BOOK REVIEWS

E. T. DAILEY, *Radegund: The Trials and Triumphs of a Merovingian Queen*, Women in Antiquity (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), 232 pp. ISBN 978 0 197 69920 1. £17.99

Rarely has the life of a female figure of the early Middle Ages been as rich and as well documented as that of Radegund (*c.*520–87). Born a princess in sixth-century Thuringia, she was abducted as a spoil of war during the destruction of the kingdom in 531 and married to a Frankish king, before retreating to a monastic life in her own foundation in Poitiers, where she finally died. It is therefore not surprising that her life has attracted the attention of biographers, both early medieval and modern. The latest product of this effort to explore Radegund's biography is Erin Thomas Dailey's monograph.

The introduction starts with a close look at the perception of Radegund as the protector of Poitiers in later centuries, when myths had already clouded her historicity, followed by a concise overview of the main sources and reflections on terminology. The subsequent text is divided into a total of eight large chapters, six of which are dedicated to Radegund's biography, while two more cover the fate of her convent and her afterlife as a saint. Chapter one begins with the traumatic early experience that would shape Radegund's life. Having lost her father as a child, she fell to the Franks as a prize when they attacked her homeland. She was deported to the royal villa of Athies and never saw her family (apart from her brother) or Thuringia again. Between 535 and 540, Radegund was forced to marry the much older Chlothar, to whom she had been assigned as prey at the end of the war, in Soissons. The marriage remained childless, apparently due to the Thuringian princess's infertility.

However, her status as a Merovingian queen clearly had an effect on Radegund's personal lifestyle and attitudes, as chapter two shows. Here the reader meets a self-confident woman, equipped with possessions and property that made her a powerful figure in her husband's realm. Without family ties, she turned to the clergy and ecclesiastical institutions in search of support. To achieve her goal, Radegund used acts of piety and benefactions, through which she also presented herself as a holy queen. Even when she had to consent to sexual intercourse, she did so only reluctantly and with the firm intention of purifying herself afterwards through atonement. That is, at least, the portrayal found in the sources, which Dailey calls into question: in the face of female competition at court, Radegund's position depended primarily on the birth of a son. Her childlessness was probably not intentional; the realization of her infertility may have made messages about the benefits of an ascetic life more attractive to her. Her pursuit of a different way of life increasingly alienated her from Chlothar. But it took another traumatic experience to bring about the end of the marriage: the murder of Radegund's brother, which set her free. Dailey argues that the Thuringian prince might have been held as a hostage by Chlothar to keep his sister under control, or that he simply became expendable when the Merovingian king lost interest in his marriage, perhaps due to the queen's infertility.

Chapter three describes how Radegund took the initiative and virtually forced Bishop Médard of Soissons to consecrate her and thus enable her to enter the monastery. In the remark, found in Venantius Fortunatus' life of the queen, that the bishop had ordained Radegund as a *diacona* (deaconess), Dailey sees only a complementary title to 'nun', from which no further conclusions can be drawn. Chapter four then begins the presentation of Radegund's life and work under the rule of Chlothar's sons after 561. The chapter takes up Radegund's activities among the successive Merovingian rulers of Poitiers, such as Charibert I, during whose term of office a dispute over his marriage to Marcovefa arose, and Sigibert I, with whose help Radegund acquired the Holy Cross relic.

The fifth chapter covers Radegund's efforts to obtain parts of the Holy Cross for her monastery in Poitiers. It explores the queen's close ties to Byzantium, and the associated difficulties with the local bishop Maroveus. To him, the increased importance of Radegund's foundation, which was associated with the acquisition of relics, posed a major problem. Maroveus evaded Radegund's request that he install the relic in the convent by leaving Poitiers on horseback. Apparently he feared both that the new relic would compete with the remains of Saint Hilarius of Poitiers, from whom his episcopal authority was derived, and that Radegund might weaken his authority. The fact that it was Bishop Euphronius of Tours who finally granted Radegund's request sheds significant light on the events. The queen's actions seem to have been motivated to a large extent by her attempt to imitate the Empress Helena, mother of Constantine the Great, which Radegund did in ignorance of unflattering details from her life. In the end, Helena became a role model for Radegund suitable to her position as holy queen.

Chapter six starts with the death of Radegund on 13 August 587 and ends with her funeral, which took place under the supervision of Gregory of Tours. In between, the chapter is devoted to the architectural design of her convent, comparing it to other important churches housing relics of the Holy Cross within their walls. The convent was built in such a way that it appeared like a new Jerusalem—or rather recreated the biblical landscape of the city. The chapter also deals with life in the community, which essentially followed the rule of Caesarius of Arles, but adapted it according to Radegund's own ideas. She formed the convent into a court that 'functioned rather like her own royal treasury' (p. 118).

The last two chapters describe the afterlife of the convent and its buildings in the years and centuries after Radegund's death. Chapter seven covers the conflict between Abbess Leubovera and several nuns, particularly those from the royal family, who may have seen themselves as natural successors to Radegund. The fact that Merovingian kings and bishops intervened in the dispute, and ultimately decided it, shows once again the great importance of Holy Cross Abbey in Poitiers. As chapter eight shows, this was also evident in the Carolingian period, when the relics were given a new vessel, and in the centuries afterwards, during which the convent repeatedly fell victim to political activities. Sometimes this had destructive consequences, such as in the wake of the French Revolution of 1789, when Holy Cross was razed to the ground. Only Radegund's funerary church survived. Dailey identifies the eleventh century as a turning point for the veneration of Radegund as a saint in the Middle Ages. Changes in the architecture of her church, a different reliquary, and a new illuminated manuscript of the saint's life originally written by Venantius Fortunatus testify that her cult was reinvented during this time and that the church was opened to pilgrims, to the benefit of the monastic community. The chapter concludes with comments on the role of violence in Radegund's life and summary reflections on her biography. Two appendices follow: one contains the English translation of Radegund's famous letter to the bishops (*Dominis sanctis*), in which she explains her intentions in founding the monastery and asks for her legacy to be preserved after her death. The other appendix shows a partial pedigree of the Merovingian family. The monograph ends with an extensive bibliography and an index.

The book presents Radegund as a self-confident woman who worked thoughtfully towards her goals and who did not shy away from using her position and prestige for her own purposes. It is a balanced mix of a scholarly approach to the topic and an easy-to-read presentation. A great advantage of the book is that the author wrote his biography very close to the sources. Quotations from early medieval texts are repeatedly presented, and then carefully contextualized and explained. Gender is consistently taken into account, creating a fresh perspective on the historical figure. Dailey's arguments are always based on the state of the art; divergent opinions are addressed. The book also contains new thoughts and theses that will have a stimulating effect on future research. At the same time, it is written in such a way that it can be easily understood by non-specialist readers. The maps, illustrations of objects, and building floor plans further contribute to making the text accessible to a wider audience. Experts, students, and laypeople can therefore read the book with benefit. Anyone wishing to learn more about Radegund in the future will have to read Erin Thomas Dailey's biography.

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OLIVER VOLCKART, *The Silver Empire: How Germany Created Its First Common Currency* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024), 384 pp. ISBN 978 0 198 89448 3. £35.00

Given the crisis of the European common currency and the remarkable inflation we face today, there is absolutely no doubt about the significance of the coordination of international currency policies and the essential importance of the European Central Bank in economic development and political affairs. The topic of Oliver Volckart's study of the first common currency of the 'Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation' in the sixteenth century is therefore of enormous interest. Moreover, his account of the currency policies pursued by the estates under the guidance of the Emperor and by the diets in the internally much-fragmented German Empire shows the complexity of this highly difficult and multilayered matter.

Volckart's book, the impressive result of years of research, offers a very intriguing perspective on currency policies at a time when coins not only displayed a face value, but also had a high commodity value, being made of the precious metals gold and silver. This was the essence of late medieval and early modern methods of payment. Oliver Volckart describes the complex development of currencies and coins in the long sixteenth century, which began in 1495 with the reforms of the diet of Worms and ended with the turmoil of the Thirty Years War, when the *Kipper und Wipper* inflation represented the peak of monetary failure. The book deals with three questions in particular: first, it is about the delicate equilibrium and sometimes dysfunctionalities of government processes in the German Empire; second, it refers to the often inconsistent and oscillating arguments of contemporary experts and estates; and third, it carefully explains the mechanisms of establishing a currency. The hidden champion of the story is Thomas Gresham (*c.*1519–79), whose law ('bad money drives out good') has been cited by economists since the nineteenth century.

