ROME'S PROVINCES AS FRAMEWORK FOR WORLD-VIEW*

By

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The year 2004 will be the twentieth anniversary of the publication of P. Janni's seminal book *La Mappa e il Periplo: Cartografia Antica e Spazio Odologico*.¹ Its main thesis has convinced many scholars who seek to understand how Romans visualized their wider surroundings beyond the immediate vicinity of home, myself included. Among the strongest and most recent affirmations of support must surely be that of C.R. Whittaker.² Four brief passages may serve as illustration: "When it came down to mental mapping on the ground...Romans viewed their localities and environment ... as 'hodological space,' the term adopted by Janni" (102); "Space itself was defined by itineraries, since it was through itineraries that Romans actually experienced space, that is, by lines and not by shapes" (102); "I believe... itineraries dominated and infiltrated all the other categories of ancient representations and perceptions of space" (83); "a Roman's sense of space and visual perspectives were shaped by the horizontal, linear movement of itineraries over land and sea" (87). Finally, Whittaker goes on to urge, "The conversion of Constantine to Christianity...radically transformed the world view of Romans. Travel made the world a smaller place. There was a new emphasis on the heroic journeys, both physical and spiritual, which were fused into one by the pilgrimage to Jerusalem" (98).

I do not quote Whittaker to dismiss his, and Janni's, view. I believe that it contains much truth: the use of itineraries *was* unquestionably *one* means by which Romans organized space in their minds. Rather, my concern in this paper is to argue that Whittaker makes 'hodological space', or the 'itinerary model', too comprehensive and too exclusive an explanation. One way or other, all else is subsumed to it. Thus, in particular, Ptolemy's work is set aside as esoteric and unnoticed by Romans (92), and the Peutinger Map

* My thanks to all those at the Workshop and subsequently (Tom Elliott in particular) who contributed insights which have improved this revision of the address delivered in Leiden. *BAtlas* throughout refers to my *Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World and Map-by-Map Directory* (Princeton, 2000):

¹ Rome 1984.

² C.R. Whittaker, 'Mental maps: seeing like a Roman,' in P. McKechnie, ed., *Thinking Like a Lawyer: Essays on Legal History and General History for John Crook on his Eightieth Birthday* (Leiden 2002), 81-112.

is regarded – in the traditional way – as no more than a set of route itineraries in diagrammatic, pictorial form (83, 93).

My view, however, is that both Ptolemy and the maker of the Peutinger Map tapped the same Hellenistic cartographic tradition to create the base elements for their maps, namely the shorelines, principal rivers, and principal mountain ranges.³ These elements by definition create shapes; they are not merely lines as itineraries are. It is a serious misconception to see the Peutinger Map as first and foremost a set of itinerary lines to which all other landscape elements have subsequently been added as no more than superfluous ‘decoration’. To create such a map in this way is a virtual impossibility, and any attempt would be most unlikely to result in the well-known cities of the empire appearing in correct relation to the shorelines and principal rivers. In fact, from a cartographic perspective, one of the Peutinger Map’s most impressive features is that the placement of principal cities does cohere with the physical landscape, distorted though it is. This landscape, which underpins the entire map, could not have been derived just from itinerary data.

A view of the Peutinger Map as a work in which outstanding features of the physical landscape are important, even fundamental, inevitably casts doubt upon the validity of the ‘itinerary model’ as a fully satisfying explanation for how Romans visualized their wider surroundings. Itineraries alone can hardly create much sense of spatial relativity. In order to conceptualize their world (however imperfectly), most Romans would surely need some set of images (however sketchy) for the purpose, beyond the type of information that one-dimensional lists could supply. The rough equations of landmasses with well-known shapes could conceivably have been of assistance: Italy like an oak-leaf, Britain like a shield, and so forth.⁴ Even so, individual shapes still need placement relative to one another. Whatever representations were made on globes could perhaps foster a grasp of relativity, but as Whittaker himself observes (83), any such ‘cosmic maps’ were likely to be too small to show much in the way of physical or topographic features.

No, if there was some set of images that were commonly related to one another to create a vision of the Roman world, in all likelihood we have to

³ For further outline of this argument, see my ‘Cartography and taste in Peutinger’s Roman map,’ in R.J.A. Talbert and K. Brodersen, eds., *Space in the Roman World: its Perception and Presentation* (Münster 2004), 113-141, at 124-125. Fuller discussion will appear in my forthcoming new edition of Peutinger’s map.

⁴ Whittaker 2002, op. cit. (n. 2), 84.

look for it elsewhere. The set proposed by this paper first caught my attention when reading the *Antonine Itinerary* – not the standard place-by-place, distance-by-distance pattern of the presentation, but headings such as:

Item de Pannoniis in Gallias per mediterranea loca, id est a Sirmi per Sopianas Treveros usque (231.8-10);
Iter quod ducit a Durrachio per Macedoniam et Trachiam Bizantium usque (317.3-4);
Inde per loca maritima in Epirum et Thessaliam et in Macedoniam, sic (324.1-2).

References of this type to provinces or principal regions (including the Alps) can only be meaningful to readers who have some vision of the placement of such entities relative to one another, however hazy it may be. Otherwise, a formulation like *de Pannoniis in Gallias* will merely be redundant. Conceivably, some or all the headings in the *Antonine Itinerary* collection as we have it are additions made by a post-Roman editor.⁵ Most, however, seem an integral part of the work,⁶ together with the summary total of the distance for the entire journey that follows in each instance. It is no doubt these headings that gave rise to the title bestowed (at whatever stage) on the land part of the work: *Itinerarium Provinciarum*.

