Highways, Byways, and Road Systems in the Pre-Modern World

Edited by Susan E. Alcock, John Bodel, and Richard J. A. Talbert

An insight into the essential means whereby civilizations grew, empires rose, and religions and intellectual influences spread. The subjects range from the Sahara Desert to Japan, Han China to the Inca, Darius the Great to Rabbi Gershom, and from Roman milestones to documents in the Cairo Geniza.

Michael Loewe, University of Cambridge

Looking from image to image in this splendid gallery of ideas about roads of every kind, every reader will see new links and re-shape old views. Wheels and pack-animals, the iconography and ordering of space, re-purposing landscapes, exchange, interdependence, and domination, connectivity-systems, cultures of travel, densities of mobility, the notion of the road, memory and the cosmic order itself, all appear in these rich mirrorings. Shown by itself how enlightening pre-modern cultural comparison can be.

Nicholas Purcell, University of Oxford

The extensive network of roads in the empire of ancient Rome was a remarkable achievement – yet this Roman road network is just the most notable example of an important feature of many pre-modern societies worldwide. Highways, Byways, and Road Systems in the Pre-Modern World presents a comparative analysis of several sophisticated systems of overland transport and communications networks across pre-modern cultures. Roman contributions form an international team of scholars, these readings delve deeply into the societal, cultural, and economic implications of these transportation networks around the globe. The latest research from the Mediterranean and the Near East is brought together with fresh work from the Americas, Africa, and Asia to reveal the significance and logistics of the movement of people and ideas in the pre-modern world.

Highways, Byways, and Road Systems in the Pre-Modern World sheds important new light – and fills a gap in contemporary scholarship – from the importance and interconnectedness of the countless physical pathways of peoples and cultures.
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Catherine Julien, distinguished archaeologist and ethnohistorian of the indigenous cultures of the Americas, died prematurely on May 27, 2011. A reflection by her was the inspiration for this volume, and we dedicate it to her memory. The work that she so generously shared will live on.
Contents

List of Figures and Tables ix
Notes on Contributors xiii
Series Editor’s Preface xvii
Preface xix

Introduction 1
Susan E. Alcock, John Bodel, and Richard J. A. Talbert

1 Overland Shortcuts for the Transmission of Buddhism 12
Jason Neelis

2 The Power of Highway Networks during China’s Classical Era (323 BCE–316 CE): Regulations, Metaphors, Rituals, and Deities 33
Michael Nylan

3 Privatizing the Network: Private Contributions and Road Infrastructure in Late Imperial China (1500–1900) 66
Nanny Kim
Appendix: Chinese Quotations and Glossary 84

4 Linking the Realm: The Gokaidô Highway Network in Early Modern Japan (1603–1868) 90
Constantine N. Vaporis

5 Obliterated Itineraries: Pueblo Trails, Chaco Roads, and Archaeological Knowledge 106
James E. Snead

6 Roads to Ruins: The Role of Sacbé in Ancient Maya Society 128
Justine M. Shaw

7 The Chinchaysuyu Road and the Definition of an Inca Imperial Landscape 147
Catherine Julien

8 The Sahara as Highway for Trade and Knowledge 168
Pekka Masonen
CONTENTS

9 From the Indus to the Mediterranean: The Administrative Organization and Logistics of the Great Roads of the Achaemenid Empire 185
   Pierre Briant

10 The Well-Remembered Path: Roadways and Cultural Memory in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt 202
   Jennifer Gates-Foster

11 Roads, Integration, Connectivity, and Economic Performance in the Roman Empire 222
   R. Bruce Hitchner

12 Roads Not Featured: A Roman Failure to Communicate? 235
   Richard J. A. Talbert

13 Road Connectivity and the Structure of Ancient Empires: A Case Study from Late Antiquity 255
   Michael Maas and Derek Ruths

14 Jews and News: The Interaction of Private and Official Communication-Networks in Jewish History 265
   Adam Silverstein

