, but the Romans were the first 'to subjugate almost the whole inhabited world.'[22] Rome, says Polybius, demonstrated her superiority over Alexander and the Macedonians by her successes in the West over 'peoples who were not even known' to the Macedonians.[23] We may add that Polybius certainly knew better: he was aware that eastward the Roman Empire definitely did not cover the entire inhabited world. He may have meant there was no serious rival to Rome, but it should be obvious that Polybius' insistence reflects a Roman political ideology rather than facts believed to be true. Thus, it may be repeated, we are dealing with a Roman, not a Greek idea.

This is particularly clear from what may be an early Latin instance. Livy attributes to Ti. Gracchus the remark that '(L. Cornelius Scipio Asiaticus) had spread the domination of the Roman people to the extreme confines of the earth.'[24] This may represent the language of Livy in the age of Augustus, rather than that of Ti. Gracchus in the early second century BC. It is a mere phrase when attributed to a speaker in the time of Scipio and was known to be a remarkable exaggeration, then and afterward. After all, Scipio may have subjugated 'the wealthiest king in the world' (Antiochus III), but it was well known at the time that there were peoples farther to the East.

In the first century BC Cicero repeatedly contends that Pompey and Caesar had made

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18   C. Auffarth, 'Omphalos.' *Brill's New Pauly*. Antiquity volumes edited by: Hubert Cancik and Helmuth Schneider (Leiden, 2010). Brill Online. See also: K. Brodersen, *Studien zur römischen Raumerfassung* (Hildesheim, 1995), 110-133: Nichtkartographische Raumerfassung.

19   P.S. Alexander, 'Jerusalem as the *Omphalos* of the World: On the History of a Geographic Concept', in: Lee I. Levine, *Jerusalem: its Sanctity and Centrality to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (New York, 1999), 104-119.

20   Admittedly, Hdt. 7.38, attributes to Xerxes boastful claims that, after conquering Greece, the Persians will bring all of humanity under their yoke. That, given the context, indeed represents no more than the Persian monarch's *hybris* as attributed to him by Herodotus.

21   Romm (n. 4 above): 122, observes: 'In fact all three of the principal geographers of the early Empire – Strabo, who wrote in Greek but was nonetheless Roman in outlook, Pomponius Mela, and Pliny the Elder – seem bent on supporting this claim by showing that the *oikoumenē* (or in Roman terms the *orbis terrarum*) had at last been completely circumnavigated.' *Rhet. Her.* 4.13 (mid-first century BC) may be the earliest extant instance in Latin.

22   Polyb. 1.2.7: σχεδὸν δὲ πᾶσαν πεποιημένοι τὴν οἰκουμένην ὑπήκοον αὐτοῖς. Cf. 1.1.5: ἐπικρατηθέντα σχεδὸν ἅπαντα τὰ κατὰ τὴν οἰκουμένην.

23   Polyb. 1.2.4-6. See also 3.1.4-5; 6.50.6; 15.9-5.

24   Liv. 38.60.5: *[L. Scipio] imperium populi Romani propagaverit in ultimos terrarum fines.*

the boundaries of the Empire coterminous with the *orbis terrarum.*[25] Pompey is said to have made the same boast for himself on a monument in honour of his deeds in Asia: he 'extended the frontiers of the Empire to the limits of the earth.'[26] Cicero regularly speaks casually as if Rome already ruled all peoples or the whole *orbis terrarum.*[27] This conception also appears in a rather bombastic preamble to a consular law of 58 BC: *imperio ampli]ficato [p]ace per orb[em terrarum confecta.*[28] In the time of the second triumvirate Cornelius Nepos could assert that Octavian and Antony both wanted to be the ruler, 'not only of the city of Rome, but of the whole world.'[29] In Virgil's *Aeneis* the walls of Rome figuratively enclose the Roman Empire.[30] Note further Ovid's claim: 'To other peoples was given land with fixed boundaries. The extent of the city of Rome is the same as that of the world.'[31] Writing about Tiberius, Velleius Paterculus says: 'By this decree the command of almost the entire world (*orbis*) was being entrusted to one man.'[32] Also in the first century CE the astrologer and poet Manilius writes: 'Italy belongs to the Balance, her rightful sign: beneath it Rome and her sovereignty of the world (*orbis*) were founded.'[33] A related theme is found in a Stoic tradition represented by Cicero who speaks of 'those who regard the entire world as one city.'[34]

Seneca has a related image: 'The very reason for our magnanimity in not shutting ourselves up within the walls of one city but in going forth into intercourse with the whole earth, and in claiming the world as our country, was that we might have a wider field for our virtue.'[35] Florus (writing at an uncertain date in the reigns of Hadrian to

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[25]   Cic. *Cat.* 3.26; *Sest.* 67; *Prov. Cons.* 30, 33; *Bal.* 64. Cf. Brunt (n. 16), 162. Nicolet (n. 12 above), 31 with note 17, notes that *orbis* by itself, without '*terrarum*' dates from the Augustan period.

[26]   Diod. Sic. 40.4 (= Const. Exc 40.4, pp. 405-6): ὅρια τῆς ἡγεμονίας τοῖς ὅροις τῆς γῆς προσβιβάσας. The *oikoumenē* is not mentioned in the parallel text Plin. *NH* 7.97-8; cf. Nicolet (n. 12 above), 31-33.

[27]   For instance: *de or.* 1.14. Alternatively, Cicero speaks of Rome's power over all peoples, II *Verr.* 4.81; *Leg. Agr.* 2.22; *Dom.* 90; *Planc.* 11; *Phil.* 6.7.19. Cf. E. Bréguet, 'Urbi et Orbi' in J. Bibauw (ed), *Hommages à Marcel Renard*, Collection Latomus 101 (Brussels 1969), 140-152; Brunt (n. 16 above), 168.

[28]   *CIL* 1².2500.

[29]   Nep. *Att.* 20.5: … *cum se uterque principem non solum urbis Romae sed orbis terrarum esse cupere*t. Also: 3.3: *in ea urbe in qua domicilium orbis terrarum esset imperii.*

[30]   *Aen.* 8.714f. See P.R. Hardie, *Virgil's Aeneid: Cosmos and Imperium* (Oxford 1986), 364: 'The association of city and empire is basic to the whole conception of the Shield of Aeneas … .'

