

2. Romanae spatium est urbis et orbis idem: Roads, space and perspectives in the Roman empire

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1. Introduction

A funerary inscription from Acelum, today's Asolo near Treviso, in the Veneto region shows the following text:

[Name of the deceased] who lived about 40 years, Martina, the dear wife, who came from Gaul over 50 mansiones to pay tribute to the memory of the dearest husband, that you may rest well, husband.



Fig. 1. CIL V 2108 (p. 1069)

Mommsen described the fragment, which is now lost, as heavily weathered and difficult to read.¹ Nevertheless, it seems to contain very interesting information: Martina had a tomb erected in Acelum for her deceased husband. She had travelled there from Gaul over 50 *mansiones*.

* Literature subsequently referenced in abbreviated form: Nicolet, Space, Geography and Politics = C. Nicolet, Space, Geography, and Politics in the Early Roman Empire (Ann Arbor 1991).

¹ CIL V 2108 (p. 1069): [---] qui vixi[t] an[nos] / plus minus XL Mar/tina cara coniux / qu[ae] / venit de Gallia per man/siones L ut commemo/raret memoriam du[lcis/si]mi mariti sui / bene qu(i)escas dulcissime / marite. The fragment (earliest seen in Asolo "nel muro in chiesa un pezzo di pietra rota et fori di chiesa due altri pezzetti") changed ownership and location several times between the years 1615 and 1712.

We know the expression *mansio* as stopping place usually to be found along main routes in the Roman empire. In relation to a journey, *mansio* also refers to “the distance between two stations” or the time necessary to travel that distance, which normally means “a day’s journey”.² Our inscription here seems to refer to this information on time and space, i.e. the distance and duration travelled. However, the exact starting point and the circumstances of the journey remain unclear. I used to think that the husband had died on a business trip and that the wife had travelled after him from her home in Gaul. However, as the burial is more likely to have taken place at home, she was obviously the only one travelling abroad (somewhere in Gaul) and hurried home to at least immortalize the memory of her husband who had died in her absence. No matter – as it was – Martina states that she travelled over 50 rest stops or day trips – i.e. up to 1500 km. She must have worked out the route for her journey over 50 stops, that means obtained or made an itinerary. How did she achieve this?

According to the apparently modest gravestone, she did not belong to the social elite, so we cannot assume a higher education. Nevertheless, it was possible for her to travel across provinces – presumably within a group – and to recognize the distance and stations of her journey. Ancient itineraries have hardly come down to us today apart from the *Itinerarium Antonini*, *Itinerarium Burdigalense* or the *Tabula Peutingeriana* and a few other references, most of which belong in an official or elite context.³ But as this example shows, it must have been possible for members of the lower classes to find out about paths, routes and distances within the empire. Itineraries are therefore a largely lost source genre that must have been available to mobile people in antiquity.⁴

² Pliny HN 6,96; 6,102; It. Ant. 439,11,13; distance: Plin. HN 12,52; 12,64; Lact. mort. pers. 45.

³ On itineraries in short J. Fugmann, *Itinerarium*, RAC 19, 1999, 1–31; with further literature see A. Kolb, *Antike Strassenverzeichnisse – Wissensspeicher und Medien geographischer Raumerschließung*, in: D. Boschung – Th. Greub – J. Hammerstaedt (eds.), “Morphome des Wissens: Geographische Kenntnisse und ihre konkreten Ausformungen”. Beiträge der Tagung vom 15.–17. Juli am Internationalen Kolleg Morphomata (München 2013) 192–221; A. Kolb, *The Romans and the World’s Measure*, in: S. Bianchetti – M.R. Cataudella – H.-J. Gehrke (eds.), *Brill’s Companion to Ancient Geography* (Leiden/Boston 2016) 235–237.

⁴ The procedure of route planning was apparently too commonplace to be described in detail in historiography or elsewhere; Vegetius alone describes it for the military in the 4th century: Veg. mil. 3,6,4: *Primum itineraria omnium regionum, in quibus bellum geritur, plenissime debet habere perscripta ita, ut locorum intervalla non solum passuum numero, sed etiam viarum qualitate perdiscat, compendia, devorticula, montes, flumina ad fidem descripta consideret usque eo, ut sollertiores duces itineraria provinciarum, in quibus necessitas gerebatur, non tantum adnotata sed etiam picta habuisse firmentur, ut non solum consilio mentis, verum aspectu oculorum viam profecturus eligere*; on this see. M. Rathmann, *Orientierungshilfen von antiken Reisenden in Bild und Wort*, in: E. Olshausen – V. Sauer, Vera (ed.), *Mobilität in den Kul-*

The Roman Empire was without parallel in the western ancient world. No other empire exercised a similar extent, intensity or continuity of authority. What had once been a small settlement at the bank of the Tiber had, after many centuries of successful expansion, become the dominating power of the Mediterranean. This is poignantly illustrated by the famous dictum of the *mare nostrum* – “our” sea. As a matter of fact, the Mediterranean had become an inland sea at the end of the Republic. Yet, Rome's territorial expansion did not stop then and there. It was only with the reign of Traian that the Imperium Romanum reached its greatest extent. In its Golden Age the empire reached approximately 6 million square kilometres and was home to a multi-ethnic state of about 60-80 million people.⁵

The Imperium Romanum was destined to dominate the ancient world for many centuries to come. This fact is reflected by Roman mentality and self-representation, which construed the empire as a world-spanning empire. This paper reconsiders the development of this fiction and explores its reception in Roman society with a particular focus on the transportation infrastructure and its utilisation.

2. Vision of a world Empire: *oikumene* – *orbis terrarum* – *orbis Romanus*

Since the Middle Republic, ancient authors praised Rome's vast territorial extent as a special feat, as a characteristic of the Imperium Romanum even.⁶ Polybius reported the subjugation of the inhabited world, the *oikoumene*, by the power of the Romans and chronicled its events, causes and mechanics in his histories: “For where is there such a dull and indifferent person who would not wish to know how and by what form of government almost the entire inhabited world was overpowered and brought under the sole rule of the Romans in less than 53 years.”⁷

turen der antiken Mittelmeerwelt. Stuttgarter Kolloquium zur Historischen Geographie des Altertums 11, 2011 (Stuttgart 2014) 411–423.

