



Heather Streets-Salter, Trevor R. Getz. *Empires and Colonies in the Modern World: A Global Perspective*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. Maps. 592 pp. \$49.95, paper, ISBN 978-0-19-021637-5.

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Commencing in the last quarter of the twentieth century, scholars of postcolonial studies and cultural history set about exploring imperial history as a global experience. Drawing on this turn in the historiography and research conducted in archives in the previously colonized world, historians began to discover that the lives of those living in not only the metropole but also the periphery were affected by their imperial experiences. Since the 1978 publication of Edward Said's seminal work, *Orientalism*, historians have also become aware that an "intimate engagement, attraction, and opposition" occurred among the colonizers and the colonized as well as between, and across, empires throughout the imperial world.[1] This has allowed historians to realize that empires were not simply unified entities that appeared on maps of the world as monolithic centers of power, unaffected by the varying cultures and ideologies that existed within them. On the contrary, empires were, and to a certain degree continue to be, living entities that are "contested, confused, and chance-ridden." [2]

In *Empires and Colonies in the Modern World: A Global Perspective*, Heather Streets-Salter and Trevor R. Getz draw from the major themes and methods that have emerged in the study of imperial history over the past four

decades. The work is presented in a well-structured, approachable format, which would be appropriate as the foundational text for a multitude of global history courses at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. From a chronological perspective, the book begins with the creation of early modern empires in both Eurasia and North Africa during the middle portion of the fourteenth century and concludes with the imperial activities undertaken by China, Russia, and the United States in the post-Cold War era. Rather than only addressing the events and actions taken by either individual nation-states or global empires, the work excels at providing the reader with an understanding of the countless ways that empires, and their representatives, were linked by inter-, intra-, and trans-imperial relationships. This is a recent shift in the imperial historiography and an addition to the authors' original work, *Modern Imperialism and Colonialism: A Global Perspective*, which was published in 2010. Furthermore, the updated volume continues to challenge Euro-dominated perceptions of imperialism by integrating African, Asian, and American empires into the larger study of imperial history and by showing how these geographically diverse domains interacted with one another in a multitude of differ-

ent ways, reinforcing the global scope of the work.

The book opens by providing the reader with a timeline of the major imperial events in global history from 1235 to 2014, as well as nineteen full-color maps. These two preliminary sections of the work serve as valuable points of reference for students of history who are encountering the study of imperial history for the first time. The authors then shift to the introductory chapter of the work, where they establish a clear foundational understanding of the study of imperial history for newcomers to the field. This is done by defining such key terms as “empire,” “imperialism,” and “colonialism,” as well as explaining how these terms will be used to support the three central claims of the work, which are “that empires are an appropriate unit by which to study global interactions as well as local phenomena...; that it is impossible to suitably analyze empire and imperial and colonial processes in the modern period without consideration of global contexts...; and that the modern era is an appropriate period in which to consider these processes” (p. 16). Although these claims are not groundbreaking to scholars of imperial history, they do allow less experienced students to establish an understanding of the inter-, intra-, and trans-imperial conceptualizations of the field. These understandings will serve as building blocks for the readers’ comprehension of not only the remainder of the work but also the ways in which to approach the larger study of imperial history.

The body of the book is divided into six parts, in which the authors continuously stress the interconnectedness of empires throughout the past six hundred years of history. Part 1 explores the emergence of early modern empires in Eurasia and North Africa from approximately 1350 to 1650, while part 2 analyzes how the intra-imperial relations within these empires allowed Europeans to strengthen their positions as global imperial entities from the middle portion of the sev-

enteenth century up until the early nineteenth century. Within these sections, the authors astutely establish their belief that as the leaders of the early modern empires of Eurasia and North Africa went about attempting to centralize, rationalize, legitimize, and expand their control, both in the metropole and throughout the periphery, sectoral alliances shaped colonial identities and the outcomes of imperial endeavors. This is best represented in chapter 5, where the authors address the creation of new colonial identities in the European empires that were situated in the Americas. Here, new identities were created within the preestablished, rigid hierarchies of the period, demonstrating that imperial flexibility became a necessity to maintain imperial control of global empires during the early modern era. This chapter, as well as chapter 6, which challenges Eurocentric views of imperial domination by providing agency to Asia’s land-based empires of the early modern period, is where I believe this book sets itself apart from other textbook-style works. Having previously used *Empires and Colonies in the Modern World* in a first-year history course that examined empires during the early modern era, I found chapters 5 and 6 to be the most profound chapters for my undergraduate students, many of whom were non-history students and were previously only familiar with top-down, Eurocentric presentations of past events. These chapters challenged their preconceived biases, a clear sign of a strong academic work.

