Building and running an Empire was a sweaty business. For many the experience of the British Empire was a grinding one of long days, meagre remuneration and oppressive conditions all round. Indentured servants, slaves, sailors, rural and domestic workers found the day-to-day realities of life under the jurisdiction of the Imperial Crown grubby, harsh and often as bad if not worse than the life they had left behind. These essays are about the legal settings that spanned those lives. The management of the human capital so vital to the British Empire occurred inside a series of ‘immensely varied’ legal frameworks that, nonetheless, replicated key features of the metropolitan model. Master and servant laws consistently displayed three defining characteristics. The first was the idea that the employment relation was a matter of private contract or agreement giving the employer a right to command and the employee an obligation to obey. Second, these agreements were subject to summary enforcement by lay justices of the peace or magistrates in a manner largely unsupervised by superior courts. Uncooperative workers were subject, third, to criminal sanctions and punishment (rather than civil liability) that could entail whipping, imprisonment, forced labour, fines and the loss of wages. Hay’s essay on the English laws describes how that pattern was anchored in ‘highly specific local cultures of works and social relations’, a localism replicated, other essays show, in the colonial jurisdictions of the pre-Victorian period. It began to recede in the first half of the nineteenth century as the coercive aspects of master and servant law became a matter of public debate, culminating in British legislation in 1875 removing virtually all penal aspects. In the United Kingdom this meant that ‘a type of contract originally based on the need to subordinate labour was restated as if it were a contract between fully equal parties’ (p. 62).

The essays explore that ‘distinctive conjuncture’ of ‘civil contract, informal justice and effective criminalization of the worker’s breach’ (p. 2) in England and Empire. The essays follow a roughly chronological order starting with the Statute of Artificers (1562), through colonisation of the New World, British North America, and into the nineteenth-century settings of Australia, the post-abolition Caribbean (including British Guiana), Africa, Hong Kong and post-Mutiny India. Those themes persisted in twentieth-century Africa when international law and organisations (the International Labour Organisation especially) pressed the issue of ‘native labour’. Carefully avoiding a ‘metrocentric’ history, the essays stress the calculated localism of the colonial regimes. Many colonies consciously rejected English master and servant law
while also re-inscribing its underlying features. Some, such as Africa, India and British Columbia, kept a penal element in their laws long after the British had left it behind. Usually it was a case of local legislation setting the master-servant framework although occasionally – as in Newfoundland, which did not have its own legislature until 1832 – custom also played a major legal role. The erection and application of the colonial laws were anchored in each jurisdiction’s specificities – sailors drew special legal attention in the colonial Maritimes, rural workers in Australia, domestic help in Hong Kong – but there was also a considerable amount of inter-colonial exchange as the introductory essay emphasises and underlines by extensive comparative data analysis.

Indenture and slavery were surely important features of those laws, but these nonetheless were regimes in which those subject to the law often had considerable agency. Legal form was one thing, enforcement another. Tomlins’ essay on colonial America argues for the re-examination of ‘the notion that the legal culture of work was primarily a culture of unfreedom’ (p. 117), showing the plasticity and negotiability of outcomes. He suggests that these laws did not begin to rigidify until racial slavery entered the picture. Mary Turner’s essay contends, however, that even inside Caribbean slavery there existed customs and strategies of labour bargaining giving slaves leverage that free status later upended. Nonetheless the essays clearly demonstrate the major role that race took in the formation and application of master and servant law throughout the Empire. Several observe that the penal attributes of the laws were often symbolic and resort to them was uneven and often more exemplary than regular (as in England and Canada in marked contrast to the plantation colonies). Race clearly affected overall patterns of enforcement. This important collection of essays argues for an imperial legal history – or network of histories – of master and servant regimes that acknowledges the imprint of the metropolitan model and the extent of inter-colonial borrowing but which, ultimately, is rooted in the specificities of each colonial jurisdiction and the agency of those inhabiting them.

PAUL MCHUGH
Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge

The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain, 1649–1815
N. A. M. Rodger
London, Allen Lane, 2004
lxx + 907 pp., ISBN: 0-713-99411-8 (£30.00 hardback)

This is the second volume of the author’s projected three-volume British naval history. If the first – Safeguard of the Sea (1997) – which took as its beginning date of 660, is really a naval history of tribal Britain, this second is that of upstart Britain. Who in a London tavern in 1660 would have taken a bet that Britain would, by 1815, attain the command of the sea by outdoing all its rivals? The book provides an explanation for that surprising outcome by studying the wars with the Dutch Republic in the seventeenth century through those with France, Spain and the United States in the next.
As sheer naval history this marvellous book is certainly the most authoritative yet attempted for this era. Following the model developed in *Safeguard of the Sea*, it not only interprets naval operations, but details administrative practices which ensured that squadrons went to sea and were sustained there. Rarely do naval histories attempt both. In addition, the book provides a social history of those who manned the fleets. Throughout we are treated to the clever sketches of some of the principal characters. Rodger’s learning is formidable, and perhaps unequalled among his peers.

Readers, scholarly and lay, will get their money’s worth as the book also boasts eighteen maps, fifty-six illustrations and a bibliography of eighty-nine pages (up from forty-nine in *Safeguard of the Sea*). The bibliography, particularly useful for imprints up to 2002, is enlivened by Rodger’s pithy comments on some of the entries. One that alarmed me reads: ‘Essential reading for any serious naval historian’ (p. 809) and refers to Jan Glete’s two volumes on *Navies and Nations: Warships, Navies and State Building in Europe and America, 1500–1860* (1993). I have yet to read it. Bibliographic expansion simply reflects the continuing interest, among naval historians especially, in the long wars with revolutionary and Napoleonic France. None has contributed more than Rodger himself, even as he acknowledges his debts to such scholars as Michael Duffy, Roger Knight, Brian Lavery, Roger Morriss and A. N. Ryan.

Notwithstanding the excellence of this book, there are underlying issues that should engage the reader’s attention, which the author either ignores or fudges. The first relates to the book’s title, which is also the heart of the author’s thesis. Rodger, with many others, believes that Trafalgar was a strategically important encounter. It would lead ultimately to Britain’s command of the seas by 1815. To establish this link he must explain why, if Trafalgar was so critical, it took another ten campaigns before the war was brought to an end. Why, before this happened, had the navy to endure a long and costly war with Danish gunboats, a humiliating withdrawal from Buenos Aires, the loss of a whaling fleet in the North Atlantic, the loss of a frigate squadron off Mauritius and a remarkable challenge from the pubescent navy of the United States? Why indeed was the bulk of the Royal Navy tied down by the building of new French fleet of men-of-war, if Trafalgar was so vital? Why were British merchant ships still protected by heavy naval escorts until 1815, if the oceans were subject to British whims? The link between Napoleon’s demise and a greatly expanded post-Nelson navy requires far more discussion than appears in this book. At the least, Rodger’s claims for Trafalgar remain debatable, even if it is unseemly to say so while Britons were having such fun in 2005 helping to mythologise the annihilation of the combined fleet in 1805.

The author, with many others, accepts without debate that, if an invasion force had landed successfully on British soil in the 147 years between Cromwell’s death and 1805, all would have been lost. Such naval historians appear to assume that the British army could win battles in every quarter of the globe, including Ireland, but, if the contest occurred on the soil of England or Scotland against an invading enemy, it would face certain defeat. They seem, Rodger included, also to miss the point that the navy along with the British political nation remained largely on the wrong side of the political debate from the 1760s onwards. Lord Nelson, like Wellington, was the
upholder of aristocratic privilege in the face of reform agitation. Had they and the bulk of the political nation supported the American as well as the French revolutionary causes, where the world’s future lay, there would have been little need for great opposing fleets, while Napoleon would have died as an obscure captain of artillery. Instead of resisting their colonists in the 1770s, or the French in 1789–92, who had far more creative political wisdom and energy than could be found either in parliament or without, the British ‘took a wrong turn’.

The British navy might have acquired command of the sea by 1815, but for what purpose? Nelson’s victories and those of his brother sea officers helped to ensure the return of reactionary regimes throughout Europe after 1815. Triumphant British militarism after 1815 witnessed a tightening grip on the colonies, thereby denying to those of ‘white settlement’ for a generation or more the dominion status earlier offered to the American rebels in 1778 and enjoyed by the Irish in 1782–1800. None of this is considered in Command of the Ocean. The assumption is always that the British were generally on the side of ‘good’ while those they opposed remained upholders of, or at least linked to, tyranny.

The book brought to mind a remark by Plautus, not celebrated in British naval annals: ‘Mare quidem commune certo est omnibus’ (The sea surely is common to all). What Command of the Ocean describes is not only Britain’s anxiety to protect itself from invasion, but also how it could bully that part of the world which also had access to the sea. Presumably Professor Rodger’s final volume will tell us both how Britain used its assumed command of the sea, and how it lost it to the United States.

JULIAN GWYN
University of Ottawa

Longitude and Empire: How Captain Cook’s Voyages Changed the World
BRIAN W. RICHARDSON
Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 2005

To most of those working in the crowded field of Captain Cook studies Brian Richardson will be a new name. This book, based on a doctoral dissertation at the University of Hawai‘i, combines the insights and, occasionally, the irritants of much of today’s scholarship. Unlike most books on Cook’s voyages, including the recent major studies by Anne Salmond, The Trial of the Cannibal Dog: Captain Cook in the South Seas (2003), and Nicholas Thomas, Discoveries: The Voyages of Captain Cook (2003), Richardson’s book breaks away from the orthodoxy of a chronological structure. Instead, its thematic chapter headings indicate an approach in which Paul Carter and Edward Said are the models rather than the documentary-based emphasis of J. C. Beaglehole and his successors. ‘The focus of the discussion here’, the author explains, ‘is on the printed texts and on Cook as an authorial voice in those texts. There will be no attempt to determine what happened on the voyages or what Cook was really like’ (p. 16).
The book gets off to a shaky start with a spiralling disquisition on Nathaniel Dance’s 1776 portrait of Cook, which might not only have left both artist and sitter bemused, but which is marred by factual errors. The book close to Cook’s right hand, we are told, is one of the printed volumes of Cook’s second voyage, which was not published until 1777, and the caption notes that Cook is pointing to the Friendly Islands (Tonga) on the chart in front of him, whereas the text makes much of the fact that Cook is pointing to the Society Islands. After this, the book gets into its stride with chapters on ‘Points’ and ‘Shapes’ which do much to justify its ambitious sub-title. More emphatically than I have seen before, Richardson takes such familiar features of Cook’s voyages as his ability to establish longitude at sea and his avoidance of fatal outbreaks of scurvy, and turns them into a fundamental reappraisal of how explorers explore. Thanks to his success in covering expanses of ocean without losing either track of where he was or numbers of his crew, Cook won free of the necessity to be within reach of known coasts. He had the confidence on his second voyage to plot sweeps of the southern oceans during which he was out of sight of land for months on end, and on the third to cross the Pacific from south to north (and so come across the Hawaiian Islands, nestling between the regular trade routes to and from Mexico and the Philippines). It was more than an exploration of space; it was, as Richardson puts it, a triumph over space, and it was all recorded, printed and circulated. In this context Cook’s voice was that of ‘the mathematical geographer, demonstrating the shared shape of the world’.

In the following chapters, which investigate the human inhabitants and societies of the lands he visited, Cook sheds the garb of the mathematical geographer and takes on a different role, that of ‘a geographical Linnaeus’. His detailed descriptions of the peoples and places of the Pacific brought a new complexity to the study of ‘savagery’. Working from the ship, a microcosm of Europe’s hierarchical social and political order, Cook failed to find similar structures in the islands. The instinctive search for ‘the King’ in New Zealand and elsewhere revealed both Cook’s intentions and his limitations. Even so, Richardson argues that Cook taught that the question was not whether savages were noble or ignoble, or, to use Bernard Smith’s terminology, represented ‘hard’ or ‘soft’ savagery. Rather, the range of Cook’s experiences showed that the key question was ‘Which natives?’ His different reception in places only a short distance apart gave the lie to Dr Johnson’s dictum, ‘One set of savages is like another’.

Other parts of the book are less persuasive as the theoretical structure becomes more dominant, and doubts arise about the author’s approach. There is a section on the change in wording as Cook’s second- and third-voyage journals progressed into print which saw the catch-all term, ‘Indians’, of the manuscript versions turned into ‘natives’ or ‘inhabitants’, terms, we are told, which signify peoples who are attached to specific places, and who have specific characteristics. In tune with this process was Cook’s decision to alter ‘King George’s Island’ (Captain Wallis’s proprietorial name for Tahiti), to ‘Otaheite’, in recognition of the link between a place and its inhabitants. The problem here is that these instances occur in different worlds – the first in the world of the printed word as determined by Cook’s revising editor,
John Douglas (hardly mentioned in the book), the other the world in which Cook made decisions and took action. Richardson on Tupaia, the Raiatean warrior-priest of the first voyage, is another case in point. He tells us that Cook tried to bring Tupaia back to England (p. 95), and that, just before Tupaia’s death in Batavia, Cook found ‘significant’ his observations on ‘the diversity of human identities’ (p. 141). It is true that there is support for all this in Hawkesworth’s published account of 1773, but the manuscript journals show that it was Joseph Banks’s idea to bring Tupaia back, against Cook’s advice, and that it was Banks, not Cook, who recorded Tupaia’s observations and may well have found them ‘significant’. It is in such places that one begins to wonder about the author’s overriding insistence on Cook as an ‘authorial voice’, divorced from what actually seems to have happened on the voyage.

Cook’s voyages were notable both for their ‘horizontal extension’ — more parts of the world described — and for their ‘vertical extension’ — more detail about those places described. They were, Richardson argues, the epitome of a global process, and through their publication directed attention to the gaps in knowledge of the world. One of the gaps that Cook filled in, late on, was the Hawaiian Islands, and here the author is at his most iconoclastic. Most scholars dwell obsessively on the story of the explorer’s stay on Hawai’i, his controversial identity as Lono and the circumstances of his death. Richardson will have none of this. He is content to explain Cook’s death simply as something which occurred ‘while he was trying to recover some stolen article by taking a native chief hostage’ (p. 154). But he goes further. Cook found the Hawaiian Islands ‘unremarkable’, even ‘boring’, and his descriptions of them were routine. By now he had seen, and described, too many island groups to be excited any more. I would dispute this (see Cook’s sense of wonder, almost awe, in his journal entry of 2 February 1778 when he realised that the Hawaiians were the same ‘nation’ that he had seen in New Zealand thousands of miles to the south, Easter Island far to the east and the New Hebrides to the west); but the argument here is challenging enough to make one look again at the events and the sources.

For an author who has clearly immersed himself in the texts, there are some surprising slips. John Rickman, who sailed on and chronicled Cook’s third voyage, is described throughout as having been on the second voyage. Richardson perhaps has a blind spot for sequences of voyages, for we are told that the Adventure was on Cook’s third voyage, while the artist of the second voyage, William Hodges, is described as sailing on the Discovery, which was the consort vessel (not the Adventure) on the third voyage. More puzzling, given the emphasis on the printed accounts of the voyages, is that what would seem to be the obvious editions — the authorised accounts of 1773 (Hawkesworth), 1777 (Cook/Douglas) and 1784 (Cook/King/Douglas) — are rarely cited. Instead the citations are to a seven-volume edition of The Voyages of Captain James Cook, published in 1821, and referred to as ‘the Admiralty’s version’, a short-hand description which at once says too much and too little. Every now and again, there are sentences that might have been reconsidered: ‘Printed books existed well before Cook was born’ (p. 12); ‘Every member of the European reading public could be expected to know at least something about Cook’s voyages’
‘Before his [Cook’s] voyages, the world was uncertain and dangerous; after
them, it was clear and safe’ (p. 198).

It would be wrong to finish on a carping note. Brian Richardson has given us a
thoughtful and perceptive text which takes its subject a significant step forward.
This is not a book for the beginner, but specialists will gain from its fresh thinking
about Cook and his voyages.

GLYNDWR WILLIAMS
Queen Mary, University of London

British Atlantic, American Frontier: Spaces of Power in Early Modern British America
STEPHEN J. HORNSBY
Lebanon, NH, University Press of New England, 2005
x + 307 pp., ISBN: 1-58465-426-0 ($60.00 hardback); 1-58465-427-1 ($9.99 paperback)

In *British Atlantic, American Frontier*, Stephen Hornsby offers a sweeping reassessment
of British America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Hornsby’s basic argu-
ment is that the patterns of human geography created the ‘spaces of power’ that shaped
the growth and fracture of the first British Empire. To support this premise, he adopts
an admirably broad perspective that traverses the Atlantic rim from Newfoundland to
the West Indies. The book’s temporal scope is equally impressive, spanning the origins
of the British Atlantic in the 1480s to the aftermath of the American Revolution in the
1790s. Hornsby’s analysis is based largely on specialist studies of the various colonial
economies and, in a sense, represents a partial synthesis of recent scholarship on the
early modern British Atlantic. Yet, despite the book’s reliance on secondary sources,
Hornsby offers a brief synopsis of Atlantic historiography and says relatively little
about recent developments in imperial history.

