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Frontiers and mobilities: the Frontiers of the Roman Empire and Europe

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Corresponding Author:	Richard Hingley, Ph.D. UNIVERSITY OF DURHAM Durham, England UNITED KINGDOM
Corresponding Author Secondary Information:	
Corresponding Author's Institution:	UNIVERSITY OF DURHAM
Corresponding Author's Secondary Institution:	
First Author:	Richard Hingley, Ph.D.
First Author Secondary Information:	
Order of Authors:	Richard Hingley, Ph.D.
Order of Authors Secondary Information:	
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Frontiers and mobilities: the Frontiers of the Roman Empire and Europe

Richard Hingley, Archaeology department, Durham University, South Road, Durham, County Durham UK , DH1 3LE (richard.hingley@durham.ac.uk). <Draft: 31/10/16>

Abstract

This paper addresses the 'Frontiers of the Roman Empire World Heritage Site' and seeks to introduce into this initiative some concepts derived from recent writings on contemporary mobilities and bordering, exploring the possibility of creating greater engagement between the two academic fields of 'border-studies' and 'Roman Frontier Studies'. Exploring the relationship between the Roman Frontiers initiative and the European Union's stated aims of integration and the dissolution of borders, it argues the value of crossing the intellectual borders between the study of present and past in order to promote the value of the Roman frontiers as a means of reflecting upon contemporary problems facing Europe. This paper addresses the potential roles of Roman Frontier Studies in this debate by emphasising frontiers as places of encounter and transformation.

Keywords: borders, encounter, European Union, frontiers, mobilities, Roman Empire, World Heritage.

1. **Introduction**

A new focus on mobilities and migrations is developing in archaeology across the world (van Dommelen 2014).[1] Archaeologists, particularly in Britain, have focused on human mobility within the Roman Empire, using a series of newly developed scientific techniques that offer new understandings (Eckardt ed. 2010; Eckardt et al. 2014; Eckardt and Müldner 2016; Martiniano et al. 2016; Redfern et al. 2016). The Roman past provides a particularly significant parallel to the modern world with the large-scale movements of people across the Empire and the apparent success of the imperial administration in assimilating people from disparate backgrounds into a settled society (Hingley 2005; Versluys 2014). This material is sometimes used directly to reflect on issues of mobility and migration in the contemporary UK (e.g. Hingley 2010; Tolia Kelly 2010; Eckardt and Müldner 2016, 215–6). The discipline of Roman Frontier Studies is also focusing increasing attention on the function of Roman frontier works and the transformative character of populations within and beyond the border zones (Hingley in press; cf. Wells ed. 2013; Jankovic et al. ed. 2014; Romans et al. eds. 2017; González Sánchez and Guglielmi in press),[2] although research on the geographical origins of those living on the Roman frontiers remains fairly rare.

The 'Frontiers of the Roman Empire World Heritage Site' (FREWHS) initiative is casting an interesting light on issues of migration. This transnational initiative has been developed since the early 2000s by Roman Frontier specialists and heritage managers (Figure 1); involving UNESCO State Parties from western, central and eastern Europe (Breeze and Jilek eds. 2008; Sommer 2015). This paper has been written as to review this theme and also as a response to the decision of the UK government, and a small majority of the British public, during the Summer of 2016 to withdraw from the European Union. This move toward British separation from Europe seems to be symptomatic of the growing global trend in the west to define migration as problematic which is leading to the development of policies that control and monitor migrants in the 'most stringent ways' (Jansen et al. 2015: 1).

The manner in which the FREWHS initiative has defined the value of the Roman frontiers will be explored by drawing upon the EU's two central concepts, integration and

[1] 'Migration' involves the movement of people across physical space (Jansen et al. 2015), while 'mobilities' is a far broader term that 'encompasses both the large-scale movement of people, objects, capital and information across the contemporary world, as well as the more local processes of daily transportation, movement through public space and the travel of material things within everyday life' (Hannam et al. 2006: 1).

