













This indicates ongoing competition among routes in the context of a set of rival inter-linking hegemonies. Indeed, "During Kushan rule conflicts between Rome and Parthia, especially under the reign of Trajan (AD 98-117), made the route through the Indus and seaports of the west coast essential for Roman trade to Central and East Asia" (Warmington 1928:94-5). Well known are the Parthian efforts to control and derive monopoly profits from their intermediary position along the Silk Road(s) between China and Rome. Even though this trade was not in daily necessities, it "nevertheless sustained many caravan cities and seaports from the Mediterranean to East Asia" (Liu 1988: 178). During these same 1st and 2nd centuries AD, the expansion of international trade, diplomatic missions, and political relations also tied Funan and other parts of Indochina and Southeast Asia more closely to China on the one side and especially to India on the other (Coedes 1968).

Liu also emphasizes how shifts in trade routes affected the locus of accumulation. "The shift of trade routes caused the rise and fall of these cities as effectively as warfare or other political crises" (Liu 1988:178). From the 1st century AD, direct Roman trade with India and Africa struck a heavy blow at the urban centres of Arabia, especially those of South Arabia and Yemen, which were dependent on the incense trade (Bowen and Albright 1958).

Thus, this period of inter-linking hegemonies was characterized by constant rivalries among the competing hegemonies and pretenders in Rome, Armenia, Parthia, Kushan and farther east.

## **B Phase Crisis 200 — 500 AD**

From the 3rd through the 5th centuries AD, the previous period of expansion and consolidating hegemonies was followed by a major world systemic crisis on a Pan-Eurasian scale. During this world systemic crisis the Han and Roman, as well as the intermediary Kushan and Parthian hegemonic structures simultaneously disintegrated. Frederick Teggart (1939) examined international political economic linkages through Central Asia for the Roman period.

When war occurred on the routes in the Tarim Basin [in what is now China's western Xinjiang region] disturbances broke out in Parthia and either in Armenia or on the border of Syria. Evidently then, war in the Tarim occasioned an interruption of traffic on the silk route, and this interruption aroused hostilities at points along the route as far west as the Euphrates (Teggart 1939: 240).

Teggart correlated and compared the timing of wars and "barbarian" invasions in Rome and China and concluded that.

Thus the effects of wars which arose out of interruptions of the great "silk route" through Persia are plainly visible in the internal history of Rome...

Seemingly there could be no better illustration of interdependence of nations than the consideration that a decision of the Chinese government should have been responsible for a financial panic in the capital of the Roman empire (Teggart 1939:x).

However, even Teggart seems to have considered wars and other political disturbances more as the cause of interruptions of trade, rather than the other way around. Yet, it may also be argued with equal or greater reason that many uprisings, wars, alliances and other political developments were themselves stimulated if not caused by changing local, regional, or even system-wide economic conditions and interests.

Thus first *the rise and then again the decline* of Han China (and their Central Asian Hsiun-nu neighbours), Kushan India, Parthian Persia, and Western Imperial Rome occurred at very much the same time. The political economic decline of these empires was also manifested in the notable simultaneous decline of Central Asian and maritime trade among them. The IVth and Vth centuries AD seem to have been a period of major Eurasian (system) wide economic and political decline. This apparently interrelated series of declines is another important instance of what we see as a major world system-wide crisis. Therefore, we wish briefly to examine some of its regional manifestations in greater detail.

The hegemonic disintegration of the Han preceded that of Rome, becoming acute by the late II<sup>nd</sup> century AD. The III<sup>rd</sup> and IV<sup>th</sup> century in China was a period of economic retrogression, with a significant decline in internal and external trade and demonetization of the economy. Many cities disappeared altogether and the monetary economy practically collapsed.

The political centre of gravity shifted from the former capital of Chang'an to Loyang, and the economic centre of gravity from the Kuan-chung region to the Ho-nan region, and thereafter to the Yangtse valley. Nevertheless, cities linked to the Eurasian trade continued to exist and prosper, such as the centres in the western Ho-ssi area (the modern Kansu corridor) (Liu 1988:42-43). Wealthy merchant houses existed in this period of general urban decline and the Northern Wei dynasty seems to have been particularly favourable toward merchant activity up until the early VI<sup>th</sup> century.

The Kushan empire in North India and Central Asia disintegrated, and India's political centre of gravity shifted back to the middle Ganges plain during the Gupta period (c. AD 300-500). The Gupta empire in North India rose in the IV<sup>th</sup> century, and was destroyed by the White Huns in the VI<sup>th</sup> century. During the Gupta period landed property gained value and land grants by the king increased in significance, while the urban economy in general showed clear signs of decline (Liu 1988:21, Thakur 1981). Nonetheless, during the Gupta period some trade between India and China and between India and the west continued. The Ujjain region in the Gupta period prospered from international trade and Barygaza was still an active port (Liu 1988:32-33). However, this trade was diverted.

It seems reasonable to conclude that even when north India suffered a general urban decline in the Gupta period, certain cities along the trade route from Kashmire to the north Indian plain prospered ... political changes in the post-Kushan period disturbed the Eurasian commercial network from the Roman empire to China but did not destroy it. A major shift took place in the north-west, where the route through Kashmire connecting India to Central Asia gained importance. As the seaports in western India continued to flourish the new Kashmire route brought both western India and the Ganges plain closer to China (Liu 1988:35).

Liu maintains that from the third to the fourth centuries a series of political changes in Asia and Europe disturbed the trade network connecting China and the West through the western-north-western Indian routes (Liu 1988: 21,35,178). These upheavals appeared across all of Eurasia: China was divided for three centuries after the disintegration of the Han empire (AD 220), except for a brief unification of north China under the Chin (AD 280-316). The Kushan Empire (which controlled Kashmir, Bactria, Kabul and north-western India) collapsed under the weight of White Hun deprivations in the IVth century. As a result, many urban centres in Central Asia declined or became depopulated during the IVth and Vth centuries. Major cities like Bactra and Taxila and many lesser ones experienced significant decline, "became desolated" and ended up "all in ruins" (Liu 1988: 32,27). Bactria "might have temporarily lost its nodal function because of the pressure of Sassanians, and subsequent damage done by the Hephthalites or White Huns" (Liu 1988:27). The Roman Empire disintegrated and led to the establishment of the eastern Byzantine empire (AD 395).

