THE IDEA OF EUROPE:
BETWEEN UTOPIANISM, HEGEMONY AND EMPIRE.
COMMON CULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE GRAECO – ROMAN WORLD

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Abstract

This essay puts the idea of Europe in its historical context, tracing in back to the ancient Greeks and their association with political freedom. As it is known, every historical phenomenon has its history and its prehistory[1]. Today, when Europe is not as stable as it would like to be, the issues relative to the Graeco–Roman Antiquity have become favourite topics for historians as far as diachronic explorations help to better define present-day situations[2]. At the same time, the inherent process of globalization[3] – older and having more consequences than is generally admitted – has stimulated efforts towards political pluralism and recognition of cultural diversity[4].

States often define themselves as bounded by a fixed border, and nowhere was this principle of state ideology more closely followed than in imperial Rome[5].

Some Europes in Their History:
The Classical Idea of Europe in the Graeco – Roman Antiquity

The first known use of the term "Europe" in a geographical sense is recorded in the last part of the 6th century B.C. and designates the Greek "continent" as opposed to Peloponnese and to the

1) Santo Mazzarino, *Il nome e l'idea di Europa*, in *idem, Antico, tardo antico ed èra constantiniana*, II, Bari, 1980, p. 412-445; Marta Sordi (ed.), *L'Europa nel mondo antico* (CISAUC, 12), Milano, 1986; Wolfgang J. Mommsen (ed.), *Long Way to Europe: Historical Observations from a Contemporary View*, Edition Q, Inc., 1993; Jan van der Dussen, Kevin Wilson (eds.), *The History of the Idea of Europe*, Routledge, London, 1995.

2) Roger-Pol Droit (ed.), *Les Grecs, les Romains et nous. L'Antiquité est-elle moderne ?*, Le Monde Éditions, Paris, 1991; Luciana Aigner Foresti, Alberto Barzanò, Cinzia Bearzot, Luisa Prandi, Giuseppe Zecchini (eds.), *Federazioni e federalismo nell' Europa antica. Alle radici della casa comune europea*, Milano, 1994; Fernand Braudel, *Memory and the Mediterranean*, Knopf Publishing, 2002, p. 217-316; Glen W. Bowersock, Peter Brown, Oleg Grabar (eds.), *Interpreting Late Antiquity: Essays on the Postclassical World*, Harvard University Press, 2001, p. 107-129, 170-195.

3) Manfred B. Steger, *Globalization: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford UP, 2003; Martin Wolf, *Why Globalization Works*, Yale UP, 2005.

4) L. Canfora, *Analogia e storia –L'uso politico dei paradigmi storici*, Milano, 1982; Monica Shelley, Margaret Winck (eds.), *Aspects of European Cultural Diversity*, Routledge, London, 1995; Morton A. Kaplan, *Character and Identity: The Philosophical Foundation of Political and Sociologist Perspectives*, Professors World Peace Academy, 1998; Willfried Spohn, Klaus Eder, *Collective Memory in the Enlarging Europe: The Impact of National Memories on the Making of a European Identity*, Ashgate Publishing, p. 2-16, 2005.

5) W.J. Mommsen, *Theories of Imperialism*, University of Chicago Press, 1982; A. Henrikson, *The Power and Politics of Maps*, in C.J. Demko, W. Wood (eds.), *Reordering the World: Geopolitical Perspectives in the Twenty-First Century*, Boulder, 1994, p. 49-70; Catherine Edwards, Greg Woolf (eds.), *Rome the Cosmopolis*, Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 1-20, 44-70; Aldo Schiavone, *End of the Past: Ancient Rome and the Modern West* (trans. Margery Schneider), Harvard University Press, 2002.

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archipelago (thus it appears in *Hymn to Apollo the Pythian*[6] and in the *Periegesis* of Hecataeus of Miletus[7]). However, for Herodotos of Halicarnassus (*c.* 484 – *c.* 425 BC ?) – polemical as he was as regards the "ecumenical" image of the Ionian School[8], to which Hecataeus belongs – attention had to be focused upon the universe of the Greek trading world, especially upon the so-called "prior Europe" (*ē emprosthe Eurōpē*)[9] or upon the world of Greece, Macedonia and Thracia between the Adriatic Sea and the Black Sea, on the one hand, and the euroasian steppes[10] peopled by the Scythians[11]– with all their climatic and cultural peculiarities – on the other hand.

The axis of this Europe seemed strongly oriented towards the Orient and especially around the Aegean Sea, rather than around the Mediterranean, even though, in certain respects, this Europe also included the "Atlantic" Celts and the Iberians mentioned by Herodotos[12]. The ancient Celts have been described as „the first Europeans"[13], the first Transalpine civilization to emerge into recorded history. Geographically, the Celts were regarded as inhabitans of western Europe, bur also of central Europe and the north as far as the land of the Scythians. The Germanic tribes living beyond this „Celtic belt" on the whole remained unknown to the South, and when news of them filtred down to the Mediterranean, they too were generally regarded as Celts. Whether speaking of the Celts or of any of the „barbarians" peoples of Europe, the same fundamental truth applies: the vague traces of them found in the prehistoric grave sites take on color, life and meaning only when they have been illuminated by the rays of the written cultures emanating from the Mediterranean area[14].

In the 5th century B.C., for Herodotos as well as for Pindarus (518-438 BC)[15], geographical Europe was the vast continent streching between river Phasis (in Colchis, historical Black Sea region) – or the more western Tanais (Don, Russian river) – and the Pillars of Hercules (Gibraltar)[16].

This pattern spans over the centuries transmitted by a whole literary tradition[17] illustrated by the great scientist Eratosthenes (*Geographika*) in the 3rd century BC, by Agrippa's *Commentarii*

6) *Ad Apollo*, v. 250-251 and 290-291, in Filippo Cassola (ed.), *Inni Omerici*, Milano, 1975, p. 128-131.
7) G. Nenci, *Hecatei Milesii fragmenta*, Firenze, 1954; C. Milani, *Note etimologiche su* Εὐρώπη, in M. Sordi (ed.), *L'Europa...*, p. 3-11.
8) G. Amiotti, *L'Europa nella polemica tra Erodoto e la scuola ionica*, in M. Sordi (ed.), *L'Europa...*, p. 49-56.
9) F. Mora, *L'etnografia europea di Erodoto*, in M. Sordi (ed.), *L'Europa...*, p. 57-67.
10) Bruno Gallotta, *Dario e l'Occidente*, Modena, 1980, cap. 1 *La Scizia*, p. 9-54.
11) About the Schythian world as a "psychological space" in the Antiquity, see also F. Conte, *Gli Slavi. Le civiltà dell'Europa centrale e orientale*, Torino, 1991, p. 11 sqq.
12) Herodotus II, 33, 3; IV, 49 3 (ed. Carolus Hude, Oxford, 1960). See F. Hartog, *The Mirror of Herodotus: The Representation of the Other in the Writing of History*, Berkeley, 1986.
13) J. Filip, *I Celti alle origini dell'Europa* ["Paperbacks Civiltà scomparse" series], Rome, 1980.
14) Peter Berresford Ellis, *The Celts. A History*, Caroll & Graf Publishers, New York, 2004, p. 1-15.
15) Pindar, *Nemee* 4, 70.
16) Pytheas Massiliensis, *De Oceano: Pytheas, Fragment* (ed. Hans Joachim Mette, Berlin, 1952).
17) F. Cordano, *La geografia degli antici*, Roma-Bari, 1982, p. 167-180.

