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ONE

ANCIENT EMPIRES ON THE GROUND: PROVINCIAL AND PERIPHERAL PERSPECTIVES

Bleda S. Düring and Tesse D. Stek

COMPARING EMPIRES

How to best explain the success or failure of ancient empires has been central to the work of political scientists, historians and other scholars from Antiquity onwards. This interest for the waxing and waning of ancient empires is connected to the perceived importance of empires and imperialism in the contemporary world. In many studies, ranging from Machiavelli and Mommsen to Maier, this motivation is explicitly stated (Machiavelli 1532; Mommsen 1868; Maier 2006). This perceived relevance of ancient empires has, however, also profoundly determined the manner in which they have been conceptualised and studied. Ancient empires have been idealised or deprecated to serve contemporary political agendas. Moreover, substantial differences in the access to sources as well as the perceived importance of various ancient empires in, and for, (western) history, have led to divergent assessments of these empires. Whereas the Roman Empire, for instance, has been regarded as the worthy predecessor of and *exemplum* for many Western powers, very different assessments have been made for, say, the Assyrian Empire, perceived mainly through a Biblical lens, and the Achaemenid and Byzantine empires (Jenkyns 1992; Larsen 1996; Dietler 2005; Terrenato 2005).

Comparative studies of ancient empires, from the Renaissance onwards, have thus always borne the burden of aprioristic interpretations. The emergence of distinct academic disciplines and generally increased specialisation in

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the nineteenth to twentieth centuries has, apart from its great advances in the knowledge of specific empires, exacerbated this tendency towards particularism and has discouraged comparative analysis. Notwithstanding some exceptions (Garnsey and Whittaker 1978; Larsen 1979), a serious engagement with ancient empires from a comparative perspective is relatively recent. Important studies from the last decade or so have cleared the path towards more structural and typological analyses of the workings of empires and imperialism (Morris and Scheidel 2009; Burbank and Cooper 2010; Bang and Bayly 2011; Cline and Graham 2011).

These predominantly historical studies have highlighted the workings of imperial power structures and related ideologies and bureaucracies. Key to many of these studies is the relationship between the imperial capitals and bureaucracies on the one hand and local elites on the other, who have often been seen as instrumental in the creation and maintenance of imperial power structures (e.g. Millett 1990; Woolf 1998; Ando 2000; Goldstone and Haldon 2009; Dusinberre 2013; Harmanşah 2013). Further, in many definitions of empire, aspirational claims of universal domination have been given centre stage. Such aspirations are widespread among empires. For example, in the Near East Akkadian, kings claimed to be 'king of the four corners (of the universe)', and similar assertions recur in later periods in, for example, the Ur III period (2112–2004 BC), the Middle Assyrian state (1350–1180 BC), and the Neo-Assyrian period (880–612 BC) (van de Mieroop 2004: 64; Caramelo 2012). Very comparable statements were put forward by the Egyptian pharaoh (Smith 2005), and they recur in empires across the globe (Bang 2011), including that of Rome, that empire '*sine fine*', without bounds in time and space (Verg. 1.279; cf. e.g., Zanker 1987; Nicolet 1991, cf. also Boozer, this volume).

This focus on imperial elites, administration, ideology and aspirations may explain why archaeology has added relatively little to the new wave of comparative empire studies. The fact that the main study on the archaeology of empires was published as long ago as 2001 (Alcock et al. 2001) speaks volumes.[1]

The aim of this book is to shift the focus from elites, ideology and courts to the transformations that occurred in the societies and landscapes of the provinces and peripheries dominated by ancient empires – yet maintaining a comparative perspective. In doing so, we take issue with a perspective sometimes put forward, in which empires are viewed as primarily military 'overlay' organisation extracting tribute, and that imperial societies, apart from their elites, were hardly affected by imperial states (Tilly 1994: 7; Strootman 2013: 68). While such empires may have existed (also Rogers, this volume), the case studies in this book demonstrate that in many ancient empires substantial transformations took place in imperial provinces and peripheries and that everybody and everything was impacted by empire, not only the people and infrastructure that appear prominently in the literary sources.