The notion of provinces as ready-made, well established components for creating a vision of the Roman world hardly seems likely to predate Augustus' rule.⁷ Only from that date is the empire a single cohesive entity from the Iberian peninsula to Egypt, subdivided into provinces that are each defined units adjoining one another (or large islands).⁸ From then onwards,

⁵ For the manuscript tradition, note the observations by B. Salway, 'Sea and river travel in the Roman itinerary literature,' in Talbert and Brodersen 2004, op. cit. (n. 3), 43-96, at 68-69.

⁶ The repeated concern to clarify the province within which a landing-place was situated that characterizes the beginning of the *Itinerarium Maritimum* likewise seems an integral, and thus original, feature of that work. I am at a loss to account both for the writer's purpose in offering this information up to 493.1, and for the abrupt exclusion of it thereafter.

⁷ Compare, however, the earlier attempt by Eratosthenes to divide his map into "seals" (*sphragides*, regions marked by distinctive lines and landmarks), so that its representation of the *oikoumene* should be "readily drawn, copied and memorized"; see K. Geus, 'Measuring the earth and the *oikoumene*: zones, meridians, *sphragides* and some other geographical terms used by Eratosthenes of Cyrene', in Talbert and Brodersen 2004, op. cit. (n. 3), 11-26, at 20-26.

⁸ Profs. W. Eck, H. Meyer and H. von Hesberg have all kindly drawn my attention to the volume edited by the latter *Was ist eigentlich Provinz? Zur Beschreibung eines*

however, a comprehensive framework is established, and a web of main land routes develops. Strictly speaking, ‘holes’ persist within the framework for several decades, although even in Augustus’ time these areas are all Roman ‘client kingdoms’, which gradually are absorbed into provinces. Meantime, such later significant additions to the empire as occur – Britain, Dacia, and a few others – are easy to graft on to this framework conceptually. The same applies to principal areas or peoples that remain beyond the empire, such as Ireland, Germany, Nubia, Parthia.

For written descriptions, provinces are the units into which the empire can most readily be divided. It is to them that Strabo (17.3.25) gives pride of place in the brief outline that closes his *Geography*, with its enumeration from west to east of the twelve provinces assigned to ‘the people’ by Augustus. Cassius Dio offers a comparable list of all the provinces as divided by Augustus.⁹ The provinces are the basis for the detailed record of the empire in Pliny’s *Natural History* Books 3 to 6; likewise in the fourth century for the records of the *Expositio Totius Mundi et Gentium*,¹⁰ and of Festus, *Breviarium*.¹¹ The opening sentence of the Preface to Appian’s *Roman Histories* states bluntly that he considers it necessary to begin by setting out the boundaries (*horoi*) of the *ethne* ruled by the Romans. Here it is surely correct to translate the Greek noun by its original meaning “peoples”, rather than as the common Greek equivalent for the Latin *provincia*.¹² Even so, from the description that follows there can be little question that Appian is thinking in terms of Roman provinces, and he makes repeated reference to the *horoi* of each or of a group of them. Moreover he sums up his account (*praef.* 7) by stating how the Romans “establish a ring of great garrisons around the empire and guard all this land and sea just as one would an estate (*chorion*).” Thus in Appian’s vision the empire as a

Bewusstseins (Cologne 1995): its stimulating contributions range widely (over administration, art, language, religion, etc), but do not address the subject of the present paper. The same is true of the entry ‘Provincia. Diritto romano’ by G.I. Luzzatto in *Novissimo Digesto Italiano* 14 (1967) 377-382.

⁹ 53.12.4-7; as his remarks immediately following demonstrate (53.12.8-9), Dio does not consider the framework of his description to be undermined either by the subsequent division of some of the provinces listed or by Rome’s annexation of further territory.

¹⁰ See especially 21 to the end (ed. J. Rougé, *Sources chrétiennes*, Paris 1966).

¹¹ 4.1-14.5, ed. M.-P. Arnaud-Lindet (Budé, 1994).

¹² On the use of Greek *ethnos* and *eparcheia* for Latin *provincia*, note the comments of S. Mitchell, ‘Ethnicity, acculturation and empire in Roman and late Roman Asia Minor,’ in id. and G. Greatrex, eds., *Ethnicity and Culture in Late Antiquity* (London 2000) 117-150, at 125-126.

whole is a well demarcated entity, and so too is each of the provinces within it that form its individual components.¹³

The great increase in the number of provinces from the time of Diocletian's reorganization onwards hardly acts to cloud the type of vision reflected by Appian. The increase stemmed, after all, from a splitting of the long-established principal components, and for broad descriptive purposes those larger components remained clearly in focus. This is certainly the vision maintained by the composer of the list of maximum fees for cargoes on 49 and more voyages in the Tetrarchs' Price Edict. The list is headed "*ex quibus locis ad quas provincias quantum nav<a>li excedere minime sit licitum*", but it gives no hint of the new division of provinces. Rather, the list (with its chosen starting-points for trans-Mediterranean voyages primarily situated in the East) is entirely comprehensible to anyone who can distinguish East from West, and is familiar with the empire's main territorial components as well as with some of its most notable ports.¹⁴ To name only two late fourth century authors, Festus¹⁵ and Optatus of Milevis¹⁶ both demonstrate awareness of the increased number of provinces in their own day, but for clarity both still outline the empire to their readers in larger, traditional units.