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geografici during the Augustan period, by Pomponius Mela[18] in the 1st century AD, by Justinus[19] towards the end of the 3rd century AD, by *Panegyrici Latini*[20] and by Ammianus Marcellinus[21] in the 4th century AD, by Zosimos[22] at the end of the 5th century AD and the beginning of the 6th century, as well as by Procopius[23] in the 6th century AD.

Nevertheless, next to the spatial conception there also appeared – starting precisely with Herodotos – the political-moral idea of a much more limited Europe, an idea that knew ceaseless transformation and translation in keeping with the mutations suffered by the political, economic and ideological framework. With the Greeks of the 5th – 4th centuries BC – especially under the effect of the Persian Wars[24] that acted as a great catalyst of panhellenic cohesion – a polemical opposition took form (initially "defensive", later aggresive) between a Europe inhabited by "western", free, autonomous, valuable, combative peoples and the"barbarian" Asian continent, enslaved by kings or despots, unmanly and weak[25].

The Limits of Political Ecumenism in the Graeco-Roman World

The conception of a Europe centred upon Greece, Macedonia and Thracia – a natural bridge towards Asia – continued to appear with Greek historians and writers with ever increasing expansionist propensity (in Aeschylus' *Persae*[26] or in Thucydides[27]), especially during the period of greatest flourish of the Macedonian monarchy, under Philip II, and then under Alexander the Great. Aristotle (384-322 BC), the educator turned counselor of Alexander Macedon, became, successively, the exponent both of the traditional Europe–Asia[28] bipolarity and of an evolution,

18) Pomponius Mela, *De chorographia* I, 3, 1 (ed. Gunnar Ranstrand, Götteborg, 1971).
19) Iustinus, *Epitoma historiarum* 44, 1, 1 (ed. Otto Seel, Stuttgart, 1972).
20) Barbara Saylor Rodgers, C.E.V. Nixon (eds.), *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors: The Panegyrici Latini*, Berkeley, 1994. See Claudius Mamertinus, *Gratiarum actio Mamertini de consulato suo Iuliano Imperatori* II (3), 27, 2 (362 p. Chr); Pacatus, *Panegyricus Latini Pacati Drepani dictus Theodosio* 12, 22, 3 (389 p. Chr.). Cfr. D. Lassandro, *L'integrazione romano-barbarica nei „Panegyrici Latini"*, in M. Sordi (ed.), *L'Europa...*, p. 153-159.
21) Amm. Marc. 17, 7, 13; 22, 8, 27 (ed. Wolfgang Seyfarth, Leipzig, 1978).
22) Zosimos, *Historia Nova* 1, 64, 2; 4, 20, 3 (ed. François Paschoud, Paris, 1971); Cf. P. Grattarola, *Il concetto di Europa alla fine del mondo antico*, in M. Sordi (ed.), *L'Europa...*, p. 180-181.
23) Procopius, *De bello Gothico* 4, 6 (ed. Otto Veh, 1971); cf. P. Grattarola, *Il concetto di Europa alla fine del mondo antico*, in M. Sordi (ed.), *L'Europa*…, p. 181-183.
24) A. Bovon, *La representation des guerres perses et la notion de barbare dans la lère moitié du Ve siècle*, în *BCH* 87, 1963, p. 579-602; M. Anderson, *The imagery of the Persians*, in *Greece & Rome* 19, 1972, p. 166-174; B. Gallotta, *Dario e l'Occidente*, Modena, 1980, p. 213-254; A. Tourraix, *L'Orient, une invention grecque*, in Roger-Pol Droit, *Les Grecs, les Romains et nous. L' Antiquité est-elle moderne ?*, Paris, 1991, p. 89-97.
25) S. Perlman, *Panhellenism, the polis and imperialism*, în *Historia* 25, 1976, p. 1-30; M.-F. Baslez, *La péril barbare, une invention des Grecs ?*, în C. Mossé (ed.), *La Grèce ancienne*, Paris, 1986; R. Kabbani, *Europe's Myths of Orient: Devise and Rule*, Basingstoke, 1986; Edith Hall, *Asia unmanned: Images of victory in classical Athens*, în J. Rich, G. Shipley (eds.), *War and Society in the Greek World*, Routledge, London, 1995, p. 108-131; S. Swain, *Hellenism and Empire: Language, Classicism and Power in the Greek World, AD 50-250*, Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 17-65, 409 sqq.
26) G. Paduano, *Sui Persiani di Eschilo: problemi di focalizzatione drammatica*, Roma, 1978; S. Goldhill, *Battle narrative and politics in Aeschylus' Persae*, în *JHS* 108, 1988, p. 189-193.
27) J. Corbet, *Herodotus and Thucydides on war*, in I.S. Moxon, J.D. Smart, A.J. Woodman (eds.), *Past Perspectives: Studies in Greek and Roman Historical Writing*, London, 1986, p. 7-18.
28) Aristotel, *Politica* 1258a 20, 1327b 24; cfr. G. Vanotti, *Aristotele: dall'affermazione geografica alla dissoluzione politica dell'idea di Europa*, in M. Sordi (ed.), *L'Europa*…, p. 105-112.

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through the idea of a "universal" monarchy[29] reflecting the latest events and the first effects of the cosmopolitan openness of Alexander's "ecumenical" empire[30].

In the following decades, all the attention of the Greeks was concentrated on the gradual discovery of the East, through the campaigns of Alexander, who penetrated as far as India. Unfortunately, apart from a few passages by Polybius (*c.* 200 – *c.* 118 BC) – who spent much of his life in Rome –, the entire history of the Hellenistic period, like the ethnography and geography, has been lost.

In the 2nd century BC, Polybios of Megalopolis [31] (son of one of the leaders of the Aechean League but connected by his interests to the elites of another "world" empire that is the Roman Empire[32]) rejected the cliché of a "Balcanic" Europe which was being advocated at the time by Macedonian kings. Admirer of the Romans, Polybios determined[33] that the Europe between the Adriatic Sea and Istros (Danube) – that the Macedonian kings claimed to be dominating – covered just a small part of the European continent. In the Hellenistic age there began a whole new epoch of European culture.

In the "universal" Roman Empire[34] (*imperium sine fine*[35]), the ample geographical concept of Europe – inspired by Herodotos' model – tended to coincide with political reality[36]. To Roman consciousness, the world –*orbis terrarum*, had become *orbis Romanus*[37]. At the height of imperial fortunes, borders fall into two main types: natural and military. These categories complemented each other, often were mixed, and formed an intricate matrix of Roman imperial self-definition[38].