The three central propositions of this book are the following. First, archaeology is uniquely placed to investigate the impact of empires on the landscapes and societies they dominated. Archaeology can thus complement the existing focus on imperial ideologies and elites that is preoccupied mainly with the rich iconographic, textual and material remains of courts and elites. Although archaeology naturally tends to detail, it should not loose itself in particularism. Importantly, archaeology is able to shed light on the effects empires had on places and communities not or only marginally featuring in imperial narratives. Second, the transformations that occurred in dominated provinces and peripheries matter greatly because imperial power and fragility are ultimately based on what happened in these 'marginal' regions. Third, the processes occurring in provincial and peripheral regions of empires may in fact be inherently diverse, uneven and dynamic. As such, their analysis will result in a much messier understanding of these empires than those based on an analysis of elites, courts and homogenising ideologies put forward by imperial discourse.

We argue, therefore, that an explanation of ancient empires requires both the investigation of imperial aspirations, elites, ideologies *and* the facts on the ground in provincial and peripheral settings. Empires need to be established and consolidated in the centre, the provinces, the peripheries and beyond through a broad and flexible set of 'repertoires of rule', and in this complex constellation imperial leaders, related elites and courts are only one component (Sinopoli 1994; 1995: 4–5; Glatz 2009).

PERIPHERAL AND PROVINCIAL PERSPECTIVES

An archaeological perspective on ancient empires is most distinctive in peripheral and provincial areas. 'Peripheral' regions are arguably not only good places to study the extent and constitution of ancient empires, but can be seen as pivotal in their rise and development. Although rural and remote landscapes are crucial in the creation and maintenance of empire, and sometimes seen as its primary basis, they are invariably poorly represented in the literary and iconographic sources produced by imperial courts and elites. To understand the interplay of strategies of imperial agents who maintained control over and developed and exploited conquered territories, on the one hand, and others resisting or yielding to empire, an archaeological view on what happens on the ground provides important data. These data can serve to complement and adjust reconstructions based on imperial narratives, and ideologically charged or unreliable imperial propagandas.

This is not to say that archaeological interpretations and datasets are straightforward and have not been caught up in aprioristic and normative interpretations of ancient empires. Instead, we want to highlight the potential of archaeological information to address developments on the ground in provincial and peripheral areas in a comparative perspective. Advances in our

archaeological knowledge of 'marginal' territories allow us to open new perspectives on the complex constitution of empires. A comparative archaeological approach can thus add to one end of the spectrum of imperial rule, by mapping out the diverse transformations occurring in (local) communities, agricultural practices and economies.

The idea that empires can best be understood by analysing the effects these empires have on dominated territories, that is, how they are transformed by imperial systems, has been recognised in many studies of separate empires (Wells 1999; Parker 2001; Smith 2003; Glatz 2009), but has perhaps been most fully developed in New World archaeology by scholars working on the Inca, Wari and Aztec empires (Smith and Montiel 2001; Schreiber 2005; Malpas and Alconini 2010). For none of these New World empires do we possess extensive textual records – the *codices* of Mesoamerica are few and not fully understood, and the information recorded with the Inca *quipus* is likewise obscure – and consequently archaeological data are the main source of data for the reconstruction of these empires. Scholars such as D'Altroy (2001; 2005) and Alconini (2005; 2008) have reconstructed in great detail how the Inca Empire impacted the territories it dominated. Schreiber (2001; 2005) has done the same for the earlier Wari Empire that was likewise centred in the Andes, whereas Smith and colleagues (Smith 2001; Smith and Montiel 2001; Ohnersorgen 2006) have analysed the Aztec Empire.