[2] I will not draw a clear distinction between frontiers and borders. Usually frontiers are more formal, substantial and physical, while borders may be virtual and conceptual.

the dissolution of borders. The character of the FREWHS will be addressed as a series of venues for encounter and transformation rather than as measures of (former) national or colonial division (cf. Cooper and Rumford 2013: 114). These materials will be used to reflect upon the trends toward nationalistic and divisive rhetoric in Europe, drawing upon the prominence of the FREWHS to argue the value of heritage as a means to promoting inclusive messages that link into the interconnectedness of the people of Europe and the Mediterranean region. The role of the Roman frontiers as the borders of an intercontinental military dictatorship makes the World Heritage Site potentially particularly potent as a parallel and source of contemplation for concerns about contemporary bordering and mobilities.

2. Roman Frontier Studies and World Heritage status

First proposed during the early 2000s, the FREWHS has drawn in heritage professionals, educationalists, public agencies and organisations, including UNESCO and the EU (Breeze and Jilek eds. 2008; Mills ed. 2013). Many available accounts of the Roman frontier works describe their physical form and the variable characters in different parts of the frontier zone (including Breeze 2011; Breeze et al. 2005; Klose and Nünnerich-Asmus 2005; Moschek 2011). These Roman frontier works include substantial linear fortifications across isthmuses (Hadrian's Wall and the Antonine Wall); systems of forts, roads and ramparts that supported a river frontier (the *limes* along the Rhine and Danube); and complex landscapes of forts, roads and ramparts in less well-defined frontier regions (North Africa and the Middle East; Breeze 2011).

The FREWHS initiative has built upon the lengthy history of research into these physical remains (Breeze 2008; Breeze et al. 2005: 44). Much of the initial archaeological work on Roman frontiers was undertaken in Germany, Austria and Britain, where these relict physical works began to be uncovered during the nineteenth century (Breeze 2011: 9–10; Moschek 2011). Research has been undertaken in other parts of Europe, although in North Africa and the Middle East this has been undertaken largely by European and American archaeologists (Mattingly et al. 2013: 44–7). Notable exceptions to this European and American focus are the scholarly studies in Israel that reflect long-term issues of national security (Isaac 2000: 1–3; Gambash 2015). This research has found a focus through the Congress of Roman Frontier Studies, which was established in 1949 and to date has met on twenty-three occasions at various locations in the frontier lands of the former Roman Empire (Birley 2002). Large-scale surveying and mapping has been accompanied by excavation and fieldwork to uncover the location, sequence, character

and the regional variability of the physical remains of Roman frontiers and their individual elements (Breeze 2011: 9–12). Extensive research since the 1970s has also addressed the military and civil populations of the Roman frontiers and the movement of peoples and artefacts both into and out of the Roman Empire across its frontiers (e.g. Bloemers 1989; the 'thematic session II on Romans and natives' in Maxfield and Dobson eds. 1991; Haffner and von Schnurbein 1996; Wells ed. 2013; Jankovic et al. ed. 2014).

The 'Frontiers of the Roman Empire World Heritage Site' initiative and European identities

The FREWHS initiative involves significant co-operation between archaeologists and heritage managers in a number of European State Parties and also has the support of UNESCO (Breeze et al. 2005: 20; Breeze and Jilek eds. 2008: 5). Following extensive discussion at the European Archaeological Association, Culture 2000 funding was obtained from the EU in 2005 to co-ordinate the management and interpretation of the Roman frontiers, communicating shared values to create an agenda for international co-operation (Breeze and Jilek eds. 2008). To understand this initiative it is important to consider the history of the World Heritage Site policy. The United Nations and UNESCO were formed in the aftermath of World War II to support internationalisation, promote peace and to encourage international co-operation and cultural respect. The 'Convention concerning the protection of Cultural and Natural World Heritage' was adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO in 1972 to promote this agenda (Askew 2010: 20–3; Long and Labadi 2010: 5–6).

