

## 1 Empires, Bureaucracy and the Paradox of Power

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Discernable across the flux of history is a persistent trend: the proclivity of human groups to establish large-scale and durable political formations that rule over subject populations of different ethnicities, religions and cultures – in short, to build empires. On this narrow point, scholars appear to have achieved consensus.<sup>1</sup> But having gained power, usually through violent conquest, how did empires rule over different peoples across vast expanses of space and time? Or to recalibrate the question with the particular concerns of the present volume in mind: how did relatively small numbers of imperial bureaucrats govern large numbers of subordinated peoples? Dane Kennedy has aptly described this as ‘one of the most persistent conundrums to arise from the study of Western Imperialism’.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, we can amplify his observation: this administrative sleight of hand is a conundrum of *world* history. It is also a matter with an urgent contemporary resonance. The past decade has witnessed a surge of work on the subject of empire inspired by what might be termed the ‘imperial turn’ in contemporary world affairs. Much of this literature swirls around a deceptively simple question: ‘what is an empire?’ Any satisfactory answer must take account of political structures and forms of governance – of how real empires actually *ran*. This book represents a collaborative effort to advance our understanding of these issues by exploring the power and limits of bureaucracy in historical empires across a broad canvas, from ancient Rome to the dismantling of European empires after World War II.

<sup>1</sup> John Darwin describes empire as the ‘default setting’ for large-scale political formations until the past two centuries (*After Tamerlane: the global history of empire since 1405* (London: Allen Lane, 2007), p. 23), a phrase echoed in Ashley Jackson, *The British empire: a very short introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 11; and Mrinalini Sinha, ‘Projecting power: empires, colonies, and world history’, in Douglas Northrop (ed.), *A companion to world history* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), p. 263. See also Lieven, *Empire*, p. xvi (‘[empires] are one of the commonest forms of state in history’); Howe, *Empire*, p. 1 (‘a great deal of the world’s history is the history of empires’); Goldstone & Haldon, ‘Ancient states’, p. 19 (‘[the] typical formation by which large territorial states were ruled for most of human history’); Burbank & Cooper, *Empires*, p. 8 (‘[empires] played a long and critical role in human history’).

<sup>2</sup> Dane Kennedy, ‘Imperial history and post-colonial theory’, *JICH* 24:3 (1996), 357.

4 Peter Crooks and Timothy H. Parsons

Such chronological and geographical scope, not to mention the range of disciplinary backgrounds and theoretical dispositions represented among our authors, is unusual in a book of this sort. It is quite deliberate. We explicitly reject the notion that an unbridgeable chasm separates historicist and generalist positions, ‘splitters’ and ‘lumpers’.<sup>3</sup> Our methodological point of departure is that a diachronic approach to the history of empires is mutually enriching for all the sub-disciplines involved, and that it is possible to engage in long-range comparison while attending closely to geographical specificity, human agency and change over time. The objective is not to provide a ‘comparative history’ but rather what Frederick Cooper has called, in another context, a ‘history that compares’ – that is, a history that compares while retaining a high level of sensitivity to the specifics of time and place and refrains from invoking a totalizing explanatory framework that elides the varied experiences of the past.<sup>4</sup>

We begin by considering the contested nature of the keywords at the heart of the book – ‘empire’ and ‘bureaucracy’ – and examine how they can be put to work together in pursuit of meaningful comparisons across time and between cultures without ‘sweeping the particular under the global’.<sup>5</sup> To clarify the problem of conceptualization, we make a basic distinction between concepts as *analytical categories* and concepts as *historical ideas*.<sup>6</sup> Our working concept of empire as a category of analysis is as follows: *an extended and durable polity in which a core society exercises formal and authoritarian power over subordinated peoples of outlying territories gained or maintained by coercion*.

Bureaucracies played a role (albeit more often in aspiration than result) in providing empires with a means of articulating social power and marshalling resources in regions remote from the imperial core. In pursuit of these ends, imperial bureaucracies were authoritarian, extractive and backed by violence.

<sup>3</sup> For a recent argument for the importance of long-range historical analysis, see Jo Guldi and David Armitage, *The history manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); David Armitage, ‘Horizons of history: space, time, and the future of the past’, *History Australia* 12:1 (2015), 207–25.

