

Centre and Periphery

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Introduction

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In recent years there have been signs, among archaeologists studying the development of social complexity, of increasing dissatisfaction with the evolutionary theories of the Anglo-American 'New Archaeology' of the 1960s and 1970s as full explanations. Much has been learnt from this phase of archaeological enquiry. The focusing of attention on a society's relationship to its environment, on the complicated interrelationships of internal factors such as subsistence economy, exchange, technology and population, and on the potential for small-scale change in one area to initiate major restructuring of the whole social system, has been most fruitful. Attempts to use the concepts of chiefdom and state have led not only to discussion of the applicability of such terms in prehistoric contexts, but also to debate about the proper identification of such social concepts, or indeed other concepts of complexity with material correlates in the archaeological record. Above all there has been the recognition of the very wide range of forms of social organization which is largely masked by lumping them into such grossly oversimplified categories as chiefdom and state. Because of the evident success of this conceptual framework in stimulating archaeological enquiry, its shortcomings have also become increasingly obvious. There has been a reliance on functionalist and adaptationist explanations, and an obsession with the adaptively successful reorganizations which enable societies to incorporate ever larger quantities of territory, population or energy. There has been a tendency to adopt a stadial approach within a theory of unilinear social evolution which can frequently descend into sterile debate about the correct attribution of a particular social formation to one category or another, or the search for process to transform social formation from one stage to the next. Finally, there has been an excessively abstract modelling of social factors which pays little attention to the realities of social relations in historical societies. The rich diversity of forms taken by societies with complex organization is given scant attention in the search for generalized evolutionary models.

The concern of this book is to explore one particular alternative frame-work—the analysis of long-distance relationships, especially between societies with markedly different patterns of social or economic organization, and the potential of such asymmetric interactions to bring about major transformations of social

relations. In one sense, a recognition of such long-distance relationships has been present in archaeology for a considerable time, as frequent references to such concepts as 'diffusion', 'influence' or 'trade' testify. Connections of this sort have frequently been invoked as no more than a simplistic sort of explanation of observed similarity in material culture. They have also been used to give an account, or even an intended explanation, of economic, social and political development, though mostly without a systematic analysis of how the relationships might have operated, and sometimes in a quite irresponsible manner, as with the hyperdiffusionist attempts to derive all human civilization from Egypt. In the present case, however, we are dealing not with the explanation of observed similarity, but with the investigation of the social consequences of long-distance interaction, in a debate moulded specifically by the concept of the relationships between centres and peripheries. Like so much else in archaeology, this theme has been taken up from elsewhere, in particular from political theory and geography, but we should regard this not so much as a 'borrowing' which shows archaeology's own intellectual impoverishment, but as sign of archaeology's close connection to contemporary debate in other important areas of social enquiry, and of its ability to contribute meaningfully to that debate.

Centre and periphery

The concepts of centre and periphery, in various ways and in various degrees of specificity, have had a long history in western European thought. Such opposed ideas as town and country, civilized and barbarian, long engrained in our thinking, implicitly embody them. The Western construction of history, with its emphasis on the rise and fall of the classical world, the emergence of its north and west European successor states and their rise to world dominance, also incorporates a contrast between an innovative, developing, dynamic and dominant region and others which are backward and ultimately subjected. This contrast is both a spatial one, with the dynamic region of western Europe surrounded on all sides by less developed territories, and a cultural one, defining western Europe as an area of particular interest and values, to be studied, appreciated and maintained in a way very different from the regions beyond. This spatial contrast may also be given a temporal dimension, in theories of social evolution which stress the backward or retarded nature of non-European societies. Though the European historical tradition may not always be couched in the specific terminology of centre and periphery, it does nonetheless by its very Eurocentric nature reflect them.

More specifically, the centre and periphery model has figured in a variety of ways in the geographical analysis of the spatial organization of human society. The German geographer von Thuenen's study (1826) of the intellectual fiction of the isolated city in a featureless plain demonstrated the theoretical relationship between distance from the centre and increasing economic disadvantage, and was the ultimate intellectual ancestor of the specifically archaeological theory of site-catchment analysis (Higgs and Vita-Finzi 1970). Christaller's work (1966) on least-

cost solutions to the problem of the spatial organization of functional hierarchies of settlement systems in an industrialized society represented a rather different approach to centrality, but it was the stimulus for a great period of growth in academic interest in such problems and for the emergence of a geographical theory of central places. These ideas were the starting point for several different lines of enquiry in recent archaeology, and anthropology too (Cherry 1987, Hodges 1987), including attempts to modify central place theory for application to the regional analysis of ethnohistoric settlement systems (Smith 1976) or to prehistoric societies (Steponaitis 1978), or to use rank-size correlation as a measure of the emergence of centralized political authority (Johnson 1981). Underlying this work in archaeology there is an attempt to find a means of translating social concepts of power and authority into terms appropriate to the analysis of the actual archaeological data, among which settlement evidence is comparatively plentiful (Renfrew 1982). Much of this work suffers from being too concerned with the spatial patterning rather than the social reality, and from weaknesses in moving from one frame of reference to another. Furthermore, the kind of relationship typically analysed in this way has been comparatively small-scale, within a defined zone, whether that is a geographical entity such as an island or river drainage or a historically defined polity, and focused on a single central point, whether a small settlement in relation to the resources in its catchment area or a large urban centre in relation to its hinterland.

