

we are increasingly used to books produced in India being published in full colour, this book has all its images in black and white and even these not always very clearly reproduced. We can only hope that future volumes in this important and continuing series can benefit from the new technologies which India now commands. <[blurtonr@dircon.co.uk](mailto:blurtonr@dircon.co.uk)>

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PICTURING INDIA: PEOPLE, PLACES, AND THE WORLD OF THE EAST INDIA COMPANY. By JOHN MCALEER. pp. 224. London, British Library Publishing, 2017. ISBN 9780712356954.  
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In 1799, Richard Wellesley – still fresh into his tenure as Governor-General “determined upon building a palace suitable to his magnificent ideas, and one as would be proper for the residence of the British Governor General of India”. Designed by Charles Wyatt, an officer in the Bengal Engineers, the resulting Government House dominated Calcutta’s skyline, transplanting a vast British country house to Bengal. The message was not intended to be subtle – through bricks and mortar Wellesley sought a clear assertion of the East India Company’s transformation from a “retail dealer in muslins and indigos” to the preeminent presence in South-Asian politics.

John McAleer’s admirable new book charts this relationship between artistic culture and the East India Company’s imperial success. In the acknowledgements, he explains that “this book is about the images”, and a glance through its beautifully-designed pages reveals why. The book contains 138 glossy illustrations spaced over just 224 pages, many of them occupying double-page spreads. This gives the work the feel of a catalogue – McAleer has essentially produced an overview of the materials that constitute the British Library’s prodigious India Office Collections. Priced very reasonably, this will undoubtedly appeal enormously to general readers. For academics, the book adds to previous overviews of Britain’s artistic engagement with India: catalogues like Pratapaditya Pal’s and Vidya Dehejia’s *From Merchants to Emperors: British Artists and India, 1757–1930* (1986); Christopher Bayly’s edited volume *The Raj: The British and India, 1600–1947* (1990); and the impressively comprehensive *Indian Life and Landscape by Western Artists* (2008), edited by Pauline Rohatgi and Graham Parlett.

What distinguishes McAleer’s account from these existing catalogues is the elegance of his overview. Previously the Curator of Imperial and Maritime History at the National Maritime Museum, he now teaches history at the University of Southampton. This pedagogic expertise is evident throughout the text. Each new artist or idea is introduced with an accompanying illustration, which lets the narrative progress much like a traditional art history lecture. After setting out the intentions and scope of the study in Chapter One, the following chapter provides a concise account of the East India Company’s history – emphasising in particular its commercial and maritime contexts. Chapter Three examines artists who depicted the subcontinent’s landscapes and architecture, whilst Chapter Four explores the social functions of portraiture in colonial India. The final chapter assesses the Company’s artistic patronage with a specific focus on London, before a conclusion reiterates the grand narrative underpinning the study – art’s relationship to the Company’s emergence as a territorial power. Throughout, the author demonstrates a keen eye for a good quote, artfully balancing arguments with well-chosen anecdotes and voices from the past. In addition, McAleer has appended suggestions for further reading on each of his principal themes.

This real attention to accessibility and pedagogic utility makes the work a superlative introduction to the subject.

As a lecturer of history (although, it would seem, with one foot firmly in the history of art), McAleer's narrative also subtly revises some of the issues that have characterised previous art-historical overviews of the East India Company. His deft engagement with the idiosyncratic nature of the 'company-state' is a welcome addition to a field in which scholars have often been unclear about the precise way in which British imperialism was implemented in the subcontinent prior to the 1858 Government of India Act. Equally, the author's previous publications on the globalised infrastructure of the East India Company evidently inform this present overview, adding a crucial maritime context to a field that has often focused exclusively on the Company's subcontinental activities. Both of these qualities make the chapter entitled 'Politics, Power and Port Cities' – in which McAleer highlights the strategic importance of St Helena and the Cape of Good Hope – one of the best available introductions to the context underpinning Britain's visual engagement with India.

By working closely with the British Library's India Office curators, the author has brought a number of previously-unpublished images to public attention. Additionally, the text includes several fascinating glimpses into the biographies of artists working in India – details of Arthur William Devis' (1762–1822) experience of shipwreck in the South Pacific, alongside an account of Thomas Hickey's (1741–1824) peripatetic career, are particularly compelling. On the other hand, and as a result of writing an overview, McAleer has been forced to trace the careers of several artists who already enjoy excellent monographic studies. Like many of the later painters who subsequently recreated the Gangetic voyages of William Hodges (1744–1797), Johan Zoffany (1733–1810), and the uncle-nephew duo Thomas (1749–1840) and William Daniell (1769–1837), McAleer's description of these key artists treads much of the same ground. Equally, the way that aesthetic frameworks influenced artists depicting the colonial landscape has become a familiar subject, examined by scholars such as John E. Crowley, Tim Barringer, Romita Ray, and, of course, by McAleer himself.