<sup>4</sup> Frederick Cooper, ‘Race, ideology, and the perils of comparative history’, *AHR* 101:4 (1996), 1122–38 (quotation at 1135).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> What we refer to, for the sake of clarity, as ‘historical ideas’ would in German scholarship fall under the banner of the ‘history of concepts’ (*G. Begriffsgeschichte*), a discipline associated especially with Reinhart Koselleck. A distinct approach to ‘historical concepts’ is that of the so-called Cambridge school of political thought, led by J. G. A. Pocock and Quentin Skinner, on which see Kari Palonen, ‘The history of concepts as a style of political theorizing: Quentin Skinner’s and Reinhart Koselleck’s subversion of normal political theory’, *European Journal of Political Theory* 1:1 (2002), 91–106; Melvin Richter, *The history of political and social concepts: a critical introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995). For an application of these approaches to the concepts ‘empire’ and ‘imperialism’, see Helge Jordheim and Iver B. Neumann, ‘Empire, imperialism and conceptual history’, *Journal of International Relations and Development* 14:2 (2011), 153–85.

But, for all that, their capacity to rule directly was often limited by the tiny numbers of bureaucratic personnel, by the problem of communications and, most of all, by the difficulty of ruling ‘different’ peoples who do not want to be ruled, the troublesome subjects that Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936) described as a ‘seething, whining, weakly hive, impotent to help itself, but strong in its power to cripple, thwart, and annoy the sunken-eyed man who, by official irony, was said to be “in charge” of it’.<sup>7</sup> It is Kipling’s acknowledgement of the ‘official irony’ of his invented bureaucrat’s position that gives this passage its particular valence. The imperial bureaucrat is the local representative of the might of empire, yet he appears ludicrously ineffectual because his real latitude for the exercise of power is so restricted.

Here the mask of imperial power is let slip, bringing us face to face with an inherent paradox or contradiction in how bureaucracy operates on the scale of empires, as opposed to states. While the development of a bureaucratic apparatus, however minimal, was required to consolidate formal control over territorial acquisitions, it also acted in certain circumstances to undercut imperial power. Common to all the empires discussed in this volume was the challenge of maintaining a treacherously unstable equilibrium between integration and fragmentation, between assimilation and differentiation. The balance was liable to be upset precisely because empires are dynamic not static: they change in response to internal tensions and external pressures of various kinds – political, military, religious, cultural, economic. ‘More bureaucracy’ is often the solution of the bureaucrat faced by change. In point of fact, these chapters show how the expansion of bureaucracy can destabilize imperial power because the attempt to rule directly alienates the very elites without whose compliance imperial rule would have been impossible in the first place.

## I

*America has no empire to extend or utopia to establish. We wish for others only what we wish for ourselves – safety from violence, the rewards of liberty, and the hope for a better life.*  
 – George W. Bush (2002)

*Unlike the old empires, we don’t make these sacrifices for territory or for resources. We do it because it’s right.*  
 –Barack Obama (2011)<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> The phrase occurs in Kipling’s short story ‘The education of Otis Yeere’ (first published 1888, later collected in *Wee Willie Winkie and other stories*).

<sup>8</sup> Graduation speech at West Point delivered by President George W. Bush, 1 June 2002 (<http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020601-3.html>); remarks by President Barack Obama and the First Lady on the end of the war in Iraq, Fort Bragg, North Carolina, 14 Dec. 2011 ([www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/12/14/remarks-president-and-first-lady-end-war-iraq](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/12/14/remarks-president-and-first-lady-end-war-iraq)).

