Empires and Bureaucracy in World History

How did empires rule different peoples across vast expanses of space and time? And how did small numbers of imperial bureaucrats govern large numbers of subordinated peoples? *Empires and Bureaucracy in World History* seeks answers to these fundamental problems in imperial studies by exploring the power and limits of bureaucracy. The book is pioneering in bringing together historians of antiquity and the Middle Ages with scholars of post-medieval European empires, while a genuinely world-historical perspective is provided by chapters on China, the Incas and the Ottomans. The editors identify a paradox in how bureaucracy operated on the scale of empires and so help explain why some empires endured for centuries, while, in the contemporary world, empires fail almost before they begin. By adopting a cross-chronological and world-historical approach, the book challenges the abiding association of bureaucratic rationality with ‘modernity’ and the so-called ‘Rise of the West’.

Peter Crooks is Lecturer in Medieval History at Trinity College Dublin. He is editor of *Government, War and Society in Medieval Ireland* (2008) and (with David Green and W. Mark Ormrod) *The Plantagenet Empire, 1259–1453* (2016). He is also principal editor of ‘CIRCLE’ (https://chancery.tcd.ie/), a reconstruction of the Irish chancery rolls destroyed in the 1922 fire at the Public Record Office, Dublin.

Empires and Bureaucracy in World History

From Late Antiquity to the Twentieth Century

Edited by

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Preface

On 30 June 1922, an explosion and fire destroyed the records treasury of the Public Record Office of Ireland (PROI), situated at the western end of the Four Courts complex that lies on the north quays of the River Liffey in Dublin. Established by an act of the Westminster parliament in 1867, the PROI was a state-of-the-art archival facility for the preservation of the public records and state papers of English government in Ireland. Its holdings stretched back some seven hundred years to the early decades of the thirteenth century, when Ireland first became a dominion of the English crown. Following the signing and ratification of the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921, control of the PROI was transferred to the provisional government of the southern twenty-six counties of Ireland on 1 April 1922. A fortnight later, on 14 April 1922, ‘irregular’ forces opposed to the treaty occupied the Four Courts, including the PROI buildings. After temporizing for more than two months, the Irish National Army began to bombard the Four Courts in the early morning of 28 June, employing eighteen-pounder guns borrowed from British forces. Ireland had slipped into a bitter civil war. The exact sequence of events that led to the catastrophic explosion remains contested. What is clear is that – despite the pleas of a few learned scholars with impeccable Irish nationalist credentials – neither pro- nor anti-treaty forces demonstrated much concern in practice for the safeguard of the accumulated records of English (later British) colonial rule in Ireland. The anti-treaty forces had heavily mined the records treasury. A double blast on 30 June 1922 caused a near-total archival cataclysm. The intense blaze that raged afterwards destroyed even those records stored in protective metal casings. As a report of the deputy keeper of the public records in Ireland later lamented: ‘The fire left little but tangled iron work, blocks of masonry, mason rubbish and the charred fragments and ashes of what had once been Public Records.’

Empires and Bureaucracy in World History finds its oblique beginnings in this post-colonial Irish bonfire. Colonial archives currently ride high in the public

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consciousness. Indeed, the whole topic of empires and archives – their intended function, their unintended consequences, their appropriation, their destruction, their migration, their survival – is one that could usefully be explored in long-range historical perspective, perhaps from the destruction of the library at Alexandria to the ‘migrated’ Kenyan archives, until recently secreted at Hanslope Park. The present volume arises from a distinct but related concern with colonial archives, namely to salvage and reconstruct some portion of what was lost in the flames of 1922. In 2008, the Medieval History Research Centre at Trinity College Dublin established the ‘Irish Chancery Project’ with funding provided by the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences under the thematic strand: ‘The Making of Modern Ireland: Paths to Modernity’. The aim of the Irish Chancery Project was to reconstruct the records of the medieval Irish chancery – the secretariat of the kings of England in Ireland. All the original parchment chancery rolls had been consumed in the Four Courts blaze. A principal outcome of that research is CIRCLE: A Calendar of Irish Chancery Letters, c.1244–1509.\(^3\) Reconstructing records is, however, only a preliminary stage in any historical inquiry. More challenging is the interrogation of those records – the work of reconstructing the past. To this end, the Irish Chancery Project sought to place its research on medieval record-keeping in the broadest possible context. The establishment of English-style law and administration in Ireland in the thirteenth century – so important in the later historical development of the island – was an early phase in the export of English governing structures and official attitudes overseas. This itself was but a chapter in a longer, but curiously unwritten, story about the relationship between bureaucracy and empires – the theme explored in the essays that make up the present volume.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge here the contribution of the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences and its successor institution, the Irish Research Council, in funding the project that gave rise to this volume at a time of acute fiscal crisis in Ireland. I am also immensely grateful to the scholars who attended the colloquium on ‘Empires and Bureaucracy’ at Trinity College Dublin in June 2011 and who engaged so fully in the spirit of collaborative comparison that I hoped the occasion would engender. The pairing of the key words ‘empires’ and ‘bureaucracy’ proved to be felicitous. It enabled a diverse group of specialists on empires from ancient Rome to twentieth-century Africa to engage in meaningful conversations. Their findings revealed the historical relationship between empires and