Oliver Volckart's account is divided into six chapters. The first and second chapters outline the general problems contemporaries identified, hence setting the scene. The great variety of currencies, especially in the German Empire, caused various crises: from the beginning of the sixteenth century, the estates, the diets, and the Emperor himself increasingly sought to prevent the trade in coinage, to avoid the 'breaking' (debasement) of coins, and to suppress the proliferation of underweight 'side-strikes' (in German: *Beischläge*, referring to poor imitations of better coins). In the first half of the century, 123 imperial estates issued their own money, which created a rather confusing situation, and last but not least, the spread of small-unit coins. Rulers felt the need to keep good coins within their territory for their value in precious metals, because every measure to keep the commodity value of coins high was followed by an outflow of coins. Meanwhile, money of account emerged for larger units of currency and, in consequence, led to the detachment of commerce from banking. Generally speaking, because of market integration, estates already tended to create currency unions without being induced to do so by the imperial institutions. The basic purpose of currency policies was to maintain order. In this context, the trade in coinage was a particular irritation that was to be avoided, while the value of coins also had to be kept high to stimulate commerce.

Oliver Volckart opens his story with a very sensitive and thoughtful account of the decision-making procedures of the estates and the Empire as a whole (chapter three). The fundamental focus is on the approach of the estates and the experts on money matters. There was an obvious upward trend in attendance at the diets during the first half of the sixteenth century, facilitating better acceptance of decision-making procedures. The currency conference (*Münztag*) in Speyer in 1549 appears to have been the first fruitful attempt to negotiate a settlement. In the 1520s and 1530s, debates on currency issues concentrated on the price of silver and the costs and profits of mining. However, as chapter four tells us, the first crucial moment was the procedural decision at the diet of Worms in 1545 to delegate currency matters to a committee that represented both the Catholic and Protestant estates. An essential step forward was to abolish seigniorage, given that the estates did not necessarily have to agree on the price of silver before defining the standard of coinage. A second step came when the power and influence of Emperor Charles V grew notably after his victory in the Schmalkaldic War (1546–7), resulting in increased pressure on estates to reach an agreement. Although the Speyer currency conference in 1549 did not succeed in passing a law, one significant outcome was a general assay held in Nuremberg in 1551. In consequence, the traditional argument that debasement would encourage mining or prevent the breaking of coins was dropped in subsequent debates.

At the diet of Speyer in 1549, described in chapter five, the leading representatives of the Emperor—Philip von Flersheim, Bishop of Speyer, and Reinhard von Solms, Count of Solms-Lich—did much to convince the *Bergherren*, or 'mining lords' (in the absence of the powerful elector of Saxony, but with the successive consent of the economically important electorates on the Rhine) to agree on the standard of the new coinage, based on the Austrian–South German model: the total nominal value of the coins was defined and limited at one mark of pure silver, and the gulden of account was also fixed at sixty kreuzers (later, a sixty-kreuzer coin was issued). Of course, any agreement had to ensure that the estates could still take out much-needed loans, which they would not be able to repay if the coinage was devalued.

The negotiations went on until 1559, when the Second Augsburg Coinage Ordinance was finally approved (chapter six). The sixty-kreuzer coin was named the silver gulden and the exchange rate for the Rhenish florin was capped at seventy-five kreuzers. Moreover, this meant that the bimetallic currency was abandoned in favour of the silver standard. In 1566 the Duchy of Saxony was brought into the fold by an amendment referring to the Saxon taler, which had to undergo some slight debasements in order to fit into the new currency system. According to the constitution of the Empire, the imperial circles (*Reichskreise*) had to implement the new standard currency, and they were fairly efficient in doing so. However, too much small change continued to enter into circulation, putting the whole system at risk according to Gresham's law.

The Silver Empire is a seminal work that enters into contemporary perspectives and carefully narrates the business of decision-making on money matters in the German Empire. The crucial points are the intersections between currency policies and decision-making procedures in the complex context of the sixteenth-century Empire. The result is a convincing account of the development of the currency system and the arguments made in its favour. It is very plausible that the first common currency was not a total failure, but was eroded over time because of the centrifugal biases of the constitution. The ever-changing variety of viewpoints within around 120 estates with different expectations was a challenge to all attempts at centralization. In the German Empire, the economic dynamics were concentrated in the imperial cities and imposed a unique logic on how rulers approached currency systems. Oliver Volckart's book takes a fascinating transdisciplinary approach to a difficult topic and should be read by a broader audience far beyond experts.

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CRAWFORD MATTHEWS, *Anglo-Prussian Relations 1701–1713: The Reciprocal Production of Status through Ceremony, Diplomacy, and War*, Routledge Research in Early Modern History (Abingdon: Routledge, 2024), 326 pp. ISBN 978 1 032 30263 8. £135.00

Elector Frederick III of Brandenburg had set his sights on the royal crown long before he was able to place it on his head himself in Königsberg in January 1701 and henceforth go by the name of King Frederick I in Prussia. The value of the crown as a symbol of sovereignty and the arduous negotiations en route to its acquisition by Frederick are well known to researchers, at least since the numerous publications to mark the tercentenary of the coronation. However, historians have long overlooked the fact that acquiring the crown still did not mean that Frederick's royal status was recognized by European royalty—which is surprising, as people at Frederick's court knew only too well that it was not enough to be crowned king, but that one had to be sure of being 'recognized *pro rege*'.[1] It was a matter of being treated as a king in the ceremonial of European monarchs and thus having one's dignity confirmed. Historians have only been able to grasp contemporary knowledge since the cultural turn, as the tools to analyse symbolic communication in diplomatic ceremonial have only been developed in the last twenty-five years. In this new light, there has been, in recent years, renewed interest in the early modern history of Prussia in particular. The monograph presented here belongs in this research context. It deals with the steps taken by Frederick and his officials to assert his new royal dignity and status as a sovereign potentate, as well as with the important role played by English actors in this process.

Against the background of the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–13/14), Matthews shows how the ceremonial and military

Translated by Marielle Sutherland (GHIL).

[1] Memorandum by Rüdiger von Ilgen of 11 Nov. 1701, quoted here from Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, 'Honores regii: Die Königswürde im zeremoniellen Zeichensystem der Frühen Neuzeit', in Johannes Kunisch (ed.), *Dreihundert Jahre Preußische Königskrönung: Eine Tagungsdokumentation* (Berlin, 2002), 1–26, at 23, n. 71.

cooperation between the courts in Berlin and London functioned in the period from 1701 to the Peace of Utrecht in 1713. The English side was repeatedly prepared to meet Frederick's demands for the granting of royal privileges (*honores regii*) in diplomatic ceremonial, and in return they could count on his troops: in other words, they were willing 'to use ceremonial concessions to facilitate greater military cooperation' (p. 147). However, as Matthews emphatically demonstrates, things were far more complex than simply 'troops in exchange for ceremonial'. In particular, some of the English diplomats involved utilized both Frederick's striving for recognition of his rank and their relationships with the Berlin court to secure their own promotions, above all Thomas Wentworth, who was the third Baron Raby and, from 1711, Earl of Strafford.

The book consists of four case studies (as the author himself calls them), each about fifty pages long. They are preceded by a detailed introduction and a separate chapter in which Anglo-Prussian relations and the question of Prussia's status are comprehensively placed in the context of ceremonial, rank, and diplomacy in the period from the Peace of Westphalia to the Peace of Utrecht. The book concludes with a ten-page summary chapter, followed by a detailed bibliography of archival and printed sources as well as research literature.

Of course, the author's achievements can only be given cursory recognition here. Matthews rightly sees Prussia's rise in status as part of the process by which the hierarchical order of the old European princely society was reshaped into a system of equal subjects under international law. Only as king did one count as a sovereign in both orders, and only potentates with royal privileges had the right to send and receive ambassadors, that is, noble envoys of the highest rank, who were fully entitled to represent their ruler. Consequently, as Matthews lucidly explains at the outset, Frederick had to ensure that his ambassadors received ceremonial treatment with royal privileges. These privileges were particularly visible upon the ambassador's entry, during his audience, and by where he was seated at court festivities attended by foreign monarchs. The same applied in reverse: it was also imperative to provide recognized royal ceremonial for the reception of ambassadors at the Berlin court. The important role played by English actors in this process of 'status production' is already clear from chapter two, in which Matthews demonstrates in detail that the various European princely actors were less willing to fulfil Frederick's ceremonial demands than England was, for different reasons in each case. This was true both before and after the acquisition of the royal crown.