Index 276
Figures and Tables

Figures

1.1 Nodes of the *Uttarāpatha* 14
1.2 Petroglyph and graffiti complexes in northern Pakistan 17
1.3 Tarim Basin silk routes 23
2.1 The classical road system in China 34
2.2 Stretch of trestle road (*zhan dao*) cut into the rock face, Sichuan 37
2.3 The progresses of Han Wudi (r. 141–87 BCE) and Chengdi (r. 33–7 BCE) 38
2.4 Zhanguo example of a decorative tally awarded to a merchant by the pre-unification Thane of Chu 40
2.5 Rubbing of a typical pictorial stone showing a carriage procession, excavated in 1956 at Chengdu Tiaodenghe and now in the Sichuan Provincial Museum (41 cm high × 47.3 wide). Second century AD (Eastern Han) date 41
2.6 The Straight Road (still in use today) near the old Qin capital of Xianyang and Western capital of Chang’an 47
2.7 Wooden tablets (ca. 300 BCE) representing road deities, as identified by the grave inventory, from Baoshan, tomb 2, strip 249 49
2.8 The apotropaic Pace of Yu diagram 50
3.1 Overview of transport systems in late imperial China 68
3.2 The dike of Lord Fan 72
3.3 Northeastern Yunnan, with major roads, cities, towns, and administrative jurisdictions 77
3.4 Trough cut into a slab next to the main road near Tuogu, some three hours from the city of Huize by foot and pack horse 78
3.5 The Nagu copper transport road: road section with tunnel around a cliff, and parts of the original stele at the bridge head 79
3.6 Bridges and ferries in Zhenxiong department 82
4.1 The Gokaidō network 91
4.2 Proportional linear maps of the Gokaidō network (*Gokaidō sono hoka bunken mitori nobe zu*) 96
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIGURES AND TABLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.3  Kôshû highway at Kami Suwa station (from <em>Gokaïdô sono hoka bunken mitori nobe zu</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4  The checking station at Hakone by the edge of Lake Ashi; note Mt. Fuji in the background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1  The North American southwest, illustrating the Chaco and northern Rio Grande regions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2  The pre-Columbian pueblo of Tzenatay (La Bajada), north at bottom, illustrating the colonial-era Camino Real crossing the site from the southeast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3  Segment of the Sandia Canyon trail network on the Pajarito Plateau, illustrating worn pathway in tuff bedrock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4  Segment of the Sandia Canyon trail network on the Pajarito Plateau, illustrating a staircase that shows signs of repeated reconstruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5  The Jackson Staircase at Chaco Canyon, illustrating constructed staircase features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6  Distribution of road signatures in the vicinity of Pueblo Alto (redrawn after Kincaid 1983, with only the most obvious features retained)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1  Maya sites mentioned in the text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2  Photograph of <em>sacbe</em> 3 at Yo’okop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3  Yo’okop’s <em>sacbe</em> system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4  Modern roads, footpaths, and a <em>sacbe</em> at San Felipe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5  Photograph of <em>sacbe</em> 2 at Yo’okop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1  Tawantinsuyu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2  The Chinchaysuyu road from Vilcashuaman to Cuzco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3  The Chinchaysuyu road from Limatambo to Cuzco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4  The Chinchaysuyu road from Limatambo to Jaquijaguana (modern Zurite)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.5  Pampa of Anta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.6  Chakllanka terraces near the site of Chakllanka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.7  Terraces near the site of Limatambo/La Rioja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.8  Aerial view of Chakllanka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.9  Field Patterns on the pampa of Anta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.10  Jaquijaguana (modern Zurite)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.11  Terraces and fields near Jaquijaguana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1  Trans-Saharan routes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.1  The great roads of the Achaemenid empire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2  PFS*7: collated seal with a trilingual inscription on Persepolis fortification tablets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.3  Seal of Aršāma</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FIGURES AND TABLES xi

10.1 Map of Egypt showing places mentioned in the text 207
10.2 Stele from the Chephren quarries 209
10.3 The Seti I temple at el-Kanais 211
10.4 Graeco-Roman graffiti overlying Pharaonic inscriptions and images of Pan at the Paneion in the Wadi Hammamat 215
11.1 Territory of the Vocontii showing main roads and urban centers 227
11.2 The high steppe in Tunisia showing main roads, olive farms, and urban centers 229
12.1a Paved highway: the Via Egnatia near Philippi in northern Greece 236
12.1b Unpaved road in Egypt’s eastern desert: a gravel surface cleared of boulders for a width of approximately 8 m 237
12.2 Milestone 79 on the road from Beneventum to Brundisium in southern Italy constructed by the emperor Trajan (CIL IX.6021) 238
12.3 Routes as listed on the pillar at Patara mapped out according to modern conventions and numbered 240
12.4 The pillar at Patara as it might have appeared to viewers 241
12.5 Arch erected to Augustus at Ariminum (modern Rimini), endpoint of the Via Flaminia, to commemorate his repair of Italy’s highways 242
12.6 Reverse of one of several silver coin-types issued between 18 and 16 BCE featuring Augustus’ construction or repair of roads (QVOD VIAE MVNITAE SVNT) 242
12.7a Silver coin reverse celebrating Trajan’s construction of the new VIA TRAIANA from Beneventum to Brundisium 245
12.7b Panel, originally from a triumphal arch of Marcus Aurelius and later reused in the Arch of Constantine at Rome, depicting a “departure” ceremony (profectio) 246
12.8 The city of Rome with roads (named) fanning out in all directions on the Peutinger map, segments 4–5 249
13.1 Antonine Itinerary 258
13.2 Twelve clusters 259
13.3 Dioceses of Diocletian 259
13.4 Clusters and dioceses 260

Tables

2.1 Stele commemorating Zhao Menglin 53
3.1 Ferries, bridges, and a road section recorded in Zhenxiong zhouzhi 83
4.1 Gokaidó statistics 94
7.1 Correlation between Inca genealogy and the European calendar 148
# FIGURES AND TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.2</td>
<td><em>Tambos</em> from Vilcashuaman to Cuzco</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>Resettlement of Inca communities in Spanish-style towns on the pampa of Anta</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>Movements from Susa to Persepolis and Tamukkan (500–499)</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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