Hornsby’s overriding focus is the long-standing debate in North American history
over the role of geography in colonial development. He criticises American historians,
most notably Bernard Bailyn, for failing to recognise the socio-geographic diversity of
the Atlantic world. Although Hornsby makes passing reference to Michel Foucault, his
approach to the spatial dimensions of power is not based on post-modern or post-
structuralist theories. His goal is not to apply new theories but rather to reconstitute
two old ones: the frontier and staples theses. Drawing on the work of Maurice Careless
and, more recently, William Cronon, Hornsby claims that the ideas of Frederick
Jackson Turner and Harold Adams Innis remain indispensable to the study of
European trade and settlement in North America. Hornsby applies their theories to
build a comprehensive model of how the environmental and geographic conditions
in British America engendered different types of relationships between metropolis
and colonies. He argues that British America can be divided schematically into
three types of spaces: a British Atlantic, which included Newfoundland, the West
Indies, and Hudson Bay; an American frontier, which covered the settled colonies
from Massachusetts to Georgia; and an intermediate space, which comprised port
towns and areas dominated by continental staples.
The splits between these spaces of power formed the structural faults that eventually divided the Thirteen Colonies from the rest of the British Empire. On the one hand, the British Atlantic formed a type of oceanically oriented marine empire marked by staples trade, naval force and metropolitan authority. The extreme specialisation of the cod fishery, the sugar islands and the fur trade inhibited the emergence of alternative economic enterprises, leaving mercantile elites with little local competition for power. The continued dominance of metropolitan capital and political influence meant that these Atlantic territories remained tightly wedded to Britain. On the other hand, the American frontier comprised an agriculturally oriented settler empire marked by population growth, capital accumulation and local autonomy. The socio-economic diversification of these agricultural settlements produced a colonial elite of merchants and planters that was less dependent on metropolitan power. Whereas American expansion was internal and landward, British expansion remained external and seaward. The French territories that Britain acquired following the Seven Years War fit uneasily with the settled American colonies, contributing to the political friction that precipitated the American Revolution.

*British Atlantic, American Frontier* makes an important contribution to the continuing debate over how we should conceptualise the British Empire. Despite repeated calls for a more integrated and inclusive approach to Atlantic history, national historiographies still shape how we view the British Atlantic. Hornsby’s book affirms that New England was not the colonial norm against which all British territories should be measured. Specialists in the history of the various colonies will no doubt find fault with some of Hornsby’s conclusions, and some territories, such as early Nova Scotia, receive relatively little attention. But Hornsby’s effort to compare patterns across the expanse of British America offers a useful corrective to the barriers that continue to separate British, American, Caribbean and Canadian history. His book is also well written and clearly argued, while the numerous maps are highly innovative and useful. In a field divided between narrow studies and bland overviews, it is refreshing to read a book that is both broad in scope and bold in argument.

**JERRY BANNISTER**  
*Dalhousie University*

*Army and Empire: British Soldiers on the American Frontier, 1758–1775*  
MICHAEL N. McCONNELL  
Lincoln and London, University of Nebraska Press, 2004  
xix + 211 pp., ISBN: 0-8032-3233-0 ($44.95 hardback)

Throughout history, soldiers on the fringes of empire have typically endured a dangerous, lonely and irksome existence. The redcoats sent to garrison the string of strong points established in the wake of Britain’s victorious North American campaigns of the Seven Years’ War, posted sporadically from the Great Lakes down to the Gulf of Mexico, were no exception to this rule. The harsh lot of these frontier troops is analysed in Michael N. McConnell’s *Army and Empire*, a study that reinforces a growing
corps of scholarship addressing the significance, experiences and personnel of the British Army in the Americas during the second half of the eighteenth century. His book is a valuable addition to this body of work, presenting research that not only strengthens existing conclusions, but also breaks new ground.

Originating in the fortified depots established during Brigadier-General John Forbes’s 1758 expedition against Fort Duquesne at the Forks of the Ohio, by the close of the Seven Years’ War in 1763, Britain’s western military frontier was both extensive and diverse. Redcoats might find themselves guarding crude log stockades fronting frozen forests or the stone bastions of formal fortifications set amidst the stuflifying heat of tropical swamps. For all the blood, sweat and toil that underpinned its creation and maintenance, this straggling cordon was remarkably short-lived. Within a decade most of its garrisons had been evacuated as ever more manpower was shifted to the eastern seaboard in an effort to quell the disorder that would soon spark the American Revolutionary War. McConnell’s careful researches suggest that few of these soldiers would have bemoaned their transfer. With its routine hazards of frostbite, fever and scurvy, and the prolonged isolation that drove many to drink and some to suicide, frontier service was a punishing exile for officers and rank and file alike.

The author of an acclaimed study of the Ohio Valley during the mid-eighteenth century, McConnell approaches his topic with a strong grounding in the sources relating to the British Army’s first penetration of that troubled zone, notably the voluminous papers left by Colonel Henry Bouquet of the Royal American Regiment. The same collection is quarried here, alongside many other primary sources. McConnell also makes excellent use of secondary material, notably archaeological reports. Army and Empire outlines the genesis of the frontier garrisons and the retrenchment and realignments that led to their dissolution. It concentrates, however, upon the social world of the soldiers who staffed the forts, the work regimes that governed much of their peacetime existence, and their diet and health. McConnell emphasises the ‘domesticity’ that characterised the garrisons, itself a consequence of the significant numbers of soldiers’ dependants who ‘followed the drum’: for example, the 341 officers and men of the 31st Foot in garrison at Pensacola, Florida, in 1768, were accompanied by no less than 148 women and children. The presence of such non-combatants is borne-out by archaeology. The veritable trove of items unearthed at Fort Ligonier, Pennsylvania, includes children’s toys – a lead ‘whizzer’ and clay marbles.

In one of the most interesting chapters of his book, which discusses the ‘Material Lives of Frontier Soldiers’, McConnell combines an analysis of such excavated material with a careful sifting of the documentary evidence to examine the extent to which redcoats and their families participated in the era’s ‘consumer revolution’. McConnell is alive to the limitations of the archaeological evidence – especially the difficulty of establishing the original ownership of surviving artefacts – but his conclusions are nonetheless intriguing: the forts’ humble occupants enjoyed a richer ‘material life’ than has been assumed, seeking to improve their lot with a handful of modest possessions, from Bohea tea to fancy shoe-buckles and silk handkerchiefs. Here, McConnell hints at what could be achieved by closer collaboration between the historians and archaeologists of British North America.
McConnell points out that *Army and Empire* is a study of the British Army at peace, but this declaration sits awkwardly with his chosen chronology. New France surrendered only in 1760, and British armies were still fighting against the French and Spanish on Martinique and Cuba two years later. The Indian uprising that subsequently engulfed much of the trans-Appalachian frontier prolonged hostilities still further, subsiding only in 1765. Before then, the redcoats defending Pittsburgh and Detroit had endured sieges while dozens of their comrades at smaller posts had been massacred. Yet warfare intrudes only occasionally upon McConnell’s study, for example, when he notes the auction of possessions left behind by officers and men slain during a botched attack on Fort Duquesne in September 1758. By concentrating upon the undeniable ‘domesticity’ of garrison life, he underplays the fact that redcoats were also required to fulfil their primary role as fighting men.

Another aspect of the British Army’s western frontier experience that deserves greater coverage is the extent to which soldiers and their families interacted with other groups encountered at the edge of empire. Friction with land-hungry backcountry settlers, or the fate of army deserters who sought to escape from the hardships and tedium of garrison life among the neighbouring Indian tribes, might have provided fascinating case studies of such contacts.

Despite these omissions, *Army and Empire* remains an important and thought-provoking study. Thoroughly researched, well-written and illustrated with carefully chosen images, it contains much of interest and value, not only for historians of the British Army in North America, but also for archaeologists concerned with uncovering and interpreting the physical legacy of that much maligned organisation.

*Stephen Brumwell*

*Amsterdam*

**The Battle for Quebec 1759**

**Matthew C. Ward**

Stroud, Tempus Publishing Limited, 2005


The battle between the British and French Armies on the Plains of Abraham outside Quebec in 1759 occupies a central place in the pantheon of the First British Empire. General James Wolfe won glory for himself by perishing at the head of his troops in battle, and subsequent generations of Britons have judged Wolfe’s victory at Quebec as the most significant land battle to that time in the Empire’s development. Indeed, for many, the battle continues to stand as proof of the prowess, professionalism and patriotism of the eighteenth-century British Army.

Matthew Ward, a lecturer at the University of Dundee and author of a well-received book on the French and Indian War in the Virginia and Pennsylvania backcountry, has offered a different view of the campaign. *The Campaign for Quebec* is old-style military history, the kind that focuses on the movements of regiments, with the ‘new’ military history sprinkled throughout. Ward posits that the battle for Quebec, which he means
to encompass the events from the decision in Whitehall to capture the city through the army’s occupation of the town in the winter of 1759–60, was a very different campaign than some scholars and history buffs have taken it to be. Rather than focusing on the battle of 13 September 1759 as the denouement of the first regular-style military campaign waged in North America, and one that won Canada for the Empire, he argues that operations were ‘adjusted to meet peculiarly American traditions’. It was a campaign in which irregular warfare dominated, acts of savagery and barbarity became common place, incompetence and in-fighting nearly paralysed both sides’ leadership, and fortune and luck far more than strategic or tactical brilliance decided the outcome.

Ward devotes significant attention to the petite guerre that swirled around the regular battles at Montmorency Falls, the Plains of Abraham, and Ste-Foy. He contends that the British troops that James Wolfe brought before Quebec had been ‘Americanised’ by four years of combat outside Europe. Their training, equipment and, most important, attitudes toward non-combatants, all differed from those of their compatriots who served on the Continent. Wolfe’s Redcoats, with their commander’s encouragement, were quick to put aside European conceptualisations of regular-limited war and instead focused their efforts on bullying and intimidating the habitants of New France and, as it turned out, not very successfully engaging Native Americans in a war of skirmishes and raids.

Ward paints a critical portrait of Wolfe. The hero of the Empire comes across as a hypochondriac, quarrelsome with his subordinates, prone to secrecy that verged on paranoia, and essentially at a loss of what to do once he got his army before Quebec. Unable to bring his adversary, the marquis de Montcalm, to battle, he defaulted to bombarding the town and ravishing the surrounding countryside with both the American and British troops under his command. Indeed, Ward’s Wolfe seems unfit for command of such an important operation. Wolfe’s impetuousness at the skirmish at Montmorency Falls could have been a disaster for the British. Even Wolfe’s apotheosis on the Plains of Abraham had more to do with luck than his operational or tactical acumen. Harkening to traditional analyses of the battle, Ward contends that Montcalm, because of his own prejudices against his Canadian and Indian auxiliaries, foolishly left the protection of the city’s walls and marched out to meet a qualitatively superior regular force in an open field. Still, the battle was, to borrow a phrase from one of the British Army’s other great battles, a near-run thing. Yet, it all worked out in the end for the Empire. While the Redcoats and their American allies spent a scurvy-ridden winter on near starvation rations inside Quebec and faced another battle (Ste-Foy) in the spring to hold their costly gains, the Empire found a hero in the dead General Wolfe.

While specialists in colonial military history will not find any paradigm-shattering interpretations in it, there is much to recommend in this book. General readers will find Ward’s narrative a fast-paced and enjoyable read. His stinging critique should compel many to reassess the ‘glory’ that James Wolfe and the British Army found in the campaign for Quebec.

JOHN GRENIER
US Air Force Academy
In 1835, William Miller, a licensed Baptist preacher arrived in the Eastern Townships of Lower Canada/Quebec and, for three weeks, exhorted listeners to prepare for the Second Coming. Miller’s pre-millennialist doctrine gained considerable support from local residents beset by crop failures, political upheaval and the fear of infectious disease; to many, it seemed that the region had finally caught the fever of radical revivalism that was sweeping throughout that burnt-over district south of the border. But as Jack Little concludes in this study of *Borderland Religion*, ‘the flames of religious enthusiasm’ cooled quickly (p. 145) and, even before the movement reached its peak in the United States, it was already in decline in this small, isolated pocket of the British Empire.

*Borderland Religion* is a case study of popular religion in the Eastern Townships that explores why support for American evangelical churches was not sustained in this frontier settlement and how, instead, the Eastern Townships were transformed into a British colony. At first glance, the answer is straightforward. The British Wesleyans and the Church of England were more willing to commit financial and human resources to their work in this border community than were their American counterparts. As Little illustrates, however, how this actually worked out on the ground is a complex story that was indelibly shaped by local circumstances and personalities. The first half of *Borderland Religion* considers the ‘American’ context of the Townships. The largely Yankee settlers of the region welcomed Baptist, Congregationalist and other evangelical preachers from their old homeland, attended camp meetings in droves and professed their conversions often and loudly. American evangelicals were eager to provide spiritual leadership to their northern cousins; they were very reluctant, however, to offer any tangible financial or institutional support to sustain the movement. Thus, when, after the War of 1812, first the Wesleyan Methodists and then the Anglicans offered free churches, and the Anglicans offered free clergymen, the situation was ‘too tempting’ for many residents ‘to refuse’ (p. 146) The second part of *Borderland Religion* chronicles the increasingly successful efforts of these two British missionary societies to plant churches and build congregations in this outpost of Empire. By the mid-nineteenth century, approximately 38 per cent of residents identified themselves as either Wesleyans or Anglicans; and an active building programme had begun to transform the landscape into a ‘cultural expression of the British Empire’(p. 246). Little is careful to note that ‘the victory of the forces of religious conservatism should not be . . . exaggerated’ (p. 284). Nonetheless, as he argues on the whole persuasively, the Eastern Townships were, by 1850, beginning to take on the religious and cultural sensibilities of a British colony.

*Borderland Religion* is classic social history. It rests on an exhaustive and very impressive analysis of church and missionary society records, local histories, various census and extant diaries and journals. The historiographical debates that set up
many of the chapters are at times distracting and would have been better placed in the notes, but this is offset by the rich and at times compelling detail and careful analysis that Little brings to the work. The nature of the sources does mean, however, that, despite concerted efforts to tease out the world of those who sat in the pews, *Borderland Religion* is a view largely from the pulpit and the institutions. The last chapter on popular resistance to the dictates of Anglican authorities is intriguing; it also illustrates the conundrum social historians face in trying to understand lived religion when actual voices are few and fragmentary and even statistical evidence is incomplete. One is left to wonder if the conservative doctrines of the Wesleyans and Anglicans had really been internalised by parishioners. My biggest concern with this work, however, comes with the volume’s subtitle. Little suggest that the Eastern Townships can be viewed as a social laboratory from which one can trace the emergence of an English-Canadian identity in British North America. This is taking the evidence too far. One of the strengths of *Borderland Religion* is its particularity of time and place. Without much more work, one cannot assume that English-speaking residents in the Maritimes or in the Canadas shared a common identity built on conservative, Protestant and essentially imperial values.

*Borderland Religion* is nonetheless a very important contribution to our understanding of the development of one colonial community in the nineteenth century and of how competing cultures and beliefs interacted and negotiated at the local level. More significantly, *Borderland Religion* also convincingly highlights the crucial role that religion, at both the institutional and the personal level, played in this development and that we ignore it at our peril.

JANE ERRINGTON
Royal Military College, Kingston, Ontario

**Plantation Jamaica 1750–1850: Capital and Control in a Colonial Economy**
B. W. HIGMAN
Mona, University of the West Indies Press, 2005
xiv + 386 pp., ISBN: 976-640-165-9 (£65.00 hardback)

During the eighteenth century Jamaica became Britain’s most valuable overseas colony, and the world’s leading exporter of sugar and other tropical produce. During the nineteenth century the island rapidly lost its commercial pre-eminence. Slave emancipation in the 1830s proved especially disruptive to estate agriculture there. The basic reasons for this sequence are clear enough. Jamaica, much the largest of the original British Caribbean colonies, had the most scope for increasing output in response to eighteenth-century market opportunities. Yet few Jamaican estates matched the productivity levels that would be achieved on the richer soils being opened up for development elsewhere by 1800. Thus market competition severely reduced profits, and after emancipation many ex-slaves sought an independent peasant livelihood, taking advantage of Jamaica’s relatively low population density.
This economic history has been supplemented by an institutional theme: the growth of absentee ownership, to embrace about 80 per cent of Jamaican sugar properties by the immediate pre-emancipation period. Absenteeism is alleged to have done harm through broad social effects, weakening civic leadership and more specifically by placing estates under a long chain of delegated management, with the attorney taking a key role. The attorney, in British West Indian usage, was a colonial resident given general charge over an absentee’s local affairs, including the shipment of produce and the purchase of supplies, while daily plantation routine was left to a subordinate manager ('overseer') and white foremen ('bookkeepers'). Often attorneys took responsibility for several estates and served many different owners. These features were not unique to Jamaica, but became most pronounced there. Contemporary critics, and some later historians, accused the attorneys of lacking agricultural knowledge, rarely visiting the estates under their charge and commonly perpetrating fraud. Payment by commission on shipments gave an incentive to maximise current output at the expense of long-term viability. Perhaps Jamaica’s nineteenth-century decline resulted in large part from a previous over-expansion, driven by attorney self-interest. Alternatively, ‘revisionists’ argue that attorneys and overseers became an expert, professional management class, adequately monitored as a rule by their transatlantic employers. Why otherwise would British-based absentees have gone on holding West Indian property, often over several generations of family ownership? Was Jamaica’s spectacular rise and fall the effect above all of general circumstances, rather than a pernicious business structure? Higman tackles these issues with the fullest study the subject of absenteeism has yet received, on the whole taking the revisionist line.

He pursues his inquiry partly through aggregate data, most of it from the early nineteenth century. For example, the slave registration returns show that in 1832 200 attorneys were responsible for Jamaica’s 745 major absentee-owned rural properties. Almost half these attorneys managed just one property, while a quarter looked after four or more. However, there were few very large portfolios, and multiple holdings usually formed regional clusters, so fairly close supervision should have been possible. Tombstone inscriptions suggest that most attorneys were British-born expatriates, who had often begun their planting career as overseers or even bookkeepers. The average recorded age at death was 64 years, not indicating high mortality, as Higman points out, despite the attorneys’ ‘reputed dissipation’. He demonstrates how packet boats had increased the speed and frequency of transatlantic letter postage. A pair of case studies then follows, derived from attorney-absentee correspondence: Simon Taylor’s reports on Golden Grove estate to Chaloner Arcedeckne over the years 1765–75, and Isaac Jackson’s stewardship of Montpelier plantation for Lord Seaford between 1839 and 1843. Taylor, a wealthy proprietor himself, was a rather high-handed and erratic correspondent, offering few suggestions on ways to increase productivity. He persistently urged increasing the slave labour force, but in order to meet the absentee owner’s demands for extra output and profits. Jackson had risen up the managerial hierarchy from humble origins, wrote regularly, showed deference, took a close interest in technical minutiae and was kept on a tight leash. This contrast, Higman believes, illustrates a more general formalisation
of management that had occurred with the passage of time. However, both men were active and assiduous, showing no evidence of fraud or dishonesty. Jamaican attorneyship appears therefore to have been fairly efficient and adaptable.