Empires are very much a hot topic at present in the ‘public sphere’. Much of the interest was prompted by a debate that was visible even before September 11, 2001, but which grew exponentially after that date, concerning the merits and existence of an ‘American empire’.<sup>9</sup> In large part, the literature on America-as-empire can be characterized as a twenty-first-century form of pamphleteering by hand-wringing policy wonks and chest-pounding public intellectuals from all sides of the political spectrum. Its interest is primarily as a specimen of contemporary Anglo-American ideology rather than as a substantive contribution to the study of empire. But amid the noise and haste, learned and instructive interventions have set the present conjuncture in its historical and comparative context.<sup>10</sup> For the wider community of scholars, the importance of the debate on an ‘imperial America’ is that the rising tide of interest in empire has raised all boats. Especially notable is the appetite for collaborative comparison.<sup>11</sup> The most adventurous works responding to this trend amount to surveys of world history through the analytical frame of ‘empire’. This represents a significant reorientation of existing explanatory frameworks. As more than one scholar has commented, placing the emphasis on empire has the virtue of diverting attention from the ‘rise of the nation-state’, a reading of the past which, even at its most sophisticated, tends to teleology.<sup>12</sup>

The novelty of the present collection is the conceptual coupling of ‘empire’ with ‘bureaucracy’. The value of the pairing lies in a two-part claim: first that bureaucracy is basic to the subject matter of imperial history, and second that it

<sup>9</sup> Stephen Howe, ‘The slow death and strange rebirths of imperial history’, *JICH* 29 (2001), 131–40. Already in the 1990s, the then-recent collapse of the Soviet Union excited interest in the ‘end of empires’: Barkey & von Hagen, *After empire*; Alexander Motyl, *Imperial ends: the decay, collapse, and revival of empires* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

<sup>10</sup> For works that are especially successful in setting America in the context of the comparative history of empire, see Charles S. Maier, *Among empires: American ascendancy and its predecessors* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); Dane Kennedy, ‘Essay and reflection: on the American empire from a British imperial perspective’, *International History Review* 29:1 (2007), 83–108; Alejandro Colás, ‘Open doors and closed frontiers: the limits of American empire’, *European Journal of International Relations* 14:4 (2008), 619–43; Paul A. Kramer, ‘Power and connection: imperial histories of the United States in the world’, *AHR* 116:5 (2011), 1348–91; Julian Go, *Patterns of empire: the British and American empires, 1688 to the present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>11</sup> Important examples include Alcock *et al.*, *Empires*; Frédéric Hurlet (ed.), *Les empires, antiquité et moyen âge: analyse comparée* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2008); Walter Scheidel (ed.), *Rome and China: comparative perspectives on ancient world empires* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Dina Rizk Khoury and Dane Kennedy, ‘Comparing empires: the Ottoman domains and the British Raj in the long nineteenth century’, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 27:2 (2007), 233–44; Bang & Bayly, *Tributary empires*. For a review article, see Phiroze Vasunia, ‘The comparative study of empires’, *JRS* 101 (2011), 222–37.

<sup>12</sup> A. G. Hopkins, ‘Back to the future: from national history to imperial history’, *P&P* 164 (1999), 198–243, esp. 201–7; Frederick Cooper, ‘Empire multiplied: a review essay’, *CSSH* 46:2 (2004), 247–72, at 247; Frederick Cooper, ‘States, empires, and political imagination’, in Cooper, *Colonialism*, pp. 153–203.

is especially useful to the comparativist. Bureaucracy was an essential component of imperial rule. However informal or absent-minded an empire may be in its beginnings, and this itself is often the subject of controversy, there will arrive what has been termed the ‘hour of the bureaucrats’.<sup>13</sup> Empires typically began with military conquests, but a conquest must entrench itself with an institutionalized system of ruling the vanquished population, other than assimilation, if it is to result in an empire. Once established, imperial bureaucracies sought to coordinate, even if they could not entirely control, the means of coercion, the means of persuasion and the means of production – the three constituent elements of social power identified by W. G. Runciman.<sup>14</sup>

The second part of our claim concerns utility. For the comparativist, the virtue of the coupling of bureaucracy with empire is that it provides a common point of reference transcending time and place when identifying continuities in how different peoples have been ruled differently.<sup>15</sup> By bringing the analysis of bureaucracy to an imperial scale, the volume helps us perceive a fundamental distinction in the nature of rule in empires and states, specifically a key difference in the nature of the problems with which the bureaucracies of empires and states respectively had to contend. Here the spatial context of power is important, notably the predicament of imperial functionaries and intermediaries stretched and pulled between the vagaries of politics at the imperial core and the realities of ruling on the periphery. But the difference was more than simply one of scale. It was also one of function. Whereas state bureaucracies draw legitimacy from the uniformity of their rule, imperial bureaucracies were frequently predicated on the ‘rule of difference’ and required a legitimizing ideology of rule premised on the inferiority of the governed.<sup>16</sup>