¹³ Compare the allusions in Claudius' 'Lugdunum Table' speech (delivered to the senate during his censorship) which, while no more than figurative, still reflect comparable alertness to the *finis* or *termini* between provinces (ILS 212 col. 2 lines 21-22, 26-28, 30-31). A passage preserved from Ulpian, *De Officio Consulis* indicates that there were circumstances in which a magistrate would need to be aware of which provinces adjoined Italy: '*Continentes provincias*' *accipere debemus eas, quae Italiae iunctae sunt, ut puta Galliam: sed et provinciam Siciliam magis inter continentes accipere nos oportet, quae modico freto Italia dividitur* (Dig. 50.1.99; cf. 5.1.9). In the same vein, note the distinctions made by an unidentified emperor's edict (preserved on papyrus, third century ?) between Italy, *provinciae transalpinae* and *provinciae transmarinae* (FIRA² I.91 col. 1 line 10, col. 2, lines 4-5).

¹⁴ See chapter 35 (pp. 184-186) in M.H. Crawford and J.M. Reynolds, 'The Aezani copy of the Prices edict,' *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 34 (1979) 163-210.

¹⁵ Note 4.6, 5.3, 6.3, for example.

¹⁶ Note *Traité contre les donatistes* 2.1.3-4 (ed. M. Labrousse, Sources chrétiennes 412, Paris, 1995): *Ergo ut in particula Africae, in angulo parvae regionis apud vos esse possit [sc. ecclesia], apud nos in alia parte Africae non erit ? Si apud vos tantummodo esse vultis, in tribus Pannoniis, in Dacia, Mysia, Thracia, Achaia, Macedonia et in tota Graecia, ubi vos non estis, non erit ? Ut apud vos esse possit, in Ponto, Galatia, Cappadocia, Pamphilia, Phrygia, Cilicia et in tribus Syriis et in duabus Armeniis et in tota Aegypto et in Mesopotamia, ubi non estis, non erit ? Et per tot innumerabiles insulas et ceteras provincias quae numerari vix possunt, ubi vos non estis, non erit ?*

By the first century AD, if not earlier in many instances, I imagine that the point at which travelers by a main land route crossed from one province to another would normally be marked. Recent scholarship has chosen to focus so much on the varied character and significance of the empire's external frontiers (with all the associated difficulties of defining these satisfactorily) that the abundance of internal frontiers has attracted little attention by comparison. But there can be no question that these internal ones existed, and that they were lines dividing the territories of neighboring communities, and by extension of provinces. With his Greek perspective, Strabo described the erection of conspicuous markers (*horoi*) as "ancient custom" (*ethos palaion*). Thus, for example, Alexander was credited with having built altars at the furthest point of his expedition, and Theseus with having erected a pillar on the border between Megarian and Athenian territory, inscribed on one side "This is not the Peloponnese, but Ionia", and the reverse on the other.¹⁷ Just such pillars were erected by Romans, among them those inscribed on one side *F(ines) terr(ae) Thrac(iae)* and on the other *F(ines) terr(ae) Odess(itanorum)* that marked the boundary between the province of Thrace and the city of Odessus in Moesia Inferior.¹⁸ Moreover, even under Roman rule boundary disputes between communities remained common occurrences, and frequently long-lasting. Indeed, one possible means for a community to attract the attention of the imperial authorities to itself was to engage in a fierce boundary dispute with a neighbor.

The itinerary with the fullest record of where a traveler crosses from one province to another is that of the Bordeaux pilgrim dated to 333.¹⁹ In a recent article on this work, J. Elsner draws attention to the pilgrim author's "acute awareness of provincial boundaries", and comments: "This care both to notice and to delineate boundaries is more than a taxonomic fetish. It shows implicit awareness of administrative, ethnic, even cultural differences across the terrain which the linear thrust of the text so relentlessly traverses".²⁰ Quite so; and, as Elsner himself proceeds to stress, this awareness reflects a sense of administrative and spatial geography which is more than

¹⁷ Strabo 3.5.5, with 9.1.6 and Plutarch, *Theseus* 25, for the pillar. For Alexander, Diodorus 17.95.1; Curtius 9.3.19; Plutarch, *Alexander* 62; Arrian 5.29.1; Peutinger Map 11A3.

¹⁸ B. Gerov, 'Die Grenzen der römischen Provinz Thracia bis zur Gründung des Aurelianuschen Dakien,' *ANRW* II.7.1 (1979) 212-240, at 226 (with discussion of date) and Tafel II.3.

¹⁹ P. Geyer and O. Cuntz, eds., *Itinerarium Burdigalense*, in *Itineraria et Alia Geographica*, Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina 175 (Turnholt 1965), 1-26.

²⁰ J. Elsner, 'The *Itinerarium Burdigalense*: politics and salvation in the geography of Constantine's empire', *Journal of Roman Studies* 90 (2000), 181-195, at 187-188.

merely linear. At the same time the references to crossing from one province to the next helpfully subdivide for the reader what might otherwise seem a long, disorienting succession of quite unfamiliar stopping-place names.

