

Phiroze VASUNIA and Nicola Terrenato
Ancient and Modern Imperialisms

Panelists: Danielle Allen, Carla Antonaccio, Alessandro Barchiesi, Mary Beard, Homi Bhabha, Steven Dyson, Anthony Pagden.

Our APA-AIA workshop is an attempt to discuss the relationship between ancient and modern imperialisms and to assess its contribution to the historical understanding of empire. The workshop brings together historians, archaeologists, and literary critics who have figured prominently in debates on ancient and modern imperialism. We propose three related areas within the terms of comparative imperialisms:

1. classical scholarship and empire. This heading explores the impact of empire on scholarship about Greece and Rome, and assesses the political and imperial contexts to modern writing about antiquity. In connection with the nineteenth century, for example, we examine how the British empire shaped British views of the Roman empire, how Napoleonic conquests affected French studies of antiquity, or how imperial rivalry among European powers influenced contemporary interpretations of past empires.
2. classics and contemporary scholarship on empire. The workshop also considers scholarly developments in fields outside of classics and evaluates their impact on the study of ancient empires. Such fields include postcolonial studies, subaltern studies, the study of Orientalism, and modern imperial history. For instance, a large amount of challenging research has been produced, and an aggressively revisionist body of writing has developed, in colonial and postcolonial studies in relation to terms such as hybridity, mimicry, and the subaltern. We intend to stimulate a discussion between classics and colonial studies and to reflect on the interconnections between the various sides in the debate.
3. classics and modern empires. The workshop also asks how ancient empires have influenced modern empires, at the level of discourse, ideology, or practice. For instance, Napoleon fashioned himself after Alexander, British imperialists in India repeatedly drew parallels between themselves and Roman provincial governors, and there is an ongoing debate over imperial analogies in relation to the current American occupation of Iraq. In each case, the example of past empires has affected either the practice or the theory of modern empires.

The research at the heart of this workshop has wide ramifications for subjects such as classics, history, colonial studies, and cultural studies; it also intersects with our understanding of class, race, ethnicity, and nationhood. We hope to cast new light on the collaborative, conflictual, and charged relationship described above. The time is ripe for the study of classical antiquity to engage self-reflexively in its genealogy and for the study of empire to acknowledge a broader arena of colonial knowledge and practice.