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978-1-107-02014-6 - Britain's Oceanic Empire: Atlantic and Indian Ocean Worlds, c. 1550–1850

Edited by H. V. Bowen, Elizabeth Mancke and John G. Reid

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Britain's Oceanic Empire

This pioneering comparative study of British imperialism in the Atlantic and Indian Ocean worlds draws on the perspectives of British newcomers overseas and their native hosts, metropolitan officials and corporate enterprises, migrants and settlers. Leading scholars examine the divergences and commonalities in the legal and economic regimes that allowed Britain to project *imperium* across the globe. They explore the nature of sovereignty and law, governance and regulation, diplomacy, military relations, and commerce, shedding new light on the processes of expansion that influenced the making of empire. While acknowledging the distinctions and divergences in imperial endeavours in Asia and the Americas – not least in terms of the size of indigenous populations, technical and cultural differences, and approaches to indigenous polities – this book argues that these differences must be seen in the context of what Britons overseas shared, including constitutional principles, claims of sovereignty, disciplinary regimes, and military attitudes.

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Preface

This volume is the product of a thoroughly team-based enterprise. The authors were invited to contribute essays on focused themes designed to explore potential comparisons, contrasts, and connections between the early modern British Atlantic and British Indian Ocean worlds. The team assembled for three days of intensive discussions at a symposium held at the University of Sussex in July 2007, with the help of a panel of internationally distinguished commentators in Gwyn Campbell, Stephen Conway, and P. J. Marshall. The authors then reworked the draft essays in the light of these exchanges, and more explicit comparisons and contrasts were drawn. Although we as coordinators of the project and editors of the volume have shaped certain aspects of the findings that emerged, and we certainly accept a large measure of responsibility for any gaps and shortcomings, this book essentially belongs to a collective of scholars who came together from diverse historical fields to map out an analytical response to a central question – initially defined as ‘British Asia and the British Atlantic: Two Worlds or One?’ – as well as to lay down a foundation that would support further collaborative research.

The informal origins of the project dated from the 2001 annual conference of the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, held at the University of Glasgow. In a session chaired by Marshall, with Bowen, Mancke, and Reid among the participants, a part of the discussion focused on the comment made by Governor Samuel Shute of Massachusetts in 1722 that the British-occupied portion of New England was ‘the English Pale or territory’.¹ The implication in Shute’s comment that the British exerted little real control or influence beyond an enclosed and restricted area prompted Bowen to

¹ Samuel Shute to Philippe de Rigaud, marquis de Vaudreuil, 14 March 1722, The National Archives, Kew, CO, 5/10, 284. Also among the participants were Stephen J. Hornsby and (a co-author of a paper though not present in Glasgow) Emerson W. Baker.

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draw comparisons with British enclaves in Asia. The ensuing discussion quickly broadened to embrace a widening range of issues common to both North America and India. Exploratory communications among the three of us over a period of many months led us to focus on thematic parallels that might be explored and tested, and eventually to agree that we would collaborate in a larger-scale effort to address the most promising comparisons – without prejudging whether they would yield commonalities or contrasts – between British oceanic worlds from the early sixteenth to the mid-nineteenth century.

The themes we initially selected were ones that could be addressed from either an Atlantic or an Indian Ocean perspective: the respective oceanic contexts; governance and regulatory frameworks; British–indigenous commercial relations; British–indigenous diplomacy; British–indigenous military relations; societies within the British ‘pales’; and sovereignty and law in Asia and the Americas. Some themes addressed maritime space, some land-based concerns, and some both, with a particular, though not exclusive, emphasis on British relations with indigenous populations. The invited authors, naturally, had considerable latitude in determining their preference for addressing a given theme. Some chose a wide-ranging approach; others placed their broad interpretive comments in the context of detailed case studies. All were encouraged to position themselves in relation to other essays, during the intensive discussions at the Sussex symposium, in electronic exchanges before and after that event, and in preparing the essays for publication. All participants recognised that to achieve the benefits of crossing historiographical boundaries, they must qualify the biases of their particular field of study and use language and concepts that are intelligible across fields. The goal was to generate a collection of essays that, coordinated from the start, would add up to more than the sum of its parts.