[31]   Ovid. *Fasti* 2.683-4: *gentibus est aliis tellus data limite certo: Romanae spatium est urbis et orbis idem.* For other instances of this theme: F. Bömer's edition of the *Fasti* (*Die Fasten,* 2 vols., Heidelberg 1957), vol. 2, 17 and 131-2. Other relevant passages in the *Fasti*: 1.284; 517; 529; 600; 616; 712; 717; 2.130; 136ff.

[32]   Vell. Pat. 2.31.2: *Quo scito paene totius terrarum orbis imperium uni viro deferebatur.*

[33]   Manil. *Astron.* 773-5: *Libra … qua condita Roma orbis et imperium retinet discrimina rerum.*'

[34]   Cic. *Parad.* 2.18.5: *qui omnem orbem terrarum unam urbem esse ducunt.*

[35]   Sen. *Tranq.* 4.4: *Ideo magno animo nos non unius urbis moenibus clusimus, sed in totius orbis commercium emisimus patriamque nobis mundum professi sumus, ut liceret latiorem uirtuti campum dare.* Cf. Bréguet (n. 27), 150.

Marcus Aurelius) asserts: 'So widely have they extended their arms throughout the world (*orbis*), that those who read of their exploits are learning the history, not of a single people, but of the human race.'[36] The idea is still encountered in the fifth century in the work of Rutilius Namatianus: Rome 'has united all peoples into one nation and made all the world one city.'[37]

It is true, as noted by Brunt, that *orbis terrarum* was also used in a restricted sense of those parts of the world that formed the Roman political universe.[38] However, this is less frequently encountered than the use of the expression in a universal sense. Altogether more important is the fact that the numerous authors who make these claims of Roman universal rule knew it to be false. Nobody was unaware of the existence of an independent power, Parthia. The presence of numerous independent Germanic tribes beyond the Rhine, before the end of the first century BC and after AD 9 was familiar and so was the presence of numerous farther-away peoples. In the Augustan period Pompeius Trogus says the Romans and Parthians had divided the world between them.[39] An important aspect of this is that east-west distances are consistently underestimated by Greeks and Romans.[40] In Central Europe, for instance, it seems that only after the loss of Varus' army in AD 9 the Romans began to appreciate the size of the population they would have to keep under control if they wanted to hold Germany east of the Rhine.[41] This is clear, too, from Caesar's plans for an eastern campaign as described by Plutarch. Caesar is said to have intended to conquer Parthia, India and subsequently Scythia and Germany.[42]

To sum up: two somewhat varying ideas are conveyed by these passages. One is the claim that the city of Rome rules the entire world, a world that is circular or elliptic in shape. This is found in the work of Cicero, in Pompey's victory inscription, in a legal source, and in the works of Nepos, Velleius, Manilius and Florus. The second idea is that Rome, the city and the entire world — round or elliptic — are one and the same. This is encountered in the work of Vergil, Ovid, Cicero, Seneca, Rutilius Namatianus, cited above, and in that of Aristides, discussed below.

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[36]   Flor. 1. *Praef.*: *Deinceps ad Caesarem Augustum centum et quinquaginta anni, quibus totum orbem pacavit*. Note also: *ILS* 212: *gloria prolati imperi ultra Oceanum*.

[37]   Rut. Namat. 65-6: *Dumque offers victis proprii consortia iuris / urbem fecisti quod prius orbis erat*. This refers to the grant of citizenship to the inhabitants of the provinces.

[38]   Brunt (n. 16) 323, n.35: *SEG* 1.335; cf. Cic. *Att.* 4.1.7 (consular law of 57 *de annona*); Polyb. 1.1.5; 1.3.10; 3.1.4; 6.50.6; for his true meaning: 1.3.9; 15.9.5 with 2.14.7 and 4.2.2.

[39]   Justin. *Epit.* 41.1.1: *Parthi, penes quos uelut diuisione orbis cum Romanis facta nunc Orientis imperium est …* Strabo advances a similar idea: 11.9.2 (515); 17.3.24 (840), but for a different view: 6.4.2 (288), where the Parthians are described as a dependent kingdom.

[40]   This phenomenon goes far back in Greek geographical ideas as shown by M. Finkelberg, 'The Geography of *Prometheus Vinctus*', *RhM* 141 (1998), 119-142.

[41]   C.M. Wells, *The German Policy of Augustus* (Oxford, 1972), 7-8.

[42]   Plut. *Caes.* 58.3; cf. Nicol. Dam. (Jacoby, FGH 90F 130.95). See on this R. Syme, *The Provincial at Rome and Rome and the Balkans 80BC-AD 14* (Exeter, 1999), 174-92, ch.4: 'Caesar's Designs on Dacia and Parthia'. Syme discards the reports on a planned eastern campaign and argues that Caesar meant to go to Dacia. This does not concern us here. It suffices that Nicolaus and Plutarch, two well-informed authors, and, one may presume, their readers, found it credible that Caesar seriously contemplated such a campaign.

While these ideas are common in Latin authors, there are no parallels for such statements in Greek literature, apart from Greek authors strongly influenced by Roman concepts such as Polybius and Strabo. It is true that there are Greek precedents of seeing the world in the shape of a shield and having an *omphalos,* a navel, in the exact centre.[43] However, the Roman idea of the Empire, or the city as covering the entire circular world, the *orbis terrarum*, is a new concept. The world is circular in shape, but there is no centre and no periphery, for the two are in fact the same.

The idea of the identity of city and empire is prominent in Aristides' speech *Regarding Rome* which, of course, attempts to praise Rome in Roman terms: 'What a city is to its boundaries and its territories, so this city (of Rome) is to the whole inhabited world, as if it had been designated its common town …'.[44]

The implication is that the empire, and, with it, the entire inhabited world, is Rome's territory. Thus here again we see the conflation of city and empire. Note also the following passage in Aristides' work: 'Since the government is universal and like that of a single city …'.[45] This immediately reminds the modern historian of the fact that Rome, to some extent, always remained a city whose magistrates also ruled the Empire.