Despite UNESCO's excellent intention to recognise and protect important cultural and natural heritage resources, problems with World Heritage policies have subsequently emerged. World Heritage Sites have sometimes been used by State Parties to emphasise the ancestry and status of a particular people or territory (cf. Herzfeld 2008: 146). Marc Askew (2010: 20–2) has drawn upon specific examples, including the Preah Vihear temple close to the borders of Cambodia and Thailand, to outline the idea of the World Heritage List as a 'status-conferring artefact' in the competition for dominance between States. He has argued that, in some cases, the nomination process has been used for domestic agendas of cultural hegemony and state nationalism. Heritage resources often cross State boundaries and, therefore, are potentially difficult to inscribe and manage. As a response to such concerns, certain States have joined together to develop particular 'transnational World Heritage Site' nominations that span international boundaries and that promote international co-operation to communicate universal values.

UNESCO's 'World Heritage Centre' currently (October 2016) lists 1052 'properties' or individual World Heritage Sites (UNESCO 2016), of which the FREWHS forms one. It also forms one of thirty-four transnational World Heritage Sites (UNESCO 2016; cf. Brough and Scott 2014: 116–7). The long-term ambition is to create a truly transnational FREWHS that encompasses all Roman frontier works across Europe, North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean. When the project was initiated, Hadrian's Wall was already inscribed, having been added to the World Heritage List in 1987. The *limes* along the Rhine and Danube in Germany was nominated in 2004 and approved the following year. In 2008 the Antonine Wall in Scotland was added to the List. The current focus is upon the nomination of the river frontiers along the Lower Rhine and eight additional Danubian States that contain the surviving Roman remains (Sommer 2015: 920–1). Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia and Serbia are currently co-operating over the nomination of their Roman frontier works (Zsolt 2008: 74–5). The European focus of the FREWHS initiative reflects recent political changes. Following the collapse of their communist regimes, many central and eastern European countries joined the EU between 2004 and 2013, including Hungary and Slovakia and Croatia (European Union 2016).[3]

The concept of Europe is highly complex and draws upon entangled historical roots and models of which ideas deriving from classical Rome comprise just one part (e.g. Graves-Brown et al. eds. 1996; Biebuych and Rumford 2012: 5–6). Imperial Rome has, however, constituted a powerful element in the European psyche since classical times. Classical writings and the physical remains of classical cultures have been used to frame cultural, political and military strategies, especially since the rediscovery of Greek and Roman texts and material remains during the Renaissance (Hingley 2001; Morley 2010; Witcher 2015). The ethnic origins of European peoples are far more complex than a simple claim to former unity under the Roman Empire might suggest and different regions of Europe have drawn upon a wide variety of supposedly ancestral populations from the ancient and more recent past (cf. Geary 2002; Eder 2006; Hsu 2010; Zielonka 2006). Imperial Rome has nevertheless been fundamental to the modern European project.

Although the Roman Empire has not always been represented in an entirely positive light, the organisation now known as the EU has drawn deeply upon this concept since the foundation of the European Commission by a Treaty signed at the city of Rome in 1958. This choice of city was not random, since, as one commentator on the FREWHS has recently argued, Rome stands for the principles of 'peace, governance, law and order,

[3] Negotiations are currently underway to consider the membership of Serbia and a number of other countries within an expanded EU.

and above all unity' that lie at the core of the EU's purpose (Figel 2008: 1). The original treaty stressed the idea of integration and the dissolution of borders (European Commission 1957). European policy has continued to stress the free movement of people within Europe and has also worked to create ethical measures to control migration from outside the EU's borders.

