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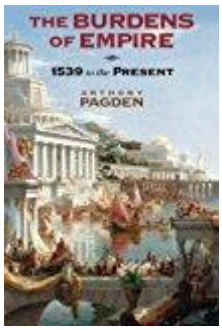

Anthony Pagden. *The Burdens of Empire: 1539 to the Present.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015. 302 pp. $29.99, paper, ISBN 978-0-521-18828-9.

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Published on H-Empire (September, 2016)

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The title of Anthony Pagden's latest book might suggest a wide-ranging survey of empire from the early modern era through the modern age and down to today. In truth, this collection of essays, almost all of which have appeared previously in one form or another, is both chronologically broader and more narrow in scope than its title implies. 1539 must refer to the year by which the Spanish had conquered the Inca Empire, and therefore were in possession of major territories in the Americas. But it would be more accurate to peg 1492 or even earlier as the book's starting point because of Pagden's discussion of the questions Columbus' voyages raised as Europeans discovered what was to them an entirely new world. 1815 would be a more appropriate closing date because the book concentrates on the early modern period and really does not get much past the Napoleonic empire. *Burdens of Empire* is not a broad survey, but rather a series of essays whose coherence derives from a sustained focus on legal debates and political thought about overseas rule, including legal justifications and critiques of empire. Pagden describes the collection as "all that I wish to preserve of what I have written on the political and legal theory of empire over the past fourteen years" (p. ix).

Pagden's analyses of debates about empire have him again and again parsing arguments by key thinkers, beginning with the School of Salamanca and Spaniard Francisco de Vitoria, who struggled with the question as to whether Spanish conquest and rule in the Americas was just. In chapter 2 Pagden puts Vitoria in conversation with Alberico Gentili, the latter of whose reasoning suggested European, "civilized" states had the right to conquer so-called barbarians. Pagden also explores ideas about race, concluding that early modern empires were not race-based even if individuals might have been racist. "So long as they were committed either to evangelizing or to preparing the non-Christian, non-European subject for a life in a 'civilized' polity as a civilized being, apologists for empire were inescapably committed to a single indivisible human nature.... For this reason, paradoxical though it may seem, race

plays no ultimately determining role part [*sic*] in the early modern ideologies of empire" (p. 115). He thus confirms that race as biology arose later, namely in the nineteenth century. A chapter on English early modern empire stresses how legal structures in the English colonies had a variety that distinguished them from their Spanish, Portuguese, French, and Dutch counterparts. Another essay delves into the question of sovereignty over the seas and Dutchman Hugo Grotius's argument in *Mare liberum* (The Free Sea, 1609) against Portuguese claims of authority over the Indian Ocean and its littoral, which would have given Portugal control over not only the seas but also Indian Ocean commerce. Pagden examines Portuguese Serafim de Freitas's counterarguments in his *De iusto imperio lusitanorum asiatico* (The Just Asian Empire of the Portuguese, 1625), acting (as he does in other chapters as well) as a latter-day judge, taking apart or distilling arguments, and the reasoning of those making them. Another chapter examines the legal basis of Spanish overseas empire in the 1700s, Creole identity, and the possibility of reforming Spain's colonial system. The book's last three essays delve into Immanuel Kant's and Benjamin Constant's views on overseas colonialism, and the idea of human rights as it developed in the context of empire.

Burdens of Empire's focus is overwhelmingly centered on what educated, critical European observers said empire was, or what it could be, or should not be. It says much less about what empire actually was in practice. These essays really form an extended, erudite reflection on early modern legal and political thought, including both legal arguments justifying empire and those constraining it. Pagden has much less to say about how legal debates influenced the course of history, that is to say, how they affected colonies and their metropoles in practice. Many of the book's chapters read like exegeses, often of texts that are themselves expositions, for example Pagden's in-depth examination of Benjamin Constant's analysis of empire. The author's sustained interest in issues of empire and citizenship is revealed in his analysis of Alberico Gentili's views on universal empire in the book's second chapter, and it is in that discussion that one can discern from where the book draws its title. The Roman Empire was open to outsiders, and drew into itself so-called barbarians, which some at the time lamented as a "burden of empire." Yet later commentators—Pagden included—could only conclude that Rome drew strength from this openness, and successors to Rome that were more closed off to "barbarians" excluded outsiders from citizenship to their own disadvantage.

Pagden is on firm ground in the early modern era, less so regarding more recent empires. He wonderfully captures the transformation in European thinking after they discovered a wider world in the 1400s, from the African continent to the Americas to India, forcing Europeans to account for entirely new world areas unmentioned in the Bible. "Human history could now be conceived as a narrative of human migration through space and time" (p. 155). As noted, he stresses how Rome's openness to outsiders compared to the Ottoman, the Spanish, and later European overseas empires, which tended to exclude outsiders. He writes that "no African, Native American, Polynesian, or Australian Aboriginal was ever given any formal role in any European colonial government" (p. 6). Yet one can point to the example of Félix Éboué, who was born in French Guiana, attended the École Coloniale, and later became a colonial administrator. Éboué eventually became governor of Guadeloupe, then of Chad in French Equatorial Africa. The example of Éboué and others (Blaise Diagne from Senegal, Tippu Tip in the Congo Free State, Indian MPs in Britain in the late 1800s), cases of "indirect rule" in the twentieth century, and the size and importance of the Indian Civil Service suggest that the dividing line is not as clear as Pagden draws it. Another drawback to the text is the surprisingly large number of spelling, typographical, punctuation, and other errors, including missing words, all of which detract from

the book's readability. There are numerous such errors in the chapter endnotes as well.

Nonetheless, the essays collected in ***Burdens of Empire*** are rewarding for many reasons. Pagden is an expert on the early modern period and empire, and reading through his analyses of varied debates and the views of contemporary observers is like having an expert-guided tour through early modern legal and political thought. Pagden also provides a corrective to some present-day thinking. Europeans, for example, knew they had encountered a "new" world in the Americas but did not call it the "New World" because they thought it was literally new, rather because it was new to them (pp. 156-157). Most significantly, what these essays reveal is the great extent to which empires of the early modern era framed discussions about sovereignty, just war, citizenship, and human rights, and how empire continued to act as both catalyst and framework for debates over those ideas, all of which are concepts with which we continue to grapple today.