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Rome and its Frontier in the North: the Role of the Periphery

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THE BIRTH OF EUROPE:
ARCHAEOLOGY AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
IN THE FIRST MILLENNIUM A.D.

EDITED BY KLAVS RANDSBORG

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Contents

Preface (K. Randsborg, Copenhagen)	7
To Study the First Millennium A.D. (K. Randsborg, Copenhagen)	8
I. INTRODUCTION	
Europe in the First Millennium A.D.: Archaeological Approaches to Longterm Changes of Social Practices (K. Randsborg, Copenhagen)	10
II THE ROMAN EMPIRE AND BARBARIAN SOCIETY	
Italian Wine and African Oil: Commerce in a World Empire (A. Carandini, Pisa/Rome)	16
The First Millennium A.D. in Rome: From the <i>Porticus Minucia</i> to the Via delle Botteghe Oscure (D. Manacorda, Siena-Roma & E. Zanini, Rome)	25
Rome and its Frontier in the North: the Role of the Periphery (W.J.H. Willems, Amersfoort)	33
Beyond the Roman Frontier (U.L. Hansen, Copenhagen)	46
The Weapons Sacrifices from Illerup Ådal, Denmark (J. Ilkjær, Århus)	54
III. SETTLEMENT ARCHAEOLOGY IN ROMAN PERIOD EUROPE	
The Italian Landscape in the First Millennium A.D.: Some Archaeological Approaches (G. Barker, Rome/Leicester)	62
Villas to Castles: First Millennium A.D. Demography in the Albegna Valley (E. Fentress, Rome & F. Cambi, Portoferráio/Rome)	74
Priorsløkke: A Fortified Early First Millennium A.D. Village in Eastern Jutland, Denmark (F. Kaul, Copenhagen)	87
Rural Settlements in Denmark in First Millennium A.D. (S. Hvass, Vejle)	91
IV. IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE EMPIRE	
Archaeology and History: Proposals on the Social Structure of the Merovingian Empire (H. Steuer, Freiburg im Breisgau)	100
Dankirke: Affluence in Late Iron Age Denmark (H.J. Hansen, Copenhagen)	123
The Gates of Eketorp: To the Question of Roman Prototypes of the Öland Ring-Forts (U. Näsman, Århus)	129
V. THE RISE OF WESTERN EUROPE	
Italy and the Early Middle Ages (C. Wickham, Birmingham)	140

General Remarks on the Changes in Techniques Observable in the Material Culture of the First Millennium A.D. in North-West Italy (T. Mannoni, Genova)	152
Brescia: Building Transformations in a Lombard City (G.P. Brogiolo, Polpenazze (Brescia))	156
The Makings of Medieval Tuscany (R. Francovich, Siena)	166
The Early Town in Scandinavia (A. Andrén, Lund)	173
 VI CONCLUSIONS	
Archaeology and the Class Struggle in the First Millennium A.D. (R. Hodges, Sheffield (Copenhagen/Rome))	178
Appendix: Current addresses of the authors	189

Rome and its Frontier in the North: The Role of the Periphery

by WILLEM J.H. WILLEMS

When Caius Iulius Caesar started the conquest of Gaul, a chain of events was started which fundamentally altered the structure of the Roman state and of Roman society. The change was, of course, even more drastic for Rome's northern neighbours. But it is equally obvious that developments, and their outcome, were not the same for each of those neighbours. In recent literature on the subject,¹ it is increasingly acknowledged that the structure of native societies was a crucial factor in the process of their integration in the Roman empire, but also at an earlier stage. It influenced the process of expansion of the empire, and it was a major underlying determinant for the termination of that process, in other words: for the origin and location of frontiers.

The concepts of frontier and of frontier society are difficult ones, to which entire conferences have been devoted.² It is not the purpose of this paper to examine all relevant aspects, but to explore some of the differences that existed not between the areas within and beyond the frontier, but between the frontier area itself and its hinterland as well as the regions in front of it. In accordance with the themes of the conference, this will be done from two points of view: the different integration into the Roman empire of native societies in areas which became part of the frontier zone, and the specific role of this periphery in the emergence of new states in the Early-Middle Ages.

This means that, from a chronological point of view, the earliest and the latest phases of Roman rule in the north, the 1st and 4th-5th centuries, will receive special attention. In spatial terms, discussion will largely be limited to one sector of the northern frontier, namely, that of the German provinces in present-day Germany and the Netherlands.

It is not possible, in the present context, to dis-

cuss at length the complicated and often conflicting theories on the growth of empires in general or of the Imperium Romanum in particular. But it is useful to examine some concepts which give insight into the process of expansion and thus implicitly into the factors which terminate that process. When we understand why a frontier is reached or established, that also provides a clue to its nature.

Imperialism and Colonialism

The expansion of states, as a process, is generally referred to as imperialism or colonialism, and they are the result of dominance/dependency relations between one society and another.³ The concepts are sometimes used interchangeably, which to some degree they are, but imperialism is normally considered the more general term for the situation in which one society or state controls another and in fact the cause of colonialism, although they are, at the same time, different forms of domination which may coexist.⁴ The difference lies mainly in the degree or rather character of this control which, in the case of colonialism, is inevitably direct and involves the movement of people.⁵

In both cases, the prerequisite for domination is an inequality in the resources of the social systems involved, including their own internal structure. This difference may be expressed in forms of coercion. It is perhaps useful to look for general laws in domination processes, but it is more likely that the specific historical context and the societies — or even certain individuals — involved will have determined the precise causes in each case. All do, however, have at least one other common denominator in addition to coercion, and that is that at least at the point where imperialism turns into colonialism, there must be an interest at stake. The nature of this interest, and whether it simply