In this light must be seen also his statement about the army:

> You (i.e. Rome) believed that it was base and inconsistent with your other conceptions to put walls about the city itself, as it were concealing it or fleeing your subjects, as if some master should show himself in fear of his own slaves. However, you did not neglect walls, but you put these about your empire, not your city. And you erected them as far off as possible … For beyond the outermost circle of the inhabited world, indeed like a second line of defense in the fortification of a city, you have drawn another circle, which is more flexible and more easily guarded, and here you have put up your defensive walls and have built border cities, filling each in a different place with inhabitants … Just as a trench encircles an army camp, all this can be called the circuit and perimeter of the walls, so that the circumference of this perimeter is not calculated at ten parasangs, nor twenty, nor a little more, nor as much as you would say right off, but by all that is enclosed by the inhabited portion of Ethiopia and the Phasis on the one side and the Euphrates inland, and to the west that final great island. These walls have not been built of bitumen or baked brick … This circuit, which is much greater and grander than those walls, is on every side in every way unbreakable and indissoluble … men who hold out their shields in protection of those walls, not believing in flight …[46]

Obviously all this is a metaphor inspired by imperial ideology, but it is also the perspective of an upper class representative living in Greece, who has no concrete

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[43]   Romm (n. 4 above), 14: The first Greek maps of the world portrayed the earth as a disk of land surrounded by Ocean: Agathemerus 1.1, in C. Müller *GGM* 2.471; Hdt. 4.36, and further references in Romm, 14 n. 14. In fact the similarity between these visual and verbal images was remarked as early as the second century AD by Crates of Mallos (reference in Romm, 14 n. 15) who called Achilles' shield a *kosmou mimēma* or 'image of the world'; the parallel thereafter became a commonplace among Stoic geographers and critics, for instance Strabo 1.1.7 (c. 4): 'Again in the story of the making of the arms of Achilles, Homer places Oceanus in a circle round the outer edge of the shield of Achilles'.

[44]   Aristid. *Or*. 61. Translated by Ch. A. Behr (Amsterdam, 1968).
[45]   Aristid. *Or*. 65.
[46]   Aristid. *Or*. 80-84.

conception of the remote provinces.[47] It is interesting as well to observe that Aristides, born in Asia Minor as he was, explicitly states that he does not speak of man-made and built barriers, but of an army located in a frontier zone. This does not refer to limes-works, rivers or mountains. That, however, touches on the subject of frontiers, which is not our topic here. The point of interest for present purposes is that Aristides' images are in fact the opposite of a core-periphery model: the core and periphery are one and the same, part of a single structure. The army surrounds it all, but that has nothing to do with an idea of core and periphery. Also worth mentioning is Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who again refers to Rome as a city ruling an empire (1.3.3).

Connected with this idea is the rule that the pomerium (the formal boundary of the city of Rome) might be extended only by those who expanded the boundaries of the Empire.[48] There is thus a clear connection between city and the limits of empire. A concomitant idea was the universality of the Roman Empire: 'She is the first and only power ever to have made the risings and settings of the sun the boundaries of her power.'[49] This may have been inspired by a boastful phrase attributed by Herodotus to Xerxes: '… we shall extend the Persian land as far as Zeus's heaven stretches. The sun will then shine on no land beyond our territory.'[50] It is also an early predecessor of the claim that Charles V and Philip II ruled 'an empire on which the Sun never sets.'[51]

The concept of a universal empire is most famously encountered in Vergil's line: 'For these I set neither bounds nor periods of empire; dominion without end have I bestowed'.[52]

So far this brief sketch of ancient authors which aims to show how they envisaged the Roman Empire as part of the world in geographical terms. We have encountered two distinct levels or concepts. There are authors who see the empire and the world in abstract, ideological terms. While they describe the world as circular, there is no clear distinction between a core and a periphery. Of course, this is ideology and not reality, as has been noted, but it reflects the manner in which the empire was seen by some intellectuals. Rome rules the entire world; the city and all of the empire are one and the same. The Roman Empire covers the entire inhabited world without any indication of a division between heartland and outlying districts. This approach insists on the integration of city and empire in every respect: geographical, social, and military. Then there are authors with a genuine interest in geography and ethnography such as Strabo and Tacitus. Their descriptions certainly convey no sense of an empire consisting of a core and a periphery. For them the Empire, as well as the world, was complex and no

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[47]   Cf. T.J. Cornell, 'The End of Roman Imperial Expansion,' in: J. Rich & G. Shipley (eds.), *War and Society in the Roman World* (London, 1993), 139-170.

[48]   Tac. *Ann.* 12.23: *Caesar, more prisco, quo iis qui protulere imperium etiam terminos urbis propagare datur.*

[49]   Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.3.3.

[50]   Hdt. 7.8c.1-2: γῆν τὴν Περσίδα ἀποδέξομεν τῷ Διὸς αἰθέρι ὁμουρέουσαν· οὐ γὰρ δὴ χώρην γε οὐδεμίαν κατόψεται ἥλιος ὁμουρέουσαν τῇ ἡμετέρῃ.

[51]   *El imperio en el que nunca se pone el sol.* The phrase became popular elsewhere too, notably in nineteenth-century Britain.

[52]   Verg. *Aen.* 1.278 (trans. Fairclough, Loeb): *his ego nec metas rerum nec tempora pono: imperium sine fine dedi.* E. Bréguet (n. 27 above), 151-2, briefly indicates the afterlife of the idea, in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

centre and periphery can be recognized in those works.

If the idea that the Empire consists of a core and a periphery is not as such encountered in ancient literature, it can of course still be argued that the core-periphery model is a productive way of analyzing ancient realities for a modern historian. This possibility should now be discussed.

Core/Periphery in the Modern Literature

The idea that there existed a core and a periphery has been applied also to the Greek world. It is sometimes claimed, for instance, that Macedonia is peripheral to the Greek core. This is a misconception, for numerous Greek colonies were geographically farther from the Greek mainland than Macedonia: yet the cities in Southern Italy and Sicily, Libya, Egypt and the Black Sea are not normally considered peripheral, even though they are much farther away than Macedonia which often is regarded as belonging to the periphery. On the other hand, population groups closer to Athens could be regarded as non-Greeks by the ancient Greeks themselves, for instance the Dryopes who inhabited Euboea, the Cyclades and the Peloponnese (Hdt. 8.46.4; Diod. Sic. 4.37.2) and the Aetolians in the later fifth and fourth centuries BC.[53]

We move on therefore to a brief consideration of the popular core-periphery model and various attempts to apply it to the Roman Empire. Wallerstein is a fairly late successor to universalists like Spengler and Toynbee, but less of an historian and more of an abstract social scientist. Also, unlike these two historians, he is a consistent neo-Marxist.[54] Three of his works are relevant here.[55]

The core-periphery model is essentially an expansion of dependency theory, which is a body of social science theories predicated on the notion that resources flow from a 'periphery' of poor and underdeveloped states to a 'core' of wealthy states, enriching the latter at the expense of the former. It is a central contention of the dependency theory that poor states are impoverished and rich ones enriched by the way poor states are integrated into the 'world system'.