The final four parts of the book serve as the unofficial second half of the work and analyze the period from 1810 to the present. Part 3 addresses such key issues as informal empire building, as well as both the benefits and drawbacks associated with the conscious lived experience of existing within an imperial metropole in the nineteenth century. Readers also encounter topics surrounding the rise of new imperialism and the continued “complex, messy process” of creating colonial societies from 1870 to 1930 in part 4 (pp. 329-330). While in part 5 such topics as the use of social

Darwinism as an imperial tool to justify empire building, the perception of the two world wars of the twentieth century as imperial conflicts, and the emergence of anti-colonial movements in the second half of the century are all examined. Finally, the work concludes in part 6 with an exploration of the emergence of the Cold War empires, as well as a debate on the validity of continuing to use imperial approaches to history when examining both national and international powers in the twenty-first century.

In the unofficial second portion of the book (parts 3 to 6), the authors excel at reinforcing the importance of the various cultures of imperialism that manifested themselves through formal and informal imperialism. Additionally, they explore how the actions of not only colonial administrators and military officers but also merchants, consumers, missionaries, and various other agents of empire created these cultures. An essential imperial connection is also made in chapter 14, by presenting the world wars of the first half of the twentieth century as imperial conflicts, and by demonstrating that the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust had clear colonial antecedents rooted in nineteenth-century imperial ideologies surrounding social Darwinism.

Despite the strengths of the majority of the last four parts of the work, chapter 15, which explores decolonization movements following the conclusion of the Second World War, lacks adequate connections to previous challenges to imperial rule and fails to suitably position these decolonization movements within the Cold War era. I believe that the chapter would have been more appropriately positioned in part 6, "The World We Live In: 1948 to Today," and would have benefited from additional examples of decolonization movements, as well as further instances of how these nations have struggled to break free from neocolonialism, following independence. Providing this additional information would have reinforced the current belief in the historiography

that despite independence, many former colonial subjects and their nations continue to be "haunted by empire" (*Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History*, edited by Ann Laura Stoler [2006]).

The work concludes in part 6 by positioning the American and Soviet actions in the Cold War era as being examples of imperialistic endeavors. The authors also argue that US incursion into Afghanistan and Iraq, Russia's involvement in Chechnya, and the One China Policy can all be seen as acts of imperialism. However, when analyzing modern global institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, the authors concede that current definitions associated with empire may require some manipulation because although the actions of these institutions can be perceived as informal acts of imperialism, all countries are, in theory, willing participants. By introducing global entities such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank into the larger discussion of the study of empires in the twenty-first century, Streets-Salters and Getz have once again challenged readers to reconceptualize their understanding of the field of imperial history.

Throughout *Empires and Colonies in the Modern World*, Streets-Salter and Getz do an exceptional job of seamlessly guiding previously non-enculturated readers through the past six hundred years of global imperial history. Simultaneously, the work excels at providing readers with working definitions of key terms in the field and a solid historiographical foundation, both of which are essential for undergraduate and graduate students beginning their engagement with the field. Despite lacking some details about decolonization movements and somewhat awkwardly attempting to integrate a discussion of sub-Saharan African empires, which may have warranted its own chapter considering Getz's expertise in the field, into a larger discussion of Eurasian and North African empires during the early modern period,

the work is still a resounding success and should continue to serve as a gateway to conceptualizing the global imperial experience for a multitude of university students in the years to come.

Notes

[1]. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, preface to *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, ed. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), viii.

[2]. John Darwin, *After Tamerlane: The Rise and Fall of Global Empires, 1400-2000* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007), x.

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