Higman's book is well organised, with much new detail, and largely convincing, although the evidence deployed for the eighteenth century seems rather thin, and over-reliant on the Taylor-Arce.deckne case. The proprietor here conducted a separate correspondence with the estate overseer, who also had powers of attorney. This material, not included in the printed collection used by Higman, probably paid more attention to planting matters. Golden Grove, its soil fertility maintained by seasonal river flooding, had less need of the cultivation adjustments pursued to raise yields elsewhere on the island. The letter run consulted ceases before the main Jamaican effort at ‘ameliorating’ labour maintenance had started, in response to the threatened abolition of the transatlantic slave trade. The archives available in much greater abundance for later years and other properties would have given a fuller sense of policy dynamics.

J. R. WARD
University of Edinburgh

Contesting Freedom: Control and Resistance in the Post-Emancipation Caribbean
Edited by Gad Heuman and David V. Trotman
Oxford, Macmillan Caribbean, 2005
xxxi + 239 pp., ISBN: 1-4050-6248-7 (£16.00 paperback)

This book derives from a workshop held in 2000 at the University of Warwick’s Centre for Caribbean Studies. Nine of the twelve papers cover the British West Indies; the other three, dealing with Haiti, Surinam and Cuba, offer some wider perspectives. The main themes, popular assertion and upper-class control techniques after slavery, are pursued through a wide variety of local circumstances.

Concerning the issue of resistance, Heuman’s survey notes how across the British territories conflict often arose in the immediate post-emancipation period through the planters’ efforts to extract labour services by imposing rent charges for houses and grounds. On francophone Dominica and St. Lucia freed people showed a particular fear that they might be re-enslaved, apparently deriving from memories of how bondage had been restored in the French Caribbean under Napoleon. On Jamaica ex-slaves drew inspiration from the 1831 uprising, the ‘St James’s war’, though, as Diana Paton shows, popular feelings were also articulated to some extent within the framework of official institutions. Courthouse trials attracted large, expressive audiences and self-taught ‘half-inch lawyers’, very relevant background to the events precipitating the Morant Bay rebellion, which had their origin in a court case for trespass. Poorer Jamaicans also developed their own alternative judicial systems, built partly around church communities and myalism. Rosemarijn Hoefte gives an account of resistance among Surinam’s sugar plantation contract labourers, detecting some difference in behaviour between imported British Indians and Javanese immigrants. The former, perhaps emboldened by their status as British subjects enjoying
consular protection, were more inclined to open, collective defiance, the latter to avoidance protest through ‘sulking’ and flight.

Methods of elite control through armed force are examined in most detail by David Trotman’s essay on Trinidad, where the upper classes felt at risk through an exceptionally high degree of ethnic diversity, accentuated by indentured labour immigration. White troops stationed here still fell victim to fevers and rum, while it was thought that the black West India Regiments were becoming less reliable, as the supply of imported Africans dwindled and local recruits took their place. So during the later nineteenth century the authorities put their main faith in a strengthened, semimilitarised police, following the Royal Irish Constabulary model, with officers from Ireland commanding a predominantly Barbadian rank and file. Courtesy calls by the British Navy and marines gave back-up. Post-emancipation elites also kept their ascendancy through various other forms of containment and social engineering, pursued most effectively on Cuba. Here modernised central cane milling ensured the resilience of the sugar industry and made possible blanqueamiento, attracting substantial European immigration to keep Afro-Cubans in a minority. A patriotic integrationist discourse prevailed, largely accepted by the black and mixed race intelligentsia. On Barbados a few affluent ‘men of colour’ were drawn into planter-dominated election politics under a highly restrictive franchise. Lower down the social scale, the island developed a distinctive Landship movement of mutual aid groups with uniforms and parades in British naval style. At first harassed by the authorities, the Landships eventually won official patronage. But elsewhere top-down initiatives against the grain of popular culture were more common, and quite futile.

Contributions from Juanita de Barros and Sheena Boa describe nineteenth-century prison and reform school experiments, influenced by new metropolitan penal ideology. British Guiana’s reformatory inmates were put to agricultural labour, cultivating coffee, cacao, lime and rubber trees, with the aim of turning out keen young farmers and diversifying the economic base. Such schemes, echoing estate slavery, met strong hostility from the boys’ own parents. Attempts on Jamaica to check ‘concubinage’ by adjusting the marriage laws had no perceptible effect.

As usual with conference proceedings, there are a number of loose ends. For example, why were some 40,000 soldiers, National Guard and rural police on early nineteenth-century Haiti even less successful than Jamaica’s much smaller security forces in holding back the ex-slaves’ shift towards peasant self-sufficiency? Was Haitian military power particularly handicapped by weak central control? The matter is left unclear. Why in Surinam were planter demands for an enlarged police force after outbreaks of estate violence generally not met, so that plantation managers here armed their overseers with revolvers instead? More notice might usefully have been given to efforts at social control through education, the fastest growing major category of British West Indian public expenditure from the 1870s. Nevertheless, taken as a whole Contesting Freedom forms an interesting and useful collection.

J. R. Ward
University of Edinburgh
The huge island of Madagascar is still relatively little known. Few people are aware that in the nineteenth century Madagascar was the home of a relatively sophisticated government — the Merina kingdom in the centre of the island claiming, though not effectively exercising, sovereignty over the whole island. Thanks to the work of mainly British missionaries there was a high degree of literacy, with compulsory primary education, secondary schools for boys and girls, and even some higher education with colleges training teachers, church ministers and medical personnel. There was a form of constitutional monarchy with a reigning queen, a powerful executive prime minister and government departments headed by secretaries of state and ministers more or less on the British model. And Christianity, in the nonconformist version propagated by the London Missionary Society, became the state religion in 1869.

The history of the nineteenth century has inspired numerous authors, who have tended to concentrate on the Merina monarchy, because of the wealth of written documentation, both European and Malagasy. Gwyn Campbell has written the first comprehensive economic history of the period, covering not only the areas controlled by the Merina empire but the whole of the island. Campbell claims that his work is original in a number of respects. In particular he seeks to debunk the ‘myth’ perpetrated by missionary and other European writers of the enlightened Merina Christian empire uniting the whole island by pointing out that more than half the island remained outside Merina control, and that the Merina empire had serious weaknesses, notably its reliance on slavery and forced labour (fanompoana in Malagasy). This is not a particularly original thought: in my own History of Madagascar I mention the ‘grave weaknesses beneath the surface’, specifically including slavery and forced labour.

But, if this claim to originality is somewhat exaggerated, Campbell more than compensates by providing lots of fascinating new information on the workings of fanompoana and slavery, on which he is an acknowledged expert. From its earliest days the Merina kingdom employed compulsory labour for strictly limited periods to carry out road building and other public works. This was not particularly burdensome or reprehensible; indeed similar schemes were employed at times by the French colonial authorities. But in the nineteenth century the use of fanompoana was gradually expanded to include labour not only for public works but also for the private benefit of the ruling oligarchy; and recruitment to the army, in which service was unpaid, amounted to a massive extension of fanompoana. Campbell shows the debilitating effect of dependence on forced labour: crops declined as farmers were taken from their land; a promising industrial development was abandoned when the unpaid workers rebelled and smashed the machinery; and growing numbers of workers and soldiers deserted to join groups of bandits whose depredations further weakened the economy.
Economic historians tend to accuse their political brethren of paying insufficient attention to economic factors, but the reverse accusation might be laid at Campbell’s door. He maintains that the main reason for the collapse of the Merina empire was its internal weaknesses rather than the French invasion; and he seriously underplays the effect on the economy of the constant French menace: the almost complete disruption of trade during the 1883–85 war when the French occupied the two main ports; the drain on limited revenue and scarce foreign exchange from the need to import guns, rifles and ammunition; and the imposition in 1885 of a huge indemnity of 10 million francs. These factors were the main reason for the subsequent expansion of fanompoana to increase production from the gold fields, a particularly harsh and unpopular task that played a large part in weakening support for the regime.

The *Economic History* is a major work of scholarship, which adds considerably to our knowledge of the Great Island, especially in two areas of true originality. Campbell is the first author to cover in detail the economy of the large areas in the south and west outside the control of the Merina monarchy. While the export of slaves from the Merina empire was prohibited, on the whole effectively, following the Anglo-Merina treaty of 1820, slave trading continued to flourish through the ports of the south west. And the French blockade of the east and north-west coasts in the 1883–85 war greatly stimulated trade of all kinds along the south-west coast, involving particularly American, British and especially Indian merchants.

Of especial interest is Campbell’s demonstration that Madagascar’s economy was not a self-contained but formed part of a thriving wider economy covering the whole of the south-west Indian Ocean. Drawing on a wide range of sources, he shows how Madagascar was linked commercially not only with the Mascarenes but also South Africa, East Africa, Arabia and India and even beyond. He emphasises the importance of the British role in this regional economy, but this is somewhat misleading as on closer examination the great majority of the British traders in question turn out to be from South Africa and especially India rather than the United Kingdom. The role of Indian middlemen and financiers in Madagascar, though subdued during the colonial period, has continued to the present day, when businessmen originating from both India and Pakistan can almost be said to dominate the economy.

This important work is not without blemishes. There are various questionable statements, unsupported by sources; the relevance of the footnotes to the text is not always clear (e.g. the 1817 diary of James Hastie is given as a source for events or situations dated 1822, 1820–26 and 1832–35); and there are a number of incorrect facts and dates. Space does not permit the listing of these mostly trivial defects, which should have been corrected by more careful editing. But equally it does not permit full treatment of the great wealth of new information that Campbell has unearthed and the many valuable insights into the way the economy of the island and the Indian Ocean region operated. This is a definitive work to which all future historians will be indebted.

*Book Reviews*

616

Mervyn Brown

London
Britain sometimes claims (with imaginative creativity) to have been the first nation to have outlawed slavery on home soil when Lord Chief Justice Mansfield refused to allow an escaped slave to be deported to Virginia in 1772. Portugal, by contrast, was often seen to be the last European nation to outlaw slavery, hence the ironic title – *The Sounds of Silence* – which João Pedro Marques has given to his brilliant book on the ‘abolition’ campaigns. Portugal did, however, question the use of slaves and in 1773 the Marquis of Pombal – Portugal’s semi-enlightened despot – followed Mansfield’s lead (for good commercial reasons) and outlawed the carrying of slaves to Portugal’s temperate Atlantic colonies on Madeira and the Azores.

Joaõ Pedro Marques follows de Tocqueville when arguing that the outlawing of slave trading, and ultimately the abolition of black Atlantic slavery, represented the ‘miraculous’ reconciliation of morality and material interest. It was the ‘enlightened will of the masters’ rather than revolution which brought slavery to an end. The strength of Marques’ book is his ability to disentangle the mythology surrounding Portugal’s eventual disengagement from the traffic. He tries to identify the masters whose ‘enlightened will’ brought them to accept the international moral and economic pressures driving Europe towards a ‘free’ wage-oriented market in colonial labour.

The received accounts of the Portuguese acceptance of wage labour as a substitute for slave labour have focused on the lone, morally driven crusade of Viscount Sá da Bandeira. In 1974 Portugal underwent a revolution and history once more became a legitimate field of research after forty-eight years of fascist self-censorship by Portuguese historians who had concentrated their efforts on the patriotic glorification of the motherland. Lisbon scholars discovered Eric Williams’ *Capitalism and Slavery* and attempted to see whether the material determinism of Marxist modes of analysis might shed light on their hitherto darkened nineteenth century. To some local historians the Portuguese industrial bourgeoisie was so weak that it had no interest in the Atlantic. Others argued that Portuguese entrepreneurs were so dependent on Brazil that when Brazil became ‘independent’ (as a neo-colonial client of Britain) the merchant class of Oporto and Lisbon turned its attention to employing African manpower inside Africa rather than on overseas plantations.

Neither of the quasi-Marxist theses of empire fully stands up to the subtle and persuasive revisionism of João Pedro Marques. He writes at a time when religion and philosophy have been brought once more into the limelight by David Brion Davis. This new intellectual fashion, however, has proved more difficult to explore in Portugal than in Britain or the United States, since nineteenth-century Portugal did not have a vibrant pamphlet culture which exposed militant opinions to the scrutiny of historians – hence the sounds of relative silence. But was silence the result of lack of interest, of a marginalisation of slavery as a popular concern? Or was silence a strategy helping vigorously to pursue the slave trade out of sight of the arrogant British whose
ambassadorial minister plenipotentiary behaved like a public school prefect in the Lisbon diplomatic corps? Unearthing the ideas of ‘the people’ and the ‘will of the masters’ has been Marques’ triumph – a triumph which has naturally discomfited some of his more cautious and conventional fellow scholars. The sources range from Portugal’s vibrant literary tradition of fiction to the records of the Navy Office and the Foreign Office. The bulk of Marques’ new data, however, derives from a meticulous – and hitherto neglected – examination of the parliamentary debates in the Cortes during the effervescent revolutionary and civil war eras of 1820 to 1851 and from mountains of newspapers out of which currents of hitherto unsuspected opinion have been extracted.

Where Marques puts the cat among the pigeons is by showing that the September Liberals of 1836 (who passed the Portuguese ‘abolition’ act) and their sainted leader, Viscount Sá da Bandeira, were dependent on the financial support and good will of colonial interest which actively invested in slaving. Some Liberals loudly suggested that, before the Portuguese navy was sent out into the Atlantic to effect suppression, Britain should be asked to guarantee the defence and security of Angola and Mozambique in the event of a rebellion resulting from local colonial bankruptcy. Britain should also, it was suggested, make 1,000 marines and two ships available to help Portugal in the Atlantic, and should also guarantee ‘in perpetuity’ an offer to make good any loss of colonial revenue Portugal might suffer. Endangering the empire was ‘economic folly’. It also exacerbated the strong thread of anti-British nationalism which informed Portuguese politics. Thus it was – according to Marques – that a ‘duplicitous...latticework of good intentions and subterfuge’ caused Sá da Bandeira to take one step forward and two backward. One of his generous contemporaries, ignoring the unpopularity which concessions to Britain would bring, called the viscount a ‘capital enemy of slavery who was, without knowing it, surrounded by slave traders who were his best friends’. João Pedro Marques, by contrast, does not ignore the unpopularity of Britain whose heavy hand had been constantly felt since the Peninsular Wars and – for the first time – his book carefully examines the trail of popular opinion. The inaction of the September Liberals on the question of abolition was one factor which allegedly enabled traders to stock up with almost unbelievable numbers of African slaves during the late 1830s, half of them being apparently shipped from Angola alone. This late flourish of slaving drove Britain to increase pressure on Portugal to such an extent that on 25 July 1842 a new, Conservative Lisbon government, with greater links to English commerce than to the colonial trade, was compelled to make trading in slaves an act of piracy. Eighteen days later the British Parliament revoked the clause in a Palmerston act of 1839 which had allowed the Royal Navy to seize unilaterally Portuguese ships equipped with slaving shackles.

This book emerged from a thesis supervised by Jill R. Dias who has presided for thirty years over the slow evolution of a Lisbon school of African history. It contains an important contribution to that historical tradition as well as being an innovative interpretation of Portuguese domestic history. It comes in a series edited by Pieter Emmer and Seymour Drescher and will be of interest not only to readers concerned
with Portugal but also to any reader interested in the history of ideas, in the history of slavery and its abolition, and in the history of all four quarters of the Atlantic, north and south, west and east.

David Birmingham
University of Kent

A Concise History of New Zealand
Philippa Mein Smith
Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 2005
xiv + 302 pp., ISBN: 0-521-83438-4 (£40.00 hardback); 0-521-54228-6 (£14.99 paperback)

The market for histories of New Zealand is a crowded one at the moment, but the new Concise History series of Cambridge has chosen this point, when Penguin has amassed the largest sales for any book ever published in New Zealand for Michael King’s History, to release a similar scaled work by a historian at the University of Canterbury, best known for being co-author of a history of Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific with Donald Denoon, to take on the field. The commendable virtues of King’s book were its readability, its brief, well-argued chapters and its freedom from clutter, while its interpretation followed established lines. So perhaps it was inevitable that Mein Smith would choose a very different approach both in interpretation and style. The style is an obvious point of difference. Mein Smith wastes not a word; her account is dense, rich with illustrative details and comparisons with the present day, and the result is a challenging read. One might quarrel with many of the links drawn, and wonder whether the text will not quickly become anachronistic, as the comparisons lose their currency. However, the most critical features of this history are its interpretative stances. Mein Smith focuses on the culture of New Zealand, but this is not new; she has a welcome emphasis on comparisons with other colonial societies particularly Australia; she makes much of recent gendering of the historical narrative; but, on the other hand, she plays down Maori history, stresses the colonial story more than has been fashionable in the recent past and takes on with gusto the interpretation of another recent national historian, James Belich, of the New Zealand story as by no means a one-way journey towards national identity. The nuancing of this story means that the book has a combative approach, sitting uncomfortably within the confines of this series.