Whether this means of subdividing the stages of a lengthy journey was an exceptional choice on the Bordeaux pilgrim's part seems open to question. To be sure, among our few surviving materials of comparably detailed type, his record of provincial border-points is an unusually full one, but the same may be said of his entire itinerary. Egeria, who probably traveled during the 380s, is likewise alert to provincial border-points.²¹ Altogether, however, the Bordeaux pilgrim stands out for his considerateness to the traveler who seeks to reduce risks and surprises to a minimum. In this important respect, the Antonine Itinerary and above all the Peutinger Map both prove cavalier and inconsiderate. They are often content with intervals of 30 or 40 miles, or even more, between stopping-places, in other words well beyond the distance that the typical traveler will be able to cover in day.²² The Bordeaux pilgrim, by contrast, offers reassurance by consistently taking pains to mention a *mansio* or *mutatio* every few miles.

Under normal circumstances most free individuals,²³ it would seem, could move about within the Roman empire, as well as in and out of it, just as they wished.²⁴ If they chose to cross a provincial border, that was a routine matter, seldom of concern to a traveler or to the authorities, therefore.²⁵

²¹ See E.D. Hunt, 'Holy Land itineraries: mapping the Bible in Late Roman Palestine,' in Talbert and Brodersen 2004, op. cit. (n. 3), 97-110, at 99-102 and 106. Note also how Egeria summarizes her return journey through Asia Minor to Constantinople by reference to provinces (23.7, *Et inde alia die subiens montem Taurum et faciens iter iam notum per singulas provincias, quas eundo transiveram, id est Cappadociam, Galatiam et Bithiniam, perveni Calcedona*); and how she remarks in the course of describing the Christian year at Jerusalem, *Et quoniam in ea provincia pars populi et grece et siriste novit...* (47.3).

²² See Talbert 2004, op. cit. (n. 3), 127-128, with B. Salway, 'Travel, *itineraria* and *tabellaria*', in C. Adams and R. Laurence, *Travel and Geography in the Roman Empire* (London and New York 2001), 22-66, at 32.

²³ But not necessarily senators and exiles, for instance, nor everyone within and from Egypt; and certainly not slaves. For restrictions in Egypt, see C. Adams, "'There and back again': getting around in Roman Egypt', in id. and Laurence 2001, op. cit. (n. 22), 138-166, at 157-158. For governors, note Marcianus' observation, *ne qui provinciam regit fines eius excedat nisi voti solvendi causa, dum tamen abnoctare ei non liceat* (Dig. 1.18.15).

²⁴ Payment of *portoria* might impose a check (hence stations named *Ad Publicanos*); see further below.

²⁵ Pliny's argument (*Epistulae* 10.77) that Iuliopolis (*BAtlas* 86B3) needs the assistance of a centurion in part because of its location *in capite Bithyniae* hardly seems compelling. In principle, a border location ought not to have placed it under greater strain from passing

Consequently, we do not hear of efforts by the latter to mark or control provincial boundaries for policing or security purposes, and it is understandable that the land part of the Antonine Itinerary does not go to the trouble of indicating where the traveler will cross from one province to the next.²⁶ Yet in at least one instance – whatever the reasons – Rome did evidently feel the need to mark an entire border along its length, as documented by the work of M. Antius Rufinus late in Hadrian's reign, who *inter Moesos et Thraces fines posuit*.²⁷

Even if it remained exceptional to mark an entire provincial border in this way, on main land routes a variety of means is attested that served to alert travelers to the point at which they crossed from one province to another. Although Ammianus Marcellinus (21.15.2) does not mention how he knew Mobsucrenae²⁸ to be the last *statio* in Cilicia for travelers proceeding north from Tarsus, it is striking that this is how he identifies the place where Constantius II died. Equally, he identifies Dadastana,²⁹ where Jovian died, as *qui locus Bithyniam distinguit et Galatas*.³⁰ The itineraries preserve plenty of names in the style of “*Fines*”, “*Ad Finem*”, “*Ad Fines*”: often these will signify only the boundary between communities or great estates, but in some cases it is unquestionably one between provinces.³¹ That point is not made explicit when *Ad Fines* makes its surprising appearance in

travelers than any other town along a main route: this indeed seems to be Trajan's reaction in response (10.78).

²⁶ The papyrus record of Theophanes' return journey from Antinoopolis in Egypt to Antioch in Syria, probably during the early 320s, does not record such crossings either: see P. Ryl. IV.627-628, 638. Why the first part (only) of the *Itinerarium Maritimum* should trouble to do so is puzzling, as observed above (n. 6).

²⁷ See ILBulg. 184, 357, 358, 386, 390 and 429, with B. Gerov, op. cit. (n. 18); for Antius, *PIR*² A784 with <http://www.bbaw.de/forschung/pir/addenda/A/0784.html>

²⁸ *BAtlas* 66F2 Ma(m)psoukrenai.

²⁹ *BAtlas* 86B3.

³⁰ 25.10.12, phrased notably in this order (rather than *Galatas et Bithyniam*) even though Jovian, too, had been traveling westwards. Compare Ammianus' identification of the Cilician Gates (Pylae) as *qui locus Cappadocas discernit et Cilicas* (22.9.13).

