
Steve Kosiba

Antiquity / Volume 90 / Issue 349 / February 2016, pp 267 - 269
DOI: 10.15184/aqy.2015.211, Published online: 17 February 2016

Link to this article: [http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0003598X15002112](http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0003598X15002112)

How to cite this article:

Request Permissions: [Click here](http://journals.cambridge.org/AQY)
sets out to achieve for Ireland, in a single volume, the kind of transformative investigations that have been undertaken for England. And it succeeds. By weaving together a genuinely jaw-dropping amount of evidence (outlined in Chapter 2), collated from a desk-based assessment of cartographic and historical sources, as well as first-hand fieldwork observations and zooarchaeological analyses, Beglane achieves her ambition of investigating the role of Anglo-Norman parks in both the Irish landscape and mind-set. But this book is about more than Anglo-Norman parks, which are simply a lens through which the subtleties of Irish culture and identity are examined. The temporal coverage of the volume certainly extends beyond its purported focus of AD 1169–1350, with content ranging from the rise of parks in prehistory to their decline and reinvention in the early modern period. Perhaps one of the most important contributions of this book is that it highlights how particular topics—in this case, Anglo-Norman parks and castles—can go almost entirely un-researched for reasons of politics and national identity. In Chapter 1, Beglane explains how, as perceived symbols of oppression, medieval parks and castles have been largely ignored in Ireland. Their physical remains were, for a long time, allowed to collapse so that they might also fall from the wider cultural consciousness, the exceptions being where these landscape features were re-cast as the backdrop to Gaelic mythology. This situation not only renders Irish Anglo-Norman parks something of a lacuna in terms of our knowledge and understanding of them, but also adds an additional element of contemporary interest to an already fascinating topic.

Following Chapter 2’s full review of the sources examined in the book, Chapter 3 explores the role of parks as hunting reserves and, in particular, their connection to fallow deer—a subject of great interest to this reviewer but about which I now realise I knew astonishingly little with regard to Ireland. Beglane concludes this chapter with the observation that, in contrast to the situation in England, the primary aim of Anglo-Norman parks in Ireland was not deer keeping. Rather, in Chapter 4, she examines their significance as ‘economic units’, and their importance for the management of timber resources, cattle and horses. In Chapter 5, the way in which the function of parks translated into their design is examined through six, detailed case studies set against a broader synthesis of the data. Having demonstrated the evidence for the ‘design’ of parks, the complexities of their symbolism are further explored in Chapter 6, taking in turn the psychological impact of park boundaries, the significance of controlled and productive landscapes as markers of elite status, and how such markers could be subverted through park-breaking and poaching. Finally, this chapter examines how parks became signifiers of both Anglo-Norman and Gaelic identities, and subsequently woven into their respective myths and memories.

Chapter 7 goes well beyond the book’s remit, charting the mixed fortunes of the six parks explored in the case studies, initially detailed in Chapter 5 (plus an additional example). When considered independently, it becomes clear that there is no such thing as a typical ‘park’, each having its own unique history that requires investigation in order to extract vital social and cultural information about the Irish landscape. With this in mind, the book finishes, in Chapter 8, with a warning about the potential loss of evidence that may occur as unstudied parks and their ephemeral remains vanish in a landscape increasingly under pressure from development. It must be hoped that Beglane’s book, which represents a comprehensive one-stop shop for information about Ireland’s Anglo-Norman parks, will both raise the profile of, and encourage research into, these neglected elements of the island’s landscape history.

NAOMI SYKES
Department of Archaeology, University of Nottingham, UK
(Email: naomi.sykes@nottingham.ac.uk)


In The Inka Empire: a multidisciplinary approach, the editor, Izumi Shimada, skilfully weaves together multiple scholarly perspectives on the ancient Inka civilisation. The Inkas built the most extensive and culturally diverse empire in the indigenous Americas. Scholarship on the Inkas has been as vast and variegated as the empire itself.
Shimada’s volume navigates the landscape of Inka scholarship, offering a fresh and comprehensive compendium that will interest readers who are unfamiliar with the Inkas, and specialists who have long studied them. The volume differs from other anthologies of Inka research because it includes and contrasts perspectives from a broad range of scholars—archaeologists, art historians, historians, geneticists and linguists. These scholars present recent data from multiple disciplinary approaches in an effort to reinvigorate and resolve key debates about the historiography and cultural hegemony of the Inka Empire.