The documents produced through the FREWHS initiative emphasise strongly these aims of integration and the dissolution of borders. Among the initiative's publications intended to communicate the ideas behind this transnational monument is the booklet *Frontiers of the Roman Empire* (Breeze et al. 2005), with text in English, German, French and Arabic. A statement on the 'common cultural heritage of the Roman empire' states the aims of the initiative:

> Roman frontiers are part of a *common heritage of the countries circling the Mediterranean Sea*. Successive generations have built on that heritage and modified it thus helping to create our modern world. Today, our world appears to be diverse, divided by language, religion and traditions. Yet, our heritage is more *common and interconnected* than we sometimes appreciate. (ibid.: 12; author's emphasis).

This statement emphasises the common heritage of all the countries surrounding the Mediterranean, that the frontier of the Roman Empire have more than a specifically European relevance.

Since the Roman Empire incorporated peoples within a vast territory, it may be interpreted as an inclusive mechanism as a result of its policy of encouraging local self-government and urbanisation throughout its territories (ibid.: 14–6). The FREWHS booklet suggests that the Roman frontiers comprised the 'membrane' through which Roman ideas and objects 'percolated' to reach the outside world beyond the empire's limits (ibid.: 16; cf. Whittaker 2004: 193). This is in keeping with a body of archaeological work that has used the distribution of artefacts on both sides of the imperial frontiers to assess the likely movement of people across them (e.g. Wells ed. 2013). The opportunities provided by the scientific analysis of human bones offer a potentially far more informed understanding of the movement of people across and within these frontiers (cf. Hingley 2010; Nesbitt 2016), although relatively little relevant research has been undertaken in the regions through which they passed.

To be included in the World Heritage List, Sites must be rated of outstanding universal value (UNESCO 2016). The UNESCO World Heritage Centre sets out the methods to be used by UNESCO 'State Parties' to nominate potential World Heritage Sites and also the processes to be addressed before these can be inscribed by UNESCO in the World Heritage List. The process of nominating a World Heritage Site requires a State Party (or State Parties) to produce and submit to UNESCO a 'Statement of Outstanding Universal Value'. UNESCO's guidelines and regulations encourage the establishment of the identity of the Site as exceptionally representative of a particular time and place.

The *Statement of Outstanding Universal Values for the Frontiers of the Roman Empire and its Component Parts* was produced as part of the FREWHS initiative and made available online by the UK's Department of Media and Culture (DCMS 2011).[4] The draft SOUV for the FREWHS drew on the earlier outputs of the initiative but rephrased the cultural relevance of the Roman frontiers in a manner that reflects the progress of the move for inscription. This document includes a four page synthesis that observes that:

> The FRE as a whole has an extraordinarily high cultural value. It was the border of one of the most extensive civilizations in human history, *which has continued to affect the western world and its peoples till today*. It had an important effect on urbanisation and the spread of cultures among remote regions. The scope and extent of the frontier reflects the *unifying impact of the Roman Empire on the wider Mediterranean world*, an impact that persisted long after the empire had collapsed while the frontiers are the largest single monument to the Roman civilization. (DCMS 2011: 2, author's emphasis).

This SOUV follows UNESCO's template by outlining the importance of the FREWHS and supports this by providing evidence for three of the ten universal criteria that UNESCO requires in order to assess a monument or landscape for World Heritage Site status (UNESCO 2016). Two of these criteria for the FREWHS SOUV emphasise integration and the movement of people by commenting (author's emphases) that:

[4] This thirteen-page document was not finally submitted to UNESCO as part of the nomination process, although it provides an interesting set of observations. To date the nominated sections of the FREWHS have produced their own independent SOUVs which are available at the UNESCO World Heritage Centre. An earlier version of the SOUV was published by Breeze and Young (2008).

‘Criterion iii

The Roman frontier is the largest monument of the Roman Empire, one of the world’s greatest preindustrial empires. The physical remains of Limes, forts, watchtowers, settlements and the hinterland dependent upon the frontier *reflect the complexities of Roman culture but also its unifying factors across Europe and the Mediterranean world*.

