Introduction

In this thesis, I will consider how the conditions of subjection and imperialism were reproduced in both Rome and Han Dynasty China. Three elements will be considered: 1) an imperialist mindset or ideology on the part of the imperializing power, 2) a foreign policy that emphasizes exemplary violence and which seeks to instill an ideology of fear and repression in the periphery, and 3) the negative characterization of one’s enemy to justify imperialism. I will argue that, together, these three elements were part of an imperialist machine whose objective was the conquest and subjugation of others.

For the purposes of a consistent vocabulary, I shall adopt several definitions proposed by Michael Doyle, a theorist on various forms of imperialism. Doyle identifies imperialism as “the process of establishing and maintaining an empire,”¹ and empires as “relationships of political control imposed by some political societies over the effective sovereignty of other political societies.”² Empires consist of metropoles and peripheries; the metropole being the controlling or dominating society, while the periphery is the society or people that is being controlled.³

The Roman episodes under consideration will include the Second Punic War (218-201 B.C.), Caesar’s conquest of the Gallic territories (58-50 B.C.), the Jewish Revolt (66-73 A.D.), as well as Aeneas’ mythical battles against both the Carthaginians and Italians, which will taken to be indicative of Augustan age values and beliefs. The

² Ibid, 19.
³ Ibid, 11-12.
conflict between the Han and the nomadic empire of the Hsiung-nu, which will form the centerpiece of discussion for Part I, lasted for most of the duration of the Han Dynasty itself (206 B.C.– 220 A.D.)

These two empires are particularly noteworthy for their longevity; in contrast to the Athenian and Spartan empires of the 5th century B.C., or the Macedonian Empire of the late 4th century B.C., these two societies maintained empires that lasted for many centuries. I hope that by examining the mechanics of imperialism in each nation, we might better come to understand the unique power that was wielded by both Rome and the Han.

Part I will focus on the Han Empire; it will examine the origin of hostilities between the Hsiung-nu and the Han, the subsequent events that led to China developing and maintaining an extensive empire abroad, and the three aforementioned apparatuses that assisted in both expanding and maintaining their empire. Primary sources for this section will include Sima Qian’s *The Records of the Grand Historian* and Pan Ku’s *The History of the Former Han Dynasty*.

Part II will examine Roman imperialism from both the Republican and Imperial phases; primary sources that will elucidate the particular episodes described above include Livy’s *From the Foundation of the City*, Caesar’s *The Conquest of Gaul*, Cicero’s *Speech on the Consular Provinces*, Augustus’ *Accomplishments of the Divine Augustus*, Josephus’ *The Jewish War*, and Virgil’s *The Aeneid*.  

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Part I: China

Setting the Stage:

The period that we will first consider is that of the Han Dynasty (206 B.C. –220 A.D.), which flourished at approximately the same time as the imperial order of Rome. The foundation of the Han Dynasty was preceded by two distinct periods in East Asian History. The first was the Spring and Autumn period (722 B.C.-481 B.C.), in which hundreds of small city states “engaged in a diplomatic-military free-for-all, some absorbing others.” The second was the Warring States period (403 B.C.-221 B.C.), in which only seven primary states remained and competed with one another. China was first unified at the end of the Warring States period by the ruler of Ch’in in 221 B.C., a man who titled himself the ‘First Emperor.’ The First Emperor’s methods of control were extremely harsh, however, and upon his death in 210 B.C. his empire quickly disintegrated. During the subsequent civil war that enveloped China, a man of common origin named Kao-tsu (originally Liu Chi) gained control of the kingdom of Han, and thereafter most of China, inaugurating the Han Dynasty roughly around 206 B.C., a legacy that was to flourish for over 400 years.

Prior to the beginning of the Han Dynasty, the constant increase in state power and size of armies that was a hallmark of the late Warring States period encouraged a constant expansion in the quest for new resources. The northern states of Ch’in, Yen, and

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5 Ibid, 57-59.
Chao were especially adept at this, and expanded steadily northwards. It was this expansion that first met with resistance by northern nomads, and to secure their gains, these states built extensive walls on their northern boundaries (these original walls are the precursors of the infamous Great Wall). The Han Dynasty took up this legacy and continued to push northwards, and it was in this effort that the Han discovered the enemy that would dominate both Han popular imagination and foreign policy for most of the duration of the Dynasty: the Hsiung-nu empire.

The origin of enmity between the Hsiung-nu and the Han is closely bound up with the formation of the Hsiung-nu empire itself, which happened approximately at the same time as the creation of the Han Dynasty. Nicola DiCosmo, a scholar who has recently explored relations between the Han Dynasty and the Hsiung-nu, has posited the explanation that Hsiung-nu unification and expansion occurred as a result of the invasion and expansion into their grasslands by the Chinese peoples to the south, and was specifically begun by the Ch’in general Meng T’ien’s invasion of the Ordos area (where the Hsiung-nu pastured their animals) in 215 B.C.. DiCosmo argues that this process of unification involves three distinct stages: Crisis, Militarization, and Centralization.

These three stages are drawn from the examination of many pastoral nomadic societies throughout history. In the first stage, Crisis, something happens to affect the extremely fragile nomadic economy. This was undoubtedly the invasion of Meng T’ien, described above, which drove the Hsiung-nu from their traditional grazing grounds. The next step, Militarization, involves a transferal of power to the military aristocracy in order to combat and deal with the Crisis. This could take the form of military escorts to transfer

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7 Ibid, 174-178.
the people safely to new territory, or the formation of an army to invade another area. Charismatic military leaders also seem to arise during this time, and the man who would rise to prominence among the Hsiung-nu and unite them was named Modun. The third act in this three-part play is Centralization, the process by which a central bureaucracy and military is formed to support the rule of the leader. Modun (the Hsiung-nu name for its ruler is the *ch’an-yu*) formed this bureaucracy and a large standing army in order to subdue his Inner Asian neighbors and to retrieve the territory taken by Meng T’ien.\(^8\)

However, the formation of a full-time army and the creation of a centralized bureaucracy has several important consequences in the context of a nomadic state. Traditionally, as mentioned above, the nomadic economy is very fragile; therefore, a large portion of the nomadic society solely involved in activities that do not directly produce resources is not sustainable, and the society must look to outside resources and revenue to support the supra-tribal state. The *ch’an-yu* of the Hsiung-nu solved this problem by setting up tributary relationships with the peoples that they conquered, as noted by DiCosmo:

> There is no doubt that the nomadic peoples defeated by the Hsiung-nu were responsible for paying tribute to them and that these payments, probably exacted at fixed times from the various tribal leaders, were essential for the support of the Hsiung-nu court, military machine, and economic well-being.\(^9\)

This tributary relationship would also prove to be the keystone of Hsiung-nu policy towards China. In the year 200 B.C. the Hsiung-nu attacked the kingdom of Hann, a dependent state of the Chinese on China’s northern border. Hsin, the king of Hann, then made a pact with the Hsiung-nu and their combined forces swept south to attack the T’ai-

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\(^8\) Ibid, 186-190.  
\(^9\) Ibid, 188.
yuan commandery. Han Kao-tsu led an army north to meet the rebellion, but suffered a devastating defeat at P’ing-ch’eng in 198 B.C.. Subsequently, “the Hsiung-nu imposed tributary conditions that led to the ratification of the first-known treaty between the two powers.” Thus was the conflict between the Hsiung-nu and the Han born. We will now turn to our Han literary sources on the Hsiung-nu, Pan Ku and Sima Qian.

