

<b>Institution: The University of Edinburgh</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: 31 Classics</b>
<b>Title of case study: CS3: Borderlines: Understanding Ancient Empires through their Frontiers</b>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>Research by Sauer and collaborators on the relationship between large imperial powers ('superpowers') and subject populations at the borders of empire has influenced public debate in Britain. Through a series of public debates and lectures, the provision of information to public services, as well as the display of key archaeological finds in a museum context, the research has increased public awareness of complex and long-standing issues surrounding immigration and integration, military occupation, civic status, and imperial expansion and rule.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>The underpinning research, carried out in Britain and Iran, was conducted by <b>Eberhard Sauer</b> (University of Edinburgh, 2003-) together with colleagues from the Universities of Durham, Bradford and Oxford in the UK, the CNRS in Paris, and the Iranian Cultural Heritage, Handcraft and Tourism Organisation in Iran. Both in Britain (Alchester) and Iran (Gorgan Wall), Sauer was one of the primary investigators as well as one of the main contributors to the published research findings. Sauer has been involved with the Alchester project continuously between 2003 and 2013. Sauer has taken a lead role in the Gorgan Wall project in Iran since 2005. He continues to be involved in both projects.</p> <p>Sauer's work on <b>the relationship between large imperial powers and subject populations at the borders of empire</b> has made a significant contribution to our understanding of the nature of that relationship and the purpose of the military structures on the imperial 'borderlines'. His fieldwork, subsequent research and publication of the site at Alchester and The Great Wall of Gorgan have revealed hitherto unknown aspects of the social, cultural, economic, and political interactions on and across the borders. One of the key research findings is the recognition that the control of the borders, their hinterlands, and their economic assets required greater logistical efforts than previously recognised. Sauer has argued forcefully for the importance of the military function of these structures: despite socio-economic exchange between conquering soldiers and local populations that documents much peaceful interaction and transfer of goods, technologies, customs, and ideas, the wall structure demonstrates that the attention of the imperial powers was firmly on the defence of their empires. Consequently, the primary purpose of the military sites is to be seen in the defence of empire, rather than, as often suggested, as facilitators for economic exploitation of (newly) conquered territories.</p> <p>These general conclusions are based on specific research findings in a number of areas. In the case of Alchester, Sauer was able to redate the site to the immediate aftermath of the Roman invasion of Britain in AD 43/45. The site, not previously identified as a fortress, has yielded the earliest tree-ring dates from Roman Britain (AD 44/45) and the earliest representatives of newly introduced plant species. It is now generally recognised as one of the most significant sites illuminating the period of the Roman conquest. It also serves as the key case study for dendrochronology in one of the most widely read introductions to Archaeology (K. Greene, <i>Archaeology: An Introduction</i> (5<sup>th</sup> rev. edition, 2010: 165). The excavated tombstone of a veteran of Legio II Augusta provides moreover the first known pre-medieval biography of a person living and dying in Oxfordshire. The veteran was of northern Italian origin; his choice to retire in conquered territory suggests personal interaction between (former) soldiers and the local population which was not hindered by the fortress' role in the defence of Rome's (newly conquered) territory.</p> <p>On the basis of radiocarbon and OSL samples from burned charcoal, Sauer redated the Great Wall of Gorgan to the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> century AD (from the previously favoured 2<sup>nd</sup> (or 1<sup>st</sup>) century BC date):</p>

## Impact case study (REF3b)

the wall is now associated with the empire of the Sasanian Persians. Sauer has shown that the Wall and its hinterland fortresses served to protect key economic assets in the northern frontier zone of the vast Sasanian empire, where several major wars against the White Huns and Turks are recorded. Wall construction was accompanied by a massive landscape engineering project: the Sasanians constructed new water supply canals, cutting through the pre-existing Iron Age landscape like a knife. Excavation of the fort structures along the Wall revealed plentiful evidence for dense occupation, including animal bones, pottery, glass and metal: the Wall and its forts bustled with life, raising many questions about the interaction between occupiers and locals.

The research was published in a variety of outlets (see 3a below). The Great Wall of Gorgan-project culminated in a multi-authored book (*Persia's Imperial Power*); the research findings from the excavations at Alchester have been disseminated through articles, chapters, and excavation reports, to be completed through the publication of the final excavation report in 2015.

### 3. References to the research

All listed outputs are available on request from the University of Edinburgh. Those marked REF2 form part of the unit's output submission.