³¹ For example, the *mutatio Fines* (*BAtlas* 86B3) at the border of Bithynia and Galatia in *Itinerarium Burdigalense* 574.3-4 (strictly speaking, no doubt more accurate than Ammianus' Dadastana above). *Ad Fines* on the route westwards from Augusta Taurinorum marked the border between Italy and Cottius' kingdom: see *BAtlas* 39A3 with J. France, *Quadragesima Galliarum: l'organisation douanière des provinces alpestres, gauloises et germaniques de l'empire romain (1er siècle avant J.-C. – IIIe siècle après J.-C.)* (Rome 2001), 326.

the Antonine Itinerary's summary of the main stages of the long journey Sirmium-Lauriacum-Augusta Vindelicum-Ad Fines-Treveri, but the distance totals elucidate the reason for its inclusion: hereafter to Treveri, *leugas, non m.p.* (232.3). This Ad Fines³² is therefore the boundary-point between Raetia and Germania Superior.

Herodian's mention³³ of the *methorioi bomoi* at the border of Pannonia and Italy – where the emperor Maximinus sacrificed in 238 as he marched south to overcome rivals – seems to be unique; but from its sheer casualness we might infer that other borders, too, were marked by altars.³⁴ It is natural to infer that the altars erected near the Rhine between Rigomagus and Antunacum (*BAtlas* 11H2), with a dedication *finibus et genio loci et IOM* (CIL 13.2, 7732), marked the boundary between Upper and Lower Germany.

On roads where a provincial boundary was stated by milestones to be the endpoint from which distances were measured, a traveler proceeding in the appropriate direction as far as that boundary would readily recognize when it was reached. It is clear enough that a provincial boundary was not a common choice for endpoint when milestones were erected. But it is also quite evident that there was no consistent code of practice for making these choices,³⁵ and we do find several instances where a provincial boundary was settled upon. Most notable perhaps are the milestones marking Trajan's work after his establishment of the new province of Arabia in 106: *redacta in formam provinciae Arabia viam novam a finibus Syriae usque ad mare Rubrum aperuit et stravit....* (ILS 5834). It is likewise a Trajanic milestone that records repairs to the Via Egnatia *a Dyrrac(hio) usq(ue) Acontisma per provinciam Macedoniam*.³⁶ Two Hadrianic milestones have been found southwest of Amaseia (*BAtlas* 87A4) – at that date in the province of Cappadocia

³² *BAtlas* 19A2. On Gallic leagues and their use, see now M. Rathmann, *Untersuchungen zu den Reichsstrassen in den westlichen Provinzen des Imperium Romanum*, Beihefte der Bonner Jahrbücher 55 (Mainz 2003), 115-120.

³³ 7.12.8; cf. 8.1.1.

³⁴ A feature of this particular border which by contrast seems exceptional was the *praetentura Italiae et Alpium* maintained under M. Aurelius. What form the *praetentura* took (military zone ?) is uncertain: see ILS 8977 with *BAtlas* 20B3 and J. Sasel, 'Über Umfang und Dauer der Militärzone Praetentura Italiae et Alpium zur Zeit Mark Aurels,' *Museum Helveticum* 31 (1974) 225-233.

³⁵ See most recently Rathmann 2003, op. cit. (n. 32), 112-115.

³⁶ AE 1936, 51; for Acontisma/Hercontroma (*BAtlas* 51D3) as border-station, see *Itinerarium Burdigalense* 603.8. Another milestone (AE 1936, 52) from the Via Egnatia has identical wording, except that it defines the extent of Trajan's repair work less precisely as *a Dyrrac(hio) usq(ue) Neapoli per provinciam Macedoniam*.

– on a route *ab Amaseia ad fines Galatorum*.³⁷ At the end of the second century Septimius Severus and his sons used milestones to commemorate roadwork in their new province of Osrhoene: *viam ab Euphrate usque ad fines regni Sept(imi) Ab(g)ari a novo munierunt per L(ucium) Aelium Ianuarium proc(uratorem) Aug(usti) prov(inciae) Osrhoenam (!) ...*³⁸ Maximinus and his son recorded the scope of their repair work to a road in Africa specifically as: *viam a Karthagine usque ad fines Numidiae provinciae longa incuria corruptam adque dilapsam restituerunt*.³⁹

At some border-points, we may be sure, monuments were erected which left travelers in no doubt that they were crossing from one province to another. That was plainly the intention of an arch, the *Ianus Augustus*, erected in Augustus' time at the Baetis river (perhaps in connection with a bridge) to mark Baetica's eastern boundary. Milestones measured distances from the arch, and its function was evidently remembered long after the province's eastern boundary had in fact been shifted elsewhere.⁴⁰ On a desert route about 70 km north-west of Palmyra a single great column was erected – probably around AD 100 – to show quite unmistakably where Palmyrene territory began.⁴¹ At the traditional frontier point of Arae Philaenorum, we know that around the end of the third century four freestanding columns were erected, surmounted by statues of the four Tetrarchs, to mark the border between the new provinces of Tripolitana and Libya Superior and also the new dioceses of Africa and Oriens.⁴²

It remains unclear whether the statues of the emperor in a four-horse chariot, which Claudius permitted the Alexandrians to set up to him in 41, were ever erected. The request, at least, was to place these at three 'entrances' to Egypt (*eisbolai tes choras*), at Taposiris, near the Pharos in

³⁷ D.H. French, *Roman Roads and Milestones of Asia Minor*, 2.1, BAR International Series 392 (Oxford 1988), nos. 060, 339.

³⁸ AE 1984, 920; for the installation of boundary markers *inter provinciam Osrhoenam et regnum Abgari fines*, see AE 1984, 919.

³⁹ ILS 488; Rathmann 2003, op. cit. (n. 32), 207.