It is noteworthy that the Gupta empire rose to power and privilege at the expense of regional predecessors *during a period of generalized economic crisis*, which had weakened its predecessors in the Indian region. At about the same time, the same was true of the Sassanians, who replaced the Parthians in Persia. For in the IIIrd century also, the Sassanian empire took control of the former domains of the Parthians and the Kushan in Persia and Central Asia. However, Sassanian power also was in ascendancy, as Roman and Han power declined. The Gupta perhaps less, and the Sassanians perhaps more, successfully managed to retain some as sort of super-accumulating monopoly rent from their positions along the way while other economic and political powers already waned or went under in the generalized world-system economic and political crisis.

However, neither Gupta nor Sassanian power lasted very long. Perhaps that was not only because they suffered from repeated batterings by the White Huns in the IVth — VIth century. Perhaps Gupta and Sassanian power was also a sort of flash in the pan, precisely because they were only able to take advantage of their rivals' economic and political decline in a period of economic downswing; which would also limit and ultimately destroy their own capabilities. (An apparently similar major such instance may have been the rise

of the Assyrians at the beginning of the first millennium BC. Another would be the rapid rise and decline of the Mongols in the XIIIth and XIVth century world economic downturn to which we will get in due time below. Probably, there were other similar instances in between, as well as before and after this period, which merit greater attention.)

Returning to the IIIrd and IVth centuries, they were a period of significant economic contraction in the Roman empire. This included contraction in the market and currency devaluation (even demonetization), and reversal of urbanization, especially in the Western provinces of the empire. Childe argues that by 150 AD the "frontiers of the civilised world" had been reached and that the external market could expand no more. Thus, "Unable to expand the whole system began to contract...by 250 AD all semblance of prosperity vanished" (Childe 1942: 273,275) The hegemonic disintegration forces of the IIIrd century were severe, but the empire was formally kept together. Huge quantities of bullion flowed to the east to make up for Rome's chronic structural deficit on its trade in luxury goods with Asia, thus increasing the pressure on the Roman treasury to debase the coinage. The aristocratic ruling class was discouraged by its own ideology from investing in industry, and preferred for reasons of status considerations to invest in land and commerce. The competition of slave labour with free depressed wages in the latter and thus depressed the expansion of the market.

Geoffrey de Ste. Croix explains the long decline of the Roman economy as the result of the Roman political system and its class structure:

facilitated a most intense and ultimately destructive economic exploitation of the great mass of the people, whether slave or free, and it made radical reform impossible. The result was that the propertied class, the men of real wealth, who had deliberately created this system for their own benefit, drained the life-blood from their world and thus destroyed Graeco-Roman civilization over a large part of the empire (de Ste. Croix 1981:502).

Economic collapse, particularly in the form of fiscal crisis, came first in Britain, Gaul, Spain and North Africa in the Vth century, much of Italy, the Balkans and in Egypt, Syria and Mesopotamia in the VIth and VIIth centuries. However, the eastern or Byzantine part of the Roman empire never suffered such a severe collapse as its western European part did.

Western Europe suffered perhaps more than any other region in the world system from the economic retrogression that this world systemic crisis set in train. Moreover, many centuries passed before Western Europe recovered, and then only partially. A unique amalgamation of late Roman and Germanic institutions took form in the Western European provinces of the Roman empire. The institutions of feudalism were in place by the time of the death of Charlemagne in 814, and Western Europe declined into the "dark ages." However, we agree with the evidence and arguments of scholars like Dopsch (1918/1937) and Lombard (1975) to the effect that even in Europe, trade and

markets never declined as much as the more dominant tradition of Max Weber and Henri Pirenne had taught us. Nonetheless, Western Europe became an economic backwater in the world system, with concomitantly backward and primitive political institutions. Thus, Western Europe would be largely bypassed by the next world economic upturn, which began in the VIth century. When Western Europe finally did get some recovery, it was as part of a process of reintegration into the world economy whose centre was then located in the East.

### **The Medieval and Early Modern Periods 500 to 1500 AD**

#### **A Phase 500 — 750/800 AD**

A new period of nearly world system wide economic expansion began in the VIth century. The Sassanid empire regained strength and acquired the key Syrian entrepot of Antioch. Sassanid campaigns of expansion in the early VIIth century brought its power into Anatolia, the Levant and Egypt. Byzantium, or the Roman empire in the east, also expanded during the VIth century, when Belisarius undertook successful reconquests in the west. Both empires seriously over-extended and then exhausted each other in a final debilitating war in the VIIth century. In India, Sri Harsha rebuilt a north Indian hegemony from the city of Kanauj in the VIIth century. In China, reunification occurred under the Sui dynasty in the later part of the VIth century.

In summary, most of Eurasia, excepting Western Europe, but also parts of Africa were again interlinked and synchronized, in particular through Central Asia. This synchronization thus linked up across the whole from West to East and vice-versa. Chinese unification brought acceleration of the economic expansion phase and Chinese extension of hegemonic power into Central Asia under the Tang dynasty, which succeeded the Sui. Simultaneously, Tang China also increased its relations with Indochinese Champa. The new Arab/Muslim state of Arabia and Palestine exploited the exhaustion of the Persian Sassanid empire in the VIIth century and quickly conquered the former Persian domains. Egypt and Alexandria was also taken by the Arabs in 643. Central Asia was added to the hegemony in mid-century. The unification of Mesopotamia, Egypt and Central Asia under one hegemonic structure gave the Ummayyad and its successor the Abbassid dynasty the position of super-accumulator in the world system. The Abbassid and Tang empires clashed head on in Central Asia in the mid - VIIIth century. The battle of Talas confirmed Abbassid super-hegemony and accelerated Tang decline.