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29) On the idea of the succession of the empires, see also J.W. Swain, *The theory of the four monarchies: opposition history under the Roman empire*, în *Classical Philology* 35, 1940, p. 1-21; D. Flusser, *The four empires in the fourth Sibyl and in the book of Daniel*, în *Israel Oriental Studies* 2, 1972, p. 148-175; D. Mendels, *The five empires: a note on a propagandistic topos*, în *American Journal of Philology* 102, 1981, p. 330-337; A. Kuhrt, S. Sherwin-White (eds.), *Hellenism in the East*, London, 1987, p. 47-48.

30) W.L. Adams, E.N. Borza (eds.), *Philipp II, Alexander the Great and the Macedonian Heritage*, Lanham, 1982; M. Austin, *Alexander and the Macedonian invasion of Asia: Aspects of the historiography of war and empire in antiquity*, în J. Rich, G. Shipley (eds.), *War and Society in the Greek World*, Routledge, London, 1995, p. 197-223; P. Cartledge, *Alexander the Great: The Hunt for a New Past*, The Overlook Press, 204, p. 251-294.

31) F.W. Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius*, I-III, Oxford, 1957-1979.

32) Domenico Musti, *Polibio e l'imperialismo romano,* Napoli, 1978; J.M. Alonso-Nunez, *Die Abfolge der Weltreiche bei Polybios und Dionysios von Halikarnassos*, in *Historia* 32, 1982, p. 411 sqq.

33) Polybios I, 2, 4-6. Cfr. G. Zecchini, *Polibio, la storiografia ellenistica e l'Europa*, in M. Sordi (ed.), *L'Europa...*, p. 124-134.

34) Joseph Vogt, *Orbis Romanus. Zur Terminologie der römischen Imperialismus*, Tübingen, 1929; C. Nicolet, *L'Inventaire du monde: géographie et politique aux origins de l'empire romain*, Paris, 1988; J.S. Richardson, *Imperium Romanum: empire and the language of power*, in *JRS* 81, 1991, p. 1-9; A.W. Lintott, *What was the Imperium Romanum ?*, in *Greece & Rome* 28, 1981, p. 53-57; W. Dahlheim, *Geschichte der Römischen Kaiserzeit*, München, 1984, p. 203 sqq.

35) Velleius 2, 103: *spem conceptam perpetuae securitatis aeternitatisque Romani imperii.*

36) P. Arnaud, *L'image du globe dans le monde romain: science, iconographie, symbolique*, in *MEFR* 96, 1984, p. 53-116; S. Dyson, *The Creation of the Roman Frontier*, Princeton, 1985; C.R. Whittaker, *Frontiers of the Roman Empire: A Social and Economic Study*, Baltimore, 1994; H. Elton, *Frontiers of the Roman Empire*, London, 1996; D. Baatz, *Der römische Limes*, Berlin, 2000.

37) Joseph H. Straub, *Imperium–Pax–Libertas*, in *Gymnasium* 84, 1977, p. 136-148; Ronald Syme, *Rome and the Nations*, in *Diogenes* CXXIV, 1983, p. 33-46; Fergus Millar, *Rome, the Greek World, and the East*, I-II, University of North Carolina Press, 2004.

38) Emilio Gabba, *Aspetti culturali dell'imperialismo romano*, Firenze, 1993.

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Natural boundaries created an obvious break between Rome and those beyond the borders[39]. The Roman insistence on imperial borders, contradicted a second imperial rhetorical imperative: universalism[40].

The Roman perspective was that they had subjected the entire *orbis terrarum* to the rule of Roman people – as far as they had knowledge about it or considered it worth conquering. This philosophy did not encompass the idea of boundaries at all except the idea that „barbarians" should stay outside the Roman concept of the civilised world.

Rome's expansion was slowing down and her main aim became the maintenance of imperial security. In doing so Rome's foreign policy used a wide range of different instruments and strategies to maintain her superior status. Her army did not rely only on force but also on the image of Rome itself as a policy instrument. An essential part of the Roman genius was its ability to win the support of the people it conquered. It respected local traditions and ethnic characteristics, so long as the superior status of Rome was not challenged.

The Roman Empire encircles the Mediterranean Sea – *Mare Nostra*, as they called it – and beyond that lay its frontiers. These, in time, stretched from the Atlantic Ocean, across Europe to the Black Sea, through the deserts and oases of the Middle East to the Red Sea, and thence across North Africa , skirting the edge of Sahara Desert, to the Atlantic Coast of Morocco.

But in the Hellenic culture[41] and in the Latin culture directly influenced by the former, the image of a Europe situated first and foremost in the Illyrian area - with a preeminence due especially to military reasons – will nonetheless know a long career. Thus, it is to be found in the time of emperor Augustus in Diodorus Siculus (1st century BC), in *Bibliotheca historica*[42], as well as in *Antiquitates Romanae*[43] of Dionysios of Halikarnassos[44] (born *c.* 50 BC), or later, in the epoch of the Severans, in the historian Dio Cassius[45], in connection with the siege of the city of Hatra[46], in AD 198.

39) Andreas Alföldi, *The moral barrier on the Rhine and Danube*, in E. Birley (ed.), *The Congress of Roman Frontier Studies I*, Durham, 1949, p. 1-16; Susan Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy: Imperial Strategy in the Principate*, Berkeley–Los Angeles–London, 1999.

40) Alan Bownam, Martin Goodman, Simon Price, Hannah Cotton (eds.), *Representations of Empire: Rome and the Mediterranean World*, London, 2003; Anthony Pagden, *Peoples and Empires*, Random House, 2003, p. 17-47.

41) Simon Swain, *Hellenism and Empire: Language, Classicism and Power in the Greek World, AD 50 – 250*, Oxford University Press, 1998, *passim*.

42) Diodor Siculus XVIII-XX. Cfr. F. Landucci Gattinoni, *L'Europa nei libri XVIII-XX di Diodoro*, in M. Sordi (ed.), *L'Europa…*, p. 113 sqq; K.S. Sacks, *Diodorus Siculus and the First Century*, Princeton, 1990.

43) Dionysius 1, 47, 6; 1, 61, 3; 14, 1, 1-2.

44) J.M. Alonso-Nunez, *Die Abfolge der Weltreiche bei Polybios und Dionysios von Halikarnassos*, in *Historia* 32, 1983, p. 411-426.

45) Cassius Dio, *Hist. Rom.* 76, 12. Cf. Fergus Millar, *A Study of Cassius Dio*, Oxford, 1964; S. Swain, *op. cit.*, p. 401-408.

46) H.J.W. Drijvers, M.J. Versteegh, *Hatra, Palmyra und Edessa. Die Städte der syrisch–mesopotamischen Wüste in politischer, kulturgeschichtlicher und religionsgeschichtlicher Beleuchtung*, in *ANRW* II/ 8, 1977, p. 799 sqq.

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In the 3rd century AD the identification of Europe with Thracia/Macedonia is to be seen in C. Iulius Solinus' *Collectanea*[47], as well as in Iustinus' *Epitoma*[48].