Much may be applauded in this attempt to give what one may coin a South Island interpretation of this history, but the approach to Maori history and Maori-European relations suffers badly in the approach. The account of the initial encounters, the missionary movement and the musket wars is unsatisfactory for its failure to appreciate the tribal dimensions of the story. Similarly the treatment of the Treaty of Waitangi plays down indigenous interpretations, returning to the traditional emphasis on British annexation. The brevity of the treatment of the land wars of the mid-nineteenth century and the reorganisation of Maori society that emerged through the King movement and figures like Te Kooti and Te Whitē is astonishing. In just
three pages the wars which Belich has played up as central moments in colonial history are dismissed, and one wonders at this as at other points in the narrative if the book is not too dominated by references to familiar images from movies. Really this is gross distortion and Rewi Maniapoto and Te Kooti Rikirangi seem like caricatures. The book has real strength in its treatment of the Wakefield settlements but says very little about other and later emigration patterns. While the Wakefield settlements deserve emphasis, and the contribution of the author’s ancestor, Captain William Mein Smith, is very interesting, the growth of northern settlements is absent, important figures like G. A. Selwyn, Robert Stout and Harry Atkinson are not mentioned, and colonial government before the Liberals is virtually absent. The book is in contrast very interesting on the Liberal era which has lost favour in other recent accounts, tellingly criticising the Belich narrative, emphasising the enfranchisement of women, the suburban dream and the Australasian dimensions of the story. The chapters covering the twentieth century are likewise indulgent in the space given to social change and brief to the point of being cryptic in some political trends. Again James Belich is challenged repeatedly.

I am ambivalent about this history. On the one hand it will be a rich source of topics for essays and examination questions. Its superb illustrations greatly enhance the story. But, on the other hand, it feels a very oddly balanced work, moving far too easily from elaborate detail to interesting reflections on historiography to misleading summaries of crucial events. I am glad that Mein Smith has challenged the exceptionalism that even in Belich and King is too much a mark of the story, but this one lacks the coherence and accessibility for which I had hoped.

PETER LINEHAM
Massey University, New Zealand

Recognizing Aboriginal Title: The *Mabo* Case and Indigenous Resistance to English-Settler Colonialism
PETER H. RUSSELL
Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2005
xii + 470 pp., ISBN: 0-8020-3863-8 ($65.00/£42.00 hardback)

The modern states which are the successors to the white settler colonies of the British Empire (Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States) all have unfinished business in their relations with their indigenous inhabitants. Colonial policies in these territories pushed Aboriginal peoples off their land without their consent or achieved similar ends by unequal or manipulated treaty processes to make way for European settlement, sought to erase their cultures and languages, and often left them in political, social and legal limbo. The result has been serious material, cultural and psychological harm to indigenous communities. Traditionally, they had a profound sense of their identity, sophisticated ways of governing themselves and developed spiritual connections with the lands they inhabited. They also possessed notions of law which infused their very being and how they conducted their relations with each other, with other
human groups, with the animal life around them and the land of which they were part. The nature of colonial policies towards Aboriginal peoples differed depending on time, place, the character of indigenous cultures and resistance, strategic considerations and settler demographics. Of the states in question Australia presents the most problematic and conflicted example of colonial oppression and difficulty in recognising and responding to the injustices done to indigenous communities. It is these historical and contemporary realities that are addressed by the eminent Canadian political scientist and constitutional scholar, Peter Russell, in this carefully researched, passionately argued, engagingly written and profoundly important book.

Russell uses the life and struggles of a campaigner for the constitutional recognition of Aboriginal rights in Australia, Eddie Koiki Mabo, as the focus for telling the story of the shameful impact of colonialism on indigenous Australians, and how they have fought back to gain recognition of their title to land, their law and customs, and a right to self-determination. This remarkable man from the island of Mer in the Torres Strait between Queensland and Papua New Guinea is described endearingly in the dedication by the author as ‘a shit-disturber par excellence’. After working in and then leaving his island home Eddie Mabo relocated in the port city of Townsville on the east coast of Queensland in the early 1960s. He soon became involved in the labour movement and radical politics. Through his reading and thinking, as well as his contacts with sympathetic academics at the local university, he developed a commitment to challenging the long-established white Australian view that the land they had taken over was terra nullius. Eddie Mabo’s quest to use the institutions of the dominant system, most especially the courts, to challenge this mindset and the colonial policies it supported are employed by Peter Russell to extract the history and peculiar trajectories of colonialism in Australia as it affected Aboriginal people, to assess the place of that particular history in the broader pattern of settler imperialism, to chart the growth of Aboriginal resistance in Australia and elsewhere in the British settler world to the denial of rights to them, and to comment critically on the political and legal outcomes of the battles waged by Mabo and others against the continuing colonising of indigenous peoples.

Professor Russell has a well-deserved international reputation for his deep knowledge and understanding of constitutional theory, politics and law, as well as an ability to communicate his thoughts in engaging prose. Those qualities are evident in this work. He moves effortlessly from historical narrative to legal analysis and to political critique to provide the reader with a rich understanding of how the treatment of Aboriginal peoples in the colonial and post-colonial worlds was and remains such a burning issue. His account of the history of colonisation in the settler British Empire recognises the attempts of both imperial policy and decision-makers to bring some order and justice to relations with indigenous communities. However, he leaves the reader in no doubt that benign instincts within and pressure from the metropolis fell in one way or another to the raison d’être of colonisation in these territories, their reconstitution and settlement by Europeans, and in the face of the realpolitik of the acquisitive instincts and actions of settlers and their political representatives at ground level. Australia provides the most pointed, but certainly not an exclusive, example of this phenomenon.
The author is very effective in his treatment of the application of the law to settler-Aboriginal relations in both the colonial and post-colonial periods. He makes no bones about the implication of the dominant legal system in the politics of oppression of indigenous peoples. In a particularly persuasive and pungent metaphor he uses the term ‘legal magic’ to describe the invocation and manipulation of that system. This phenomenon, he suggests, is nowhere more potent than in the legal characterisation of the sovereign right of the imperial power to exercise exclusive jurisdiction over the territories in question, and to vest what were simply unilateral self-interested acts of possession with the mantle of legitimacy by the Act of State doctrine. ‘We have come, we have discovered, we have established a beach head, and we are therefore legally entitled to be here and exercise jurisdiction over whoever is already here’, as one might characterise the colonialist frame of mind. Russell is quick to recognise that, within the constraints of this legal doctrine, there has been and is an important strand of legal authority which supports the existence of Aboriginal rights to land and some degree of self-governance. These are based either on judicial decision-making about common law customary rights, as in the decisions of the Marshall Court in the United States of the 1820s and 1830s and the much later Canadian jurisprudence following the Calder decision in 1973, or on treaty relations such as those embodied in the Treaty of Waitangi concluded in New Zealand in 1840. It was this body of law and practice to which Eddie Mabo and his supporters were to appeal in the complex of litigation which led to the decision of Mabo (No. 2) by the High Court of Australia in 1992. A majority of the court in that case turned white Australians’ understanding of the colonial history of their country on its head. The majority denied the validity of the terra nullius doctrine in Australia, recognised the existence of political and legal Aboriginal communities in that land mass and accepted that land rights might have survived the application of the colonists’ attempts to ignore those rights. In this sense, as Peter Russell makes clear, the courage and grit of Eddie Mabo were vindicated and he had brought the issue of renegotiating Aboriginal-settler relations to the centre stage of Australian politics and law.

As the author demonstrates, however, the application of legal magic to Aboriginal rights to land and self-determination in both Australia and the other former settler colonies has not disappeared. In Australia, in particular, it left its tell-tale mark in the Mabo (No. 2) decision itself with its uncertainty as to the nature of Aboriginal rights over land, the ‘frozen in time’ gauge for assessing those rights, and the relative ease of their extinction. Moreover, even where courts have upheld the existence of Aboriginal title in landmark cases, the record of other courts and panels in those jurisdictions has been inconsistent, and in some instances, as in Australia, progressively more restrictive. All of this points, in the mind of Russell, to the difficulties in basing lasting and radical change in the Aboriginal-settler relationship on the decisions of courts whose judges who feel constrained by the politico-legal system of which they are a part and are fearful of moving too far out in front of political and public opinion. As both Australian and Canadian courts have said or hinted, and the author agrees, lasting solutions lie in the realm of politics rather than law.
The problem, as the often tense post-Mabo political debate in Australia and evidence of resistance to and back-lash against the recognition of Aboriginal rights in Canada and New Zealand indicate, is that equitable political resolution can be as elusive as that crafted by the courts. Russell stands with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal advocates of the negotiation of the recognition of Aboriginal rights as nation to nation agreements concluded in a climate of equality and mutual respect. But serious questions remain about how ripe the time is for such bold initiatives. In the final analysis, the author is forced to recognise that, in Australia at least, short-term progress is more likely to involve regional agreements between Aboriginal communities and economic stakeholders interested in resource development on lands claimed by those communities with federal and state governments as more passive players. This falls far short of the ideal aspirations of Aboriginal Australia but appears to be accepted by some Aboriginal leaders as providing the best route for now to ensure their communities a say in what happens on those lands and a share in mainline economic development.

There is much more of note in this fine book, including the important development of interest of international organisations in fostering Aboriginal rights within nation states and the growth of increasingly powerful and effective domestic and transnational indigenous organisations. Peter Russell writes with an authority, a breadth of vision and an optimism which makes this essential reading for any interested in these issues and those that should be: political scientists, judges, lawyers and legal academics, those active in indigenous and cultural studies, members of Aboriginal communities, the intelligent general reader and, not least, the national and regional politicians and business leaders whose decisions impact so greatly on those indigenous peoples. As Professor Russell concludes, the ultimate objective has to be a radical reconfiguration of the relationship between these settler states and their indigenous communications. This book is an important milestone on the road to understanding just why. To quote the author’s final sentence: ‘I hope Eddie Mabo would say “Amen” to that.’

John McLaren
University of Victoria

The State at War in South Asia
Pradeep P. Barua
Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005
xi + 438 pp., ISBN: 0-8032-1344-1 (£42 hardback)

This book deals with the military history of South Asia over the longue durée. Covering a period of over 3,000 years, stretching from the early Vedic period to India’s current status as a regional military power, Pradeep Barua’s panoramic account of the evolution of statehood, warfare and military systems in South Asia has much to offer the military history enthusiast. This well-written and readable volume focuses on the South Asian ways of waging war. The book is divided into six parts, each
covering a period of Indian history. Through fairly detailed accounts of warfare and battles ranging from the Bharata War during the Vedic period to the Indo-Pakistan skirmishes on the Siachen Glacier in Kashmir, Barua explains the evolution of warfare in South Asia, and the manner in which the state, in its different historical forms, has waged war. The study comprises an impressive compendium of battles and campaigns, and gives a good synthesis of the different phases of war-making in the long history of the subcontinent.

The chapters in Parts One and Two, dealing with warfare in classical and medieval India leading to the establishment of British rule in the subcontinent, are impressive. They constitute the strongest parts of the book and offer useful details of regimental organisation, arms, tactics, strategies and military leadership. Part Three, covering the period of British rule, does not, however, live up to expectations as a core section of the book. There is certainly no shortage of materials, as the author acknowledges, for detailed examinations of the military in colonial India. However, by focusing his discussion on colonial military doctrine, military reforms and the Indian Army’s officer corps, the author has missed an opportunity to demonstrate the extent to which the colonial state had evolved from what was termed ‘a fiscal-military state’ (C. A. Bayly) to a ‘very military state’ (D. A Washbrook) in the course of the nineteenth century. There is no discussion of the impact of the 1857 Revolt on the functioning of the colonial state, a somewhat surprising omission. There is only cursory attention allocated to the range of operations that the colonial armed forces were involved in, from border skirmishes in the Northwestern Frontier to direct involvement in the battlefields of the both World Wars. It would also have been useful to understand how the colonial armed forces were used in aid to civil power.

Parts Four and Five deal with the post-colonial Indian state and the chapters contain useful descriptions of the operations conducted by the Indian armed forces against the Pakistanis in the three wars they had fought after 1947. There is also a good account of the war against China in 1962. While there is some allusion to the nature of the relationship between the military and the state in post-colonial India, there is only the passing remark on the nature of civil-military relations in the period following 1947. The book concludes with a final part which traces the growth of the various arms of the Indian forces, including a useful discussion of the defence policy and operational doctrines of the Indian armed forces. The story is brought up to date with a discussion of India’s attainment of nuclear capability. While this final chapter provides an account of India’s emergence as a regional military power, it stops short at India and does not examine the story in the other successor state of the British Raj – Pakistan. While the military may have played a marginal role in the state-building process of India, it clearly played a significant part in the making of the Pakistani state. Here may be another gap in Barua’s able survey of the military history of the subcontinent – the study seems incomplete without mentioning that it was Pakistan that was the actual successor of the military state in South Asia.

This is a useful general text on the military history of South Asia. I would recommend it for the student of Indian military history for it provides, in a single volume, a broad sweep of how states have evolved and the nature of warfare that
was waged in South Asian history. A book that covers such a long time scale will have
the inevitable gaps. The book serves, however, as a useful starting point into various
aspects of the subcontinent’s military history. Those who want more could of
course make forays into a fairly well-developed extant literature of the military in
South Asia.

TAN TAI YONG
National University of Singapore

Colonial Armies in Southeast Asia
Edited by KARL HACK and TOBIAS RETTIG
Abingdon, Routledge. 2006
xviii + 334 pp., ISBN: 0-415-33413-6 (£65 hardback)

As the editors, Karl Hack (Nanyang Technological University) and Tobias Rettig
(Singapore Management University) explain, the original forum for the contents of
the present volume was a panel on colonial armies presented at the 2001 EUROSEAS
Conference. Five of the twelve chapters (Geoffrey Robinson, Hack, Henri Eckert,
Richard Meixsel and Gerke Teitler) were originally published (and improved upon
for the present volume) in South East Asia Research in 2001 and 2002 as a result of
this panel. To complete the volume and broaden the coverage, the editors have
written the two initial chapters and five additional chapters have been contributed
by Abu Talib Ahmad, Kevin Blackburn, Sarah Womack, Robert H. Taylor and Geoff
Wade. The geographical coverage includes country-specific chapters on Burma
(Taylor), the Philippines (Meixsel), East Timor (Robinson), Malaysia and Singapore
(Hack, Blackburn), Indonesia (Teitler), Vietnam (Eckert) and Cambodia
(Womack), as well as chapters of a regional scope (Hack and Rettig, Wade, Ahmad).

While the focus is on colonial armies per se, several of the chapters, such as Wade’s
treatment of Ming Chinese colonial armies (thankfully drawing attention to the splen-
did work of Liew Foon Ming) and Robinson and Blackburn’s chapters on the post-
colonial impact of colonial-era armies, expand the periodisation. The expanded
breadth at first feels awkward given the usual, Western applications of ‘colonial’, but
in the present volume it seems to work and one finds some of the same problems
faced by fifteenth-century Chinese administrators and by the Indonesians in post-
1975 East Timor as by British, French, and Dutch officials of the late nineteenth
and early twentieth centuries.

The main problem apparently faced by all foreign rulers was how to control a large
and distant foreign population with as few national troops and as little expense as
possible. The solution was to mobilise indigenous forces to garrison the colony
while applying mechanisms of control to keep them from joining the ruled – a
great fear among colonial officials – frequently by recruiting among ethnic minorities
and from among European settler populations. Additionally, as indicated in the
chapter by Womack, in French Indochina, recruits from the main ethnic groups in
some regions were deployed to others as well to exploit historical enmities.
Recruitment from among ‘reliable’ ethnic groups was also complicated by unequal burdens placed on the European element in the case of the East Indies, for example, as shown by Teitler. Attention is also paid throughout the volume to the ideology applied (and the resulting imagery conjured up) to promote the ‘martial races’ (despite American reservations of doing so in the case of the Philippine Scouts) of Southeast Asia, owing much to the British Indian model. Colonial recruitment policies also had their indigenous responses, a development brought out most clearly in the chapter on Burma by Taylor, and the emergence of a number of private armies sponsored by different Burmese political parties. As Taylor suggests, their meaning went beyond politics, for they were intended to demonstrate Burmese ability to defend the colony when their British rulers portrayed them as unfit for colonial service. It should be no surprise then that Southeast Asians who mobilised both for and against the Japanese during the Second World War usually owed very little to the Europeans who had left them behind and would soon oppose their return.

The volume opens up substantial new ground in both Southeast Asian studies and world military history. Southeast Asian warfare, including the sub-topic of the region’s military history, has been ignored for a very long time by those scholars who focus on world history, although this has begun to change. Relatively recent work by Geoffrey Parker and Jeremy Black, for example, has begun to include some attention to Southeast Asian warfare in their general surveys of warfare. Surprising as it may seem, until now there has been no satisfactory study of colonial-era armies in the region. The present volume’s appearance is thus extremely timely and necessary.

This collection is highly recommended for researchers and students in Southeast Asian studies as a whole, as well as for comparativists interested in warfare or military institution building. The chapters are easily separable from the volume for assignment in courses focused on one particular Southeast Asian country or another, enhancing its applicability to undergraduate and postgraduate instruction. The careful reader will find in the volume substantial new data and insights that will likely enrich existing research agendas or open the doors to new ones.

