

March 9, 2007¹
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*Can we see signs of Romanization, acculturation, or
resistance in the art of the provinces?*

“Previously the doings of the world had been, so to say, dispersed, as they were held together by no unity of initiative, results, or locality; but ever since this date history has been an organic whole, and the affairs of Italy and Africa have been interlinked with those of Greece and Asia, all leading up to one end.” (Polybius, *Histories* 1.3, 2nd century BCE)

Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit: Captive Greece conquered her savage victor (Horace *Odes* 1)

“Others will cast their breathing figures more tenderly in bronze, and bring more lifelike portraits out of marble...Roman, remember by your strength to rule earth’s peoples – for your arts are to be these: to pacify, to impose the rule of law, to spare the conquered, battle down the proud.” (Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.1145-47, 1151-54)

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ⁱ Four books with one title—*Empire*—were published within the past few years, and the interest they have generated reveals a widespread concern with the exercise of power on a vast scale, beyond the limits of national or continental boundaries.¹ Yet the contemporary use of the word “empire” as a metaphor for unbounded power sits uneasily with scholarship on actual historical empires. Many historians have been trying to show that

the long-term survival of empires depended on their rulers limiting their transformative ambitions even as they extended their power. The new interest in empires is nonetheless valuable because it suggests that scholars and intellectuals are considering new forms of global connections. Empire is being discovered in the past, in the present, and in the future.