

commodity agreements. In this context, proponents of neoliberalism gained influence and promoted an approach to free trade that did not include rationalization. The result has been that multilateral trade institutions reinforce existing inequalities in the global economy, much as was true of earlier free trade efforts.

Fakhri covers ground that few others have touched, and his interdisciplinary approach deepens our understanding of international commodity agreements and the twentieth-century contradictions of free trade. It will be particularly useful for specialists in economic and legal history, trade law, commodity studies, and the history and political economy of development. As a historian, I would have appreciated a more thorough contextualization of Fakhri's historical and archival sources, and I disagree with a few of his interpretations. Nonetheless, this is a remarkably wide-ranging book, with a wealth of insights and an impressive, persuasive synthesis.

**Investing in the early modern built environment: Europeans, Asians, settlers and indigenous societies**

*Edited by Carol Shammas. Leiden: Brill, 2012. Pp. xxvi + 404. Hardback €150.00, ISBN: 978-90-04-23119-1.*

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doi:10.1017/S174002281800013X

This informative, critically engaged, and empirically rich collection of essays captures the diverse histories of built environments in

the early modern world, covering a geographical area from Europe to the Americas, and from East Asia to Australasia. The volume features a wide range of actors, patterns, and modalities of investment in built environments, from the material to the ideological. The point of departure of the editor, Carol Shammas, is the concept of architectural permanence, which she skilfully elucidates in the introduction and opening chapter. Here she establishes a correlation that is central to a critical analysis of investment in the context of European overseas expansion: that between the revival of the classical Vitruvian idea of *firmitas* (permanence) in eighteenth-century Europe and its association with European racial and political superiority across the globe in the age of trading empires.

Part I compares England and Japan as non-colonial settings and addresses the question of architectural permanence and impermanence by discussing ideological, social, and legal factors that led to different patterns of investment in urban and rural spaces. The impact of different fire regimes is central to Sands' and Pearson's chapters on Edo/Tokyo before and after the Meiji restoration and eighteenth-century London respectively. Also focusing on the eighteenth century, Broad's contribution explores the important role played by landlords and the church in expanding a new brick frontier in the English countryside for the rural poor.

Part II shifts attention to overseas and to the role of buildings in the investment portfolios of local and European intermediaries of empire. This section brings into sharp focus the complex intersections of economy, ideology, and imperial global politics. The case of the urban Spanish Philippines analysed by Yamaguchi illustrates how native, Chinese, and Chinese mestizo merchants monopolized the constitution trade, thus limiting metropolitan control over urban areas. In contrast,

Hackel and Hough's account of the reconstruction of missionary compounds as masonry buildings in earthquake-prone coastal California explains how Spanish missionaries were able to advance both the architectural and the colonial agenda of the Spanish empire simultaneously. The troubled lifecycle of the thirteen factory buildings that housed Canton's foreign merchants before and after the Opium Wars points to the precarious situation of traders as emissaries of empire. Ultimately, as suggested by Farris, in the same way as the buildings they inhabited, the merchants became the hated symbol of foreign presence, rather than functioning as instruments of colonization.

Also featuring the British and Spanish empires, Part III is devoted to settler societies and explores how ecological and socio-economic factors and the influence of metropolitan governments played into the making and unmaking of architectural permanence. The case of Port Royal/Kingston discussed by Mulcahy opens up the question of individual, as opposed to government, investment in commercial and residential infrastructure, the risks involved, and the precarious nature of the life and properties of English colonists in a hostile natural environment. Architectural form and urban reform feature in Walker's chapter on colonial Lima after the 1746 earthquake. Eager to impose its hegemonic vision over the city, the Spanish government entered a confrontation with creole elites over the height and baroque style of their residences. Similar tensions are analysed by Hart in British American Charleston but with a focus on the development of the town's land and housing markets. The author shows how a class of urban speculators among free white tradespeople were able to build in wood, contravening the provisions of the 1740 Fire Act, which was modelled on the London Fire Act of 1667.

Part IV looks at the interaction between indigenous and settlers societies, and at the meaning assumed by the built environment in the context of their strategies of survival/dispossession. The case of the Iroquoia Indians analysed by Anderson exemplifies the doomed destiny of an indigenous civilization on the New York frontier after the American War of Independence, and how white settlers manipulated the history of their traditional homeland in order to erase the presence of 'uncivilized' others. Similarly, as narrated by Karskens, the history of aboriginal people was erased from Sydney after 1810 as the 'convict' city of the early colonial era was largely demolished to make way for the urban genteel transformation vigorously supported by the British governor Macquaire. While the lost battle over their traditional built environments made the Iroquoia and the aboriginal populations of Sydney 'invisible', the case of the Micronesian and Polynesian Islanders analysed by Cordy tells a different story, as control of and investment in monumental architecture allowed them to preserve their political and cultural identity in the face of European encroachment.

The chapters deliver what Shammas sets out to do in the introduction and opening chapter by providing comparative and global perspectives that counter the age-old idea that the imposition of European architectural models was hegemonic and uncontested. Taken together, they highlight the vicissitudes and the mixed fortunes of permanence as a colonial export and construct, caught between the ambitions of metropolitan governments and the goals of indigenous and settlers' societies. Two poignant examples are provided by the contribution on Spanish Manila by Yamaguchi and that on British American Charleston by Hart. Both reveal the extent to which urban development before the nineteenth century epitomized the failed aspirations of the Spanish crown and

South Carolina elites to build homogenous cities of brick and stone as the coveted symbols of progress and civility. More or less explicitly, many of the chapters also raise the important issue of the influence of overseas developments on the metropole, thus contributing substantially to advance the volume's agenda.

Given space constraints this review cannot do full justice to the volume's multi-

layered thematic texture. Suffice to say that, by concentrating on the built environment, it offers a crucially important angle on the evolution of early modernity on a global scale. It does so by bringing into sharp focus key contributing forces and factors: colonial, mercantile, and indigenous actors, racial and class struggles, ideas of progress and freedom, and, last but not least, often unstable political and ecological environments.