⁴⁰ *RE Suppl.* 6, s.v. *Ianus Augustus*; T. Pekáry, *Untersuchungen zu den römischen Reichsstrassen* (Bonn 1968), 107-108; E.W. Haley, *Baetica Felix: People and Prosperity in Southern Spain from Caesar to Septimius Severus* (Texas 2003), 34-35; CIL 2, 4697 = CIL² 2/5.1280.

⁴¹ *BAtlas* 68E4 *Khirbet el-Bilaas*, with publications cited s.v. in *Map-by-Map Directory*, 1045. The border dispute, which apparently continued nonetheless, must have been with either Apamea or Emesa, or conceivably even both.

⁴² *BAtlas* 37D2 *Arae Philaenorum* and *Fines Africae et Cyrenensium*, with publications cited in *Map-by-Map Directory* ss. vv., 553-554.

Alexandria, and at Pelusium.⁴³ An associated puzzle is whether the statues were intended to carry any statement to the effect that they marked an 'entrance' to Egypt. There must be the same uncertainty about the bridge across the Dravus river at Poetovio. When the Bordeaux Pilgrim crossed it,⁴⁴ he knew that he was leaving Noricum and entering Pannonia Inferior: what, if anything, on the bridge itself drew attention to the existence of the provincial boundary?

In certain instances the presence of a *statio* for the payment of *portoria* might alert travelers to the fact they were crossing a border. There was evidently such a *statio*, for example, on the border between Italy and Cottius' kingdom (later the province of Alpes Cottiae).⁴⁵ It must be recognized, however, that the 'zones' into which the empire was divided for payment of *portoria* were large – often spanning several provinces – and few; consequently, at most provincial borders such dues were not levied.⁴⁶ Even where they were payable, the surviving evidence is too random and meager to claim that a *statio* was situated, say, on every main route or at every landing-place. A *statio* might indeed be situated at such locations but also, it is clear, in a major center such as Lugdunum Convenarum;⁴⁷ equally, it seems that payment of dues might be made at Ostia.⁴⁸ It is quite understandable that the so-called customs law of AD 62 from Ephesus retains the clause⁴⁹ dating back to 75 BC, which requires anyone entering the Asian customs zone at a location without a *statio* to proceed promptly to the nearest one in order to pay the expected dues.

For Ptolemy's mapmaking, Rome's provinces (and, further east, Parthia's satrapies) are entities of fundamental importance to his procedure and purpose. As he explains in 1.19:⁵⁰

⁴³ P. Lond. 1912 col. 3 lines 44–48, with *BAtlas* 74B3, B2, H2.

⁴⁴ *Itinerarium Burdigalense* 561.5, with *BAtlas* 20C3.

⁴⁵ See n. 31 above. Compare the incident where Apollonius of Tyana in Philostratus' *Life* (1.20) is questioned by a customs collector as he leaves Zeugma (*BAtlas* 67F2) for Mesopotamia – crossing an external border of the empire, therefore.

⁴⁶ See *NPauly*, s.v. Zoll IV.

⁴⁷ *BAtlas* 25F2; France 2001, op. cit. (n. 31), 65–68, 316.

⁴⁸ France 2001, op. cit. (n. 31), 135–138, 322–323.

⁴⁹ SEG 1989, 1180 lines 40–42.

⁵⁰ Here, and further below, I draw upon the invaluable work of J.L. Berggren and A. Jones, *Ptolemy's Geography: an Annotated Translation of the Theoretical Chapters* (Princeton 2000).

“We have written down for all the provinces (*eparchiai*) the details of their boundaries (*perigraphai*) – that is, their positions in longitude and latitude – , the relative situations of the more important peoples in them, and the accurate locations of the more noteworthy cities, rivers, bays, mountains, and other things that ought to be in a map (*pinax*) of the *oikoumene*. ... In this way we will be able to establish the position of each place, and through accuracy in particulars we will be able to establish the positions of the provinces themselves with respect to each other and to the whole *oikoumene*.”

He continues in the same vein in 2.1.7-9:

“We will keep to the same principles also in each continent with respect to its parts as we do for the whole world and the entire *oikoumene* with respect to the continents, that is, we will again begin by recording the more northern and western countries and the adjacent seas and islands and the more noteworthy things of each kind. We will distinguish these parts of the continents by the boundaries of the satrapies or provinces, making the guide, as we originally promised, only as detailed as will be useful for recognizing and including places on the map, while leaving out the great mass of reports about the characteristics of the peoples (unless perhaps some bit of current knowledge calls for a brief and worthwhile note).

Moreover this method of exposition will also make it possible, for anyone who wishes, to draw the parts of the *oikoumene* on planar surfaces, individually, or in groups of provinces or satrapies, in whatever way they might fit the proportions of the maps. The localities contained by each chart will then be inscribed at the appropriate scale and relative placement.”

Not only does Ptolemy then proceed to present his data, as promised, by province or satrapy or region, but in his last book (Eight) he also provides captions for 26 regional maps. A great advantage of making regional maps, he explains, is that the scales can be varied according to the extent of territory and density of data to be marked; each such map does not need to be at the same scale. His 26 comprise 10 of Europe, 4 of “Libya” (Africa), and 12 of Asia. Predictably enough, provincial boundaries are one of the main determinants for settling what the scope of each of these regional maps shall be, and some of the captions state this explicitly – those for Spain and

Gaul, for example. The results are rendered most effectively in the expert reconstructions by Carl Müller, published posthumously.⁵¹

It is seemingly an interest in the dimensions of provinces or regions which is the distinctive purpose behind the compilation of the two Late Antique Latin lists that are preserved with the titles *Dimensuratio Provinciarum* and *Divisio Orbis Terrarum*.⁵² Apart from a broad definition of the location of each province or region by reference to major physical features (typically mountains, rivers, seas), the only further information offered is figures for the length and breadth of each in Roman miles.

