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The World-Systems Perspective and Archaeology: Forward into the Past

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This article reviews previous attempts to extend world-system theory from the modern era to prehistoric and archaeological settings. It summarizes major debates among scholars from several disciplines who are comparing the modern world-system with earlier world-systems. Special attention centers on the problems of conceptualizing world-systems, the spatial bounding of world-systems, and understandings of systemic logics.

KEY WORDS: world-system theory; world-systems perspective; social change; intersocietal interactions; nonstate societies.

INTRODUCTION

Almost since the world-systems perspective[3] first appeared in social science discourse (Wallerstein, 1974a, b), archaeologists have had an ambivalent reaction to it: first grabbing it with some enthusiasm, then walking away muttering something like, "Close, but no cigar!" This reaction runs from one of the earliest such attempts (Pailes and Whitecotton, 1975,

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[3]We distinguish between the world-systems perspective and world-system theories. The perspective is a general orientation which analyzes the ways in which the social geography of interactions among societies affect social change. Within this approach are many, often contradictory, theoretical explanations of social change.

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1979)[4] through Blanton and Feinman's *American Anthropologist* note (1984) and appeared recently in Ferguson and Whitehead's (1992, pp. 4–8) book on war, Christopher Edens's (1992) discussion of the Mesopotamian "world system," and Schortman and Urban's (1992) collection on interregional interaction. Even within sociology, early critiques of Wallerstein's work often questioned its applicability to precapitalist settings.[5] The entire January 1977 issue of *Journal of Peasant Studies* was devoted to critical review of world-system theory. Jane Schneider's (1977) critique of Wallerstein's concentration on trade in bulk goods to the exclusion of trade in preciosities is the most frequently cited article in that issue.

By now a large number of scholars from many different disciplines—history, political science, sociology, geography, anthropology, and archaeology—have taken up the project of analyzing premodern world-systems in order to "go forward into the past." The dean of world historians, William H. McNeill (1990), has acknowledged [in an autocritical reflection on his *The Rise of the West* (1963)] the need for an approach to world history that focuses on intersocietal interactions, explicitly citing the work of Immanuel Wallerstein. Of course the problematic of intersocietal interactions has a long history in social science. For many anthropologists and archaeologists, world-systems imagery will recall Alfred Kroeber's (1917) concept of the "superorganic" and/or Frederick J. Teggart's *Theory and Process of History* (1918, 1925) or his *Rome and China* (1939). But the issue at hand is not the deep intellectual roots of the world-systems perspective (Chirot and Hall, 1982) but, rather, Why the renewed interest?

Chase-Dunn (1990) captures a good part of the motivation for the interest: the modern world-system will be facing a major shift and realignment in the next few decades. To avoid the pitfalls of simply extrapolating current trends into the near-future—the generic strategy of linear statistical analyses—many scholars are examining earlier major transitions to gain insight into where things might be going and, for activists, insights on where and how to push so that change is in a positive direction (Abu-Lughod, 1987, 1989, 1990; Amin, 1980, 1989, 1991; Chase-Dunn, 1990, 1992b; Chase-Dunn and Hall, 1991, 1992, 1993a, b, c; Frank, 1990a, b, 1993; Frank

[4]As far as we know, this was the first attempt to use world-system theory in archaeology, although Phil Kohl (1978, 1979, 1981) also used and criticized it quite early. In personal conversation, Joseph Whitecotton suggested that Phil Weigand was also playing with world-system theory in the late 1970s.

[5]We follow convention in using terms such as "precapitalist" and "prehistoric" to refer to societies or events occurring before the start of conventional capitalism or conventional history. We do *not* imply a unilinear theory of social change.

and Gills, 1990, 1992; Gills and Frank, 1991, 1992; Wallerstein, 1990, 1991, 1992).

Others are driven less by these motivations than by a dissatisfaction with the longer-term issues surrounding world-systems analysis: Where *did* the modern world-system come from? Where might it go? How did its origins influence, shape, or direct its course over the last half-millennium? Could it have worked differently? How did world-system processes and effects distort development, and underdevelopment, of nonstate societies? and What does all this say or imply about human social evolution?

Of course, with these last questions we find ourselves in the thick of very old archaeological connundra. To this we add our own, "close but no cigar" frustration with the efforts to extend the world-systems perspective to precapitalist settings. These broad questions, different motivations, the various disciplinary weltanschauungen, and the many relevant regional and temporal specialities create a situation ripe for extremely exciting cross-fertilizations—or for a stupendously cacophonous dialogue of the deaf.