Unlike the Roman monuments already inscribed, the FRE’s constructions are evidence from the edges of the Empires and reflect *the adoption of Roman culture by its subject peoples. The frontier was not an impregnable barrier: rather it controlled and allowed the movement of peoples* within the military units, amongst civilians and merchants, thus *allowing Roman culture to be transmitted around the region and for it to absorb influences from outside its borders*.

Criterion iv

The Frontier reflects the power and might of the Roman Empire and the *spread of classical culture and Romanisation which shaped much of the subsequent development of Europe*.’

This document emphasises the idea of the unifying impact of the Roman Empire on its subject populations in the frontier regions, the movement of peoples and cultures across borders and, on two occasions, the European and ‘western’ inheritance of Rome’s example. It also directly reflects the EU’s policies of integration and free movement by emphasising the former role of the Roman frontiers in spreading Roman culture and in both controlling and allowing the movement of people.

A series of publications has been produced to communicate the particular characteristics of various regional sections of the FREWHS (Figure 2; these include Breeze et al. 2008; Jilek et al. 2011; Mattingly et al. 2013 and Zsolt 2008). These document the ways that the physical character of the Roman frontiers varied according to local topography and the character of the societies encountered by the Roman administration in different parts of the Empire,[5] while also communicating the unified nature of the Roman frontiers as a whole. A directly cooperative agenda is outlined in all

[5] The volume on North Africa, for example, stresses the variability of the populations living in the frontier zone and emphasised the importance of studying the ‘indigenous peoples’, reflecting the colonial context of much of the archaeological research undertaken across this region (Mattingly et al. 2013: 48).

these publications, emphasising the need for co-ordination but also for each State Party to follow its own particular approach in terms of understanding, protecting, managing, presenting and interpreting its monuments (Breeze et al. 2005: 14–6). The FREWHS initiative has also created a separate body of literature focused upon regional heritage practice, marketing and interpretation to encourage people to visit and explore the archaeological remains (e.g. Breeze and Jilek eds. 2008; Hingley 2012: 301–5; Mills ed. 2013; Stone and Brough ed. 2014 and Brough 2015).

The progress of the FREWH initiative appears currently to suggest that a unified monument will be created for the European sections, perhaps by 2020 (John Scott pers. com.). Those leading the FREWHS initiative have communicated the transnational values of the monument to a range of people throughout Europe and the Mediterranean world, although currently it appears likely that political, military and cultural factors will prevent the realisation of the inscription of Roman frontier works in North Africa and the Middle East. For people living across much of the south and east Mediterranean, Roman frontier monuments may, indded, represent a physical reminder of former colonial (and current economic and political) domination (Mattingly 2011: 69). Some of the Roman frontier remains in Tunisia have been included in a Tentative List, although, in the current military and political context, it is easy to understand why relatively little progress has been made in nominating other parts across North Africa and the Middle East (Brough and Scott 2014: 118; Brough 2015).

The nature of the archeological evidence also influences the process of the inscription; it is much simpler to define the linear frontier works that make up much of the northern frontiers than the multiple fortified cities that defined the empire's limits across much of the the southern and eastern Mediterranean (David Breeze pers. com.). The success of the FREWHS initiative, however, also directly reflects the European focus of Roman Frontier Studies and the European claim to the inheritance of the cultural legacy of imperial Rome (Mattingly et al. 2013: 44–7; Brough 2015: 934).