The emphasis in this volume is on the formal institutions of imperial governance. Much of the most influential scholarship on empire since the 1950s has explored the informal aspects of imperial rule, sparking interpretations as widely divergent as Robinson and Gallagher’s ‘imperialism of free

<sup>13</sup> The term is that of Jürgen Osterhammel, *Colonialism: a theoretical overview* (Princeton: M. Wiener, 1997), p. 25. Osterhammel’s analysis only concerns colonial empires after 1500, but this phrase seems germane to earlier empires also.

<sup>14</sup> See W. G. Runciman, *A treatise on social theory*, vol. II: *substantive social theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 12, for coercive power, ideological power and economic power, and their respective ‘means’. Cf. the four ‘sources’ (ideological, military, economic and political) of social power described in the conceptual introduction of Michael Mann, *The sources of social power*, vol. I: *A history of power from the beginning to A.D. 1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 22–7.

<sup>15</sup> ‘The concept of empire presumes that different peoples within the polity will be governed differently’ (Burbank & Cooper, *Empires*, p. 8).

<sup>16</sup> For a seminal discussion, see Edward W. Said, *Culture and imperialism* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1993), esp. the description of ‘the *imperium* as a protracted, almost metaphysical obligation to rule subordinate, inferior, or less advanced peoples’ (quotation at p. 10).

trade',<sup>17</sup> Foucault-inspired 'postcolonial discourse theory',<sup>18</sup> and the transcendent and de-territorialized 'empire' of Hardt and Negri.<sup>19</sup> These interpretations share common ground in their concern to show that the full reach of imperial power extends far beyond formal institutions. Informal empire was often more sustainable and effective, and was certainly cheaper, than formal empire. But the focus on bureaucracy assists us in locating the vulnerabilities and contradictions in the very nature of imperial rule, rather than seeking them at the penumbra. It compels us to reconsider formal empire and then account for its weaknesses.

Renewed emphasis on formal empire might well be interpreted as a return to fundamentals. It would, however, be unfortunate if this were understood as sounding a retreat to top-down imperial history. Constitutional, diplomatic and administrative history once provided the dominant mode in the historiography of empires, as of individual nation-states. This approach was already falling from favour by the mid-twentieth century with the rise of social, and later cultural, history. Viewed in this light, the historiography of imperial institutions resembles an aged Cinderella, memories of whose illustrious presence at the ball linger on, though in her dotage she is unglamorous and overlooked. Our application of the term 'bureaucracy' is intended to provide more than a facelift. The primary objection to the older historiography is not that it was dry as dust (though it often was), but rather that it was narrow in its range of interests. Too often metropolitan imperial history has been 'armchair' imperial history. Bureaucracy carries with it a broader range of application than conventional history of administration. The term encourages us to think beyond administrative technicalities to how bureaucracy operated as part of the social systems and political cultures of empires.<sup>20</sup> This requires us to raise our eyes beyond the metropolitan administration and to explore the articulation of power on the peripheries, the 'lived experience' of imperial bureaucratic rule, the identity of bureaucrats, the role of bureaucracy in shaping historical memory and creating a shared imperial space, and the social and ideological impact of bureaucracy on subject peoples.

<sup>17</sup> John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, 'The imperialism of free trade', *Economic History Review* 6:1 (1953), 1–15.

<sup>18</sup> By way of introduction to a vast literature, see Robert J. C. Young, *Postcolonialism: an historical introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001); and for a positive assessment of what postcolonial theory offers conventional imperial historiography, see Dane Kennedy, 'Imperial history and post-colonial theory'.

<sup>19</sup> Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000). For an insightful discussion of Hardt and Negri, see Alejandro Colás, *Empire* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), ch. 5.