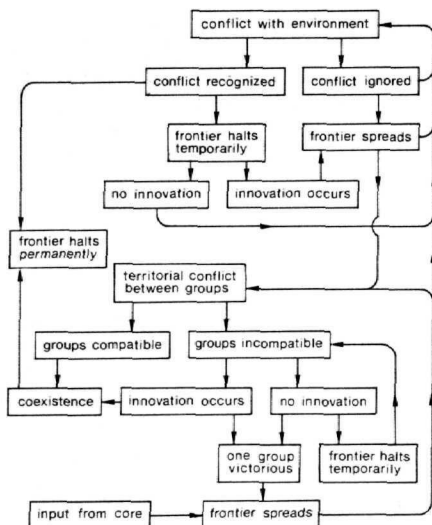


Fig. 1. A model of frontier dynamics, illustrating the role of environmental and group conflict as a stimulus to frontier innovation. After Willems 1984, fig. 124.

arose or was deliberately pursued, is more or less irrelevant: it may be economical, political, ideological, all such motives together, or something else. From an analytical point of view it may even be completely unintelligible, it just has to be important enough. It is easy to see why this should be so, for colonising has its price: it means the expenditure of energy.

This becomes especially clear when we look at the relation between imperialism and colonialism. Imperialism, when not defined as an umbrella concept but the antecedent stage of, or the alternative for, colonialism, also implies coercion. But it is a form of domination which consumes much smaller amounts of energy. It does not involve moving significant numbers of people but it is primarily based on the transfer of information. The distinction between "power" and "force" made by Luttwak (1976, 195-200) will serve to clarify this point.

In his analysis, force is essentially a physical phenomenon which is consumed in application and wanes over distance: "... military force is indeed governed by constraints on accumulation,

use, transmission, and dispersion akin to the physical laws that condition mechanical force" (op. cit., 196-7). Power, on the other hand, works very differently: "It works not by causing effects directly, but by eliciting responses — if all goes well, the desired responses". When you use force to obtain obedience, you use energy, but when you are obeyed because of your power, it is the object of your power who is the actor and therefore the one who uses energy. The power itself is not a physical phenomenon, so it is not consumed by this action. It remains the same, just as — in principle — it does not diminish over distance. But power does not exist unless it is perceived: it is not something at the level of matter or energy, but on that of information. Of course there is a relation between the two, in that ultimately power is based on force and on its perception and "correct" evaluation, which is obedience. Power does not work when the means of perception are lacking or when the evaluation is "wrong" or, in other words, when prior information about force has been unintelligible or insufficient. Unless, of course, an error was made or a risk taken. In all these cases force has to be used directly, but it is evident that a careful power-policy requires much less input of energy than the use of force, where the output is proportional to the input.

Luttwak's distinction between power and force is also applicable in a distinction between imperialism and colonialism. Imperialism is a patron-client relationship, based on a flow of information which allows a low-cost domination because of the client's perception of the patron's power. Colonialism, on the other hand, is characterized by the use of direct force. It is not just a flow of information but a flow of matter and energy which is decisive in this case. This makes colonialism a relatively expensive enterprise and that is why there has to be some sort of necessity or interest at stake for the colonizer. Another consequence of the use of energy is that, in contrast to information, it is finite. Depending on the capacity of the system and the general conditions under which the process takes place, somewhere a limit is reached, which brings us to the concept of the frontier.

It is not helpful to discuss this in a very general way, because there are evidently some major differences between imperialism and colonialism before and after the 15th century when they be-

came intercontinental in scope. When thus limited to ancient empires, or archaic civilizations in the sense as described by Service,⁶ it is possible to apply the ideas concerning the structure of frontiers developed by Lattimore.⁷ In an expanding empire, the frontier is dynamic: in Roman terms, this is Vergil's (*Aen.* I, 280) *imperium sine fine*. There is sufficient energy left to control or incorporate new units. In Lattimore's terminology, this would be a "frontier of inclusion". In the colonial situation, if a point is reached where an energy-surplus is no longer available, a static frontier develops, the "frontier of exclusion".

The reasons for a frontier to become fixed are, of course, more complicated than this and may be found in the natural as much as in the social environment, but in the end energy is the main factor. Even the very important role of innovation is, in principle, only of temporary importance as is shown by fig. 1.

When we look at the areas constituting an empire instead of at these general processes, it is clear that the same energy argument causes differences from the core region to the periphery. For the empire as whole, several zones can be distinguished as proposed by Lattimore (1962, 480). These are determined by the geographical range of:

1. Unification by military action
2. Centralization under uniform civil administration
3. Economic integration.

The radius of military action is greater than that of civil administration. Following Lattimore's ideas there is therefore an inner zone reaching into territories that can, after conquest, be added to the state and an outer zone into areas that can be invaded for profit or for the purpose of breaking up barbarian concentrations dangerous to the state, but that cannot be permanently annexed. Economic integration has the shortest range, because it is a function of the ability to transport bulk goods at a profit. These analytical zones presumably have some universal validity.⁸

But as far as imperialism and colonialism are concerned, such a scheme represents only the static side of the coin. When the individual areas within an expanding empire are considered, a dynamic picture emerges, which also shows that both imperialism and colonialism are essentially temporary phenomena. An area at first under

imperialist domination by a neighbouring group may then be formally colonized and finally fully integrated although, depending on the constraints posed by the social and natural environment and the capacity to overcome them, this development may halt at any stage.

For the periphery of an empire, this means that a frontier is created along a perimeter defined negatively by those areas that, for whatever reason, cannot be colonized, or positively by the maximum territory brought under direct administrative control (which may lead to a very different outcome). Such a formal frontier is, of course, only one of many boundaries on a transept of control from a core area outwards that could be analytically relevant according to the subject of study. In addition, the kind of formal frontier and the way in which it functions will vary widely depending on the relevant circumstances in different cases. The above-mentioned literature contains various approaches to these problems, but it is more appropriate to examine here the specific development of the northwestern frontier in the light of the outlined general principles.