The project was launched formally in May 2004, with the tangible objective of convening the symposium as a direct stepping-stone to this book. Over time the scholarly network gathered collaborators and, critically, financial support from the major granting councils of Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States, so that it quickly became clear that the Sussex symposium would not be an isolated event. Subsequent ventures during 2008 and 2009 included a series of workshops exploring specific facets of the general topic. They were held at the National Maritime Museum (UK), Swansea University (UK), the Johns Hopkins University (USA), and the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic/Saint Mary's University (Canada). The final event of the series was a second major conference, held at the University of New Brunswick

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(Fredericton) in August 2009 and focused on ‘Early Modern Imperial–Indigenous Military Conflict and Cooperation’.²

It is a pleasure to acknowledge our indebtedness to those on whose support we have depended for this project and for earlier projects that made a collaborative work of this magnitude viable. Mancke and Reid were members of an international team working on layered constructions of the Conquest of Acadia, 1710, and they have more generally worked together on various Canada–United States research teams, including co-authorship of the early modern chapter of the Canadian volume in the Companion Series to the *Oxford history of the British empire*.³ Contemporaneously, Bowen as a historian of British Asia was implementing collaborative research projects involving British, Indian, and Dutch scholars of Asia, and imperialism in Asia, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Encounters between British imperial outreach and indigenous societies were intrinsically central to this work. Moreover, both Bowen and Mancke were participants in the collaborative project that led to the publication of Christine Daniels and Michael V. Kennedy (eds.), *Negotiated empires: centers and peripheries in the new world, 1500–1820* (New York, 2001). We share, therefore, a longstanding appreciation of the value of working in team-based ventures.

For this project, we thank especially Peter J. Marshall, who has generously and consistently given us the benefit of his good counsel. He, Gwyn Campbell, and Stephen Conway contributed invaluable to the Sussex symposium as commentators – their collective wisdom and acute observations clarified many important issues in steering the discussions repeatedly in productive directions. Femme Gastra and Joseph Inikori, along with others who attended specific sessions, enriched the discussions, as did seven younger scholars who attended as ‘new researchers’: Lucy Allwright, Emily Burton (who presented a historiographical paper), Colin Ganley, Amanda Hamilton, Thomas Rodgers, Manu Sehgal, and Alastair Wilson. John McAleer from the National

² The proceedings are published as Wayne E. Lee (ed.), *Empires and indigenes: intercultural alliance, imperial expansion, and warfare in the early modern world* (New York, 2011). The papers from the Canadian symposium have been published as John G. Reid with H. V. Bowen and Elizabeth Mancke (eds.), ‘Is there a “Canadian” Atlantic world?’, *International Journal of Maritime History*, 21 (2009), 263–95. Details of all Asia–Atlantic activities can be found at www.smu.ca/baban (accessed 5 June 2011).

³ John G. Reid et al., *The ‘conquest’ of Acadia, 1710: imperial, colonial, and aboriginal constructions* (Toronto, 2004); John G. Reid and Elizabeth Mancke, ‘From global processes to continental strategies: the emergence of British North America to 1783’, in Phillip Buckner (ed.), *Canada and the British empire* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 22–42.

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Maritime Museum at Greenwich, UK, also attended and helped coordinate the subsequent symposium held there.

As well as being a participant in a number of the project's scholarly events, Emily Burton has been our graduate assistant throughout the key phases. We thank her for her commitment and her organisational skills, but most of all for being a valued colleague whose judgement was always influential in the shaping of the project and its development over time.

The authors themselves have been an essential source of strength. The scholarly qualities of this excellent team, and the support they have provided all along a sometimes tortuous editorial path, continue to be both sustaining and inspiring. Trevor Burnard, then of the University of Sussex, was not only an author but also our host for the symposium, and we owe to him the meticulously coordinated arrangements that necessarily underpin a successful scholarly gathering.

As well as early support from the International Council for Canadian Studies that helped fund the initial planning meeting of the three of us, the project received major grants from the International Opportunities Fund of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (Canada: award no. 861–2006–1081), the Research Networks and Workshops Scheme of the Arts and Humanities Research Council (United Kingdom: award no. AH/F001436/1), and the Collaborative Research Grants Program of the National Endowment for the Humanities (United States: award no. RZ-50747–07). We gratefully acknowledge this invaluable and indispensable financial aid.

As far as the publication of this volume is concerned, we warmly thank Michael Watson of Cambridge University Press for his patience and support; and Carol Fellingham Webb who has undertaken a difficult copy-editing task with great skill and efficiency. We are also grateful to Michael Hermann, who prepared the maps.

Finally, we are too large a group to thank by name the friends and family members on whose support we depend, but our gratitude endures none the less.