#### a) Outputs:

E. Sauer et al., *Persia's Imperial Power in Late Antiquity: the Great Wall of Gorgān and Frontier Landscapes of Sasanian Iran. A joint fieldwork project by the Iranian Cultural Heritage, Handcraft and Tourism Organisation, the Iranian Center for Archaeological Research and the Universities of Edinburgh and Durham (2005-2009)* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2013). [REF2]

H. Omrani Rekavani, E. Sauer *et al.*, 'At the frontiers of the Sasanian Empire: the Gorgan and Tammishe Walls in northern Iran', in P. Matthiae *et al.* (edd.), *Proceedings of the 6<sup>th</sup> International Congress of the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East, 5-10 May 2008, »Sapienza«, Università di Roma*, Vol. 2 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010), 599-611.

H. Omrani Rekavandi, E. Sauer *et al.*, 'Sasanian walls, hinterland fortresses and abandoned ancient irrigated landscapes: the 2007 season on the Great Wall of Gorgan and the Wall of Tammishe', *Iran* 46 (2008), 151-78. [REF2]

E. Sauer, 'Fortress annexes: a possible clue to instability and insurgency during Rome's conquest of southern Britain?', in P. Ottaway (ed.), *A Victory Celebration: Papers on the Archaeology of Colchester and Late Iron Age-Roman Britain presented to Philip Crummy* (Colchester: Colchester Archaeological Trust, 2006), 27-41 (and plates).

E. Sauer, 'Inscriptions from Alchester: Vespasian's base of the Second Augustan Legion (?)', *Britannia* 36 (2005), 101-33.

E. Sauer, 'Forum Germanorum in north-west Italy: the home community and life of arguably the earliest known legionary veteran in Britain', *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 24.2 (2005), 199-214.

#### b) Grants/Fellowships:

AHRC Collaborative Grant, 'Linear Barriers in Iran', 2006-2009: £226,063.75 (PI: Sauer; CI: T. Wilkinson, Edinburgh)

British Academy Large Research Grant, 'Alchester Excavations', 2005: £15,908.

British Institute of Persian Studies, 'Linear Barriers in Iran', 2005: £9,000.

European Union 'Culture 2000' Collaborative Grant, 'The Roman Conquest of Europe, Alchester', 2005: 49,767 Euros (of the total award of 149,300 Euros).

#### 4. Details of the impact

The research was disseminated through a variety of means, notably in the form of public lectures and debates, including media broadcasts. Key archaeological discoveries were made available to public services, including museums and local councils. These forms of dissemination generated a range of interrelated impacts, primarily in the areas of the making of civil society and the influencing of public discourse about contentious contemporary questions such as imperial expansion and rule, military occupation, citizenship status, immigration and integration. The particulars of each impact (as well as the periods in which these occurred) are illustrated below.

##### a) *civil society*:

The tombstone of Lucius Valerius, a veteran of the Second Augustan Legion, has provided **Oxfordshire Council** with a means to enhance citizenship ceremonies. At the request of Oxford Register Office, Sauer provided information and a picture of the tombstone after its discovery. The veteran, who came from northern Italy, retired in conquered territory. When the tombstone went on display (see b below), BBC News Oxford announced Lucius as 'Oxfordshire's earliest recorded resident': <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-oxfordshire-22873707> [<http://tinyurl.com/lrodqxq>].

The tombstone of Lucius Valerius documents in effect the earliest known *immigrant* to the area of the modern county of Oxfordshire. The research findings have subsequently been used to illustrate aspects of immigration and integration in citizenship ceremonies in Oxfordshire: the findings now feature in the materials given to thousands of **individuals recently granted British citizenship**, thus impacting on their reflection on British civic status in particular and the making of civil society in general. Oxford Register Office commented that 'we [the Council] thought that readers would be impressed by the fact that Lucius Valerius was a new arrival to the area nearly 2,000 years ago'. More specifically, the superintendent registrar of the Oxford Register Office stated in e-mail correspondence on 8 December 2011 that the materials provided by Sauer feature in a book 'which has been specially written for new citizens' and 'is presented to new citizens who are becoming British at their citizenship ceremony': the 'combination of tradition and diversity [...]', the Register Office commented, 'provides an eloquent testament to the arrival and experience of people settling and becoming British in Oxfordshire'. The Register Office confirmed that they have 'received many positive comments about the book from our new citizens'.

The quantitative impact is documented by the number of citizenship ceremonies: the superintendent registrar stated that 'citizenship ceremonies are held every week in Oxfordshire and on average about 150 people per month become British in our county [...]' Over the period in which the materials have been used (from 2009 onwards), the average annual total was 1,800, i.e. around 7,000 individuals between 2009 and July 2013 in total: at the time of correspondence (in 2011), the superintendent registrar confirmed that 'the photo will have been seen by about 3,500-4,000 citizens' (see 5.1 for all quotations). The discovery of the tombstone of the veteran of the Second Augustan Legion by Sauer and his team, providing the only known biography of a person living in the area of modern Oxfordshire prior to the Middle Ages, has thus had a direct impact on issues surrounding immigration, integration, and civic status in modern-day Britain.