The origin of the frontier

As several recent studies have shown,⁹ the expansion of the Roman state from the 2nd century B.C. onwards was preceded by more indirect influence, such as trade contacts with societies on its northern periphery which caused changes there. A process such as described by Nash for central Gaul, with increasing social stratification and wealth concentrated in the hands of successful elites, followed by a need to consolidate this position and thus to create an efficient administrative structure, may indeed have led to a process of secondary state formation. The archaeological and historical evidence indicate that Celtic society was permanently changed from weakly organized tribal groups into centralized and hierarchical polities. Without going into detail, the distribution of late-La Tène oppida and, even further to the north, of smaller fortifications, can be taken as an illustration (fig. 2).

This development was strongly influenced by information about conditions in the Mediterranean, but information flows both ways, and the knowledge of and contacts with the Gaulish area allowed not only imperialistic domination but led to actual annexation of territory at an early stage: the creation

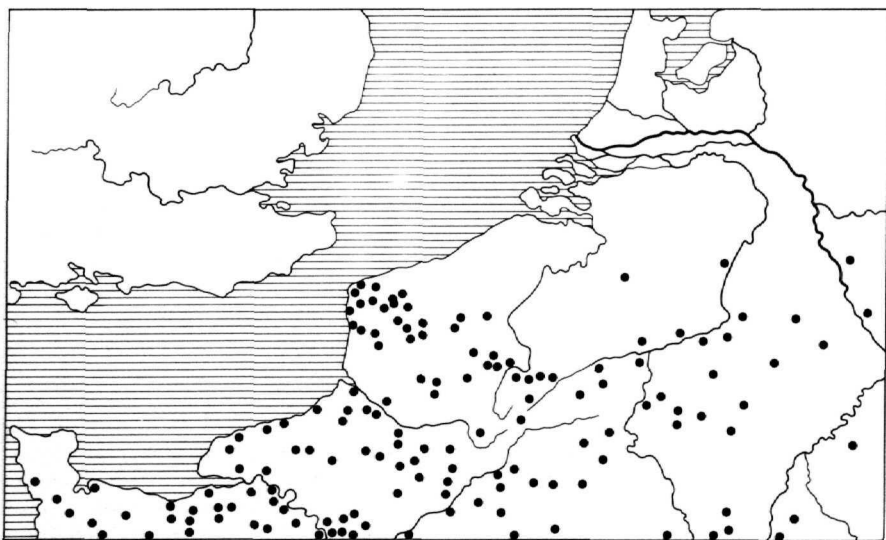
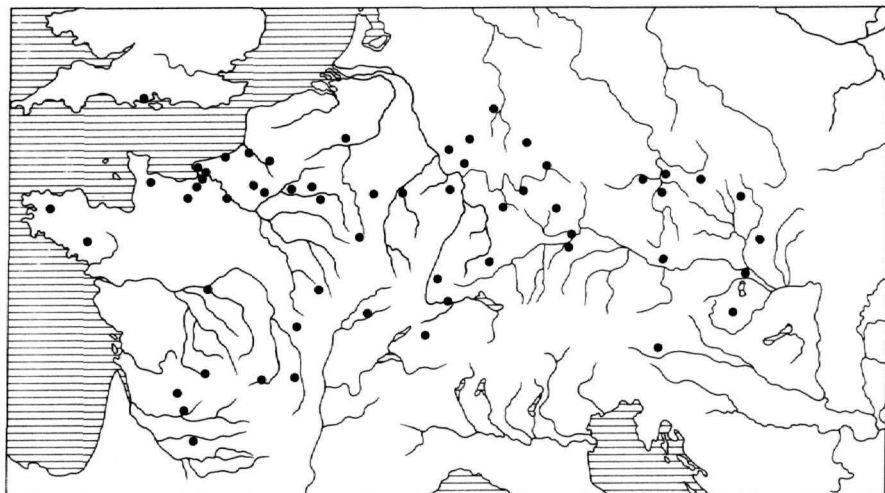


Fig. 2. The distribution of late-La Tène defended oppida of over 25 ha (above) and of late-La Tène fortifications of all sizes (below). After Willems 1984, fig. 119.

of the republican province of Transalpine Gaul (later Gallia Narbonensis) between 125 and 121 B.C.

More than sixty years elapsed before the next phase of conquest and a change from imperialism to colonialism took place in a northerly direction. This was Caesar's Gallic war, and its designation

as Caesar's war is not at all inappropriate. It can be argued that the changes in Celtic society in Central Gaul, brought about by contacts with Rome, had effectively prepared the way for this conquest. But that does not make such a major enterprise the logical next step. After all, client states under

imperialist control were still of major importance elsewhere more than a century later. Perhaps it is true that Caesar's personality was the decisive factor. But even then, the conquest as such can still be seen as yet another consequence of peripheral imperialism.

As was recently argued by Bloemers, the sociological concept of *peripheral imperialism* is eminently suitable for understanding the process of Roman expansion.¹⁰ The idea is that apart from, or even instead of, a deliberate policy formulated by the rulers in the core area, expansion also arises from the activities of their representatives in the periphery, who deal directly with local elites. Support of one party in a conflict, personal ambition, and the like, may then trigger a series of events starting with some actual interference and ending in a true conquest. Roman history has recorded many such situations.

