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Edited by P. D. A. Garnsey and C. R. Whittaker

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1: INTRODUCTION

P.D.A.Garnsey and C.R.Whittaker

The first and major problem in discussing imperialism is one of definition.¹ 'Imperialism' has become a term of abuse, implying unjust or oppressive rule or control of one people by another. These pejorative connotations are central to the meaning of the word as it has been interpreted by numerous historians of antiquity, with the result that it has been all but eliminated from their accounts of interstate relations. In the case of the Delian League, where it was not at all obvious that the dominant state ruled benignly or in the interests of its subjects, scholars have fallen back on the assertion that Athenian-allied relations were 'hegemonial' in character rather than 'imperialistic' in the first decades of the existence of the League (if not through the entire inter-war period); meanwhile Thucydides' characterization of the Athenian empire as a tyranny has been attributed by some to the historian's political prejudices, which led him to overlook the popularity of Athens among the lower classes of the empire.

The requirement that an imperialist power must have imperialist aims and motives has further narrowed the concept of imperialism and limited its applicability. In this case discussion has centred on the growth of Roman power; the debate has its origin, not in the strictures of a critic, a Roman Thucydides, but in the viewpoint of an enthusiastic admirer, Polybius. Polybius asserted, indeed took it for granted, that Rome aimed at empire.² Modern scholars influenced by anti-imperialist currents of thought were bound to challenge this assumption. In 1920, Maurice Holleaux demolished an extreme version of the Polybian theory, according to which Rome was an aggressive and Machiavellian power advancing systematically and deliberately towards the goal of world dominion. His thesis, put simply, is that the Romans did not want an empire and did not look for one. War and empire were imposed on them from outside, by chance factors beyond their control. Thus, for example, Holleaux concluded his discussion of the outbreak of the Second Macedonian War in this way:

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'In 200, as thirty years earlier, it was simply an accident that drew the Romans out of Italy and set events in motion. It was by accident and through an error of judgement that the senators committed themselves to this course.'³

The concept of accident has found its way into English historical writing. Cary wrote of the First Punic War: 'Both parties may be acquitted of using the affair of Messana as a pretext for a predetermined war. The collision which brought on the First Punic war was wholly accidental.' Badian in discussing Rome's Illyrian policy came to this conclusion: 'It was the accident (if we may call it such) of the failure of Rome's attempt to live at peace with other great powers, that led to the need to subdue them and thus to the establishment of the Roman Empire as we know it.' A recently published book by Errington begins with the startling sentence: 'Rome's rise to power was one of the most important accidents in European history.'⁴

The doctrine of 'accidental imperialism' rests on an improper use of the word 'accident', as a reading of Aristotle's discussion of chance in *Physics* ch. 4ff. makes clear.⁵ In the first place, it would be difficult to concede that a state which made a whole series of territorial conquests or political gains was acting without having foreseen possible consequences. If the Romans consistently failed to co-exist with their rivals, the proper inference seems to be that their wars were inevitable not accidental. The broader the perspective we adopt on Roman foreign policy, the less appropriate the language of accident becomes - Polybius, it will be recalled, began with the Gallic invasion of the early fourth century and the steady conquest of Italy that followed. Secondly, if the Romans, as we are told, were forced to expand their area of control, then the proper notion to introduce, following Aristotle's discussions in both the *Physics* and the *Ethics*, is that of a reluctant not an accidental action or set of actions.

An amended version of the thesis might run as follows: Rome's chief aim in expanding its frontiers was self-defence; the empire grew only under the stimulus of threats and provocation from outside; Rome was not involved in empire-building for its own sake. Here it is tacitly admitted that expansion was in some sense an end, and its accomplishment therefore neither accidental nor unforeseen. But the initiative for warlike action lay with other powers, and the

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Romans are therefore freed from the opprobrium which is attached to aggressors. We have thus slid into the thesis of 'defensive imperialism'. This popular thesis, which draws its strength from the apparent inconsistency of Roman foreign policy, the slowness with which their rulers acted (or reacted), and their reluctance to annex, has yet to be subjected to systematic and searching criticism.

The most recent proponent of the view that imperialism is to be associated with a palpable intent is Veyne.⁶ In an article asking whether there was such a thing as Roman imperialism Veyne argues that what is important is not so much dependence and superiority as 'a sense of dependence', 'a sense of superiority'. Imperialism, as distinct from an empire, does not exist unless one acquires a taste for unsought conquest. Desiring only the freedom to behave as she wished, Rome was the victim of circumstances, being forced into a series of pragmatic decisions, the consequences of which she never considered. In this jungle, where dog eats dog and every neighbour is either subordinate or a threatening enemy, war was a normal part of life in which the aristocracy took part for the public good without asking why. To be sure, there were ambitious individuals anxious for their measure of glory, but their personal behaviour must (by this argument) be separated from the collective intention of the state and the oligarchy.