⁵ Dio 72,36,4 describes the era of the 2nd century AD as golden kingdom; K. Harper, *Disease and the Fate of Rome*, Princeton 2017, 30 f. estimates the imperial population at 60 million for the time of Augustus and then 75 million in the 3rd century.

⁶ On the topic of the Roman empire as a world-spanning entity see J. Vogt, *Orbis Romanus. Ein Beitrag zum Sprachgebrauch und zur Vorstellungswelt des römischen Imperialismus*, in: J. Vogt, *Vom Reichsgedanken der Römer* (Leipzig 1942) 176–207; C. Nicolet, *Space, Geography, and Politics in the Early Roman Empire* (Ann Arbor 1991) especially 29 ff.

⁷ Pol. 1,1,5; similarly 1,2,7; 1,3,9–10; 3,1,4; for a perspective in global history, see W. Siegfried, *Studien zur geschichtlichen Anschauung des Polybios* (Leipzig – Berlin 1928) 91–106; F. W. Walbank, *A historical commentary on Polybius* (Oxford 1957) 40. 42; for the Greek conception of the *oikoumene* essentially F. Gisinger, *Oikumene*, RE 17, 1937, 2123–2174; Nicolet, *Space, Geography and Politics*, 30; Polybius' view of a ‘fusion’ of the histor-

Claude Nicolet is right to conclude that this statement “cannot mean that the Romans dominated the entire area of the *Oikumene*, but rather that they were present in every part of it and – at that time – had no serious competitors.”⁸

The following times then show this equation of Roman reign with the power over the *oikumene* (inhabited world) or *orbis terrarum* as a common motif. The works of Cicero may be its richest source, followed by poets and historians at the end of the Republic and the beginning of the Principate.⁹ Augustus exploited the fiction even stronger by emphasising his accomplishments in various media and promoting himself as a peacemaker, conqueror and sole ruler of the world. In the aftermath of the battle of Actium (31 BC), impressive series of coins were struck, displaying the goddess of victory, striding on a globe. Moreover, Augustus put up such a Victoria on a globe in the *Curia Iulia* in gratitude for his victory.¹⁰ Other important documents are of course the famous so-called world map of Agrippa of which we know only literary mentions and descriptions.¹¹ The heading of Augustus' political testament of 14

ical spaces is addressed by F. K. Maier, *Chronotopos. Erzählung, Zeit und Raum im Hellenismus*, *Klio* 98/2, 472 f.

⁸ Nicolet, *Space, Geography and Politics*, 30; M. Oellig, *Die Sukzession von Weltreichen: zu den antiken Wurzeln einer geschichtsmächtigen Idee* (Stuttgart 2023) 540.

⁹ Firstly, see the Auctor ad Herennium 4,9,13: *nedum illi imperium orbis terrae, cui imperio omnes gentes, reges, nationes, partim vi, partim voluntate consensuerunt, cum aut armis aut liberalitate a populo Romano superati essent, ad se transferre tantulis viribus conarentur*. (Transl. H. Caplan); cf. Nicolet, *Space, Geography and Politics*, 31; Oellig, *ibid.* (fn. 6) 540; for later sources see Vogt, *ibid.* (fn. 4) 178–184; Nicolet, *Space, Geography and Politics*, 31; Oellig, *ibid.* (fn. 6) 540; esp. beginning of the principate Lucr. 3,836 f.; Dion. Hal. ant. 1,2,1; Liv. 1,16,6–7; Vell. 1,2,3; 2,124,1; 2,126,3.

¹⁰ BMC I 99 n. 603 tab. 14,19; RIC I 62 n. 27; RIC I² 59 n. 254; W. Trillmich, *Münzpropaganda*, in: *Kaiser Augustus und die verlorene Republik. Eine Ausstellung im Martin-Gropius Bau, Berlin 7.Juni-14.August 1988* (Berlin 1988) 509 n. 329. The motif of the globe as sign for the world is shown on coins since 76 B.C. see Nicolet, *Space, Geography and Politics* 35; essentially on the topic see R.V. Sidrys, *The Mysterious Spheres on Greek and Roman Coins* (Oxford 2020). Due to its political importance the image of Victoria grew in popularity during imperial and late antique times, see T. Hölscher, *Victoria Romana* (Mainz 1967) 6–47.

¹¹ Although scholars have argued that it also could concern a textual form (e.g. K. Borderesen, *Terra Cognita: Studien zur römischen Raumerfassung* ²(Hildesheim 2003) 268–287), a graphic representation of the *orbis terrarum*, i.e. in the sense of a map, is to be favoured; see C. Hänger, *Die Karte des Agrippa*, in: M. Rathmann (ed.), *Wahrnehmung und Erfassung geographischer Räume in der Antike* (Mainz 2007) 135–142; cf. further P. Arnaud, *Texte et carte de Marcus Agrippa: historiographie et données textuelles*, *GeoAnt* 16/17, 2007/2008, 73–126; M. Rathmann, *Geographie in der Antike. Überlieferte Fakten, bekannte Fragen, neue Perspektiven*, in: J. Hammerstaedt – D. Boschung – T. Greub (eds.), *Morphome des Wissens. Geographische Kenntnisse und ihre konkreten Ausformungen, Beiträge der Tagung vom 15.–17. Juli am Internationalen Kolleg Morphomata* (München 2013) 11–49; M. Rathmann, *Orientierungshilfen von antiken Reisenden in Bild und Wort*,

contains a prominent culmination of this notion: CE „*Rerum gestarum divi Augusti quibus orbem terra[rum] imperio populi Rom[ani] subiecit*“¹² This notion of empire, as a peaceful and world-spanning space, governed centrally by a single ruler, established the state doctrine of the Roman emperors to be kept up by all his successors.¹³ Literary sources as well as the mass medium of coins in particular propagate the emperor as lord of the world which also fulfils central needs by labelling him as «*rector et parens orbis*» in the early empire and later as «*propagator orbis* or *locupletator orbis*», and during or after difficult times as «*pacator orbis, restitutor/reparator orbis* or *defensor orbis*» what is testified well into