A broader frame of vision was not common, but some work did point to the recognition of patterns on a larger scale. Smith's (1976) typology of regional settlement systems included a dendritic pattern stemming from a single focus or gateway community (Hirth 1978), which could serve to integrate two rather differently ordered societies, somewhat comparable to Polanyi's concept of a port-of-trade (1957). Rather earlier Toynbee (1954) had drawn attention to the tendency for new and dynamic societies to emerge on the fringes of old and declining ones, as did Macedonia on the northern borders of the Greek world, or the Manchu in the case of China, in a pattern of progressive shifting of power from the centre to the periphery. This not only applied the concept of centre and periphery on a larger scale and within a frame that was not clearly defined by any natural or historical boundaries, but also conceived of the centre itself in a different way; not as a single point, but as a large polity or even a cluster of polities. Despite the underlying patterns of historical and geographical thinking, however, and the occasional specific formulation of the ideas of centre and periphery, there does not seem to have been much explicit theoretical development of the concept at a large scale, appropriate to the analysis of relations between polities.

From the early 1970s this picture rapidly changed as the idea of centre and periphery achieved considerable intellectual popularity in a variety of related academic fields such as political, historical, and economic geography, political theory, and historical sociology (e.g. Gottmann 1980). Strassoldo (1980, p. 53) has suggested that this new interest in the relationships of centre and periphery at

a global scale was linked to broader changes in Western thinking about the human environment and social development: a realization of the limits to technological growth, a concern for the environment and its resources, an unwillingness to accept centralized power structures uncritically, a concern with apparently insoluble problems of famine and impoverishment, with the political transformation of former colonies, and with the changing nature of American and Western European world dominance. However that may be, the centre and periphery model came to the fore in several disciplines, even to the point of being an academic 'fashion'. The scale of its application and the precise meaning given to the terms naturally varied somewhat with the context. The model was most often adopted to analyse contemporary political structures, but could also have a historical dimension, and be applied not just to the analysis of contemporary patterns but also to the historical processes through which they had arisen. The widespread discussion of the idea therefore provided an alternative framework for understanding the processes through which the stark contrasts in economic and political development in the modern world had come about, at a time when the traditional perception of those processes was being called into question.

Development and underdevelopment

Throughout the 19th century and the first half of the 20th the prevailing response of the Western intellectual tradition to the contrasts between the more 'advanced' societies of western Europe and the less 'advanced' ones of the rest of the world with whom they were increasingly coming into contact was an appeal to the concept of social evolution. The progress of western Europe to its dominant world role, politically, economically, technologically, and militarily, was based on a specific conjunction of circumstances; other societies had not been so fortunate and had been left stranded at lower points on the evolutionary ladder. The metaphors used to characterize this inequality draw heavily on the language and imagery of a biological organism, in particular the human body. Concepts such as 'advanced' or 'backward', applied to the development of society, have unfortunate overtones of mental retardation, but the most common metaphors, 'development' and 'underdevelopment', suggest that the proper maturation of the human body is analogous to the growth of western European society to some inherently ordained form, while failures to achieve this normal pattern are somehow to be diagnosed as problems for treatment. Even the term 'aid' for such treatment offered by the developed to the underdeveloped world perpetuates the imagery of a condition to be cured by the appropriate injection of cash or technology. Constant pictures of famine in the Third World may also serve to reinforce this imagery of a parallelism between the malnutrition and underdevelopment of the individual, and the under development of the social or political group, both to be cured in similar ways.

Since World War II, however, the existence of a systematic structural connection between the growth of western Europe and the underdevelopment of

other societies, and the precise nature of such a connection, has been the subject of growing debate. It was initiated in the first place by the development theorists such as Frank (1967), who argued that the underdevelopment of the Third World was the result of its exploitation by expanding European capitalism, perpetuated through the creation of an international division of labour, the extraction of surplus, and the creation of a market for the products of the technologically advanced producers in the developed core area. In the end, as Boutilier explains in his discussion of the Solomon Islands in [Chapter 1](#), early theories of dependency failed to deal adequately with the nature of the structural connection between centre and periphery, and the variety of response to capitalist penetration displayed by the periphery. The course of the debate had, however, been firmly set.

Wallerstein and world systems

The same theme of the structured growth of inequality was taken up in a rather different way in Immanuel Wallerstein's *The modern world-system* (1974), which expanded the historical and geographical scale of the currently prevailing model of centre and periphery. His aim was to describe and account for the condition of the modern world, especially the emergence of the current political and economic structure of capitalist world domination. In so doing, he raised questions not only about the precise formulation of such an account of recent history, but also about the correct scale of analysis and the correct units to form its basis. Though he was not, as will be seen, primarily concerned with the pre-capitalist world, and indeed explicitly excluded it from his analysis, it is appropriate to raise his fundamental methodological questions in an earlier chronological context, and to ask whether, or to what extent, he was right to limit the applicability of his concept so narrowly.