The studies in this volume illustrate the problems of conceptualization that are discussed above. On the one hand are those papers which employ a restricted definition of imperialism and empire. Griffith describes the Second Athenian Confederacy as 'no *arche*, but a genuine and respectable hegemony', and argues that the 'mentality of *arche*' can be detected with certainty only in Athens' relations with allies who were not members of the Confederacy. Briscoe declares it 'wrong to see Macedon as an imperial power consciously seeking to extend its control in Greece', and draws a parallel between Macedonian and Roman behaviour, which was 'purely defensive'. In arguing for the lack of rational choices open to the Hellenistic rulers, he comes close to a modern view of imperialism as being a natural consequence of international power relations, which are necessarily unstable. Andrewes' question-mark over Spartan imperialism hinges on the difficulty he finds in distinguishing between the ambitions of individuals and the policy of the state.

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On the other hand are those papers which seek to define imperialism purely in terms of the exercise of power. However difficult the abstraction, commonsense tells us that we are dealing with a reality, the relationship of ruler to subject, which can be evaluated with reference to some set of criteria. Finley suggests six ways in which power might be exercised by one state or community over another - restriction of freedom, political interference, compulsory service, tribute, confiscation of land or emigration, and other forms of economic exploitation or subordination. Whittaker and Kemp have followed this suggested typology with minor variations when discussing Carthaginian and Egyptian imperialism.

The reader must make his or her own choice as to how this debate is to be conducted or resolved. Motives, real or assumed, are of interest. The problem is, how are they to be ascertained? It may be significant that Kemp, who is dealing with the heavily stylized and formulaic sources of the Egyptian New Kingdom, and Whittaker, who has to rely on the largely hostile Greek sources for Carthaginian history, are the most ready to adopt Finley's view that motives are irrelevant to definitions of imperialism. Neither in the events of Egyptian nor of Carthaginian imperialism can they confidently detect the immediately pragmatic rationale of action.

Conquerors can hardly be expected to explain their motives as a deliberate attempt to increase their *Machtbereich*. The British in India did not admit to a doctrine of imperialism. Louis Faidherbe, architect of French imperial expansion in West Africa, declared: 'Our motives are pure and noble, our cause just.' Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany was supposedly 'profoundly penetrated by the ideal of peace'. So although we may feel in retrospect that actions ought to relate to a declared philosophy of conduct, in practice the information available usually consists of either the pragmatic rationale of the frontiersmen, the men on the spot, for whom the action itself is sufficient without a clear policy, or ritual justifications and pretexts: claims of honour at stake, security at risk, necessary war measures and the '*mission civilisatrice*'.⁷ Athenian tribute was necessary to protect the allies from Persia; freedom and autonomy were the gifts which every imperial power wished to confer on willing or unwilling subjects. Brunt's study of Roman concepts of empire in the age of Cicero shows how important it is to differentiate between explanations

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of the genesis of empire ('the true driving forces' behind imperialism), the ideology which keeps it going, and the reality.

As for the conquered, their point of view (or more correctly, points of view) is usually inaccessible to us, or at least until such time as the empire itself has produced its own beneficial ideology among those subjects who have cooperated.

Motives can be understood only with reference to a background of the structure and institutions of society. This is the lesson of Andrewes' study, which shows that the Spartans were not so much imperialists who arrived too late (as Veyne suggests), as half-imperialist; their actions abroad laid bare the basic contradictions of a society which produced a militarist ethos with no military mission to complement it. New methods of warfare abroad were necessarily evolved in the Peloponnesian War, but new political relations never developed internally. A structuralist approach is prominent in Finley's unromantic assessment of the economic benefits and burdens of Athenian imperialism, which he finds was designed to serve the interests of the Athenian democratic state. By contrast, the rational interests of the commercially-minded Carthaginian oligarchy lay in avoiding confrontation but increasing control. This volume lacks a structuralist study of the Roman republic along the lines proposed by W.V.Harris in a recent article.⁸ Such a study might stress the ever-increasing need for warfare in the acquisition of personal riches, glory and clients among a competitive political elite, which was bound to produce an empire. Brunt refers briefly to the militarism of the traditions of old Rome, such as the ancient prayer of the censors for the aggrandizement of Rome, or the soothsayers' habit of predicting that a war that was imminent would advance the boundaries of the empire. Such practices in his view undermine the argument for defensive imperialism. When all such justifications have been swept away, it is *laus imperii*, the doctrine of power, which remains. And this is simply the ancient belief, expressed by Thucydides and implicit in the works of Polybius, that it is natural for the stronger to dominate the weaker.