Thus, the second half of the VIth and the VIIth centuries witnessed commercial and political expansion in various regions. From the second half of the VIth century AD, much of Central Asia was conquered and reorganized by the Turks. They expanded westward to dominate the entire area from

Manchuria to the Aral Sea. The role of the Turks in trans-Central Asian trade and its importance to them has been noted by several authors, among them Christopher Beckwith and Luc Kwanten, who write:

When the Turks annexed most of the Central Asian city states — great centers for the east-west and north-south caravan trade -- in the second half of the sixth century, they also removed the political obstacles to relatively high-volume transcontinental trade.... The Turks' great interest in commerce did not mean that they dominated it; they were its patrons. Most of the international trade during the Early Middle Ages was in the hands of others.... Trade was almost totally monopolized by two or three great trading peoples: the Jews, the Norsemen, and the Sogdians. The profits from this trade in silk, spices, perfumes, war material, horses, and other products stimulated not only imperialism, but also local industry and local trade (Beckwith 1987: 178-180).

Trade played an important role in the Turkish empire. Through their victory over the Juan-juan, the Turks had gained control over Central Asian trade routes, and hence over the lucrative silk trade between China and Byzantium. The Turks had no intention of either abandoning the trade or sharing it with other intermediaries.... Inevitably, this led to war between the Turks and the Sassanian empire in Persia who had been the intermediaries (Kwanten 1979:39).

However, the Turkish empire(s) did not last long. In the VIIth and VIIIth centuries they gave way to the Tang Dynasty expanding westward from China, the Tibetan empire expanding northwards, the Muslims overrunning Iraq and Persia and expanding eastward, the Byzantines still holding their own, and the Frankish empire rising in Western Europe. The Islamic caliphate and the "world" economy around it, so masterfully analyzed among others by Hodgson (1974) and Lombard (1975), probably became the driving force, with its driver's seat in Baghdad. It was founded in 762 and by the year 800 already had a population of two million.

In his *The Venture of Islam*, Marshall Hodgson (1974) examined the Abbassid High Caliphate from 692 to 945 and especially its period of "flowering" and commercial expansion until 813. To introduce his examination of the Muslim Caliphate however, Hodgson observed.

This period was one of great prosperity. It is not clear how far this was the case throughout the Afro-Eurasian Oikoumene, but at least in China at that time what may be called a 'commercial revolution' was taking place. Under the strong government of the T'ang dynasty.... commerce became much more extensive and more highly organized.... The Chinese economic activity was directly reflected in the trade in the Southern Seas (the Indian Ocean and seas eastward), where Chinese ports became an important terminus for Muslim vessels.... It can be surmised that the commercial life of the lands of Muslim rule was given a positive impetus by the great activity in China, especially considering the important connections with China both via the Southern Seas and overland through central Eurasia. In any case, commerce also enjoyed the

great benefit of an extended peace which the caliphate was able to ensure within its domains (Hodgson 1974: I, 234-5).

However, it may be possible further to "clarify" Hodgson's doubts about the extent of prosperity throughout the AfroEurasian Ecumene during this period. From the mid-seventh century came the rise and expansions of Taika and Nara Japan, Silla Korea, and Tang China in the East. China expanded southward and increased trade relations with Champa in Indochina. The Silendras established themselves at key trading entrepots at the tips of Malaya, Sumatra and Java, astride the direct and indirect trade routes between China, the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf via India. At the same time, the Chinese and the Turks also expanded westward, the Tibetans northward, the Muslims eastward, the Scandinavians southward, and the Byzantines consolidated and held their own as best they could. Meanwhile, Indian, Persian, and Axum power in East Africa declined and/or was replaced by these expansions and rivalries. Trade through North Africa began to flourish, both along its East-West axis and southward across the Sahara to the sources of gold in West Africa. West Europeans languished for another century until Charles the Great was crowned in 800. Yet even then its trade with the Eastern Mediterranean languished. Egypt prospered under the Tulunins in the second half of the IXth century. Is it unlikely that these far-flung developments occurred simultaneously only by historical accident. It seems much more likely that they were "a sequence of repercussions in a chain of quite unexpected consequences in all four corners of this immense zone" going through Central Asia, to recall the terminology of Grousset (1970:32).

## **B Phase 750/800 — 1000/1050 AD**

This chain of repercussions also includes what appears to have been a set of "regional" but very widespread political crises in the mid-VIIIth century. Beckwith notes:

The Eighth century saw the development of serious crises, and major economic, political and cultural changes, in every important Eurasian state. Typologically speaking, these changes followed more or less the same pattern, due no doubt to their common origin in international, specifically economic change, of a fundamental nature....It is a curious fact that, unlike the preceding and following centuries, the middle of the eighth century - specifically the period 742 to 755 — saw fundamental changes, usually signalled by successful political revolts, in every Eurasian empire. Most famous among them are the Carolignian, Abbasid, Uighur Turki, and anti Tang rebellions each of which is rightly considered to have been a major watershed in the respective national histories. Significantly, all seem to have been intimately connected with Central Eurasia (Beckwith 1987: 192).