The theory defines the difference between developed countries and developing

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[53]   J. Hall, 'Contested Ethnicities: Perceptions of Macedonia within Evolving Definitions of Greek Identity', in I. Malkin (ed.), *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity* (Cambridge, Mass. 2001), 159-186, at 166. For the Aetolians: C. Antonetti, *Les Etoliens: Image et religion* (Paris, 1990). The criticism cited here more or less echoes the observations of Horden and Purcell (n. 3 above).

[54]   I. Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World-Economy* (Cambridge and Paris, 1979), 118: 'The next twenty-five years will probably determine the modalities and the speed of the ongoing transition to a socialist world government'. On pp. 109-111 he copies with approval an essay by Comrade Kim Il Sung, consisting of three full pages, published as 'an advertisement by the Office of the Permanent Observer of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the United Nations in *The New York Times* [16 March 1975], pp.6-7.

[55]   I. Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York, London, 1974); *The Capitalist World-Economy* (Cambridge and Paris, 1979), Part I: *Unthinking Social Science: The Limits of Nineteenth-Century Paradigms* (Cambridge 1991), Part 6: 'World-Systems Analysis as Unthinking', 227-272; esp. Chapter 20, 'World-Systems Analysis: The Second Phase', 266-2.

countries, characterized e.g. by power or wealth. The core refers to developed countries, and the periphery is a synonym for the dependent developing countries. The main reason for the position of the developed countries is economic power.

Beginning in the fifteenth century, the Age of Discovery, Europeans took the capitalist system, which flourished at home, to distant lands, whose labour and productivity were then bound to the European core in an unequal colonial relationship. The result was the capitalist world system, as Wallerstein terms it.[56] There was increasing economic and productive specialisation among the world's regions, as a pattern of unequal exchange developed between the industrial commodities of the advanced European nations (at the world system's core) and the raw materials from underdeveloped Asia, Africa, and the New World (at the world system's periphery). By the eighteenth century a worldwide urban culture had come into existence. It took variant forms of economic, political, and urban organisation in the colonising core and in the colonised periphery.

Wallerstein's analysis of what he calls a 'world-system' makes an essential distinction between a 'world-economy' and a 'world-empire.' A world-system is, in his description, 'a unit with a single division of labour and multiple cultural systems' (i.e. countries, powers, political and military systems). If there is a common, that is, unified political system, then he speaks of a 'world-empire,' if there is not, then it is a world-economy.

Wallerstein concludes: 'It turns out empirically that world-economies have historically been unstable structures leading either towards disintegration or conquest by one group and hence transformation into a world-empire. Examples of such world-empires emerging from world-economies are all the so-called great civilisations of pre-modern times, such as China, Egypt, Rome … '. On the other hand, the so-called nineteenth-century empires, such as Great Britain or France, were not world-empires at all, according to Wallerstein, but nation-states with colonial appendages operating within the framework of a world-economy. If we want to analyse ancient Empires such as Rome in Wallerstein's terms, we must then follow his qualifications of a 'world-empire'.[57]

There have been three major mechanisms that have enabled world-systems to retain relative political stability, according to Wallerstein: '… One obviously is the concentration of military strength in the hands of the dominant forces … A second mechanism is the pervasiveness of an ideological commitment to the system as a whole … Three: the division of the majority into a larger lower stratum and a smaller middle stratum.'[58]

The normal condition of a world-system is a three layered structure. When this ceases, the world-system disintegrates. In a world-empire, the middle stratum is in fact accorded the role of maintaining the long-distance luxury trade, while the upper stratum concentrates its resources on controlling the military machine which can collect tribute,

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[56]   The Modern World-System (n. 55).
[57]   I. Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World-Economy* (Cambridge and Paris, 1979), Part I: *The Inequalities of Core and Periphery*, chapter 1: 'The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System: Concepts for Comparative Analysis', 5.
[58]   Ibid. 22.

the crucial mode of redistributing surplus.[59] This is hardly an appropriate structural description of the Roman Empire.

However, the essential difference between the two types of world-systems is that a world-empire has a 'cultural' stratification (presumably meaning social and class distinctions), while a world-economy has: core, periphery, and semi-periphery states.[60]

The important conclusion for us is that core and periphery are concepts which Wallerstein uses, not in connection with a world-empire, which, in his terminology, includes the Roman Empire, but with a world-economy, and he uses them for a classification of states, not regions. The description of core, periphery and semi-periphery refers to what he calls 'world-economic' systems, not to 'world-empires'.[61] This is relevant for the period of European domination from the fifteenth until the twentieth century, not to any ancient major empire that we try to understand here and now. He specifically and emphatically analyses the capitalist economy of those recent centuries and in fact says little about empires.[62] He insists: 'a "world-economy" is a fundamentally different kind of social system from a "world-empire" … both in formal structure and as a mode of production … the mode of production is capitalist'.[63] Were China, Egypt, and the Roman Empire capitalist?[64] Where in these empires was the 'semi-periphery'?[65]

Wallerstein explains: 'World-economies then are divided into core-states and

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[59]   Ibid. 23.

[60]   There is extensive discussion throughout Chapter Five of 'Semiperipheral countries and the contemporary world crisis'. By 'semiperipheral countries' he means, for instance, those in Latin American regions.

[61]   Ibid. 20-21.

[62]   I. Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System* (n. 55 above), 16. He defines an empire as a mechanism for collecting tribute, which 'means payments received for protection, but payments in excess of the cost of producing the protection'.

[63]   Ibid. 159. R. Blanton and G. Feinman, 'The Mesoamerican world-system,' *American Anthropologist* 86 (1984), 673-82, try to apply Wallerstein to Meso-America, which they see as a pre-capitalist world-economy, not as an empire. In discussing a pre-capitalist economy they already abandon Wallerstein's principles. However, they consider Wallerstein's mode to provide a useful framework for macro-regional interaction. It is not clear what they mean when they use the terms core and periphery. They see pre-capitalist Mesoamerica as a world-economy with core state and peripheral cities, and further ignore Wallerstein's concept of a semi-periphery.

[64]   J. Schneider, 'Was there a Pre-capitalist World-System?' *Peasant Studies* 6 (1977), 20-29. Schneider proposes a hypothesis that there was a *pre-capitalist* world-system, in which core-areas accumulated precious metals while exporting manufactures, whereas peripheral areas gave up these metals (and often slaves) against an inflow of finished goods. Whatever the merits of this hypothesis for an early modern study, it cannot apply to the Roman Empire.