in: E. Olshausen – V. Sauer. (eds.), *Mobilität in den Kulturen der antiken Mittelmeerwelt*. 11. Internationales Kolloquium zur Historischen Geographie des Altertums in Stuttgart (Stuttgart 2014) 411–423. The map of Agrippa must have been a monument of good publicity by which the power of Rome and its emperor were brought home to the mass public of the capital. A pictorial representation is thus most likely. The Tabula Peutingeriana (at around AD 300) is a later shape of such sort of documentation. Interestingly enough it suggests that the *orbis Romanus* with his traffic system extended to the south Indian harbour town of Muziris, where a *templum Augusti* marked the end of the world. Tab. Peut. 11,5; most recently on the significance of the Tab. Peut. M. Rathmann, *Neue Perspektiven zur Tabula Peutingeriana*, *GeoAnt* 20/21, 2011/2012, 83–102. Roman trade in Muziris is described by Plin. nat. 6,104, but specifically documented by a loan agreement agreed upon in the city SB XVIII 13167 (2. Jh.); for the *templum Augusti* see M.A. Speidel, *Augustus-Tempel in Indien und im Partherreich? Zur Tabula Peutingeriana und zum römischen Kaiserkult ausserhalb des Römischen Reiches*, in: A. Kolb – M. Vitale (eds.), *Kaiserkult in den Provinzen des Römischen Reiches – Organisation, Kommunikation, Repräsentation* (Berlin 2016) 101–121.

¹² RGDA = EDCS-20200013 = CIL 03, p 0774. Reflections of a permanent publication of this document have so far been reliably attested only from the province of Galatia (from Ancyra, Appollonia and Antiochia), see latest W. Eck, *Die Königin der Inschriften*, in: Ernst Baltrusch – Christian Wendt (eds.), *Der Erste. Augustus und der Beginn einer neuen Epoche (Antike Welt Sonderband)* (Mainz 2016) 17–30 who (with J. Nollé, *Zur Neuentdeckung einer sardianischen Fassung der Res Gestae*, *Gephyra* 7, 2010, 143–145), does not see the recently found fragment from Sardeis (published by P. J. Thonemann, *A Copy of Augustus' Res Gestae at Sardis*, *Historia* 61, 2012, 282–288) as part of the RGDA; also S. Mitchell, *Das Monumentum Ancyranum: Text, Gebäude, Geschichte*, in: A. Eich (ed.): *Inschriften edieren und kommentieren. Beiträge zur Editionspraxis, -methodik und -theorie* (Berlin 2022) 51–74 seems to agree (without mentioning this discussion) and judges the provincial publication as following the wishes of the Roman Senate, whereas Eck explains it as a special initiative of the Galatian governor. Consequently, there is no evidence to date that the permanent publication of the RGDA spread beyond Galatia, as has already been shown by A. E. Cooley, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti: text, translation, and commentary* (Cambridge 2009) 22 in her concise discussion of the publication process: "Nor should we exclude the possibility that other copies of the RGDA may at some point be found in a different province; I simply suggest that it is not safe to assume that the RGDA was universally published, and that it is worthwhile exploring local contexts in order to understand why it was set up".

¹³ G. Woolf, *Inventing Empire in Ancient Rome*, in: S. E. Alcock et al. (eds.), *Empires. Perspectives from Archaeology and History* (Cambridge 2001) 311–322.

late antiquity.¹⁴ It was, of course, known that there were other or foreign areas on the *oikomene* besides the Roman world (*orbis Romanus*), which is clearly implied by the term of *noster orbis* – witnessed so far since the early empire.¹⁵

3. The importance of transport infrastructure from the perspective of the emperor and the elite

The territory of the empire was integrated by a well developed transport infrastructure that was the basis for all communication and exchange. The Roman road system was at the same time regionally interconnected as well as of a global, empire-spanning extent, which was only to be reached again in 18th century Europe. It consisted of routes on land and sea that not only made possible the setup of a vast territorial state spanning the Mediterranean but also its consolidation and political and administrative pervasion.¹⁶

Due to its extensive territory Rome's rule was dependent on reliable and rapid communication as well as efficient routes of transportation. Transportation links thus were the basis and medium of Roman dominion. As illustrated by Pliny the Younger's letters to Traian the main part of government and administration was effected by means of written communication of the emperor with the public representatives in the provinces. Likewise, the orator Aelius Aristides reflects on working methods of Antoninus Pius. This emperor, however, did not need to undertake tedious journeys all across the empire in order to

¹⁴ Martial 7,7,5 e.g.; Vogt, *ibid.* (fn. 4) 188 f.; Nicolet, *Space, Geography and Politics*, passim.- Coins firstly show *concordia orbis terrarum* during the republican civil wars RIC I² 41; *pax orbis terrarum* later in 68 RIC I² (Otho) 3-6, further e.g. RIC II² (Vespasian) 101; *locupletator orbis terrarum* RIC II² (Hadrian) 429-431; *restitutor orbis terrarum* RIC II² (Hadrian) 450-452; *securitas orbis terrarum* RIC III (Commodus) 179; *pacator orbis* RIC IV (Septimius Severus) 282; *defensor orbis* RIC V (Victorinus) 90; further examples are available.

¹⁵ In detail see Vogt, *ibid.* (fn. 4) 195 ss., with earliest reference of Vell. 1,2,3 and the notion that parts of the empire could also be labelled as *orbis* (like *orbis Lybicus* etc.); cf. later the constitution of Caracalla Dig. 1,5,17: *in orbe Romano qui sunt, ex constitutione imperatoris Antonini cives Romani effecti sunt*. Interestingly enough reflections of this self-designation (*orbis Romanus*) appear in inscriptions from Diocletian onwards more often, but at the same time the sole '*orbis*' remains a common motif such as Diocletian, in his Edict of Prices, as an example still emphasises: „*tranquillo orbis statu*“. Ed. Dioc. pr.; examples for the use of *orbis Romanus* or sole *orbis* are easy to find in the EDCS-database.