For Gaul, and especially for its northern parts, Caesar's untimely death may have prevented completion of the colonialist incorporation, but it did proceed far enough to allow effective manipulation of events in those northern regions. The limited available data show, however, that this manipulation could not rely simply on a power-policy and that direct interference, the use of (military) force, was necessary. Examples are the activities of Agrippa in 38 or 37 B.C. and the offensive against German tribes in the following two decades including one, the *clades Lolliana*, that ended in defeat.¹¹ Groups such as the Suebi, Tencteri, and Usipetes were prevented from settling west of the Rhine while others, such as the Cananefates, Batabi, Cugerni, and Ubii, were deliberately moved there.¹² As is evident from fig. 3, these groups, as allies of Rome, were settled in a highly strategic position along the Rhine.

The reasons for this direct interference could be related to what has been said earlier about the nature of power, which rests on the perception and correct evaluation by the dominated party. It can be argued that the egalitarian tribal groups in the north could not do that, so that they were less susceptible to the use of power. In a centrally organized hierarchical society it is a paramount chief or the decision-making upper stratum of society who take action. This institution, in organizational terms a high-level regulator, allows both the perception and — at least in principle — the correct



Fig. 3 The approximate location of tribes in Germania Inferior and north of the Rhine from the late-1st century B.C. onwards.

evaluation of power, which is why the institute of client kingdoms was fairly effective in the East. In a tribal organization, however, such a central information processing and control unit is lacking and it can be argued that, for a tribal society as a whole, there are no efficient direct means of evaluation. In terms of systems theory,¹³ it can be said that there is not enough channel capacity to process the information input because the cultural system as a whole lacks a high-level regulator who can act with speed and flexibility. In practical terms, any petty chieftain can take a chance and there is no central authority to hold him back.

One obvious response of a cultural system in its effort to cope with changed circumstances more effectively is organizational change, and that is one way to view the process of secondary state formation in Central Gaul in the last century B.C. and also the developments in northern Gaul during and after the Gallic war. But there is another side to this, namely, that of the larger organizational structure controlling new units, in our case the Roman empire. For effective control, a multi-level (hierarchical) regulatory system is needed. Given a certain amount of time, as in slow imperialist expansion, this may develop gradually as a

response of dominated societies around the perimeter. But in the case of rapid colonialist expansion by conquest, new units cannot be controlled permanently, let alone be incorporated, unless their structure is somehow altered more directly.

The successful Roman interference in the North Belgic area between Caesar and Drusus can thus be seen in this light, but so can the ultimate failure to conquer Germania Magna. Germanic societies could not be controlled by limited force followed by a power-policy. Thus, their structure made them the subject of much direct use of military force but on the other hand it prevented that force from having its intended effect. After all, the ability of the empire to apply such force was limited, certainly in view of the magnitude of the task, if not with respect to the capacity for staging campaign after campaign then at least as far as imposed changes of the indigenous social structure were concerned.

From a historical or economic point of view there is more to say about all this, but basically it is considered here the main reason why expansion into Germany stopped and a frontier was established. One may, for example, point to political difficulties or to the "environmental conflict" which arose from the difficulties to find enough food locally to feed the army. But that situation was not due to a harsh natural environment but to its limited exploitation and thus again to the socio-economic structure of the groups living there. Evidently, there was little to be gained by conquest of their territory, a factor which Mócsy (1978) convincingly shows to have been the underlying reason for Augustus' advice to restrict the empire within its (then) existing boundaries.¹⁴ Outside the established frontier, in what Lattimore would call the outer zone of military control, force, diplomacy and other, commercial, contacts were a constant factor.¹⁵ But only inside was there centralization under uniform civil administration. It is in this area that processes of (further) acculturation and integration into the socio-economic system of the empire are triggered.

However, during the 1st century A.D., a transition can be observed from what Luttwak describes as a hegemonic empire (with "frontiers of inclusion"), towards a territorial empire, with most of the military apparatus deployed along its

"frontier of exclusion" (fig. 4). This introduces a vital difference not only between areas within or outside the designated perimeter, but also between those directly at the frontier and the areas more to the interior of the empire. These are not merely closer to the core area and thus more easily incorporated into Lattimore's inner zone of economic integration. There is another difference as well, namely, that after the conquest troops move on and the regions concerned can develop further within the new context. At the frontiers, once established, the situation is different because there troops are stationed permanently, thus perpetuating aspects of the otherwise transitional colonial situation. When almost the total instrument of imperial force is located in the frontier regions, it is clear that these have a disproportionately large infrastructure imposed on them. At the north-western frontier of the Roman empire it is this factor in particular which may initially have prevented and later have led to a very different kind of integration. This will be examined next.

The frontier zone

In Lower Germany, the creation of a "frontier of exclusion", the *limes*, can be dated to reign of Claudius. It followed the abandonment of plans to conquer Germania Magna and the start of the conquest of Britannia. Although different in detail, a very similar process started there. The conquest was never a real problem, but keeping control without the constant use of military force was,¹⁶ and that led to a similar result: the building of Hadrian's wall.

After it had first been established, the *limes* along the Rhine did not, of course, remain the same. It was subjected to minor as well as — in Upper Germany — to major changes and adaptations.¹⁷ Sometimes this further development is a highly significant reflection of processes in the frontier zone itself. But all stages of development between the mid-1st and mid-3rd centuries are equally suitable to illustrate the impact of the military infrastructure. Fig. 5 illustrates one such phase, the situation in the early-Flavian period.