A major event in the inter-hegemonial history of this period and a turning

point in the history of Central Asia and of the world was the reversal of Tang Chinese expansion in Asia at the battle at the Talas river in 751. The Arab Muslims and the Turks combined forces and defeated the Tang General Kao Sienchi (lent to the Chinese by the then flowering Silla kingdom in Korea). He had previously led the Chinese expansion into Central Asia during two victorious campaigns across the Pamirs and into Kushan. The same year, the new Kitai confederacy defeated the Chinese in their northeast; and a Chinese expedition to the southwest into Yunnan failed. Four years later in 755, began the major eight — year — long internal rebellion against Tang rule led by An Lu-shan. The rebellion was put down with Uighur help from Central Asia. Nonetheless, Tang power and the regime of the Tang Dynasty never really recovered from this external defeat at Talas River in 751 and the internal Lu-shan rebellion from 755 to 763. The weakened Tang Dynasty hung on until 907, after another major rebellion from 874 and 883. China lost all its western territories again; and the Turks and much of Central Asia — eventually right up to the Great Wall of China — became Muslim.

A century later in the course of the four years 838 to 842, as Beckwith (1977) notes, in the West the trade route between the Volga and the Baltic was closed in 838 (not to reopen for another generation), and the Frankish Empire broke up in 840. In the East, the Uighur Empire fell to the Kirghiz in 840, the Tibetan Empire was split up in 842, and the same year began the open persecution of Buddhism and then of other foreign religions in China. At the same time (after the Arab-Byzantine war of 837-42 and Turkish expansion), the last Caliph in Baghdad began the persecution of heretics under Islamic rule. Again, it seems unlikely that these political and cultural events are entirely responses to “internal” pressures that are unrelated to each other. More likely, they were also related to each other and to economic problems or even another widespread economic crisis, which was common to them all and/or transmitted through Central Asia. Of course, we will never find out, unless we look for such interrelations!

Beckwith observes that

the great crises of the eighth century were followed by absolutely astonishing economic and cultural growth across Eurasia, from Japan to England. The enormous expansion in trade brought about an explosion in the growth of cities and market towns everywhere. Besides the huge metropolises of Baghdad, Constantinople, and Ch'ang an, the old Central Asian centers of Samarkand and Khwarazam, etc., there were fastgrowing cities where once there were none: Rasa, Karabalgasum, Rostov, Quentovic, and many others. The internationalism of the age burst into full bloom, as commerce and culture, hand-in-hand, flourished as never before (Beckwith 1977: 92-94).

However, the IXth and Xth centuries may still have been a period of economic slowdown. They also witnessed important setbacks to some regional powers and (therefore?) greater opportunities for others to establish themselves. Tang China languished and then declined, especially in its relations with

Central Asia. The Tang decline opened spaces for the temporary growth of some regional powers, such as the Uighurs and then the Kirgiz. At the other end of Central Eurasia in the Xth century, Egypt experienced economic difficulties and declining real wages (Ashtor 1976: 153-54). Elsewhere, "the boom in the Near Eastern economies came suddenly to an end and the unity of the Moslem empire was shattered" (Ashtor 1976: 115). This author lays part of the blame on a 14-year revolt by slaves, many of them Negroes, in southern Mesopotamia beginning 869. The growth and power of Baghdad failed to continue and its caliphate began its "disintegration", as Ashtor entitles his chapter on the same. Trade with India and China was diminished (Ashtor 1976: 147). Lombard (1971: 126) dates the "onset of the decline of Baghdad from the end of the tenth century; it continued in the eleventh century under the Seljuk Turks and was completed when the town was captured by [the Mongol] Hulagu in 1258". "It is evident that the decline of Baghdad [as well as Basra] and of the centrality of the Gulf route [to the orient] is explainable only in part by purely local and exclusively economic factors. It can be fully understood only within the context of changes in the geopolitical system of the larger region, and indeed, of the world system" (Abu Lughod 1989: 192). We now turn to these in the next period of expansion.

#### **A Phase 1000/1050 — 1250/1300 AD**

The XIth and XIIth centuries and perhaps more precisely the years 1050 to 1250 were another period of widespread economic growth.

For instance, Wallerstein notes

The feudal system in western Europe seems quite clearly to have operated by a pattern of cycles of expansion and contraction of two lengths: circa 50 years and circa 200-300 years.... The patterns of the expansions and contractions are clearly laid out and widely accepted among those writing about the late Middle Ages and early modern times in Europe.... It is the long swing that was crucial. Thus 1050-1250 was a time of the expansion of Europe (the Crusades, the colonizations).... The "crisis" or great contractions of 1250-1450 included the Black Plague (Wallerstein 1989: 33,34).

Of course, Wallerstein and others limit their reference to "feudal" Europe. The legitimacy or not of this limitation has been debated by Wallerstein (1990) and Frank (1990a). There is ample evidence to support the present authors' belief that both the cycle and this period of expansion within it were world-system wide. Indeed, that was a major reason for the commercial ventures of the Crusades he mentions; as well as for the prosperity, but also the rivalry of Venice, Genoa, and the other south European city states, who increasingly turned eastward to connect up with the growing profitable trans-Asian trade. However, especially in the hands of the Genovese and the

Catalans, trade also prospered in the Western Mediterranean and increasingly extended out into the Atlantic in the XIth, XIIth and XIIIth centuries. After Gibraltar, it turned both northward towards northwest Europe and southward to the newly discovered Canary Islands and on around West Africa. Simultaneously, Christians pushed their "reconquista" of the Muslim domains in Spain ever southward. Both would eventually culminate in 1492 with the simultaneous expulsion of the "Moors" and Jews from Spain and the "discovery" of America by a Genovese navigator and merchant shipper, who was already trained in Atlantic voyages to the Canaries. He raised private finance capital in Barcelona and elsewhere but worked in the service of the Spanish Queen, for whom he sought a better and cheaper way to the riches of the Orient. Several other regions around the world also prospered during this period. Their simultaneous and interrelated growth and decline have recently been analyzed by Janet Abu-Lughod (1989) under the title *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250-1350*.