¹⁶ M. Rathmann, *Der Princeps und die viae publicae in den Provinzen. Konstruktion und Fakten eines planmäßigen Infrastrukturausbaus durch die Reichszentrale*, in: A. Kolb (ed.), *Infrastruktur und Herrschaftsorganisation im Imperium Romanum. Herrschaftsstrukturen und Herrschaftspraxis III. Akten der Tagung in Zürich 19.-20.10.2012* (Berlin 2014) 197-221; A. Kolb, *Communications and Mobility in the Roman Empire*, in: C. Bruun – J. Edmondson (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Roman Epigraphy* (Oxford 2015) 649-670.

settle disputes and problems on site. Rather he could allow himself to stay in Rome and rule the world by written orders, since no sooner were they „*written than they arrive, as if borne by winged messengers*“.¹⁷ Traffic connections were an important factor in safeguarding the existence of the empire for many centuries.

The main and most important part of this traffic system consisted of a road network of roughly 300.000 km that pervaded the empire with connecting lines of imperial roads (*viae publicae*) as well as local and regional routes. It connected the provinces with the centre in Rome or the current whereabouts of the emperor.¹⁸ In addition, lake and inland navigation – on rivers, lakes or the Black Sea – were highly developed. In various regions it was on par with or even more important than its counterpart on land.¹⁹ This elemental infrastructure that was utilised with various types of ships and technologies was purposefully supplemented by the building of harbour installations and canals.²⁰

Having planned and implemented this empire-spanning network and thus having developed the truly global extent of the empire is a feat Augustus and the following emperors were keen on documenting. Monuments and their inscriptions celebrate the building of roads, bridges, canals and other constructions. Milestones marked the distance every mile along main roads as well as canals, thus indicating the course of the route. At the same time, they bore

¹⁷ Aristeid. 26,33 (Transl. C. A. Behr).

¹⁸ On Roman roads, their building and administration, in general T. Pekáry, *Untersuchungen zu den römischen Reichsstraßen* (Bonn 1968); M. Rathmann, *Untersuchungen zu den Reichsstraßen in den westlichen Provinzen des Imperium Romanum* (Bonn 2003); in Italy R. Laurence, *The roads of Roman Italy* (London 2001); C. Campedelli, *L'amministrazione delle strade romane in Italia* (Bonn 2014); on engineering L. Quilici, *Land Transport Part 1: Roads and Bridges*, in: J. P. Oleson (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Engineering and Technology in the Classical World* (Oxford 2008) 571–579; on the development and significance cf. compare the responsibility; cf. A. Kolb, *The conception and practice of Roman rule: the example of transport infrastructure*, *GeoAnt* 20/21, 2011/2012, 54–68; C. R. Van Tilburg, *Traffic and Congestion in the Roman Empire*, (London/New York 2007); A. Kolb, *Roman Roads* (Berlin 2019).

¹⁹ B. Campbell, *Rivers and the Power of Ancient Rome*. *Studies in the History of Greece and Rome* (Chapel Hill 2012), especially 200–228. 246–330; S. MacGrail, *Sea Transport, Part 1: Ships and Navigation*, in: J. P. Oleson, *The Oxford Handbook of Engineering and Technology in the Classical World* (Oxford 2008) 606–637.

²⁰ D. J. Blackman, *Sea Transport, Part 2: Harbours*, in: J.P. Oleson, *The Oxford Handbook of Engineering and Technology in the Classical World* (Oxford 2008) 638–670; B. Campbell, *Rivers and the Power of Ancient Rome*. *Studies in the History of Greece and Rome* (Chapel Hill 2012) 219–226; A. Kolb, *The conception and practice of Roman rule: the example of transport infrastructure*, *GeoAnt* 20/21, 2011/2012, 57–58 and 64–65.

witness to the fact that what they signalled had been materialised by imperial initiative and commitment.²¹

In addition, the global perspective of the emperor and his staff was visualised by further impressive monuments, of which only a fraction survives today. The most representative landmark to illustrate the transport infrastructure and its importance for the vast space of the empire was the so-called golden milestone that Augustus had erected on the Forum Romanum in the year 20 BC.²² After having assumed the management of the roads and subsequently having introduced organisational as well as structural measures, Augustus appears to have promulgated his initiatives for the traffic system by means of this monument in the centre of Roman social and political life. Apparently, this milestone marked the start and end point of all the routes leading away from Rome. It probably bore a corresponding inscription.²³ In this way, the emperor tried to convey the image of Rome as the centre of a space developed by Roman authority.

Similar monuments were erected at prominent sites in the provinces by or with the help of inhabitants of the empire. They evince the connection to the traffic system and the inclusion into the empire: At the city gates of Leptis Magna in Libya, a milestone of the emperor Tiberius demonstrates that the sphere of the empire had been developed from the coastal town far into the uncharted south of the province by imperial order.²⁴ Besides, inscriptions on milestones from diverse regions emphasise the vast geographical scope of the spacial development of the emperors. Borders of the provinces or distant, prominent geographica such as rivers or the ocean are given as end points of particular roads.²⁵ Various miliaria in the provinces even give an additional

²¹ On milestones see with further references see A. Kolb, *Via ducta* – Roman Road building, in: id., *Roman Roads* (Berlin 2019) 11–21; on milestones of canals A. Kolb, The conception and practice of Roman rule: the example of transport infrastructure, *GeoAnt* 20/21, 2011/2012, 64–65.

²² Cass. Dio 54,8,4; Z. Mari, *Miliarium aureum*, in: M. Steinby (ed.), *Lexicon topographicum urbis Romae* 3, 1996, 250–251; see further following footnote.

²³ This can only be assumed; the discussion in K. Brodersen, *Terra Cognita: Studien zur römischen Raumerfassung* ²(Hildesheim 2003) 254–255; M. Rathmann, *Untersuchungen zu den Reichsstraßen in den westlichen Provinzen des Imperium Romanum* (Bonn 2003) 57.