[65]   G. Woolf, 'World-systems analysis and the Roman Empire,' *JRA* 3 (1990), 44-58, at 48: 'Nothing like a semi-periphery can be identified within the [Roman] empire: the inner provinces seem if anything to have been exploited more than the outer ones. The term semi-periphery must be used in a fairly precise sense.' Woolf then offers his own application of the idea of a semi-periphery to the Roman Empire which one may accept or not, but his proposition has no place in Wallerstein's concept of a semi-periphery.

peripheral areas. I do not say peripheral *states* because one characteristic of a peripheral area is that the indigenous state is weak, ranging from its nonexistence (that is, a colonial situation) to one with a low degree of autonomy (that is, a neo-colonial situation) …. There are also semi-peripheral areas which are in between the core and the periphery on a series of dimensions …. The semi-periphery is a necessary structural element in a world-economy.'[66]

The conclusion is clear: if we want to use terms like "core", "semi-periphery" and "periphery" towards an understanding of ancient empires, we have to make it clear that we do not use them as concepts formulated by Wallerstein in part of his 'world-systems analysis', but in another sense. As observed by Woolf: 'Wallerstein's analysis of the extension of capitalism has been most often applied to pre-capitalist periods in a manner that runs directly contrary to his own conception of world history'.[67] In fact, I imagine that many of those studying the Roman Empire are strongly influenced in their choice of terminology and imagery by some of the views they encounter in ancient, Greco-Roman texts. The difficulty is that they do not usually define their terminology. In fact, the term "core" is often replaced by "centre" without explanation. Most of them tend to apply Wallerstein's terminology, not when writing about the type of economic relationship that is the subject of Wallerstein's work, but when discussing some of the usual subjects of interest to Roman historians: the exercise of Roman military and political power, and the degree of integration of peoples into the Empire. This is true for the work of Daphne Nash,[68] Colin Haselgrove,[69] Lotte Hedeager,[70] Barry Cunliffe,[71] Tom Bloemers,[72] Susan Alcock,[73] Richard Hingley,[74] and Michael Rowlands.[75] A collection of papers edited by

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[66]   Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System*, (n. 55 above), 349.

[67]   Woolf (n. 65), 44.

[68]   D. Nash, 'Imperial expansion under the Roman Republic', in M. Rowlands, M. Larsen and K. Kristiansen (eds.), *Centre and Periphery in the Ancient World* (Cambridge 1987), 87-103. She distinguishes *four* zones: 1) Italy, 2) provinces, 3) allies, friends and enemies, 4) a zone close to the empire, of economic importance, also described as '…a remote periphery which can be seen to have been recognizably involved in the economic maintenance of the Roman empire, but which lay outside the immediate political concerns of Rome …'.

[69]   C. Haselgrove, 'Culture Process on the Periphery: Belgic Gaul and Rome during the late Republic and Early Empire' in Rowlands et al., (n. 75), 104-24, discusses Gaul. He distinguishes between an 'outer' and an 'inner periphery'. On p.112 he also speaks of the 'periphery' of the states of Central Gaul, which itself is apparently considered to be a core. I am not certain whether Nash's 'outer periphery' is the same thing as Haselgrove's 'remote periphery'.

[70]   L. Hedeager, 'Empire, frontier and the barbarian hinterland: Rome and northern Europe from AD 1 - 400, in Rowlands et al., (n. 75 above), 124-140. 'Free Germany' is the periphery to the Roman core.

[71]   B. Cunliffe, *Greeks, Romans & Barbarians: Spheres of Interaction* (London 1988), 2-9; 193-201; reviewed by G. Woolf, *JRS* 79 (1989), 236-9, esp. 237-8.

[72]   J.H.F. Bloemers, 'Periphery in pre- and proto-history: structure and process in the Rhine-Meuse basin between c. 600 BC and 500 AD' in R.F.J. Jones, J.H.F. Bloemers, S.L. Dyson and M. Biddle (eds.), *First Millennium Papers* (BAR S401, Oxford, 1988), 11-35 at 11-13. He equates 'periphery' with buffer zone. The periphery is part of the sphere of influence of the core. The elites in core and periphery collaborate.

[73]   S.E. Alcock, 'Archaeology and imperialism: Roman expansion and the Greek city', *Journal*

Timothy Champion is concerned with the application of the theory to archaeology and less concerned with the Roman Empire.[76] A critical and systematic attempt to analyse the difficulties has been made by Greg Woolf. It is my impression that not much remains of the Wallerstein theory after Woolf has applied it to the Roman Empire.[77] Woolf analyses the Roman Empire in terms of Wallerstein's category of a 'world-empire,' even though, according to Wallerstein's own definition, this is not applicable.[78] Woolf characterizes world-empires 'as centralised and extensive political units, comprising a number of tributary cells. The economy of a world-empire is subordinate to its political structure, as are its internal dynamics'.[79] Woolf acknowledges that the Roman Empire had no semi-periphery in Wallerstein's sense and observes that the frontiers of the empire were major consumers of the tribute and taxation exacted from the rest of the empire because of the presence of much of the imperial army there.[80] As already noted, the essential difference between Wallerstein's two types of world-systems is that a world-empire has a 'cultural' stratification, whatever this may mean, while a world-economy has: core, periphery, and semi-periphery states. This means that the entire notion of the Roman Empire consisting

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of Mediterranean Archaeology 2 (1989), 87-135. Alcock discusses the manner in which Greece was incorporated after the conquest and calls it periphery. Here then periphery is used for newly conquered and annexed territory, which is totally different from the views of those who study N.-W. Europe, where the area beyond direct imperial political, judicial and administrative control is meant.

[74]   R. Hingley, 'Roman Britain: the Structure of Roman Imperialism and the Consequences of Imperialism on the Development of a Peripheral Province', in D. Miles (ed.), *The Romano British Countryside: Studies in Rural Settlement and Economy* (Oxford BAR 1981), 17-52. Hingley sets out to mix Wallerstein's concepts of a world-empire and a world-economy. He thus proposes to view the 'core' of the empire as having a relationship with 'peripheral provinces'. He ignores Wallerstein's emphasis on 'semi-periphery.' I am not at all sure that his description of the economic and social relationships in Roman Britain, however appropriate it may be, has anything to do with Wallerstein. For criticism of Hingley, see: M. Millett, 'Romanization: historical issues and archaeological interpretation,' in T. Blagg and M. Millett (eds.), *The Early Roman Empire in the West* (Oxbow books, 1990), 35-41. Millett altogether rejects the attempts to apply Wallerstein's model to the reality of the Roman Empire.