Wallerstein's analysis is based on the asserted importance of studying the individual social system, which is characterized by 'the fact that life within it is largely self-contained and that the dynamics of its development are largely internal' (Wallerstein 1974, p. 347). No society, of course, is ever entirely isolated, so the lack of an absolute definition need not pose serious problems. On this basis, Wallerstein distinguishes two types of social system: not the tribes and states of much archaeological and anthropological discussion, but only 'the relatively small, highly autonomous subsistence economies not part of some regular tribute-demanding system' (1974, p. 348), and the much larger-scale world systems, containing a multiplicity of cultures and based on a geographical division of labour in accordance with the principle of most efficient location of production within the system as a whole.

Wallerstein argues further that thus far there have only been two types of world system, though a third form, a socialist world government, is envisaged as a theoretical but currently unattainable possibility. The two types are the world empire, in which a single political system dominates, however weakly, more or

less the entire area of interrelated societies, and the world economy, in which no such single political structure exists.

It is furthermore an integral part of Wallerstein's thesis that the growth of a stable and long-lived world economy is a unique event of the modern world, specifically related to the rise of the European capitalist economies, which has given capitalist entrepreneurs the ability to operate over, and to dominate, a far wider territory than could ever be controlled by a single political unit. Capitalism has 'invented the technology that makes it possible to increase the flow of surplus from the lower strata to the upper strata, from the periphery to the center, from the majority to the minority by eliminating the "waste" of too cumbersome a political structure'; world empires, on the other hand, were a 'primitive means of economic domination' (Wallerstein 1974, pp. 15–16).

World economies operate within an external arena with which they have little or no contact, and are themselves characterized by a division into core states and peripheral areas. The core comprises an area of strong state machinery, typically a cluster of states rather than a single state, and of high technological advance and sophisticated economic institutions, which enable it to extract surplus from the periphery. That is an area where those features are correspondingly weak, and which is regarded mainly as a source of raw materials. Another important element in the structure is the semi-periphery, which forms a link between the core and the periphery, but also a buffer; it serves to integrate core and periphery economically as well as geographically, but also to provide a means of moderating political pressures that might be brought to bear on the core. Such semi-peripheries do not have access to the political opportunities offered by being part of the core.

One important feature of Wallerstein's model is its ability to cope with diachronic change. Though the existence of a core is a stable and permanent feature, the set of states which comprise the core may vary through time, and indeed there can be significant shifts of membership and of geographical centre of gravity in quite short periods. Similarly, individual states may 'decline' from semi-peripheral to peripheral status, while others are correspondingly 'promoted'. The whole world economy is potentially expansive, so areas in the external arena may themselves in time be incorporated in the periphery.

This is not the place to discuss the details of Wallerstein's account of European capitalist expansion since the 'great transformation' of European economies, which he places in the 16th century, though it should be noted that it has sparked a considerable debate. What is of more relevance here is the applicability of Wallerstein's model and its concepts to earlier, precapitalist societies. These were not Wallerstein's main concern; indeed in places he seems to regard the world economy model as inappropriate to them. 'We have insisted that the modern world economy is, and can only be, a capitalist world economy' (Wallerstein 1974, p. 350). He is, however, prepared to admit that there were some, presumably very few, pre-capitalist, pre-modern world economies, though he argues that they were all transformed into world empires by political expansion; he cites in

particular China, Persia and Rome (Wallerstein 1974, p. 16). The contrast is therefore between the economic integration of modern world systems in the form of world economies, and the essentially political nature of those in pre-modern times.

In extending the debate on centre-periphery relations to archaeology, and attempting to assess the utility of the model for pre-modern societies, we clearly have to consider the validity of Wallerstein's simple division of social systems into an opposition between small-scale subsistence economies which are not part of a tribute-demanding structure on the one hand, and world systems on the other. This is particularly important in the light of his insistence that the only form of world system to have existed to any significant degree in pre-modern times was the world empire. It would not take long to think of a variety of possible asymmetric relationships between social groups, and of historical examples of them, which do not fit easily into such a simple dichotomous classification. We also have to ask whether there might not in the past have been world systems with the economic structures of world economies which were not coterminous with world empires and did not resolve themselves into world empires. In any case, even if only a few such pre-capitalist world economies did exist, then the circumstances in which they came into being, and in which they were in turn transformed into world empires, are also matters of considerable interest.

The crux of the question is whether Wallerstein was right in asserting that the modern pre-capitalist world economy was the only true embodiment of the world economy version of the world system, or whether he did not thereby exclude large tracts of past human existence from a potentially meaningful analysis. Clearly, though, if the concept of a world economy were to be applied to pre-capitalist societies, it would need to be generalized and freed from the culture-specific capitalist formulations of centre and periphery, and of the relationships between them, which dominate Wallerstein's discussion.

Posed in this way, the question can be situated in the long-standing, but somewhat sterile, debates about substantivist or formalist approaches to the discussion of past economies and about primitivist or modernist assessments of their scale. Wallerstein's view of pre-capitalist economies would place him firmly in the substantivist and primitivist camps; he would hold that the nature of pre-modern economies was qualitatively different from that of modern economies and hence cannot be analysed in the terms developed appropriately for the contemporary world, and in particular that the degree of commercial activity in the ancient economy was minimal. It would be futile to argue that there were not major differences between modern capitalist economies and those of past pre-capitalist societies, but in our desire to emphasize the differentness of the past, we should not lose sight of the possibility of similarity and continuity. After all, the world economy which Wallerstein saw developing in the 16th century itself grew out of a network of economic relationships centred on the Mediterranean (Hodges & Whitehouse 1983), which was certainly of a qualitatively different nature but was nonetheless of critical importance in the emergence of early

medieval Europe. There do not in fact seem to be any a priori grounds why we should not expect to find world economies of a non-capitalist kind in the pre-capitalist world; Wallerstein did not find any because he was not concerned to look for them.