The cliché of a Balcanic Europe („*per Thraciam Europamque omnem*") reappears in *Historia Augusta*[49], a *corpus* of imperial biographies elaborated at the end of the 4th century AD[50]. The historical projection of an administrative reality – the old cliché of a Thracian/Balcanic Europe – will be reflected in the epoch of the Tetrarchy through the foundation of the new *provincia Europa* mentioned in *Laterculus Veronensis*[51], dated between AD 297 – 312/314[52].

The Later Roman Empire and the Birth of a "European" Consciousness

The way we nowadays evaluate the Later Roman Empire tends to change thanks to the positive acknowledgement and appreciation of its specificity: classicism has been replaced by the cultural relativism proposed by the humanities and thus the spectre of the "Great decadence" and catastrophe has been exorcised[53]. Out of the juxtaposition of models which tend to divide themselves into multiple territorial perspectives and according to a plurality of cultural levels, there appears the problem of the continuity of European history[54]. And out of this juxtaposition, as we ask ourselves about the role of the culture of the Later Empire in the long gestation of the idea of Europe (Europe seen not only as a spatial/geographical concept but especially as belonging to a well defined historical and moral entity, structured along certain socio-political, cultural, religious lines which differentiate it from other historical entities[55]), other questions arise: how did the idea of Europe appear and how did it evolve[56] in contradistinction to the surrounding worlds?

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47) Solinus, *Collectanea rerum memorabilium* 10, 1 (ed. Theodor Mommsen, 2d ed., Berlin, 1895).
48) Iustinus, *Epitoma historiarum* 7, 1, 6 (ed. Otto Seel, Stuttgart, 1972).
49) *Historia Augusta*, *vita Aureliani* 17, 2-5; 31, 3; 32, 1-2; *Historia Augusta*, *vita Probi* 13, 4.
50) Th. Honoré, *Scriptor Historiae Augustae*, in *JRS* 77, 1987, p. 156-176; Lellia Cracco Ruggini, *Elagabalo, Constantino e i culti „syriaci" nella Historia Augusta*, in *Historia Augusta – Colloquium Sir Ronald Syme dicatum* (Chantilly, 1990), Macerata, 1992, p. 123 sqq; *Histoire Auguste*, tome V/1, *Vies d'Aurélien et de Tacite*, texte établi et traduit par François Paschoud, Paris, 1996, p. XV-XVI.
51) Otto Seeck (ed.), *Notitia Dignitatum, accedunt Notitia Urbis Constantinopolitanae et Laterculi Provinciarum*, Berlin, 1876, 247 sqq. Cfr. K. Christ, *Geschichte der Römischen Kaisezeit*[3], München, 1995, p. 714.
52) A.H.M. Jones, *The Date and Value of the Verona List*, in *JRS* 44, 1954, p. 21-29.
53) S. D'Elia, *Il basso impero nella cultura moderna dal Quattrocento a oggi*, Napoli, 1967; Henri-I. Marrou, *Decadence romaine ou antiquité tardive? IIIe –VIe siècle*, Paris, 1977; P. Brown, *The Making of Late Antiquity*, Cambridge Mass., 1978; Santo Mazzarino, *La fine de mondo antico*[2], Rizzoli, Milano, 1988; Rosamond McKitterick, R. Quinault (eds.), *Edward Gibbon and Empire*, Cambridge, 1997; Simon Swain, Mark Edwards (eds.), *Approaching Late Antiquity: The Transformation from Early to Late Empire*, Oxford University Press, 2004.
54) Bruno Lançon, *La modernité du Bas–Empire*, in Roger-Pol Droit, *Les Grecs, les Romains et nous*, Paris, 1991, p. 332-348; Aldo Schiavone, *End of the Past: Ancient Rome and the Modern West*, Harvard UP, 2002.
55) Marshall G. Hodgson, *Rethinking World History: Essays on Europe, Islam and World History*, Cambridge University Press, 1993; Franco Cardini, *Europe and Islam*, Blackwell Publishers, 2001.
56) For general review: F. Chabod, *Storia dell Europa* (a cura di E. Sestan e A. Saitta), Bari, 1961; V. Curcio, *Europa. Storia di un'idea*, I, Firenze, 1958; J. Fischer, *Oriens–Occidens–Europa. Begriff und Gedanke „Europa" in der späten Antike und im frühen Mittelalter*, Wiesbaden, 1975; S. Mazzarino, *Il nome e l'idea di Europa*, în *idem*, *Antico, tardoantico ed èra constantiniana*, II, Bari, 1980, p. 412-445; Marta Sordi (ed.), *L'Europa nel mondo antico* (CISAUC, 12), Milano, 1986; J. Le Goff, *La vieille Europe et la nôtre*, Paris, 1994; D. Gruender, E. Moutsopoulos (eds.), *The Idea of Europe: Its Common Heritage and Future*, Paragon House Publishers, 1992; Anthony Pagden, Lee H. Hamilton (eds.), *The Idea of Europe: From Antiquity to the European Union*, Cambridge UP, 2000, p. 33-71.

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In this sense, the period between the 3rd and the 5th centuries A.D. presents us with an essential turning point[57]. Certain conceptions regarding Europe – starting from the oldest Greek matrix – changed their interpretation[58], reflecting the relations among the Romans and the other peoples[59].

The political ascent of the New Rome (Νέα ΄Ρώμη)/Constantinople[60] and of a new Romano-Byzantine Empire could only emphasize this idea of a Europe concentrated south of the Danube: we find it in Zosimos' *Historia Nova*[61], in Marcellinus Comes' *Chronicon*[62] in 519 AD, in Procopius of Caesarea's *De aedificiis*[63] – where the writer likened Europe to an island (νησοειδής) surrounded by the Danube abd by the sea –, in the times of Justinian, in Evagrios Scholastikos' *Ekklesiastike historia*[64] and in a number of other authors. As a strictly political conception, the idea of a Europe concentrated south of the Danube was perpetuated in the Byzantine world as long as there survived the statal entity that had preserved, in an almost mumified form, the archaic Greek concept.

A conception that focused more upon the Occident as early as the time of Augustus[65], but in the time of the emperor Julianus (AD 361-363), inheritor and continuator of the Hellenic cultural tradition[66], there occured an emphasis on the value of the Italics, Illyrians and Celts[67], as opposed to that of the subjects of the king of Persia: the emperor avoided to stress only the Thracian area out of hate towards Constantine, his Christian predecessor, and towards his emblematic choice of a new Rome on the Bosphorus[68]. From a different perspective but with the same care of excluding Constantinople, the sophist Libanios of Antiochia[69]– contemporary and admirer of Julianus –