[75]   M. Rowlands et al., (eds.), *Centre and Periphery in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, 1987). Rowlands in 'Part One: Theoretical Perspectives, Centre and periphery: a review of a concept,' 1-11, presents a theoretical and critical Marxist discussion in which he attempts to redefine Wallerstein's model so as to make it applicable to the ancient world. In doing so he does *not* refer to empires — he mentions Sumer, the Valley of Mexico, the Maya. However, he clearly uses 'periphery' in the sense of the remote areas of an empire.

[76]   T. C. Champion (ed.), *Centre and Periphery: Comparative Studies in Archaeology* (London, 1989), Introduction by Champion. Chapters 7, 9 and 10 deal with specifically Roman topics.

[77]   Woolf (n. 65 above), 44-58.

[78]   Ibid. 45.

[79]   Ibid. 47.

[80]   Ibid. 48. Note also the reservations expressed by H. Elton, *Frontiers of the Roman Empire: Spheres of Interaction* (Bloomington, Ind. 1996), 1. See also: T.C. Champion, *Centre and Periphery: Comparative Studies in Archaeology* (London, 1995); M. T. Larsen (ed.) *Power and Propaganda: a Symposium on Ancient Empires* (Copenhagen, 1979).

of a core and a periphery evaporates if Wallerstein's model is applied rigorously which, admittedly, he does not do himself.[81]

The advantage of working with Wallerstein's model for Roman history, so it has been argued, is that it provides a tool 'for understanding the macro-scale structures and dynamics of the Roman Empire and its neighbours, and for facilitating comparisons between Rome and other early empires'.[82] However, if Wallerstein's ideas and his concepts are freely adapted without clear definitions of terminology and method, they cannot clarify or facilitate anything.[83] It has been claimed that the distinction between centre and periphery may be 'very useful and perhaps even indispensable.' But we must recognize that it is only a metaphor, and that hence it has the weakness of all metaphors when we turn from generalizations to analyses of specific historical circumstances … We must be cognizant … of the dangers as well as the attractions of using models like the center-periphery dichotomy.'[84] Indeed, the model has become a buzz word, or what *Fowlers Usage* calls: a 'worsened word.'[85]

Regarding the views encountered in Greek and Roman authors, one point is clear: the *ancient* authors saw relationships in terms of politics, intellectuality, military and social culture and, from the fourth century onward, in terms of religion as well. They were not interested in economic dependency theories. This in itself, of course, does not invalidate attempts to develop such theories.

Furthermore, it is clear that the terms "core" or "centre", "semi-periphery" and "periphery" as such reflect modern, rather than ancient views of imperial geography, although some of those views may misleadingly suggest a core and periphery approach, if interpreted in a somewhat distorted manner. The world is shaped like a dinner table, an elliptoid surface, surrounded by the Ocean with Greece or, respectively, Italy, forming the centre of a civilised Mediterranean world, encircled by barbarian lands which formed the outer ring. This causes students of the Greek and Latin literature to find the concepts of "centre and periphery" familiar and comfortable, whatever the exact content of the idea. It has to be admitted, too, that the geographic basis for the application of the

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[81]   As noted, Wallerstein regards core-periphery as typical of a world-economy, not of a world-empire. Yet he himself uses the core-periphery idea in connection with empires: Wallerstein, *The Modern World System I* (n. 55 above), 15.

[82]   Woolf (n. 65 above), 50: 'Above all the process of theoretical abstraction allows issues, structures and dynamics to be envisaged and debated with a clarity impossible in discussion at a more concrete level.' Woolf refers to Wallerstein's 'pre-capitalist world-economies'. Wallerstein, in fact, does not make it clear that he felt any such systems existed. The only world-economy he really discusses is the capitalist one. On pp. 51-2 Woolf goes on to refer to the 'frontier zone' and beyond as periphery vis-à-vis core. That is legitimate, but it is not the same as Wallerstein's concept of a periphery.

[83]   Woolf (n. 65 above),45: Wallerstein's model has been 'customized for use in pre-capitalist contexts … But only a few of the many attempts to apply world-systems analysis to the precapitalist world face up to these challenges'.

[84]   R. McC. Adams, 'Common Concerns but Different Standpoints: A Commentary' in: Larsen (n. 80 above), 393-404 at 400-1.

[85]   K. Clarke, *Between Geography and History: Hellenistic Constructions of the Roman World* (Oxford, 1999), has an item in the index: 'centre-periphery model' which, however, has nothing to do with all of the above.

terminology will remain simplistic as long as no extensive analysis has taken place in the case of the Roman Empire, is regarded as core and what as periphery.

A final remark: a serious problem in working with the ideas of "core" or "centre" and "periphery" is that many of those who try do so keep us largely in the dark as to whether we are thinking in terms of geography, communications, power, military control, or social and economic relationships. It is somehow suggested that these spheres overlap. Of course they do not do so in fact. If a model is to generate clarity it requires minimal conceptual definition.[86]

The Microecological approach

This is the term introduced by Horden and Purcell in their major work, *The Corrupting Sea*. Their microecological approach seems the opposite of the core-periphery model.[87] They conceive that towns constitute the basic elements of the Empire less as separate and clearly definable entities and more as loci of contact or overlap between different ecologies.[88] The microregions they consider have to be understood with reference to a wider setting and they therefore aim to show how microregions can coalesce on a grand scale. Part of their study considers 'four definite places': The Biqa (in Lebanon); South Etruria; Cyrenaica and Melos.[89] It would be futile to attempt to discuss these complex matters as part of this paper. However, it may be instructive to conclude by considering a recent work which attempts to apply the model of Horden and Purcell to yet another region.[90]

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[86]   An interesting parallel showing the difficulties of working with a model of centre and periphery is found in the study of Jewish quarters in German towns in the late medieval period. See A. Haverkamp, 'The Jewish Quarters in German Towns during the Late Middle Ages', in R. Po-Chia Hsia and H. Lehmann, *In and Out of the Ghetto: Jewish-Gentile Relations in Late Medieval and Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge, 1995), 13-28 at 27: 'These findings also do not support the notion, widely found in research on Jewish quarters, that there was a negative social gradient from a town's center to its periphery … The supposed gradients, particularly in such small urban settlements, were interrupted by the arrival of local highways that assigned a functionally central role to the outer areas. At least as important within the *regnum teutonicum*, with its diversified structure of lordship, were the conditions of constitutional topography, which, for example, could transform the geographical periphery by the existence of monasteries or other religious institutions, even in the suburbs, into centers of economic importance. Aspects of historical genesis, together with the constitutional topography, raise doubts about the applicability of modern social categories of "central" versus "peripheral".