**The Sources:**

Before we focus on the interaction of imperialism, foreign policy, and characterization of the enemy during the Han period, it is worth taking a moment to introduce our main primary sources for this period, Sima Qian and Pan Ku, and their histories: *The Records of the Grand Historian (Shi chi)* and *The History of the Former Han Dynasty (Han shu)*, respectively.

Sima Qian was most likely born around 145 B.C., and died around 90 B.C., by which time most of his epic *Records of the Grand Historian* was completed. His father, Sima T’an, was initially created Grand Historian by Emperor Wu around 141 B.C., and Sima Qian seems to have taken up his father’s work upon the latter’s death in 110 B.C.. Halfway through his work, however, he apparently angered Emperor Wu and was ordered to undergo castration; although it was normal in these situations for honorable men to commit suicide, Burton Watson appreciatively notes, “[Sima Qian] chose to bear the indignity in order to complete his manuscript and justify himself in the eyes of posterity.”

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10 Ibid, 190-192.
11 Ibid, 192.
DiCosmo observes that previous to the endeavors of Sima Qian, the role of the historian in Chinese court society was largely confined to observing astronomical phenomena, and interpreting the moving of celestial bodies via astrological principles. However, the advent of the Hsiung-nu and the ensuing conflict demanded that China explore the North not only physically (by soldiers, colonizers, engineers, and the like), but also intellectually: “the emergence of the Hsiung-nu phenomenon was explained in the context of a set of known historical categories…In this way, the new and ominous phenomenon lost its threatening charge.”\(^\text{13}\) Sima Qian employed the empirical method of astronomy to observing the Hsiung-nu. In this way, the barbarians were categorized and rationalized, and this method would also pave the way for Pan Ku’s cataloguing of the peoples of the Western Regions. Although DiCosmo also notes that Sima Qian might be considered something of a ‘barbarophile’\(^\text{14}\) in light of his efforts to understand the Hsiung-nu through extensive ethnographic efforts, this interpretation has little impact on our investigations here. Whatever his personal views might have been, Sima Qian bowed to the widely held views of his contemporaries by also characterizing the Hsiung-nu with racial, stereotypical generalities.

The compilation of *The History of the Former Han Dynasty* was begun in 36 A.D. and most likely finished between 110 and 121 A.D.. The Pan family was responsible for its creation, of whom Pan Ku seems to have been the primary compiler.\(^\text{15}\) Beginning in the year 130 B.C., the Han embarked on a series of incursions and conquests into the so-called Western regions as a part of their efforts at depriving the Hsiung-nu empire of

\(^{13}\) DiCosmo, 297.  
\(^{14}\) Ibid, 271.  
resources and wealth. Chapter 96 of the *Han shu* is dedicated to describing this series of conquests and also the peoples and cultures of the Western regions, and is what will comprise our focus here. By this time, the Hsiung-nu had become a known quantity and as such no longer constituted such a threat to the Chinese people, as again noted by DiCosmo:

> In Pan Ku’s description of the Hsiung-nu, contrary to that of [Sima Qian], we find strong derogatory expressions, such as that the Hsiung-nu had human faces but hearts of beasts.\(^{16}\)

In Pan Ku’s time, the Hsiung-nu had become considered, categorized, and dismissed; Han hegemony and power were on the rise, and as such the conquest of the new frontier of the Western Regions seems most likely to yield evidence of interest in our investigations, rather than the assumed subservience and inferiority of the Hsiung-nu.

**The Enemy Described:**

We now turn to a crucial part of the paper, the description and characterization of the enemy and foreigner in a negative manner. It is to be noted that, in the following, words such as ‘barbarian’ and ‘savage’ are not merely words that have a negative translation in English; on the contrary, the wide range of terms used to describe aliens, as M.A.N. Loewe observes, “bear derogatory overtones that express a scorn for the non-Chinese and their standards of living and culture….”\(^{17}\) I will argue that these negative depictions justified at least in part the conquest of foreign peoples to the Chinese themselves, a point to which we will return later.

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\(^{16}\) DiCosmo, 271.

\(^{17}\) Ku, Pan, A.F.P Hulsewe and M.A.N. Loewe. p 52.
Sima Qian lays out his ethnography of the Hsiung-nu in Chapter 110 of the *Shih chi*. In describing Modun’s rise to power among the Hsiung-nu, Sima Qian speaks extensively about the *ch’an-yu*’s frightening methods of control. Modun killed his father and obtained power by ensuring the absolute loyalty of his retainers and the execution of any who would not obey him. These homicidal tendencies continued throughout his reign, in which he seemed to maintain control solely via the threat of violence and execution. After successfully conspiring to kill his father, the former *ch’an-yu*, Modun “executed his stepmother, his younger brother, and all the high officials of the nation who refused to take orders from him, and set himself up as the new [ch’an-yu].”\(^\text{18}\) Whatever the reality of Chinese politics and methods of control within dynastic struggles, this nevertheless contrasts strongly with Han notions of the Emperor’s superior *te*, or virtue. This idea posits that others submit themselves willingly because of the Son of Heaven’s inherent goodness and superiority; a system in which reliance on crass force is largely unnecessary.\(^\text{19}\)

In other parts of his narrative he emphasizes the greed and self-interest of the Hsiung-nu, which is contrasted with virtuous Chinese values:

…in periods of crisis they [the Hsiung-nu] take up arms and go off on plundering and marauding expeditions. This seems to be their inborn nature….Their only concern is self-advantage, and they know nothing of propriety and righteousness.\(^\text{20}\)

\(^{18}\) Sima, Qian, and Burton Watson. p 161.


\(^{20}\) Sima, Qian, and Burton Watson. p 155.
The passage cited above gives clear evidence of contemporary Han attitudes towards the Hsiung-nu; even if Sima Qian held sympathies with the nomads, they are not evident here. In another passage, he again addresses the barbarians’ savagery:

> When they fight, each man strives for his own gain…when they catch sight of the enemy, they swoop down like a flock of birds, eager for booty, but when they find themselves hard pressed and beaten, they scatter and vanish like the mist.²¹

The Hsiung-nu are again classified as greedy, and their behavior is also likened to that of animals. The inferiority and undisciplined nature of their military implied by this metaphor is clearly in stark contrast to established Chinese values, as again noted by DiCosmo: “the Chinese military people prided themselves on fighting ‘by the rules’ and abiding by notions of honor and selflessness.”²² There are countless examples of such descriptions of the barbarians in Sima Qian, but the above should serve our purposes; suffice it to say that despite the ethnographic and empirical attempts at understanding the enemy, the Hsiung-nu were still very much characterized in a negative and inferior fashion.