Various points have emerged from these New World empire studies. First, many of these imperial systems have strongly impacted the regions under their domination. Here we can think of the destruction of preexisting settlement systems, the deportation of populations from one region to another, the creation of colonies, the development and reorganisation of agricultural economies and the development of road and fortification systems. However, empires can also have more subtle effects, such as a shift in household economies towards producing crops for the state or creating a larger market for the exchange of craft products.

A second point that emerged from these studies is that imperial strategies are not programmatic, but instead are highly flexible. On the basis of the preexisting socioeconomic situation, the strategic or economic value of a region under domination, and the resources available to the agents of empire, a broad range of practices and strategies can be put to use, and these can change dynamically. Many scholars have therefore described these empires as *mosaics,* in which differentiated imperial practices occur in different parts of the empire (Sinopoli 1995: 6; Ohnersorgen 2006: 4).

Peripheral perspectives have also been developed in empire studies in Eurasia, where the emergence of an entire subdiscipline, that of provincial Roman archaeology (although traditionally with a strong focus on the western part of the empire) can serve as the clearest example. However, significant differences can be noted between New World and Old World empire approaches,

which becomes especially clear in comparative studies. Whereas in New World studies of empires the focus has been largely on the transformations occurring in settlement systems, economies and societies in the processes of imperial expansion and consolidation, many Old World studies have foregrounded the issue of civilisation and, later, identity. For example, the expansion of the Roman Empire has often been discussed in terms of cultural process, giving birth to a sheer endless stream of 'Romanisation' studies, ranging from the positive notions of the early- and mid-twentieth century (e.g. Haverfield 1912; Salmon 1982), via criticism, resistance and revision (e.g. Bénabou 1976; Millett 1990; Webster and Cooper 1996) to today's globalisation perspectives (Hingley 2005; Pitts and Versluys 2016). Although very different semantic and ontological interpretations of the term are possible, the focus since the 1990s has usually been on issues of imperial ideology, cultural identity and complex processes of acceptance, adaption or rejection by dominated groups to developing metropolitan values (e.g. for the imperial period, in very different ways: Bénabou 1976; Zanker 1987; Millett 1990; Mattingly 1997; Woolf 1998; Ando 2000; Mattingly 2011; for the Republican period, Keay and Terrenato 2001; Van Dommelen and Terrenato 2007; Wallace-Hadrill 2008; Stek 2014; Stek and Pelgrom 2014). Likewise, there are similar debates about 'Hellenisation' (Zanker 1976; Prag and Quinn 2013; Strootman 2013) and 'Assyrianisation' (Bedford 2009; Matney 2016). The emphasis on the role of ideology and cultural process in empire studies in the Near East and Mediterranean, on the one hand, and on the transformation of settlement systems and economies in empire studies in the Americas, on the other, is remarkable. The difference may be explained in part by the availability of substantial documentary sources for Old World empires *and* in part by the perceived importance of (some of) these empires for Western civilisation.

The enormous historiographical weight of the Roman Empire, which is perceived as the predecessor of both numerous empires and many nation-states, as is manifested for example in 'Roman' institutional, topographical and architectural elements which are incorporated in the most prominent of modern political institutions (e.g. the Senate, Capitol Hill), means that the study of this empire is 'colonised' by the present (Dietler 2005). For instance, in the mentioned *Empires, Perspectives from Archaeology and History* volume (Alcock et al. 2001), the entire part on 'Imperial Ideologies' is made up of chapters about the Roman Empire, whereas Rome does not feature elsewhere. This raises the question whether Rome was exceptional – Rome's special moral force and integrative power has indeed been highlighted in explanations for its success from antiquity to the present – or whether this emphasis on ideology is rather the result of a particular focus on this empire directed by contemporary interests.