3. Bordering, migration and the values of Roman frontiers

Recent writings in the cross-disciplinary field of border-studies have focused on migration and bordering in the contemporary world (for archaeological responses, see Hingley and Hartis 2011 and Gardner in press). This prolific body of research has developed in response to changing international strategies for controlling migration (cf. Kolossov 2005; Rumford 2006). It grew out of works undertaken during the later twentieth century but has been transformed as a result of pressures resulting from '9/11' and the 'War on Terror'

(Wilson and Donnan 2012: 2–3). James Sidaway (2015: 216) has recently observed that ‘Dozens (or probably hundreds) of books and hundreds (or probably thousands) of papers would need to be referenced to begin to do justice to border-studies’. Indeed, this cross-disciplinary field has expanded to the extent that it no longer has a single disciplinary agenda (Chris Rumford pers. com.). Border-studies is characterised, however, by works that address the theories and practices of contemporary bordering (see Rumford 2006; Wilson and Donnan eds. 2012; Luath Bacas and Kavanagh 2013; T. Richardson 2013; Jansen et al. 2015). Much of the output has aimed critical attention on the ethics of bordering in the contemporary world, with a particular focus on the border policies of the EU. Other accounts of borders have emphasised the transformative and creative potential of such spaces as mechanisms of connectivity and encounter (e.g. Juffer ed. 2006; Parry 2010; Hingley 2010: 240; Hingley and Hartis 2011: 82–3; Cooper and Rumford 2013: 107); this may partly serve to counter the creation of increasingly impermeable boundaries.

The EU has been seeking to deal with large-scale migration across its borders during the past decades in a pragmatic and ethical manner. The scale of the problem at the EU’s boundaries, and increasingly, the crisis emerging at certain national boundaries within the EU, has, however, resulted in stringent critiques of EU policy and practice (e.g. Bialasiewicz 2012; Carr 2012; Jansen et al. 2015). Research has focused on the need to provide more detailed theoretical explorations and ethical assessments of the ‘amazing sophistication and complexity’ of bordering practices that characterise the EU’s borders (Bialasiewicz 2012: 843–4). There is much emphasis upon the ethics and power-relations behind contemporary borders and the importance of assessing the borders and frontiers of pre-modern societies has been raised (Jansen et al. 2015: xvi). It has even been suggested that the EU’s border policies and practices draw deeply upon the example of the Roman frontiers (Hingley 2015a: 62).

While conceptions of borders and mobilities in the contemporary world have become more complex, accounts of Roman frontiers have moved away from the Victorian and Edwardian imperial conception that they served as structures that separated ‘civilisation’ from ‘barbarism’ (Whittaker 2004). New approaches explore the idea that Roman frontiers constituted more inclusive and transformative landscapes (Hingley 2012: 311–21). A focus on the peopling of the Roman frontiers has addressed the multiple locations across the Roman empire and beyond from which these populations originated and the ways that frontier lands acted to connect people and to transform their identities (ibid: 333–4). This strategy draws upon archaeological evidence for the ways of life of the communities living on the Roman frontiers, including auxiliary soldiers who were recruited

from across the empire (Breeze 2011: 34–9). The encouragement of international tourism draws upon the character of the Roman communities that once inhabited these frontier regions (Mills ed. 2013: 1–2). To encourage people to visit the places that make up the Roman frontiers, strategies for tourism and interpretation focus primarily upon the messages of mobility and inclusion long promoted by the EU.

Such a strategy helps to communicate the living relevance of these ancient works (Hingley 2012: 1–8). Powerful and inclusive messages are generated for visitors to the regions with impressive physical remains of Roman frontier works, since World Heritage may function as a tourism advertising strategy (cf. Long and Labadi 2010: 7). Income from visitors and tourists is vital for local communities in certain of the European sections of the Roman frontier. Prior to the recent military and political difficulties, tourism also acted as a crucially important source of income for communities living close to the well known classical monuments of the southern and eastern Mediterranean regions (Mattingly 2011: 70–1; Lafrenz Samuels and Totten 2012: 22–3; Mattingly et al. 2013: 92–3).