Foremost among the regions of expansion was China. During this period the Sung consolidated their empire in China, amid spectacular population growth and economic expansion. The Chinese population grew to 150 million, the city of Hangchow to 6 million and Kaifeng to 4 million (while by comparison Venice, Europe's biggest and most trade-dependent city reached 160,000). Technological revolution, increased agricultural productivity, large scale industrial production, construction of vast networks of overland transportation and navigable inland waterway, widespread commercialization, high finance, sumptuary consumption, and expansive domestic and foreign trade all characterized the Sung period. Nonetheless, the Sung never regained the hegemonial political position in Central Asia, which the Tang had lost. On the contrary, throughout the Sung period and until the Mongol conquest, China was «among equals» (to use the revealing title by Morris Rossabi) among its neighbours. Indeed, China was on the defensive against repeated threats and incursions by its also economically and politically expanding neighbours in Central Asia, the Kara Khitai empire in particular, and in Manchuria.

Moreover,

this external threat was not without effect on the social and economic history of the Sung age. It determined the whole Chinese policy from the end of the tenth century to the end of the thirteenth century.... Cut off from access to central Asia, blocked in its expansion towards the north and north-west by the great empires which had arisen on its frontiers, the Chinese world turned resolutely to the sea. Its center of gravity shifted towards the trading and maritime regions of the southeast, which were extended inland by the enormous network of the Yangtse and its tributaries. The sea routes starting from the Abbasid empire and connecting the Persian Gulf with India, South-East Asia, and the Chinese coast no doubt played a part in this call of the sea.... China was the greatest maritime power in the world (Gernet 1982: 300, 328, 326).

An important question for us is whether and to what extent Sung China can or should be considered to have been in a position of super-accumulation without super-hegemony. Remarks by the eminent world historian (and author of among others *The Pursuit of Power* since 1000 AD) William Mc Neill (1983) to Gunder Frank led us to believe that such a situation may have been the case. On the other hand, there is evidence that Sung China suffered from a negative balance both of trade and payments, which would be inconsistent with, indeed contrary to, super-accumulation within the world economy. Other countries, like hegemonic Britain, also had a negative balance of trade over the long term, at least from 1815 to 1914. However during that time, Britain also enjoyed a positive balance of payments on current account. Sung China, however, seems to have been a net exporter of bullion. Indeed, this apparently long-term structural adversity or handicap of China may have been another one of the reasons why the Ming dynasty finally sought to "de-link" China from the world economy.

Before that, however, the Indian coasts and especially Southeast Asia and China also experienced a centuries-long economic boom since the eleventh century, which was manifested in fast growing intra and inter regional trade. Indians, Malays, "Indonesians," and Chinese were especially active in inter-regional trade to the east of India. On the other side, Indians, Persians and of course Arabs were active on the West side of the Indian sub-continent. As Janet AbuLughod (1989) stressed, in the West Asian/East Mediterranean region Baghdad, Basra and the Persian Gulf route declined. One of the reasons was that it was in the interest of the now rising Genovese to favour the more northerly route through the Black Sea and/or for the Venetians to favour the more southerly one through the Red Sea. The development of the latter also benefited rival Cairo, which consequently rose to prominence and 500,000 population under the Mamluks in the XIIIth and early XIVth centuries, and would even repulse the Mongols. "Egypt was a vanguard for the world system" (Abu Lughod 1989: 227).

Both before and after the domination of the Mamluks, Egypt had a direct link to India and the East Indies and pushed its communication system as far as Mohammedan Spain and the western [sic] Maghreb. Thus, Egypt was the forerunner of Portugal... At this time in Cairo ... a group of wealthy people had a horizon which included nearly a third of the whole world (Chaunu 1979:58 quoted in Abu Lughod 1989:227).

Venice and Cairo established a "marriage of convenience" in the attempt to monopolize the Asian-Mediterranean trade between them in competition with their rivals. These included Genoa and its attempt to monopolize the Black Sea route. First competition from Venice and only finally the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453 propelled the Genovese to expand westward through the Mediterranean and out into the Atlantic instead.

In Central Asia in the XIth century, the Yamini dynasty of Ghazni (near

Kabul) also consolidated a new hegemony, ruling from Hamadan and Isfahan in Persia to the headwater of the Ganges in Northwest India. Turkish peoples from Central Asia expanded westward and reached Anatolia. They were then Islamicized and later created the Muslim Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey. Turks also began a systematic conquest of India in the XIIth century. This process culminated in the consolidation of the vast hegemonic state of the Sultanate of Delhi, which by 1235 ruled from Sind to Bengal. Such was the strength of this consolidation in India, with a centralized administration and standing army, that the Sultanate successfully repelled the Mongol invasion led by Genghis Khan.

### **B Phase 1250/1300 — 1450 AD**

The expansion and consolidation of the Mongol empire began at the end of this long period of expansion and at the onset of a new period of contraction. The Mongols used their military superiority to exploit the situation on a larger and more successful scale than any of their Inner Asian predecessors. They struck first at the Chin in north China. Genghis undertook the conquest of Central Asia against the Muslim empire of Khwarizm. The seizure of Central Asia gave the Mongol imperium the opportunity to assume a position of super-accumulator in the world system. However, the ease of Mongol conquest in Persia and Mesopotamia was facilitated by the weakness of the Muslim states in West Asia. The economically still stronger state in Egypt was able to resist and repel the Mongol advance. However, elsewhere the economic decline had already begun before the Mongols arrived. Then, the economic downturn that began from the middle of the XIIIth century was made even more severe by the widespread destruction that accompanied Mongol conquests, both in the East and in the West. For instance, the progress in urbanization and trade in Russia of the earlier expansion period was virtually eliminated in the Mongol conquest. Most of the cities (Novgorod excepted) were destroyed, and economic retrogression deepened thereafter. Therefore, despite Mongol consolidation of a vast Eurasian hegemony, an economic downturn of severe proportions affected most of the continent during Mongol tenure. In this respect the hegemony of the Mongols differs from the more usual case of hegemonic expansion during a period of economic upswing. Therefore, it is reminiscent of Gupta hegemony in the economically depressed IVth and Vth centuries and requires special attention.