The story that Matthews then tells in his four case studies can be summarized as follows. When it came to the question of where the Prussian king should send his first ambassador, the choice soon fell on London. An important reason for this was that London was not only a hub of European diplomacy, but also—and directly linked to this—the newspaper market was flourishing there, meaning that news of the recognition of Frederick's status was likely to spread rapidly. Ezechiel von Spanheim, who was purposely elevated to the nobility in the run-up to his appointment as ambassador, represented the Prussian king at Queen Anne's court from 1702 until his death in 1710. On the express orders of the English master of ceremonies, Charles Lodowick Cottrell, he received full royal privileges, from his entry—with thirty-seven carriages and sixty-one-gun salutes—to the defrayment of expenses, a welcoming audience, and festivities. Spanheim did not attend Anne's coronation, though, as he feared the planned seating arrangements would diminish his status. The ambassadors and envoys of other crowns, however, did not necessarily follow the English in their acquiescence to these demands.

The next step chronologically and the second case study concerns the introduction of a royal ceremonial for the reception of ambassadors and envoys in Berlin, which was done by adopting the Danish ceremonial in 1702/3. Here, too, it was English actors who cooperated as 'diplomatic partner[s]' (p. 89), observed the new ceremonial, and thus provided the model for other monarchs. Thomas Wentworth (Baron Raby) was promoted from envoy to extraordinary envoy, and finally to ambassador in 1706, always in conjunction with Frederick's promises to send further troops to Marlborough's army (whose military glory also increased as a result). It is fascinating to read Matthews' microscopic analysis of how the English court played 'poker' with Frederick: with his hopes for Raby's appointment as ambassador, with his willingness to remain in the alliance, and through strategies of mutual withholding of ceremonial 'so that they may be kept firm by the hopes of it' (p. 157), as Marlborough put it.

However, Matthews shows in his third case study—a reassessment of the Raby Crisis in the context of Anglo-Prussian court factions—that the end result of this game was not always to the immediate satisfaction of the actors on either side. In 1706, Raby's dismissal was imminent, as was Spanheim's dismissal from London, which would have probably spelled the end of their personal careers. Here again, we see what an actor-centred perspective can achieve if it stays focused on the context—in this case, on the types of assets held by both sides: troops, and ceremonial concessions. Neither court could afford such a diplomatic crisis.

The fourth and last case study focuses on Frederick I's efforts to turn his city of residence, Berlin, from a 'proto diplomatic hub' (p. 183) into a 'Landscape of Monarchical Magnificence' (p. 215) via the later *Dreikönigstreffen* held in Berlin and Potsdam in July 1709. This personal meeting of three monarchs in the context of the Great Northern War (1700–21) is generally considered to have been largely fruitless in political terms but is well known thanks to its idealized representation in the oil painting by Samuel Theodor Gericke (1709; several versions exist). It shows Frederick Augustus II of Saxony—since 1706, no longer King of Poland—alongside Frederick IV of Denmark and Frederick I of Prussia in friendship, unity, and royal equality. However, Frederick's expectations that the visit of these crowned heads would confirm his royal status were only partially fulfilled, as the two royal guests placed their own strict limits on the ceremonial. The English ambassador Baron Raby once more played a decisive role, to the extent that Matthews refers to a 'meeting of four monarchs' (p. 225). Raby attended the ceremonial meetings frequently enough for his 'ambassadorial presence' (p. 225) to embody the British recognition of royal dignity, thus lending a certain glamour to the court. He also organized a luncheon at his residence, a '*locus tertius*', as Matthews has ascertained from the writings of the Prussian master of ceremonies, Johann von Besser (p. 231). Frederick I was also a guest here, so he did not have to concede precedence, but neither could he assert equal status on his part. Raby seized his opportunity: as ambassador to the Queen—who wanted to keep the Prussian King in the Grand Alliance and, as guarantor of the Peace of Altranstädt (1706), did not want to lose him to the anti-Swedish alliance in the Northern

War—Raby was able to do his sovereign a great service. 'This was a unique opportunity, for his rank as ambassador and social status as baron and peer of the realm gave him a level of access and influence that others, such as the Dutch and Russian envoys, could only dream of' (p. 233). Questions of rank at table were circumvented by drawing lots for seats. Nevertheless, Frederick and his wife were seated in the most prestigious seats at the oval table, which was conducive to the king's 'status production' in the long run. Above all, however, Anglo-Prussian relations had once again proved extremely beneficial to both sides. Soon, in 1711, Raby was elevated to Earl of Strafford and appointed British ambassador in Utrecht, with explicit reference to his services in the relationship with the Prussian court.

This clever and methodologically stimulating book is one of the first accounts to demonstrate how bilateral relations can be presented in an exciting way, not in terms of institutional and structural history, but from an actor-centred perspective, and without losing sight of the relevant structures and institutions. Like the ambassadors, the masters of ceremonies on both sides—Cottrell in London and Besser in Berlin—are also revealed to have been more than mere officials making sure that everything went off without a hitch; instead, as Matthews shows, they used their knowledge and networks in such a way that the programmes not only ran smoothly but also benefited them personally. Matthews' interpretation of the Raby Crisis and the *Dreikönigstreffen* certainly sets a new benchmark. In addition, there are numerous new and interesting individual findings, which, presented in beautifully narrated episodes, make for an exciting read.

In view of the high quality of the text, however, it is regrettable that apparently little thought was given to the reading public in the production of the book. It is certainly not made for bibliophiles. For example, if readers need to look something up again—and it is not only reviewers who may need to do so—they will have difficulty finding their way around: the pages are very densely printed, and the running heads are identical on both odd and even pages. The notes are neither at the bottom of each page (as is the case in the original dissertation on which the book is based) nor all at the end of the volume, but are placed at the end of each chapter. This is awkward, and also means that literature that appears in each chapter is also cited in full in the notes to each chapter (for example, Stollberg-Rilinger's essay on the courtly public sphere is cited four times: on p. 24, n. 32; p. 67, n. 8; p. 124–5, n. 12; and p. 175, n. 225). This is confusing, and takes up unnecessary space. Moreover, the notes are often not very informative, since they contain only short titles and page numbers. For example, Besser's exciting, broad-ranging writings, from which Matthews quotes repeatedly and to great effect, are referred to in the notes only as 'Besser, *Schriften*, 2, 236–238' (for example), without telling us what manner of text is being cited. The same applies to the excellent sources Matthews employs from Cottrell's papers. What are we to understand by 'Rousham, MC-7'? What kind of document is it, what type of source? In general, it is often not clear what one can expect to find on the pages of the work cited: a confirmation of the author's statement, a primary source, an example, a discussion? This is particularly regrettable in note 49 on page 276, which contains an important discussion of new research questions.

Notwithstanding, I would still unreservedly advise readers not to be deterred by the book's unwieldy presentation, as the study is utterly convincing. It is knowledgeable and innovative, it is based on an incredibly broad body of literature, and it offers many new insights from archival sources. Crawford Matthews has a broad vision and is as curious as he is theoretically and methodologically reflective. The result is an exceptionally refreshing text, and I would like to see more from this promising young author.

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COREY ROSS, *Liquid Empire: Water and Power in the Colonial World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2024), 464 pp. ISBN 978 0 691 21144 2. £35.00

Water has increasingly become central to global crises, with two thirds of the world's population experiencing severe water shortages for at least one month annually. Recognized by the World Economic Forum as one of the most pressing challenges of the coming decades, this scarcity underscores the urgent need to understand the historical and socio-political dimensions of water. It also reflects the importance of interrogating colonial legacies in shaping contemporary vulnerabilities. Furthermore, 90 per cent of global fisheries are overexploited, threatening food security and biodiversity. Against this backdrop, Corey Ross' *Liquid Empire* offers a timely exploration of the multifaceted relationship between water and European colonial empires. Ross analyses water as a resource, a medium of power, and a site of socio-environmental contention, providing a rich perspective on imperial interactions with both people and environments.

The book sets out to reveal neglected aspects of Europe's imperial engagement with the colonial world. While earlier studies have often focused on large-scale hydraulic engineering or post-war mega-hydropower projects in Asia and Africa, *Liquid Empire* delves into broader, underexplored topics, such as attempts to enhance river navigability for trade and the significance of water as a transport medium and resource input. Ross' central thesis is that colonial states not only managed water but also governed through its manipulation. In this way, he uses water as a lens through which to examine the socio-ecological dynamics of imperial power.

Drawing on approximately 250 primary sources in English, French, German, and Dutch—including reports by engineers, state officials, and biologists—the book offers a comprehensive survey of imperial encounters with water. Its focus spans different colonial powers (Britain, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Belgium) and regions, with a particular emphasis on India, China, and Egypt.