bureaucracy to be far more varied, complex and significant than I had realized when embarking on this project. The collection as a whole challenges conventional state-focussed narratives of modernization and bureaucractization. In doing so, it nicely subverts the original, rather étatiste, presumption of the thematic strand ‘Paths to Modernity’, under which the project received its funding. This is, I hope, a useful demonstration of the value of open-ended research in the humanities, which the Irish Research Council has done much to promote.

The Advisory Board of the Irish Chancery Project provided encouragement and sage advice throughout the course of the project. I am especially grateful to the chairperson of the board, Chris Given-Wilson (St Andrews), from whom I cajoled the chapter that appears here on the Incas, as well as my fellow travellers in medieval Irish history: Robin Frame (Durham), Elizabeth Matthew (Reading) and Brendan Smith (Bristol). In Ireland, several colleagues provided advice and practical support during the project and at the time of the Dublin colloquium, especially David Dickson, David Ditchburn, Seán Duffy, Aine Foley, Jane Ohlmeyer and Katharine Simms from Trinity College Dublin, and Nicholas Canny from the National University of Ireland, Galway. Much of the editorial work was undertaken during two happy years at the University of East Anglia, where I enjoyed the company of a most magnificent muddle of medievalists: Julie Barrau, Stephen Church, Hugh Doherty, Tom Licence, Gesine Oppitz-Trotman, Carole Rawcliffe and the inimitable Nick Vincent. Above all, I am grateful to my co-editor Tim Parsons, who cannot have known what he was getting into when he responded positively to an email I sent him as a stranger from the unknown (by which I mean the Middle Ages) in October 2010. He has since become a valued colleague and a close friend. Our editorial meetings have taken us from Dublin to Washington DC, St Louis and – as surprising for myself as for anyone who knows me – Goodison Park (thrice).

Tim and I would like to thank our contributors warmly for engaging so constructively with our importunate demands at every stage of the writing and editing process. They were a pleasure to work with and have helped shape this into what is, we hope, a genuinely collaborative exercise in historical comparison. We are especially grateful to Karen Barkey and Deana Heath, who did not attend the Dublin colloquium but kindly agreed to contribute chapters to the book. We would also like to record our appreciation for Dane Kennedy of George Washington University, who organized a seminar at the Elliott School of International Affairs, Washington DC, in March 2012, at which we presented the preliminary findings from the collection and received valuable feedback. Mike Rowe and Margaret Procter of the University of Liverpool, who attended the Dublin colloquium in 2011, provided us with an occasion to deliver a more refined version of
our arguments at a colloquium held at Liverpool in October 2013. The ideas
developed on those occasions form part of Chapter 1. A special vote of
thanks is due to Michael Watson of Cambridge University Press for his
interest in the volume, for his patience and for his expertise in steering it
through the press. Finally, the book would not exist without the unflagging
support of Ann and Helen (*sine quibus non*) and those micro-motivators,
Emily and Olivia (*nil satis nisi optimum*).
Abbreviations


AfD Archiv für Diplomatik

AHR American Historical Review


ANP Archives nationales (Paris)

AOF Afrique Occidentale Française (French West Africa)

AOM Archives d’Outre-Mer (Aix-en-Provence, France)

AP (Affaires Politiques)

IGT (Inspection Générale du Travail)

19PA (Delavignette Papers)

K (Travail)

AS Archives du Sénégal, Dakar 2G (Rapports) 7G (Affaires politiques) 18G (Affaires administratives)

BCE Before Common Era

Bang & Bayly, Tributary empires in global history (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011)