²⁴ IRT 930 = AE 1936, 157 = AE 1940, 69: *Imp(eratoris) Ti(beri) Cae/saris Aug(usti) / iussu / L(ucius) Aelius Lam/ia proco(n)s(ul) ab / oppido in medi/terraneum di/rexist (!) m(ilia) p(assuum) XLIV.*

²⁵ See e.g. AE 1995, 1606 (Khirbet al-Kithara, Arabia): *Imp(erator) Caesar / divi Nervae f(ilius) Nerva / Traianus Aug(ustus) Germ(anicus) / Dacicus pont(ifex) max(imus) /⁵ trib(unicia) pot(estate) XVI imp(erator) VI / co(n)s(ul) VI p(ater) p(atriciae) redacta in / formam provinciae / Arabia viam novam / a finibus Syriae /¹⁰ usque ad mare Rubrum / aperuit et stravit p[er] C(aium) / Claudium Severum; A. Kolb, *Redacta in formam provinciae: Überlegungen zu Rolle und**

mile number to Rome besides the locally relevant distance indication.²⁶ A few years back, such a monument was found in the Pannonian community of Savaria (*colonia Claudia Savaria*, today Szombathely). Possibly, it had originally been positioned at the southern gate, the startpoint of the *via publica* to the south and Italy that converged with the Amber Road.²⁷ The fragmentary text at the end quantifies the distance from Savaria to Rome along this significant trade link with 675 Roman miles – in accordance with the testimony of ancient itineraries. Thus, this milestone reflects the imperial policy in a provincial municipality.

At the end of the third century AD the formulation *miliaria orbis restituit*, found on milestones from Numidian Zarai, refers to the continuing notion of the Roman state as a global, unitary empire.²⁸ Even as late as in the reign of Julian, a prefect of the Praetorian Guard praised the emperor as “master of the whole world” while stylising his swift journey “from the Britannic ocean to the Tigris” of the year AD 361 as an extraordinary march performance.²⁹ The transport network of the Roman Empire can therefore be seen as an ideology realised in stone.

Its benefits primarily lay in the realisation of political and administrative goals. In this sense Tacitus praises the perfect connectivity in the empire as an achievement of Augustus: “Legions, provinces, fleets, everything was tightly interconnected.”³⁰ However the advantages of the transport network also extended to other areas such as the economy, in which the state and the ruling elite ex-

Funktion der *viae publicae*, in: M. Horster – N. Hächler (eds.), *The Impact of the Roman Empire on Landscapes*, Leiden/Boston 2021 (2022) 66–68.

²⁶ See CIL XVII 2, 291 = XII 5668 p. 858; CIL XVII 2, 298 = XII 5671; CIL XVII 1, 250 = CIL II 4918; cf. M. Rathmann, *Untersuchungen zu den Reichsstraßen in den westlichen Provinzen des Imperium Romanum* (Bonn 2003) 57 w. n. 328; furthermore H. Lieb, *Zwei Wege von Narbonne nach Rom*, in: R. Frei-Stolba (ed.), *Siedlung und Verkehr im römischen Reich. Römerstrassen zwischen Herrschaftssicherung und Landschaftsprägung. Akten des Kolloquiums zu Ehen von Prof. H. E. Herzog* (Bern 2001) 156–162.

²⁷ AE 2000, 1195: [---?] *A Rom(a) S(avariam) m(ilia) p(assuum) / DCLXXV*. On the context of the find, which suggests the first century as a date of the stone (because its usage as a spolium in the first third of the 2nd century AD), see O. Sosztarits, *Meilenstein aus Savaria*, in: D. Planck – Z. Visy (eds.), *Von Augustus bis Attila. Leben am ungarischen Donaulimes*, *Schriften des Limesmuseums Aalen* Heft 53 (Aalen 2000) 57–59. The author’s conjecture that the inscription was put up in connection with the foundation of the colony by Claudius is possible yet not verifiable.

²⁸ CIL VIII 10374 = ILS 5855. CIL VIII 22473–75. 22477. 22482. 22486; the stones attest the emperors Aurelian, Tacitus, Aemilius Aemilianus, Diocletian and Maximian.

²⁹ CIL III 247 = ILS 754 = Iulian 20 (Ancyra, Galatia): *Domino totius orbis / Iuliano Augusto / ex Oceano Bri/tannico vi(i)s per / barbaras gentes / strage resistenti/um patefactis adus/que Tigridem una / aestate transvec/to Saturninius / Secundus v(ir) c(larissimus) praef(ectus) / praet(or)io [d(e)votus] n(umini) m(aiestati)q(ue) [ei(us)]*.

³⁰ Tac. ann. 1,9,5: *legiones provincias classes, cuncta inter se conexa*.

pressed their interest. This briefly addresses the issue of the use of transport infrastructure in the views of the elite. Pliny the Elder, in his *Natural History*, assures his readers that the special unity of the empire was not only helpful to government and administration but primarily to economic activity:³¹ *“For who would not admit that now that intercommunication has been established throughout the world by the majesty of the Roman empire, life has been advanced by the interchange of commodities and by partnership in the blessings of peace...”* The *pax Romana* – an achievement of the emperors and their dominion over the Mediterranean – now allowed for a global economic network.

A few years later his nephew, Pliny the Younger, used similar wording to pursue similar aims. In his panegyric on the emperor Traian he praised the food provisions of the capital and the thoroughfares and facilities established to this end by the emperor:³² *“... in his wisdom and authority and devotion to his people has opened roads, built harbours, created routes overland, let the sea into the shore and moved the shore out to sea, and linked far distant peoples by trade so that natural products in any place now seem to belong to all.”* Evidently, the empire in its globality was made accessible by imperial transportation infrastructure. This was also the subject of an eulogy on Rome held by the rhetor Aelius Aristides in AD 143 in the presence of Antoninus Pius:³³ *“Indeed, you best have proved that well-known saying, that the earth is the mother of all and the universal country to all. Now it is possible for both Greek and barbarian, with his possessions or without them, to travel easily wherever he wishes, quite as if he were going from one country of his to another. And he is frightened neither by the Cilician Gates, nor by the sandy, narrow passage through Arabia to Egypt, nor by impassable mountains, nor by boundless, huge rivers, nor by inhospitable barbarian races. But it is enough for his safety that he is a Roman, or rather one of those under you. And what was said by Homer, ‘The earth was common to all’, you have made a reality, by surveying the whole inhabited world,*

³¹ Plin. nat. 14,1,2: *quis enim non communicato orbe terrarum maiestate Romani imperii profecisse vitam putet commercio rerum ac societate festae pacis, omniaque etiam quae ante occulta fuerant in promiscuo usu facta?* (Transl. H. Rackham).