Scholars of the Inkas have long been concerned with historiography. The Inkas did not keep a written history, but Spanish and indigenous authors composed historiographies of the Inka realm after the empire’s fall. Most contributors to this volume suggest that a selective and judicious reading of these historiographies can yield insights into the actors, events and processes that gave rise to, and structured, the empire (chapters by Bray, Kaulicke and Niles). A notable exception is Bauer and Smit’s provocative chapter, which challenges this viewpoint by urging scholars to identify elements of myth, narrative and description in these historiographies before accepting their accuracy. In a similar way, Salomon’s chapter seeks to understand the social and political discourses that constructed Inka ‘histories’, suggesting that scholars view the historiographies less in terms of their factuality and more in terms of “a sociology of knowledge concerning Inka things” (p. 24).

These chapters establish a critical framework with which scholars might reconsider Inka origins. To this end, several chapters in the volume take positivistic approaches that seek to confirm historical sources or to collect independent evidence on the early Inkas. Pärsinen presents recent archaeological data with which to argue, convincingly, that elements of the ‘Classic Inka’ aesthetic drew from earlier, southern Andean stylistic conventions. Cerrón-Palomino seeks evidence for myths that situate Inka origins in the southern Andes, and contends that historical linguistic data illustrate deep historical connections between the Inkas in Cusco and the Puquina speakers of the Lake Titicaca region. Similarly, Shinoda examines mitochondrial DNA of human skeletal samples from multiple archaeological sites to suggest kin ties between Inkas and populations of the southern Andes. These chapters on origins will be subject to critique, in part because they challenge accepted chronologies and paradigms. Their innovative approaches, however, will surely influence research on the early Inka state.

Other chapters focus on the nature of Inka rule and the scope of Inka cultural hegemony. Urton examines the methods by which the Inkas encoded, transmitted and interpreted information in their knotted-cord systems (khipus). His careful analysis reveals a code among the cords that allowed information to be translated upwards and downwards, and shared among administrators of different rank. Contributions from Hayashida and Covey also concentrate on administration by discussing the extent to which Inka imperialism affected Andean communities. Covey argues that archaeological signs of Inka control and governance—Inka pottery and architecture—are largely restricted to the areas with Inka roads, which functioned as “corridors of power” (p. 87). Hayashida complements this argument with data on craft production from Peru’s north coast. She demonstrates how craft production practices reveal a degree of Inka imperial administration, even in an area where there is limited evidence of the empire. As Covey notes, additional archaeological research into Andean communities will be necessary to uncover the extent to which Inka imperial rule affected social life in the provinces.

These chapters find a perfect counterweight in contributions pertaining to the Inka cultural order. In a comprehensive review of Inka architecture, Nair and Protzen argue that Inka imperial governance relied on an architectural style—indeed, a visual language—that was creatively translated to local environments, making it appear as though Inka rule emerged organically from local stones and structures. Similarly, in a masterful synthesis of Inka imperial art, Cummins reveals how materials, and their material characteristics, were essential to Inka ideals of aesthetics, beauty and cultural order. Phipps finds evidence for the transformation of Inka material culture during the Spanish colonial era, when Andean people reimagined the materials that had long constituted social value. During this era, the wefts that constituted Inka-style textiles were redesigned as Hapsburg eagles and crowned lions, motifs that subtly altered what it meant to be ‘Inka’ or ‘Hapsburg’.

The final chapter of the volume, with its focus on the different meanings of the concept ‘Inka’ after the fall of the empire, is a perfect conclusion to this panoply of viewpoints concerning all things Inka. In
this chapter, Amino traces how the ‘Inka’ concept was historicised when it became a noble title attached to Cusco families or as a dramatic role performed in Andean villages. Later, ‘Inka’ was de-historicised and reformulated as an abstract force (enqa) that commoners could manipulate to their own ends.

Indeed, Shimada’s monumental volume makes clear that ‘Inka’ can be understood in multiple ways, whether as a claim to ethnic origin, an assertion of status, a mode of governance or as a standard of beauty. The critical and attentive reader will appreciate how Shimada has organised the volume to foreground contrasts between these different understandings, rather than to fabricate consensus. The contrasts work not only to present various perspectives on the Inka past, but also to emphasise that contemporary archaeological and art-historical research are not the handmaidens of historiography, consigned to supporting roles that fill gaps in the historical record. This volume will surely influence research on the Inkas for decades to come. Moreover, although the volume maintains a tight focus on its subject matter, it offers rich and varied insights into imperialism that will interest scholars of ancient empires more generally.

STEVE KOSIBA
Department of Anthropology, University of Alabama, USA
(Email: sbkosiba@ua.edu)