By incorporating this existing literature into his overview, McAleer's book has also internalised something of the field's chronological bias, which privileges the artistic efflorescence of the decades between 1780 and 1820. This is understandable – it was during these years, after all, that art shaped the political transformation that Lord Wellesley's construction of a grandiose seat of imperial governance in Calcutta so well epitomises. Yet this 'merchant to emperor' narrative risks simplifying art's relationship to a more nuanced history, in which the Company and the British State tussled for political sovereignty, and which the Company ultimately lost. Very few of the works included in the book date from the years between the Company's charter renewal of 1833 and its ultimate liquidation in 1858, and so art's relationship to the steady erosion of Company autonomy through parliamentary legislation remains to be studied. Research on neglected artists like Colesworthy Grant (1813–1880), whose work in the late 1830s and 1840s was judged by contemporaries as "the best proofs we could possibly have of the successful progress of the arts in India", or the scholar-artist James Atkinson (1780–1852), who recorded aspects of the Company's bloody conflicts on the North-West Frontier during the decade 1839–1849, will help nuance the chronology within which the East India Company's cultural expression of sovereignty is framed.

Overall, however, McAleer has provided a cogent and sumptuously illustrated introduction to the subject, adding a historical depth and subtlety to several previous catalogues detailing Britain's artistic engagement with the subcontinent. By presenting within a concise and useful book what must have been an exceptionally intensive encounter with the British Library's gargantuan India Office Collections – steered, presumably, by the expertise of its curators – McAleer has achieved an undeniable triumph. The work will prove both highly appealing to general readers, and an invaluable tool for teaching in the academy. Of course, contemporary instances of transnational corporations and multi-state actors developing alternative forms of cultural sovereignty make this history a particularly

relevant topic today. Chapter Five's account of the East India Company's use of public art to legitimise its territorial conquests provides a striking counterpoint to the now established literature dealing with art's involvement in the rise of the nation-state. By exploring this relationship between art, global capitalism, and colonial power, McAleer's book not only elucidates one of the more idiosyncratic aspects of Britain's imperial past, but opens questions about the multifaceted relationship between culture, capital, and power. [ty260@cam.ac.uk](mailto:ty260@cam.ac.uk)

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WOMEN IN MONGOL IRAN: THE KHĀTŪNS, 1206–1335. By BRUNO DE NICOLA. pp. xii, 288. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2017.  
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The study of the Mongol queens or *khatuns* and Mongolian women in general in the period of the Mongol Empire has long been overlooked. While an occasional article or chapter appeared in the past, it is only in the last few years that the metaphorical veil has been removed from these remarkable women in an ever increasing body of scholarship. *Women in Iran: The Khātūns, 1206–1335* is one of the few monographs examining women in the Mongol Empire and the first with a focus on the Mongols in the western empire. De Nicola's work seeks to understand the role of the queens of *khatuns* from the pre-imperial period until the demise of the Ilkhanate. The focus on the title of *khatun* (Mongolian for queen) or *khātūn* (the form adopted by De Nicola rather than *khavātūn* in Persian) is appropriate as much of what we know about Mongolian women in the medieval period is drawn from the royalty. While the first two chapters includes pre-dissolution queens, with the establishment of the Ilkhanate, De Nicola focuses his attention on Iran but also considers the larger historic picture by discussing how the *khatun* institution affected the Middle East.

The work consists of an introduction, six chapters and additional maps and charts. De Nicola included two maps: one of the entire empire with post-dissolution boundaries, as well as a map of the Ilkhanate. Eight charts help the reader keep track of genealogies, marriages, and other connections while another eight illustrations accompany the work. The introduction is an overview of the sources as well as the scholarship, which also reminds us that there is more of both than one might suspect.

In the first chapter, De Nicola explores women in Pre-Chinggisid Mongolia, their development in the early empire, and how female rulers appeared only a generation after Chinggis Khan. He focuses on the legendary origins and divine connections found in them to demonstrate that these women had a role as advisors and that they performed certain ceremonial duties. He also notes that an elite woman's place in society had little to do with how she entered a family (kidnapping, formal betrothal, etc.), but rather her pre-marriage status. Additionally, he argues that direct female rule in the Middle East came after the rise of the Mongols and not before, thus probably influenced by the Mongols (p. 50). At the same time, he examines where the Mongols may have acquired female agency, such as from the Turks or Chinese before finally settling on the Liao (p. 53). While outside antecedents are possible, De Nicola never considers that it may have been autochthonous for the Mongols, merely suggesting that it only existed at an "embryonic level" (p. 57). His evidence for external influence, however, does not dispel this possibility.

In the second chapter, the author examines female rule in the Mongol Empire. This chapter includes a discussion of the usual suspects: Töregene, Oghul Qaimish, and Sorqoqtani. The first two ruled as