Whatever is the case, it is clear that the emphasis on imperial ideology and cultural process has not facilitated cross-disciplinary comparison of the

workings and impact of empires 'on the ground', in more basic terms of subsistence, demography and infrastructure. The present volume will therefore pursue a comparative agenda with a rather strict programmatic approach, focussing the analysis on archaeological assessments of change and continuity and their relationship to imperial expansion, in provincial and peripheral areas of a number of Eurasian ancient empires. This perspective also means that we deviate somewhat in our foci on empire in the emphasis we put on certain aspects, notably *the problem of empire, logistics* and *heterogeneity*.

The Problem of Empire

Empires are often presented as the self-evident norm in history. In introductions to studies on the subject, reference can frequently be found to the notion that empires would be the most important institution by which human history has been (and continues to be) framed, a statement sometimes supported by quantitative estimates of the proportion of humanity that has lived under imperial rule (Goldstone and Haldon 2009; Burbank and Cooper 2010: 3). Moreover, often some kind of sequence or progression in empire formation is noted, which seemingly adds to the historical importance and omnipresence of empires. We argue, however, that these claims are exaggerated. Empires only come into the historical view from the moment that they are documented. Historical perspectives on empire therefore often, and indeed often consciously, ignore or downplay long-term developments in preimperial situations, thereby in effect making imperial history seem natural.

   In fact, looking at empires in quantitative terms, we could equally point out the opposite, and rather underline the relative *exceptionality* of empires. Taking a long-term perspective, early empires emerged in relatively few regions of the world. Among the regions with early empires, we can mention the Near East, China, the Andes and Mesoamerica (Taagepera 1978a; 1978b; Alcock et al. 2001; Burbank and Cooper 2010). These areas are largely identical to the early Neolithic centres (Bellwood 2005), which were subsequently transformed into highly productive agricultural regions capable of supporting early complex urban societies, which constituted the contexts in which imperial states first became a possibility (Cline and Graham 2011: 12–16). However, empires did not arise naturally in these regions. In many cases, the first empires take shape millennia after the emergence of complex societies. One clear example is that of Mesopotamia, where we can document truly complex and urban societies from at least 3500 BCE, but the first (short-lived) empire, that of Akkad, emerges only about a millennium later, around 2300 BCE (Van de Mieroop 2004). A similar case is that of China, where the first empires arose only in 221 BCE, some two millennia after the emergence of the first regional states (Yates 2001; Indrisano and Linduff 2013).

These examples demonstrate that empires were not a self-evident outcome. Instead, they arose up to eighty generations after the emergence of complex urban societies, and as we will discuss later, were often short-lived states that regularly fell apart soon after the death of the charismatic leaders who had created them. Thus, instead of regarding empires as self-evident and omnipresent, we should ask ourselves *why they developed in the first place*, and *what set of historical, social, ecological and geographic circumstances explain their emergence at a particular moment in time*. Shifting the perspective on the emergence of empires in this way makes clear that empires require explanation and cannot be seen as a self-evident or even evolutionary process. Archaeologists have the datasets and theoretical frameworks to investigate the emergence of empires from a long-term perspective. They can identify the structural changes in societies and economies that enabled the actions of empire builders.

The Logistics of Empires

Empires are, above all other matters, logistical challenges (also Taagepera 1978a; 1978b; 1979; Colburn 2013). In a world without tarmac roads, cars, trucks, railroads and airplanes, the frictional costs of transport mattered in ways that are hard to fathom in the modern world (Braudel 1949; Clark and Haswell 1967; Bairoch 1990). The implications for premodern empires are profound, especially those that were landlocked, such as, for example, China and Assyria. These frictional distance costs had clear effects on the premodern economy, on the abilities of imperial elites to obtain and share information on developments in far-flung regions and the abilities of imperial elites to intervene militarily or otherwise in far-removed regions. Recently, Walter Scheidel has attempted to model the connectivity of the Roman Empire, both in terms of the speed of military projection and the cost of different kinds of transport for trade and exchange. His model shows that the expansion of the Roman Empire progressed according to connectivity cost constraints. Similarly, the breakup of the empire followed this same logic (Scheidel 2014).