The opening chapter examines the interplay between steamboat technology and colonial waterways, particularly in the Ganges and Brahmaputra basins. While rivers served as vital conduits of mobility, their seasonality—marked by flooding or drought—often disrupted navigation. This highlights the agency of rivers, which defied human efforts to impose control. By contrast, the development of railways in colonial regions reconfigured imperial space. Water systems were subordinated to the expansion of rail, as the latter was seen as a more economically effective transportation system.

Focusing on irrigation systems, in chapter two Ross illustrates the uneven distribution of water as a central challenge. He discusses how irrigation projects symbolized European power, serving both as displays and instruments of dominance. Case studies, such as dam-building along India's Penner River from the 1850s, reveal the frequent underestimation of costs and environmental factors. Cyclones, monsoons, and floods repeatedly thwarted progress, while the neglect of indigenous knowledge exacerbated failures. Ross contrasts such projects with the Ganges canals, which integrated local expertise with colonial engineering. Famines and humanitarian crises often forced colonial governments to adapt water systems, exposing the political stakes of water management.

Chapter three explores efforts to 'conquer' wastelands in extreme climates, including river deltas in South-East Asia, the northern Sahara, and India's arid north-west. Engineers attempted to transform these 'hydraulic frontiers', with varying degrees of success. For instance, French plans in the 1870s to flood parts of the Sahara and create an inland sea were abandoned in the 1880s due to high costs and feasibility concerns. Such projects reflect colonial faith in technological mastery over nature, often overlooking the resilience of local ecologies.

Building on Ross' earlier work 'Constrained River',[1] chapter four focuses on attempts to mitigate flood risks. Colonial hydrological regimes aimed to keep water in place for economic development, but flood defences often introduced new vulnerabilities, particularly along India's north-eastern rivers. Human interventions, while addressing immediate challenges, frequently created long-term risks. Moreover, these efforts reinforced socio-economic inequalities, with

[1] Corey Ross, 'Constrained River, Constrained Choices: Seasonal Floods and Colonial Authority in the Red River Delta', *International Journal of Asian Studies: FirstView* (June 2023), 1–19, at [https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479591423000190].

poorer populations disproportionately affected by flooding and the unintended consequences of water management.

Shifting the focus underwater, in chapter five Ross examines the colonial neglect of fisheries, despite their significance for food security in Asia and Africa. Indigenous fishing practices were often dismissed as primitive, and colonial policies—including restrictions on certain methods and leases—contributed to overfishing. European ideologies of industrial liberalism exacerbated these issues by introducing mechanized methods that many indigenous fishers could not afford, disrupting ecosystems and further widening socio-economic disparities.

Urbanization introduced significant challenges related to sanitation and water quality in Europe by the end of the nineteenth century. Colonial powers sought to implement sanitary infrastructure, mirroring European urban reforms, as chapter six shows. However, these projects often clashed with local customs and practices. For instance, the introduction of sewage systems frequently prioritized elite neighbourhoods, perpetuating infrastructural segregation. Conflicts over water cleanliness—such as the perceived loss of sacred qualities in Indian water bodies—further illustrate the cultural tensions inherent in these reforms.

The penultimate chapter explores the rise of hydropower as a marker of colonial modernity. Dams built after the First World War symbolized the civilizing mission of imperial powers. However, access to electricity was typically restricted to urban centres, excluding rural and indigenous populations. In some cases, broader socio-political contexts are missing from the numerous projects that Ross presents. For example, the brief discussion of hydropower networks in 1920s and 1930s Palestine fails to adequately contextualize their role in deepening inequalities between Jewish settlers and the local population.

The final chapter examines the enduring legacies of colonial water management. Decolonization often sparked resource conflicts, such as disputes over the Indus River between India and Pakistan, or tensions along the Mekong River in South-East Asia. The environmental and social consequences of colonial dam-building—including threats to agriculture and fisheries—persisted, intensifying vulnerabilities and inequalities. Pollution and over-extraction further complicated post-colonial water governance.

Ross' *Liquid Empire* excels in demonstrating the multifaceted role of water in colonial power structures. The book's key strengths lie in its breadth of primary sources and its interdisciplinary approach, combining environmental history, political ecology, and postcolonial studies. By framing water as an active agent that often disrupted human designs, Ross challenges traditional narratives of imperial control. Recurring themes—such as the unruly nature of water and its role in reproducing inequalities—are woven effectively through each chapter. The book also underscores the tensions between indigenous and colonial knowledge systems, illustrating how local expertise was often marginalized but occasionally integrated with European methods. However, certain sections would benefit from greater depth. The discussion of hydropower in Palestine, for example, lacks the nuance required for such a complex subject. Similarly, while the inclusion of numerous case studies enriches the narrative, the sheer volume occasionally overwhelms the reader. A more selective approach could have allowed for deeper analysis of individual examples.

Liquid Empire is a significant contribution to the study of colonial history and environmental humanities. Ross, owing to his choice of sources and the foundational work he undertakes, primarily adopts a top-down approach, where colonial states and sometimes water itself are granted a central role. However, the indigenous population is afforded limited agency, with protests and resistance only peripherally addressed. Further studies should interrogate this agency and the means of dissent available to colonized peoples in order to better challenge the dichotomy of powerful empires and disempowered colonies. Ross' book demonstrates how water, as both a resource and a socio-political medium, shaped the trajectories of imperial expansion and its enduring legacies. By highlighting the environmental and human costs of colonial water management, Ross connects historical processes to contemporary global challenges. His work reminds us that many of today's water vulnerabilities are deeply entwined with the history of empire, making *Liquid Empire* essential reading for scholars and policymakers alike.

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MARY FULBROOK, *Bystander Society: Conformity and Complicity in Nazi Germany and the Holocaust* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), xiii + 470 pp. ISBN 978 0 197 69171 7. £26.99

History does not repeat itself. But reading Mary Fulbrook's *Bystander Society* while Elon Musk gave what looked like a Hitler salute at a parallel event to Donald Trump's inauguration in January 2025, the book felt less and less like a book about the history of Nazi Germany and more and more like a foretoken of a not-too-distant future. However, Fulbrook stresses that sociological and psychological insights into the behaviour and motivation of bystanders in democracies should not be applied to dictatorships, because the context in which people act is fundamentally different.

Fulbrook argues that summary concepts like 'perpetrator society' are too broad to understand the messy social changes in Nazi Germany, during which bystanding emerged as a widespread social arrangement that enabled social segregation in the early 1930s and eventually facilitated mass murder. At first glance, Fulbrook's approach appears contradictory because, by using the term 'bystander society', she seems to be replacing one essentialist concept with another. A closer look shows that Fulbrook is focusing on Germans 'who were neither enthusiastic supporters nor political opponents or direct victims of Nazism' (p. vii). This 'muddled middle' of society, as she calls it, is her rather large sample. Shifting the view away from perpetrators, Nazi elites, and victims to the wider population allows her to examine how the majority of Germans 'accommodated themselves and participated in an evolving system of collective violence, or the extent to which members of mainstream society were themselves in part responsible for, or complicit in, the ultimately murderous outcomes of Nazi persecution' (p. 6). This approach enables her to differentiate between varying degrees of complicity, to distinguish willing facilitation from forced conformity, and to identify the varying levels of choice available to individuals in different social and political contexts. In the introduction, the author provides a short definition of her concept. In a 'bystander society', 'fewer people are likely to stand up and act on "the courage of their convictions" in face of violence against those ousted from the community and vilified as "others"' (p. 3). In Nazi Germany, the social conditions that led to the formation of a 'bystander society' were established over the course of several years, rather than being present from the outset. Although her definition illustrates the complex relationship between different forms and spaces of violence and the social figure of the bystander, the concept of a 'bystander society' could have benefited from a more substantial engagement with the rich literature on the history of violence—especially if the manifold insights of the book are to be made applicable 'beyond the specific cases and period of Nazi rule' (p. 386).

By following individual personal accounts and using ego-documents like diaries, Mary Fulbrook aims to uncover patterns of social processes that fostered passivity in the face of different forms of violence in different spaces, such as the home, the street, or the occupied Baltic states. Because the book tells a linear story of the emergence of a 'bystander society' over time, it is chronologically structured and divided into two major chapters. The first covers the period between the First World War and 1938 and looks at how processes of social segregation were introduced, enacted, and internalized. Fulbrook shows that the majority of Germans quickly accepted the fundamental categorization of 'Aryans' and 'non-Aryans' introduced and consolidated by Nazi legislation during the 1930s. This is not a new argument, as Harald Welzer, to take one example, also believes that the social acceptance of a legal framework of absolute and unchangeable exclusion marked a fundamental shift in the way Germans saw themselves and legitimized their behaviour.[1] However, unlike perpetrator researchers, Fulbrook mostly focuses on the majority of Germans who were complicit by conforming, but who were not necessarily directly involved in perpetration.