Our intent in this essay is to maximize the former potential and minimize the latter. Hence we extend a Navajo weaving custom and leave lots of loose threads, citing, where possible, overview or summarizing sources on many topics and concentrating our review on literature in other disciplines that is germane to archaeologists. We begin with an overview of the comparative world-systems perspective, including a "site sketch" of the various theoretical camps. This is followed by an overview of ties to "neighbors" and "outsiders" with similar interests. Finally, we recap some early efforts to import world-systems thinking into archaeology.

We spend the bulk of the review on the first task, since this covers the territory less familiar to archaeologists. We have tried to find and cite all those studies in the archaeological literature that grapple in some way with world-systems concepts. If we have missed important contributions, it may be because we are archaeological neophytes, and we apologize in advance. As enthusiastic disciplinary trespassers, we are quite aware of the dangers which lurk in deep assumptions about evidence and methods in different disciplines. We are also aware that our intellectual ancestors are different, and that battles which are taken for granted by some may not have occurred for others or may have occurred in the unremembered past. We admit that we originally began this trespass primarily in order to "borrow" evidence—a somewhat imperialistic venture which presupposed that our ideas were in no need of exposure to those of lesser cults. But in the process we have been humbled, and we now seek to synthesize the theoretical approaches of archaeology with those of sociology, a task that is only in its preliminary stages.[6]

[6]This synthesis is forthcoming (Chase-Dunn and Hall, 1993a, b, c).

THE WORLD-SYSTEMS PERSPECTIVE AND ITS KIN

The world-systems perspective has expanded the temporal and spatial scope of theorizing about social change throughout the social sciences. However, in order to make this approach usable in precapitalist settings, we need to examine those structural "constants" which are, in fact, variable when the universe of explanation includes time before the long sixteenth century (1450–1650). Are interstate systems or core/periphery hierarchies inevitable features of all human organizational wholes? Do all world-systems share a similar underlying developmental logic, or do systemic logics undergo fundamental transformations? Such questions can be addressed only by comparative analyses that use concepts that are general enough to allow sensible comparison of very different kinds of systems and yet do not distort by imposing features of some systems on others. Janet Abu-Lughod (1989) has done this superbly for the thirteenth century.

It may be possible to use the generalized world-systems perspective in a comparative analysis that is nonevolutionary, but we think that the most potentially powerful outcome of world-systems analysis is a new synthetic theory of historical evolution. We content that this evolutionary focus should be explicit. Anthropologists and archaeologists are usually less paranoid about the "*E* word" (evolution) than are many historians and sociologists,[7] but we, nevertheless, need to stress that the kind of evolutionism we are contemplating is far from the unilinear determinist nightmares which haunt those who shun this word (see Sanderson, 1990, 1991).[8]

The following briefly summarizes the main theoretical debates which have arisen among those scholars who are extending the world-system perspective to premodern systems. This discussion is organized by dividing the main debates into three interrelated topics: definitions of world systems, spatial boundaries of world-systems, and the problem of systemic logics.

Definitions of World-Systems

Wilkinson (1988a) and Gills and Frank (1991, 1992) restrict the usage of the world-system concept to those intersocietal systems which contain states and cities. Chase-Dunn (1992a, b), Chase-Dunn *et al.* (1993), Chase-Dunn and Hall (1991a, b, 1992, 1993a, b, c), and Collins (1992) claim that

[7]But see McGuire (1992).

[8]Sanderson argues in his book on social evolution (1990) and, again, in a briefer article (1991) that world-system theory is implicitly evolutionary in its construction. He also describes how the nascent attempts to apply world-system theory to precapitalist settings offer some valuable approaches to general problems in social evolution.

smaller stateless and classless systems can also be meaningfully studied using world-systems concepts. They further claim that this extension adds useful variation for the understanding of processes of structural transformation. One relevant issue is whether or not a world-system *must* have a core/periphery hierarchy. Some classless and stateless systems apparently do not have core/periphery hierarchies.[9]

All definitions of world-systems claim or imply that the particular kinds of interaction upon which they focus are necessary or systemic, but there are vociferous disputes about the relative importance of specific kinds of interconnectedness. Immanuel Wallerstein (1974b, pp. 41–42) contends that the exchange of "preciosities" does not produce important systemic effects. Jane Schneider (1977) and many others (e.g., Friedman, 1992; Blanton and Feinman, 1984; Blanton *et al.*, 1992; McGuire, 1986; Peregrine, 1991, 1992; Upham, 1982, 1990) argue that prestige goods economies constitute systemic networks because the ability of local leaders to monopolize the supply of prestige goods is often an important source of stability and change in local power structures. Other types of interconnections which are contenders for systemic necessity are bulk-goods exchanges (foods and raw materials used in everyday life by the majority of people), bullion (Wallerstein, 1974a, b), political protection and regularized military conflict (Wilkinson, 1991; Tilly, 1984), and political symbolism (Helms, 1992).