Roman writers under the Principate produced no new thoughts on the subject of imperial rule. Such 'advances' as were made in the philosophy of empire were the work of the Greek intelligentsia. This class, which in the fluid and dangerous period of the late republic, according to Crawford, exploited the Greek intellectual pretensions

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of leading Romans in order to win protection and other concessions for the Greek communities, two centuries later, as Nutton shows, produced the ideology of participation and turned *imperium populi Romani* into *imperium orbis terrarum*. Aelius Aristides, Plutarch, and the other Greek intellectuals who became vocal supporters of the empire were representative of the class of provincials which benefited most from Roman rule, the local aristocracy. On the one hand, the new phase of imperialism ushered in by the Principate of Augustus was characterized by a more rational exploitation of the subjects of Rome; on the other, the Roman imperial system that Augustus and his successors created brought real material benefits for subjects as well as rulers. There is no paradox here, for the benefits and burdens of empire were unevenly distributed. In order to reap the fruits of power the Romans were forced to utilize their provincial clients and thus to share power with them. As Garnsey shows, the real effect of empire was to increase social differentiation.

Resistance within the empire was not to be expected, and did not come, from the *évolué*, who despite his provincialism was committed to the values of the empire, and was prepared, even anxious, to participate in the exercise of power and the economic exploitation of the mass of provincials. There were Rabbinic protests - although Jewish attitudes were not uniformly hostile, according to de Lange - and some dissentient Christian voices. But the spirit of rebellion was by and large the preserve of the poor and the fringe members of Roman provincial society. Their resistance was the least likely to be effective.

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2: IMPERIALISM AND EMPIRE IN NEW KINGDOM EGYPT (c. 1575-1087B.C.)

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The treatment of a period of ancient Egyptian history under a heading which belongs very much to the modern world requires something of a defensive introduction. The charge is easily made that simply by using the words 'imperialism' and 'empire' a host of complex and debatable issues are prejudged and cast into a misleading and inappropriate mould. Certainly the ancient Egyptians themselves seem to have known of no words which can be translated as 'imperialism' or 'empire', but neither, for that matter, did they have words for 'government', 'administration' and 'history', nor even, despite its pervasiveness in Egyptian civilization, was there a word 'religion'. This is something that can be encountered across the whole range of subjects on which the Egyptians wrote. Thus, they possessed a technical vocabulary for solving mathematical problems, but no word which can be translated 'mathematics'. They acted without seeing the need to abstract and refer separately to the activity as an independent phenomenon. The verbal and mental sequence in Egypt was not from the particular to the abstract, it was to metaphor and religious symbolism. Yet, conversely, whilst we may judge the Egyptian vocabulary to have been weak in just those areas that we rate most highly, it is also true that our own vocabulary and range of concepts is inadequate for coping with the heart of the Egyptian intellect for which we can offer only the sadly degraded term 'religion'. It is not just a matter of difficulties in translation; there is a major intellectual disjunction between us and the ancient Egyptians. Yet, with a large bureaucratically-run country and having important interests in neighbouring lands, they also faced some of the same practical problems that more recent societies have faced. Their solutions, though justified in religious terms, seem firmly rooted in political reality. It is in our assessment of politically real behaviour that the answer is to be found as to whether they acted in a manner analogous to states of later periods who have conceived of 'empire' with a greater degree of abstraction and clarity.

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From the New Kingdom, a considerable body of inscriptions and scenes has survived related to the theme of conquest and subjection of the outside world to the rule of the king of Egypt. Some of them, in alluding to specific instances of triumph, are termed 'historical' by modern scholars, but from their language, and very often from their context within a temple, one can judge them to be more truly theological documents and sources for our understanding of divine kingship. Within them the divine king is depicted fulfilling a specific role with historical actuality entirely subordinated to a predetermined format. Presented as a form of cultic drama the conquest theme is one element in the broader and fundamental role of divine kingship: that of reducing chaos to order.¹ Sometimes one finds scenes of the king's subjection of foreign humanity paired with hunting scenes where a chaotic animal world is subdued, and certainly in later periods the symbolic connection between the two was explicitly formulated in scenes of the king snaring birds in a clapnet which illustrated the text, or 'book', called 'The subduing of the nobility', which was evidently intended to assist the king's supremacy over his enemies.²