##### b) *public discourse*:

The key research findings of Sauer's archaeological investigation of the legionary fortress at Alchester led to a **travelling exhibition** in Oxfordshire in 2011. The County Museum Stores at Standlake displayed some of the key artefacts from Alchester, including a section of the original main wooden gatepost that formed part of the early fort defences in AD 44, and the tombstone of the veteran (see 5.2). 'History exhibition attracts hundreds' was the headline of the local newspaper (see 5.3). The exhibition drew on the enduring fascination of the British public with the Romans in Britain. As a consequence of the public interest in the temporary exhibition, a permanent exhibition has been mounted in Woodstock at the Oxfordshire Museum, which is open to the public since 20 July 2013 (see also REF3a). The discussion generated by the finds amongst the British (local) public is well documented in a popular newspaper article on the establishment of the permanent display (Bicester Advertiser; 25 November 2010, p. 13 [<http://tinyurl.com/onaqxa7>]). As the success of the travelling exhibition makes clear, the display of the artefacts in a museum

## Impact case study (REF3b)

context fostered an engagement with Britain's early history especially amongst **the local population in Oxfordshire**, and with particular regard to the Roman military occupation of the island, as well as the impact of imperial expansion and rule on Britannia.

Public lectures by Sauer to local **archaeology societies in Britain** have further influenced how **members of the British public** view their own exposure to historical 'borderlines'. Most notably, after Sauer's talk to the Falkirk Archaeological and Natural History Society in December 2012 on the Gorgan and (neighbouring) Tammishe Walls, the Society's Honorary Secretary wrote to Sauer commenting that 'living, as we do, in the shadow of the Antonine Wall it was good to see the role of an even larger frontier wall in its empire's history'. Sauer's research was described as 'illuminating', and the Honorary Secretary commented further that the Society's members learnt that 'climate change and sea level changing are not a modern phenomenon'. The lasting impact on the knowledge of other historical frontier zones by members of the British public is also documented through the Honorary Secretary's statement that Sauer delivered an 'insight into a neglected region of the Middle East which, as many said on the night, is an area [where] none of us has any real knowledge. We can no longer say that' (see 5.4 for all quotations). The findings from both the Roman fortress at Alchester and the Great Wall of Gorgan were also central to a public debate hosted by the **Royal Archaeological Institute** in London on 13 February 2013 titled 'The limits of imperial power: the function of military frontier walls'. The entire debate (with David Breeze, an Honorary Professorial Fellow in Classics at Edinburgh) was subsequently made available for public viewing on the website of the Royal Archaeological Institute to encourage further discussion: <http://www.royalarchinst.org/lectures> [<http://tinyurl.com/nsz3ym5>]. The media broadcast was highly successful. An official from the Institute commented on 25 February 2013 that 'it was a good idea and beneficial to put the debate on the web for free', and that the number of hits within the first 24 hours ('we've had 67 people view this information') 'doesn't sound much but it is for us' (see 5.5).

## 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

All original web content and corroborating sources have been archived and are available through the REF3b wiki via tinyurls. Items marked with an \* are available on request from the HEI.

### 5.1 Confirmation of the use of the tombstone by Oxford Register Office for its citizenship ceremonies and verification of the number of citizenship ceremonies:

- \* (contact details of) **The superintendent registrar of the Oxford Register Office**
- \* **E-mail exchange from December 2011**

### 5.2 Documentation of the use of key finds from Alchester in the travelling exhibition:

- \* (contact details of) **The Curator of Archaeology, Oxfordshire Museum Resources Centre, Standlake, Oxfordshire OX29 7QG**

### 5.3 Visitor numbers reported in the Bicester Advertiser:

[http://www.bicesteradvertiser.net/news/bicester/9043244.History\\_exhibition\\_attracts\\_hundreds/](http://www.bicesteradvertiser.net/news/bicester/9043244.History_exhibition_attracts_hundreds/)  
[<http://tinyurl.com/qbz8gc9>]

### 5.4 Communication on the impact on members of the Falkirk Archaeological and Natural History Society:

- \* (contact details of) **The Honorary Secretary, FAaNHS**
- \* **Letter from December 2012**

### 5.5 Documentation of the reach of the Royal Archaeological Institute's public debate:

- \* (contact details of) **The Administrator, Society of Antiquaries of London**, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London, W1J 0BE

#### \* **E-mail exchange from February 2013**

**RAI article:** 'The limits of imperial power: the function of military frontier walls'

[<http://tinyurl.com/p5dzxat>]