The *limes* itself delimits, in Lattimore's terminology, the radius of centralization under uniform civil administration, the end-product (in that period) of the process of colonialist expansion. It formed, at the same time, the base-line for a zone

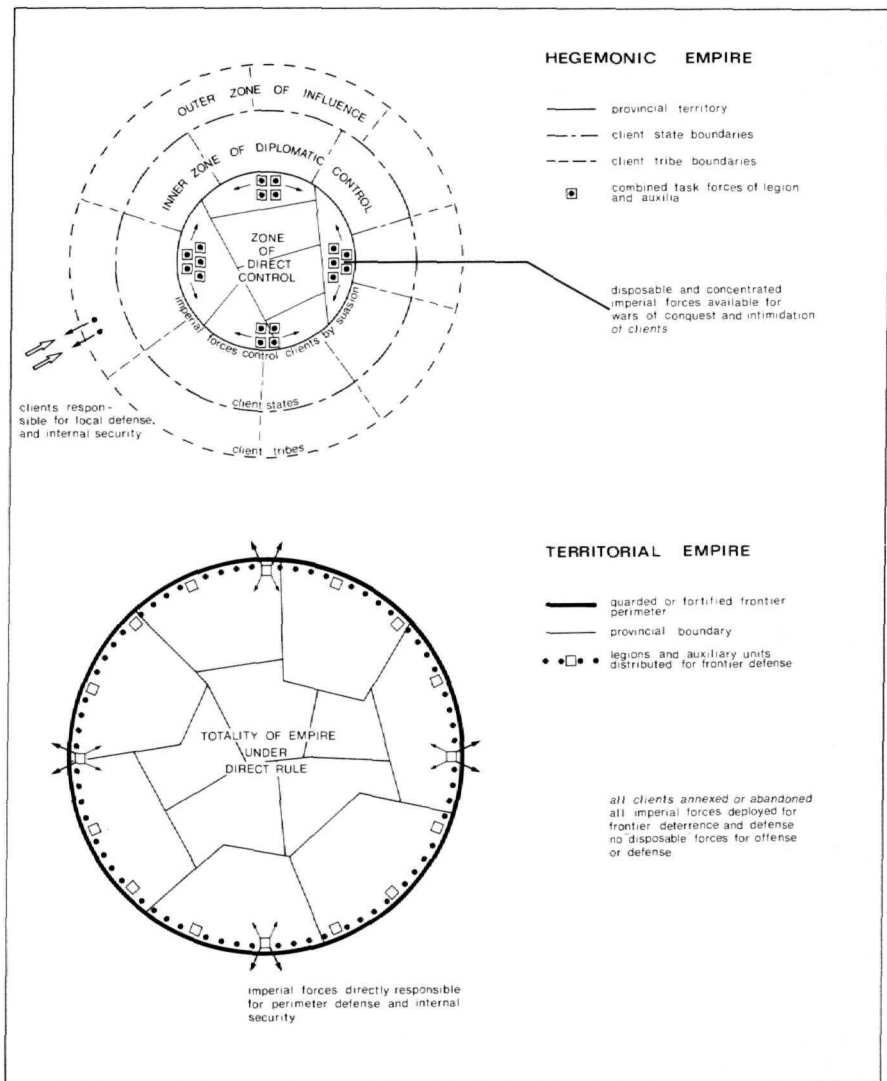


Fig. 4. Two models of empire. After Luttwak 1976, fig. 1.2.

stretching further to the north which could be controlled by military means and, with additional activities such as trade and diplomacy, could be subjected to imperialist domination. But the *limes* had to be maintained, and it is obvious that this required further input from the hinterland.

Even apart from historical evidence,¹⁸ simple logic dictates that whenever and wherever possible frontier areas were made to pay for themselves. But there are numerous studies showing that this ideal was seldomly reached and that, at the level of the empire as a whole, there were inner

provinces producing a surplus which was spent in the outer — especially northern — provinces (and, of course, in the centre).¹⁹ There are differences in this respect between the Danubian area, the Thine area, and Britain,²⁰ but the principle remains the same and it is understandable. After all, there were not only costs but benefits as well, in particular where the security of the empire was concerned.

When viewed from the perspective of the frontier zone, this means that economic, social, or administrative developments are all subordinated to the primary, military objective. It is, for example, remarkable that the military districts of Lower and Upper Germany were only converted into formal provinces by Domitian, between A.D. 82 and 90.²¹ This measure had nothing to do with the attainment of a stable situation. After all, the Upper German frontier was in the process of being advanced to include the salient between Rhine and Danube. As has often been observed the measure in fact had little practical meaning, but precisely because of this it can be seen as the formal confirmation of the fact that local conditions were now transformed and adapted to Roman needs. And that, evidently, took a long time.

The underlying reason, which also explain the difference from other areas such as the western Danubian provinces, Belgica, or Britannia, can be sought in the structure of native societies in the north. As long as the idea of conquering Germania had not been abandoned, these people were relatively independent allied tribes. But when the *limes* was built they too were subjected to strong acculturative pressure. This process has recently been described in detail for the Batavians (Willems 1984), where it appears to have been the true cause of their revolt. The same pattern can, however, be seen in many other uprisings: that of Vercingetorix against Caesar, the Dalmatian-Pannonian revolt under Augustus, or the rebellion of Boudicca in Nero's reign. As Dyson (1971) concluded in his study of the subject, all native revolts occurred in the context of enforced acculturation.²²

Although similar processes can thus be observed in these different areas, the further development was nevertheless different. When the army had moved out of Gaul or southern Britain, relatively balanced and integrated economic systems originated. Although much work still needs to be done

on the analysis of these (Hingley 1982), it is evident that they are very different from the situation at the frontiers in the Germanies or northern Britain. An example in case is the above cited study on the Batavian area in the north of Lower Germany, which showed that the area had a dendritic central-place system and a strongly primate "colonial" rank-size distribution of settlements.

Other lines of inquiry, such as Middleton's (1979) study on the importance of army supply from Gaul, support this interpretation. Another aspect, however, is the supply of the frontier region from beyond the *limes*. For Lower Germany, for example, there is good archaeological, epigraphical, and archaeozoological evidence for imports from the Frisian area on the North Sea coast. Bloemers (1983b), in his discussion of some of the evidence, also called attention to another form of "import" from beyond the frontier, namely, of soldiers for the army.

