

Review of Reed, C.V. (2016) *Royal Tourists, Colonial Subjects and the Making of a British World, 1860-1911*. Manchester University Press

This excellent book is published in the Manchester University Press 'Studies in Imperialism' series. Reed provides a deep and also wide ranging scholarly coverage of the highly symbolic, planned, stage managed and mediated official visits that were undertaken by members of the British monarchy to the Empire, Dominions and Commonwealth during the period identified in the title and their reception by those visited.

Through thorough research in archives and contemporary media sources, Reed provides a rich picture at several levels in his exploration of the detailed planning and organisation of the royal tour arrangements, their progress and reception. These levels include an assessment of the at times, competing roles of colonial administrators at home and abroad and their tensions with local elites surrounding the specific details of the programme and, importantly the personal disposition of the royal 'tourist' in question.

The reception and encounters of royal tours and personages by 'native' princes, chiefs and 'respectable people of colour' in Africa, South Asia, and New Zealand in seeking symbolic appropriation of and/or resistance to British power is also addressed in interesting detail. In addition, there is coverage of the reported perceptions of 'ordinary colonial subjects of colour' and how those who imagined themselves as members of a British imperial community sought to use royal tours in making claims on Britishness, loyalty to the Crown and imperial citizenship.

The content of this volume also provides in the words of the author, a 'conceptual space between the projection of Queen Victoria as a symbol of empire and nineteenth century royals' often ambivalent attitudes towards the empire and in particular their participation in more or less arduous royal tours. Reed asserts that royal tours during this time were, 'an essential, ritual function of monarchy' in the assertion of power and Empire. To a lesser extent, this remains the case where members of the British royal family are regularly 'on tour' at home and overseas, if not now exclusively in the residual Commonwealth, with these travels continuing to excite media attention, public attendance and varying extents of ritual and deference. Reed also presents a nuanced and subtle discussion of the ways in which symbolic resistance to British appropriation of local political traditions in the Empire was exerted and / or how royal connections were used in attempts to accentuate status and authority locally.

How colonial settlers imagined their relationship with a British 'homeland' and to a larger British world in the fashioning of communal mythologies, identities and claims to imperial citizenship through instruments of propaganda and social control also receives interesting attention. The 'pilgrimage' of colonial subjects 'home' discussed by Reed may tenuously be extended to the 21st century travels of diaspora communities as manifest in 'homeland tourism' to the UK from the former colonies.

This observation reveals that the reviewer approached Reed's book from the perspective of Tourism Studies, an inter-disciplinary field though located primarily in the Social Sciences, with a research interest in popular cultural perspectives on 'royal tourism'. This departs from the Historian's conceptualisation and approach and situates royal tours not as 'tourism' *per se* but as phenomena that relate to wider considerations of the subsequent designation of destinations which royal

persons graced with their visits, either officially or more formally and the subsequent associations and packaging by a nascent tourist industry which endures today. Historians such as John Walton's excellent work on the popular cultural history of tourism and some of the contributors to the edited collection, *Royal Tourism: Excursions around Monarchy* have addressed this in various contexts, including also foreign royalty. However, the latter work may be acknowledged as lacking the detailed and thorough attention of a single authored text by an expert historian such as Reed.

Nevertheless, the contemporary implications of past royal tours and places with royal associations continues to be of critical interest in seeking to understand how and why the British royal family maintains the level of fascination that they do for many people around the world in the curious psychological need for royal narratives and for imagined participation in royal lives. As Reed puts it, 'British and imperial identities remain culturally relevant long past the end of empire'. This comes across almost explicitly in the current 'Britain's Great' nation branding campaign and in the promotion of the UK for international tourism through the "corporate heritage branding" of which the royal family is a major component (Ornes and Maclaran 2016).

References

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