[87]   They refer to the core-periphery theory only once (n, 2), 133: 'The influential theories of Wallerstein about the nature of large scale social and economic systems will therefore apply to the Mediterranean, if at all, in a curious way: the core territories may be composed of far-flung coastlands whose functional proximity is the product of seaborne connectivity. Peripheral regions will be found in the interstices of this network as well as in geographically remote areas.'

[88]   Horden and Purcell (n. 2 above), 100.

[89]   Ibid. Part Two, Chapter III: 'Four Definite Places', 53-88.

[90]   D. Kennedy, Gerasa and the Decapolis: A 'Virtual Island' in Northwest Jordan (London, 2007); see my review in Ancient History Bulletin (forthcoming).

David Kennedy, in his interesting and stimulating book about Gerasa and its vicinity in modern Jordan aims to consider this region as a 'virtual island', a microregion in terms of the approach proposed by Horden and Purcell. This is defined as a region 'isolated by the peculiar form of the geography and environment around it'. The question to be asked then should be: *was* this region indeed a 'virtual island' in the terms of Horden and Purcell's concept? I cannot avoid expressing serious doubts. While it is clear that the presence of the pre-desert and desert in the East and, perhaps, the lava lands of Trachonitis to the North demarcated it in those directions to some extent, no such isolating geographical feature existed to the south, west and north-west.

There is, of course, a modern frontier now, separating two states, and it is conceivable that this conveys a sense of isolation to those archaeologists working in Jordan who are unfamiliar with the terrain west of the frontier, but that need have no implications for antiquity. It is not obvious that the Jordan valley as such ever was a significant barrier. Indeed there are indications that it was not. The province of Judaea extended east of the river and this included the cities of Gadara and Pella. This is still the reality in the late third-early fourth century, as shown by Eusebius' *Onomasticon*.[91] This is important, for Eusebius is very precise, as shown, for instance, by the entry on Arbela, a village in the territory of Pella, east of the Jordan. Eusebius says that this village marked the boundary of Judaea.[92] Through the centuries administrative units straddled both banks of the river. Scythopolis, west of the river, was one of the cities of the Decapolis. It has been a topic of discussion what exactly was the Decapolis, a term encountered in several texts covering a varying number of cities, among them Gerasa.[93] The question what really is represented by the term 'Decapolis' is central to the subject of Kennedy's book.

The Nabataean kingdom encompassed southern Jordan, the Negev to the West and, to some extent, Sinai. In Late Antiquity the province of Palaestina III again included the Negev and the area which is now southern Jordan. As can be seen on pp. 88-95 of Kennedy's book, there were good Roman roads linking Judaea-Palaestina with Arabia.[94]

Fig. 1.1 on p.16 of Kennedy's book illustrates the boundaries of the area discussed in his book with the aid of two circles with a 50 km. radius. One circle has Gerasa for its centre. That is entirely appropriate if one writes about Gerasa and tries to see the world from the perspective of the Gerasenes. Scythopolis-Beth Shean, then, lies at the edge of

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[91]   Iazer is described by Eusebius, *Onom.* 104.13 (Klostermann) as a city '10 miles west of Philadelphia, now in Peraea in Palestine beyond the Jordan …'. Villages east of Pella, on the road to Gerasa are *not* described as belonging to Palestine. They are in Arabia Provincia.

[92]   Euseb. *Onom.* 14.18 (Klostermann): Ἀρβηλά. ὅριον ἀνατολικὸν τῆς Ἰουδαίας. ἔστι δὲ κώμη τις Ἀρβηλὰ πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου ἐν ὁρίοις Πέλλης πόλεως Παλαιστίνης.

[93]   Plin. *NH* 5.16.74 lists ten cities: Damascus, Philadelphia, Raphana, Scythopolis, Gadara, Hippos, Dion, Pella, Galasa (i.e. Gerasa), Canatha. Ptolemy 5.15.22-3 lists eighteen. He does not include Raphana, but mentions also nine others, including Heliopolis and Abila Lysaniae in the Lebanon. Cf. E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 BC – AD 135)*, vol. 2, G. Vermes, F. Millar, M. Black eds. (Edinburgh 1979), 125-7.

[94]   The most important of those was the road from Caesarea-on-the-Sea to Scythopolis - Beth Shean and thence to Pella and Gerasa: cf. B. Isaac and I. Roll, *Roman Roads in Judaea* 1: *The Legio-Scythopolis Road* (Oxford, 1982).

the circle. However, it would be equally justified to draw a circle with Scythopolis at the centre. After all, Scythopolis was a large city, belonging to the Decapolis and, later, the capital of the province of Palaestina II, so it cannot be maintained that its natural location is at the edge of any circle. Modern Beth Shean is rather isolated, but that is a different matter, the result of modern political divisions. A circle of 50-60 km. with Scythopolis at the centre, giving the perspective of, say, the governor of Palaestina II, would have Gerasa at the south-eastern edge. The circle would include Caesarea, port city and capital of Palaestina I on the Mediterranean, the Roman colony of Ptolemais-Acco in Syria-Phoenice to the north-west; Neapolis (Nablus, Shekhem) to the South-West and much of the Galilee, densely populated, including the cities of Tiberias and Diocaesarea-Sepphoris to the North-West. To the North, just beyond the 60 km. circle would be Gaulanitis with numerous villages of mixed population. All of these locations could be reached via good Roman roads. If we focus on Damascus which also belonged to the Decapolis according to the shorter of the two lists given by Pliny and Ptolemy we move to an altogether different region.

This is no mere speculation. As an approach it is reflected in Eusebius' *Onomasticon*, where he says of Gadara that it is 'a city across the Jordan, opposite Scythopolis and Tiberias, in the east, in the mountains …'.[95] I do not see therefore that the Decapolis was truly isolated or united in a geographical or environmental sense.