This became more and more necessary in the course of time. The epigraphical record has revealed that recruiting for the army was increasingly limited to the frontier zones, but during the 3rd century other measures were necessary. Not only recruiting beyond the Rhine but also, for example, the fact that the habit whereby sons entered their fathers military profession was made compulsory.²³ The military character of the frontier was thus strengthened and it benefited at the same time from the Severan measures and reforms which were quite favourable towards the military in general. Together with other indications²⁴ this suggests that a rather prosperous, strongly militarized population group with caste-like properties developed in the 2nd century.

This development towards a self-perpetuating military frontier population can be considered to be a form of integration, made possible by the stable and virtually unchanging deployment of troops from the early-2nd century onwards. But even though the archaeological evidence from this period shows a great deal of acculturation the social and economic structure of the frontier zone remained different from, and dependent on, the hinterland. This despite the fact that by the end of the 2nd century the favourable geographical position had caused part of the frontier area, the German Rhineland and the adjacent eastern part of Gallia Belgica, to become a centre of economic ac-

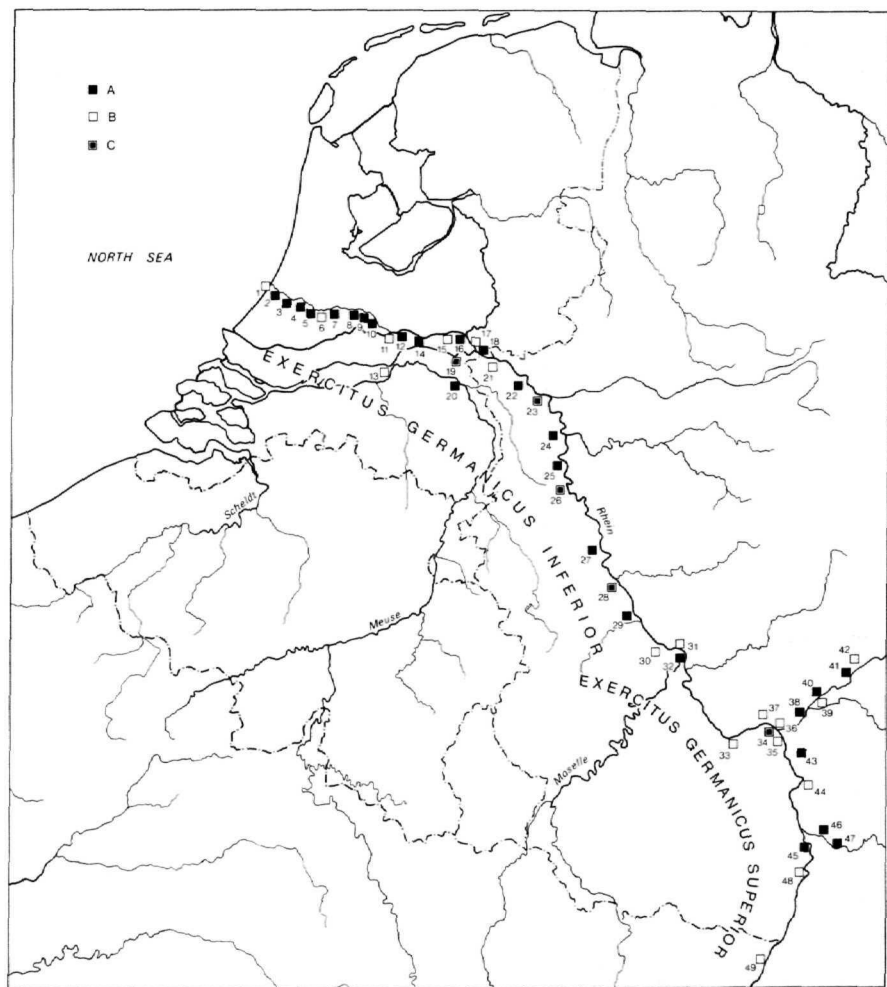


Fig. 5. The Rhine frontier in the Early-Flavian Period, after Schönberger 1985, Map C and Willelm 1984, fig. 130. A: fort, B: possible fort of uncertain dating, C: legionary fortress. 1 Katwijk, 2 Valkenburg Z.H., 3 Roomburg, 4 Alphen, 5 Zwammerdam, 6 Bodegraven, 7 Woerden, 8 Vleuten, 9 Utrecht, 10 Vechten, 11 Rijswijk, 12 Maurik, 13 Rossum, 14 Kestern, 15 Driel, 16 Meinerswijk, 17 Duiven-Looward, 18 Herwen-De Bijland, 19 Nijmegen, 20 Cuijk, 21 Rindern, 22 Altkalkar, 23 Xanten, 24 Moers-Asberg, 25 Krefeld-Gellep, 26 Neuss, 27 Köln-Alteburg, 28 Bonn, 29 Remagen, 30 Andernach, 31 Bendorf, 32 Koblenz, 33 Bingen, 34 Mainz, 35 Mainz-Weisenau, 36 Mainz-Kastel, 37 Wiesbaden, 38 Hofheim a. Ts., 39 Frankfurt, 40 Hedderheim, 41 Okarben, 42 Friedberg, 43 Gross-Gerau, 44 Gernsheim, 45 Rheingönheim, 46 Ladenburg, 47 Heidelberg-Beuenheim, 48 Speyer, 49 Selz.