In a perceptive review of Wallerstein's original book, Schneider (1977) has suggested that Wallerstein gave too great an emphasis to the uniqueness of the western European expansion, and that his work 'suffers from too narrow an application of its own theory'. Her own main concern was with the period immediately prior to that of Wallerstein's study, and she argued that he systematically underestimated the scale and consequences of pre-capitalist exchanges, and in particular that he had misconceived the critical importance of luxury goods. Wallerstein (1974, p. 306) had, for instance, described the Russian fur trade of the 16th century, one of the 'rich trades', as 'an exchange of preciousities, a method of consuming surplus rather than producing it, hence dispensable at moments of contraction, and consequently not central to the functioning of the economic system'. Schneider argues that this denial of the importance of the rôle of so-called luxury goods led to a failure by Wallerstein to understand the process of initial European expansion in search of such items as spices. To archaeologists familiar with the debate over the rôle of prestige goods in the structuring of social relations, and the close connection between such luxury goods and other items of production, even if they are not mutually exchangeable, any denial of their importance is even stranger.

The contrast between luxury and utilitarian goods is not in fact an absolute one; they are, rather, two opposite ends of a spectrum. Individual items are not to be categorized as either luxury or utilitarian on the basis of any immutable physical property or necessity for biological survival: meaning is given to them by the rôle they play in the social relations of a specific society at a specific time. Furs and textiles do not only fulfil a functional, utilitarian need for clothing, but can take on a variety of social-specific meanings. Similarly, consumable items such as wine or spices, or particular types of meat or fish, can be valued both as nutrition and as a social statement. Nor should we assume that even the category of 'utilitarian' is unproblematic; as Rowlands (1987) has argued, Mesopotamia's shortage of basic raw materials such as stone and metal would not necessarily imply a need to ensure regular imports, unless we knew the purposes to which they were put and their importance for the social reproduction of the state. Equally, the critical rôle played by 'luxury goods' in the economic system is not to be measured in purely quantitative terms of volume, nor does it determine the degree to which they can be considered utilitarian rather than luxury goods. Some luxuries have the potential to be transformed into more utilitarian products, and themselves to transform social relations. In many prehistoric Near Eastern and European societies copper seems to have followed such a course, while more recently, as Mintz (1985) has shown, sugar has passed from being a 'luxury' used for medicinal, flavouring, and decorative purposes to become the basis of plantation economies in the periphery and a key element in the new patterns of diet, employment, and

social relations of the industrial world in the core. To raise a graded distinction between luxury and utilitarian goods to the level of absolute opposition and then to deny the economic importance of luxury goods may, as Schneider argued, have misrepresented the medieval and modern picture, but its effect is potentially much more serious for our understanding of pre-capitalist societies.

Diffusionism reinvented?

It has been suggested by Renfrew (1986, p. 6) that the concept of centre and periphery is an example of the diffusionist thinking of the old-fashioned culture-historical school in a new guise, with its emphasis on exogenous change. It is, of course, much more than that: as already mentioned, it is one way of proceeding in an attempt to escape the aridity of neo-evolutionary theories of social development, and to recognize the importance of the specific context of social and political relationships in which real historical actors operated. Somewhat similar aims could also be claimed for Renfrew's own concept of peer polity interaction, which recognizes that social change can be produced not only endogenously but also through external relationships, though here the emphasis is on connections within a cluster of autonomous polities equal in structural terms if not equal in actual economic, political, or military power. It is significant that many of the case studies analysed to assess the utility of the peer polity concept (Renfrew & Cherry 1986) in fact concern clusters of polities which were peripheral to more developed regions (e.g. Iron Age Europe). It was suggested that those external relationships had an important rôle to play in initiating or maintaining the internal processes of development through peer polity interaction; competitive emulation or a network of alliances among peer polities might well produce a marked similarity of socio-economic development or a shared set of political or ideological values, but the stimulus to such change among the cluster of polities as a whole came from interactions with an area outside that cluster. There does not seem to be any *a priori* reason to reject what those empirical examples as well as many other historical situations would suggest, namely that processes of endogenous change can include relationships between polities of unequal status as well as those of equal status (in terms of the structure of the model, if not on any scale of 'evolution' or 'development').

The fundamental question concerns the correct scale of analysis. Whereas evolutionary explanations have emphasized the trajectory followed by a single polity, and have sought to find the causes of change internally, the centre and periphery model, like the peer polity model, recognizes a larger framework of social organization which can generate its own internal patterns of change. In the terminology of systems, centre-periphery relations should not be regarded as exogenous, either to the centre or to the periphery; rather, the system itself is larger than any single society or polity. Centre—periphery relations are integral to it, and explanations which rely on the historical elucidation of such relations are themselves dealing with endogenous change, not invoking external causes.

