

In short, students of Indian, African and Southeast Asian colonialism will be somewhat disappointed in what this book has to say about their subject even as they may be persuaded, by the topics it treats more richly, to recognize that the most dynamic and integrated features of the nineteenth-century global system were located elsewhere.

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Ralph A. Austen, *University of Chicago (Emeritus)*

Fiona Paisley and Kirsty Reid, eds. *Critical Perspective on Colonialism: Writing the Empire from Below*. New York: Routledge, 2014. 246 pp. ISBN: 9780415537384. \$140.00.

The collection of essays in *Critical Perspective on Colonialism* restores the roles played by individuals marginalized in histories of empire building. It also successfully brings attention to unknown and/or understudied types of interactions between individuals and society. The types of individuals and the ways that they interact with institutions are studied in surprising diversity. The originality of this book lays in the fact that its authors do not fear to explore alternative sources like newspaper advertisements, personal letters and street performances. These sources might, at first, seem narrow in view but shed important light on the understudied realities of empire. The editors divide the book into chapters that correspond to different ways of studying empire: writings from below, interaction through speech and mobility as a means of communication, as well as the analysis of uncommon archives. It ends with a chapter about a book that aimed, by insisting on the Afro-Asian “solidarity” during the Cold War, to take the point of view “from below” but returns to a “view from above”.

Through this book’s essays on discourses “from below”, the usual dichotomies that oppose metropolitan authorities to colonial subjects and/or colonists to indigenous societies are shown to be complex and subtle. For instance, Frederick Hoxie analyzes how an Amerindian female defender of indigenous values challenged both the US government and the patriarchy of her own tribe. Another example, although in a different context, is the ambiguous situation of Chinese colonists in Australia that Marilyn Lake describes. This group played a role in the dispossession of Aboriginal societies but was also subject to race-based discrimination. A similar in-between status, described in the essay by Fiona Paisley, is the case of an ex-colonial man of colour from Australia who petitioned for the rights of aboriginal people in London while he disseminated political ideas marked by racism. Such individuals were part of a multi-layered society where most people could not easily be categorized. Part of this book’s argument about the discourse of “non-elite” actors is to illustrate the recurrent reversal of the classic opposition between European civilisation versus indigenous barbarism. Indeed the “march of civilization” is repeatedly qualified by the portrayal of colonised actors who see themselves as the “civilized” and the British as the barbarians.

Types of original sources valorised in this collection are petitions in the form of ballads and songs. As Isaac Land nicely points out, if we restrict ourselves to the study of written petitions, we might miss out on the expressions of people for whom writing or conversing were not always the means of communication with which they were the most comfortable. This collection also shows how spatial interactions can be considered a means of expression. The circulation of people, such as the Zulu sailors studied by Johnathan Hyslop, reveals transnational and modernist aspects of their mentalities. Zulu sailors are an interesting example of

“self-conscious cultural brokers” who acted in international port environments where the modern nation-state has little to no control over agents’ interactions. Another aspect of spatial interactions in this book is the circulation of people as part of empire building. As Tony Ballantyne demonstrates, whalers and sealers had their economic behavior and social practices intertwined within the “webs of empire” before the formal British Empire was established in New Zealand.

Cecilia Morgan’s chapter unveils interesting views about the British Empire by studying the personal correspondences between members of a family dispersed all over the world and through the circulation of letters from Britain to fur trade posts, to the Red River Colony and to Australia. These letters from children to their mothers give us insight “from below” into people’s subjectivities. Generally speaking, the authors of the essays in this collection have not made conventional use of colonial archives in the usual sense since most their sources were not state-produced. Caroline Bresseley highlights the agency of four coloured women through their daily intervention recorded in newspaper advertisements and in their personal letters to authorities. Clare Anderson explores prisons as spaces where people from all kinds of backgrounds, cultures and languages interacted. She manages to get a glimpse of this challenging environment through the study of particular types of sources: reports of prison discipline and complaints by prison keepers, prisoners and their families.

Despite the methodological challenges posed by their choice of sources, which are sometimes marked by more “gaps than lines”, this collection succeeds in demonstrating how “non-elite” individuals made use of writings and/or performances and the ways they could affect them and why. We discover how these non-state actors—whether local, foreigner, indigenous, or otherwise—played key roles in the establishment of the British and, surely, other European empires. This collection of essays opens up world history to more complex viewpoints by paving the way for the use of innovative and alternative sources to create fresh perspectives on new agents who fill voids left by traditional historiography. The authors leave behind the models of western knowledge diffusion through the classic center-periphery system and, instead, insist upon focusing on relations across social, cultural and linguistic boundaries. Such a perspective leads to a vision of the British Empire that is both trans-national and cross-cultural.

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Elisabeth Heijmans, *Leiden University*

Opoku Agyeman. *Power, Powerlessness and Globalization: Contemporary Politics in the Global South*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014. 178 pp. ISBN: 9780739195215. \$80.00.

This book offers telling evidence that not just imperialism and colonialism but also the human race bares the brunt of humiliations beyond imagination in the existence of humans themselves. It is a fine balance between truth and facts. The author makes a clear distinction between truth, which has different perspectives, and facts, which speak by themselves. Every argument made in the book shatters the glory of the developed nations of the “north” being constructed on the graves of the oppressed “south”. In the introduction to the book, the author quotes Kenneth Waltz’s statement that “weakness invites control” (1) and sets the tenor for the intellectual endeavour of his project. The project is simple, yet in-depth, in its analysis on the dehumanising aspects of imperialism that trigger dignitist politics as a core