The collapse of the Mongol imperium in the mid-XIVth century might be taken as evidence of a world system crisis. If it was indeed the culmination of a "down" phase, we would have to question Abu Lughod's characterization of 1250-1350 as a generalized "up" phase. Yet Abu-Lughod (1989) herself cites ample evidence that transport and other infrastructural investment and expansion in Venice, Genoa, and in the eastern Mediterranean had declined and

halted at least two decades before the arrival of the plague in 1348. In a later essay, she says that prosperity peaked in the opening decades of the XIVth century, after which signs of decline were already evident (Abu Lughod 1990: 5,7).

If the construction and collapse of the Mongol imperium did coincide with a down, as in Wallerstein's periodization, then this may raise a new possible explanation for the failure of the Mongol imperium. Traditional explanation of the failure of the Mongols as a ruling class to consolidate their imperium revolves around the theme of their nomadic social organization and its presumed inherent limitations for such a task ["you can conquer, but you cannot rule from horseback"]. It is true that the unity of the empire was destroyed early on, in 1260, due to dynastic succession struggles. But if the world economy was already on the downturn by 1250, this itself could help explain why the Mongols could so easily set up their conquest states (except in India) on the back of their already depressed rivals. However, the same world economic depression could then also help account for the Mongols' inability to maintain their power, and why they and everybody else went (temporarily) "to hell in a hand basket."

While the downturn lasted, the Mongols continued their predatory depredations. Timur [Tamerlane], once again using Central Asian cities (Samarkand) as a base, set out to reconquer and reunify the empire from 1370 to 1405. The Sultanate of Delhi had entered into a phase of decline and disintegration and therefore could not resist Timur's onslaught as it had that of Genghis over a century before. But Timur's campaigns were again more destructive than constructive. They did have the historical effect, however, of largely clearing the decks of the Mongol conquest states themselves, such as the Golden Horde in Russia and the Il-Khans in Persia.

*Some Implications for the Significance of 1492, the Rise of Europe and the Emergence of the Modern World System*

In her pathbreaking book Abu Lughod (1989) argues that there was also a "XIIIth century world system", but that it was a *different* one from that which "began" in the XVIth century. For her, between the XIVth century decline of the world system based in the East and the XVth-XVIth century rise of the world system centred in the West, there occurred a "declining efficacy" and "disorganization" of "the ways in which they were formerly connected." We view these changes rather as a "reorganization" and consequently as a shift of the hegemonial centre of gravity in the system from East to West — but not a complete failure of the system as a whole, as she suggests. On the contrary, this temporary disorganization and renewed reorganization can and we believe should be read as the continuation and evolution of the system as a whole.

Therefore, we even more decidedly agree that "of crucial importance is the fact that the fall of the east precedes the rise of the west," as Janet Abu-Lughod (1989:338) insists.

That is, the world systemic economic and hegemonic crisis of the mid-XIVth century gave Europe "the chance" to ascend in the hierarchy of the world system, in the context of a new economic expansion and hegemonic reorganization during and following the crisis.

The context...undeniably altered.... The world-system ... arena did move outward to the Atlantic and the Atlantic rim nations of Portugal and Spain, before shifting to northwestern Europe. The fact is that the axis of Central Asia-Anatolia-northern India-and the Levant-Egypt — an axis of central importance in earlier times which was scarcely destroyed by the seventeenth century — never again occupied the center stage of the world system" (Abu-Lughod 1990:12).

A similar argument was already made by Marshall Hodgson in the 1950s and by Jacques Gernet in the 1970s:

The economic weakness of the pivotal Middle East by the end of the Middle Ages, for instance, seems to have been a decisive factor in the economic and political disposition of the world into which Europe was about to expand (Hodgson 1954:718).

What we have acquired the habit of regarding — according to the history of the world that is in fact no more than the history of the West — as the beginning of modern times was only the repercussion of the upsurge of the urban, mercantile civilizations whose realm extended, before the Mongol invasion, from the Mediterranean to the Sea of China. The West gathered up part of this legacy and received from it the leaven which was to make possible its own development. The transmission was favored by the crusades of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and the expansion of the Mongol empire in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.... There is nothing surprising about this Western backwardness: the Italian cities ... were at the terminus of the great commercial routes of Asia.... The upsurge of the West, which was only to emerge from its relative isolation thanks to its maritime expansion, occurred at a time when the two great civilizations of Asia [China and Islam] were threatened (Gernet 1982:347 [original ed. 1972]).

In general, the Mongol conquests *and* the economic crisis also laid the basis for wide-ranging economic reorientation and political reorganization in the following period of economic expansion during the "long XVIth century" from 1450 to 1600+. In direct or indirect response to the changes wrought by the previous economic crisis and the Mongol invasions, the Ming Dynasty rose in China, Akbar's empire rose in India, the Safavid Empire rose in Persia, and Europeans began a worldwide imperial and now also trans-Atlantic venture in the West. It is the latter to which the then eurocentric historiography has devoted most absolute and relative attention. Perhaps too much. For as we

observed in our introduction, until at least the XIXth century, the preponderance even of hegemonial transformation still did not lie exclusively in the West.

## PROVISIONAL THEORETICAL CONCLUSIONS AND QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

It is possible to identify many economic and political structures and processes over the millennia, which we now (or still) associate with the modern-world-capitalist-system. In particular, the core/periphery, hegemony/rivalry, and A/B phase cycle trinity seem to be constant or at least recurring structures and processes of the world system. However, so have multiple political hegemonies (or cores) in regional configurations, which are in political economic competition with each other in a wider world economy and system.

There seem to have been alternating periods of faster /greater and slower / lower or even negative accumulation. Moreover, these periods apparently were not only localized or regional and attributable only to "internal" factors. The periods of alternating expansion and contraction were also interregional and apparently world system wide. For over two thousand years between 500 BC and 1500 AD, these cycles appear to have been four or five centuries long, with up and down phases of approximately two centuries each. This does not exclude possible shorter cycles as well within these longer cycles.

