

Book Reviews

Post-1800

DAVID C. ATKINSON. *The Burden of White Supremacy: Containing Asian Migration in the British Empire and the United States*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017. Pp. 334. \$95.00 (cloth).
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In *The Burden of White Supremacy: Containing Asian Migration in the British Empire and the United States*, David Atkinson provides a detailed and comprehensive analysis of mobility across the British Empire and the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In doing so, he recognizes the traditional *push* and *pull* reasons for migration as well as the various efforts to restrict movement on grounds of race and ethnicity that prevailed in this recognized period of mass migration, when countries around the world vied for global domination, both politically and economically.

The material is neatly arranged geographically by continent and country, from Australia and New Zealand to Africa, and from North America to South America, and it includes interesting chapters on the impact that both war and peace have had on the restriction and movement of labor. Atkinson neatly brings the issues up to date in the conclusion, recognizing that although restrictions on grounds of race have receded, attitudes and anxieties very much remain.

In the chapters exploring attitudes in wartime and peace Atkinson examines uneasy alliances between nations, detailing, for instance, how the White Australia policy deteriorated the relationship between “allies” of Australia and Japan during the First World War. In the following chapter he emphasizes accurately the hope that peace at the end of the Great War would bring positive change on social, economic, and political levels, as new nations emerged on the global stage. Ultimately, however, peacetime failed to end the restriction of Asian immigration and if anything made things worse, culminating in the decay of the American and Japanese relationship in the 1930s, in the buildup to the Second World War.

Atkinson usefully illustrates his arguments with pertinent examples in each chapter, ranging from attitudes toward Chinese laborers in South African gold mines to Japanese mobility in the America West. There are some gaps, though. Colonial populations were by no means static. For example, after the defeat of Britain in the American War of Independence in 1783, loyalists left for Canada, Nova Scotia, the Bahamas, and England. Also, after the

abolition of slavery, emigrants from the Indian subcontinent were encouraged to migrate to the West Indies to help with local labor problems, as indentured labor. The latter phenomenon could have been explored more fully, perhaps warranting a separate chapter for the Caribbean. That said, Atkinson forms useful parallels and comparisons with attitudes to races other than Asians, most notably Afro-Caribbean in the United States.

The book is well researched, and Atkinson provides a very extensive bibliography of both published and unpublished sources from a host of archives across the globe, including the National Archives of the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand.

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JAMES BEATTIE, EDWARD MELILLO, and EMILY O'GORMAN, eds. *Eco-Cultural Networks and the British Empire: New Views on Environmental History*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015.

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In *Eco-Cultural Networks and the British Empire*, James Beattie, Edward Melillo, and Emily O'Gorman have compiled a series of innovative essays that demonstrate, individually and collectively, how networks of empire and ecology brought diverse cultures and landscapes into contact. Concentrating on the period between the ascension of Queen Victoria in 1837 and the end of World War II in 1945, the contributors examine what they call eco-cultural networks, defined as the “interlinked cultural formulations, material exchanges, and ecological processes” that were generated by British imperialism (8). Rather than lingering on the theoretical analysis that often dominates the study of networks, the editors focus on the connected geographies of the Empire and the eco-cultural networks that linked the “environments, capital, knowledge, commodities and resources of formerly separate places” to one another (12). Imperial ecologies depended upon exchanges of biota, scientific expertise, technologies, ideas, and values, which, in turn, produced “new environmental practices and cultural adaptations within and beyond the British Empire” (14). The essays in this collection reveal the multidirectional and contingent nature of these eco-cultural networks, as well as the material and cultural consequences of such linkages.

This collection is not the first to argue that the expansion of the British Empire profoundly reordered landscapes and human societies, nor the first to investigate how imperial environmental encounters produced new forms of knowledge, economic values, social relationships, and power dynamics. The amalgamation of “ecological” and “cultural,” which the Beattie, Melillo, and O'Gorman use to indicate “the role of humans in shaping, and being shaped by, their environments,” is fundamental to the discipline of environmental history (8). However, as they note, environmental historians tend to focus on either the material *or* the cultural, political, and social dimensions of human-environmental interactions, rarely both. The essays in this collection exhibit the rewards of exploring imperial networks through a “combined analysis” (8). Perhaps more important is the editors' contention that analysis of these networks should not be constrained by the dichotomies that characterize imperial historiography: center/periphery, settler/administrative, formal/informal, direct/indirect, tropical/temperate, and the like. While acknowledging the imbalances of power in the extraction of natural resources, exploitation of labor, and development of commodity chains, the contributors eschew the hegemony of the center, pointing instead to connections, parallels, and entanglements that do not exist along neat arterial lines extending from the metropole. As Beattie,