Because the types of interaction may vary across world-systems, Chase-Dunn and Hall (1991, 1992, 1993a, b, c) use a multicriteria approach to systemic interconnectedness which utilizes bulk goods networks, prestige goods networks, and networks of regularized political/military interaction. They note that in many systems the boundaries of these different kinds of networks are nested, with prestige nets containing military nets which in turn contain bulk nets.

Finally, in an insightful article, Santley and Alexander (1992) generalize core/periphery models into three types. First are dendritic political economies, in which exchanges occur between core and periphery, but without overt political control and with no intercore exchanges. Second are hegemonic empires in which a single core state dominates peripheral regions, extracting tribute and raw materials. Third are territorial empires,

[9]The conceptualization of core/periphery relations also needs rethinking for comparative studies. The terms core, periphery, and semiperiphery are used to mean quite different things by different scholars. Chase-Dunn and Hall (1991b, pp. 18–21) have proposed definitions of core/periphery hierarchy and core/periphery differentiation which are intended to be useful for studying very different kinds and degrees of intersocietal inequality. Their conceptualization is constructed to avoid the projection of features of some kinds of systems upon others. Their distinction between c/p hierarchy and c/p differentiation allows for the possibility that a less-complex society (differentiation) may, in some circumstances, exploit or dominate a more complex society (hierarchy)—e.g., Barfield (1989).

which incorporate peripheral areas under a single political system with a dominating central administrative and military apparatus. Territorial empires may develop capitalist systems, but many do not. Santley and Alexander's analysis does not emphasize either evolution of world-systems or core/periphery relations, nor does it stress comparative strategies for studying different types of core/periphery systems. Other than these nuances, their analysis is quite compatible with that of Chase-Dunn and Hall (1991, 1992, 1993a, b, c).

Spatial Boundaries of World-Systems

Disputes over which kinds of connectedness to stress are tied to disagreements over the boundaries of world-systems. While all agree that world-systems are networks of intersocietal interaction, the types, frequencies, and distances of interactions are in great dispute. World-system scholars can be arrayed along a continuum of "lumpers" and "splitters." The extreme lumpers are those who see only one global system far back in time (Lenski and Lenski, 1987; Frank and Gills, 1990, 1992; Gills and Frank, 1991).[10] This approach is similar in spirit to that of the extreme diffusionists (e.g., Kehoe, 1993). Among those who agree that the Afroeurasian system was separate from the Mesoamerican system, there are still problems about how many separate systems there were in the Americas or in the Old World (Chase-Dunn and Hall, 1991a, b, 1992, 1993a, b, c; Abu-Lughod, 1987, 1989, 1990). Extreme splitters are those who focus only on local processes to the exclusion of all more distant connections. O'Brien (1992a), Blanton *et al.* (1992), and Upham *et al.* (1992) are examples of midpoints on the lumper/splitter continuum.

What constitutes "systemness" is problematic. Given sufficient time, events in one locality may eventually have some impact on things very far away. If the sweet potato had not somehow gotten from Peru to the Hawaiian Islands, the large semiarid regions of the islands would not have been able to sustain dense populations. This, however, does not necessarily mean that prehistoric Hawaii and Peru were in the same world-system. Diffusion is not regularized interaction, but is the limiting pole of a continuum of systemness. Yet it is an important process which needs to be studied in its own right.[11] A parallel issue is the distinction between the effects of

[10]Lenski and Lenski (1987) argue that, since all human societies, even nomadic hunter-gatherers, interact with their neighbors, each is connected indirectly with all other societies on earth. But this ignores the problem of "fall-off," the degradation of consequences over space.