³² Plin. paneg. 29,1–2: *Instar ego perpetui congiarii reor affluentiam annonae. Huius aliquando cura Pompeio non minus addidit gloriae, quam pulsus ambitus campo, exactus hostis mari, Oriens triumphis Occidensque lustratus. Nec vero ille civilius, quam parens noster, auctoritate, consilio, fide reclusit vias, portus patefacit, itinera terris, litoribus mare, litora mari reddidit, diversasque gentes ita commercio miscuit, ut, quod genitum esset usquam, id apud omnes natum esse videretur.* (Transl. B. Radice).

³³ Aristeid. 26, 100–101 (transl. C. A. Behr). Permissive and fearless travelling as a result of the *pax Romana* is also described by other authors: Irenaeus, *Contra haereses* 4,30,7: *sed et mundus pacem habet per eos et nos sine timore ambulamus et navigamus quocumque voluerimus*; cf. H. E. Herzig, *Ohne Furcht reisen, wohin man will. Römerlob und Reisewirklichkeit bei den Griechen des 1. und 2. Jahrhunderts n. Chr.*, in: T. Szabo (ed.), *Die Welt der europäischen Straßen. Von der Antike bis in die Frühe Neuzeit* (Köln a. o. 2009) 53–58, who interprets such utterances in the context of literary stylisation.

by bridging the rivers in various ways, by cutting carriage roads through the mountains, by filling desert places with post stations, and by civilizing everything with your way of life and good order."

The idea of the Imperium Romanum as a world-spanning space was adopted by the intellectual and political elite as well as administrators (including the army). Not only do these descriptions reflect the notion of a world-spanning empire. They also illustrate its entrenchment in economy and society. Yet, the question remains whether this perspective was reserved for a political and intellectual elite or whether it also found its way into the lower strata of the population and the provincial communities, respectively.

4. The space of the empire in use and perception

The primary question is how the inhabitants of the empire located themselves in their geopolitical life situations. What was the relationship a citizen had, on the one hand, with his immediate surroundings and, on the other hand, with the global vision of the Imperium Romanum which has just been suggested? What was the inhabitant's assessment of his or her affiliation with the imperial federation or a certain province?

As with other pre-industrial states, the citizens of the Imperium Romanum too constituted a primarily agrarian society. Its majority worked in farm production or benefited from it. The various peoples and regions were organised by the Roman state as wider areas, the provinces, as well as territories of more than 2000 cities. The latter had functioned as political, administrative and economic centres virtually empire-wide ever since the 2nd century AD. As a result, it was the polis or the *civitas*, respectively, on which territory one lived, that acted as a determining point of reference in political, legal, administrative, social and cultural matters.

The majority of the inhabitants of the empire, in their geographical perspective, only rarely pursued goals that went beyond the territory of their city or the closer area. This is largely true for the local elites, whose political and economic interests were mainly geared to the municipal territory.³⁴ It is an obvious fact, however, for the mass of the lower strata of society. Long commutes

³⁴ It is true that there is occasional evidence of members of the local elite (not senators or *equites*) who apparently had interests in more than one municipality and were therefore members of the *ordo decurionum* in more than one city; but this seems to have been a rather small group.

were not the rule for farmers, agricultural labourers, craftsmen or merchants. The markets too apparently were within reach of half a day's journey at the maximum, i.e. a distance of about 15 km, or even closer, making a same-day return journey possible.³⁵ Accordingly, the traffic system was mainly used locally or regionally and thus had a compartmentalised structure.

This is also indicative of the organisation of transport and communication within the Imperium Romanum. These services and their corresponding infrastructure too were oriented towards the urban territories, where local shipping contractors commonly met the needs. They used to be positioned at the city gates and provided chauffeur and courier services or hired out their means of transportation, respectively. As a rule, however, they might only have provided transportation on the territory of their own municipality.³⁶

The empire's municipalities eventually handled the organisation and maintenance of the transport infrastructure. The cities bore the financial and administrative burden generated by the maintenance of public roads³⁷ as well as the *cursus publicus*, the official transport system. It is exactly the terms of use of this latter institution that bespeak the compartmentalised organisation of the traffic system: the means of transportation used were not to be utilised further than to the next station.³⁸

³⁵ Tib. 1,7,61 f.: *Te canit agricola, a magna cum venerit urbe. Serus inoffensum rettuleritque pedem*; cf. the example of the markets in the vicinity of Magnesia on Meander in J. Nollé, *Nundinas instituere et habere*, (Hildesheim a. o. 1982) 20–22; on shorter distances summarising M. I. Finley, *Die antike Wirtschaft* ³(München 1993) 149; comparative treatment in J. Bintliff, *Going to market in antiquity*, in: E. Olshausen – H. Sonnabend (eds.), *Zu Wasser und zu Land. Verkehrswege in der antiken Welt* (Stuttgart 2002) 209–250; cf. generally on the topic L. Wierschowski, *Die regionale Mobilität in Gallien nach den Inschriften des 1. bis 3. Jahrhunderts n. Chr. Quantitative Studien zur Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte der westlichen Provinzen des Römischen Reiches* (Stuttgart 1995) 16 f.