MICHAEL W. CHARNEY
School of Oriental and African Studies

For Lust of Knowing: The Orientalists and their Enemies
Robert Irwin
London, Allen Lane, 2006

In For Lust of Knowing: The Orientalists and their Enemies, Robert Irwin, a student of early Mamluk and other mainly classical Islamic subjects (Irwin is also a publisher and a novelist), challenges Edward Said’s view, famously propounded in Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient (1978), that Orientalism should be seen as a hegemonic discourse of European imperialism, a discourse that not only constrains everything that can be written and thought in the West about the Orient, more particularly
Islam and the Arabs, but also justifies Western penetration and conquest of the Arab lands. This Irwin does in two ways: first, by writing a straightforward (and extremely interesting) history of Orientalism, covering broadly speaking the same ground as Said's *Orientalism* and, second, by writing a separate (penultimate) chapter, entitled 'An Enquiry into the Nature of a Certain Twentieth-Century Polemic'. In his history Irwin concentrates mainly on describing the lives and works of the principal orientalists (Postel, Pococke, Jones, de Sacy, Lane, Goldziher, Nöldeke, Caetani, Brown, Massignon, Bertold, Gibb, Lewis, Kedourie and many others). In his critique he analyses Said's work on orientalism and draws attention to the 'breathtaking ignorance' of Middle Eastern history and other weaknesses it supposedly reveals. For good measure he then adds a final (again extremely interesting) chapter, entitled 'Enemies of Orientalism', in which he looks briefly at the work of a number of mainly Arab/Muslim critics of orientalism (Kurd 'Ali, Jalal Al-i Ahmad, Muhammad Asad, Hossein Nasr, A.L. Tibawi, Abdullah Laroui, Anouar Abdel-Malik, Ziauddin Sardar and two or three others).

Of the two methods Irwin uses to attack Said's *Orientalism* (he makes it clear that he is attacking the work not the man), there is no doubt that the first is the more effective. For in his history of Orientalism he shows convincingly that Said largely misunderstood Aeschylus's *The Persians*, Herodotus's *History* and Euripides's *The Bacchae*, and that he similarly misread Dante's *Divine Comedy* and the *Chanson de Roland*. Nor did he show much understanding of the early history of Islam and the ways in which most Christians related to it. In the early days and for quite a long time thereafter, Irwin makes clear, most Christians looked on Islam not as a new and dangerous 'other', but as just one more Christian (usually Arian) heresy, a cause of further schism in the church. Otherwise in the medieval period Islam did not feature much in European thought. At best it played only a minor role in forming the 'self-image' of Christendom. Moreover, 'we find no sense in European writing that the Middle East was technologically, economically or militarily backward and there were some, like Abelard of Bath, who recognised that Arab culture was in some respects more advanced' (p. 53). As for the orientalists, far from being the component parts of some kind of grand over-arching and constraining Foucauldian discourse, blind instruments of imperialism, they should for the most part be seen as what they were: a succession of 'lonely and eccentric' scholars – dabblers, obsessives, evangelists, freethinkers, madmen, charlatans, pedants, romantics – united in little else but their interest in and fascination with the languages and history of the (Arab) Orient. There can, in other words, be no 'clearly defined chronicle of Orientalism' that can be set within 'clearly defined limits' (p. 7).

Irwin's critique of Said's *Orientalism* (much of it implicit rather than stated) is very convincing, not least because it is well researched and thorough. But it is doubtful if it will convince the present-day enemies of Orientalism, many of whom work in the (sometimes ideologically driven) field of post-colonial studies. They would probably insist, with some justification, that Irwin's work itself shows that most, but by no means all, of the great orientalists preferred to study Arabic and Persian as dead classical languages (some could not even speak modern Arabic and/or Persian),
and that most, but again by no means all, had little or no interest in the contemporary Arab/Muslim world. They would probably also argue that, though Irwin does draw attention from time to time to the significant political investment of the European imperialist powers in Orientalism (he writes useful and interesting short accounts of the origins of SOAS, Soviet Orientalism and Nazi Orientalism) and the part some orientalists played in the colonial enterprise (Massignon, Snouk Hurgronje), for the most part he plays down this aspect of the issue; that he writes mainly about academic orientalists and not the many other sorts of ‘orientalists’ described by Said (though he does write a brief account of European travel writing mainly in the sixteenth century); that, like Said, he deals only with the elite elements in European culture; and that, most importantly perhaps, he fails to recognise the significant contribution Said made, in Orientalism, to the discovery of a European ‘myth of Orient’, one which has survived more or less intact for many hundreds of years. (If you doubt the continued existence of such a myth have a look at the cover picture of Irwin’s For Lust of Knowing, which is taken from a painting entitled ‘Duke Ernest of Saxe Cobourg Gotha’s tour of Egypt’, by Robert Kretzchmar, 1818–72, and which by coincidence happens to be the same as the cover picture of my own book The Eastern Question, new edition, 1996.)

Irwin makes it clear in For Lust of Knowing that he is mystified by the attention paid to Said’s Orientalism which he looks on as a work of ‘malignant charlatanry’ (p. 4). Could this, he wonders, be because the work appealed to the adherents of younger disciplines, who resented the authority exercised by the long-established ‘guild of Orientalists’, or because it appealed to anti-Zionists and anti-Americans, who had no real interest in the subject? Or could it be because Said’s facile doubts about the possibility of objective knowledge fitted in well with recent intellectual fashions? One way or the other, he concludes, it is a ‘scandal and damning comment on the quality of intellectual life in Britain in recent decades that Said’s argument about Orientalism could ever have been taken seriously’ (p. 309).

A. L. MacFie
Sevenoaks

Tropical Visions in an Age of Empire
Edited by Felix Driver and Luciana Martins
Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2005
xii + 279 pp., ISBN: 0-226-16471 ($65 hardback); 0-226-16472-1 ($25.00 paperback)

The conceptualisation of the tropics by people from temperate Europe – and to a lesser extent some in the United States – began seriously in the eighteenth century and continues into the twenty-first. Images of the tropics in texts and paintings were one of the major products of the great exploratory voyages, notably those into the Pacific. These were soon followed by the work of geographers and naturalists, botanists and travelling artists, ships’ captains and scientists (both amateur and professional), medical men, literary figures and photographers. All of these are touched
upon in the eleven essays in this book, a volume arising from a conference which, appropriately enough, took place at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich. As befits such a subject, it is well illustrated by black and white illustrations in the text as well as by nine coloured plates.

As with so many constructions of the ‘other’, European reactions can be categorised in a variety of ways. It is possible to see temperate and torrid as being in a binary relationship, each defining the other in climatic, physical and even psychological characteristics, as well as in their flora and fauna, not to mention the peoples who inhabit each. But they can also be seen as inter-penetrating and needing each other. In one telling phrase that appears in the book, the tropics were seen by Europeans as difficult to manage, but also difficult to manage without. The reactions of travellers in the tropics reflected this. They ranged from Alexander von Humboldt’s ecstatic visions of grand landscapes, exuberant vegetation and endlessly fascinating natural phenomena to those who found the tropics emotionally overwhelmingly, difficult to embrace and ultimately producing much melancholy – Claude Lévi-Strauss’s *tristes tropiques* or Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*. They were also seen as offering an escape to life, health and artistic inspiration by figures such as R. L. Stevenson and Paul Gauguin, among others. But the tropics also came to symbolise danger, not least in the tropical diseases which were identified as such by the end of the nineteenth century, stimulating the research of the Schools of Tropical Medicine in Liverpool and London, 1898–99, and carrying forward notions of the dangers of the tropics into the twentieth century.

Images of the tropics came, indeed, to be bound up with the terror of disease and with the insects and micro-organisms which spread them. The new science of microbiology from the 1890s stimulated many panics and influenced authors into alarmist stories of a new weapon, ready to hand for hostile societies, pathogens that could wipe out populations. Yet, in keeping with the central paradoxes of history, this happened at just the time when the tropics were becoming much more accessible, when the continuing revolution in shipping and railways, together with the provision of infrastructures, made them a region available for tourism. As imperial rule in the tropics spread, so did people in temperate zones try to recreate tropical conditions in botanical gardens (and their increasingly vast glass houses), zoos, great exhibitions and even department stores. The tropics also became chic. The palm, so long seen as the botanical symbol of the tropics, would survive at seaside resorts, enhancing their other-worldly airs, suitable for restorative holidays. The tropics could be brought home. They were inspirational for a new generation of writers and musicians, from Noel Coward to Alec Waugh, Benjamin Britten to Colin McPhee. Travelling in the tropics could warm the muses and also act as a symbol of success. The tropics also came to be featured in that most escapist of media, the film.

Inevitably, a collection like this cannot be comprehensive and a good many of the cultural (particularly popular cultural) elements are omitted. The essays themselves tend to be rather scatter-gun in their effect, but the efforts to pull the material together in the introduction (by Driver and Martins) and the afterword (by Denis Cosgrove) are penetrating and successful. The contributions are divided into three
sections: voyages, mappings, and sites, the first covering ‘travelling artists and the iconographic inventory of the world, 1769–1859’, ‘Humboldt’s Physiological Construction of the World’ and William Burchell’s collecting activities in tropical nature, the ‘Struggle for Luxuriance’. The thesis of this essay, by the editors, is that Europeans were not as much in control as they liked to suggest, that the notion that they were imposing taxonomic order wherever they went does not fit the reality. Burchell collected so extensively (and managed to get his vast numbers of specimens home – unlike many who suffered shipwreck or other forms of loss) that he was utterly overwhelmed by them, and committed suicide before he was able to impose order.

The second section includes an essay on comparisons – ethnographic, natural, historical and in imaging and perceptions – between Dominica and Tahiti; on Henry Smeathman’s eighteenth-century study of termites in Sierra Leone, a founding exploit of entomology; and the hydrographic and biogeographical studies, within a severely natural theological framework, of Matthew Fontaine Maury, an American naval captain. As this chapter, by D. Graham Burnett, points out, we should never forget that the tropics are indeed mainly oceanic. The third part contains David Arnold’s essay on Joseph Hooker’s botanical travels in India and the Himalayas, illustrating his re-emphasis of the fact that altitudes as well as latitudes were key factors in botanical distribution as well as his realisation that tropical associations could be found in regions that are technically outside the tropics. A chapter on photography in Samoa attempts to demonstrate that photographs are amenable to nuanced readings that spot instabilities and uncertainties in place of the pure assertions of power relationships that have been read into so many such photographic images. And, finally, a piece by Rod Edmond considers the fear of tropical diseases returning to the metropole, conveyed by sailors, soldiers and non-European employees of shipping lines, and efforts to stem this supposedly terrifying tide. This offers some interesting considerations of leprosy, a disease that was obviously not tropical, given its medieval incidence, yet which came to be identified with the tropics. While many of the usual caveats with regard to essay collections do apply, generally this is a successful and valuable example of the genre, offering much that should stimulate further work.

JOHN M. MACKENZIE
University of Lancaster

Media and the British Empire
Edited by Chandrika Kaul
Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006
xv + 266 pp., ISBN: 1-4039-4882-8 (£45.00 hardback)

As recent studies such as Mark Hampton’s Visions of the Press in Britain, 1850–1950 (University of Illinois Press, 2005) and Michelle Tusan’s Women Making News: Gender and the Women’s Periodical Press in Britain (University of Illinois Press, 2005) indicate, interest in the history of the British media is burgeoning.
A traditional concern with the politics of the press and broadcasting is now being supplemented with curiosity about commercial and institutional aspects of the media and the history of media organisations as producers of culture. At the same time, as most readers of *JICH* will know, imperial history has been enjoying greater popularity and a higher public profile than ever before. For historians of all political persuasions imperial history now seems pertinent, and significant new areas of debate have opened up as a result. The concurrent renewal of media and imperial history has created opportunities for fruitful interactions between two previously quite distinct fields, as Chandrika Kaul’s new edited collection demonstrates.

The wide range of topics covered in the volume, the diverse backgrounds of the contributors and the varied approaches adopted in the essays all show how fertile and attractive this area of study has become. Some chapters, which deploy new evidence or fresh ways of thinking about their subject, are of particular value. John MacKenzie contributes a useful study of the newspaper activities of Scots migrants at the early nineteenth-century Cape, which should be of interest to Scottish, South African, imperial and media historians alike. Similarly engaging are Joanna Lewis and Philip Murphy’s survey of Colonial Office policy towards the press during the ‘pivotal’ year of 1959 and Ian St John’s discussion of Winston Churchill’s use of the press in resisting constitutional reform in India in the 1930s: both chapters ought to appeal to a wide audience. While more specialist in nature, Tim Pratt’s essay on the radical *People’s Paper* and its responses to the Indian mutiny complements recent research on the press and empire by historians such as Jill Bender and Stephen Manning. Su Lin Lewis meanwhile contributes an excellent, original study of English-language ‘indigenous’ newspapers in colonial Penang that engages critically with theoretical work by Benedict Anderson and others.

Unsurprisingly, a collection with such a wide remit suffers from a certain lack of coherence, and the quality of contributions is somewhat varied. Despite the inclusion of a select bibliography at the end, the volume does not always provide an accurate guide to the historical literature in the field. Similarly, even though some chapters bear the marks of work in progress, the volume sometimes does not succeed in setting the agenda for future research in the way that might have been desired. Nevertheless, *Media and the British Empire* does highlight some key aspects of recent work, and suggests likely trends for future writing.

First, the collection illustrates how the media can be seen as a terrain contested by three different forces: editorial and proprietary influences; external commercial factors; and political and state intervention. It also illustrates the tendency among historians of the media to select and focus attention on one particular factor, and to privilege this factor in their analysis. This selectivity can be justifiable, particularly in ‘micro’ studies of individual cases in which the configuration of circumstances may have acted to elevate one factor to dominance. However, it also often reflects the historian’s own hidden assumptions about the way that the media work, and that may prove misleading. We need to move towards histories that are more sensitive to the changing balance of different forces that helped establish relationships between media, state and society.
Second, several of the essays in Kaul’s collection hint at where we might be going next with the history of ‘media and empire’. While quite varied, the contributions of Su Lin Lewis, Deana Heath (on purity, obscenity and censorship in the late nineteenth-century empire), Denis Cryle (on cable news in Australia and New Zealand, 1870–1912) and Ross Harvey (on cable news and the Intangahua Times of Reefton, New Zealand) all reflect a growing interest in the role of press and broadcasting in forging trans-national connections. Meanwhile, imperial historians such as Chris Bayly, Tony Hopkins and John Darwin have elsewhere begun to think about how their field relates to broader attempts to write more ‘global’ histories. Assuming that both these trends continue, we might predict that further links will be forged between imperial and media history, but perhaps in the guise of writing about broader trans-national forces.

SIMON J. POTTER
National University of Ireland, Galway

Men, Women, and Domestics: Articulating Middle-Class Identity in Colonial Bengal
SWAPNA M. BANERJEE
New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2004

The historiography of colonial Bengal is extremely well-travelled territory for South Asianists and imperial historians. The emergence of middle-class or bhadralok subjectivity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has been explained by a significant body of scholarship, and this book might easily be situated among this historiography. But its ambitions are greater in several respects. Among the strengths of this book is the use of a large body of material that traverses domestic manuals, travellers’ accounts, newspaper reports, police and governmental documents and well-known and obscure texts of colonial Bengali literature, such as memoirs, autobiographies, novels, short stories and poems. Banerjee is methodologically innovative in organising these texts in a rigorous and empirical way, both reading ‘against the grain’ and reading with the grain to show the ways that the emergence of middle-class and servant-class identity were complementary, even parasitic, developments.

Through a careful reading of her sources, Banerjee shows how the practice of domestic servitude changed in bhadralok households between circa 1830 to around 1930, as more women entered the servant classes. In tandem with this discussion about the changing demographic among domestic servants, she complicates the development of bhadralok as a homogeneous group. For instance, cooking was a responsibility that middle-class wives prided themselves on and thus it became a task that was jealously guarded; nonetheless, large, landed families allowed cooks to prepare the food and Muslim cooks were often celebrated as being especially gifted. Similarly, child rearing was seen as something that was crucial to the making of the middle-class wife, unless the family was among the wealthy and influential, in which case, infants were often provided with wet nurses who became surrogate mothers. The range of bhadralok figures
and families in her book, from the aristocratic Rabindranath Tagore, to less eminent figures, shows some of the tensions within this influential, high-caste social group. There were families whose wealth was from the land and those who saw themselves as educating, training and working themselves into this elite social group.

Perhaps the most intriguing and original part of the argument is in the latter half of the book, in which Banerjee argues that the master-servant relationship that structured Bengali middle-class households deployed similar strategies of coercion and dominance that British colonisers used against their colonised subjects. Drawing from the work of James Scott, Ranajit Guha and others who have explored the question of subaltern consciousness and resistance in the face of colonial hegemony, Banerjee shifts the terms of the coloniser-colonised binary to argue that Bengali middle-class householders used various strategies to silence and suppress their inferiors within the household. As she notes, the practice of having servants predated British rule and had a particular genealogy in rural Bengal. In reading the ‘colonial’ of colonial Bengal in a new way, Banerjee argues that a racialised discourse of white/non-white was mapped onto an ethnic and caste opposition of Bengali Brahmin or Kayasth employer/Oriya, Bihari, Muslim servant. She is careful to note that, in their own accounts, many bhadralok distinguished their relationships from what they understood of British colonialism and cast their relationships with their servants not as impersonal, capitalist relationships, but rather as intimate and familial, founded on a deeply paternal sense of responsibility and emotional attachment. Childhood accounts showed servants to be caring and nurturing, occasionally authoritarian, but usually with the best interests of the child in mind. These fond remembrances were complicated by accounts left by adults in which the care of middle-class children could not be trusted to the incivility and undisciplined behaviour of the lower-caste and lower-class servant.

The idea that the master-servant relationship was structured by paternalistic behaviour became a kind of defence against British colonial rule for the bhadralok, but, as Banerjee shows, this pattern was marked by moments of violence and social anxiety. Bhadralok representations of servants either sanitised the coercion that servants were exposed to by recounting narratives of loyalty and sentimental attachment or these representations showed servants to be treacherous, over-sexualised, beings whose impulses need to be subdued and civilised. From a complex and contradictory field of texts, Banerjee compellingly critiques the bhadralok class and its aspirations to being modern by showing that their collective subjectivity was founded on an edifice of hierarchy and superiority. While representing itself as keeping colonialism outside its confines, the bhadralok household recreated colonial dynamics within it to sustain its hegemony.