57) Richard Miles, *Constructing Identities in Late Antiquity*, Routledge, London, 1999, p. 1-16.
58) Luciana Aigner Foresti et alii (eds.), *L'ecumenismo politico nella coscienza de dell'Occidente. Alle radici della casa commune europea*, II. [Atti del Convegno. Bergamo, 1995], L'Erma, Roma, 1998.
59) G.W. Bowersock, P. Brown, O. Grabar (eds.), *Interpreting Late Antiquity*, Harvard UP, 2001, p. 107-130.
60) G. Dagron, *L'empire romain d'Orient au IVe siècle et les traditions politiques d'Hellénisme*, Paris, 1968; *idem, Constantinople imaginaire*, Paris, 1984.
61) Zosimos, *Historia Nova* 1, 27, 1 (ed. François Paschoud, Paris, 1971, p. 27, 148-149).
62) Marcelinus Comes, *Chronicon ad a. 447*, 2 (ed. Theodor Mommsen, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Auctores antiquissimi*, XI, 1894, p. 82).
63) *De aedificiis* 4, 1, 10-14 (ed. Otto Veh, 1977). Procopius (*De aedificiis* 2, 8, 3-4) described also how the Euphrates formed a natural divide, "but the other boundaries between Romans and Persians are of the sort where the territories of each crowd the other, and both will fight or make peace, as is human nature whenever those who differ in custom and political organization hold territory with the same border".
64) Evagrios Scholastikos, *Eccl. Hist.* 3, 38 (eds. Joseph Bidez, L. Parmentier, London, 1898).
65 G. Cresci Marrone, *Ecumene Augustea. Una politica per il consenso*, L'Erma, Roma, 2001.
66) Polymnia Athanassiadi-Fowden, *Julian and Hellenism: An Intellectual Biography*, Oxford, 1981; Rowland Smith, *Julian's God: Religion and Philosophy in the Thought and Action of Julian the Apostate*, Taylor & Francis, 1995, p. 23-48.
67) Iulianus, *Caesares* 320 D (ed. Chr. Lacombrade, *L'empereur Julien. Œuvres completes*, II/2, *Les Césars, Sur Hélios-roi, Le Misopogon*, Paris, 1964).
68) B. Baldwin, *The Caesares of Julian*, in *Klio* 60, 1982, p. 449 sqq.
69) U. Criscuolo (a cura di), *Libanio sulla vendetta di Giuliano*, Napoli, 1994; *Sophists and Emperors: The Case of Libanius*, in S. Swain, M. Edwards (eds.), *Approaching Late Antiquity: The Transformation from Early to Late Empire*, Oxford UP, 2004, p. 355-400.

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centerd his Europe around two moral and intellectual capitals, both situated in the Oriental Mediterranean: Athens şi Antiochy[70].

The old Hellenic idea of the bipolarity between the free peoples of the Occident and the enslaved masses of Asian peoples had resurfaced in Augustus' propaganda[71], during the latter's conflict with Antonius and the "oriental" supporting Antonius. But the unity of this Roman *oikoumenē* (an *orbis Romanus* actually entirely Mediterranean, excluding from its geographical orbit the central and Scandinavian Europe, inhabited by nomadic, untamed and inhospitable peoples[72]), could only contradict the until then valid dialectics between Europeans and non-Europeans, both geographically and politically. There had appeared in imperial Roman society the idea of „supranationality" in which only the opposition between "Romans"[73] and "barbarians" at a cultural level rather than ethnic was preserved[74]: namely, the opposition between the ethnic groups living within the borders of the Empire and which had assimilated the Roman culture, customs and traditions and those who had not been subject to such a process of transformation[75].

Pliny the Younger, praised the universal providence of Trajan's rule and his divine direction of world affairs in imitation of Jupiter, but he could, at the same time, praise Trajan for halting before the natural boundary of the Danube, disdaining to cross for the sake of a mere triumph, content that „the [barbarians] were locked away in their proper lairs"[76].

In the 2nd century AD, Aelius Aristides (*Laus Romae*) claimed not only that Rome held universal mastery, but also that it created „a general species or race, not one of many races, but one that ballances all the rest"[77]. Yet these most developed parts of the Roman world were protected and at the same time defined by frontiers. It was as if these frontiers were, as Aelius Aristides remarked, „enclosing the civilised world in a ring".

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70) Libanius, *Orationes* II (Ἀντιοκικός; ed. A.F. Norman, London, 1969). Cf. Lellia Craco Ruggini, *Simboli di battaglia ideologica nel tardo ellenismo (Roma, Atene, Costantinopoli; Numa Empedocle, Cristo*), in *Studi storici O. Bertolini*, I, Pisa, 1972, p. 204 sqq.

71) P. Hardie, *Virgil's Aeneid: Cosmos and Imperium*, Oxford, 1986, p. 133 sqq.

72) G. Dagron, L. Marin, *Discours utopique et récit des origins*, in *Annales ESC* XXVI, 1971, p. 290-328; M.A. Giua Carmassi, *Roma e i Germani*, in Aldo Schiavone (a cura di), *Storia di Roma*, II.2, Torino, 1991, p. 507 sqq.

73) Tertullianus, *Pal.* 4, 1: *Quid nunc, si est Romanitas omni salus, nec honesties tamen modis ad Graios estis ?*

74) Paolo Desideri, *La romanizzatione dell'impero*, in A. Schiavone (a cura di), *Storia di Roma*, II.2, Torino, 1991, p. 577-626; Ray Laurence, Joanne Berry, *Cultural Identity in the Roman Empire*, Routledge, 2001; Richard Hingley, *Globalizing Roman Culture: Unity, Diversity and Empire*, Routledge, London, p. 49-71, 2005.

75) *Roman Citizenship and Roman Law in the Late Empire*, in S. Swain, M. Edwards (eds.), *Approaching Late Antiquity*, Oxford UP, 2004, p. 133-155.

76) Plinius, *Panegyricus* 1, 12, 4.

77) Ael. Arist., *Pan.*, 346 (ed. G. Dindorf, Leipzig, 1929); cfr. R. Klein, *Die Romrede des Aelius Aristides. Einführung*, Darmstadt, 1981; S. Swain, *Hellenism and Empire,* Oxford UP, 1998, p. 254-297; Clifford Ando, *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty in the Roman Empire*, University of California Press, 2000.

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The sense of diversity and the sense of religious and political homogeneity (3^{rd} – 5^{th} centuries AD)

The weakening of the imperial cohesion and unity under the pressure of barbarian peoples without[78] and of centrifugal forces within was the reason for returning both to the spatial concept and to the ethical-political idea of Europe, an idea that had been ignored for centuries.

Probably in the time of Gordian III (AD 238-244) Herodian[79], a syriac historian writing in Greek, and thus in direct contact with the Hellenic tradition having its roots in the 5^{th} century BC, returned to the idea of a division between Europe and Asia, the "border" lying along the Hellespont, starting from the diarhia desired by Septimius Severus (AD 193-211) and Julia Domna for their sons Caracalla and Geta; Herodian thus made the distinction between the "European" senators in Rome, and the "Asian" ones from the other likely capital city (Alexandria or Antiochia)[80]. There is also mention of an Asia claimed by the Persians as the "continent opposed to Europe"[81]. The notion of a Europe stretching to the Hellespont was also supported by the Arian Philostorgius of Borissos (Cappadocia), in his *Ekklesiastike historia* where, referring to the natural and political that had befallen the Roman Empire in *c.* AD 399-400, stated that these had struck not only the entire Europe but also Asia and Africa[82].