It is nevertheless instructive to try to specify in what ways an analysis of centre—periphery relationships is superior to an old-fashioned diffusionist explanation. The arguments against diffusionist thinking were partly empirical, in that they simply did not fit the pattern of facts which archaeology was progressively revealing, as Renfrew (1973), for instance, argued in the case of the impact of radiocarbon dating on our perception of the traditional chronological relationships of European prehistory. They also arose partly from a realization of the theoretical importance of endogenous factors. In both cases, however, the objections were to the inappropriate or exaggerated reliance on diffusionist ideas to the exclusion of others, rather than to the inadequacy of such ideas in general. Far more serious was the failure of diffusionist explanations to offer any description in real social terms of the precise social context in which the relationships were played out. Diffusion could either be elevated to some suprahistorical force which did not need further analysis, or it could be provided with some mechanism such as migration, invasion, or acculturation, which was in turn frequently felt not to need any more detailed account. The transformation of diffusion as the observation of static patterns of similarities in the archaeological record into diffusion as the explanation of dynamic social change was easy but fundamentally flawed, since it failed to give an adequate account of change in terms appropriate to the nature of prehistoric societies.

It is important that centre–periphery analyses do not share the same flaws; core and periphery or the world economy are not to be elevated to suprahistorical forces, operating universally and not in need of specific analysis in any given context. On the other hand, these concepts do provide a general framework within which it is possible to analyse in very precise terms the specific conditions in which the relationships between polities at different levels of economic, political or technological development did, in specific cases, produce changes in those polities. That is the aim of the various chapters in this book, and it is clear from the insights they provide that the concept, either as a framework for understanding past social change or as a heuristic device for investigating it, has great utility. It is not just a tried and discredited idea in new terminological clothes, but an intellectually stimulating theme for elucidating a detailed understanding of past social change.

Archaeological applications

Wallerstein's concept of core and periphery is, as discussed above, an integral part of his theory of a uniquely capitalist world economy. To develop its application to archaeological examples of pre-capitalist societies, it is clearly necessary to free it from this culturally specific form and to generalize it. The broader idea of a world system, embodying a centre and a periphery, will then provide a conceptual framework for the analysis of past societies, but will need to be defined in specific terms appropriate to each historical context. The very concept of a world system implies a scale of analysis far larger than a single polity or cluster of polities, and

the contrast inherent in the concept of core and periphery, differentiating two aspects of a relationship which is itself the primary entity of archaeological interest, implies not just a spatial separation but a difference in the nature of social organization. The precise form that the system takes, and the nature of the relationships which structure it, are likely to have been very varied in the past.

The centre-periphery model has already been a fruitful source of archaeological insight, as is shown in the chapters in this book and elsewhere (see e.g. Rowlands *et al.* 1987 for an important series of Old World studies). In much of this work, the interest has moved away from Wallerstein's concern with trade, and has concentrated more on the growth and nature of long-distance interactions and their capacity for producing social transformations, on the interrelationship of cycles of economic activity in spatially distant areas, and on diachronic patterns in the location of power centres (Frankenstein & Rowlands 1978, Gledhill 1978, Kristiansen 1982). This is not due to the technical problems of quantifying the level of prehistoric and early historic exchange, though these are without doubt considerable. Even in those areas where substantial bodies of documentary evidence exist, for example in the Near East (Larsen 1987), the record can be very patchy; for those areas where no documents ever existed, or none survive today, the problem is far worse. The only source of evidence is archaeology, and recovery of relevant information will depend not only on modern excavation techniques and strategies, but also on past behavioural practices with regard to the deposition of such materials in an archaeologically recoverable way, and on the very nature of the exchanged items themselves. Many of these were organic, such as furs, timber, textiles, or slaves, and hence only rarely survive in an archaeologically recognizable form, making any estimate of the scale of 'trade' or the accumulation of capital impossible.

Nor is this shift of emphasis due to some espousal of a simple primitivist view that exchange was not materially important in the ancient economies. Rather, it follows from an assessment of the different possibilities of exploiting economic activities in the ancient and modern worlds. Kohl (1987, p. 23), for example, has argued that economic development and dependency could not be linked in the ancient world as they can now, because of specific differences in the nature of technologies, such as metallurgy, which could not be so easily limited to create spatial variations in technological competence, or in the nature of transport facilities, or in the availability of sources of power, such as the horse, which could be exploited on the periphery to change the structure of the system. The specific nature of ancient economy and technology in many cases simply did not allow economic power to be wielded in the way that is possible in the modern world. As Kohl has argued, the development of underdevelopment was itself underdeveloped in Bronze Age Asia. Hence archaeological interest, though still focused on exchange, both for its importance in social and political relations, and for its visibility in the archaeological record (at least in the case of some items), has also turned to broader questions of political dependence.

At the same time, archaeology has shown a greater interest in the historical development of the periphery. Wallerstein himself was little concerned with the actual transformations of societies outside the core of his world economy, though something of this history as seen from the periphery has been provided by Wolf (1982). Similar studies in the nature of reaction to the expansion of the core and the transformation of local peripheral institutions through interaction with it have been undertaken in archaeology, for instance by Hedaeger (1987) and Haselgrove (1982, 1987) for northern and northwestern Europe outside the Roman world. As several of the chapters in this book show—McGuire's [Chapter 2](#) on the American Southwest, Dincauze and Hasenstab's [Chapter 3](#) on the Iroquois, Whitehouse and Wilkins's [Chapter 5](#) on south Italian responses to Greek colonization—concepts of centre and periphery in a world system can provide an insight into the nature of social change in the periphery.