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Abbreviations

BL	British Library
CO	Colonial Office
<i>Ec. Hist. Rev.</i>	<i>Economic History Review</i>
IOL	India Office Library
IOR	India Office Records
<i>JICH</i>	<i>Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History</i>
MAS	<i>Modern Asian Studies</i>
<i>OHBE</i>	Wm Roger Louis (editor-in-chief), <i>The Oxford history of the British empire</i> , 5 vols. (Oxford, 1998)
TNA	The National Archives, Kew, London
WMQ	<i>William and Mary Quarterly</i>

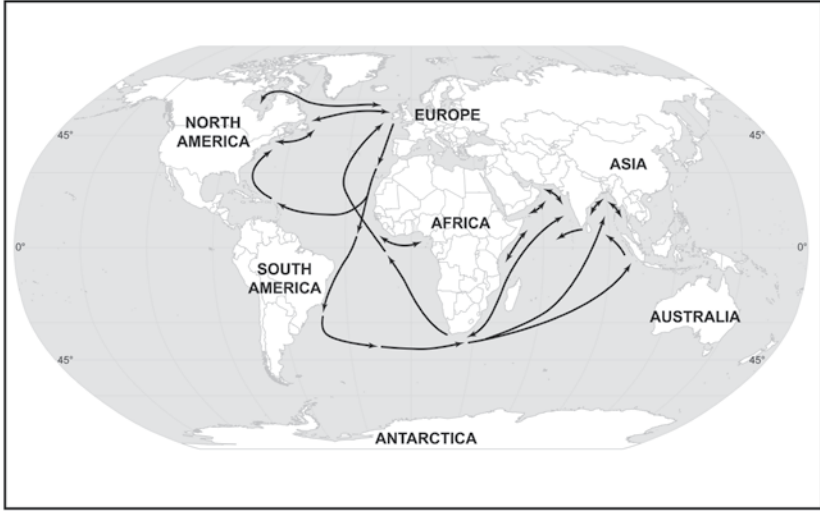
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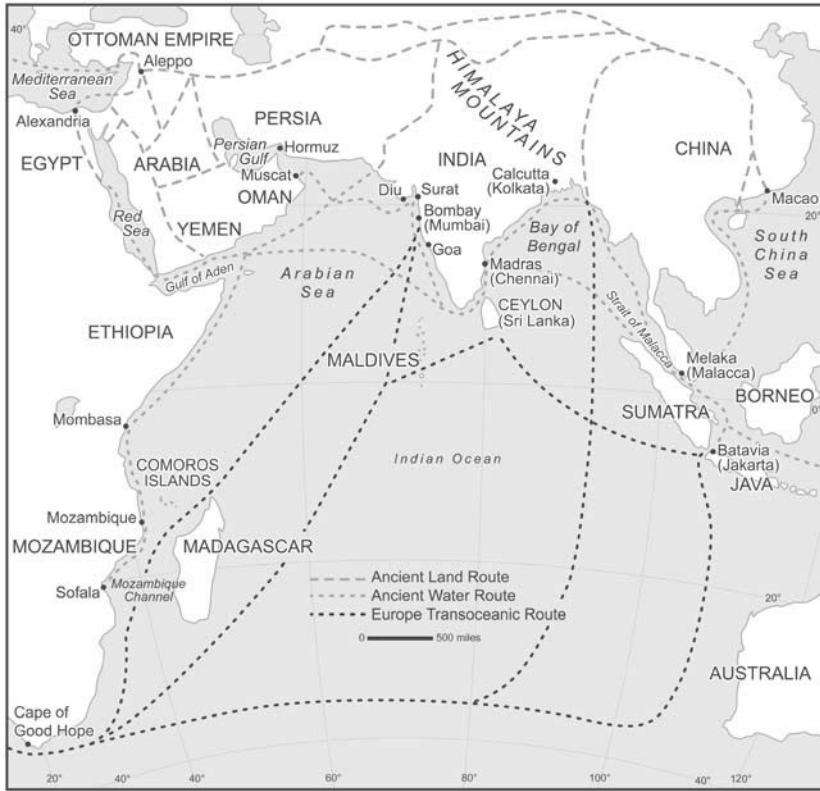
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Map 1 Major transoceanic routes



Map 2 Indian Ocean world, c.1700

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Map 3 South Asia, c.1750

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Map 4 Eastern Native North America, c.1700

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Map 5 British America, c.1750