It is a mistake, too, to explain the endless repetition of victory as just propaganda. Little of it would have been visible to the people as a whole, being often well within the body of the temple, or at least screened off by the great temple-enclosure walls. It represents rather a constant restatement of theological formulae, particularized for each king. It is also likely that the great scenes of victory and the listing of conquered places which frequently occur on temple walls, particularly on the towers of pylon entrances, were regarded as magically efficacious in protecting Egypt from foreign hostility. This interpretation can be supported by reference to a ritual of humiliation in which the names of the king's 'enemies' were written upon little statuettes of bound captives which were then burnt or buried, or on pottery vessels subsequently smashed. This ritual is known from as late as the Graeco-Roman period, and many actual statuettes bearing long lists of foreign places and princes have survived from the earlier period of the Middle Kingdom (when they are referred to as 'Execration Texts').³ The lists on the temple walls of the New Kingdom, and around the statue bases of kings, were probably intended, by their attitudes of

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permanent subjugation, to achieve the same end, having shared in the 'Opening of the Mouth' ritual which animated temple walls and statues alike.⁴

These formal scenes and texts contain elements of a fairly consistent and coherent view of Egypt's position in the world, or more correctly, of the king's position, for at times the Egyptian people, including the army itself, are presented as being on a level little different from that of the foreign nations. These statements can be abstracted and put together to make up a single account. It is important, however, to realize that Egyptian religious texts in general are not constructed as logical treatises intended to explain or to persuade, but consist instead of series of concise statements whose logical connections may not be made explicit. Hence, any modern account which seeks a logical presentation is bound to be quite alien to the spirit of the texts themselves.

In the theology of the New Kingdom the single most important element was still the sun (Ra), whose manifestations were many, but most importantly the Theban god Amen, whose almost total absorption into solar theology was marked by the common divine designation Amen-Ra. Akhenaten's religious reform was evidently an attempt to separate the sun cult from extraneous elements, particularly that of Amen, and to emphasize its true nature by constant reference to the sun's disk (Aten). The theme that the sun god was the creator and sustainer of all life, both animal and human, throughout the universe was made the subject of hymns, some of great poetic beauty.⁵ Some passages briefly include the foreign lands and peoples within the scope of the sun god's power,⁶ but more generally Egyptian theologians seem to have displayed little interest in the details of the creation of the physical world. Nevertheless, a simple, unelaborated claim that the sun-god of Egypt, and occasionally other gods as well, was the creator and sustainer of the whole universe was not infrequently stated or implied in contexts involving the king in his role of foreign conqueror. Of more particular interest to the gods were those lands which yielded products for themselves and for their temples. These places were sometimes referred to as 'god's land'. The Lebanon where grew the cedar trees for the great temple flagstaffs and barges was one; Sinai of the turquoise mines was another; so also was the greywacke quarries of the inhospitable Wadi Hammamat (*KRI* VI 11.4,

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VI 13.11). But most important was Punt, a term for some coastal area somewhere between Eritrea and northern Somaliland which the Egyptians regularly visited by voyages from ports on the Red Sea coast.⁷ Here, through trade probably at a coastal entrepot, incense was obtained.

Considerable prominence was given in the New Kingdom to detailed expositions in temples by texts and pictures of the king's conception and birth from a union between his mother and Amen-Ra, who had assumed the form of the reigning king.⁸ Being made in the divine image the land was described as becoming at his accession as perfect and harmonious as it had been 'in the time of Ra', on the 'First Moment' immediately after creation had taken place (e.g. *Urk* IV 2119-20), and as the son of the gods he inherits all that they have made, 'that which the sun's disk encircles',⁹ in order to administer it on their behalf (e.g. *Urk* IV 368.13-14, 1327.1-3). This could include a claim to universal rule abroad. Thus Amenhetep III says of Amen: 'He has handed over to me the princes of the southlands, the southerners and the northerners as well, every one made equal to the other, and their silver, their gold, their cattle, all the precious stones of their lands in millions, hundreds of thousands, tens of thousands, and thousands. I shall act for him who begat me with a steadfast purpose, just as he appointed me to be "Ra of the Nine Bows".'¹⁰ The 'Nine Bows' is a common collective expression for the nations of mankind, including the Egyptian people, and here the king's equivalence to the sun god is expressed by simply calling him 'Ra'.

Sometimes this transfer is represented as a contract in which the king provides for the gods, building temples and ensuring a plentiful supply of offerings, and the gods in their turn are then obliged to grant universal power, as well as health and good fortune (e.g. *Urk* IV 563.4-5, 817.2-5, 864.5, 1754.4-7, 2043.6-9). But the transfer should not be understood as something which took place at one point in real time. It belongs to a mythopoetic dimension outside time, and describes rather an ever-active relationship. And whilst the king is most commonly the heir to certain gods of outstanding power and importance, principally Amen-Ra, the inheritance myth could also be invoked to describe his relationship to lesser divinities as well, an aspect of the interchangeability of Egyptian deities. In the little temple at Semna in Nubia, for example, the king's inheritance stems from Dedwen, a probably Nubian god long before brought into the