<sup>20</sup> For discussions of bureaucracy as part of broad social and political processes, see Eugene Kamenka, *Bureaucracy* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989); David Beetham, *Bureaucracy*, 2nd edn (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1996), esp. ch. 2.



## II

**Scope and Content of the Collection**

This book takes as its subject the operations of bureaucracy – however minimal or intensive – in historical empires. Individual chapters examine different component parts of the bureaucratic engine, but across the collection, the chapters suggest how the imperial machine functions (or, as often as not, malfunctions) as an interlinked system of rule. We do not seek to isolate ‘bureaucratic empires’ as a particular category deemed suitable for comparison on the basis of an *a priori* assessment of similitude.<sup>21</sup> Nor do we pretend to be comprehensive in our coverage of empires since Late Antiquity – something that no single volume could reasonably hope to achieve.<sup>22</sup> Instead we aim for representative coverage while being purposefully eclectic in our choice of examples and in our embrace of plural methodological and theoretical positions. The studies presented here are not restricted by historical era, by geography or by economic structure – the most common denominators of empires in the existing scholarly literature. Instead the volume considers within a single analytical frame ancient and modern empires, Western and non-Western empires, land empires and seaborne empires, tributary empires and commercial empires. Parts III and IV of the book, which are ordered chronologically, explore the bureaucracies of Western empires. Running through these chapters are two strands. The first explores empire-building within mainland Europe and the projection of European power overseas. Among the empires that receive attention here are Rome and its twin descendants in the Middle Ages – the Byzantine empire in the East and the Holy Roman Empire in the West, the Spanish and Napoleonic empires in the ‘age of expansion’, and the French overseas empires in the era of the ‘new imperialism’ (c.1880 onwards). A second strand of essays, woven through Parts III and IV, examines the British empire and its precursors, with contributions on the Angevin empire (1154–1204) and England’s overseas empire in the late Middle Ages (1259–1453), colonial North America, the British Raj, and decolonization in British Africa after World War II. The chapters in Part II place the dynamics of Western empires in world-historical perspective by providing examples of non-Western and non-literate imperial bureaucracies: Song China, the Incas, the early Arabic caliphates and the Ottomans.

<sup>21</sup> ‘Historical bureaucratic empires’ are the focus of the analysis in Eisenstadt, *Empires*.

<sup>22</sup> Among the more obvious omissions are (in the ancient world) the Assyrian, Babylonian, Achaemenid, Athenian and Egyptian empires, for which see Morris & Scheidel, *Dynamics*; Eric H. Cline and Mark W. Graham (eds.), *Ancient empires: from Mesopotamia to the rise of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); and from period c.1000 CE to the twentieth century, the Malian, Safavid, Mughal, Portuguese, Dutch, Russian, Soviet and Japanese empires.

While the volume makes a virtue of bringing together subjects that are normally kept apart, we do not make light of the formidable obstacles presented by the comparative history of empires. Two interrelated difficulties are worth highlighting. The first concerns evidence. The archives and records that provide the fodder for much historical research are themselves the physical residue of the historical bureaucracies that are the object of this enquiry. Archival evidence is biased in at least three ways. The records privilege the viewpoint of the conquerors over the conquered; they survive in greater abundance for more recent eras; and they are dramatically skewed towards the temperate West.<sup>23</sup> The quantity of surviving evidence affects our assumptions about past societies more than we often acknowledge. Societies with fewer written records (whether medieval Western or more recent non-Western societies) are far more likely to be depicted by empire-builders or subsequent historians as ‘backward’ and uncivilized – as *pre-‘modern’*. Mass survival of documents is seductive in an equally problematical way: it encourages us to confide in the normative power of the ‘state’.<sup>24</sup>

A second difficulty arises from qualitative assessments about the sophistication of one imperial bureaucracy as against another. We should not assume that historical bureaucracies sought to maximize control in the manner attributed to the modern territorial state; it follows that it is not necessarily a sign of ‘failure’ if imperial bureaucracies did not achieve the same level of penetration into their respective societies.<sup>25</sup> The imperial bureaucracies surveyed in this volume varied widely in terms of size, complexity and ‘rationality’ across the two millennia explored by the book.<sup>26</sup> The contrasts are most starkly visible *between* empires: witness the extremes of the rational bureaucracy of the Song (with more than 30,000 officials and perhaps some 200,000 more clerical staff) as against the administration of the medieval German Reich, whose officials can be measured in dozens not hundreds, or the more familiar contrast between the bureaucratized transatlantic empire overseen by the Spanish