To allow such an analysis to proceed beyond the banal invocation of centre—periphery relations as an explanation for observed change, a procedure no better than an appeal to diffusion, it is necessary to develop analytical concepts appropriate to these archaeological cases that will allow these general ideas to be made specific and put into practice. One such concept of importance is that of a prestige-goods economy (Ekholm 1977, Frankenstein & Rowlands 1978, Gledhill 1978). Such economies, indeed, seem particularly common on the fringe of early states and empires, and are a regular means of articulating societies with very different structures of economic and social organization. Within such economies, prestige goods circulate in a variety of contexts, in a system which associates them closely with status. The nature of the relationship between exchange and hierarchy may be complex; Rowlands (1987), for example, has discussed the rôle of the circulation of prestige items in societies which stress inalienable rights as a means of creating social dependencies. Nor can it be assumed that the nature of the exchanges within which such goods circulate will necessarily be clear-cut; Larsen (1987) has argued that many of the commodities exchanged in Mesopotamia were both a source of commercial profit and a means of defining social statuses. The coexistence of different types of exchange within a single society has long been recognized, but the particular problems of characterizing the nature of prestige-goods systems and their relationship to other systems is a major question for archaeology.

Nevertheless, the concept of prestige-goods economies has proved a valuable one. Both Dietler in [Chapter 6](#), dealing with the export of wine from southern France to central Europe in the early Iron Age, and Williams in [Chapter 7](#), studying the wine trade beyond the frontiers of the early Roman empire, stress the rôle played by this item in the reorganization of hierarchical societies in the periphery. McGuire too, in his study of the American Southwest in [Chapter 2](#), stresses the vital nature of the supply of prestige goods from the south for the social reproduction of Anasazi communities.

It is necessary not only to develop an appropriate analysis for the relationship of the prestige goods exchanges to the rest of the economy, but also to find ways of

characterizing the economy of the periphery and describing transformations in it. Wolf (1982) has suggested the concept of mode of production, and in particular the specific formulation of kin-ordered and tributary modes, as being appropriate for the analysis of the economies of such peripheral societies. Following Wolf, McGuire in [Chapter 2](#) develops the notion of a kin-ordered mode of production, and the varieties of relationship within it, in the context of the American Southwest. The importance of these concepts is that they offer a far more useful way of discussing the social and economic organization of peripheral societies than the notion of redistribution associated with the chiefdom level of political organization proposed by Service (1962), and criticized by Earle (1977) and Carneiro (1981). Wolf (1982, pp. 97–9) stresses the possibility for chiefs to transcend the limitations of the kin-ordered mode and transform their status differential into one of class in a tributary mode, if they can acquire some independent power over resources and some new mechanism of power. The new possibilities opened up for such chiefs by interactions with an expanding periphery, with the possibility of control over new resources or new forms of prestige goods or knowledge, or new sources of political power through alliances, provide exactly the sort of context in which such transformations might occur.

In addition to the prestige goods systems already mentioned, Dincauze and Hasenstab in [Chapter 3](#) discuss the importance of maize agriculture and the skills it requires, while Havlík in [Chapter 13](#) describes the rôle of the introduction of Christianity into early medieval Moravia. The new religion was closely associated with the recently consolidated kingship, as the physical proximity of palace and churches and the burial of royalty in the nave of a church testify, and was a powerful instrument in legitimating and expanding royal power.

Recognizing centre and periphery

The concept of centre and periphery has now been so widely used that it is necessary to think about its definition in specific contexts. Even in the modern world there is no automatic correlation between political centres and areas of highest economic investment or technological advance; indeed, the peripheral areas will often be the most technologically advanced, as the capitalist economy seeks to take advantage of variations in the costs of labour and raw materials and to promote a geographical specialization and division of labour. Similarly in Wallerstein's world economies it was control of the investment and of the economic institutions by the core areas, and the channelling to them of the produced surplus, that characterized their status, rather than the physical location of any of these things at a geographical centre. In modifying Wallerstein's model to suit the conditions of pre-capitalist societies, we would still expect the core areas to be net consumers of the products of the periphery, and to be the dominant partners in the network of political relationships of which the exchange may be the visible manifestation, while the peripheries are the net providers and

the dominated partners. How, though, are we to recognize such patterns in the archaeological record?

