

geopolitical, and historical conditions that implicate Assyria's neighbors as much as Assyrians themselves. He shows convincingly that virtually all elements of Middle Assyrian imperialism have precedents or parallels in other parts of Bronze Age West Asia and Egypt, and that Assyria's fourteenth-century rise resulted from an unpredictable confluence of historical factors. Assyrian political survival into the Iron Age was clearly likewise a historical accident. Düring's complex argument is that the tradition of power sharing and entrepreneurship among the great houses of Assur during the Old Assyrian period resulted later in Assyrian nobles showing personal initiative in investing in the development of Middle Assyrian provinces, so after those territories had been lost, certain people retained cultural affiliations with Assyria that made it easier for Neo-Assyrian kings to reestablish control there. Each piece of this argument is a hypothesis resting on very thin evidence, however. The weakness of Old Assyrian kingship is indeed distinctive (unlike the use of vaulted tombs under house floors—incorrectly declared a “distinctly Assyrian tradition” [p. 38]), but this was perforce completely transformed by the dramatically self-aggrandizing rulers of the Middle Assyrian period, and we have virtually no evidence for the intervening 350 years. The idea that the resources to found the fortified provincial estates were supplied privately is not well supported (the text regarding seed grain for newly arrived deportees cited on p. 103, n. 51, explicitly says the grain was “belonging to the palace” and given to the governor by a “representative of the king”). Rule of outer territories through cadet dynasties was also practiced by the contemporary Hittites, allowing Hittite imperial culture and traditions likewise to survive in north Syria in the Iron Age after the fall of the central capital. Despite less intensive Hittite landscape interventions there, a sufficient number of people had bought into the Hittite imperial project and identity that these traditions were taken up and adapted by emergent “Neo-Hittite” rulers—some of Hittite descent, some not—in new Iron Age states. In spite of this cultural success, certainly on par with that of Assyria (evidence for retention of Assyrian identity by a significant number of people in the western and northern provinces is, again, thin), the surviving Hittite regional capital, Karkemish, was unable to reestablish the empire. The cultural imprint of New Kingdom Egypt in the southern Levant and Nubia, too, demonstrates that this was not unique to Assyria and cannot be regarded as a sufficient explanation for its Iron Age revival.

Notwithstanding its tenuous argument for Assyrian exceptionalism, this book makes a valuable contribution to the archaeology of empire by demonstrating the Bronze Age origins of many imperial strategic and cultural tactics of enduring importance.

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***Imperial Matter: Ancient Persia and the Archaeology of Empires.* Lori Khatchadourian. 2016. University of California Press, Oakland. xxxviii + 288 pp. \$35.95 (paperback), ISBN 978-0-520-29052-5. Open access (e-book), ISBN 978-0-520-96495-2, <https://doi.org/10.1525/luminos.13>.**

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Scholarship on the Achaemenid Empire has consistently skirted the attention of archaeological theory. Ending this drought is Lori Khatchadourian's compelling and well-written book, which draws on multiple themes in contemporary archaeological research—posthumanism, entanglement theory, empire, among others—to examine one of the world's oldest and often misunderstood empires, which held sway over the ancient Middle East from 550 to 330 BC. Despite more than a century of research,

the field still suffers from an early confidence in Greek writers' (e.g., Herodotus, Xenophon) and more recent Orientalists' claims about Achaemenid politics and culture.

Khatchadourian considers one such misunderstood issue, the idea of the *satrap*, a term that Greek writers (e.g., Herodotus's *The Histories*, 3.89) glossed as "political province" when describing the empire's territorial organization. "Satrap" now commonly appears in modern usage to describe a subordinate political polity or actor. The book's introduction invokes this familiar term but quickly pivots to suggest that a more nuanced meaning waits to be discovered. The book is then divided into two parts, each consisting of three chapters. Chapter 1 draws on Ancient Iranian texts and visual culture to orient the reader not only to the study of Achaemenid imperialism but also to what the author describes as the "satrapal condition," a state in which Achaemenid elites and their constituents were bound together in *xšaça*. Philologists have long debated this term, which most consider to mean "divinely granted kingship." However, there is a deeper meaning to be found in the Avesta, a Zoroastrian religious text, and the carved relief sculptures adorning Achaemenid buildings such as Persepolis, located today in modern Iran. Both sources are sensitive to the roles that materials play in granting and sustaining *xšaça*. Khatchadourian argues that *xšaça* is a dialectical condition in which kings and their subjects—including nonhuman actors—co-constituted Achaemenid sovereignty. This expanded notion of *xšaça* presents opportunities to appreciate the roles that objects played in promoting, tolerating, and resisting imperial ideologies.

Chapters 2 and 3 scaffold the book's intellectual framework. Chapter 2 observes how archaeological investigations of empire habitually interpret objects as the material outcome of dutiful human agents working, willingly or not, on behalf of the empire's economic interests. This "imperial debris," Khatchadourian insists, should also be recognized for its capacities to shape human political relationships. Merely stating that "objects have agency" is not the author's goal, however. Chapter 3 sets out a framework to understand four distinct political roles that objects can play under imperial circumstances. Nonhuman delegates promote "the terms of imperial sovereignty through the force of both their material composition and the practical mediations they help afford" (p. 69), whereas proxies are mimetic "copies" of delegates who possess capacities that can differ from their original forms. Captive objects, on the other hand, are displaced things that are conscripted by empires to carry out the work of imperialism. Last, affiliates are the inconspicuous and stubborn objects that participate in the entanglements of everyday life under empire.