<sup>23</sup> Archives in non-temperate climates are doubly disadvantaged. Without proper preservation policies, paper will become dust in a tropical climate within one or two centuries; but it is precisely in such climate zones that disparities in contemporary economic development make it difficult to implement the policies necessary for preservation (*Lost memory: libraries and archives destroyed in the twentieth century*, UNESCO Memory of the World Programme (Paris, 1996), p. 31). Deliberate ‘weeding’ of old documents might also be the policy of bureaucrats in need of space: see Richard Britnell, ‘Pragmatic literacy beyond Christendom’, in Britnell (ed.), *Pragmatic literacy, east and west, 1200–1330* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1997), esp. pp. 186–8, for a comparative discussion of archival conservation and ‘weeding’ in the Latin Christendom, Song China, Kamakura Japan and the ‘Abbāsīd caliphate.

<sup>24</sup> On this point, see the discussion by Gillingham (Chapter 9, pp. 197–9) and Crooks (Chapter 11, pp. 256, 270, 276) of the ‘precociously bureaucratic’ medieval English ‘state’; and also Heath (Chapter 15, pp. 365–9) and Cooper (Chapter 16, pp. 392–3) on the ‘modern’ colonial state.

<sup>25</sup> A point brought out by Given-Wilson (Chapter 4, p. 96) and Scales (Chapter 10, pp. 247–9).

<sup>26</sup> On rationalities, see David d’Avray, *Rationalities in history: an essay in weberian comparison* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).



monarchy and the ‘bureaucratically challenged’ empire of the British in North America. Without due caution, long-range historical comparison becomes a parlour game. The later Roman empire was staffed by a civil service of perhaps 34,000,<sup>27</sup> precisely the same size as the modern-day civil service of the European Commission, which is itself dwarfed (contrary to popular myths about a Brussels festooned in red tape) by the bloated national bureaucracies of the constituent states of the European Union.<sup>28</sup> This is a nice coincidence, but an absolute comparison between late Rome and the European Commission tells us little of significance, just as direct comparisons between Rome’s military power and that of present-day America are virtually meaningless. It is *relative* comparison that is significant.<sup>29</sup> By recent standards, later Roman bureaucracy was modest. But the fact remains that, as Michael Whitby shows in Chapter 6, late Roman bureaucracy bulked large relative to that of the ‘undergoverned’ or ‘proto-bureaucratic’ early empire, and indeed compared to many later empires surveyed in this volume.<sup>30</sup> Likewise, while debates may rage among Sinologists about the efficiency or otherwise of Chinese government, it is hard to gainsay Patricia Ebrey’s observation that ‘when the Chinese bureaucracy is viewed in comparative terms . . . it was remarkably well-organized and effective’.<sup>31</sup> Historical phenomena cannot be properly assessed when abstracted from the peculiar circumstances of time and place. Indeed, as Bruce Berman has remarked: ‘it is precisely [the] peculiarities and idiosyncrasies of a society that may be the most important thing shaping its historical development and contemporary significance.’<sup>32</sup> By the same token, imperial societies cannot be fully understood unless specialists are willing to extend their gaze beyond the borders of their own particular empire.

<sup>27</sup> Christopher Kelly, ‘Emperors, government and bureaucracy’, in Averil Cameron and Peter Garnsey (eds.), *CAH*, vol. XIII: *The late empire, A.D. 337–425* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 163, n. 132. See also Whitby (Chapter 6, p. 130).