It is true that neither the Peutinger Map nor the Madaba mosaic map marks any boundary lines, but their absence need not mean that the makers in either case were ignorant or unconcerned about boundaries. Both makers are to be seen as 'professionals', who were deliberately selective in determining what they wanted to show and how their map might most effectively convey their aims. Since the Peutinger mapmaker gives special prominence to land routes, he might reasonably prefer not to introduce a large amount of further linework of a different type, especially when his extreme format already so distorts the landscape. In all likelihood, too, the inclusion of borders would act directly counter to his vivid demonstration that Rome's sway stretches unbroken across the entire *oikoumene* from west to east, allowing ease of communication everywhere. This said, the Peutinger mapmaker does not hesitate to name provinces, regions and peoples very conspicuously; his placement of them confirms that he has a sound sense of their spatial relationships.⁵³

The Madaba mapmaker chooses to mark neither borders nor any routes linking places,⁵⁴ but the wording of his didactic legends testifies time and again to his awareness of boundaries, both traditional ones that hark back to the biblical world which is so central to his purpose, and ones in his own contemporary world. Thus attention is drawn to the *horoi* of Egypt and Palestine,⁵⁵ and to the eastern boundary (*horion*) of Judaea (§ 32). To Beer-sheba, "today Berossaba", is not only appended the information that it marks

⁵¹ *Claudii Ptolemaei Geographia: Tabulae XXXVI* (Paris 1901).

⁵² A. Riese, *Geographi Latini Minores* (Heilbronn 1878), 9-19.

⁵³ On the Peutinger mapmaker, see further Talbert 2004, op. cit. (n. 3), 118-141.

⁵⁴ Whittaker's understanding (2002, op. cit. [n. 2], 87) that routes are shown seems a misperception.

⁵⁵ § 129 in the presentation edited by M. Piccirillo and E. Alliata, *The Madaba Map Centenary, 1897-1997: Travelling through the Byzantine Umayyad Period* (Jerusalem 1999).

the southern boundary of Judaea, but the chance is also taken to repeat from *Second Samuel*: “The boundary of Judaea to the south reaches down to it from Dan near Paneas, which marks the northern boundary” (§104). Asemona is described as a “city by the desert bordering (*diorizousa*) Egypt and the crossing to the sea” (§106), while the legend for Gerara reads “once a royal city of the Philistines and boundary (*horion*) of the Canaanites to the south, where is the Saltos Geraritikos” (§107).

The Madaba map could fairly be cited in support of Whittaker’s traditional claim that Constantine’s conversion “radically transformed the world view of the Romans.”⁵⁶ One manifestation of this shift was Christian pilgrimage: it may well have boosted the number of long-distance travelers, and they certainly went in a changed spirit to novel destinations. At the same time, however, we should not omit to appreciate how one fundamental way in which non-Christians had been visualizing the world remained unaffected by the triumph of Christianity; rather, it was reinforced by it. I refer to the notion of Roman provinces as an organizational framework.

As the Christian church expanded, it evidently founded its organization as a matter of course on cities and provinces.⁵⁷ The result of this slow, shadowy growth at last becomes clearly visible under Constantine, when the Canons of the Councils of Nicaea in 325, and of Antioch two years later, formalize previous haphazard practice. It is now established that a new bishop should if possible be consecrated by all the existing bishops of cities in the province, once his appointment has been confirmed by the ‘metropolitan’, the bishop of the chief city of the province. Moreover, in order to address various concerns, each metropolitan should summon and preside over a synod of all his province’s bishops twice yearly.⁵⁸ The substantial authority placed in the hands of a metropolitan was justified at Antioch: “The bishop in the metropolis undertakes responsibility for the whole province, because it is in the metropolis that all those with business to settle assemble from everywhere.”⁵⁹

Evidently it was not at all the intention of ecclesiastical authority to position itself in an alternative location of its own choice, away from the

⁵⁶ 2002, op. cit. (n. 2), 98.

⁵⁷ My sketch of this large theme derives from *CAH*, 2nd ed., vol. XIII, 240-250 (by E.D. Hunt).

⁵⁸ *Concilium Nicaenum*, Canon 5, in E.J. Jonkers, *Acta et Symbola Conciliorum Quae Saeculo Quarto Habita Sunt* (Leiden 1954), 41; *ibid*, *Concilium Antiochenum*, Canon 20, p. 54.