What then was the Decapolis? Undoubtedly it was a group of cities that had something in common, for it is mentioned in the literary sources, even if they disagree about the cities that belonged to it. In the first century, at least, there was a Roman equestrian officer administering the Decapolis, an indication that there was reason to keep the cities belonging to it together in some form.[96] Since at least some of the cities were scattered physically it seems best to assume that the Roman authorities recognized them as united by another bond, and this was almost certainly Hellenic culture and social organization, hence the claim by the citizens of Scythopolis that their city was 'one of the Hellenic cities in Coele-Syria'.[97] The name Decapolis may have lost its flavour when the cities came to belong to three separate provinces in the second century. In the late third-early fourth century Eusebius is rather vague: 'Decapolis: in the Gospels. It is in Peraea in the neighbourhood of Hippos, Pella and Gadara'.[98] Yet the inhabitants still called themselves Greeks, as distinct from the Jews, Nabataeans, Arabs, Ituraeans, Syrians and other peoples in the region. In other words, what united them and set them apart from the vicinity was not geography, environment, or presumed common descent, but social and cultural identity; in other words: not descent, but their distinct language, social organization and culture were regarded as essential. These categories were regarded as

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95   Euseb. *Onom.* 74.10: Γάδαρα. πόλις πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου, ἀντικρὺ Σκυθοπόλεως καὶ Τιβεριάδος πρὸς ἀνατολαῖς ἐν τῷ ὄρει …

96   B. Isaac, 'The Decapolis in Syria, a Neglected Inscription', *ZPE* 44 (1981),67-74, repr. in *The Near East under Roman Rule: Selected Papers* (Leiden 1998), 313-322.

97   G. Foerster & Y. Tsafrir, 'Nysa-Scythopolis — A New Inscription of the City on its Coins', *Israel Numismatic Journal* 9 (1986/7), 53-8. The inscription is dated 175/6 and describes the city as 'Hyera, asylos, of the Hellenic cities in Koile-Syria'.

98   Euseb. *Onom.* 80.16 (Klostermann): Δεκάπολις (*Matth.* 4.25). ἐν Εὐαγγελίοις. αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἐπὶ τῇ Περαίᾳ κειμένη ἀμφὶ τὴν Ἵππον καὶ Πέλλαν καὶ Γάδαραν.

crucially important not only by those concerned, but also by the Roman authorities.

Look at the situation before the Roman annexation. Petra was the capital of the Nabataean kingdom; Jerusalem, 'by far the most famous city of the East and not of Judaea only.'[99] Rome transferred the capital of Arabia, after its annexation, to Bostra (not to Gerasa). Jerusalem was destroyed while Caesarea-on-the-Sea was retained as provincial capital. Then, in the fourth century, Jerusalem again expanded rapidly. Both before 70 and after 235 the central position of the city, its prosperity and large size were the consequence of its importance as a religious centre.

Horden and Purcell, in their major work, discuss several samples throughout the Empire, such as the Biqa in Lebanon. In the reign of Augustus this region was made part of the territory of the Roman colony of Berytus (Beirut) in spite of the fact that the Biqa was separated from Berytus by a mountain range.[100] This is only one of many instances where Roman administrative arrangements may give a sense of ancient geographical perspective that runs counter to that of one looking at modern maps. Another such region is Cyrenaica, which is also a sample in Horden and Purcell's work. It was some 300 km. distance sailing from Crete with which it formed one Roman province.

To conclude: any consideration of the Roman Empire should not ignore the extent to which people are connected by culture, language, religion and other factors that are not economic and geographic, but social and cultural. These too play a role in economic life. In the words of Owen Lattimore, it is one of the old rules of frontier history that 'the new frontiers were shaped less by geographical and material conditions than by the cultural momentum of those who created them.'[101]

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[99]   Plin. *NH* 5.70 (M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, vol. 1 [Jerusalem, 1974], 468-481, no. 204): '… (*Toparchia) Orine ... in qua fuere Hierosolyma, longe clarissima urbium Orientis non Iudaeae modo*. Cf. Joseph. *BJ* 7.4: Ἱεροσολύμοις … λαμπρᾷ τε πόλει καὶ παρὰ πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις διαβοηθείσῃ.

[100]   L.-P. Rey-Coquais, *Baalbek et Beqa*, vol. VI of *Inscriptions Grecques et Latines de la Syrie* (Paris 1967), 34. n. 9; 'Syrie romaine de Pompée à Dioclétien', *JRS* 68 (1978), 44-73, at 51-2; J. Lauffray, 'Beyrouth: Archéologie et histoire, époques gréco-romaines: I, Période hellénique et Haut Empire romain', *ANRW* II.8 (1978), 135-63; F. Millar, 'The Roman *Coloniae* of the Near East' in: *Roman Eastern Policy and other Studies in Roman History : Proceedeings of a Colloquium at Tvärminne 2-3 October 1987*, ed. H. Solin and M. Kajava (Helsinki 1990), 10-23; 31-4; Isaac (n. 14 above), 318-21, 342-4; 'Latin in Cities of the Roman Near East' in: H.M. Cotton, R.G. Hoyland, J.J. Price and D.J. Wasserstein (eds.), *From Hellenism to Islam: Cultural and Linguistic Change in the Roman Near East* (Cambridge, 2009), 49-54.

[101]   O. Lattimore, 'The Frontier in History' in: *Studies in Frontier History: Collected Papers, 1928-1958* (Paris & The Hague, 1962), 470-91 at 489.
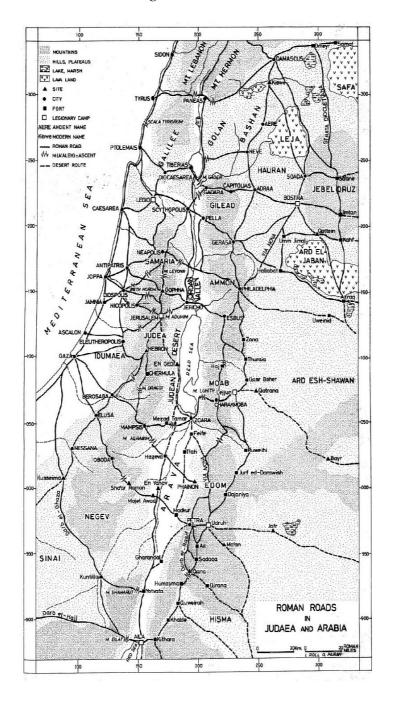
Fig. 1. Roman Palestine