Notwithstanding the existence of important metallurgical and textile industries and far-flung trade networks in antiquity, prior to the industrial revolution agriculture was by far the most important activity in all economies (Bairoch 1990; Bang and Bayly 2011). The proceeds of agriculture, however, could for the most part only be put to use locally. This follows from the frictional cost of transporting bulk agricultural produce over land. Bairoch (1990; also Clark and Haswell 1967) calculated an average of 4–5 kilo per kilometre of transport costs for overland transport of a ton of cereals, and demonstrated that the effective supply range of Paris in the 1830s was only 50 kilometres (Table 1.1)!

In places where boats could be used to transport bulk agricultural produce, as was the case, for example, in Egypt, the frictional costs of transport were

TABLE 1.1. *Frictional Costs of Cereal Transport in the Preindustrial Economy According to Bairoch (1990; See Also Clark and Haswell 1967: 184–9)*

Transport Mode	Frictional Cost per 1000 Kilo per Km
Porters	8.8 kilo
Pack animals	4.8 kilo
Cart	3.9 kilo
Boat	0.9 kilo

significantly reduced. There the River Nile not only served as a source of water and nutrients that sustained the agricultural basis of Egyptian society, but also served as the major conduit of river-based transport with barges, facilitating the transport of people, valuables and bulk goods, in both upstream and downstream direction. Although travelling the Nile by boat could be challenging at times (Graham 2005), the logistical affordances of the Nile Valley are no doubt in part responsible for the early rise of a unified state in Egypt and the remarkable durability of the Pharaonic state over the millennia. A later, similar, example is the Roman use of the Mediterranean Sea for transporting cereals from Egypt, and building materials, wine and olive oil from across the empire (Scheidel 2014). Interestingly, in different ecological and sociopolitical circumstances, the Mediterranean could form both an important communication route and a barrier (Braudel 1949: Horden and Purcell 2000).

In most places, however, agricultural produce had to be consumed locally or converted into less voluminous and more valuable artefacts (for example, by feeding workers in textile industries) that could be traded at a profit even when deducting transport costs. This very basic fact of premodern economies – that agricultural produce had to be largely consumed regionally – raises important logistical challenges for empires, which they could address through a variety of measures. One of these was to create an imperial elite culture, through which local elites were differentiated from local societies and were coopted into serving the ends of the empires and their self-interests simultaneously (usually underwritten by keeping the sons of local elites 'hostage' at the imperial centre). A second technique was to replace local populations (in part) with groups of productive colonisers, who owed their allegiance to the empire, through a combination of genocide, deportation, colonisation and the agricultural development of previously little cultivated landscapes. A third technique was to stimulate the development of industries and agricultural cash crops that were dependent on trade with the broader empire. A fourth technique consisted of regularly visiting provincial and peripheral regions with the army, in the process consuming local agricultural produce supplies. All these techniques would have served to counter local and particularistic tendencies in the provinces and peripheries of empires.

The twin problems of how imperial elites were able to obtain and share information on developments in far-flung regions and how they could enhance their abilities to intervene military or otherwise in far-removed regions can likewise be addressed through a limited number of measures. One of these is to enhance the road system and implement a system by which messengers and key military personnel could travel quickly across the empire (Assyria: Kessler 1997; Achaemenids: Colburn 2013; Rome: Kolb 2000). A second technique was to create enough military infrastructure (forts, garrisons etc.) for local elites to be able to slow down and contain hostile threats (whether internal or external) for long enough for reinforcements to be brought in (Luttwak 1976).

The point we want to raise here by stressing that empires are above all a logistical challenge, and that logistical problems can be countered mainly through a relatively limited set of measures, is that, first, empires are a meaningful category and that empires can be fruitfully compared, because, second, the fact that they had to deal with similar logistical problems means that their solutions are often comparable. Finally, we would argue that the degree to which empires managed to successfully overcome these logistical problems to a large degree determined how robust they were and why some empires were more long-lasting than others. What we do not want to suggest, however, is that empires are homogeneous, either internally, or through time, in how they obtained and secured control over conquered and dominated territories and how they extracted resources from them. It is to this issue of heterogeneity that we now turn.