<sup>28</sup> The figure of 34,000 is for the Commission of the enlarged EU representing 28 countries. The civil service of the United Kingdom in 2011 was 498,433 (Office for National Statistics, Civil Service Statistics, 2011: [www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778\\_237745.pdf](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_237745.pdf)); that of France more than 2 million, with 40,000 serving the city of Paris alone. For a comparison between the European civil service and the public administrations of the constituent national governments of the EU, see the remarks of the vice president of the European Commission, Maroš Šefčovič, ‘A European civil service fit for the 21st century’ (Speech 12/249, European Policy Group, Brussels, 10 May 2012): [http://ec.europa.eu/civil\\_service/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/civil_service/index_en.htm).

<sup>29</sup> As argued by Kennedy, ‘On the American empire from a British imperial perspective’, 108.

<sup>30</sup> Garnsey & Saller, *Empire*, p. 20 (quotation). Although note Whitby’s important qualification concerning ‘uncosted’ administrative contributions (for example, of the cities) in the Roman republic and early empire (Chapter 6, pp. 139–40); and for the corollary of this, that in the late Roman empire (fifth and early sixth centuries CE) centrally appointed officials tended to be local aristocrats, see Chris Wickham, ‘Tributary empires: late Rome and the Arab caliphate’, in Bang & Bayly, *Tributary empires*, pp. 205–13, at 210.

<sup>31</sup> See Ebrey (Chapter 2, p. 47).

<sup>32</sup> Bruce J. Berman, ‘“A palimpsest of contradictions”: ethnicity, class, and politics in Africa’, in *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 37:1 (2004), 13–31, at 17.

12 *Peter Crooks and Timothy H. Parsons*

III

### Empire and Bureaucracy as Keywords

The organizing concepts around which all the chapters in this volume revolve are keywords in the sense intended by Raymond Williams: words that are as slippery in meaning as they are indispensable because of their general significance in contemporary culture and society. Historical, scholarly and popular usages encrust around such words, endowing them with discrepant meanings that render them sluggish when deployed in specialist analysis. But keywords are too useful to be dispensed with because (to paraphrase Williams) the problem of their meanings is inextricably bound up with the problem that the words themselves are used to discuss.<sup>33</sup> To invent new terms or brandish previously discarded alternatives clouds as much as it clarifies. An alternative is to heed the advice of Susan Reynolds, who has exhorted scholars to distinguish carefully between words, concepts and phenomena – that is, the words we employ, the concepts or ideas that lie behind those words, and the historical phenomena to which those words and concepts are taken to apply.<sup>34</sup> A first step is to distinguish ‘our’ words – that is, the terms of analysis we use together with their associated concepts – from the words and concepts that appear in the historical record. For convenience, we describe this as a difference between *analytical categories* and *historical ideas*. While the analytical category and historical idea are often related, they are not commensurate with each other, and making the distinction clear helps us avoid a number of conceptual pitfalls.<sup>35</sup>

This procedure is crucial precisely because the classical idea of a concept with a fixed definition is a will-o’-the-wisp.<sup>36</sup> In the case of empire, there is no consensus in the current scholarly literature as to what single feature links all those entities that described themselves, or have been described, as empires;

<sup>33</sup> Raymond Williams, *Keywords: a vocabulary of culture and society*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), esp. p. 15.

<sup>34</sup> Reynolds, ‘Empires’, 151. Her approach is set out more fully in Susan Reynolds, *Fiefs and vassals: the medieval evidence reinterpreted* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), esp. pp. 12–13.

<sup>35</sup> This approach gains theoretical ballast from the distinction made between *etics* and *emics* (or external or internal perspectives) in other disciplines that engage in cross-cultural analysis, notably linguistics and anthropology. The two approaches are complementary, and neither can claim precedence over the other. For discussion, see J. W. Berry, ‘Emics and etics: a symbiotic conception’, *Culture and Psychology* 5:2 (1999), 165–71; Thomas N. Headland, Kenneth L. Pike and Marvin Harris, *Emics and etics: the insider/outsider debate* (London: Sage Publications, 1990).

<sup>36</sup> Gregory L. Murphy, *The big book of concepts* (Cambridge, MA; London: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2002): Murphy’s discussion shows that at a very basic level, human conceptual knowledge, ‘a phenomenologically simple cognitive process . . . turns out to be maddeningly complex’ (quotation at p. 2). By way of introduction, John Wilson, *Thinking with concepts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), remains useful.