Fulbrook's main source for the first part of the book is a collection of over 250 essays written for a competition initiated by a psychologist, a historian, and a sociologist at Harvard University in 1939. Participants could win up to $1,000 with a text on 'My life in Germany before and after 30 January 1933'.[2] About two thirds were written by educated

[1] Harald Welzer, *Täter: Wie aus ganz normalen Menschen Massenmörder werden* (Frankfurt am Main, 2005), 248.

[2] G. W. Allport, J. S. Bruner, and E. M. Jandorf, 'Personality under Social Catastrophe: Ninety Life-Histories of the Nazi Revolution', *Character & Personality: A Quarterly for Psychodiagnostic & Allied Studies*, 10 (1941), 1–22.

exiles and refugees who had been classified as Jewish by Nazi policy and were living in the United States at the time. The essays offer a unique perspective on the society of pre-war Germany because the narratives had not yet been shaped by the Holocaust. Although Fulbrook is careful to critique her sources, she does not mention the body of research on the history of these essays, and there is little information about the overall narratives presented in these texts.[3] Based on the Harvard essays, she reconstructs the practices and motivations of non-Jewish German bystanders through the lens of marginalized and self-marginalized exiles and emigrants who are, as Fulbrook argues, 'the best barometer of the historical significance of bystander passivity, conformity, and growing complicity' (p. 13). The production of knowledge about bystanding as a social practice is therefore based on what was classified as deviant in Nazi Germany. Fulbrook makes a strong case for the use of personal accounts, as this is the only way to access not only the changing social and emotional relations between Germans and those classified as 'non-Aryans', but also the changing subjectivities. Less convincing, however, is her assertion that opinion polls and surveys 'only provide snapshots, with evidence of specific attitudes on particular issues at certain moments; and the individuals whose views are recorded generally remain anonymous, simply seen as representatives of their class, gender, religion, or region' (p. 12). In my view, there is no contradiction between personal accounts and mass data; indeed, the Harvard study aimed to turn the essays into quantitative data points. By selecting certain essays and ego-documents, Fulbrook also presents her examples to the reader as representative of people of different ages, genders, and political affiliations.

In the second part of the book, when Fulbrook looks at the expansion of violence between 1938 and 1945, with a geographical focus on the Holocaust in the Baltic region, she gets closer to the worldviews and practices of the bystanders. Here she mostly uses letters and diaries written by non-Jewish Germans. Fulbrook manages to show how many Germans professed to feel ashamed at the ways in

[3] See e.g. Detlef Garz, *Von den Nazis vertrieben: Autobiographische Zeugnisse von Emigrantinnen und Emigranten. Das wissenschaftliche Preisausschreiben der Harvard Universität aus dem Jahr 1939* (Opladen, 2021); Christian Meyer, *(K)eine Grenze: Das Private und das Politische im Nationalsozialismus 1933–1940* (Berlin, 2020).

which people classified as 'non-Aryans' were treated and at the same time pleaded ignorance long before the war ended in 1945. This combination of admitting to feeling shame while denying any complicity or knowledge became a common narrative in post-war Germany, and was probably most prominently used by Albert Speer. This ignorance had to be actively constructed; it required effort to claim not to have known anything.

At times, the book seems to move away from the bystander category because of the many examples Mary Fulbrook presents. In the end, however, it all ties together, and it becomes clear that the figure of the bystander is crucial because it is through them and their behaviour that we can understand how the participation of most individuals across society was required to implement and enforce discriminatory categories in Nazi Germany. Fulbrook demonstrates that inaction in Nazi Germany was a form of action. In her conclusion, she identifies three factors to explain bystander behaviour: ignorance, impotence, and indifference, which differ in significance depending on the context. The book clearly shows that ignorance was 'actively produced and fostered' (p. 387) in cultural, personal, and structural ways, often entailing a conscious decision to look away. After the war, many Germans claimed that they had had to comply, or they would have been punished. This narrative of powerlessness changed over time, as it became clear from the 1960s onwards that the majority of Germans had agreed with Nazi policies and benefited from them in one way or another. At the same time, terror and repression were an integral part of German society, but also a 'sense of mutual distrust constrained many people into outward conformity' (p. 389). Indifference was, as Fulbrook argues, mostly a way to explain and legitimize inaction at the time rather than an excuse that was used later. For Fulbrook, antisemitism is not a convincing explanation for the inaction of bystanders in the face of violence, but rather the result of processes that 'actively created' indifference (p. 391), such as geographical and emotional segregation.

Mary Fulbrook has written an important and insightful book about the everyday history of violence in Nazi Germany. *Bystander Society* is impressive because it masterfully assembles a huge variety of sources and personal perspectives, binding them together with the concept of bystanding. I am curious to see whether the bystander concept will be applied to other historical examples and developed further. It remains to be hoped that the contemporary history of the United States and Germany will not turn into case studies of 'bystander societies' for future historians.

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YORAI LINENBERG, *Jewish Soldiers in Nazi Captivity: American and British Prisoners of War during the Second World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), 288 pp. ISBN 978 0 198 89278 6. £83.00

Yorai Linenberg's book deals with an apparent paradox: between 1939 and 1945, around 4,700 Jewish soldiers serving in the British and US armies were captured by the Germans; however, contrary to what one might expect from the National Socialist regime and its persecution of Jews, most of them survived the Second World War. Unlike almost all other Jews in the territories controlled by Nazi Germany, they were not murdered. The same is true of the roughly 13,000 Jewish POWs from France,[1] as well as the 2,000 or so who came from other countries.[2] In total, around 20,000 Jewish men thus survived the war as POWs (not 60,000, as Linenberg claims).

By contrast, Jewish soldiers serving in the Red Army were separated from other Soviet prisoners immediately after being captured and were murdered at assembly points and in transit camps. The *Wehrmacht* and Gestapo also searched for Jews among Soviet internees after their arrival in camps within the German Reich. These Jewish POWs were then released from military detention, transferred to concentration camps, and murdered.[3]

Translated by Jozef van der Voort (GHIL).

[1] Linenberg assumes that there were 55,000 French Jewish POWs (p. 5), but I take my estimate from Delphine Richard, 'Prisonniers de guerre juifs de l'armée française 1940–1945' (unpublished PhD thesis, Université Lyon II, 2022), abstract at [https://www.fondationshoah.org/recherche/prisonniers-de-guerre-juifs-de-larmee-francaise-1940-1945-delphine-richard], accessed 27 Jan. 2025.

[2] Rank-and-file Jewish soldiers from Poland were generally released from detention and later murdered in the Shoah; however, 1,000 Polish Jewish officers and up to 650 Jewish officers from Yugoslavia survived the Second World War as prisoners of the *Wehrmacht*. The same is true of several hundred Jewish POWs from Belgium and the Netherlands. Linenberg also names Canada, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand as countries of origin (p. 5).

[3] Rolf Keller, *Sowjetische Kriegsgefangene im Deutschen Reich 1941/1942: Behandlung und Arbeitseinsatz zwischen Vernichtungspolitik und kriegswirtschaftlichen Zwängen*, 2 vols. (Göttingen, 2011), ii. 110–15.

While the fate of Jewish POWs from the Soviet Union is relatively well studied and documented, it is only over the last twenty years that historians have begun to pay closer attention to non-Soviet Jewish soldiers in German captivity.[4] Some authors have studied non-Soviet Jewish POWs collectively in a bid to explain their extraordinary exclusion from the extermination of Europe's Jews,[5] while others have focused on Jewish prisoners from a particular country, most notably France.[6] The 1929 Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, whose terms were generally observed by the *Wehrmacht* in their dealings with non-Soviet POWs, is an important point of reference in all attempts to explain the phenomenon.[7]

Linenberg is deeply familiar with the current state of research on British and US Jews in German military captivity, and his extensive work in international archives has enabled him to assemble a superb source base. His introduction also offers an accurate and helpful overview of the German POW organization and how it changed between 1939 and 1945.

Linenberg divides the Jewish soldiers he studies into two major groups. The first of these is made up of 1,500 Palestinian Jewish

[4] The first studies on the subject were published nearly fifty years ago: Shmuel Krakowski, 'The Fate of Jewish Prisoners of War in the September 1939 Campaign', *Yad Vashem Studies*, 12 (1977), 297–333; Josef Lador-Lederer, 'World War II: Jews as Prisoners of War', *Israel Yearbook on Human Rights*, 10 (1980), 70–89; Yoav Gelber, 'Palestinian POWs in German Captivity', *Yad Vashem Studies*, 14 (1981), 89–137.