As mentioned above, archaeology has been only minimally concerned with questions of the volume of trade in centre-periphery relationships. Quantifying the volume may be difficult, but the making of comparisons in order to estimate the extent of inequality in the exchange is going to be even more so. In any case the exchanges may have been subjectively seen by the participants as being fair and balanced, if not of particular advantage to their own side. The amazement of the Greeks, for instance, recorded by Diodorus Siculus (V. 26, 2–3), at the willingness of the barbarian Celts to accept as little as one amphora of wine for a slave was probably matched by a similar surprise on the part of the Celts. For most archaeological analyses the exchanged items and the balance between them have been of less importance than the actual exchanges and the political relationships within which they took place. But how are those relationships to be recognized, and how is the nature of domination in the relationship to be defined if the archaeologically visible material is not an adequate source of evidence? This may not be a problem if the centre-periphery model is being used as a heuristic frame-work for organizing and furthering our understanding of the past, but if it is not to become totally vacuous, the question of domination and inequality must be faced. The inequality may lie not in the balance of trade, nor in the costs of participating, but more in the costs that would be incurred in trying to extricate oneself from the relationship. Just as the capitalist economy can create an economic dependency through the establishment of a geographical division of labour and the export of goods from the centre, so the political structures involved in pre-capitalist centre-periphery systems can ensnare the periphery ever more firmly and make it dependent on the centre for social, or even biological, reproduction, because of a lack of any suitable alternative. It is a characteristic of many, though by no means all, peripheries that they are not presented with opportunities for similar interactions with a plurality of centres, while the centre may well have other possibilities for meeting its needs; hence there is an asymmetry in the relationship, which leads to dependence. Both Randsborg in [Chapter 12](#) on Denmark and Szyrkiewicz in [Chapter 8](#) on nomadic relationships with China discuss the oscillation between trading and raiding, as peripheries turn to military force to maintain the access to items from the centre on which they have come to depend. In the latter case, the nomadic dependence on China for essential foodstuffs was such that it could be used as an overt mechanism of political control. McGuire's treatment ([Ch. 2](#)) of the Anasazi *katsina* religion as a crisis cult which arose in the face of cessation of contacts with the south again underlines the strength of the dependence that had been produced.

One question implicit in the discussion in several of the chapters in this book is the extent to which we impose a pattern of centre and periphery analysis, in which the centre is defined as much by the preconceptions of our own culturally determined vision of the past and other societies as by any objective set of criteria

for defining it and recognizing it in the archaeological record. As has already been remarked, the concept of the centre is well established in Western thought, and the centre is frequently endowed with culture-specific values. Oppositions such as town/country, urban/provincial, civilized/ uncivilized, classical/barbarian, are heavily value-laden and structure many of our patterns of thought. In particular, they influence our expectations about the nature of interactions in the prehistoric and early historic world, where metaphors such as ‘ex oriente lux’ and ‘la rayonnement de la civilisation hellénique’ are not uncommon, and clearly betray our attitudes to the past.

Thus in the case of the archaeologically and historically documented expansion of the Mediterranean world it has become common to speak in terms of ‘hellenization’ or ‘romanization’, as if such processes were natural, and Greece and Rome were naturally to be thought of as centres. Stoddart, in [Chapter 4](#) on the emergence of Etruscan society, is at pains to refute this ‘natural’ assumption of an external causation for the development of a non-classical world, though it ultimately came to share much of classical civilization. His argument raises questions about the definition of the Mediterranean centre of European civilization in the first millennium BC; about whether, in fact, we are right to think exclusively in terms of a Greek centre, or whether there was a much more diffuse centre, including also Etruscans and Phoenicians, who have been excluded for reasons that have more to do with recent European perceptions of the true development of their history and culture. Similarly, Whitehouse and Wilkins in [Chapter 5](#) question the notion of ‘hellenization’ and draw attention to the very limited spheres of interaction between the Greek colonies of southern Italy and their immediate neighbours. At a rather different level, Szykiewicz in [Chapter 8](#) raises the question of whether the characterization of the mutual dependence between the nomadic cultures and China as a centre-periphery relationship is derived from the Chinese view of the world as sharply divided into themselves and the outside. We might also ask whether our own culturally determined attitude to sedentary farmers predisposes us to regard the Chinese state as a centre, and the extent to which this is a useful description of the reality of their external relations.

One quite specific problem raised by our own perception of historical development concerns the terminology to be applied to interacting populations, especially where a centre is expanding. As Whitehouse and Wilkins point out in [Chapter 5](#), the term ‘native’ carries colonial overtones of either a romantic or a pejorative nature, while ‘indigenous’ suggests permanent and everlasting presence; ‘aboriginal’ has the same problems, while other terms such as ‘local’ are vague. It does not seem appropriate, or even possible, to fix on a single term to describe all the varied contexts discussed in this book, so usage will inevitably vary. If we cannot remove all the cultural overtones from our terminology, we must be aware of them, and prevent them from allowing our language to influence the way we view other societies.

The rôle of the semi-periphery

The concept of the semi-periphery has played little part in the archaeological adaptation of Wallerstein's ideas, though it was an important part of his world system. It served to protect the core from pressures from the periphery, and bore some of the costs of running the system. Dietler's analysis (Ch. 6) of the wine trade in the south of France pays full attention to the zone lying between the prime producers on the coast and the ultimate destination of some of the wine in central Europe. He stresses its economic and social, as well as its geographical, centrality—a centrality characterized by a different pattern of consumption and discard in the archaeological record.

Dincauze and Hasenstab (Ch. 3) raise similar questions concerning the actual nature of long-distance connections and the rôle of the sites on the fringe of the Cahokia region. Their estimate of a 40-day travel time from the centre to the Iroquoian periphery corresponds with Wallerstein's discussion (1974, pp. 16–17) of 60 days as a possible upper limit (whatever the transport technology available at any time or place), and Braudel's (1972, p. 355) estimate of 70–80 days for communication between the eastern and western peripheries of the Mediterranean world. Within such a large system, the sub-centres of the Cahokia world, intermediate between the centre and the Iroquoian periphery, may perhaps be regarded as a form of semi-periphery.