Gallic panegyrics of the 4^{th} century AD[83] on the one hand seem to accept the traditional division between Europe and Asia along the Tanais river, bringing again to the forefront the old Greek dichotomy between fearsome and weak, enslaved orientals and the occidentals who love military discipline (the Romans), despising danger and death (the Franks): such is the Panegyric of AD 313 devoted to Constantine. In reality, however, they introduce two important novelties, either the inclusion of even Greeks among "oriental" peoples – from a typical Gallo-Roman perspective – or the values of an Occident that was no longer formed of Romans only but also of barbarian peoples. In the same *Panegyric* for Constantine, the resemblance between the latter and Alexander Macedon is meant to exalt the warlike superiority of occidentals as compared to asians, stating that Constantine had confronted not only effeminate Medes, unworthy syriacs, Persians who were only able to throw arrows from a distance but also Maxentius's soldiers, traitors indeed but of a certain value, bestowed upon them by the fact of being "Romans", (in the sense of "occidentals"). However, the distance between the inhabitants of Roman provinces and the peoples beyond their

78) Thomas S. Burns, *Rome and the Barbarians, 100 BC – AD 400*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003.
79) W. Widmer, *Kaisertum, Rom und Welt in Herodian „Meta Markon Basileias Historia"*, Zürich, 1967.
80) Herodian, *Ab excessu divi Marci* 4, 3, 5-6 (ed. Filippo Cassola, Firenze, 1968).
81) Herodian *Ab excessu divi Marci* 6, 2, 1.
82) Philostorgius, *Hist. Eccl.* 11, 7 (ed. Joseph Bidez, *GCS* 21, Paris, 1921).
83) *Panégyriques latins* (ed. E. Galletier, I-III, Paris, 1949-1953); *XII Panegyrici Latini* (ed. R.A.B. Mynors, Oxford, 1964); *In Praise of the Later Roman Emperors: The Panegyrici Latini* (eds. C.E.V. Nixon, Barbara S. Rodgers, Berkeley, 1994).

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borders started to decrease as the *limes*[84] became less and less a contact line for exchanges of all kinds and turned into a barricade with defensive purpose, a barrier between two worlds (as Hadrian may have conceived it in the 2nd century AD when he erected, for the first time, an endless string of fortresses and "waves", in the most exposed zones[85]).

In such a context, beyond a certain ethnic prejudice[86], the deprecating term of "barbarity", received a dimension of a more cultural order. In the 4-5 centuries[87], the antibarbarian aversion[88] – practically unknown during the Early Empire – tended to gain momentum as the Alamanni, Visigoths, Ostrogoths, Bastarni, Roxolani, Alans (whom ancient sources tended to group under the the generic term of *scythae*[89]), Vandals, Suevi, Burgundians, Quadi, Heruli, Saxons, Sarmatians, Huns, Gepids and many other migratory *gentilitas/*polyethnic bands of mounted warriors, always wandering –*in peregrinatione*– intensified their threatening pressure at the borders as a consequence of the ample migrations in the entire north-European area[90]. The psychological impact generated by their aggressiveness became ever higher[91]. At the level of official propaganda, the iconography of the barbarians – as the campaigns of emperors, from Marcus Aurelius to Theodosius I, against them became more frequent, tougher and not always successful – got caught in stereotypes that presented the vanquished enemy, trampled or dragged by the hair by the Emperor, –a *semper invictus*[92]– in armour, with a strong emphasis on the subhuman features and physical deformities: this is the demonisation of the barbarian seen as half-human, half snake, that we see on the coins of the period. On the monuments of the 1st century AD, for instance on the columns in Rome of Trajan[93] or

84) The world *limes* has primarily conjured up images of a vast linear array, manned by soldiers and strengthened by fortifications, with the Romans on one side and the rest of the world on the other, see Benjamin H. Isaac, *The Meaning of limes and limitanei in Ancient Sources*, in *JRS* 18, 1988, p. 125-147.

85) *Historia Augusta*, *vita Hadr.* 11, 2 ":[Hadrian] was the first to build a wall eighty miles in length [in Britain] that divided barbarians and Romans. Cf. J.C. Mann, *The Function of Hadrian's Wall*, în *Archaeologia Aeliana* 18, 1990, p. 51-54; V. Maxfield, *Hadrian's Wall in its Imperial Setting*, în *Archaeologia Aeliana* 18, 1990, p. 1-27. This idea can be found as early as the 2nd century BC, see Marta Sordi, *Il confine del Tauro e dell'Halys e Il sacrificio in Ilio*, in *eadem* (ed), *Politica e religione nel primo scontro tra Roma e l'Oriente*, Milano, 1982, p. 136-149.

86) G.W. Bowersock, P. Brown, O. Grabar (eds.), *Interpreting Late Antiquity: Essays on the Postclassical World*, Harvard UP, p. 107-129; Benjamin H. Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*, Princeton UP, 2004.

87) Penny MacGeorge, *Late Roman Warlords*, Oxford UP, 2003.

88) Walter Goffart, *Barbarians and Romans, AD 418-514*, Princeton, 1980, p. 30 sqq; *idem*, *The Theme of the Barbarian Invasions in Late Antique and Modern Historiography*, in Evangelos Chrysos, Andreas Schwacz (eds.), *Das Reich und die Germanen*, Wien–Köln, 1989, p. 87 sqq.

89) Karl Kretschmer, in *RE* II. 3 (1921), col. 930, s.v. *Schythae*.

90) The *gens* of the migrations had no *patria.* Therefore it had no distinct national identity. Tribal formation and political constitution, the duality which R. Wenskus described, is the subject of an historical ethnography. Cf. Reinhard Wenskus, *Stammesbildung und Verfassung*², Köln, 1977; Peter Heather (ed.), *The Visigoths from the Migration Period to the 7th Century: An Ethnographic Perspective*, Boydell & Brewer, 2003.

91) P. Courcelle, *Histoire littéraire des grandes invasions germaniques*³, Paris, 1964; Lellia Craco Ruggini, *"De morte persecutorum" e polemica antibarbarica nella storiografia pagana e cristiana*, in *Rivista di storia e letteratura religiosa* 4, 1968, p. 433-447; E. Demougeot, *La formation de l' Europe et les invasions barbares*, II, Paris, 1979.

92) R. Brilliant, *Gesture and Rank in Roman Art*, New Haven, 1963, p. 181 sq; Michael McCormick, *Eternal Victory Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium and the Early Medieval West*, Cambridge University Press, 1986.

93) C. Cichorius, *Die Reliefs der Trajanssäule*, I-II, Berlin-Leipzig, 1896-1900; A. Claridge, *Hadrian's column of Trajan*, in *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 6, 1993, p. 5 sqq.

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Marcus Aurelius[94]– real triumphalist "figurative stories" of the campaigns against the Dacians and the Marcomans on the other side of the Danube – the barbarians had been represented as displaying dignity and noble pride.

But not the entire public opinion – not even that of the emperors – coincided with these last outbursts of a will of military primacy that left no place to a compromise with the enemy. As a proof to this fact are the more or less favourably idealised confessions of barbarians situated beyond the limits of the so-called *oikoumenē*, the brachmans of India, the Etyopian gymnosophists from beyond the cataracts of the Nile, all seen as philosophers possessing a wisdom (*sophrosynē*) left unknown to the Greek-Roman civilisation[95]. An ideology of the peaceful sovereign – utterly different from the typical Roman ideology of the warrior king – had already begum to take shape with the municipal Greek aristocracy (*e.g.* Numa's image in Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*), and Elagabalus was to a pacifist, refusing *ex virtute* the traditional imperial epithets such as *Germanicus* or *Parthicus*.