As noted above, by the time of Pan Ku’s History of the Former Han Dynasty, description of the Hsiung-nu had become even more polarized and derogatory. Information on the peoples of the Western regions was gathered in an effort to again quantify a relatively unknown area. Once again, despite these relatively empirical efforts, the peoples were defined as barbarian and ‘other’ to the Chinese. While discussing a people called the Chi-pin, who have sent an emissary to trade with the Han, an advisor

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²¹ Sima, Qian, and Burton Watson. p 165.
²² DiCosmo, 278.
named Tu Ch’in speaks ardently to the supreme general Wang Feng in an effort to
dissuade him from accepting the Chi-pin request:

If there is something which it [Chi-pin] requires, its
language is servile; if there is nothing which it desires, its
behavior is arrogant…All the instances in which China
enters into generous relations with barbarians and gratifies
their requests occur because, their territories being close,
they make incursions.….\textsuperscript{23}

Tu Ch’in speaks from the belief that the people of Chi-pin want to be allowed to send a
tributary delegation to the Emperor not out of a desire to show submission, but in reality
to trade with Han merchants and wealth; to him, the ‘barbarians’ are nothing but
avaricious and deceitful. In yet another portion of this endless catalogue of foreigners, the
people of Wu-sun are even likened to the Hsiung-nu:

Their way of life is the same as that of the Hsiung-nu. The
state has numerous horses, and rich persons may own as
many as four or five thousand animals. The people are
hard-hearted and greedy; they are unreliable and much
given to robbery.\textsuperscript{24}

The correlation between the vices of the Hsiung-nu and the Wu-sun is hard to miss;
again, the barbarians are characterized as treacherous and greedy.

\textbf{Foreign Policy as a Tool for Imperialism:}

The foreign policy which we will discuss was not a rigid framework or paradigm
that governed all foreign relations; rather, it was an adaptable set of ideas that focused on
symbolic deference of the enemy as an overarching policy goal, and one that was key to
expanding and maintaining an imperial agenda. Han foreign policy can be roughly

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid, p 144.
categorized into two patterns. The first consists of a ‘loose-rein’ appeasement policy that was utilized when the Han were either not in a position of strength or did not care to expend the necessary resources to use military force. The second involved the Han simply forcing their will through the threat of coercive force, and therefore occurred only when the Han had the advantage of superior military force.

Lien-sheng Yang explains the ‘loose-rein’ (chi-mi) policy as one essentially not obligating the Han to send punitive expeditions against barbarians who did not come to court regularly to pay tribute to the emperor.\(^{25}\) By this view, the difficulties involved for barbarians outside of China to make the journey in order to pay tribute were considered great, and it was therefore excusable when they did not come. When they did, however, the Han showered them with gifts: “the expenditures involved in the entertainments and gift-making were considered necessary.”\(^{26}\) Chusei Suzuki goes even further, however, and states that this policy of nonmilitarism was little more than a policy of bribery: “In accordance with this policy, a great many goods were sent from the Han to the Hsiung-nu in the early years of the Former Han Dynasty….”\(^{27}\)

As outlined before, this tributary appeasement policy was first used by Han Kao-tsu after his humiliating defeat by Modun at P’ing-ch’eng in 198 B.C.. This was an absolute disaster according to Chinese ideas of superiority. Thus, a clever plan was developed by Liu Ching, a councilor of Kao-tsu. The plan called for Kao-tsu’s eldest daughter to be sent to Modun as his ‘legitimate consort.’ Thus, the heir to the Hsiung-nu kingdom would be the Emperor’s grandson, and by Confucian precepts would be in theory subservient to Kao-tsu himself, and therefore all of China. The defeat by the

\(^{25}\) Fairbank, John King, and Ta-tuan Chen. p 31.
\(^{26}\) Ibid, p 32.
\(^{27}\) Ibid, p 183.
Hsiung-nu and the subsequent treaty were thereby rationalized under the guise of symbolic deference of the Hsiung-nu to Han China.\footnote{DiCosmo, 193.}

While conquering the Western regions, it seemed to have been quite a headache to attempt to quell all rebellions and disturbances of Han rule by force, and the \textit{chi-mi} was used frequently: “Whenever barbarians were assembled at court, they were always honored conspicuously, so as to make an example.”\footnote{Ku, Pan, A.F.P Hulsewe and M.A.N. Loewe. p 187.} Pan Ku also relates that, \footnote{Ibid, 203.}

\begin{quote}
Since the reign-period of Chien-wu, the Western Regions have borne in mind the might and power of Han and have all rejoiced to make themselves subjects…requesting that they be made subject to the protector general. Our saintly emperor has…declined their requests and withheld permission, while the bonds that relate them have not been severed.\footnote{Ibid, 74.}
\end{quote}

In the last instance, Chien-wu clearly considers that the costs of maintaining such a large area under direct rule (through the establishment of further commanderies subject to the protector general) would be too high; instead a loose-rein policy was adopted, which still recognized the formal superiority of the Han.

The use of military strength to implement symbolic deference was also used when available. Pan Ku explicitly states “spreading Han prestige”\footnote{Ibid, 76.} as one of Emperor Hsiao Wu’s goals in first attacking the Western Regions, and shortly after the invasion, he relates:

\begin{quote}
After the Erh-shih General’s attack on Ta Yuan, the Western Regions were shocked and frightened. Most of the states sent envoys to China to present tributary gifts….\footnote{Ibid, 76.} \\
\end{quote}
It is clear above that the demonstration of superior military force had a significant impact on the perception of the Han in the Western Regions. In the initial stages of the invasion, Han envoys were frequently harassed, especially by the states of Ku-shih and Lou-lan; Emperor Wu therefore sent the commander Chao P’o-nu to attack these kingdoms:

Chao P’o-nu reached the destination first, with seven hundred light cavalry; and having captured the king of Lou-lan he then defeated Ku-shih. He took the opportunity to stage a display of military power so as to shock (states) like Wu-sun and Ta Yuan.33

Again, it is evident that the Han thought a symbolic show of strength must have been very powerful. Although it would be easy to dismiss the actual efficacy of these displays, they seemed to be quite instrumental in maintaining and expanding the Han empire.