³⁶ For evidence on entrepreneurs of land transport in the west of the empire see A. Kolb, *Transport und Nachrichtentransfer im Römischen Reich* (Berlin 2000) 184 w. fn. 5; for inland waters T. Schmidts, *Akteure und Organisation der Handelsschifffahrt in den nord-westlichen Provinzen des römischen Reiches* (Mainz 2011); on the transportation trade of the province of Asia see J. Drexhage, *Wirtschaftspolitik und Wirtschaft in der römischen Provinz Asia in der Zeit von Augustus bis zum Regierungsantritt Diokletians* (Bonn 2007) 272–275.

³⁷ T. Pekáry, *Untersuchungen zu den römischen Reichsstraßen* (Bonn 1968) especially 168–171; again T. Kissel, *Road-building as a munus publicum*, in: P. Erdkamp (ed.), *The Roman Army and the Economy* (Amsterdam 2002) 127–160; M. Rathmann, *Untersuchungen zu den Reichsstraßen in den westlichen Provinzen des Imperium Romanum* (Bonn 2003) 136–142.

³⁸ Cod. Theod. 8,5,53, further A. Kolb, *Transport und Nachrichtentransfer im Römischen Reich* (Berlin 2000), 123–146; A. Kolb, *Transport in Thracia*, *Bulletin of the National Archaeological Institute of the Bulgarian Academy of Science* 44, 2017 (2018) 1–9.

Despite the generally local attachment of ancient empire-dwellers, several testimonia reveal that the global perspective of the emperor and the upper classes was also to be found on a local level. In fact, economic reasons always argued the case for an easy access to the road and transport system of the empire. Long-range business and trade activity is furthermore crucial for merchants and shippers who worked in maritime trade.

Titus Flavius Zeuxis, hailing from Phrygian Hierapolis, who probably worked as a textile merchant at the end of the 1st century AD, undertook the sea voyage around cape Melea to Italy 72 times.³⁹ The Lyonese Iulius Verecundus, judging by his denomination of *negotiator laudecenarius*, also seems to have worked in the textile business, promoting linen dresses from phrygian Laodoeceae.⁴⁰ An even more open image of the world is shown by long-distance trade, which spanned across the frontiers of the empire to India or even China.⁴¹ After all, we must not forget the members of the populace from other sectors, such as artists, athletes or doctors, who travelled far for professional reasons. Ancient tourism to monuments, sanctuaries or health resorts, too, was not the sole preserve of the upper classes.⁴²

³⁹ CIG 3920 = SIG³ 1229 = T. Ritti, *An epigraphical guide to Hierapolis (Pamukkale)* (Istanbul 2006) 67–70. Further mentions of long journeys in trade and transport in e.g. CIL IX 60; CIL IX 3337; AE 1972, 74.

⁴⁰ CIL XIII 2003 with J. Rougé, 'CIL XIII, 2003: Un negotiator Laudecenarius à Lyon', in ZPE 27, 1977, 263–269; cf. H.-W. Drexhage, *Wirtschaftspolitik und Wirtschaft in der römischen Provinz Asia in der Zeit von Augustus bis zum Regierungsantritt Diokletians* (Bonn 2007) 91. 237. 246 w. further examples; cf. on textile trade various contributions in M. Gleba – J. Pasztokai-Szeöke (eds.), *Making Textiles in pre-Roman and Roman Times: People, Places, Identities* (Oxford 2013).

⁴¹ On Roman trade in the east see R. Drexhage, *Untersuchungen zum römischen Osthandel* (Bonn 1988); K. Ruffing, *Wege in den Osten: Die Routen des römischen Ost- und Südhandels (1.–2. Jh.)*, in: E. Olshausen – H. Sonnabend (eds.), *Zu Wasser und zu Land. Verkehrswege in der antiken Welt*, Stuttgarter Kolloquium zur Historischen Geographie des Altertums 7, 1999 (Stuttgart 2002) 360–378; G. K. Young, *Romes eastern trade. International commerce and imperial policy, 31 BC-AD 305*, London/New York 2001; S. E. Sidebotham, *Berenike and the Ancient Maritime Spice Route* (Berkeley 2011); on communication between Rome and China see 54, A. Kolb – M.A. Speidel, *Imperial Rome and China: Communication and Information Transmission*, in: M.D. Elizalde – J. Wang (ed.), *China's Development from a Global Perspective*, Cambridge 2017, 28–56.

⁴² Cf. stays at health spas, e.g. CIL III 6306, AE 1992, 1484; further N. Zwingmann, *Antiker Tourismus in Kleinasien und auf den vorgelagerten Inseln* (Bonn 2012) 7 who cites the example of a merchant of ointment from Rome visiting Ithaca, but generally summarises the meagre body of source material on *hic-fui*-inscriptions outside of Egypt; on Egypt V. A. Foertmeyer, *Toursim in Greco-Roman Egypt* (Diss., Princeton University 1989). On travellers with diverse ambitions see L. Friedländer, *Darstellungen aus der Sittengeschichte Roms in der Zeit von Augustus bis zum Ausgang der Antonine* 1¹⁰ (Leipzig 1922) 359–390 (state, trade, studies, art, etc.) 391–490 (tourism); L. Casson, *Travel in the Ancient World* (Baltimore/London 1994) 128–137; on travellers in state business W. Eck, *Unter-*

Of interest are furthermore testimonies of independent travels that spanned extraordinarily long journeys like the already mentioned journey of Martina who travelled from Gaul to Italy over 1500 km.⁴³ Another funerary inscription, one of the favoured animal epigrams, reports a tour from an unknown place in the province of Dalmatia through Apollonia and Dyrrhachium to Macedonian Edessa.⁴⁴ These sorrowful verses of the Greek epigram elaborately relate the quadruped's remarkable inter-provincial journey along the famous via Egnatia, which was travelled for a good third of its length (probably from the Adriatic coast to Edessa). Then, diverse epigraphic itineraries, for instance the one preserved on an ancient souvenir – the well-known silver cups from Vicarello – documenting a journey from Gades to Rome, are evidence of an even wider large-scale undertaking that required both supra-regional perspective and planning.⁴⁵ Finally particular interest in geography and in the extent of the empire is indicated by the epitaph of one Hermogenes: According to his funerary inscription the doctor Hermogenes, who was the author of numerous books, wrote treatises on the cities of Asia and of Europe as well as two more volumes containing measurements of distances given in stadia – one for Asia and one for Europe.⁴⁶ This seems to bear witness to a global perspective of an