‘Bhadralok studies’ has been derided as a symbol of the project of subaltern studies gone wrong, a turn towards studying an elite group that cannot reasonably claim itself as subaltern. Banerjee critically inverts the terms in this scholarship to show that bhadralok dominance was built on the backs of their subaltern servants.
Women in the Indian National Movement: Unseen Faces and Unheard Voices, 1930–42

SURUCI THAPAR-BJÖRKERT

London, Sage, 2006

304 pp., ISBN: 0-7619-3407-3 (paperback £14.99); 0-7619-3406-5 (£35.00 hardback)

Historians face a tough challenge in trying to recover the lives of people who are, as Suruchi Thapar-Björkert says in the subtitle of her study of Women in the Indian National Movement, with ‘unseen faces and unheard voices’. This task is all the more difficult in the study of women, and especially women in India, who historically have remained submerged in the domestic sphere. One of the revolutionary aspects of the Indian nationalist movement, however, was the participation of women from all social backgrounds. Although the experiences of elite women freedom fighters have been well-documented, the stories of ordinary women, who often protested on the local rather than national level and who commonly acted within the home rather than in the public sphere to subvert British rule, have heretofore been missing from nationalist histories.

Suruchi Thapar-Björkert has tackled this challenge by drawing on a wide range of sources. Focusing primarily on Hindu women in northern India and especially Uttar Pradesh, she interviewed about seventy mainly middle-class women who had been involved in the nationalist movement in various ways. Thapar-Björkert also used private correspondence, popular magazines that would have been available in middle-class households and nationalist poetry and songs. From these admittedly sparse and sometimes questionable sources (such as using the memories of very elderly women, memories filtered through later events), Thapar-Björkert has been able to describe the diverse ways in which conventional, seemingly unremarkable women contributed to the independence struggle.

Thapar-Björkert’s central argument is that respectable women could become activists because in the nationalist movement the domestic sphere was politicised even as the public world was domesticated. An example of this was the importance of swadeshi cloth in the freedom struggle. Women spinning in their homes, as part of the boycott of British cloth, committed a political act. Conversely, Mahatma Gandhi’s campaigns of non-violence, emphasising what he saw as the characteristically female qualities of self-sacrifice and the ability to endure suffering, tended to ‘feminise’ the public world.

The picture that emerges is that of a kaleidoscope of the many different ways, both inside and outside the home, in which women acted in protest at the Raj. Thapar-Björkert says that most middle-class Indian women remained secluded in purdah (using the Islamic term even though almost all of the women she discusses are Hindu). They could nevertheless learn about the nationalist campaigns by listening to or eavesdropping on male family members, by reading newspapers and magazines and by talking with other women. Their participation could take the form not only of spinning cloth, but also of hiding political suspects in their homes, giving precious personal ornaments and household goods to the cause and secretly passing on proscribed nationalist literature. Others, Thapar-Björkert suggests, helped the movement simply by taking care of the household while their husbands entered the public fray,
and by the sacrifices they endured when their husbands, sons or brothers were imprisoned or killed.

Other women did leave the domestic sphere to enter the public arena, helped by association with elite nationalists, which gave respectability to their unconventional actions. Their political activism was facilitated by the institution of the extended joint family, which allowed mothers the freedom to leave their homes without concern for the welfare of their children. Whether as satyagrahis or as revolutionaries using violent actions, they presented an awkward problem for the British. Knowing that rough treatment of women would inflame Indian nationalist sensibility, the British treated women more moderately than they did men. For example, instead of using lathis against female protesters, they sprayed them with hoses filled with sewage. Some women activists were sent to prison, a place that Thapar-Björkert suggests was similar to the domestic world from which they came, with its sexual segregation and bonding among women. The courage and assertion of these women nationalists certainly defied the British stereotype of Indian women as weak and helpless, a view that the British had used to justify their protective rule of India.

With such rich material, analysed with insight, it is unfortunate that this important study is so poorly edited. There are frequent repetitions throughout the book, not just of ideas and information, but also of almost verbatim sentences within the same paragraph. There are unexplained contradictions in the material. There is very little discussion of what women actually did in the public arena in support of the movement or of what caused them to be imprisoned. Too many events and people are cited without any identification or historical context. There is almost no discussion of caste, with only brief mention of the fact that most of the women interviewees were Brahmin, and no discussion of the fact that many non-Brahmins supported a British Raj rather than a Brahmin-dominated independent India.

Despite these distracting and annoying weaknesses, Women in the Indian National Movement: Unseen Faces and Unheard Voices, 1930–42 is a perceptive study that expands our understanding of the lives of non-elite Indian women supporters of the nationalist movement. Inspired by her own family history of female activism, Suruchi Thapar-Björkert has used imagination and logical analysis to tease out the experiences of women who heretofore have been lost to history. Her study shows that even simple domestic acts could be charged with political significance, and that women's contributions to the movement could take quite different forms. She has indeed revealed 'unseen faces and unheard voices' of the Indian nationalist movement, making the study a valuable contribution to the history of the Indian nationalist movement and to women's history.

NANCY FIX ANDERSON
Loyola University New Orleans

Edited by JAMES H. MILLS
London: Anthem Press, 2005
Subaltern Sports brings together a collection of essays that explore the issue of subalternity in a variety of interesting and stimulating ways. While by no means comprehensive in terms of sports covered, the collection does range widely, taking in sports with origins in South Asia – *kalarippayattu*, *jori*-swinging and polo – as well as those introduced by the British – cricket and football; it also addresses specific themes, communities and cities. By looking at the evolution of sport historically, the essays combine to enhance our understanding of how changes in South Asian societies have transformed their sports, while at the same time also telling us about the role of sport in shaping these societies. Through the prism of sport, we are introduced to the complex interplay of relationships and forces that underpin the exercise of power and the resistance mounted to it. While the essays make no claim to being hugely innovative, either conceptually or methodologically, they do nevertheless combine a multiplicity of disciplines and perspectives – historical, geographical, sociological, gender and anthropological – in ways that challenge conventional wisdom by presenting well-researched critiques in which the complexities are cogently delineated. The notion of subalternity is interpreted in its widest possible sense, characterised by an unequal power relationship between groups and individuals belonging to them. Indeed, the central argument underpinning the whole collection is that sport represents an activity with the potential to oppose or resist the dominant, in which elites ‘have to face the challenge of others with only the resources of their own bodies to secure ascendancy’ (p. 1).

The first three (of ten) essays consider the idea of subalternity through sports that were indigenous to South Asia. They show that, while the essential characters of these sporting traditions have survived processes of modernisation and globalisation, they have still been transformed and ‘civilised’ by western/modern ethics, culture and practice. For instance, *jori*-swinging became part of drill in the British army; in the United States it became linked to women’s health movement and female reproduction reversing its meaning as symbolising male fertility, control and masculine power. Polo was similarly reshaped and ‘civilised’, initially by the British military, through codification.

The fourth essay, Ramachandra Guha’s story of the Palwankar cricketing brothers – “‘The Moral that can be Safely Drawn from the Hindus’ Magnificent Victory’": Cricket, Caste and the Palwankar Brothers’ – highlights how these players, coming from the bottom of the Hindu social system, challenged and even overturned dominant hierarchies of caste. The Hindu elite, in its desire to equalise symbolically its relationship with its colonial masters by beating them at cricket, in effect decided to set aside its ‘loathing and disgust’ for these untouchables, even to the extent of openly sharing food with them. Again on the subject of cricket, Satardu Sen in ‘The Peasants are Revolting: Race, Culture and Ownership in Cricket’ discusses the strategies pursued by dominant groups to resist the challenge of subordinates in order to retain their cultural supremacy. He emphasises the ways in which Ranjitsinjhi’s astonishing cricketing talent and achievements were exoticised and emptied of aesthetic value in an effort to prevent this colossus from a racially ‘subaltern’ background from representing England against Australia.
The sixth essay, Paul Dimeo’s ‘The Social History of the Royal Calcutta Gold Club, 1829–2003’, also examines the way in which sporting spaces are implicated in unequal power relations. Dimeo tells us that the nationally ‘subaltern’ Indians were excluded from membership of the Royal Calcutta Golf Club until, astonishingly, 1946. Golf, he argues, was not used to create culturally British imperial subjects since denial of entry to the club was precisely a demonstration of the power that the British had to deny locals its sumptuous resources; and hence the club became an arena in which the inferiorisation of Indians through maintenance of social distance was played out.

James Mills’ exploration of the footballing success of Meitei women on the all-India stage interrogates several important perspectives on subalternity. In contrast to the arguments of many scholars, he demonstrates that the introduction of discipline and the ethics and practice of teamwork, rather than being an instrument for imperial control, was already historically deeply embedded in Meitei women’s culture. Hence, participation in modern sport, rather than an ‘empowering’ process for Meitei women, reflects the female physical autonomy that they already possess.

The last two essays in the collection examine subalternity in the context of globalisation and post-coloniality. In particular, Megan Mills, in ‘Community, Identity and Sport: Anglo-Indians in Colonial and Postcolonial India’, by looking at the engagement of this socially marginal community with sport, demonstrates how its strategies have altered in order to maintain its position in a changing world, first, by keeping a distance from Indians and identifying with the rulers in the colonial era and, then, since independence, by offering its comparatively better-developed capabilities in a number of sports as a contribution to the nation’s reputation.

In short, what this collection of essays reveals is not just that the study of subalternity can embrace an examination of the dominant hierarchies of nation, race, gender and class from the perspective of the oppressed in the purely Marxian sense, but also that, through the historical contextualisation of sport, it is possible to arrive at an understanding of ‘subordinate’ colonial elites achieving dominance in the post-colonial era.

HUMAYUN ANSARI
Royal Holloway, University of London

Viola Florence Barnes, 1885–1979: A Historian’s Biography
JOHN G. REID
Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2005
xxiv + 228 pp., ISBN: 0-8020-8017-0 ($45.00/£28.00 hardback)

A historian’s biography of a fellow historian can pay tribute to a memorable personality or chronicle the opening of a new direction in scholarly study. It can also illuminate history’s history, revealing the range of forces and circumstances at work in the profession. It is the considerable achievement of John G. Reid’s study of Viola Florence Barnes that it combines a sympathetic chronicling of her life and work while showing
how these exemplify the opportunities and costs of becoming a historian of America – and especially a woman historian and of early British North America – during the early-to-middle decades of the twentieth century.

Barnes might seem a slender subject upon which to rest this larger agenda. By the 1930s, after birth and education in Nebraska and doctoral work with Charles McLean Andrews at Yale, she had taught for over a decade at Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts, publishing a well-regarded study of late seventeenth-century British colonial policy, along with many articles, and reaching the rank of full professor. One female colleague at a nearby college, hoping to hire her away, described her in terms intended to be admiring as ‘far and away the best woman in American history’. An early member and later president of the Berkshire Conference of Women Historians, she worked to encourage the hiring of women faculty members. Yet her later years were ones of comparative stasis and ultimate frustration, riven by disputes with colleagues and with a mammoth three-volume manuscript on Britain and the coming of the American Revolution repeatedly denied publication. Drawing on her personal papers and the letters and memories of those who knew her, Reid documents Barnes’ deepening and often stridently expressed resentments as to perceived enemies on campus, in the profession and within her own family, fuelled by suspicions that rivals were stealing insights from her unpublished work, work she would not allow to be edited and updated. Growing fears of liberal internationalism, along with her fellow Americanists’ disengagement from the kind of detailed institutional analysis she had imbibed from Andrews at Yale, left her work isolated and out of fashion, her legacy obscured.

But Reid deploys both successes and frustrations, together with an excellent grounding in the literature of women in academia, to uncover larger themes. To this reader, three are especially revealing. We see how the newer mid-western state universities, such as Barnes’ Nebraska, enabled women to begin graduate work and enter the historical profession, only to confront them with the more distinct gender separation and discrimination of eastern schools. At my own and yet further western state university, it might be noted, half of the first doctorates in history conferred during the 1920s and 1930s went to women. Simultaneously, Barnes’ career came at time when American history was only slowly being accepted as a legitimate field of professional study: Mount Holyoke, for example, apparently considered its history department well-balanced in the 1930s when it consisted of four Europeanists (three of them medievalists) and one Americanist, Barnes, who was informed on arrival that ‘American history was not a suitable subject for college’. Even Barnes’ mentor, Charles Andrews, had only been able to begin full-time teaching of American rather than European history on moving to Yale as a senior professor in 1910. Lastly, Barnes’ work emphasises how an earlier generation of American women historians hewed closely to traditional topics, intent on outshining men at their own game rather than developing such fields as the history of women. Here, perhaps, her personality problems aside, Barnes suffered from her lifelong commitment to an approach built on Public Record Office sources that viewed British imperial policy as essentially enlightened and benevolent, only to find herself isolated by later historical
interpretations based on more varied materials that gave new weight to self-interested factionalism within British politics, on the one hand, and the ideological legitimacy of colonial protest and revolt, on the other. She did not live to see the resurgence of ‘the matter of empire’ as a prime area of concern for a modern generation of ‘Atlantic’ historians.

The book focuses on the practice of early American history rather than its content. Given that Barnes’ long-researched last manuscript seems destined to remain for ever unpublished, we might have been told more of what it could yet contribute. Yet Reid has admirably fulfilled his task of showing how ‘a gendered life’ was lived in the emerging world of the study of American history.

RICHARD R. JOHNSON
University of Washington

White Rising: The 1922 Insurrection and Racial Killing in South Africa
JEREMY KRIKLER
Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2005
xiv + 405 pp., ISBN: 0-7190-6844 (£25.00 hardback)

In January 1922 some 20,000 white mineworkers struck in protest against wage cuts and in defence of their jobs, fearing that their positions as skilled workers were being systematically eroded on account of the mining houses’ determination to make greater use of cheap black labour in semi-skilled positions. The conflict rapidly escalated. By March what had now become a general strike took on the character of a full-scale rebellion against the authority of the South African state. The uprising was put down only by deploying the full might of the armed forces, including the Union’s new air force, which bombed militant strongholds in urban Johannesburg. The 1922 Rand Revolt was the culminating moment in white labour militancy after a series of earlier conflagrations, most recently in 1914 when martial law had been declared; its bloody resolution resulted in a significant reshaping of white politics and of the state’s overall relationship to organised labour.

A generation ago the Rand Revolt was proffered as a test case for the explanatory power of neo-marxist analysis. Orthodox liberal historiography was inclined to view 1922 as evidence that racial segregation in the industrial sphere was prompted by the chauvinistic impulses of a white working class that was determined to retard black advancement and to distort the operation of a colour-blind labour market. Radical historians argued to the contrary that the resolution of the strike proved that mining capitalists, in conjunction with the state, had finally proved successful in asserting overall power over the working class: the redefined white labour aristocracy might have gained certain short-term political concessions and a degree of job security, but this was at the cost of blunting organised white labour’s revolutionary capacity; from the perspective of capitalists, any temporary losses were offset by white labour’s structurally defined interest in exerting discipline over the much larger and more exploited black mine labour force. A higher theology of neo-marxist
theory pursued the debate in ever more theoretically abstruse terms — until weariness set in and the matter was eventually allowed to lapse.

Jeremy Krikler is mostly content to let these sleeping historiographical hounds lie. Instead, his fine book takes its cue from the drama of the moment and the tragic unfolding of events. Demonstrating deep appreciation of the lives and hopes of ordinary people engaged in a passionate struggle to defend their dignity, Krikler finds reason to express pity rather than condemnation for the white workers’ lost cause. This is in no sense a defence of the white workers, much less their objectives. Indeed, the author fully condemns the ‘racial killing’ phase of the strike when white mineworkers displaced their anger on to black mineworkers and bystanders, resulting in the deaths of as many as forty Africans. Krikler explains these actions in terms of psychological anxieties and fear of the ‘black peril’. The fascinating observation that blacks were rarely regarded as ‘scabs’, whereas elements of white management were freely included in this hated category, is explained by the fact that ‘Africans were simply not admitted to the community of labour to which the white strikers belonged’ (p. 133). This analysis suggests a new perspective on the nature of the racial killings: that it was motivated not so much by hatred of blacks as by the desperate desire to ‘reconstruct a racial community in the face of an impending civil war amongst whites’ (p.146). The infamous banner under which strikers marched, ‘Workers of the World, Fight and Unite for a White South Africa’, thereby takes on a fresh connotation. No longer should this message be treated as a demonstration of false consciousness or class confusion. Nor should it be seen as proof of Communist Party manipulation. Instead, the slogan might be read in terms of white workers’ fears about their collective status and honour, as an attempt to resist the arrogant dictatorship of the bourgeoisie by asserting the dignity and brotherhood of organised labour. Here, as elsewhere, there are strong resonances with Jonathan Hyslop’s superb recent study of British labourism in *The Notorious Syndicalist* (Johannesburg, 1994) which culminates with the Rand strikes of 1913–14.

Krikler’s book breaks important new ground as it delves into the social identity and psychology of white workers. Most innovative is his analysis of the commando structure which the strikers adopted. These commandos were comprised of a rough balance of Englishmen and Afrikaners (there was even a Sinn Fein brigade — albeit with few Irishmen in its ranks). The workers’ army freely adopted the organisational forms and styles of discipline acquired during the Great War: drilling, marching, medical assistance and motorcycle despatch riding were all influenced by recent war experience. So, too, was the language of sacrifice, loyalty and betrayal. The claim that the culture of war — if not militarism - extended to those who thought of themselves as socialists raises a host of interesting questions, not least about conceptions of popular citizenship in the inter-war period.

Unlike trench warfare, the Rand Revolt was entirely an urban struggle and one that bore directly on families and homes. Women were prominent during the uprising, not only in traditional roles as domestic morale-boosters, but in commandos and as field nurses. Female militants attacked strike-breakers, stripped and beat scabs in public, thereby posing a direct challenge to their masculinity. Women and children also
intermixed closely with commandos in order to deter attacks by the police and army. Even more significant than their role in neutralising the effectiveness of the state’s armed forces was the manner in which women redefined the struggle as a matter of defending communities. The particular nature of individual communities also ensured that the Rand Revolt was in reality a series of differently shaped local uprisings.