Re-enactment has been used for decades to draw the public to Roman heritage attractions and is popular along the European sections of the Frontiers of the Roman Empire (Figure 3; Appleby 2005; Bishop 2013). Living history events, artistic works and digital media have come to the forefront of policy for the European sections of the Roman frontiers as a result of the emphasis on bringing these monuments to life to encourage tourism (cf. Breeze and Jilek eds. 2008; Mills ed. 2013). For example, Jilek et al. (2011: 86) observe that, in Austria and Germany:

> Municipalities, museums and Roman societies along the Limes organise Roman events as special attractions, mainly for families ... To move outside their own exhibition spaces means to directly address the visitors, giving them a better chance to enter into the living conditions to the Roman world. Reenactment groups ... demonstrate how Roman soldiers and civilians lived.

Roman buildings have also been reconstructed to help to inform visitors to the monuments (Figure 4; Flügel and Obmann eds. 2013).

These cultural and heritage practices are perhaps most fully developed on Hadrian's Wall, where the initiative 'Illuminating Hadrian's Wall' in 2009 brought people together from across the UK and beyond to light beacons along the entire length of the monument at sunset (Hingley 2012: 6–7, 332). Works of border-studies seldom consider pre-modern borders and frontiers, but in Anthony Cooper and Chris Rumford's

‘Monumentalising the Border: Bordering through connectivity’, the authors mention the ‘Connecting Lights’ event held on Hadrian’s Wall during the Summer Olympics of 2012 which linked the 73 miles of this monument with a line of pulsating two-metre diameter lighted balloons, intended to encourage people to view the Wall as a bridge rather than as a barrier (Cooper and Rumford 2013: 107, 120). Cooper and Rumford (ibid: 114) also argue that ‘border monuments and public art situated on or near borders are increasingly designed to celebrate cultural encounters and/or the ability of borders to connect as well as divide’. Festivals have publicised Hadrian’s Wall as an inclusive heritage landscape that brings people together from across the world, elements in a sustained variety of activities that aim to promote the monument and its constituent parts as exciting places to visit (Hingley 2012: 333–335).

Hadrian’s Wall fits very well within Copper and Rumford’s definition of ‘post-national borders’ as ‘mechanisms of connectivity and encounter’ rather than as markers of national or colonial division. The extension of World Heritage Site status to the other European sections of the Frontiers of the Roman Empire is pioneering a transnational approach to celebrate cultural encounter and the connective aspects of borders in both the ancient past and the contemporary age. These activities call on a broader range of values derived from the Roman Empire than those of colonialism and imperialism (cf. Lafrenz Samules and Totten 2012: 23), including ideas of mobility and cultural integration. Breeze et al. (2008: 46) in a study of the Roman frontiers in Slovakia have noted that:

> The very commonality of Roman frontiers demands that they are treated as a single monument. Roman frontiers are the joy of the the aficionado of cultural tourism—here is one great cultural route running right around the Roman empire …, offering not just different sites but a wide range of landscapes and scenery.

Tourism is encouraged through this work although much of the emphasis across Europe appears to be focused upon informing people about the importance of managing and maintaining these resources (cf. Jilek et al. 2011: 86–7).

The idea of the Roman frontiers as contexts for cultural encounter appears to have been developed most fully with regard to Hadrian’s Wall. While the potential role of the Roman frontiers in connecting people and transforming identities is addressed in the public realm, comparatively little has been done to explore issues of bordering and mobilities from more critical perspectives (Hingley 2012: 319–20). The ‘Frontiers Gallery’ at Tullie House Museum (Carlisle, England) brings Roman frontiers into a direct relationship with

the present by addressing ‘the concept of resonances with the modern world and in particular the perspectives of people today for whom the experience of the frontier is part of their daily life and worldview’ (Mills et al. 2013: 184). This Gallery adopts the ‘narrative of the Roman frontier’ to ‘act as a metaphor through which to explore significant contemporary issues’ (ibid: 185). The intention here is to challenge the visitor to think about the moral and ethical issues that affect us all in the context of UNESCO’s wider agenda of promoting peaceful co-existence and partnership between nations of the world through respect, understanding, toleration and co-operation (ibid). One feature involves the projection of still scenes of disrupted lives on modern borders onto a screen that is in the shape of the map covered by the area of the Hadrian’s Wall World Heritage Site (Figure 5). This includes scenes from the lives of migrant peoples who have become caught in international borders, such as the increasingly well-defined borders of the EU.