[5] Johanna Jacques, 'A "Most Astonishing" Circumstance: The Survival of Jewish POWs in German War Captivity during the Second World War', *Social and Legal Studies*, 30/3 (2021), 362–83; Rüdiger Overmans, 'Die Kriegsgefangenenpolitik des Deutschen Reiches 1939 bis 1945', in Jörg Echternkamp (ed.), *Die Deutsche Kriegsgesellschaft 1939 bis 1945*, vol. ii: *Ausbeutung, Deutungen, Ausgrenzung* (Munich, 2005), 729–875.

[6] Janine Doerry, *'Schützlinge des Marschalls'? Kriegsgefangene Juden aus Frankreich und ihre Familien während des Zweiten Weltkrieges* (Berlin, 2020); Richard, 'Prisonniers de guerre juifs'; Galit Haddad, '"Prisonniers de guerre français" ou "prisonniers de guerre juifs"? La captivité des combattants juifs et le rôle du régime de Vichy', *20 & 21: Revue d'histoire*, 155 (2022), 103–16.

[7] Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War (adopted 27 July 1929, entered into force 19 June 1931), 118 LNTS 343, at [https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/gc-pow-1929], accessed 27 Jan. 2025.

volunteers in the service of the British Mandate who were captured by the *Wehrmacht* in Greece in April 1941, promptly separated from other POWs, and held in Stalag VIII-B Lamsdorf and its associated *Arbeitskommandos* (work camps) from the end of July 1941 until its evacuation in February 1945. The fact that this group was able to assert itself, with the support of delegates from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the protecting power, was a product of necessity in the face of discrimination. Yet even though they were treated worse at times, Linenberg takes an overall positive view of their isolation from other British POWs, as he notes that they were the only cohort of Jewish soldiers in German detention to be recognized as a specific national and ethnic group.

The Palestinian Jews, who were detained together until their release, can be contrasted with the 700 British and 2,500 US Jews serving in every wing of the armed forces who were taken prisoner by German forces. Although they entered captivity alongside their non-Jewish comrades, during registration in the Oflags (officers' camps) and Stalags (where enlisted POWs and non-commissioned officers were held), all prisoners were asked what religion they belonged to. At that moment, if not before, the British and American Jews had to decide whether to hide or reveal their religious background, which was in any case listed on their ID discs. They were aware of National Socialist antisemitism, and more and more information was emerging during the war about the persecution and murder of Jews. Linenberg impressively describes the dilemma faced by these soldiers. What awaited them in German captivity? Would they be treated worse than their comrades? Were they going to their deaths?

Some Jewish soldiers stated their religious affiliation upon registration, others did not. In a few cases, the *Wehrmacht* applied psychological pressure, used physical violence, or turned to informers in a bid to uncover British and American captives who were hiding their Jewish identity. However, in both the early and closing phases of the war, it remained rare for Jewish POWs from the British and US armed forces who were successfully identified in this way to be separated from their non-Jewish comrades. In cases where the authorities tried to do so, non-Jewish detainees sometimes came together to protest against and ultimately prevent any such moves.

However, not only the *Wehrmacht*, but also the ICRC and the protecting powers believed that segregating prisoners in this way was compatible with the Geneva Convention. This opinion was based on Article 9 of the Convention, which specified that POWs 'of different races or nationalities' should be kept separate. However, in cases where prisoners were segregated, they were supposed to be treated equally; under Article 4, distinctions could only be made based on 'the military rank, the state of physical or mental health, the professional abilities, or the sex' of POWs. Complaints that prisoners were being treated unequally became a source of conflict between the German camp staff and the representatives elected by the detainees. The latter were backed by delegates from the ICRC and the protecting power during their occasional visits to the camps.

Thanks to his extensive source base and his comprehensive study of the lower levels of the POW organization—the point at which *Wehrmacht* personnel and Jewish prisoners directly interacted with each other—Linenberg is able to trace in detail and interpret day-to-day life in the camps, as well as the prisoners' negotiations with administrators, guards, and German civilians.

Linenberg devotes an entire chapter of his book to the question of what it meant to be a Jewish soldier in National Socialist detention, and the associated emergence of a collective Jewish identity. His study addresses the experience of being taken prisoner—including, at times, that of segregation—along with the increased importance in captivity of religion and culture, deaths and funerals, and encounters with Jewish civilians who were entirely vulnerable to persecution and murder. Linenberg's account reveals the full spectrum of Jewishness and how it changed during captivity. At times, however, he tends to lionize his subjects, and his text would have benefited from a more critical stance towards his sources.

In order to explain the survival of British, Palestinian, and American soldiers in German captivity, Linenberg develops a complex line of argument. He begins by addressing standard explanatory approaches that he considers inadequate, including the theory that POWs in German camps were generally treated according to their nationality and its position in a hierarchy of nations—a hierarchy informed by either national conservative or racist ideas, depending on which interpretation one adopts. At the top of this hierarchy were the UK and the USA, with Russia, or the Soviet Union, at the bottom, and this ranking was also applied to Jewish prisoners.

Scholars have also based their arguments on the principle of reciprocity: if one side mistreats its POWs, the other can commit reprisals against the enemy soldiers it holds in custody. Reciprocity can have a deterrent effect, but can also result in an escalation spiral. Article 2 of the Geneva Convention expressly forbids reprisal measures. Linenberg highlights fears that German soldiers held captive by the Allies might be subjected to reprisals, and suggests that this played an important role in encouraging the *Wehrmacht* to adhere to the Geneva Convention. As a result, he suspects that this has led many historians to overestimate the importance of reciprocity.

Another explanatory approach addressed by Linenberg—one espoused above all by Rüdiger Overmans and Johanna Jacques—is based on the national conservative values of the personnel working in the *Wehrmacht*'s POW organization. Linenberg points out that these values have not been clearly defined, and for the purposes of his argument, he restricts the definition to '"chivalric warfare" between honourable foes' (p. 21). According to many scholars, this was an attitude adopted towards all non-Soviet enemies of the German Reich, including Jewish POWs.

Linenberg then uses this definition as the basis for his analysis of the collection of POW organization orders issued by the *Oberkommando*, or High Command, of the *Wehrmacht*, of which very few expressly refer to Jewish prisoners. As a result, an order issued on 15 December 1944 enjoys a particularly prominent role. It primarily specified that all non-Soviet Jews in German captivity should be separated from other members of their own armed forces.[8] Apart from that, however, Jewish POWs had to be treated in essentially the same way as their non-Jewish comrades—including a stipulation that they should not be marked out in any way, for example with a yellow star.[9]

[8] Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv, RW 6/270, Befehlssammlung 48, order 876, 15 Dec. 1944; reproduced in Doerry, *Schützlinge*, 277.

[9] Due to a translation error, Linenberg assumes that Jewish POWs *were* to be marked out. The order states: 'Von einer besonderen Kennzeichnung der Juden ist abzusehen'; in English: 'Jews are not to be specially marked'.

Linenberg stresses that the order of 15 December 1944 must be seen in the context of the increasing radicalization of general POW policies within the German Reich. He cites several other orders issued at Hitler's behest that applied to non-Soviet Allied POWs and that were carried out even though they clearly breached the Geneva Convention. He asserts that this radicalization began on the Western Front with the *Kommandobefehl* (Commando Order) of 18 October 1942, which mandated that captured commandos should immediately be handed over to the *Sicherheitsdienst* (Security Service). In this way, they were denied POW status and thus left unprotected by the Geneva Convention.

In contrast to orders of this kind, Linenberg argues, there were no top-level orders—namely from Hitler—specifying how non-Soviet Jewish prisoners were to be treated. This can be inferred not just from the fact that no such orders have been preserved in the archives, but also from the tendency of POW organization personnel to follow orders issued by the *Wehrmacht* leadership, even when this involved breaking the law. Nonetheless, Linenberg sees a crucial difference between the POW organization and almost every other institution of the National Socialist state, in that its personnel did not 'work towards the Führer';[10] in other words, they did not show any initiative in anticipating Hitler's will and implementing it independently. Linenberg ascribes this particularity to the national conservative values that dominated the organization.

Linenberg offers some additional reflections on the final phase of the war. He points out that although Himmler gradually brought the POW organization under his control between July and October 1944, the order of 15 December 1944 nonetheless confirmed that non-Soviet Jewish prisoners were to remain in the custody of the *Wehrmacht* and—apart from being segregated—should be treated the same as their non-Jewish comrades. By way of explanation, Linenberg suggests that the new head of the POW organization (the high-ranking SS General Gottlob Berger) and other senior officials were searching for ways to escape punishment in the event of

However, Linenberg translates this as: 'Special labelling of Jews is to be foreseen' (pp. 144, 207).