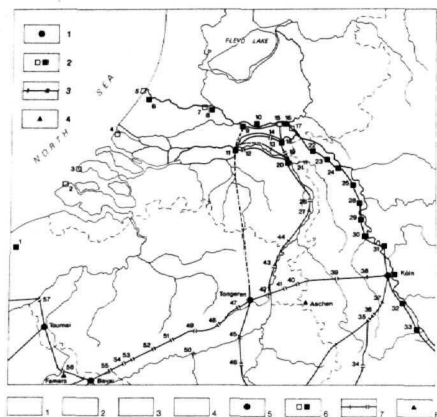


Fig. 6 The 4th-century defence-in-depth system of Germania Secunda and part of Belgica Secunda. Most of the indicated fortifications are of Constantinian and/or Valentinian date. Legend: 1 fortified town, 2 less or more certain fortification, 3 less or more certain road fort (fortified settlements or *burgi* along land-or water-routes), 4 other late-Roman urban settlements. Sites: 1 Oudenburg, 2 Domburg, 3 Westerchouwen, 4 Oostvoorne, 5 Katwijk (Brittenburg), 6 Valkenburg Z.H., 7 Vleuten, 8 Utrecht, 9 Maurik, 10 Rhenen, 11 Rossum, 12 Kessel, 13 Wijchen, 14 Ewijk, 15 Driel, 16 Meinerswijk, 17 Huissen, 18 Nijmegen, 19 Heumensoord, 20 Cuijk, 21 Asperden, 22 Qualburg, 23 Altkalkar, 24 Xanten, 25 Rheinberg, 26 Lottum, 27 Blerick, 28 Moers-Asberg, 29 Krefeld-Gellep, 30 Neuss, 31 Haus Bürgel, 32 Bonn, 33 Remagen, 34 Junkerath, 35 Zülpich, 36 Rövenich, 37 Brühl, 38 Hüchelhoven, 39 Jülich, 40 Herlen, 41 Hulsberg, 42 Maastricht, 43 Stokken, 44 Heel, 45 Amay, 46 Vervoz, 47 Oreye, 48 Braives, 49 Tavieres, 50 Namur, 51 Penteville, 52 Liberchies, 53 Morlanwelz, 54 Waudrez, 55 Givry, 56 Famars, 57 Kortrijk.

tivity. But the increased contacts across the Rhine, in analytical terms the transfer of matter and information, had led to social change in Germania as well. This allowed Germanic groups, collectively described as Franks, to muster enough military force on a more permanent basis to be a major threat for the *limes*-based defence system and that was, in the end, an important cause of that system's collapse.

The Role of the Periphery

After the invasion of the late-3rd century, there is no more archaeological evidence of the distinctive militarized population groups along the front-

ier. Considering their role in the defence and the exposed position of their homeland, that is not very surprising. But most territory of the frontier provinces, and a substantial part of their population, did in fact survive after the invasions: only the coastal region and the Agri Decumates, between Rhine and Danube, were lost. Under Diocletian the new provinces of Germania I and II were reorganized, the latter perhaps even enlarged to the south.²⁵

This may have been related to the reform of the defensive system, which was started already under Gallienus but truly effectuated only by Constantine. The essential change as analysed by Luttwak (1976), is that from a *limes*-based system of forward defence to a defence-in-depth system (Fig. 6). This proved to be a very effective strategy to ensure the security of the empire, but for border regions it was not so beneficial because it implied increased exposure to Frankish raids. The rather strong reduction of the population in the 4th century — for some areas to only 25% of its former level²⁶ — can partly be attributed to this insecurity.

But the risk of the late-Roman defensive system is best demonstrated by the events in Germania II after the usurpation of Magnentius in A.D. 350. Frankish invasions followed (even Cologne was occupied in A.D. 355), and when order was restored by Julianus, "the Apostate", the northern *civitates* of the province (centres in Xanten and Nijmegen) no longer existed. Only the *civitates Agrippinensium* (Cologne) and *Tungrorum* (Tongeren) are still mentioned in late-4th-century sources. But this did not mean that the area as such was lost. Both archaeological and historical sources confirm that Roman power was restored up to the Rhine.

The northern area was, however, settled by Franks, notably the *Salii* which had come from the northern Netherlands. Evidently, these Franks were reliable allies in the new land, in a situation of relative independence that in many ways resembled the situation in early-Roman times, when Ubii, Cugerni, Batabi, and Cananefates were settled there. Finds indicate that these Franks were supplied with money and goods from the Roman hinterland. All this is not very surprising, because control of the delta of Rhine and Meuse was of great importance, e.g., for the shipments of British grain to the German Rhineland.

It is a well-known fact that the late-Roman army consisted for a very large part of foreign, Germanic, troops, and German officers reached even the highest ranks (Waas 1965). The situation in the north of Germania II fits into this picture, although in a rather extreme way because the population as such consisted largely of immigrants. There is a wealth of archaeological evidence, such as weapons, other metal objects, pottery, burials and — although as yet only to a limited degree — settlement structures, to show that this population rapidly developed a Romano-Germanic culture of its own.²⁷ The distribution of some of the material, notably some of the metal objects and pottery, does, however, show that close contacts were maintained with people in the north, on the North Sea coast. In this respect, new finds have only further strengthened the evidence that was assembled by Böhme (1974).

This archaeological observation fits into the evidence from written sources. Reports on raids from — and retaliatory expeditions into the lands of — tribes beyond the Rhine are not lacking, but in general the situation seems to have been relatively quiet and stable compared to that elsewhere along the northern frontier.²⁸ This is also evident during the last phase of effective Roman rule when Stilicho quickly concluded a number of apparently effective treaties. For example, it is said in a panegyric of A.D. 399 that the Salii were able to cultivate their lands in peace.²⁹ Even when troops were removed to Italy and, after the Vandal raid on Mainz in A.D. 406, disaster struck throughout Germania I and Belgica, everything remained quiet in Germania II. It is evident that the Franks had become a major regional force which could maintain stable relations with its transrhineish neighbours and prevent its territory from being invaded.