Visitors are asked to write their comments on pieces of paper and attach them to a board for others to read. Their messages demonstrate that members of the public visiting the museum feel considerable discomfort in thinking about bordering in the past and, particularly, in the present. The pursuit of ethical and political considerations may indeed form one of the prime public values that may be developed through the display and interpretation of the Roman past, allowing the complexities of past and present to be addressed in the public arena (cf. Labadi 2010: 81). This may be seen as a negative message by many who seek to publicise the Roman frontiers for visitors, although it should be possible to adopt a more nuanced perspective that emphasises the variable characters of frontiers and borders in both the past and the present.

Summary

Attempts to manage the movement of people across the EU’s borders have been deeply challenged by the political troubles that have transformed the lands to the south and east of the Mediterranean over the past decade, leading to sustained scholarly and public criticism of the EU’s policies and practices on its borders. With the shock of the UK’s vote to leave the EU in mind, however, we seem to be faced with a stark choice: either to seek to maintain an international policy that attempts to manage migration across borders in an increasingly unstable world, or to progressively close borders and convert them into monumentalised frontiers. The later approach would lead to an increasing fragmentation of the international community at a time when cooperation is increasingly vital.

Historical studies of borders and frontiers tend to indicate that these works seldom work for any sustained period of time (Foster 2013: 3–4; Chaichian 2014). The Roman

frontiers are an exception in this regard, since they only collapsed after several centuries. Perhaps their lengthly history of operation was partly due to their flexibility in enabling migration across their lines. Emphasising the complexity of border cultures and the roles of borders and frontiers in both the past and the present helps to communicate the normality of migration throughout human history and the creative character of encounter, while the central role of classical Rome in European concepts of origin emphasises the academic and public potency of the tangible ruins of Roman frontier culture.

Although the promotion of the ancient frontier-works of a militarised dictatorship may appear to be a problematic context for communicating an idea of common heritage (Hingley 2015a), the co-operation of archaeologists and heritage managers in the FREWHS initiative has championed a World Heritage Site with major public appeal. The Roman frontiers are likely to continue to form an increasingly popular series of heritage landscapes and to draw in visitors from far afield, from Europe at least. The potential of this heritage asset also partly lies in researching and communicating the complex ethical context of the contemporary borders across the globe and also the intricate ways in which the past and the present are entangled (cf. Hayes and Cipolla 2015). Such an analysis may address the disconnections as well as the connections between past and present (cf. Whittaker 2004: 193; Hingley 2015b). The contemplation of these Roman frontier-works is of value to scholars, visitors, readers of accessible books on the subject and consumers of digital heritage regarding the complexity and temporal depth of the issues that impact upon the world in which we live. Thinking about these monuments also highlights themes that need to be addressed if we are to be able to imagine the possibility of better futures. It remains the task of those who address ancient frontiers to consider migration and bordering in deeper terms and to explore how the increasing normalisation of the argument for the stringent treatment of migrants has emerged (cf. Jansen et al. 2015).

Figures

1. The Frontiers of the Roman Empire and the Frontiers of the Roman Empire World Heritage Site (drawn by Christina Unwin).

2. An assortment of publications derived from the Frontiers of the Roman Empire World Heritage Site initiative (reproduced by permission of David Breeze).

3. A re-enactment Roman event in the town of Enns, Austria (reproduced by permission of Eva Kuttner).

4. The Roman civil town at Carnuntum, Austria, showing buildings that have been reconstructed and displayed for the public (reproduced by permission of Sonja Jilek).

5. The Roman Frontier Gallery, The Living Wall, Tullie House Museum, Carlisle, England (reproduced by permission of Tullie House Museum, Carlisle, England).

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