An advisor to the Emperor Ch’eng essentially outlines the importance of symbolic deference in the context of maintaining an orderly empire in the following passage:

If in view of these considerations we ask why [K’ang-chu] sends its sons to attend [at the Han court], [we find] that desiring to trade, they use a pretence couched in fine verbiage. The Hsiung-nu are the largest state of the many barbarians. At present they serve Han scrupulously; but if they are informed that K’ang-chu is not treating [our envoys] with proper respect, it will soon come about that the [ch’an-yu] will believe that he is being humiliated.34

The advisor, who was the protector general Kuo Shun, recognizes the dangers inherent in letting any nation under Han hegemony to flout China’s superior status. At this point (the event was thought to have taken place anywhere from 29-11 B.C.), the Hsiung-nu had been relatively pacified; to allow anyone to challenge the system of symbolic deference ran the risk of sowing dissension and inciting rebellion within the empire. Lest we think that this was an isolated occurrence, another incident deserves mention. Pan Ku describes

33 Ibid, 85.
34 Ibid, 128.
a relay service that the Hsiung-nu had in place on the edges of their empire. In some parts of the Western Regions close to the Hsiung-nu, the peoples were sufficiently in awe of the nomads’ military strength that they automatically provided food, supplies, and horses for Hsiung-nu envoys. However, when Han envoys passed the same way, they were required to pay handsomely for the same services. Han envoys were provided with the same care, however, after the formal submission of the ch’an-yu Hu-han-yeh at the Han court in 51 B.C., after which “all have held Han in high esteem.” Again, the importance of symbolic deference is not to be underestimated.

The Han Dynasty as an Imperialist Order:

Although many definitions of imperialism have been offered, the one adopted for the purposes of this thesis is relatively simple; that is, imperialism is here defined as any nation asserting its will through coercive force or other means over any other nation or people for an extended period of time. By this definition, the Han Dynasty was an imperial entity almost from the moment of its inception; upon its foundation in 206 B.C. it continued invasions northward begun by the Ch’in, and its later incursions into the Western Regions were an attempt to deprive the Hsiung-nu of resources, and thus a direct result of the conflict precipitated by the original push northwards.

I do not seek here to provide an explanation for imperialism; rather, my objective is to explore the evidence of imperialism and how it relates to both defining the enemy and expansionist foreign policy. As stated much earlier, during the late Warring States period, increased militarization led the states of Ch’in, Yen, and Chao to seek additional resources beyond the pale of their own boundaries; the continuance of this policy under

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the Han initially led to enmity with the Hsiung-nu, and was later continued out of expediency. The financial burdens of the war stressed the economy of China heavily, and the government took to relocating famine-struck families to the northern border to cultivate newly-won lands. DiCosmo notes how this turned into a vicious cycle of sorts, as “the increased Han presence in the north provided the rationale and the labor to conquer, occupy, put to cultivation, and defend larger and larger portions of nomadic land.”

Following Han Kao-tsu’s humiliating treaty after the defeat at P’ing-ch’eng in 198 B.C., the Han adopted an appeasement policy for the next half-century. This appeasement policy, however, was consistently violated by the Hsiung-nu during the years to follow, as various nomadic chieftains of the Hsiung-nu continued to make destructive raids across the northern border. A crisis was eventually precipitated, and during the reign of the Emperor Wu in the years 135-134 B.C., serious debates were held on the merit of the present policy. Eventually, an expansionist policy was adopted that involved complete military commitment abroad. DiCosmo identifies the consolidation of Han authority and technical improvements in weapons and cavalry as being the main factors enabling this shift. This militaristic approach essentially began in 133 B.C. and ended in 87 B.C., at the death of Han Wu-ti (Emperor Wu); at the end of this period, the Han had driven the Hsiung-nu back, severed the nomads’ relations with the Western Regions, and “replac[ed] the Hsiung-nu as the pre-eminent ‘superpower.’”

We earlier examined how the evolution of the Hsiung-nu empire depended in large part on extensive access to resources that the traditional nomadic economy could

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36 DiCosmo, 288.
37 Ibid, 247.
not itself provide; after the Han ceased tributary relations with the Hsiung-nu, the nomads became increasingly reliant on the Western Regions for this support. DiCosmo thus astutely observes that “the Han’s chief objective in conquering them (Western Regions) was to deprive the nomads of this source of strength and support.”

Chapter 96 of the History of the Former Han Dynasty is almost exclusively dedicated to detailing the conquest of the Western Regions by the Han. Of especial interest is the extraordinary catalogue that Pan Ku provides of each of the peoples that exist in this area; he records over 30 different entries, in which specific geographical data, systems of government, demographic data (including the number of men who can bear arms) are all recorded with exacting care. This information is clearly thought to be of great value, as observed by M.A.N. Loewe:

> Chinese historians do not aim at providing encyclopedic information for information’s sake. In the chapters which concern the alien peoples, especially, the histories try to provide a corpus of information that could still be of value to the administration and to the individual administrator.\(^{39}\)

Sima Qian prefaced his discourse on the Hsiung-nu with a similarly stated objective:

> The Han has attempted to determine the Hsiung-nu’s periods of strength and weakness so that it may adopt defensive measures or launch punitive expeditions as the circumstances allow. Thus I made The Account of the Hsiung-nu.\(^{40}\)

While it might seem painful to some to belabor the point that the Han Dynasty was an imperialist order, it is necessary for the purposes of this thesis to firmly establish that the Han adopted specifically expansionist policies, imposed its will on other nations,

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\(^{38}\) Ibid, 247.

\(^{39}\) Ku, Pan, A.F.P Hulsewe and M.A.N. Loewe. p 5.

\(^{40}\) Sima, Qian, and Burton Watson. p 155.
and articulated descriptions of the enemy that informed administrative and strategic purposes; in other words, the Han were a consciously imperialist people.

Putting the Pieces Together:

I hope that I have now amply demonstrated that the three elements observed above were quite prevalent and important in the Han Dynasty—that is, the negative characterization of one’s enemy, adoption of an imperialist-oriented foreign policy, and imperialist ambitions and goals. One issue remains, however, of the causality of these items. In other words, did they have anything to do with one another? Did each originate, exist, and function separately without any reliance, instigation, or recourse on or to either of the others? One of the rather more central ideas of this examination is that these three did, in fact, form a symbiotic relationship. More accurately, we might say that negative characterizations of the enemy and imperialist foreign policies served pre-existing imperial desires. On the surface, it might appear obvious that imperialist ambitions would necessitate an expansionist/imperialist foreign policy. However, I cannot stress strongly enough how crucial of a point this is. Foreign policy in the Han Dynasty was fundamentally organized around this central concept. The acquisition of other lands or the expansion of Han hegemony was not a happenstance occurrence or the result of a benign desire to ‘civilize’ others; it was the result of a specific imperial ideology and mindset that focused on the expansion of Han power and control.
Furthermore, the racial verbiage evident in both Pan Ku and Sima Qian was not mere cultural xenophobia (although this might have contributed at least in part), but was more specifically a means of quantifying one’s enemy and providing a justification for warfare. DiCosmo notes the importance of the latter in China’s preparation for the shift to military engagement:

The Hsiung-nu’s continuous demands for payments and their frequent raids…could be explained only by resorting to the cultural stereotype, born out of the Spring and Autumn tradition, of the uncouth, greedy, and violent foreigner. This was a convenient rationalization, not the least because it prepared the Chinese psychologically for the unavoidable consequence of the failure of peace: a painful and prolonged war against a powerful enemy.  