Periods of apparently more rapid economic growth are associated with the rise of several regional hegemonies, and among them sometimes an apparent transregional or even world-system-wide super-accumulating super-hegemon. Some important instances appear to have been Achaemenid Persia in the Vth-IVth centuries BC, Tang China in the VIIth century AD, and perhaps Song China in the XIth-XIIth century. These all developed during "up" phases of economic expansion. We note that all of these aspired to some control over parts of Central Asia. However, only the Achaemenids and the Tang achieved some control over Central Asia; but it was not very widespread or long lasting. The Sung achieved none at all.

The IIIrd century Sassanids, IVth century Gupta, the VIIIth-IXth century Abbasid, and the XIIIth-XIVth century Mongol hegemonies did extend their hegemony into Central Asia. However, the Sassanids and Guptas and then the Mongols achieved their hegemony during major down phases in the IIIrd-IVth and XIIIth centuries, respectively. During these periods their rivals had already been weakened. Therefore, these developments of hegemonial power and perhaps others (e.g. the US) developed their hegemony on top of rivals who had been weakened by economic crisis and war. To a significant extent, the latter was also true of the spread of Abbasid power after Byzantium and Persia were weakened by their own conflicts. However, Abbasid political expansion began in a period of generalized economic expansion. To what extent the

levelling off of Abbasid power in the IXth century coincided with or was followed by a period of economic stagnation in the IXth and Xth centuries is not so clear.

The period of economic downturn and crisis during the time in which these powers achieved their hegemony may also help to account for the relative brevity and instability of their hegemonial power. Thus it appears that maybe both the ascendance to power and its almost immediate subsequent loss again of the same by at least the Sassanids and Guptas and of the Mongols may be traced to the underlying economic downturn. The underlying economic downturn first helped eliminate their rivals and then undercut the economic possibilities of the maintenance of prosperity and power of these short-lived hegemons themselves. Each was a flash in the pan. Thus, even control over the Central Asian economic and trade nexuses proved to be insufficient for the maintenance of hegemony in the periods in which there apparently was a down period in the world economic system as a whole.

We do not wish to suggest that there are only cycles and no trends, even if we have paid little attention to the latter in this paper. On the contrary, we believe that these cycles (and probably other technological and socio-political ones) are a constitutive and necessary element of (evolutionary) trends of "development." Similarly, we reiterate that not only synchronic simultaneity but also dis-synchronic "fits" are essential parts in this historical process.

Of course, many — indeed most — of the problems related to our endeavour remain. Much more empirical and analytical work is necessary to identify, establish, and analyze:

- 1) the extent and expansion of the world system in history;
- 2) the economic cycle, the range of whose effects would also help establish the extent of the system, or vice versa;
- 3) the regions and/or polities which at various times fit into the cycle synchronically, dis-synchronically, or do not;
- 4) the relationships between political hegemony and economic coreness;
- 5) the trade relations and economic competition, political alliances and war among rival hegemons with each other and their respective peripheries;
- 6) the degree to which there may have been super-hegemony and/or super-accumulation at one time or another;
- 7) the transformatory roles of B phase crises, and why some are more so than others; and of course
- 8) the temporal precedence and causative predominance of economic cycles of growth or political cycles of hegemony.
- 9) what generates the cycle(s) and makes the system tick?

We will be able to derive some partial and very tentative answers from our historical review of political economic cycles of accumulation and hegemony above. Of course, much more historical work remains to be done. It could and should help us meet the criteria inscribed on the masthead of this journal where

it says it "is devoted ... to the study of the impact of the economic history of other continents, or countries, upon the history of Europe, or vice versa ... to the analysis of the problems and themes which shed light on the economic history of Europe or of its various countries; to the theory of economic history; to European economic historiography. Contributions are invited." Yet, even before undertaking any such contributions, it is high time to replace the predominant eurocentric view of the rise of Europe by a historically more adequate humanocentric world perspective — in this 500th commemorative year of 1492.

## EPILOGUE

As this article goes to press, and within a year of the first public presentation of its thesis at the 31st Annual Convention of the International Studies Association [ISA] March 20-23, 1991 in Vancouver, the authors are pleased to report the following in partial preliminary corroboration of our thesis and our dating of long cycles, as presented above for the period since 100 BC and in Gills and Frank (1992) also for the much longer period since 1700 BC:

1. David Wilkinson of the Political Science Department at UCLA presented a paper at the 32nd Annual ISA Convention April 1-4, 1992 in Atlanta entitled "Decline Phases in Civilizations, Regions and Oikumens" specifically to "offer an independent empirical check for the Gills and Frank proposal." Wilkinson tested the datings of our A and especially B phases by calculating increases and declines in city populations [above certain thresholds] previously tabulated by Tertius Chandler in his *Four Thousand Years of Urban Growth: An Historical Census* [Lewiston/Queenston: St. David's University Press 1987]. Wilkinson sifted through an enormous number of Chandler's "snapshots" of city sizes taken for convenience or other reasons at times that often did not coincide with our suggested inflection/turning points of A and B phases, and Wilkinson concludes:

The decline data were consistent with treating phases B1, B2, B6, B7 and B8 [numbered consecutively beginning with the first 1700-1500/1400 B phase in our list] as Old Oikumene decline phases, were ambiguous with respect to B4 and B5, and did not reflect B3. On the other hand there were misfitting decline data for A2, A7 and A8, and potential misfits in ambiguous data affecting A6 and A5; A4 could not be tested and A3 was not challenged. These results are favorable to the proposition that the Old Oikumene showed A-Bphases at least as early as the mid-IIInd millenium BC; but considerable refinement of phase time-boundaries, and data collection for crucial but unmeasured years, is called for (p.30).