⁵⁹ *Concilium Antiochenum* Canon 9, in Jonkers, 50.

center of secular authority. In the East, the church came to match the pattern of secular authority even more closely by 381, when a council at Constantinople confirmed that when a dispute could not be resolved within a province of one of the five secular dioceses (Egypt, Oriens, Asiana, Pontica, Thrace), then the matter might be referred to other provinces of that diocese.⁶⁰ Meantime, predictably, alterations by the secular power to the boundaries of its provinces for whatever reason were liable to have serious repercussions for the authority of individual bishops – fuel for any number of disputes and rivalries. Some church leaders eventually concluded that there was no value in always seeking to keep in step with the secular authorities. As bishop Innocent of Rome declared early in the fifth century: “It is not right that the church of God should be changed to suit the flexibility of worldly requirements, nor should it be subject to the promotions and divisions which the emperor may presume to make for his own reasons.”⁶¹

Broadly speaking, the fact is that in territorial terms the organization of the Christian church within the Roman empire replicated that of the existing secular administration. The church, too, was organized on a provincial basis: to conceive its sway spatially would be to think of it encompassing a set of provinces.⁶² In this important respect, therefore, the otherwise radically different outlooks of Christian and non-Christian coincided and reinforced one another. Later, in the West, Rome's provinces evidently remained the standard framework by which educated people organized their view of the world far into the Middle Ages.⁶³

In short, then, I suggest we would be right to perceive a sense of the empire's provinces as spatial entities, and of the geographical relationship between them, developing from the early first century AD. This sense – *alongside* the linear sense gained from itineraries, together with represen-

⁶⁰ *Concilium Constantinopolitanum* Canons 2 and 6, in Jonkers, 107, 110.

⁶¹ *Epistulae* 24.2 (PL 20. 548-549), quoted by Hunt 1998, op. cit. (n. 57), 244.

⁶² Compare the passage from Optatus of Milevis quoted in n. 16 above.

⁶³ Note the recent generalization in a discussion of a work where, exceptionally, this framework would seem to have been absent: “Alors que les provinces romaines furent, durant presque tout le Moyen Âge, le cadre le plus fréquent dans lequel la géographie, même d'inspiration contemporaine et moderne, se plut à classer et à situer les êtres et les phénomènes, alors même que les mappemondes de grande taille montrent parfois des lignes qui semblent être des restes des limites tracées sur les modèles antiques, l'*Expositio* ne s'intéresse que de façon sporadique aux provinces...” (P. Gautier Dalché, ‘Décrire le monde et situer les lieux au XIIe siècle: l'*Expositio Mappe Mundi* et la généalogie de la mappemonde de Hereford’, *Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome, Moyen Âge* 113 [2001] 343-409 at 370).

tations in a variety of art forms⁶⁴ – becomes a further recognized means by which Romans envision their wider surroundings. By chance, in time it turns out to be one notably reinforced by Christianity. It did not need to be at all a sophisticated perspective, and it was well able to accommodate boundary shifts, additions to the empire, and the subdivision of large provinces into smaller units.⁶⁵

Once this is said, however, one limitation to such a sense of the empire's provinces demands to be recognized: typically it was, so to speak, an outsider's perspective. It reflected the viewpoint of the Roman authorities, or of individuals seeking to grasp their surroundings well beyond home. It was seldom a vision that altered those individuals' self-identity. Rather, this remained rooted in their *origo*, the community of their birth and family. In some cases, it is true, a region demarcated by Rome as a province already had an ethnic identity that predated the annexation. Galatia, Lycia and Judaea seem indisputable instances,⁶⁶ and it was no doubt precisely in order to counter Jewish identity that Hadrian renamed the latter province Syria Palaestina after the suppression of the Bar Cochba revolt in the mid 130s.⁶⁷ At the opposite end of the range – to summarize a persuasive argument by S. Mitchell⁶⁸ – Pompey's annexation of the area newly termed 'Pontus' by Rome bestowed upon its inhabitants a shared sense of identity as Pontici which they had not had previously, and which (over time) they adopted with pride. This set of circumstances in Pontus seems to find no parallel elsewhere.

More typically, the creation of a Roman province either divided existing ethnic identities, or brought into one administrative framework various disparate communities which had never identified with one another; or it did both these things, all in the interests of Rome. As a result, the old ethnic identities might well disappear, but the preferred substitute was identity by

⁶⁴ Forms very familiar to us through the magnificent sculpture from the mid-first century Sebasteion at Aphrodisias, and through Hadrian's coin series, to cite only two examples.

⁶⁵ Note the reliance upon it by commemorative inscriptions which summarize extensive travel experience, for example AE 1975, 815; 1981, 777. Likewise striking is Ammianus' image of Rome's *lavacra in modum provinciarum exstructa* (16.10.14).

⁶⁶ For Galatia and Lycia, see Mitchell 2002, op. cit. (n. 12), 122-124.

⁶⁷ See E.M. Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule from Pompey to Diocletian: a Study in Political Relations* (Leiden 1976), 463.

⁶⁸ S. Mitchell, 'In search of the Pontic community in antiquity,' in A.K. Bowman et al., eds., *Representations of Empire: Rome and the Mediterranean World* (Proceedings of the British Academy 114, 2002), 35-64, esp. 48-50.

city, not by province nor even a subdivision of one such as a *conventus*.⁶⁹ Rome on purpose offered most of its subjects little cause to identify closely with their province. The only body representing one or more whole provinces which Rome encouraged was the *concilium* or *koinon*, and its limited agenda was the preserve of no more than a very select group of top-class delegates.⁷⁰ Most provincials' lives remained centered around their own community, and their normal tendency was to regard neighboring communities as rivals. Only when seeking to grasp their world well beyond home were they likely to think in terms of their own province, the provinces contiguous to their own, and the others that comprised the whole empire.

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⁶⁹ For Asia Minor, this shift is demonstrated by Mitchell 2000, op. cit. (n. 12), 126-127.

⁷⁰ On these bodies, see J. Deininger, *Die Provinziallandtage der römischen Kaiserzeit*, Vestigia 6 (Munich 1964).