Absence of support from the countryside or from metropolitan centres beyond the Witwatersrand, an imbalance in weaponry, and the strikers’ failure to persuade police to join their cause, meant that the insurrection against the state could not prevail. In an earlier study, Revolution from above, Rebellion from Below (1993), Krikler examined the manner in which Transvaal Africans briefly recouped land vacated by Boers during the South African War, until the restoration of white authority reversed these gains. White Rising tells the story of another ‘lost cause’, one with which the author is less politically sympathetic but more historically empathetic. Krikler has written a book of enormous power and elegaic imagination. Deeply researched, and enriched by comparative insights drawn from labour movements elsewhere in the world, this is an exceptionally fine and illuminating contribution to South African social history. It deserves the widest readership.

Saul Dubow
University of Sussex

African Underclass: Urbanisation, Crime and Colonial Order in Dar es Salaam
Andrew Burton
Oxford: James Currey for the British Institute of East Africa, 2005
xviii + 301 pp., ISBN: 0-85255-976-3 (£50.00 hardback); 0-85255-975-5 (£16.95 paperback)

Tanzania’s experiment with socialism had until recently focused historians’ attention on rural people. But since socialism’s demise in the 1980s, scholars’ attention has increasingly been drawn to city life. Books, articles and dissertations by Aili Tripp, James Brennan, Andrew Ivaska, David Anthony and now Andrew Burton have made Dar es Salaam the best-studied metropolis in eastern Africa. Andrew Burton’s contribution is to the history of governance in colonial-era Dar es Salaam. For Burton, Dar es Salaam is a paradoxical place, where the interventionist colonial state was most obviously at work, but where also young Africans could escape parental discipline and government control. In reconstructing British officials’ efforts to take hold over the urban populace, Burton’s sources are mainly reports, surveys and other archival materials produced by government. The thoroughness of his archival research enables him to create a sensitive historical narrative, attuned to the changing pattern of African life and official policy.

The book begins with a history of population and politics prior to the Second World War. In Tanganyika as elsewhere in inter-war Africa, British officials were convinced that rural people were more easily governed than urbanites. Until the 1940s, therefore, government policy was disposed against a permanent urban population. Investment in
infrastructure was minimal: in 1930, the suburb of Ilala had only one standpipe for a population of 1,600 people. The wages available to all but the most skilled workers were startlingly low. Urban dwellers had therefore to maintain links with their rural homes, to which they returned when city life became unbearable. Informal work such as petty trading, beer brewing and rickshaw driving occupied the largest percentage of Dar es Salaam’s working population. It was this informal sector that officialdom sought to control through the law. Burton argues that criminality was largely produced by European policy, which categorised urban dwellers’ customary pursuits as illegal, so better to exert control over them.

The latter part of the book focuses on the 1940s and 1950s, when British officialdom changed its mind about city life. Post-war policy favoured the creation of a better remunerated, permanent and smaller workforce to replace the temporary, ill-paid workers of pre-war times. From the 1950s urban planners began building housing for single-family inhabitants, replacing the six-roomed ‘Swahili’ style dormitories built to accommodate single male migrants. In 1957 government for the first time set down a minimum wage for both private and public employers. Government was using towns to mould a detribalised, monogamous and civically minded urban population. Access to the benefits of town life was however sharply restricted: where in 1944 Africans claiming urban residence needed to have dwelt in town only for one year, by 1958 prospective urban citizens needed to have lived in the city for fully four or five years. Using techniques inaugurated during the ‘Mau Mau’ war in Kenya, Tanganyika officials rounded up undesirable city dwellers in night-time sweeps, screened them to establish their residence and ‘repatriated’ thousands of men and women to their rural homes. This totalitarian impulse to limit urban population, to cordon off the immoral town from the countryside, is at the core of the post-colonial state’s policy on urban management. In the book’s pointed conclusion, Burton criticises contemporary officials’ ham-fisted efforts to roust out hawkers and other urban entrepreneurs. With the verdict of history in view, he argues that criminality flourishes where government adopts inappropriate policies towards the poor.

This is a carefully written, thoroughly researched study of urban governance. But Burton is so engrossed in the political and administrative landscape of the city that he rarely lifts his eyes towards the wider field of African life. Like other urban histories in Tanzania, Burton’s analysis more or less stops at the city limits. In explaining migration from rural areas to the city, for example, Burton is startlingly speculative: he suggests that women and young people were ‘no doubt motivated by the desire to escape the control of husbands and elders’ (p. 85), or drawn in by the ‘spectacle and excitements offered by the town’ (p. 75), or attracted by the ‘lure of the capital’ (p. 266). These stereotyped explanations make rural life look parochial, a world apart from the city’s bright lights.

What urban history needs is a frame that positions urbanism in relation to rural life. For the city was never far from rural dwellers’ minds. The 1940s and 1950s saw the creation of the Basubi Union, the Kigoma Friendly Society, the Luo Union and tens of other ethnic associations in Dar es Salaam. Their membership rolls joined rural conservatives in Bukoba, Iringa and other remote locales with countrymen-of-the-mind.
in the city. In their constitutions, these ethnic associations had as their chief purpose the repatriation of widows and prostitutes from the demoralising city to their rural homes. Rural elites were projecting their influence to the faraway city, constructing communities to hold urban dwellers accountable and disciplining young women. In partitioning urban from rural life, Burton and other historians obscure the trans-territorial networks that African organisers were creating. For town-dwelling women and men were not only hawkers, rickshaw pullers or wage workers. They were also daughters, sons and members of imagined communities. Their contemporaries in rural areas made claims on them, as kin and as confreres. There is a continuity of political and social discourse linking cities with rural areas, a continuity that ‘urban history’ occludes. African Underclass is a major contribution to the study of city government in colonial Africa. But the growing enterprise of urban history needs a wider geography.

DEREK R. PETERSON
Selwyn College, Cambridge

Canada and the First World War: Essays in Honour of Robert Craig Brown
Edited by DAVID MACKENZIE
Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2005
xii + 452 pp., ISBN: 0-8020-8445-1 ($85.00/£65.00 hardback); 0-8020-8445-1 ($35.00/£20.00 paperback)

A Festschrift to honour the scholarly career of Robert Craig Brown, Canada and the First World War, contains fifteen essays designed to explore and re-assess the Great War’s impact on Canadian society. Written by Brown’s friends, colleagues and former students, the volume’s focus is almost entirely on the home front, the economy, political leadership, civilian support, conscription, diplomacy, gender, ethnicity, science, technology, popular culture and memory; the exception is Terry Copp’s essay on the organisation and success of Canadian arms. The volume is introduced by the editor’s useful, succinct, synthetic overview of the collection; it also contains an informative, humorous, biographical tribute to Brown by his friend, colleague and sometime collaborator, Ramsay Cook.

All of the essays are well written and many are challenging. Among the strongest articles are: John English’s broadly informed, positive evaluation of Robert Borden’s controversial wartime political leadership; Douglas McCalla’s sophisticated, revisionist assessment of the war’s economic impact or, more precisely, lack of a long-term impact; Joan Sangster’s closely argued case that mobilising Canadian women for war had a neutral to negative effect upon the status of women; Desmond Morton’s discussion of the values and class assumption of the Canadian Patriotic Fund and its role as a supplement to government; Adam Crerar’s analysis of Ontario’s ambiguous and complex reaction to the Great War; Margaret Macmillan’s authoritative discussion of Canada’s role in the Peace Conference; and Jonathan Vance’s superb essay on how Canadians chose to remember ‘Armageddon’ during the post-war years. In his
essay on conscription Jack Granatstein explains how and why he has revised his earlier assessment on the necessity and utility of wartime conscription.

Generally the authors appear to agree on the war’s attenuated effect on Canadian society. (Paul Litt’s article on the ‘Great War, Mass Culture, and Canadian Cultural Nationalism’, however, argues that the cultural nationalism ‘forged’ during the Great War has a powerful and formative influence in shaping the character and institutions of post-war cultural nationalism.) Most authors describe the war’s impact as more transition than trauma, an acceleration of pre-war trends rather than a sharp break with the past or the birth of a new era, a point argued forcefully by Donald Avery’s essay on ethnic and class relations in Western Canada. The authors share a commitment to assessing character and circumstances in the context of their time and place. Perhaps the manuscript’s most compelling feature is its inclusion of interesting, recent scholarship frequently, though not entirely, the work of younger scholars; an appropriate tribute to Brown’s distinguished career as a teacher and graduate supervisor. Although no single volume could be expected to encompass the diverse range of subjects that might be included under the book’s somewhat expansive title, Canada and the First World War, altogether this volume provides a good cross-section of some recent Canadian scholarship on the Great War and Canadian society.

CARMAN MILLER
McGill University

Basra, the Failed Gulf State: Separatism and Nationalism in Southern Iraq
REIDAR VISSER
Munster, Lit Verlag, 2005
x + 238 pp., ISBN: 3-8258-8799-5 (£22.50 paperback)

This work studies a case of separatism in Southern Iraq, where an attempt was made, in 1921, to turn Basra into a pro-British mercantile mini-state with repercussions until 1929. Endeavours by the people of Iraq to break away from the state itself have so far been understudied, and in that respect the above volume is a welcome addition to the literature on the country. The book seeks to show the limitations of such adventures, while also providing insights into the development of Iraqi nationalism, and its successes in the face of regionalism. The author explains that the work is shaped by a single question, that of why the oppressed people of the oil-rich south did not try to separate for most of the twentieth century. At the same time he focuses on the reasons for the failure of the separatist movement.

The author subscribes to that view of history which focuses on the might have been and what would have happened if such-and-such a factor had not existed. The problem with this approach is that it assumes one change among other constants, and is less than adventurous about conceiving what additional, unexpected factors might have appeared. ‘Pursuing this kind of counter-factual problem’, Visser claims, ‘is necessary to explain the tortuous ascent of Iraqi nationalism.’ However, such a
contorted approach may irritate the reader, who suspects that the same answers may be arrived at by asking straightforward but appropriate questions.

Any work engaging with the history of Iraq at this period has to take account of the centre of power and of overwhelming structural factors, namely: British policy to establish a modern nation state system to guard its commercial and strategic interests after the First World War; the location of oil; the fragmented and unstable society riven not only by sectarian divisions, but also by divided social groups, and communities of tribal, urban and foreign (Iranian) origins. In fact the author is aware of all this and more, and what he really produces behind the rhetoric of the introduction is a solid account of the adaptation of communities in and around Basra to British policy, especially state building, between 1921 and 1929.

From 1908, despite an anti-British façade, the Basra elite manipulated the movement for decentralisation because it suited their dependence on British shipping and wider trading connections. Unsurprisingly, their objectives did not find resonance with other sections of the community. For a while, however, their interests ran in tandem with a body of opinion in the British military elite, which argued for a smaller, British-dominated enclave around Basra. After the expulsion of Sayyid Talib, the baton of separatism passed into the hands of wealthy merchants who feared rule from Baghdad and the loss of British-provided security (and probably also increased taxation, though the author does not explore this). A petition was organised and signed by 4,500 people.

The separatists now came up against nascent Iraqi nationalism. Here the author argues for an ancient sense of ‘being Iraqi’, but fails to explore which groups actually subscribed to it, and how far it was the product of cultural proto-nationalism in the decades before 1914. As elsewhere, however, the British relinquished local aspirations for national ones, which better served their interests. At the same time, a new, younger, professional group of Iraqis saw opportunities at the centre. The writer proposes that this was a lost opportunity, but, given the aforementioned structural problems, it is difficult to see what the movement could have achieved, especially against British interests.

In 1927 a new separatist movement emerged in the form of the mobilisation of the Shi’a, who had hitherto been quietist (and the author needed to make more of the precise significance of their earlier rebellion in 1920) largely as the result of another aspect of modernity – conscription. Basra contributed little to their programme, and a variety of vague and incompatible aims reflected their divisions. Differences in culture and symbols meant that the Basra separatists had failed to utilise Shi’a discontent.

From the 1930s the spread of education fostered the ideal of Iraqi unity and separatism declined, though the continuing British presence in Basra provided a measure of continuity and security. The new state opened up opportunities which led the south to relinquish separatism. Visser identifies the reasons for the collapse of the separatist movement as being its disparate elements, the limited outlook of its leadership and the shifts in the position of the British. On the other hand the protagonists of Iraqi unity at the centre used every opportunity to draw in the young and were conciliatory towards the Shi’a. The arguments as to why the Shi’a remained quietist do not quite
convince. More use might have been made of Nakash’s view that it took time for the implications of centralisation to be absorbed, especially as the government had always been Sunni, albeit minimal. Moreover the degree to which the Shi’a were able to bargain with the central government needs to be explored. This book is a useful addition to the literature on twentieth-century Iraq, soundly based on a wide range of sources.

Vanessa Martin
Royal Holloway, University of London

The British Empire and the Second World War
Ashley Jackson
London, Hambledon Continuum, 2006
xix + 604 pp., ISBN: 1-85285-417-0 (£25.00 hardback)

The central argument of this book is well summed up in the Epilogue.

The war had witnessed a co-ordinated global effort orchestrated by a medium-sized European polity, the like of which will never be seen again. Hundreds of years of British imperial history and tradition and the networks, infrastructure, contacts and institutions that it had forged were called to life by a decision taken at the imperial centre in London. . . . It was a breathtaking spectacle, and remains so to this day. In 1945 it also appeared as a remarkable validation of Britain’s unique role as an imperial state, and it was not a role that was about to be relinquished. (p. 526)

Jackson’s aim was to demonstrate precisely how important the empire was, first, in saving Britain from German conquest and, then, enabling it to develop a global strategy for defeating both Germany and Japan. The argument is straightforward. By itself Britain, particularly after the fall of France in 1940, lacked both the manpower and the physical resources to match Germany. Its main asset was control of the sea lanes, though this was seriously challenged in 1940–43. As long as they were open Britain could use the huge resources of an empire and Commonwealth to feed itself, supply the munitions industry and amplify military manpower. With the sole exception of the Republic of Ireland (and even so very many Irish citizens volunteered for the British armed forces) every overseas possession and Dominion put its resources at the disposal of Britain. To some extent this was involuntary: colonies and India had no choice but to collaborate, and in 1942 the British had to face and suppress the greatest internal challenge to their imperial power in India. But for the most part the collaboration was enthusiastic, a remarkable tribute to the sense of common interest in territories strung across the globe which had no common features other than their being ‘British’.

The argument that it was the empire that enabled Britain to defeat Germany is not, of course, new. Thus Avner Offer’s First World War: an Agrarian Interpretation (Oxford, 1989) held that it was Britain’s superior access to overseas food supplies that was decisive against a continental power increasingly throttled by naval blockade. The novelty in Jackson’s work is the detail. After four initial chapters on the start of the
war and the critical British situation in 1940, he examines each region of the empire in turn. The emphasis varies according to the main issues. In each case there is a mass of information on the contribution in terms of manpower, manufactures, raw material supplies. Where there was fighting there are very detailed accounts of land and sea battles. Much of the book, in fact, consists of military history in the broadest sense, and here there is a very great deal of detail, down to the names of mine-sweepers and army detachments. One of the strengths of the book is that these local and regional campaigns are recounted against the background of local colonial issues. There is a great deal about the social strains of full-scale resource mobilisation on local economies and its political consequences and in all this Jackson shows an impressive grounding in standard colonial history. In the epilogue he rightly emphasises that in 1945 the British thought they had not only won the war but had secured the future of their empire for an indefinite period, even though it was by then clear that India and Burma would soon become fully independent and that without American support there might by then have been no empire east of Calcutta. The subsequent realisation that Britain was financially bankrupt and that the days of empire were virtually over came as a bitter shock over the next two decades.

This is a blockbuster of a book. This is due largely to the wealth of detail provided, though it must be said that there is a great deal of repetition, both of the basic theme and of particular points, which a rigorous copy-editor might have pruned. Except for specialist military historians there is perhaps excessive detail on army, navy and air force resources which is of limited general interest. A typical example is on page 155, where there is a long list of the land and air units available for an attack on Syria in 1941, which may be thought not to add much to the narrative. The book is not based on primary sources (which would have been impossible in so extensive a survey) but, to judge by the bibliography, on very extensive reading of published work and an impressive list of unpublished theses, which come up to 2005. For the most part the prose is clear and the momentum is maintained. I found relatively few typographical errors. I did not do a detailed check on the bibliography but Freya Stark’s book on the Iraq crisis of 1941 is Dust in the Lion’s Paw not Claw. My main irritation was over the excessive use of clichés and vulgarisms: as a very short sample, ‘carrying the can’ (p. 18), ‘unbridled loyalty was not the order of the day’ (p. 34), ‘to keep the lid on the Italian fleet’ (p.37) and ‘Right from the off in September 1939’ (p. 54). A personal regret is that there are no maps. Since there are very detailed accounts of campaigns in North and East Africa, the Middle East, South-east Asia and the South Pacific the attentive reader is left to explore a large-scale atlas.

But these are for the most part niggles. Overall this is a very impressive piece of work. I can think of no single book which covers the imperial role in the Second World War in anything like the methodical detail that this provides. It will be essential reading for students both of the war and of the last years of the British empire and Commonwealth.

D. K. FIELDHOUSE
Jesus College, Cambridge
This is a slim book on an important subject. Perhaps as a consequence of its brevity, this account is neither so comprehensive nor so authoritative as the author asserts. Chapnick delights in a contrarian outlook, notably debunking, as others have done before, myths about Canada’s formative role in the development of the United Nations. That misleading impression was associated with celebrations of the Canadian reinterpretation of ‘functionalism’ and the supposed leadership of Canada’s diplomats in advocating a greater role for ‘middle powers’ in wartime and post-war international organisations.