The power of the semi-periphery to divert exchange in its own interest is well exemplified by McGuire's discussion (Ch. 2) of the consequences of the rise of Casas Grandes. Archaeological research will have to pay much more attention to the social and political rôle of such intermediate communities and their capacity for inducing very significant changes in the nature of their peripheries.

The incorporation of the periphery

As Wallerstein emphasized, centre—periphery systems are not static. Recent archaeological debate has paid comparatively little attention to the questions involved in the diachronic development of such systems, though Nash (1987) and Haselgrove (1987) have explored the political expansion of Rome into western Europe and the establishment of ever more remote peripheries. Some of the systems described in this book were comparatively short-lived, such as the Mississippian system in the eastern United States (Ch. 3) and the Southwestern link to Mesoamerica (Ch. 2), but others were more enduring. Szyrkiewicz (Ch. 8) describes one process of expansion, that of the Chinese state; administrative and military costs prohibited further political expansion, and the periphery was subordinated by the strategic control of trade. By contrast, the nomadic pastoralists of the periphery could regularly pose a severe military threat to the centre, but could not for long administer any gains they might make.

The process of Roman expansion and incorporation in western Europe does not serve as a model for the rest of the Empire. Two chapters in this book discuss

one particular region of southeastern Europe. Winter and Bankoff (Ch. 9) explore the changing nature of the relationship of Serbia in modern Yugoslavia to the Mediterranean world. They argue that after the first penetration of the region in search of raw materials, it was the specific nature of the local economy, with a primary importance placed on the extraction of raw materials, especially metals, rather than on the growth of productive industries, that determined the course of later social development. Bartel's study of Roman expansion in the same region (Ch. 10) concentrates on the variety of policies implemented in response to the varying economic and strategic importance of different zones. This produces an elegant general model, widely applicable in situations of colonial and imperial expansion, which could be tested in other areas with potentially interesting results. Farnsworth's detailed study (Ch. 11) of material culture change in the Franciscan missions of California in the wake of military and religious enforcement of a European economy represents one example of Bartel's model of acculturation. These chapters show clearly how the precise nature of the mechanisms by which the centre seeks to penetrate and subject the periphery will affect the transformations wrought on peripheral society.

The decline of the core

Spatio-temporal shifts in the location of power, with the decline of an old core and the emergence of a new one on the periphery, are an accepted part of our vision of the historical development of the Western world, if not of elsewhere. The shift westward in the Mediterranean, then to northern and northwestern Europe, then to the United States is well known, if not precisely formulated in so many words. The emergence of Europe is indeed a major theme of historical and sociological writing (e.g. Jones 1981, Hall 1985, Mann 1986), but archaeology too has its rôle to play. Randsborg's study (Ch. 12) is concerned with the correlations of the cycles of economic activity within the Empire and its northern periphery, and the interplay of local development within northern Europe and external connections. Havlík's Chapter 13 highlights the critical rôle of Christianity in providing a means of integrating politically autonomous societies over a wide area and in offering norms for the whole social order, a point made more generally by Hall (1985, pp. 121–6). On the other hand, the lack of an overarching political authority, and even more the presence of two competing cores in the Eastern and Western Empires, allowed Moravia a period of competitive aggression through which it achieved a position of considerable power.

An assessment

As the chapters in this book demonstrate, archaeologists have found the concept of centre and periphery to be a fruitful one in analysing a wide variety of specific historical cases. Though it raises many detailed questions concerning the precise

formulation of the relationships involved, and in particular concerning the connection between exchange and hierarchy and the articulation of different systems of exchange inside and outside a society, it offers a potential framework for understanding the processes of economic and political development in many different societies. Such explanations could, in theory, offer an account of a variety of processes familiar to archaeologists, including the emergence of states, cyclic patterns of very extensive cultural homogeneity, especially in prestige items, and spatio-temporal shifts in power centres.

For this potential to be realized, however, there are some important prerequisites. The very large scale of the appropriate unit of analysis, the world system, will in many cases embrace archaeological evidence which is traditionally separated into different spatial, chronological, or cultural specialisms. Thus the later prehistory of Europe cannot be sensibly split into Bronze Age and Iron Age compartments, since the patterns of cyclic growth and contraction ignore such divisions; equally, it may be impossible to understand temperate Europe without the Mediterranean world or the Near East. Research programmes will have to face this difficulty, and also the very different standards of data recovery and presentation that exist within established disciplinary subdivisions.

At the same time, the widening of the scale of enquiry should not blind us to the subtleties of regional variations within the system. More attention will have to be paid to the variations in the regional patterns of production, consumption, and discard to form a proper social context for the observed archaeological remains. Distribution maps will not reveal world systems unless it is possible to give a detailed account of how the material being mapped was produced and consumed throughout the entire system.

These, however, are challenges that archaeology should face. For archaeology alone has the potential to reveal the processes of the development of human society throughout most of its past, and many of the most useful types of evidence for this kind of enquiry, especially prestige goods, are precisely the kind of thing that archaeology is best equipped to study.

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