The role of Christianity in the confrontation between different ethnic groups and cultures: the Fathers and the Empire

From the 3rd–century AD pagan panegyristics in Gaul to 7th–century monks in Syria, Roman authors identified the border as the dividing line between barbarian and Roman, between barbarity and civilization[96].

Meanwhile, another very important element entered the equation: the christening of large strata of society in all Occidental cities[97], especially since the Christian faith was gaining ground not only among the various populations ofthe empire but also among the barbarian peoples in direct contact with the Roman world: let us think about the Goths converted by Ulfilas[98] to arianism, as

94) E. Petersen, A. von Domaszewski, G. Calderini, *Die Marcussäule auf der Piazza Colonna in Rom*, München, 1896; G. Caprino et alii, *La Colonna di Marco Aurelio*, Roma, 1955.

95) Lellia Craco Ruggini, *Leggenda e realtà degli Etiopi nella cultura tardoimperiale*, in *Atti del IV Congresso internazionale di studi etiopici* [Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei], Roma, 1974, p. 141-193.

96) Roman sources present Germans as bloodthirsty, destructive savages; Moors as even more destructive than Germans; and Persians, who were conceded a modicum of civilization, doubly dangerous in their duplicity and rapaciousness, see J.W. Drijvers, D. Hunt, *The late Roman World and its historian interpreting: Ammianus Marcellinus*, Routledge, London, 1999.

97) See especially Charles Pietri, *Roma Christiana* [BEFAR, 224], Roma, 1976; Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire. AD 100 – 400*, New Haven, 1984; *idem, Christianity and Paganism in the 4th to 8th Centuries*, Yale University Press, 1999; William H.C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity,* Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1986; Judith Herrin, *The Formation of Christendom*, Princeton, 1989; Peter Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity: Towards a Christian Empire*, Madison, 1992; Garth Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth: Consequences of Monotheism in Late Antiquity*, Princeton UP, 1993.

98) Adolf Lippold, in *RE* II. 17 (1961), col. 512 sqq, s.v. *Ulfila*; Karl Kurt Klein, *Gotenprimas Wulfila als Bischof und Missionar. Festschrift für Bischof F. Müller*, Stuttgart, 1967; M. Forlin Patrucco, Sergio Roda, *Religione e cultura dei Goti transdanubiani nel IV-V secolo*, in *Augustinianum* 19, 1979, p. 167-187.

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early as the 4th century AD[99]. In the Occident, as well as in the Orient, the Christian Empire established a new social geography[100].

Christian Romans in general showed no more sympathy for barbarians than their pagan predecessors[101].

The belief that *imperium/basileia* held the entire *orbis Romanus/oikoumenē* (the traditional Roman cultural *oikoumenē*) within its borders, or even that there existed no restrictions at all to Roman authority, went far back in Roman literature and was particularly cherished by Christian Romans. At the foundation of the Christian *imperium*, Eusebius of Caesareea claimed it was the destiny of the Roman empire to embrace „all those not yet united [with it] up the limits of the inhabited world"[102].

Christians added a further wrinkle to Roman universalism. The Roman empire embraced the world because it carried Christianity to heathens. The empire arose by divine providence „so that as knowledge of one God was given to men a single sovereign arose for the entire Roman empire and a deep pace took hold of all."[103]

Roman imperialism was set in a new context that redefined civilization so that all Christians, Germans and Persians as well as Romans, shared the same Christian *oikoumenē*. The empire assumed the mantle of the „guardian of the churches of Christ", and barbarian kings, whether the fire-worshippers of Persia or the Arians of Italy and Africa, resented and suspected that the imperial professions of ecumenical Christian unity were not far removed from claims of imperial authority[104].

The Roman rhetoric of empire was paradoxical: simultaneously proclaiming universalism and limitation, defence and aggression. Although Pacatus praised Theodosius' universal rule, comparing his universal sovereignty to the sun's radiance, he still conceded that Theodosius had to take care to secure „the pledges of the kings bordering the *limes orientis* before moving against the usurper Maximus[105]. Roman universalism was the ideal, but the presence of any border at all presented its own argument against Rome's universalist claims, both Christian and imperial.

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99) Knut Schäferdiek, *Der germanische Arianismus*, in *Miscellanea historiae ecclesiasticae* III [*Bibliothèque de la Revue d'histoire écclésiastique* 50], Louvain, 1970, p. 71 sqq.
100) Charles Pietri, *La cristianizzatione dell'Impero*, in A. Giardina, A. Schiavone (eds.), *Storia di Roma*, Einaudi, Torino, 1999, p. 635; P. Brown, *Poverty and Leadership in the Late Roman Empire*, Brandeis University Press, 2001, p. 45-74 („Governor of the Poor": Bishops and Their Cities); Michele Renee Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy: Social and Religious Change in the Western Empire*, Harvard UP, 2004, p. 178-220 .
101) Even so Christian an emperor as Justinian differed little from earlier emperors when he proclaimed that Romanity rested on „law and the force of arms" (*Codex Justinianus*, *praef.*).
102) Eusebius, *Tricennalia Oratio* 16, 6.
103) *Ibidem*, 16, 4-5.
104) Christopher Kelly, *Ruling the Later Roman Empire*, Harvard University Press, 2004.
105) Pacatus, *Pan. Lat.* 2, 10, 1; 21, 5; 32, 2.

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Step by step, the process of identification between the Christian faith and the dominant culture, or between Christianity and Romanity will be completed[106], from Eusebius of Caesareea[107], to Saint Ambrose, Bishop of Milan[108] and to Saint Augustine, Bishop of Hippona[109]. The last two – St. Ambrose şi St. Augustine– considered as early as the end of the 4th century AD and the beginning of the 5th century AD that the Empire and Christianity were one, and regarded as admissible in the relations with the barbarians– situated beyond a frontier that was at the same time political and moral – patterns of behaviour that were regarded as inacceptable among Christians and Romans: to Ambrose it was right to export wine to barbarians with an intention to weaken them, turning them into drunkards; for Augustine the slave trade perpetrated by Roman merchants beyond the *limes Africae* was not to blame, as if slaves had been "certain animals"[110].

In a short time, nonetheless, in a matter of decades, all barbarian peoples that had been converted to the Christian faith were considered "roman" thus circumscribing at a religious level the opposition between the beastly (and unfaithful) barbarian and the civilised (and pious) roman. True barbarians were soon considered only the peoples having nothing to do with the Christian world[111]. The geographical and moral preeminence of a predominantly occidental Europe was to resurface in the 6th century AD both in Venantius Fortunatus[112], and in the Pope Gregory the Great[113] (AD 590-604) – who in AD 595 wrote to Emperor Maurikios to complain about the fate of a Europei invaded by barbarians[114] -, as well as in the contemporary of the latter, the Irish monk Columbanus[115].