wegs im Auftrag des Kaisers. Römische Funktionsträger auf Reisen, in: T. Fischer (ed.), *Straßen von der Frühgeschichte bis in die Moderne* (Wiesbaden 2013) 95–108; further on mobility and roads A. Kolb, A., *Redacta in formam provinciae: Überlegungen zu Rolle und Funktion der viae publicae*, in: Horster, M. – N. Hächler (eds.), *The Impact of the Roman Empire on Landscapes* (Leiden/Boston 2021) 47–68; A. Kolb, *Mobility, roads and milestones. Aspects of the Use of Latin in the Roman Empire*, in: A. Mullen (ed.), *Social Factors in the Latinization of the Roman West* (Oxford 2023) 117–132.

⁴³ CIL V 2108 (p. 1069).

⁴⁴ SEG 25, 711, where Woodhead discusses older opinions who took Choiros for the name of a slave and mistakenly assumed that the pig was depicted in two instances, once alive and once dead. Both errors are indiscriminately repeated by G. Koch, *Zum Grabrelief der Helena*, *The J. Paul Getty Museum Journal* 12, 1984, 66; most recently again the various opinions without decision in P. Cabanes – F. Drini (eds.), *Inscriptions d'Epidaumne-Dyrrhachion et d'Apollonia. 1. Inscriptions d'Epidaumne-Dyrrhachion* (Athen 1995) 157–158 nr. 527; latest K. Schedler, *Tierliebe in der griechisch-römischen Antike*, in: K. Strobel (ed.), *Die Geschichte der Antike aktuell: Methoden, Ergebnisse und Rezeption. Akten des 9. Gesamt österreichischen Althistorikertages 2002 und der V. internationalen Table Ronde zur Geschichte der Alpen-Adria-Region in der Antike* (Klagenfurt, 14.11.–17.11. 2002) (Klagenfurt 2005) 342–344.

⁴⁵ CIL XI 3281–3284; cf. J. Fugmann, *Itinerarium*, *RAC* 19, 1999, 6; A. Kolb, *Antike Strassenverzeichnisse – Wissensspeicher und Medien geographischer Raumerschließung*, in: D. Boschung – Th. Greub – J. Hammerstaedt (eds.), *"Morphome des Wissens: Geographische Kenntnisse und ihre konkreten Ausformungen"*. Beiträge der Tagung vom 15.–17. Juli am Internationalen Kolleg Morphomata (München 2013) 202; further on an interesting business journey J. Matthews, *The Journey of Theophanes: Travel, Business, and Daily Life in the Roman East* (New Haven 2006); see as well the review of this book by Talbert in the *BMCR*, esp. since Talbert highlights the fact that some lower-level person in Theophanes' household is likely responsible for what we know about this journey.

inhabitant of a provincial city, in this case Smyrna in Asia Minor, during the first century.

A special monument from Lycia shows, that those who dwelt in the provinces were mainly mobile in their lived in region but at the same time wanted to demonstrate their integration into the space of the empire. This is visualised by the so called Stadiasmus-monument of Patara.⁴⁷ It was built by the inhabitants of the province of Lycia (in their new capital) in honour of the emperor in gratitude for peace and security as well as his impetus in road building. The main part of the inscription consists of an extensive index of all known land connections of the province. While listing only few of the large imperial roads it mainly tables footpaths and mule tracks that were unsuited to vehicular traffic due to the mountainous and fragmented relief of the countryside. In this way the text delivers the impression of a compartmentalised system of ways in Lycia that was structured mainly according to local needs but at the same time showing the integration into the road network and space of the empire.

These sources and similar monuments⁴⁸ suggest that the imperial ideology of a world-spanning empire was adopted in the communities as it led to prosperity through the unified economic area opened up by roads. It was adopted in the communities - at least by the local upper class and the 'mobile' inhabitants. Furthermore, it was also important for ordinary people to report on their extensive use of the transport network, which may indicate their supra-regional perspective.

5. Conclusion

The construct of the Imperium Romanum as a world-spanning empire seems to have been lived reality - not only for the ruling elite (including staff like soldiers and administrators) but also in the lower strata of the society - especially those who needed or wanted to be mobile. Being part of a peaceful space, a territory perceived as being all-encompassing and therefore blessed with prosperity, ruled by a patronal sovereign, the *pater patriae*, obviously conveyed a feeling of security and protection, but also pride and perhaps happiness. Suetonius in his life of Augustus thus shows how passengers and sail-

⁴⁶ IK 23, 536 (w. IK 24, 2 S. 374) = SGO 05/01/26 (Smyrna, Asia).

⁴⁷ SEG 51, 1832; A. Kolb, Antike Strassenverzeichnisse - Wissensspeicher und Medien geographischer Raumerschließung, in: D. Boschung - Th. Greub - J. Hammerstaedt (eds.), "Morphome des Wissens: Geographische Kenntnisse und ihre konkreten Ausformungen". Beiträge der Tagung vom 15.-17. Juli am Internationalen Kolleg Morphomata (München 2013) 206-214 with further literature.

⁴⁸ A. Kolb, ibidem (fn. 47), 206-221.

ors of a vessel that, coming from Alexandria, just had arrived in Puteoli, rendered homage to the emperor: only thanks to their ruler would they live, go to sea and enjoy freedom and prosperity.⁴⁹ Conversely, the emperor rejected peoples beyond the empire, who wanted to be part of it, when they did not seem to be able to contribute.⁵⁰ In the light of this reality, the dictum of the poet Ovid probably was not merely wishful thinking: „The circuit of Rome is the circuit of the world – *Romanae spatium est urbis et orbis idem*”.⁵¹

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⁴⁹ Suet. Aug. 98,2.

⁵⁰ App. praef. 7.

⁵¹ Ov. Fast. 2,684 (Transl. J. G. Frazer); Verg. Aen. 1,278 s.