[11]Schortman and Urban (1992a) review the history of diffusion in studies of interaction and social evolution.

endogenous and those of exogenous processes on social change. Climatic changes may have important impacts on human societies, but they are not part of the social system.[12]

Wilkinson (1988a, b) defines systemness in terms of "regularized" military conflict, by which he means political/military interactions that are perceived by the actors as likely to be repeated. Wilkinson does not count a connection which is constituted by a single war, as Alexander's invasion of India. Only when two entities repeatedly engage in military confrontations does he consider them to be part of the same system.[13]

Tilly (1984, p. 62) proposes another interaction-based notion of connectedness:

> The actions of power holders in one region of a network (say within a year) and visibly (say in changes actually reported by nearby observers) affect the welfare of at least a significant minority (say a tenth) of the population in another region of the network.

While the particular cutting points Tilly suggests are obviously somewhat arbitrary, any mode of empirically bounding intersocietal interactions will be forced to adopt conventions of this kind.

Systemic Logic

The thorniest theoretical problem is the issue of systemic logic. The terms for this vary. It is called the mode of production or mode of accumulation by neo-Marxists. Others reveal their assumptions about systemic logic in their descriptions of central processes such as state formation, cycles of political centralization/decentralization, or modes of social integration. There are also different metatheoretical positions regarding the way in which systemic logic changes or remains the same. Some argue that world-systems all have pretty much the same developmental logic, while others contend that systemic logics have undergone fundamental transformations. We thus refer to "continuationists" and "transformationists."

[12]Here, again, there needs to be a concept of gradation or a continuum rather than a dichotomous break. Cultural ecologists have documented many instances of human practices altering local ecology, which in turn has led to major changes in social practices and social structures (e.g., Johnson and Earle, 1987; Taitner, 1988).

[13]Wilkinson (1987, 1991, 1992) has produced a spatiotemporal chronograph based on his criterion of connectedness (military interaction) which shows the times at which 14 world-systems merged to become global "Central Civilization." Taagepera (1978, 1979) charts the expansion of empires. Chase-Dunn (1990a) analyzes these trends in a world-system frame-work.

Continuationism

There are four theoretical positions which maintain that there have been no great watersheds in systemic logic: the *geopolitics* approach, the *continuous accumulationist* approach, the *rational choice* or "formalist" approach, and *cultural ecology*. The geopolitics approach is taken by those who stress the universal importance of power politics and state formation. David Wilkinson (1987, 1992, 1993) focuses primarily on the rise and fall of states—the oscillation between interstate systems and "universal states." This is the state-as-war-machine "neorealist" approach that has dominated recent international relations political science. As Wilkinson quips, "Diamonds may be forever, but clubs are trumps." Geopolitics and Weberian state legitimacy are stressed by Randall Collins (1978, 1981, 1986, 1992) in his analysis of both state-based and kin-based world-systems. Collins uses ideas he developed in his analysis of agrarian states and empires to understand processes of alliance formation in kin-based world-systems. A somewhat different variant of the state-centric approach is taken by Michael Mann (1986). Mann focuses on "technologies of power," which include all political and organizational innovations, but with primary emphasis on military technology and organization. Eisenstadt (1969) and Crone (1989) also emphasize politics over economy in their analyses of empires and change.

Rational choice universalists argue that markets and individual economic rationality are useful for understanding all types of human social systems. It is human nature to truck and barter and to optimize. Thus even hunter-gatherers can be understood in terms of "optimal foraging" strategy (e.g., Johnson and Earle, 1987). This approach has taken several forms, all of which affect theorizing about world-systems. The "cultural materialist" form (Harris, 1977, 1979) is well-known to archaeologists. This is a reaction to radical culturalism which approaches all human behavior in terms of symbolic meaning. A related rational choice approach is called "formalism"—the notion that formal economic models, which have been produced to explain tradeoffs and economic behavior in modern society, can be usefully applied to premodern societies. This is a reaction to Karl Polanyi's "substantivism" (explained below). Formalism has increased in popularity as Polanyi's work has come under attack. Philip Curtin (1984) defends the formalist position in connection with his study of cross-cultural trade in world history. He shows that long-distance trade has often been conducted by specialized trading ethnic groups (trade diasporas) and that the formation of a cross-culturally shared set of assumptions about the basics of exchange—the trade ecumene—eliminates the need for specialized trading ethnic groups. Blanton *et al.* (1981) employed a formalist approach to explain several patterns of evidence from ancient Mesoamerica.