This implies that the Salii and associated tribes, living in increasingly close contact with Gallo-Roman society for more than a century and essentially being part of it for half time, had undergone considerable socio-political change. In a sense, the process was similar to that which is normally described as the Romanization (although the accumulation was mutual) of the natives which were incorporated in the empire in the 1st century. But there is a major difference as well. The Salii had already changed, through indirect contact, be-

fore the 3rd century: when we use the rather vague Roman terminology which was used for the first time in that century we might say that, from being Germans, they had already become Franks.

And for some of these Franks this process was accelerated under favourable circumstances, when the empire had a shortage of force and they themselves a clear perception of its power. Thus, although in a 1st-century context the two-sidedness of the accumulation process tends to be underestimated, we can safely conclude that it was much stronger, and thus more visible by archaeological means, in late-Roman times. There was as much Germanization as there was Romanization and we have, in fact, a classical frontier "meltingpot" which led to the formation of a whole new society.

We can profitably see the north of Germania I as the nursery of this society, but it could not survive there. A larger and more viable polity was created by the historically and archaeologically attested Frankish move southward. In about A.D. 450 the Salii had already established a kingdom reaching the river Somme. The inclusion of the fertile lands of Gaul also provided a new economic basis, to replace contacts with the north and, not to forget, the termination of trade between Britain and the Rhineland. This development can be interpreted as a further step towards state formation. Archaeologically, the development of society can be seen, for example, in the burial tradition that reflects an increasingly stratified and well-defined social organization. Another step was the codification of Salian law, the *Lex Salica* (*pactus legis Salicae*), probably early in the 6th century under Childebert's son Chlodoweg.³⁰ The latter king also unified the different Frankish polities into one kingdom, which meant the formal completion of the process of state formation. The royal lineage of the Salii, the Merovingians, gave its name to this new state, the Merovingian kingdom.

The emergence of this early-medieval state can thus be directly related to the frontier society which developed at the interface of the late-Roman empire and its northern neighbours. In this way, the Salian kings succeeded where a few centuries earlier the frontier groups which were the basis of Postumus' Gallic empire had failed. The ultimate cause of this difference can, of course, be found in the different situation in the core of the empire, but that should not lead us to be blind for the role

of the periphery. Postumus' empire was, no matter how independent they may have been, carried by groups that were essentially integrated into the Roman empire and different from those outside that larger structure. The Merovingian kingdom,

by contrast, was the end-product of non-integration: of a process which not only successfully combined elements from both sides but which was, in addition, an original development at the periphery.

NOTES

1. See e.g. Groenman-van Waateringe 1980, Boemers 1983a, Willems 1984, Haselgrove 1984.
2. Examples are Miller/Steffen 1977 and Savage/Thompson 1979.
3. The following paragraph has largely been derived from Willems 1984, chapter 11.
4. See esp. Horvath 1972 and Fieldhouse 1981.
5. Fieldhouse, *op. cit.* distinguishes further between the process whereby a whole population moves to the new territory (colonization in its classical Greek sense) and that involving only an elite to manage the dependent society (colonialism).
6. Service 1962 [1971], 166-9. It is perhaps useful to stress that the analytical concept of colonialism as employed here should not be understood in its 19th and early-20th century meaning, which has many connotations that are anachronistic where archaic civilizations are concerned.
7. Lattimore 1962. They were developed on the basis of his studies on Chinese frontiers, but they fit well into modern theories of comparative frontier studies (see esp. Miller/Steffen 1977).
8. An example is Hedeager's (1978) study on Roman-Germanic exchange.
9. See Nash 1978, Bloemers 1983a, Haselgrove 1984, to name only a few.
10. Bloemers 1983a. On "Caesar's war", see also Drinkwater 1983, 14-7.
11. See the overviews in Rügner 1968, 8 and Von Petrikovits 1978, 53 A simple punitive expedition such as that by Marcus Vinicius against transhenish tribes for the murder of Roman traders in 25 B.C. (reported by Cassius Dio LIII 24,2) was most likely a typical case for a whole series of similar events. This particular incident could well have survived in the records only because this same person, a good friend of Augustus, later became supreme commander of the Rhine legions.
12. For a full discussion of the argument, see Willems 1984, chapter 10.3.
13. See Peebles/Kus 1977, esp. the paragraph on "organization, energy, information, and ritual", 427-31.
14. Tacitus, *Ann.* I, 11: *consilium coecondi intra terminos imperii*, which was the final clause in his political testament concerning the State of the Empire.
15. Which did result eventually in permanent changes there. In principle, this is also a process which can be seen as one of the necessary conditions for the developments in the 3rd century and later.
16. For stimulating analyses of the pre-conquest situation and its significance, and of post-conquest developments see, respectively, Haselgrove 1984 and Hingley 1982.
17. The most recent overview of this development for the entire area is provided by Schönberger 1985.
18. See e.g. Mócsy 1978.
19. A recent discussion of the argument is provided by Hopkins 1980.
20. See, respectively, Birley 1981, Willems 1984, and Fulford 1984.
21. Relevant literature in Schönberger 1985, 366 and note 189.
22. The same is true for "successful" rebellions such as those of Arminius and, a few years later, of the Frisians.
23. Cf. Mann 1983, 67 on legionary recruitment, but the system presumably applied to auxiliaries as well.
24. For example, Gechter's (1984) study on fibula-distributions, and the epigraphical and historical evidence assembled by Mócsy (1978, 21-24).
25. By the addition of the *civitas* Tungrorum; it is still uncertain whether this *civitas* originally belonged to Belgica or to Germana Inferior.
26. See Willems 1984, 275-6.
27. For a discussion see Bloemers 1983b and Willems 1984, chapter 12. A useful overview for the adjacent area in the Rhineland is given by Von Petrikovits 1978, 230-45 and 285-91.
28. An overview in Willems 1984, 277-9.
29. Claudianus XXI, *De consulatu Stilichonis* I, 222.
30. See Zöllner 1970, 112 f.

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