Together, these three elements all formed parts of a well-oiled machine, a machine whose goal was the conquest and subjugation of others. In Part II, we shall consider these same three factors in the context of Roman imperialism.

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41 DiCosmo, 209.
Part II: Rome

Preface:

Part I of this thesis began with a survey of the history immediately preceding the creation of the Han Dynasty in China. I will not provide a similar background in Part II. Whereas Han imperialism and foreign policy were largely determined by their conflict with the Hsiung-nu and the historical events surrounding this conflict, this section shall consider a wide range of Roman primary sources, from both republican and imperial phases. It would thus be unfeasible to provide an entire history stretching nearly the breadth of Rome’s existence.

The primary sources consulted here include Livy’s *From the Foundation of the City*, Virgil’s *Aeneid*, Josephus’ *The Jewish War*, Augustus’ *Accomplishments of the Divine Augustus*, Caesar’s *The Conquest of Gaul*, and Cicero’s *Speech on the Consular Provinces*. These sources cover imperialism and conquests from the Punic Wars through the Judean rebellion during the Flavian Dynasty. My argument will proceed in a similar manner: negative characterizations of the enemy, the importance of a violent, exemplary foreign policy, and the imperialist tendencies of Rome will all be explored, and their symbiotic relationship with one another considered.

The Enemies of Rome Defined:

Livy’s *War With Hannibal*, an excerpt of nine books from his original massive 142-book history of Rome, *Ab Urbe Condita*, provides us with an excellent view of Augustan-era Roman conceptions of the enemy through his treatment of the Carthaginians and other foes of Rome throughout the war.
In pursuing Scipio after his victory at the Ticinus in 218 BCE, Hannibal’s Numidian cavalry is prevented from wreaking havoc in the rear of Scipio’s army by their desire for plunder:

The Numidians allowed their greed for plunder to divert them into his abandoned camp…Valuable time had been lost, and the enemy meanwhile had slipped through their fingers.42

Livy consistently depicts the Carthaginians as sacrilegious, and the Romans, in contrast, as pious. According to Livy, “soon Roman legions will be besieging Carthage, led by those same gods who in the former war blessed their revenge for the rupture of the peace.”43 When describing Hannibal, the historian also asserts that he has “a total disregard of…religion…,”44 and in an inspirational speech to his troops, Hannibal indirectly slights the gods by claiming that by defeating the Romans the Carthaginians will reap rewards beyond even the powers of the gods to offer them: “but those same circumstances offer you in the event of victory nobler awards than a man might pray for, even from the immortal gods.”45

Livy also takes pains to make a political distinction between the Carthaginians and the Romans:

Nevertheless not even the panic caused by these depredations…could move Rome’s allies from their allegiance. And why? Because they were subject to a just and moderate rule, and were willing to obey their betters. That, surely, is the one true bond of loyalty.46

The Romans administer a ‘just and moderate rule,’ a statement that contains clear

42 de Séllincourt, 74.
43 Ibid, 32.
implications that the Carthaginians did not. Although Livy never identifies the Carthaginian government as monarchial (like the Romans, they too had a Senate), he clearly implies that the Barcid family had an unnatural, despotic influence on Carthaginian affairs, especially during the course of the war. After suffering a series of setbacks, Hannibal’s family is blamed for prolonging the war: “However, the family of the Barcae were born fighters and it was in their blood to set a tottering cause on its feet again.” At the very end of the war, when the Carthaginian delegation suing for peace terms comes before the Roman senate, one of the Carthaginians attempts to exonerate his city by placing the blame of the war at the foot of the Barcae:

The most conspicuous figure was that of Hasdrubal…who had consistently opposed the Barcine party and worked for peace…he sought to transfer the responsibility for the war from the Carthaginian people as a whole to the greed of a few.

Although Livy never calls the Carthaginians cowards, and even often praises Hannibal’s grit and bravery, he nevertheless takes pains to stress the superior courage of the Roman people, inversely pointing out the lesser courage of others:

No other nation in the world could have suffered so tremendous a series of disasters, and not been overwhelmed…except in the fact that they were not born with so high a courage.

It is Livy’s belief that had any other people suffered the disastrous defeats at Trasimene and Cannae that the Romans did, they would have collapsed and capitulated to Carthaginian commands. Thus, the Carthaginians, while not cowards, certainly do not possess the same determination and courage that saw the Romans through the time

48 Ibid, 672.
49 Ibid, 154-155.
following Hannibal’s early victories.

Of all the negative characteristics associated with Carthage, none are more emphasized by Livy than their untrustworthy nature. When describing Hannibal, Livy says “but no less great were his faults: inhuman cruelty, a more than Punic perfidy, a total disregard of truth, honor, and religion, and the sanctity of an oath….“50 Although survivors of the Battle of Lake Trasimene were promised by a Carthaginian commander, Maharbal, their freedom if they surrendered, “Hannibal, however, with a truly Punic disregard for the sanctity of a promise, put them all into chains.”51 Livy seemed to associate not only Carthaginians, but foreigners in general with a deceitful nature:

He was a Spanish nobleman named Abelux…Previously he had been loyal to Carthage, but change of fortune—as it usually does where foreigners are concerned—had changed his principles.52

Abelix was an aristocrat of Saguntum and aided in returning the city to the Romans in 217 BCE, but he earns no respect from Livy for his actions; he has merely proven that foreigners are not to be trusted.

Jane D. Chaplin has proposed the fascinating idea that Livy’s history is primarily exemplary; that is, Livy uses historical examples to promote what he might view as valuable lessons.53 Viewed in this light and adjusted to our current discussion, what we have examined of Livy’s Ab Urbe Condita becomes even more indicative of what the Augustan Age view of the barbarian was. Livy might have used events such as the Punic Wars as material designed to be instruct Augustan era readers of how barbarians should

52 Ibid, 118.
be perceived and how they should be defined.

Composed at almost the same time as Livy was writing his *Ab Urbe Condita*, Virgil’s *Aeneid* is an extremely rich primary source for Roman definitions of the enemy. Commissioned by Augustus following his victory at Actium in 31 BCE, the composition of the *Aeneid* consumed the last years of Virgil’s adult life. Although the epic poem was never completely finished, it was published at the behest of Augustus upon Virgil’s death in 19 BCE. The poem recounts the story of Aeneas, the Trojan hero that ultimately founded the Roman people. I will primarily focus on Book IV and Book XII, both of which deal extensively with foreigners and enemies. During the course of Book IV, Aeneas and his compatriots find themselves in the budding city of Carthage, where Aeneas has a love affair with the Carthaginian Queen Dido. Book XII focuses on the final battle that Aeneas and the Trojans wage against Turnus and the Latins for control of Italy.