Of course, Chandler's city size data and Wilkinson's use of them are not beyond challenge or dispute, which could further support, modify, or detract from our dating of phases and the geographical regions or civilizational units to which they apply. Moreover, the fits are better for West Asia, from which we

took most of our cues, than for East Asia, which was less or later integrated into the "system" — but for which the data may also be less reliable. Significantly however, there was no fit at all between changes in city sizes also tabulated by Chandler for the Western Hemisphere and the phases we identified in the Eastern Hemisphere. This transatlantic misfit offers a significant corroboration of our Eurasian wide system and cycles. It suggests that, as far as it goes in Eurasia, the fit is not spurious; since it disappears entirely if we try to extend it beyond the "system" across the Atlantic before 1492.

2. At the same ISA meetings, George Modelski of the Political Science Department at the University of Washington in Seattle informed us that his graduate student at the same university, Andrew Bosworth, again independently also from Wilkinson, tested and largely confirmed our long-cycle phases. His subsequently received paper "World Cities and World Systems: A Test of A.G. Frank and B. Gills' 'A' and 'B' Cycles" was presented at the Canadian Association of Geographers Conference, Vancouver, May 21, 1992. Bosworth concludes that "1) there is significant support in Chandler's data for the existence of long-waves of economic expansion and contraction, each averaging about 250 years in length. Such regularity further reinforces Frank and Gills' contention that these phases condition one another, generating a cyclic alter[n]ation. 2) Chandler's data lend strong support to Frank and Gills' timing of the following phases: B1, A2; B2, A3; B4, A5; A6; B8. 3) Chandler's data are inconclusive or lend mild support to ... A and B phases 3000 — 2000 BC; B4: B5. 4) Chandler's data are inconsistent with the location or timing of B3; A4; B6; A7; B7; A8" for which Bosworth suggest some minor and some greater adjustments.

3. Klavs Randsborg published *The First Millennium A.D. in Europe and the Mediterranean. An Archaeological Essay* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1991]. Randsborg reports and summarizes archaeological evidence on datings of climactic cycles and ups and downs in rural settlement, towns and other centers, production and exchange, and society, culture and mentality. Many of his datings and periods for the western end and sometimes more of our "world system" also bear on and often confirm — or offer evidence to permit refinements of — our A and B phases. Moreover, Randsborg notes that "today we realize that at any rate the Western Empire [of Rome] showed signs of weakening long before the rise of Islam and that the Carolignian realm was hardly totally isolated" [p167]. After noting that there have been some 500 theories devoted to the collapse of the Roman empire, Randsborg writes that "the well known 'third-century crisis'...was accompanied and probably caused by a dramatic shift in the economic centre of gravity ... [to] the Levant [which] did not suffer overall decline" or had been the real economic centre all along [pp. 169-70]. Randsorg notes that, by contrast to the 500 theories about its collapse, "considerably fewer" have been devoted to the expansion of the Roman Empire; and he concludes that "to fully understand the emergence of the Roman Empire would require study of the centre-periphery relations in Europe and the Mediterranean area that emerged with the Mediterranean civilizations" [p. 185].

Our study, of which this article on long cycles and hegemonic shifts is but a part, offers a world systemic approach to the study of this as well as other historical and contemporary problems. We are gratified to learn of the two elaborate attempts by Wilkinson and Bosworth to put our "theory" to empirical tests with independently gathered data within a year of its public presentation and even before its publication here, which we therefore hope may promote more of "all of the above." To that end, we also welcome other recent studies which indicate the existence of such long cycles. In particular for the earlier period, these are:

— "From Luxuries to Commodities: The Nature of Mediterranean Age Trading Systems" by the archaeologists Andrew and Susan Sherratt of the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford University, who kindly sent us their paper presented in a conference at Oxford in December 1989 and published in its proceedings *Bronze Age Trade in the Mediterranean* edited by N.H. Gale [Jonsered: Paul Astroms Forlag 1991]. Under the subtitle "A Historical Picture" [pp.367-375] the Sherratts, of course entirely independently from us and without our prior knowledge, distinguish the same Bronze Age periods.

— Kristian Kristiansens "The Emergence of the European World System in the Bronze Age. Divergence, convergence and social evolution during the first and second millennium B.C. in Europe" to appear in *Europe in the First Millennium B.C.* edited by Jorgen Jensen and Kristian Kristiansen [Department of Archaeology, University of Sheffield, forthcoming], which he kindly gave to Frank. Also forthcoming is Kristiansen's book *Europe Before History. The European World System in the Second and First Millennium B.C.*

— Philip Kohl has kindly made available to Frank the still unpublished translation of E.N. Chernykh's «Ancient Metallurgy in the USSR: The Early Metal Age» (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming), in which the Russian scholar says that "peoples of the EMA [Early Metal Age] cultural zone seem to have shared the same developmental cycle: the formation and decline of cultures at various levels generally coincided....Such explosions follow some regular rhythm in accordance with [which] various provinces at the same time collapse or emerge." Moreover, Chernykh supplies datings for some of these cycles, which also lend further support to our own suggestions above.

— Frank is now drawing on the above cited and other recently available sources to refine the identification, and where necessary/possible revise the dating, of these cycles in the pre-Christian iron and bronze ages and to pursue them further back through the 3rd millennium BC. This new essay is tentatively entitled "The World System and its Cycles in the Bronze and Iron Ages."

The tests by Wilkinson and Bosworth based on city-size data and the archaeological review by Randsborg suggest some possible adjustments to the datings of cycle phases in medieval times as presented above: the 750/800 AD date is not well reflected by the data, and the beginning of the expansion phase dated from 1000/1050 should perhaps be postponed to around 1100 AD.

Illness in the family of one of the authors unfortunately prevents them from

revising the above text to this effect before it goes to press. Therefore, we beg the reader (and editor) to accept this epilogue as a better-than-nothing replacement for such revision instead.

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