Chapnick makes some valuable observations about the formation of Canadian policy, particularly as seen in the light of Anglo-American wartime planning and negotiations about the UN and the shape of the post-war world. He identifies fundamental weaknesses of Canada’s approach, notably the ultimate implications of ‘functional’ allocations of responsibilities and powers as well as the chronic inability to define and identify ‘middle powers’ in the international order. Chapnick has added emphases on personal rivalry and unprofessional conduct to the earlier reconsideration of Lester B. Pearson’s contribution to Canadian policy-making and to drafting the UN Charter. With some fanfare, but less originality, William Lyon Mackenzie King is heralded as the key player in this drama, which occasionally borders on farce.

Regrettably, the scholarly credibility and value of this book is diminished by the author’s writing style and his misuse of unpublished and published sources. Chapnick employs grand phrases, sarcastic remarks and categorical judgements, whether or not these are supported by careful analysis and convincing evidence. Perhaps unfairly, the overall impression conveyed by the text and annotation is that this account may be misleading in its analysis, ungenerous to prior scholarship, selective in covering wartime developments and unhelpful to readers in its citations. Too often, the author’s claims exceed the grasp of his knowledge and the evidence that he has presented. Attitudes and motivations are imputed or suggested without sufficient justification (or necessarily sound reasoning). Verdicts are pronounced which are open to question and contradiction. Critical aspects of context or alternative interpretations are overlooked, downplayed or dismissed.

There are careless errors, as with the statement that, in exchange for its old destroy- ers, the United States acquired ‘long-term leases on a series of naval bases in and around Newfoundland’ (p. 15) when most of those facilities were in or near the British West Indies. Hume Wrong is described as one of ‘[O. D.] Skelton’s best recruits’ (p. 10) though he was hired by Vincent Massey. The Anglo-American combined boards are depicted as a ‘follow up’ (p. 21) to the Declaration of the United Nations rather than as a consequence of the Arcadia Conference. Byelorussia and the Ukraine are mistakenly identified as ‘satellites’ (p. 107) rather than federated republics within the USSR. Sir Edward Bridges is oddly described as ‘one British
secretary’ (p. 113) rather than the secretary to the Cabinet. At times, the author seems puzzled by diplomatic practice (pp. 84–85, 108) or cabinet procedure (p. 101), so that his criticisms of seeming inaction should be tempered.

Although much has been published in the series *Documents on Canadian External Relations*, the author does not make it easy for others to follow his leads or to assess his claims. Archival references to files are employed for documents which were published nearly twenty years ago. Unhelpfully, Chapnick never gives numbers for telegrams or dispatches. In one melodramatic passage (p. 137), Chapnick quotes ‘the fiery Australian leader’ (Herbert Evatt) as condemning Britain’s posture as ‘contemptible’ and ‘most dishonest’ before suggesting that this contretemps prompted Norman Robertson to recommend a reversal of Canadian policy on the veto ‘in one of his longest and most assertive memoranda of the Second World War period’. In fact, the remarks were uttered by the prime minister of New Zealand, Peter Fraser, as recorded in telegram H-303 (not a memorandum) sent by Robertson.

Incidentally, the text of that message conveys a level of agreement and collaboration between Pearson and his colleagues that qualifies Chapnick’s portrayal. A similar point could be made about the negotiations in San Francisco and the earlier flow of information surrounding the discussions at Dumbarton Oaks. Chapnick seems so determined to stress conflicts among the leading figures of the Department of External Affairs that he states at one point that Wrong ‘wrote to a colleague’ (p. 24) instead of specifying that he confided in Pearson. The caricature of the relationship culminates in snide asides (p. 135) about ‘rare agreement’ among Robertson, Wrong and Pearson. Unquestionably, there were clashes derived from policy and personality differences as well as ambition. The familiar story of the succession to Skelton, which is retold here (pp. 10–11), highlights those tensions. Whatever the mutterings of Pearson or the assessment of Chapnick, however, the prime minister chose his immediate subordinate and principal adviser from potential candidates who were well known to him.

Other passages deal with subjects that have been treated earlier, more comprehensively and more persuasively by unacknowledged others — for example, the attitude of the deputy minister of finance on Canadian membership of the combined boards. Chapnick discusses the speech by Viscount Halifax in Toronto in January 1944 at considerable length, yet he does not place this episode effectively in the context of Canada’s historic relationship with Britain and the Commonwealth, which was surely how King viewed the speech and its repercussions. King’s subsequent performance at the meeting of prime ministers in May 1944 and his speech to the British Houses of Parliament were manifestations of his career-long mistrust of ‘centralising tendencies’ in the empire and Commonwealth.

More so than many students of Canadian foreign policy, Chapnick recognises the central role of the prime minister, who was also secretary of state for external affairs. Understandably, evaluating the wily politician and his idiosyncratic direction of Canadian foreign policy poses serious challenges. King’s understandable preoccupations with national unity and his political prospects did not prevent him from keeping a close watch on Canada’s external affairs, as his wartime correspondence attests. Moreover, it is not certain that King regarded the drafting of the UN Charter or the
‘Middle Power Project’ as vital, or even foremost, matters in Canada’s international affairs. To him, collaboration by the great powers on development of a possible organisation for collective security was more significant than specific clauses or relative powers assigned in its constitution. King’s conciliatory attitude on the great power veto reflected his shrewd appraisal of what mattered most to Canada in world affairs. Finally, it seems difficult to reconcile the contents and analysis of this study with the author’s conclusion that Canadians ‘should feel tremendous pride’ when looking back ‘on the origins of the United Nations’ (p. 152).

Hector MacKenzie
Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Ottawa

Nation-Building: Five Southeast Asian Histories
Edited by Wang Gungwu
Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2005

This volume of essays serves as a companion to the five single-authored books recently or soon to be published by the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore concerned with nation-building efforts in the founding member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations: Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. Readers of this journal will be interested in three major themes which emerge from the Wang Gungwu collection. First and foremost, is the issue of the colonial legacy in the making of the independent nation-states of Southeast Asia. The colonial imprint would seem most apparent in the Philippines – indeed, in the final overview chapter, the editor comments that the United States ‘tried to distinguish itself from the other imperial powers by insisting that its role was tutelary’ (p. 255). Moreover, Caroline Hau asserts that ‘[t]he Philippine post-colonial state greatly expanded the programme of nation-building first undertaken by the Americans’ (p. 43) and, for example, cites the American legacy of universal education which has generated a Filipino ‘national textbook history’ (p. 46). Cheah Boon Kheng believes that, in Malaya, ‘Britain’s major contribution... was to “invent” a civic and territorial state or nation’ (p. 97). Moreover, in the back-pedalling from Malayan Union to Federation between 1946 and 1948, as well as the political detachment of Singapore, ‘Britain strengthened Malay ethno-nationalism, Malay ethnicity and culture and Malay sovereignty in the new nation-state’ (p. 99).

At the same time, however, there is clearly a danger of exaggerating western colonial influences. Wang points to equally powerful Asian examples which informed nationalist discourses: from Meiji Japan, Guomindang China and the Indian National Congress, as well as the often underestimated nationalist message which Showa Japan brought to Southeast Asia (in the early years of the Pacific War at least). Moreover, into the future, the multi-ethnic models of the United States, Australia, Canada and New Zealand may have far greater significance and relevance for Southeast Asia than inheritances from western Europe.
Post-colonial states were rarely European fabrications. As Tony Stockwell demonstrates, Malaysia was hardly an artificial creation of British neo-colonialism: ‘Britain’s declining power constrained its capacity to influence developments, let alone to integrate the components into a nation-state’ (p. 193). Most of the running in the fusion of Malaya with Singapore, North Borneo and Sarawak between 1961 and 1963 was made by Tunku Abdul Rahman in Kuala Lumpur and Lee Kuan Yew in Singapore, while Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin scuppered the ‘grand design’ to offload Brunei. In terms of European influence on nation-building, Thailand clearly stands out because it was never formally colonised by a western power, and even the notion of British informal imperialism in the kingdom is highly questionable. King Chulalongkorn’s infrastructure building projects in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have been compared to the operations of a colonial state, but Craig Reynolds emphasises that the ‘designing’ of the modern nation derives more from King Vajiravudh’s notion of ‘king, god and country’ from the 1910s, the imagining of pre-colonial Burma as an aggrandising Other in the 1930s, the ‘regimen of the physical body’ (pp. 30–31) which obsessed elite figures into the 1940s, and the philosophy of Luang Wichit Wattakan from the early 1930s to the early 1960s.

Yet, as Reynolds also stresses at the end of his essay, alternative, non-elite visions of the nation are manifest in today’s Thailand through the Assembly of the Poor. This points to a second central theme running throughout these chapters, that, as Cheah writes, ‘contesting nationalism is a common phenomenon of nation-building’ (p. 112). For the Philippines, Hau’s chapter exposes the multiple national conceptions and identities which have existed alongside the ‘official’ pro-Americanism espoused by the land-holding elite – for example, the Huk peasant insurgencies of the 1940s and 1950s, the more Asia-centric nationalism of the Japanese Occupation, and politicisation among Moro Muslims and ‘indigenous’ hill peoples in the post-colonial state. Cheah claims that the continuing struggle between Malay ethno-nationalism and a more moderate inclusivist Malaysian nationalism constitutes the main issue in nation-building in contemporary Malaysia, a point which is also underscored in Lee Kam Hing’s chapter since he suggests that the independence ‘bargain’ in Malaya – whereby Malay privileges were granted in exchange for citizenship for non-Malays – has been interpreted in a number of ways. Thus, the tendency today to view Malay special rights as permanent would not have pleased the ‘multiculturalist’ Tan Cheng Lock, leader of the Malayan Chinese Association in the decolonisation époque. Meanwhile, Anthony Milner reveals the continuing unresolved tensions between Malay ‘radical’ and ‘traditionalist’ conceptions of the nation, as well as the lingering significance of monarchical allegiances and Islamist ‘nation-critiquing’ (p. 154). To add even more complexity to the Malaya/Malaysia drama, Stockwell highlights the contesting national identities evident in the Tunku’s advocacy of ‘Greater Malaya’ as opposed to Lee Kuan Yew’s conception of a ‘Malaysia for Malaysians’, which effectively brought about Singapore’s foundation as a separate republic in 1965.

Indeed, given such contestations, the final theme of these essays is that the writing of objective contemporary history in post-colonial Southeast Asia has proved a
controversial and dangerous business. Anthony Reid emphasises the constraints placed until very recently on stressing the reality of Indonesia's pluralism. After 1966 the military junta regarded history as a key means of imposing national unity and suppressed local or alternative histories, not least as the relative democracy of the 1940s and 1950s was viewed as largely responsible for the country's ills, while the political rise of Suharto, involving the liquidation of possibly one million leftists, was portrayed as a legitimate response to communist treachery. The paucity of research on contemporary Malaysia is explained by Lee in terms of sensitivities to unsettling recent events compounded by a lack of access to archives. The latter is a problem also identified in Singapore by Albert Lau, not least because the officially sanctioned interpretation of the island republic's birth has caused much consternation not only amongst opposition leaders in Singapore but across the causeway in Malaysian political circles too. Indeed, the unfinished business of the contentious era of decolonisation continues to be of central significance to the politics and intellectual culture of contemporary Southeast Asia. This fascinating and thoughtful set of essays should thus find a wide audience, not only among Southeast Asia specialists, but with imperial and Commonwealth historians more generally.

NICHOLAS J. WHITE
Liverpool John Moores University

The Rise, Decline and Future of the British Commonwealth
KRISHNAN SRINIVASAN
Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2005
xv + 184 pp., ISBN: 1-4039-8715-7 (£45 hardback)

In January 1969, away from the main conference of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, a small group of Commonwealth leaders attending the conference gathered at the invitation of Michael Stewart, Britain's foreign secretary, to discuss the value of the Commonwealth. Represented were the leaders of Canada, Botswana, Ghana and Malta. President Nyerere of Tanzania and Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore dropped out because of illness. Malcolm MacDonald, Britain's roving commissioner in Africa who believed Britain's Rhodesian policy was seriously damaging the Commonwealth, suggested the gathering. In discussion Pierre Trudeau, Canada's prime minister, argued that the Commonwealth was not unique, but principally a historical accident. He described as idealistic Stewart's arguments about the Commonwealth serving as a beacon on such issues as race relations and democratic government. Trudeau, however, was still more comfortable than his predecessor, Lester Pearson, in the surroundings of the Commonwealth conference, and he accepted that the Commonwealth was 'in some inexplicable way, worthwhile'. George Borg Olivier, Malta's prime minister, agreed, emphasising it was something 'not to feel alone in the world'.

This exchange would not be out of place in 2006. Questions are still asked about the value of the Commonwealth. No other international organisation is subject to so many bouts of introspective analysis which question whether the institution is necessary,
serves any useful purpose or has a future. Krishnan Srinivasan’s book is the latest contribution to the debate. The author is a former Indian diplomat who also served as foreign (permanent) secretary at India’s Ministry of External Affairs and as deputy secretary-general at the Commonwealth Secretariat in London.

For advocates of the Commonwealth, whether they are professionals or those influenced by sentiment, the book makes uncomfortable reading. The main focus is on image and perception. There is little detailed analysis of how the Commonwealth actually functions. Those who defend the Commonwealth, including academics with specialist interests, will take issue with the book’s emphasis. Although the author occupied a senior position within the Secretariat there is hardly any mention of what the Secretariat does, or how well it performs. Indeed in the index, where there is a lengthy Commonwealth entry, the Secretariat is conspicuous by its absence. In what limited discussion of the Secretariat there is, we learn that, without financial, consultancy and technical advisory support from the older members (Australia, Canada, New Zealand as well as Britain), the Secretariat would barely function at all. We also learn that the major donors regard the Secretariat as a ‘laboratory for their own questionable theories of modern management’ (p. 148). Programme budgeting, gender monitoring, management of change, impact assessments, all imported as a result of reports and surveys by an ever growing army of ‘western’ consultants, policy units and think tanks are said to have become the order of the day. This has led to increased uncertainty and inefficiency and, it must be assumed, a corresponding drop in staff morale. Staff numbers have been sharply reduced and government involvement and supervision in the administration of the Secretariat have reached levels of micro-management which, in Srinivasan’s view, can ‘hardly be justified in terms of the Secretariat’s staff strength and financial resources’ (p. 141). Further analysis of these issues would have added considerably to the book’s value. At no point are we told what the budget of the Secretariat is, what programmes it is pursuing, how many staff it employs, how they are appointed, what nationalities they are and how the Secretariat is accountable to members.

Those who defend the Commonwealth point to an expanding membership (an argument which must surely be wearing thin after the euphoria over Mozambique’s accession) and a renewed determination on the part of the Commonwealth to tackle abuses of human rights within its own ranks. Srinivasan will have none of this. His conclusion is uncompromising. ‘The community of Commonwealth states is considered capable of achieving little in addressing the international challenges of today, whether in bringing members deficient in human rights to book, educating the illiterate, or making the world a safer place from disease, terrorism or conflict’ (p. 158). And while the author argues that Britain alone can revive the Commonwealth – for any other country to step into the breach would be considered ‘pretentious, if not ludicrous’ (p. 159) – he also sees this as the least likely outcome. No member country seems willing to take the initiative. It has become, in his words, ‘nobody’s Commonwealth’.

Srinivasan speculates that were it not for the Queen’s presence, British prime ministers would not bother to attend the heads of government meetings. There is
an interesting historical parallel to be drawn here. Since the emergence of the modern Commonwealth with the establishment of the Secretariat in 1965, Labour governments in Britain have shown more sympathy and support for the Commonwealth than have Conservative governments. But incoming Labour governments have also been swiftly disillusioned. Harold Wilson’s frustrations in the 1960s are now shared by Tony Blair. As for the argument that the Commonwealth is able to exert pressure for the collective good, the jury is still out. There are those who believe the Commonwealth played a major role in the convening of the Lancaster House conference in 1979 which ushered in Zimbabwe’s independence. Lord Carrington, then Britain’s foreign secretary, strongly denies this. We await with interest the documentary record for confirmation one way or the other. Meanwhile, in the context of present-day Zimbabwe, Commonwealth pronouncements and the endeavours of the Ministerial Action Group have done nothing to loosen the grip or alter the behaviour of Robert Mugabe.

There is today a thriving industry of Commonwealth think tanks, policy units and professional associations. They have been stimulated by the emergence of the global world economy and the relatively new academic discipline of human rights. Those involved hardly pause to consider whether their activities actually need a Commonwealth umbrella under which to operate. Meanwhile the one piece of sticking plaster holding the Commonwealth together is not the English language, a shared historical experience, belief in the same set of political values or the network of non-governmental organisations. It is the British monarch, or more specifically Queen Elizabeth II. Her position as head of the Commonwealth is not hereditary. When her reign ends the Commonwealth might ask itself whether her successor should be similarly acknowledged as the head of the Commonwealth and the symbol of Commonwealth unity. There must surely be a risk that minds might then be concentrated on the still unanswered questions: what is the Commonwealth for and do we need it? Philip Murphy’s article in the recent special issue of *JICH* on *Empire and Monarchy* (vol. 34, March 2006, 139–54) ends by speculating on the inevitable plans which have been drawn up in Whitehall to deal with the Commonwealth implications when the monarchy changes hands. Probably Commonwealth governments, or those whose views carry greatest weight, have already been consulted. The potential for embarrassment is readily apparent. In present circumstances it seems reasonable to assume that the mandarins will not want Elizabeth II to make way for her eldest son. They will want her reign to continue as long as possible. While probably too polemical for purists, Srinivasan’s book is still an important contribution to a never ending debate. Commonwealth devotees will not like it but they will not be able to ignore it.

S. R. AsHTON  
London