Part Two illustrates this framework in three case studies drawn from around the Achaemenid Empire. Chapter 4 examines how the architectural genre of the monumental pillared halls became material captives of the Achaemenid imperial project. These halls first appeared in the Zagros Mountains and South Caucasus, where, the author suggests, the buildings were designed to mediate the political interactions of highland agropastoralist communities who assembled and deliberated with each other in these spaces. Once assuming power in the sixth century BC, Achaemenid rulers took this architectural design captive, building at least 17 versions across their territory to serve as throne rooms where the sovereign hosted large audiences. The Achaemenid redeployment of the pillared hall consequentially transformed the design into a delegate that furthered the imperial project.

Chapter 5 visits the *dahyu* of Armenia, a land whose territory included what is today the eastern edge of Turkey and modern Armenia. Although fragmentary, the evidence suggests that the *dahyu*'s inhospitable mountainous terrain challenged the Achaemenid's capacity to rule the region's communities. Object delegates—notably the silver feasting vessels that were popular in Achaemenid elite courts—as well as the monumental pillared hall design conscripted "users . . . into relationships that bound the *dahyu* to the empire" (p. 132), helping exert Achaemenid sovereignty over communities who were otherwise ambiguous about imperial rule. Chapter 6 narrows the resolution of analysis to everyday life at Tsaghkahovit, a modest fortress in the highlands of the *dahyu*. Khatchadourian identifies affiliates, proxies, and delegates among the commingled archaeological evidence documented in the rooms of excavated buildings. Among them was a potential delegate, a stone assemblage used in an Achaemenid ritual in which hallucinogenic plants may have been crushed in a vessel and consumed.

Imperial Matter is a significant intervention in archaeological inquiry. Readers interested in the archaeology of empire and colonialism, materiality and New Materialism, and posthumanism will

find the book of great interest. Scholars thinking about the roles that objects played in the political formations of the Ancient Middle East will discover a fresh framework for consideration.

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***Maps for Time Travelers: How Archaeologists Use Technology to Bring Us Closer to the Past.* Mark D. McCoy. 2020. University of California Press, Oakland. xviii + 257 pp. \$26.95 (hardcover), ISBN 978-0-520-30316-4. \$24.95 (paperback), ISBN 978-0-520-38972-4. \$26.95 (e-book), ISBN 978-0-520-97265-0.**

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Mark D. McCoy's *Maps for Time Travelers* is an intriguing romp through the world of all things geospatial in archaeology. The stated goal of the book is to provide a “crash course, with minimal jargon,” on how archaeologists utilize geospatial technologies like “GPS, satellite imagery, digital maps, and other instruments ... like drones at 3-D laser scanners ... to create a better, more complete picture of the ancient world” (p. ix). The book certainly meets this goal and, in fact, does quite a bit more than that, covering a wide range of topics that include antiquarians and the rise of the field of archaeology, GIS and 3D spatial modeling, and the challenges facing archaeologists today who are employing these techniques from the air and on the ground.

The book's narrative arc provides a bevy of hard facts and methodological discussion of archaeology, but it does so in such a way that readers forget they are learning about a scientific endeavor. Part I considers the history of archaeology (paired with the emergence of the time-travel fiction genre in writing), as well as the basis and justification for archaeological pursuits, which (McCoy reminds us) are about finding things out rather than just finding things—à la Indiana Jones and his ilk. Part II provides a deep dive into the various geospatial technologies that have been developed outside of the field over the years, and how these have been harnessed for the specific circumstances and research questions of archaeology. In Part III, McCoy introduces us to three important areas of inquiry in archaeology—migration, mobility, and travel; food and farms; and living in the past—while explaining how our frames of reference surrounding these topics have shaped and have been shaped by our understandings of the spatial world. Within these sections, McCoy does a masterful job interspersing archaeological case studies from around the globe to demonstrate his points and provide context and detail on geospatial applications in archaeology. We land now and again back in the Hawaiian Islands, where McCoy has spent most of his career applying different kinds of geospatial analyses in his archaeological investigations.

My primary complaint is that, in keeping with his time travel theme, McCoy sprinkles in a number of niche references to the genre of time-travel fiction, such as *Doctor Who* (the BBC series that started in 1963), *Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure* (1989), and *The Time Machine* by H. G. Wells (1895, and the basis of the 1960 film). These references will resonate strongly with a segment of potential readers, but at times, they feel exclusionary to a wider public with different gender/race/class/educational identities (note that I am intentionally refraining here from making my own assumptions about the primary consumers of time-travel fiction). I also predict that such references will fall flat with many younger readers (such as many of our current undergraduate and graduate students). I understand why McCoy has used these references: they clearly resonate and excite him, and my hope is that even a novice to archaeology or the time-travel fiction genre can grasp that these elements are more for