Perhaps the most pervading theme of the fourth book of the *Aeneid* is the danger of femininity and its association with Carthage, as can be seen from the irrational behavior of Dido. It is because of the emotional reaction of Dido (when she discovers that Aeneas must leave Carthage in order to continue his journey towards Italy) that the Romans and the Carthaginians would later struggle so bitterly with each other, a struggle that resulted in both horrific defeats for Rome and the destruction of Carthage:

> Then, O my Tyrians, besiege with hate his progeny and all his race to come: Make this your offering to my dust. No love, no pact must be between our peoples; no, but rise up from my bones, avenging spirit! Harry with fire and sword the Dardan countrymen now or hereafter, at whatever time the strength will be afforded.\(^{54}\)

Throughout the course of the fourth book, Virgil also stresses the disastrous consequences of a female in power. Prior to the arrival of Aeneas and the Trojans, the city of Carthage was filled with activity and an almost Roman-like industry. However, after Dido falls in love with Aeneas, all such admirable industry stops:

Towers, half-built, rose no farther; men no longer trained in arms or toiled to make harbors and battlements impregnable. Projects were broken off, laid over, and the menacing huge walls with cranes unmoving stood against the sky.\(^{55}\)

Dido also possesses an abundance of wealth, which exerts a destructive and corrupting influence on Aeneas. Mercury, sent to castigate Aeneas by Jove, catches Aeneas laying new foundations for Carthaginian buildings and observes the clothes that Aeneas wears:

He noted well the sword hilt the man wore, adorned with yellow jasper, and the cloak aglow with Tyrian dye upon his shoulders—gifts of the wealthy queen, who had inwoven gold thread in the fabric. Mercury took him to task at once….Is it for you…tame husband that you are, [to] build their city?\(^{56}\)

By showering Aeneas with wealth and money, Dido controlled and prevented him from continuing on with his most important task: the journey to Italy and the foundation of the Roman people.

Carthaginians and Italians alike are depicted throughout the *Aeneid* as being sacrilegious. Dido is skeptical and even sarcastic when Aeneas informs her that it is the gods’ will that he must leave her:

Now the prophet Apollo, now his oracles, now the gods’ interpreter, if you please, sent down by Jove himself, brings

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\(^{55}\) Ibid, 98.  
\(^{56}\) Ibid, 104-105.
through the air his formidable commands! What fit employment for heaven’s high powers! What anxieties to plague serene immortals!  

Latinus, king of the Latins and initial leader of the resistance towards Aeneas, laments his resistance of the gods: “I broke my bonds of duty, stole the girl though promised, from her husband, and took arms against the will of heaven.”

Numerous references are made about the untrustworthiness of both the Carthaginians and Italians. Dido, moments from committing suicide, acknowledges that she did not obey the vow of chastity that she took upon her previous husband’s death: “The vow I took to the ashes of Sychaeus was not kept.” Juno, eternal enemy of the Trojans, in an effort to wreak more mischief encourages Turnus’ sister, the nymph Juturna, to start hostilities between Italians and Trojans once more: “Or else renew the war, cast out the pact which they drew up. I’ll be sponsor to your audacity.” Aeneas later mourns the fact that war is now thrust upon him again by the Italians:

Calling the gods to witness that once more the fight was forced upon him, that Italians twice had turned his foes, that a second pact had now been broken.

We shall now examine *The Jewish War* by the historian Josephus. Flavius Josephus, originally a Jewish priest and leader, was also a commander during the Jewish War (67-73 A.D.). He heroically held off the Roman general Vespasian during the siege of Jotapata in 67 A.D. and ultimately surrendered to the general instead of facing death. Impressed by the courage and ingenuity Josephus had demonstrated throughout the siege

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58 Ibid, 368.
60 Ibid, 373.
61 Ibid, 389.
and also by his prophecy that he would one day be emperor, Vespasian offered Josephus a place by his side. From this vantage point, Josephus had an excellent view of events and later recorded them in his history of the conflict, *The Jewish War*.

There has been extended scholarly debate among historians as to whether Josephus’ works display continuity to a committed political allegiance and ideology, or if he was simply a turncoat whose sympathies were available to the highest bidder. This study agrees with the arguments of Per Bilde, namely in that throughout his life Josephus displayed a firm allegiance towards resolving differences between Rome and the Jewish Nation with as little bloodshed as possible. Although Josephus’ loyalties are oftentimes understandably divided during the course of his narration, he strives to provide an unbiased account of the struggle; nevertheless, however, he often defines Rome’s enemies in a manner consistent with Roman stereotypes.

At the very beginning of his history, Josephus attempts to reconcile Romans and Jews by blaming a small minority of tyrannical and despotic Jews for the cause of the Jewish War:

> For, that it owed its ruin to civil strife, and that it was the Jewish tyrants who drew down upon the holy temple the unwilling hands of the Romans and the conflagration, is attested by Titus Caesar himself.…

During the last days of the siege of Jerusalem, Josephus also records how the Jewish leaders attempted to check desertion: “Numerous prophets, indeed, were at this period

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suborned by the tyrants to delude the people, by bidding them await help from God….”

Josephus, although he often describes Judea’s ample wealth, never labels the Jewish people as greedy. However, he does brand the Parthians with such qualities and thus reveals that these stereotypes persisted in the Roman mindset. In one passage, Herod claims that “barbarians [Parthians] being by nature perfidious…” and in another, Josephus relates that “Herod…hastening to obtain from its king the money by which he hoped to move the avaricious barbarians…”

Josephus also often dwells on the superior courage of the Romans. In one passage, the Jews “had not the courage to come to close quarters with the Romans.” Later in his history, Josephus attributes Rome’s empire to her courage and bravery:

If one goes on to study the organization of their army as a whole, it will be seen that this vast empire of theirs has come to them as the prize of valor, and not as a gift of fortune.

Julius Caesar was responsible for the annexation of Gaul to the Roman empire; his campaign to pacify and conquer the entire area lasted from 58-50 B.C.E., and he details his experiences in *The Conquest of Gaul*. Caesar describes the dangerous German king Ariovistus as “an arrogant and cruel tyrant…the man was an ill-tempered, headstrong savage….” In a somewhat anthropologically motivated passage, he also describes the Germans in the following terms:

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64 Ibid, 324.
65 Ibid, 104.
67 Ibid, 117.
Their diet, daily exercise, and the freedom from restraint that they enjoy – for from childhood they do not know what compulsion or discipline is, and do nothing against their inclination – combine to make them as strong and tall as giants.\textsuperscript{70}

The Germans here are primitive creatures. Although ‘strong and as tall as giants,” they know nothing of discipline and only follow their inclinations. This seems to be a clear attempt at rationalizing and quantifying a previously unknown enemy.