[10] Ian Kershaw, '"Working towards the Führer": Reflections on the Nature of the Hitler Dictatorship', *Contemporary European History*, 2/2 (1993), 103–18.

an Allied victory, or to receive only a mild penalty. He argues that they strategically adapted their behaviour based on the foreseeable scenario of a German defeat, ensuring the continued protection of non-Soviet Jewish POWs.

Linenberg underscores his claim that the POW organization did not 'work towards the Führer' by suggesting that the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* (Reich Security Main Office) and the Nazi Party exerted continuous pressure for POW status to be removed from Jewish soldiers. This seems plausible, but unfortunately, Linenberg's evidence is problematic: he refers to statements made after the war by Adolf Westhoff and Theodor Krafft, two high-ranking *Wehrmacht* officers who may have testified to this pressure retrospectively in order to cast themselves in a more positive light in the face of ongoing investigations and the threat of prosecution.

The book also includes a contradictory case study: in February 1945, 350 US prisoners were transferred from Stalag IX-B Bad Orb to an SS forced labour camp in Berga an der Elster, in accordance with an order received by the Stalag commandant. It remains unclear why these 350 prisoners included 280 Jews. Was the Stalag commandant following SS instructions, or acting on his own initiative? Seventy of the transferred soldiers died from the appalling conditions in the forced labour camp and during its later evacuation. To explain why this is the only recorded case of its kind, Linenberg points once again to the aforementioned fear among officials at all levels of the POW organization that they would be held personally to account in the event of a German defeat. From this, he concludes that a values-based, chivalric attitude ultimately prevailed in the organization.

However, the national conservative values cited by Linenberg did not result in the principle of 'chivalric warfare' being applied to Soviet soldiers—or to Italian military internees, who were seen as traitors. Linenberg's study thus confirms that a moral double standard was in force in the POW organization just as much as in the *Wehrmacht* more widely. We thus cannot speak of a 'clean' POW organization, analogous to the myth of the 'clean *Wehrmacht*'.[11]

[11] Ulrike Jureit and Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung (eds.), *Verbrechen der Wehrmacht: Dimensionen des Vernichtungskrieges 1941–1944. Ausstellungskatalog* (Hamburg, 2002), 14.

Linenberg's book is cohesively constructed, highly readable, and offers important building blocks for better understanding the paradoxical survival of Jewish prisoners of war. He may be guilty of over-generalizing when he takes what is true of British and American Jews in German captivity and applies it to all other non-Soviet Jewish POWs; however, the sharpness of his arguments results in many different points of connection for future scholarly research.

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SAMANTHA K. KNAPTON, *Occupiers, Humanitarian Workers, and Polish Displaced Persons in British-Occupied Germany* (London: Bloomsbury, 2023), 264 pp. ISBN 978 1 350 18925 6. £85.00

Samantha Knapton's study contributes to the history of post-war displacement. Taking a chronological approach, Knapton examines multiple organizations' evolving policies towards Polish displaced persons (DPs) from 1945 to 1951. By reassessing sources on British post-war relief, she traces major shifts in international humanitarianism, particularly the transitions from repatriation to rehabilitation, from rehabilitation to resettlement, and the reclassification of DPs as refugees. She focuses on key organizations such as the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA, 1943–7), its successor, the International Refugee Organization (1946–52), and the eventual transfer of DP administration to the German authorities in July 1950.

Seeking to understand how Polish DPs 'were influenced by those whom they saw as protectors from the start: the British' (p. 178), Knapton offers new insights into the history of Poles in Germany and British–Polish relations. As the book's title suggests, she highlights three key groups involved in Polish DPs' experiences in British-occupied Germany: military personnel (the 'occupiers'), welfare workers, and the DPs themselves. While Knapton asserts that 'wherever possible, the voices of Polish DPs have been presented' (p. 180), the book's most original contributions emerge from its focus on those caught 'in the middle', that is, between top-down military decisions and bottom-up DP reactions. In particular, she convincingly presents the roles of female welfare workers, such as Rhoda Dawson, Susan Pettiss, Kanty Cooper, and Francesca Wilson, drawing on personal collections, memoirs, letters, and diaries.

One of the book's key findings is the contrast between military personnel and welfare workers in their treatment of DPs. While the military categorized DPs strictly by ethnicity or nationality, 'leaving no room to distinguish individual DPs' (p. 136), welfare workers engaged with them as individuals. Some, like Rhoda Dawson, even continued their welfare work beyond the camps. From this intermediary perspective, Knapton reveals the extent of Polish DPs' unwillingness to return to Poland; how this was related to pre- and post-war concepts of 'Polishness' (p. 33), how few other options Polish DPs had; and how at the same time the British zone was 'particularly desperate for the Polish DPs to repatriate for a number of reasons' (p. 103).

The book examines the people 'in the middle' who, according to the author, 'made an impact on the day-to-day lives within the camps' (p. 4). Knapton considers an impressive range of sources to support this claim, but the lived experiences of Polish DPs remain surprisingly underexplored. While the book's focus on Polish DPs is innovative and offers valuable insights into post-war displacement policies and German migration history, it lacks substantial engagement with Polish DP biographies. Given the explicit emphasis on occupiers, humanitarian workers, and displaced persons, the absence of DP voices is notable.

Divided into seven thematic chapters, the book's core arguments are most effectively developed in chapters two, three, and four. Chapter two explores how Polish DPs formulated an idealized vision of post-war Poland that diverged from reality, shaped by 'pre-war elite rhetoric with a heavy focus on anti-Soviet views coupled with wartime experiences that . . . took root in the British zone in strong opposition to their former Allies' (p. 55). As Knapton summarizes, Polish DPs insisted 'that the Poland they had been presented with at the end of the Second World War was not their Poland. They did not recognize it as their home, and many felt they could not return' (p. 78). Consequently, the British authorities viewed them as paradoxical: 'longing for home but refusing to repatriate' (p. 105). Since repatriation was not the preferred option for many Polish DPs, chapter three examines everyday life in DP camps. It introduces one of the book's central arguments: the formation of special relationships between DPs and humanitarian workers. Camp life, described as 'taxing and chaotic' (p. 70), gradually transformed statistics into people and names into faces for welfare workers. Chapter four further develops this argument by distinguishing between the carers (welfare workers) and the protectors (British military officials) in Polish DP camps. Knapton demonstrates how this division was deeply gendered, reflecting broader trends in the 'masculinization of relief work' (p. 87). Women were assigned caring roles, while men assumed protective responsibilities, a dynamic ultimately 'infantilizing the DPs' (p. 88).

One of the book's most significant contributions is its analysis of hierarchies within the DP camps. These hierarchies were shaped both from above, as seen in UNRRA chief Frederick Morgan's decision to separate Poles and Jews from others in an 'unhappy continuation of wartime policies' (p. 91), and from below, by Polish DPs themselves. Knapton argues that divisions among Poles were 'fuelled by British policies' (p. 100).

Throughout the book, Knapton traces the stereotyping and typecasting of Polish DPs, emphasizing their disproportionate association with criminality. In German newspapers, Polishness was frequently linked to housing problems and criminal behaviour, with accusations including 'anti-Semitic (black-market activities) or anti-Slavic (robbery, assault, murder, and sexual crimes) stories about criminality, echoing the British press' own depictions' (p. 169). The British military similarly labelled Polish DPs a 'troublesome "nuisance" in 1945' (p. 169).

The book ultimately explores Polish DPs' options for leaving the DP camps, for instance in European volunteer worker schemes, or through initiatives such as 'Operation Carrot', 'Operation Westward Ho!', and 'Operation Black Diamond' (p. 100). Alarmingly, Knapton concludes that between July 1947 and December 1951, 'more people died or disappeared than were repatriated from the British zone' (p. 159).

Using the Polish DP experience as a focal point, Knapton traces 'how the co-construction of aid operations by humanitarian organizations and military authorities in the immediate post-war era has shaped our understanding of humanitarian relief' and effectively illustrates 'how the best intentions can sometimes lead to ruin' (p. 9).

Although compact in scope, Knapton's book is meticulously researched and analytically sharp. While some sections suffer from repetition, the study remains engaging and very well written. There are a few illustrations and tables in the book that further clarify the findings and make them easier to understand. This excellent study will certainly be of great value to scholars of European and Polish contemporary history, migration studies, and displacement studies. It should not be overlooked, as it encourages further research, particularly into Polish archives, where (more) autobiographical perspectives on Polish DPs may yet be uncovered.