The "continuous accumulationists" contend that capitalism and geopolitics have been dominant forces in both ancient and modern world-systems. Those authors (Ekholm and Friedman, 1982; Friedman, 1992; Frank, 1993; Frank and Gills, 1990, 1992; Gills and Frank, 1991, 1992) claim that capitalist accumulation has been a central process since the emergence of the first states in Mesopotamia. Gills and Frank contend that there has been a single world-system for 5000 years which has displayed a logic that oscillates between periods in which states are the main engines of accumulation and periods in which private families are the main accumulators. Ekholm and Friedman (1982) call the logic of this system "capital imperialism."[14]

The ecological evolutionism of Gerhard Lenski (Lenski and Lenski, 1987) combines the "cultural ecology" developed by Julian Steward (1955) with the analysis of changes in productive technology. Cultural ecology has emphasized local application in reaction to the earlier macrodiffusionism of Gordon Childe (Schortman and Urban, 1992a). Brumfiel (1992) criticized cultural ecology for underemphasizing the roles of class, ethnicity, and gender in social change. Chase-Dunn and Hall (1991, 1992) and Schortman and Urban (1992b, p. 236) argue that it undervalues the role of intersocietal interaction. La Lone (1992, 1993) underscores these criticisms in his demonstration of the interdependence of multiple levels of analysis in his study of Andean social structures.

Transformationism

Polanyian substantivists, neo-Marxist modes of production theorists (Taylor, 1979), and Friedman and Rowlands (1977, 1978) postulate qualitative transformations. Karl Polanyi (1977; Polanyi *et al.*, 1957) argued that societies qualitatively differ as to the institutional modes of integration which produce social order. He emphasized the importance of distinct types of exchange, which he classified as reciprocal, redistributive, and market. Reciprocal exchange is based on norms which prescribe sharing and gift-giving. Redistributive systems involve the collection of goods by a central authority and their redistribution back to the community. Market systems exchange commodities in competitive, price-setting markets. Polanyi argued that market institutions did not exist in reciprocal and redistributive systems and that, far from being natural forms of interaction, markets were histori-

[14]Friedman and Ekholm are not strict "continuationists" because they contend that there was a transformation of systemic logic when some prestige goods economies evolved into urbanized states in which "abstract wealth" (capital) became an important element of social reproduction. Nevertheless, we have lumped them with the continuationists because they stress the continuity of systemic logic across all state-based systems, ancient and modern.

cally developed institutions which came into existence under certain conditions.

The attack on Polanyi is based on evidence that market-like mechanisms existed within early, supposedly marketless, state-based systems (Curtin, 1984; Allen, 1992). Polanyi definitely has been shown to be wrong in some of the cases in which he argued that completely marketless exchange was occurring. The relative significance of market exchange in early state-based systems remains in dispute, but the real issue is whether or not marketless systems generally predate the emergence of markets.

Neo-Marxists have combined Polanyi's modes of integration approach with Marx's modes of production approach (Wolf, 1982; Sahlins, 1972; Amin, 1980, 1991). Mode of production analysis concentrates on the nature of the institutional mechanisms of accumulation.[15] This approach argues that different logics of accumulation may be present in the same system but that systems are usually dominated by a single logic that tends to distort other institutional forms in ways that make them compatible with the dominant logic. Most of these authors argue that world-systems were organized as kin-based modes of accumulation until the emergence of the first states. States and empires were based on the collection of tribute and/or taxes through the deployment of means of coercion. Commodification and markets developed slowly and partially within the state-based modes of production. Fitzpatrick (1992) argues that the strong development of capitalist forces in China nearly led to the emergence of capitalism as a predominant mode in the Sung and early Ming dynasties. However, capitalism became a fully predominant mode of production for the first time in Europe.

Wallerstein (1989) uses modes of production to bound world-systems. This unfortunately precludes analysis of competing modes of production within one system or interactions between systems (Chase-Dunn and Hall, 1992). Katherine Moseley's (1992) comparison of West African interaction with the European world-system, on the one hand, and the North African Arabian world-system, on the other, and Janet Abu-Lughod's (1989) account of the thirteenth century Eurasian world-system demonstrate the utility of abandoning this stricture.[16]

Friedman and Rowlands (1977, 1978) see a major transformation in systemic logic occurring with the rise of states, but they stress the conti-

[15]All societies accumulate resources, and these are called "capital" by some scholars. But capitalist accumulation in Marx's sense is a qualitatively different process from that used by nomadic pastoralists to increase their herds or by sedentary foragers to store food.