In addition to characterizing the enemy in a certain manner, however, Roman writers took pains to stress that the Romans enjoyed a natural right to rule over others. Cicero, in the \textit{Speech on the Consular Provinces}, observes causally that the “Jews and Syrians [are] themselves people born to be slaves.”\textsuperscript{71} Later in the same speech, while observing the state of Gaul prior to the arrival of Caesar, he declares:

\begin{quote}
The rest [of Gaul] was peopled by tribes who were either enemies of our rule or rebels against it, or by men unknown to us or known only as wild, savage, and warlike – tribes which no one who ever lived would not wish to see crushed and subdued.\textsuperscript{72}
\end{quote}

Much of the same material may also be found in Josephus’ \textit{Jewish War}.

According to Bilde, Josephus was only able to justify the defeat of the Jews by attributing it to supernatural causes.\textsuperscript{73} Just as God in the Old Testament had used the Assyrians and Babylonians to punish his wayward people, he now used the Romans as his tool to chastise the Jewish people. Thus, he asserts that God has sided with the Romans and that the Jews transgress sacred boundaries by continuing to resist the

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid, 145.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid, 581.
\textsuperscript{73} Bilde, 75.
Romans:

To scorn meaner masters might, indeed, be legitimate, but not those [Romans] to whom the universe was subject... Fortune, indeed, had from all quarters passed over to them, and God, who went the round of the nations bringing to each in turn the rod of empire, now rested over Italy.  

Josephus also recalls having prophetic dreams, in which he claims God revealed to him that the Romans were destined to conquer Judea:

But as Nicanor was urgently pressing his proposals, and Josephus overheard the threats of the hostile crowd, suddenly there came back into his mind those nightly dreams, in which God foretold to him the impending fate of the Jews and the destinies of the Roman sovereigns.

These explanations for Roman conquest go a long way towards justifying Roman rule over their provinces.

An Exemplary Foreign Policy:

Susan P. Mattern identifies as the main impetus behind Roman foreign policy during the Principate the desire to not appear cowardly or fearful to the various barbarian peoples surrounding the Roman Empire. She claims that Romans believed that if they did not display an aggressive image in dealings with other peoples that it would produce confidence in the enemy and hence undermine national security. Thus, Mattern states, “Symbolic deference from the enemy was a policy goal.” Andrew Lintott concurs (albeit in the context of relations along the Eastern borders), stating that one of Augustus’

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74 Josephus, Marcus and Thackeray, 281-282.
75 Ibid, 240.
77 Ibid, 22.
goals was “the establishment of a psychological ascendancy over peoples living at the fringe of the desert or wandering form the desert into cultivated areas.” This essay will argue that this policy of symbolic deference was not confined solely to the Principate, but was used widely in Rome’s foreign relations throughout both the Republic and Empire.

Caesar’s *Conquest of Gaul* reveals several times over the importance of achieving a ‘psychological ascendancy’ over the enemy. While entreating Caesar to help the Aedui and other Gauls to repel the German king Ariovistus from Gaul, Diviciacus of the Aedui states the following:

> But your great prestige, the recent victory of your army,  
> And the terror of the Roman name, could deter him from bringing fresh German hordes across and protect all Gaul from his depredations.  

Clearly, the power and reputation of the Romans are thought by Diviciacus to be enough to deter an invasion from Germany. After capturing the city of the Atuatuci, killing 4,000 of their soldiers, and selling into slavery approximately 53,000 of their population, and in addition after subduing various peoples along the Atlantic seaboard, Caesar reports:

> These various operations had brought about a state of peace throughout Gaul, and the natives were so much impressed by the accounts of the campaigns which reached them, that the tribes living beyond the Rhine sent envoys to Caesar promising to give hostages and obey his commands.

The next year, while suppressing a revolt of the Veneti and their allies, Caesar lists as one of his chief motives for undertaking the campaign “the danger that if these were left unpunished others might think themselves entitled to follow their example.” In the middle of the winter, during the rebellion of Vercingetorix in 52 B.C. Caesar marched to

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79 Caesar, 44.  
80 Ibid, 73.  
81 Ibid, 78.
the relief of the Boii “rather than alienate all his supporters by submitting to such a loss of prestige.”

Cicero, while arguing for an extra-legal extension of Caesar’s command in Gaul in the *Speech on the Consular Provinces* (which is linked by the laws of Rome to the forfeiture of the provinces of Macedonia and Syria by two other ex-consuls), laments the present state of affairs in Macedonia:

> And yet this Macedonia, after we had subdued the neighboring peoples and crushed the barbarians, pacified and tranquil as it was in itself, we formerly secured with a small garrison and a handful of soldiers…merely by the name of the Roman people….\(^83\)

Cicero stresses that the ‘name of the Roman people’ was above all sufficient to secure the peace and tranquility of a province.

Josephus also attaches great import to this symbolic form of foreign policy in *The Jewish War*. After describing the efficiency of the Roman army and his admiration of the empire they have conquered, Josephus writes:

> If I have dwelt at some length on this topic, my intention was not so much to extol the Romans as to console those whom they have vanquished and to deter others who may be tempted to revolt.\(^84\)

This statement in essence encapsulates the goal of Roman foreign policy and their treatment of foreigners; the Romans wished to discourage peoples already under their dominion and potential enemies from making war on the Roman state by assuring them that if they do, they will lose and risk complete destruction. Ultimately, complete destruction was the fate that awaited Jerusalem. Upon capturing the city, Titus

\(^82\) Ibid, 159.  
\(^83\) Cicero, 545.  
\(^84\) Joesphus, 219.
demolished the Temple and razed the city, as Warwick Ball states, “so completely as to provide no rallying point for future Jewish insurrections.”\textsuperscript{85} It is also worth noting that Ball also argues that what mattered most to Roman foreign policy goals in the East were perceived threats, as opposed to any reality.\textsuperscript{86}

**Putting the Pieces Together: The Roman Imperialist Order:**

Although there has been extensive scholarly debate on the motivations of Roman imperialism, most scholars have agreed that Rome nevertheless consciously and deliberately embarked on expeditions to subjugate other nations and peoples through the use of coercive force. At the risk of overemphasizing the obvious, however, it is worth noting several statements that assert Rome’s imperial nature.