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SEBASTIAN KOCH, *Identitätskrisen nach dem Ende des Britischen Empire: Zur kulturellen Neu-Verortung in Kanada, Australien und Aotearoa Neuseeland*, Bedrohte Ordnungen, 18 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2023), xiii + 509 pp. ISBN 978 3 161 61481 1 (open access e-book); ISBN 978 3 161 61480 4 (hardback), €89.00

'The whole point of writing a history about a country is so that we can liberate ourselves from the dead hand of the past. The whole point of knowing about the past of humanity in Australia is to prevent all of us, the Aborigines, the British, the Europeans, and the Asians, from being doomed to go on repeating the past.'[1] This quote from a lecture given by the eminent Australian historian Manning Clark in July 1987 could well have been part of the published version of the PhD thesis by Sebastian Koch on crises of identity in Australia, Canada, and New Zealand after the end of the British Empire.[2] It speaks of the 'dead hand of the past' which haunted the former dominions or white settler colonies in the wake of the attempts by what many from the 1950s to the 1970s still called the 'mother country' to turn to Europe and join the European Economic Community. Clark names the different groups—Aborigines, British, Europeans, and Asians—in the sequence of their settling the land, and calls on his listeners to look at history in order to avoid 'being doomed to go on repeating the past.' Koch, however, goes beyond the purely national perspective Clark took and presents a transnational study of collective notions of identity in Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. As mentioned on the back cover of the book, his aim is to find out which of these notions were apt for the future.

Koch's book is one of the outcomes of the second phase of the Collaborative Research Centre 923 'Threatened Orders—Societies under Stress' that, between 2015 and 2019, looked at the agency of actors in the re-ordering of societies.[3] Not least, therefore, the author refers to

[1] C. Manning Clark, *Writing a History of Australia*, Occasional Papers (Northern Territory Library Service), 8 (Darwin, 1989), 6–7.

[2] Koch's book is available in open access at [https://doi.org/10.1628/978-3-16-161481-1].

[3] See [https://uni-tuebingen.de/forschung/forschungsschwerpunkte/sonderforschungsbereiche/sfb-923/forschungsprofil/#c1222816] and [https://threatened-orders.com], accessed 5 Jan. 2025. In the context of the study at

this concept again and again. In some contexts, this is very convincing, while in others the study could well have done without it. The same is true for some of the very long footnotes. What is impressive is the enormous amount of literature that the author has analysed, as well as the many archives he has gone to in order to find out how people in the former dominions or white settler colonies came to terms with the challenge that 'coming of age' implied for their collective identities and their self-perception. Based on Anthony G. Hopkins' call for post-colonial experiences in white settler colonies to also be analysed in the context of postcolonial studies,[4] Koch starts with a concise introduction in which he points to the fact that *formal* independence did not always mean *effective* independence, especially when looking at connections in economic, foreign policy, and cultural terms (p. 19). The latter are of particular interest to Sebastian Koch. As a consequence, economic and foreign policy entanglements only play a very minor role in his analysis, which is a pity, but understandable, as they would have filled another book. Nevertheless, it might have been helpful if the author's introduction had elaborated a little more on how he was going to use his many sources and his rich basis of research literature to make his argument, and why in his view economic or foreign policy entanglements could mostly be left aside in his study.

After his introduction, Koch focuses on the context, looking at issues of the 'End of Empire', the search for new identities, and theoretical concepts from postcolonial studies to theories of identity. Consistently taking a transnational perspective, the author is able to convincingly show the overarching crises of identity in Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, but at the same time misses out on some peculiarities of the three countries. A particularly notable further omission is the impact of the post-Second World War migration of people of non-British European and, later, Asian origin that Clark mentioned in his 1987 lecture. Although people from Ukraine, Croatia, Greece, and later Vietnam

hand, it might even have been useful if the author had reflected on the extent to which the societies in Australia, Canada, and New Zealand were really under threat (*Bedrohung*), or whether 'in danger' (*gefährdet*) might not have been the more appropriate wording.

[4] Anthony G. Hopkins, 'Globalisation and Decolonisation', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 45/5 (2017), 729–45.

and China did not shape the collective identities of the whole of Australia, Canada, or New Zealand, they nevertheless had a significant impact on at least parts of these countries. As words mean different things to different people, a more specific analysis of what the terms 'Britishness', 'whiteness', and 'family values' meant to these people, as well as those of Aboriginal or British descent, could furthermore have led to a more differentiated perspective on words that Koch so often uses in a very generalized manner.

In his third part, the author focuses on the cultural cringe in the three former dominions. His focus is on fears of Americanization (mainly in Canada and New Zealand), the ambivalent experience of distance, and the role of historiography. In order to avoid being accused of focusing too much on an academic or elitist discourse, as in an analysis of the role of the Massey Commission appointed on 8 April 1949 to investigate the state of arts and culture in Canada, Koch tries to include the voices of 'ordinary citizens', but he is not really successful in this, probably because he does not properly reflect on how much 'letters to the editor'—his main source in this context—truly reflect the 'voice' of ordinary people. Furthermore, Koch's use of such letters does not follow a systematic form of analysis. Instead, he uses many of them to confirm findings he has drawn from his rich knowledge of the research literature in the field. The author's discussion of the role of historians is more successful. It is exciting to see how historians like Manning Clark or Kenneth Sinclair tried to gain influence on identity politics and social change in Australia as well as New Zealand. Although they sought to include the history of both Aboriginal Australia and Maori New Zealand—or 'Aotearoa', as the Maori call their country—Koch convincingly shows in this context how far from really giving a voice to the First Nations these historians nevertheless remained. The fact that the author calls this subchapter a digression and mainly focuses on the two historians mentioned, rather than presenting a full analysis, for example of the debates in the Australian cultural journal *Meanjin*, is typical of a book that gives many great insights, but does not really present the in-depth discussion that many aspects such as this one would have deserved.

The fourth and longest part of the study deals with the search for a new identity or identities, in order to overcome the cringe discussed in part three. Here Koch's focus is on more specific debates and discourses in the three former colonies, such as the issues of a new flag or a new national anthem, the 1967 International and Universal Exposition in Montreal (Expo 67), as well as debates on whether the three countries should become republics in order to sever their ties with Great Britain. The study is strongest when the author focuses on in-depth empirical analysis, such as the debate on the replacement of the Canadian Red Ensign with the Maple Leaf Flag (which he could, however, have linked to similar discussions in Australia),[5] or the debates on national anthems in Australia and New Zealand. The issues of bi- or multiculturalism are also interesting, but suffer from the above-mentioned weakness that the author did not really include non-British migrants in the story. This becomes specifically clear when Koch talks about Maori fears of losing their status as *tangata whenua* (original people) in a multicultural New Zealand (p. 417). Similarly, it is not enough just to present the front cover image of Maitland Steinkopf, head of the Manitoba Centennial Corporation, in a constructed 'unity in diversity' costume made up of an indigenous feather headdress, a Hungarian traditional costume, German lederhosen, a Ukrainian sash, Dutch clogs, and an Irish shillelagh (p. 375) without giving at least a rough analysis of the idea(s) behind it.

In his well-structured summary, Koch looks back at the opportunities and threats that the three countries faced. He reviews again the debates on nationalism—especially among the elite rather than the 'ordinary people'—and, in reference to the Collaborative Research Centre in Tübingen, the attempts to re-order society. The efforts to establish multiculturalism as a 'new myth', collaborative approaches between the three countries, and the long shadow of the empire are the last three aspects the authors picks up again in his final chapter. Koch is probably right that 'Britishness', whatever it meant and means to different people, continued (and continues) to have a strong appeal in all three of the countries he investigates, and not least therefore, this reviewer would have wished to have seen more of a *longue durée* perspective on identity constructions in this study. As the book stands, it

[5] See Carol A. Foley, *The Australian Flag: Colonial Relic or Contemporary Icon?* (Leichhardt, NSW, 1996), one of the few titles missing from Koch's study.

almost looks as if nothing before 1945 was really relevant, either for Australia, Canada, or New Zealand. This is a pity. Sebastian Koch's study is an important milestone in the study of former dominions or white settler colonies in the post-Second World War era, but it is not successful in all its particulars. Primary sources should not primarily serve just an illustrative purpose (e.g. p. 430). Instead, they should form the empirical basis for results that the author has drawn from his analysis. Unfortunately, this is not always the case in this study, which nevertheless forms an important starting point for readers in the Germanophone parts of the world.

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