Heterogeneous Empires

The distinction between *territorial* and *hegemonic* modes of imperial domination has been highly influential in archaeological approaches to empires (Badian 1968; Luttwak 1974). Whereas in territorial empires dominated territories were annexed to the imperial state using the military for subjugation and converting these regions into provinces with an imperial administration, in hegemonic domination local polities were left intact but were made subject to imperial interests, paying tribute, serving as an economic dependency and augmented defensive and offensive policies of the empire. Both modes of domination have benefits and drawbacks. While territorial annexation allows for greater control and higher revenues, the costs of upholding the state apparatus are considerable; vice versa, hegemonic domination is relatively inexpensive but results in lower revenues and less control over peripheral territories (Ohnersorgen 2006: 3–4).

The distinction between territorial and hegemonic empires has been taken up and further developed and modified by many archaeologists working in both the New World (D'Altroy 1992; Alconini 2008) and in the Old World (Postgate 1992; Parker 2001; Smith 2003; 2005; Glatz 2013). Alternatively, a

number of scholars have postulated that empires are best understood as a network of imperial control inserted into and laid over conquered territories (Liverani 1988; Glatz 2009; Bernbeck 2010). Yet a third school of thought has transformed the political empire theory of Doyle (Doyle 1986) into a trait list of archaeological expectations in imperial contexts (Smith and Montiel 2001; Matthews 2003: 127–54; Kühne 2015).

While these typologies and trait lists of imperial control have stimulated archaeologists and historians to reconstruct particular imperial relations in specific case studies in detail, they have also become increasingly problematic, given that, like the often overly schematic metropolitan imperial sources, they tend to flatten imperial realities that are both heterogeneous and highly dynamic. Systematic interregional studies of empires have increasingly begun to demonstrate that they are not organised in concentric zones of territorial and hegemonic control, or as a network of imperial strongholds controlling conquered territories, but that provincial and peripheral regions typically were controlled on the ground through a mixture of direct and indirect means of control, with, for example, vassals or unpacified upland regions existing within provincialised areas, and that the situation on the ground often changes dynamically with the changing fortunes of empires and their adversaries (Sinopoli 1994; Parker 2001; Glatz 2009; Malpass and Alconini 2010; Düring 2015; Colburn, this volume). Heterogeneity was also essential in the economic functioning of ancient empires (Mattingly and Salmon 2001). Specific resources or particularly strategic areas could be targeted, and this could result in highly variegated imperial involvements. Further, the adaptation of exploitation strategies to regionally specific resources affects the modes and patterns of imperial impact importantly (Stek, this volume).

We therefore argue that the archaeology of empire needs to move beyond typology and investigate the heterogeneity and dynamism of the situation on the ground in imperial engagements with local communities and landscapes. By highlighting the *trial-and-error* nature of imperial consolidation efforts, we feel we can more productively investigate the complex interplay between the imperial *repertoires of rule*, that is, the culturally developed toolkit for imperial control upon which imperial collaborators could draw; the *practical situation on the ground*, that is, the nature of preexisting society and economy in a given region and its economic and strategic importance; the *resources available to establish control*; and the *agency* of imperial collaborators, nonstate actors, and local peoples and elites.

Instead of seeing ancient empires as systematically organised states pursuing a programmatic policy of expansion, we argue that they were often experimental in nature and that their development was determined at least as much by the actions of nonstate actors. Especially elites pursuing their own agendas and hijacking imperial policies to their own advantages can be highlighted in this regard (Yoffee 2005; Terrenato 2011; Terrenato 2014).