As the Roman borders collapsed, so too did the signifiance of the dividing line between Roman and barbarian. The border remained one of the *topoi* of late Roman imperial rhetoric so long as it remained intact, but when it collapsed, Romans turned from the rhetoric of borders to a new rhetoric of geographic self-definition[116].

In the second half of the 5th century AD, as the imperial claim to monopolise sovereignty failed more and more to accord with the real distribution of power in the western half of the Roman

106) Ch. N. Cochrante, *Christianity and Classical Culture*, New York, 1957; E.G. Clark, *Let every soul be subject: the Fathers and the Empire*, in L. Alexander (ed.), *Images of Empire*, Sheffield Academic Press, 1991, p. 265 sqq; Ch. Pietri, *La cristianizzatione dell'Impero*, in A. Giardina, A. Schiavone (eds.), *Storia di Roma*, Einaudi, Torino, 1999, p. 639-644.
107) F. Winkelmann, *Euseb von Kaisareia: Der Vater des Kirchengeschichte*, Berlin, 1991.
108) N. McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, Berkeley, 1994.
109) Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, University of California Press, 2000.
110) G. Zecchini, *I rapporti con I barbari*, in *L'Impero romano-cristiano. Problemi politici, religiosi, culturali*, Roma, 1991, p. 61-76.
111) Elias J. Bikerman, *"Origines gentium"*, in *Classical Philology* 47, 1952, p. 65 sqq.
112) Venatius Fortunatus, *Vita Maurici*, in Theodor Mommsen (ed.), *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* [*Auctores Antiquissimi*] IV, 2, p. 93, 99.
113) John Moorhead, *Gregory the Great*, Routledge, London, 2005, p. 68-89.
114) Gregorius Magnus, *Epistulae* 5, 37.
115) Columbanus, *Epistulae* 1,1; 5,1, in Theodor Mommsen (ed.), *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* [*Epp.*], III, p. 156, 170. Cf. G.S.M. Walker, *Sancti Columbani opera*, Oxford, 1957, p. XXXV-XXXVIII.
116) David Olster, *Roman Defeat, Christian Response, and the Literary Construction of the Jew*, Philadelphia, 1994, p. 72-77.

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empire, the emperors marginalised themselves. Once provincial landowning élites found that they had the option of turning to local Germanic kings, it was the centre that became irrelevant and could be dispensed with[117].

The Roman state, in one form or another, survived for over 2000 years[118]. Its empire was one of the greatest states which the world has seen, close only to China in its size and longevity.

Late Antiquity saw the gradual decline of classical Mediterranean society[119] and the initial formation of a strictly western European, Christian society[120] which eventually would culminate in the modern-day western European states[121]. Such geographical frontiers, until the end of the Roman empire, tended to separed, at last politically, the Roman world from that of the peoples beyond. The breakup of the Roman world[122] saw a disintegration of the frontiers that had divided the Roman world from the Germanic, Asiatic, Persian, Islamic and African worlds surrounding it[123].

Over the centuries following the establishment of Arab and Slav realms on territory wrested from New Rome, the Romans/the Byzantines could no longer draw the *oikoumenē* within imperial borders[124]. Yet they remained universalist: the inspiration for its constant and often self-defeating efforts to restore the ecumenical empire of Rome. There can be no doubt that Roman universalism, the firm belief that the *oikoumenē* and the *basileia* shared common space, was a fundamental principle animated Christian Roman rhetoric[125].

The notion of a unified Christian community, governed by the two divinely–appointed authorities, the *sacerdotium* and the *imperium* –this latter idea having a long pedigree which went back at least to Pope Gelasius formulation of the Two Powers in his letter of A.D. 494 to Anastasius[126].

The stress, it is true, continued to fall in the Occident too on the "universal" dimension of a *Christianitas* that inherited the ancient *Romanitas*[127]. But the geographical extent of this

117) About the development of imperial government in the western part of the Roman empire and in the early barbarian kingdoms that were established within its frontiers, see P.S. Barnwell, *Emperor, Prefects and Kings: The Roman West, 395-565*, The University of North Carolina Press, 1993, p. 53-130, 131-165.

118) L. Braccesi, *Roma bimillenaria. Pietro e Cesare*, L'Erma, Roma, 2001.

119) Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity: AD 150-750*, London, 1971, p. 19, referred to „the shifting and redefinition of the boundaries of the classical world after AD 200." Leonardo Benevolo, *The European City*, Blackwell Publishers, 1995, p. 6-18.

120) J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Barbarian West⁴, 400-1000*, Blackwell Publishers, 1996, p. 140-166; P.S. Barnwell, *Kings, Courtiers and Imperium: The Barbarian West, AD 565-725*, Duckworth, 1997.

121) Richard Lim, David Kammerling, *The West in the Wider World: Sources and Perspectives*, I. *From Antiquity to Early Modernity*, Bedford/St. Martin's Press, 2002, p. 96 sqq.

122) Peter Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire: A New History of Rome and the Barbarians*, Oxford UP, 2005; Bryan Ward-Perkins, *The Fall of Rome and the End of Civilization*, Oxford UP, 2005, p. 33-86.

123) Averil Cameron, *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity, AD 395-600*, Routledge, 1994, p. 12-57; John Moorhead, *The Roman Empire Divided: The Post Roman World, 400-700*, Longman, 2001, p. 35-66, 217-248.

124) Irfan Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, Dumbarton Oaks, 2002.

125) Glen W. Bowersock, *Hellenism in Late Antiquity*, University of Michigan Press, 1991.

126) Gelasius, *Letters* 12, 2. Text and translation in E.G. Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 266, with further references.

127) Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse*, University of California Press, 1994, p. 120-154.

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Christianitas, slowly diminished especially as a consequence of the expansion of Islam along the mediterranean coasts of Africa and because of the now definite opposition of Byzantium[128]; eventually, this *Christianitas*[129] will come to coincide with the geo-political Europe and will become a practical concept equivalent to it[130].

The universality of the Church now confirmed imperial universality; almost reversing Eusebius's rhetoric of Christian and imperial universalism. Now the empire was coterminous with the Christian *oikoumenē* in which Christ was acknowledged Lord by the nations[131].

The sentiment of a European cultural unity[132] – identified for centuries with the religious unity, beyond political divisions – will appear, clearly defined, much later, at the beginning of the *Cinquecento*, in Erasmus of Rotterdam[133]: by "barbarian" he understood "non-european", referring to inhabitants of other continents. In his turn, Machiavelli will express a European consciousness, entirely secular[134], based on the idea of belonging to a community endowed with its own political features (republics and non-absolutist monarchies, as opposed to the despotic monarchies of Asia). This "European" sentiment will be reinforced in the 17th century and exalted by the impetus of the colonial competition in North America, at a really world level[135].

The modern idea of Europe, as a *corpus civile* of its own[136], differing from other civilizations (and not only from the "barbarian" ones) finds its deepest roots in the classical idea of Europe, with which the Christianity at the end of the Antiquity contrasted the peoples situated outside the Empire.

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