### List of Abbreviations

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<td>BIHR</td>
<td>Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BJRL</td>
<td>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BL</td>
<td>British Library (London)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add. MSS</td>
<td>Additional Manuscripts</td>
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<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>circa</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCR</td>
<td>Calendar of the close rolls …, 1272–[1509] (47 vols., London: PRO, 1892–1963)</td>
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<td>CE</td>
<td>Common Era</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHI</td>
<td>The new Cambridge history of Islam (6 vols., 2010)</td>
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<td>CNRS</td>
<td>Le Centre national de la recherche scientifique (Paris)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CO</td>
<td>Colonial Office</td>
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<td>CO summer conference</td>
<td>Colonial Office summer conference on African administration, 1st–8th sessions (1947–57)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPR</td>
<td>Calendar of the patent rolls …, 1232–[1509] (53 vols., London: PRO, 1911–)</td>
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<td>CS</td>
<td>Camden Society</td>
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<td>CSSH</td>
<td>Comparative Studies in Society and History</td>
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<td>d.</td>
<td>died</td>
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<tr>
<td>DA</td>
<td>Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters</td>
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Davies, *Domination*  

Davies, *Empire*  

*DKR*  
The Annual Report of the Deputy Keeper of the Public Records

*Doyle, Empires*  

*EHD, vol. iv*  

*EHR*  
*English Historical Review*

*EI2*  

*EI3*  
Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas and Everett Rowson (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd edn (Leiden: Brill, 2007), www.brillonline.com

*EIr*  
E. Yarshater (gen. ed.), *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns Inc., 1985–)

*Eisenstadt, Empires*  
S. N. Eisenstadt, *The political systems of empires* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1963)

*Elliott, Empires*  

*Elliott, SEWW*  

*EME*  
*Early Medieval Europe*

*FCO*  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

*Fianu & Guth, Écrit*  
Kouky Fianu and DeLloyd J. Guth (eds.), *Écrit et pouvoir dans les chancelleries médiévales: espace français, espace anglais* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Fidem, 1997)

*Foedera*  

*Foucault, ‘Governmentality’*  
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<td>Gk.</td>
<td>Greek</td>
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**Garnsey & Saller, Empire**  

**Goldstone & Haldon, ‘Ancient states’**  

**Greene, ‘Negotiated authorities’**  

**HMSO**  
His/Her Majesty’s Stationery Office

**HJ**  
*Historical Journal*

**Howe, Empire**  

**HR**  
*Historical Research*

**HZ**  
*Historische Zeitschrift*

**ICS**  
Indian Civil Service

**IGT**  
*Inspection Générale du Travail* (head office of IT)

**Irigoin & Grafe, ‘Bargaining’**  

**IT**  
*Inspection du Travail*

**JICH**  
*Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*

**Jones, LRE**  

**JRS**  
*Journal of Roman Studies*

**JWH**  
*Journal of World History*

**KNA**  
Kenya National Archives

**Koebner, Imperialism**  

**L.**  
Latin

**Lieven, Empire**  

**Lugard, Dual mandate**  
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<td>MGH</td>
<td>Monumenta Germaniae Historica</td>
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<tr>
<td>MIöG</td>
<td>Mitteilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MWG</td>
<td>Max Weber-Gesamtausgabe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAI</td>
<td>National Archives of India</td>
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<tr>
<td>PBA</td>
<td>Proceedings of the British Academy</td>
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<td>Potter, IPA</td>
<td>David C. Potter, <em>India’s political administrators: from ICS to IAS</em> (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996)</td>
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<td>P&amp;P</td>
<td>Past and Present</td>
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<td>Public Record Office</td>
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<td>r.</td>
<td>reigned/ruled</td>
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<td>RA</td>
<td>Rapport annuel (‘annual report’)</td>
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<td>RC</td>
<td>Record Commission</td>
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<td>RHS</td>
<td>Royal Historical Society</td>
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<td>RS</td>
<td>Rolls Series</td>
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<td>Spanish American Historical Review</td>
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Scales & Zimmer, Power
Len Scales and Oliver Zimmer (eds.), *Power and the nation in European history* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005)

Sp. Spanish

Spangenberg, BB

TNA
The National Archives of the United Kingdom

FCO (Foreign and Commonwealth Office)

WO (War Office)

TRHS
*Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*

Weber, E&S

Weber, FMW

Weber, Theory

WO War Office

Wong & Sayer, British state