[16]There is an obvious problem in the above. If systems are bounded, how can they interact? The answer is too long to pursue here in detail [but see Chase-Dunn and Hall (1993a) for suggestions]. Briefly, the discussion hinges on when systems combine into one larger system, that is, on the problem of world-system incorporation. See Hall's (1986, 1989) critique of Wallerstein's concept of incorporation.

nuities of "capital imperialism" from then on (see Ekholm and Friedman, 1982). They formulate an explicitly world-system and structuralist Marxist interpretation of the politics of kinship which extends and critiques Leach's (1954) analysis of the oscillation between hierarchical and egalitarian kinship systems. The connection between state formation and gender relations, an important topic since Engels, is theorized in world-system terms by Friedman and Rowlands. Friedman (1982) has employed (and modified) this theory to explain the rise and fall of chiefdoms and variations in social structure across Melanesia and Polynesia.

NEIGHBORS, FELLOW TRAVELERS, AND OUTSIDERS

Several approaches to interregional interactions parallel, and even anticipate, much of world-system analysis. In political geography, chapters in Gottman's (1980) *Centre and Periphery* by Claval, Lattimore, and Strassoldo are particularly germane. Knox and Agnew's (1989) text on economic geography makes extensive use of world-system theory. Parts of it are especially interesting on the substantivist–formalist debate as it relates to precapitalist world-systems. Carol Smith's (1976) *Regional Analysis* is well-known, although her explicit comparisons with world-system theory (1984, 1987) should also be consulted.

Collections edited by Mathien and McGuire (1986), Upham (1990), and Ferguson and Whitehead (1992b) contain both archaeological and ethnohistorical chapters that touch on topics relevant to world-systems or core/periphery relations.[17] Collections edited by Green and Perlman (1985), Renfrew and Cherry (1986). Rowlands *et al.* (1987), Champion (1989), Spielmann (1991), and Schortman and Urban (1992) are mainly archaeological in focus, although some of these also contain historical and ethnohistorical chapters.

Other authors discuss culture, superstructure, ideology, or political processes that are suggestive of world-system-like processes (Broda *et al.*, 1987; Helms, 1988, 1992; Wheatley, 1971). Timberlake (1985) reviews the relations between world-system processes and urbanization. Many of the chapters in this collection suggest ties with Wheatley (1971), Weigand (1992), and Wells (1992), especially with regard to the relations among architectural styles, social structures, and intersocietal interactions. Schortman (1989) makes a strong case for the role of ethnicity in interregional interaction which closely parallels Brumfiel's (1992) argument.

[17]Mattingly's (1992) discussion of Rome suggests ties to accounts by Wells (1992) and Dyson (1985) of Roman frontiers. Haselgrove (1987) and Hedeager (1987) discuss Rome's frontiers with northern and western Europe.

Many of these collections contain chapters dealing explicitly with applications of, or interpretations of, the world-systems perspective in precapitalist contexts. The point here is that there is a great deal of work on interregional interactions, much of which has a world-system cast to it or which provides insights, problems, criticisms, or observations relevant to the study of precapitalist core/periphery relations.

CONCLUSION

This overview does not exhaust all archaeological work addressing world-systems issues. It does, however, give some indication of the influence that the world-systems perspective has in archaeology. We underscore the value of the new conceptual and theoretical work being done on precapitalist world-systems. While nearly all of this work owes an intellectual debt to Immanuel Wallerstein, much new work has been done since his insightful *Modern World-System* nearly 20 years ago. For us, the ultimate goal is a comparative framework which enables researchers to sort out the important structural similarities and differences among stateless, state-based, and capitalist world-systems and to understand the processes by which intersocietal structures become transformed.

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[19]Literature relevant to the world-systems perspective in precapitalist and/or archaeological settings can be divided into four categories: [1] literature which claims that while the world-systems perspective appears to offer potential, that potential is not realized (this is the "close but no cigar!" category); [2] literature which goes further in its critique of world-system theory, outlining its limitations and suggesting modifications; [3] literature

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which presents a serious effort to use world-systems concepts in precapitalist or archaeological contexts; and [4] literature which, while it does not explicitly use world-system terminology, is, in our view, extremely relevant for understanding prehistoric world-systems. This heuristic classification is intended to help others thread their way through the world-system literature. Classification is indicated by the number in brackets following the entry. Some categories are inherently problematic.

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