Augustus, in his *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, proudly states as one of his accomplishments:

> I extended the territory of all those provinces of the Roman people on whose borders lay peoples not subject to our government.\textsuperscript{87}

Perhaps most striking is Cicero’s statement in his *Speech on the Consular Provinces*:

> I can speak of every region of the world, of every kind of enemies. There is no race which has not been either so utterly destroyed that it hardly exists, or so thoroughly subdued that it remains submissive, or so pacified that it rejoices in our victory and rule.\textsuperscript{88}

These two statements go a long way towards summarizing Roman attitudes and beliefs on imperialism. What role, then, did foreign policy and characterization of the enemy

\textsuperscript{86} Ibid, 59.
\textsuperscript{88} Cicero, 577.
play? Very similar to our discussions on the foreign policy of the Han, Rome set great store by a symbolic system of foreign relations; in actions and literature, Roman prestige and military might were emphasized in an effort to achieve a systematic ‘psychological ascendancy’ over the enemy. This foreign policy helped a great deal to secure Roman territories and conquests.

Perhaps most interestingly, an enormous amount of Roman literature was dedicated to describing and defining foreigners and enemies, and to justifying Roman conquests. This served a primarily twofold purpose: it quantified and rationalized enemies within a Roman context, thus removing fears of the ‘other,’ and it also justified Roman imperialism. Once again, however, we have observed these three elements working in concert with one another. An exemplary, violent foreign policy, stereotypical definitions of one’s enemy, and an imperialist mindset combine to form a truly formidable imperialist war machine.
Conclusion

I would like to conclude with a brief reflection on the entirety of this project. As I originally conceived of my argument, it seemed to me that the three elements I discuss were equally functioning cogs in what I have termed an imperialist machine. While I still believe all three were critical in reproducing imperialism in both Rome and China, it now appears to me that an imperial ideology and the negative characterization of one’s enemy were of particular importance in recreating both the drive and the justification for imperialism on the part of the metropole. On the other hand, a system of foreign relations that enforced an ideology of obedience to the established order through displays of exemplary violence was of utmost importance not in producing imperialism, but rather in maintaining control of others, both during the process of conquest and during occupation. This may seem like an extremely bold claim to some, and so I would like to add a few words about the efficacy of an ideology as a tool of control. At the risk of being accused of making an anachronistic interpretation of ancient imperialism, I turn to the work of two scholars whose work focuses on class conflict in capitalist societies.

Louis Althusser, a prominent scholar and theorist, outlines how the conditions of subjection for the working class are systematically reproduced in a capitalist society. In the tradition of Althusser, all three of the above ‘mechanics’ of imperialism can be accurately termed ideological state apparatuses (ISA’s), which insure that on an ideological and intellectual level the conditions of subjection are palatable to the dominated classes. These are differentiated from repressive state apparatuses (such as the police, military, etc.), which physically assert the will of the dominant society.

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Key to Althusser’s argument is the concept of interpellation. Interpellation positions individuals, ideologically, as subjects to another, central Subject. The process of interpellation occurs before we have any consent in the matter, and is both a positive and negative phenomenon. Before our births, decisions out of our control are made about what society we shall be born in, what laws govern that society, what economic strata we shall be born into, etc. Thus, we are already interpellated – and are empowered to move within our society, while at the same time we are also hobbled by our unthinking consent to be bound by our society’s strictures. In the case of my argument, the central Subject would be the State – Rome or China. The aim of either, seen through the lens of interpellation, was the complete integration of subject populations into the social order of the empires. This was not necessarily a beneficial order, but given the longevity of each empire, we might well guess that Rome and China’s labors were repaid handsomely.

Pierre Bourdieu elaborates on the concept of ideology as a means of control and distinguishes between doxa and orthodoxy. According to Bourdieu, the continual reenactment of a mode of life, set repetitions that accord with an overall ideology and that reinforce that ideology, constitutes doxa. In this system, the subjects are completely unaware of any alternative opinions or solutions, and their condition thus seems cosmologically, politically, and intellectually self-evident. Thus, when a perfect fit occurs between the objective features of reality and one’s internalized expectations of the world (which is a result of the simple reproduction of doxa), perfect obedience to the dominant ideology results.

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90 Althusser, 178.
91 Althusser, 176.
Orthodoxy, by contrast, establishes a set order to adhere to, but is set in opposition to one or more heterodoxies, which challenge the hegemony of the orthodoxy; although the dominant orthodoxy cannot suppress the existence of these heterodoxies, it does label them as heretical and blasphemous in an attempt to assert its own dominance. In the context of class struggle, Bourdieu claims that the role of the dominating classes is to continually strive to enforce its own ideology – through doxa or orthodoxy – on the dominated classes, and for the dominated classes to continually strive to escape from the confines of both.

I believe that Bourdieu’s distinction between doxa and orthodoxy is particularly useful to my study. Rome and the Han’s unthinking acceptance of the necessity of conquest and expansion is the most blatant adherence to ideology that I can imagine, and clearly falls under the aegis of doxa. By contrast, the tension between orthodoxy and heterodoxy defines the struggle for controlling the periphery in both the Roman Empire and China. Both empires attempted to impose their own worldview and ideology on their would-be subjects, while at the same time struggling to suppress any ideas of independence or liberation.

A major difficulty with my argument is the issue of how an ideology of fear and repression was communicated across centuries of subjection. After all, Caesar’s conquest of Gaul took only eight years, after which Gaul remained a relatively peaceful province for hundreds of years. Large rebellions were never mounted, and in consequence displays of exemplary violence were not needed. How, then, was this ideology reproduced? Although I did not have the time or resources to pursue this question further for the

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93 Ibid, 169.
94 Ibid, 169.
purposes of this thesis, I have several thoughts on the issue. I think it quite likely that imperial architecture and artwork throughout the provinces in Rome advertised Roman martial dominance and projected images of conquered populations in positions of inferiority and subjection. As well, some scholars have pointed out that the gladiatorial combats and other spectacles in the arena would have provided extremely memorable examples of those who break Roman law and who resist Roman rule. Although I am less familiar with the art and culture of Han Dynasty China, I would not be surprised if the Han undertook similar efforts. I believe that phenomena such as the above would have worked very well to ensure the continual imposition of an ideology of fear.

I should also point out that I do not discount the existence of positive encouragements to obey imperial powers. Various scholars have pointed out that better roads, systems of trade, communication, juridical structures, and the like would have all been extremely appealing to subject populations. This is very possible; however, I hope that I have amply demonstrated that it was fundamentally the coercive threat of force on the part of the metropole that held subject populations in line.

I hope that by observing a relatively similar phenomenon in two cultures that were separated both physically and psychologically by great distances, the importance of our three apparatuses – an imperial mindset, a heavily exemplary foreign policy that focuses on violence as a method of control, and the definition of one’s enemy in a manner that justifies imperialism – will become ever more apparent. The power of the imperialist machine that these three helped to constitute should not be underestimated. The possibility that this machine has also transcended time and perhaps operates in some of today’s societies is also an intriguing one, as well as a possible warning bell.
References