Such a perspective fits well with recent studies of modern empires (e.g. Maier 2006; Burbank and Cooper 2010). From these studies, two main conclusions can be drawn. First, empires were not homogeneously administrated. Instead, they were constituted by a patchwork of institutions and personnel that differed greatly from one part of the empire to the next. The particular situation in any region was the result of specific historical circumstances and was in part determined by the activities of key individuals. Thus, whereas in the abstract these empires had a homogeneous system of administration on the ground, there were great differences in the form that imperial government took as a result of local factors. Second, these empires did not form as a result of an overarching *grand strategy* conceived of by the central government. Instead, they came about through a series of historical events in which entrepreneurs played a major role. For example, the British were reluctantly forced into the annexation of India in order to protect the interest of the East India Trading Company, the members of which had leverage enough to sway the British government, for which this annexation provided no clear benefits at the time (Ludden 2011). Recent studies have explored similar hypotheses for the workings of ancient empires. Although these are not without their critics, theories such as those developed by Yoffee and Terrenato provide exciting alternatives to previous more statist and monolithic explanations for imperial success (Yoffee 2005; Terrenato 2014).

Finally, empires are highly diverse in their social makeup. This diversity has often been flattened by scholars working on ancient empires into a few simple categories, for example imperial elites versus the populace; or Assyrians and Romans versus natives. In reality, empires were socially extremely complex, including imperial elites, local elites, imperial middle classes and lower classes and nonimperial nonelite people of various social standing. Some of these nonimperial societies were culturally or historically more closely associated with imperial societies than others. Some imperial institutions, such as the army, typically provided the means for outsiders to opt into the imperial system and thrive. We often see people of nonimperial origins adopting imperial identities over the generations, boosting the ranks of imperial society and in many cases serving as colonists. Importantly, identities are often nonexclusive; people might identify as Roman or Assyrian in public and as something entirely different at home. As long as the empire provides sufficient incentives for both its own society and those with other cultural backgrounds to opt into the imperial system, the empire will do well. While we are fully aware that archaeology cannot unravel the full complexity of these past social realities, archaeologists are increasingly finding evidence for imperial patchwork situations in which imperial agents have to negotiate their interests with other groups and the infiltration of imperial state apparatus with people from nonimperial backgrounds (Smith 2003; 2005; Alconini 2008; Matney 2010; Düring,

Visser and Akkermans 2015; Matney 2016), evidence which fits this idea of empires as complex in their social makeup very well.

THIS BOOK

This book aims to contribute to our understanding of ancient empires by presenting a series of archaeological case studies in which the variegated trans-formations of imperial provinces and peripheries are discussed. Our case studies include empires from the Near East and Mediterranean, in chronological order: Assyria (Düring; Morandi Bonacossi); Urartu (Ristvet); Achaemenid (Colburn); the Hellenistic world (Attema); Rome (Stek; Boozer; De Jong and Palermo); and Byzantium (Vroom); (see the frontispiece map). While our focus in this volume is on 'Old World archaeology', we have not attempted to achieve full coverage of all the relevant premodern empires across the continents of Asia, Europe and Africa. Instead, we wanted to include an adequate selection of case studies to demonstrate the potential of the approaches advocated in this volume. Inevitably, some empires have been better investigated than others, and this, as well as our own fields of research and scholarly networks, have largely determined the selection of case studies to be included in the original symposium upon which this book was based (11–12 April 2014 in Leiden). Further, we have included two chapters by Rogers and Parker that enhance the broader comparative anthropological agenda aimed for in this volume. As will become apparent in the following chapters, the transformations occurring in imperial provinces and peripheries despite being highly diverse are often remarkably comparable in the various empires analysed. In the concluding chapter, we will return to this point.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

NOTE

1   Of course we recognise that numerous archaeological studies of empires have appeared since 2001, but with the exception of the volume edited by Areshian (2013), none of these took the form of an explicitly comparative study aiming to impact the broader field of empire studies.

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