

Preface

The overseas empires of Western Europe shaped the history of all of the continents and peoples of the world during the half millennium from their origins in the mid-fifteenth-century to their final dissolution in the mid-to-late twentieth-century. The colonial empires of the West—Portugal, Spain, France, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Italy and the United States—claimed possession at one time or another all of the Americas and Australia, ninety-nine percent of Polynesia, ninety percent of Africa and nearly fifty percent of Asia. These Western colonial powers, which together constituted less than two percent of the surface of the world, created the first maritime empires that straddled the globe. In so doing Western colonialism dispatched European colonialists to every inhabitable region, implanted and disseminated Christianity throughout the colonial world and exported the languages, laws, institutions, technology and values of the West to nearly all lands, peoples, and cultures worldwide. This political, economic, and cultural expansionism reshaped the non-European societies and cultures with which it came into sustained contact. One can easily understand that the history and very nature of Western colonialism has been a subject of great controversy and conflicting moral claims. This history is not a closed and forgotten chapter without relevance to the problems and promise of today. It remains a fascinating subject open to interpretation and vigorous debate.

The *Encyclopedia of Western Colonialism since 1450* provides the most comprehensive, accessible, and international reference work about the entirety of Western colonialism from the Portuguese voyages of Prince Henry the Navigator in the fifteenth-century to the making of feature films about British colonialism in India in the twenty-first-century. The Encyclopedia presents over four hundred articles in three volumes. These articles are arranged alphabetically to assist readers in finding topics of interest easily and quickly. This work has been designed, first and foremost, as a teaching and learning resource for teachers and students. In the first volume an alphabetical list of articles is followed by the synoptic outline, which organizes all of the articles by topics and subtopics, providing readers with a map of the major subjects within the history, geography, and ideas of Western colonialism. More than three hundred maps, pictures and photographs as well as additional charts and tables appear throughout the volumes to illustrate and support the articles. Each article includes references to related articles in the three volumes and a bibliography of sources as suggested for additional reading. Readers will also find a careful selection of many of the most important documents related to the history of Western colonialism. These primary or historical sources are coordinated with the articles. Readers may explore general themes in

the articles and then read the related documents to obtain a more nuanced and in-depth understanding of the issues. There is a glossary of key terms, which provides understandable definitions and explanations of the more specialized, technical and foreign words. A comprehensive index of names, events, places, and key words is found at the end of the third volume.

The Encyclopedia is designed to provide reliable and sophisticated historical knowledge for students, teachers, general readers, and scholars. The articles in this reference work are original works of scholarship and synthesis written explicitly for this project. These articles are written by distinguished scholars and noted specialists—historians, anthropologists, political scientists, geographers, philosophers, sociologists, artists, and economists—and have been carefully reviewed and edited in a common style for easy access by all curious and engaged readers. Particularly important topics are explored in thoughtful synthetic essays of 4,000 to 6,000 words. Some of the subjects of these essays include the separate Western colonial empires such as the Portuguese, French and British Empires; the ideologies that justified expansion, imperialism and colonialism; the impact of Western colonialism on particular non-European peoples and cultures; and the modern theories that attempt to explain the phenomena of colonialism and imperialism. There are more concise articles about significant individuals, events, places, institutions, commodities, and much more related to colonialism. These articles range in size in incremental lengths from 500 to 4,000 words.

The *Encyclopedia of Western Colonialism since 1450* is not only a comprehensive reference work that embraces world history during the past five centuries, it is as well an international intellectual project. The associate editors who organized and compiled this work are a diverse group whose national origins are The Netherlands, Great Britain, Nigeria, and the United States. The more than 240 contributors who wrote articles for this work are scholars who originally came from, or now live and teach in the Americas, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. Because this reference work is truly international, it is also diverse in its approach to ideas, interpretations, and intellectual problems related to the history of Western colonialism. The articles provide not simply facts and summaries of facts about the colonial past but current scholarly interpretations. Because scholars disagree about a number of issues, there is no uniformity of opinion in these articles and across these volumes. All is not confusion and chaos, however, in this field of study or in this reference work. Readers will find considerable consensus on a number of important historical developments and topics and they will discover the fewer but more difficult issues where disagreement exists and what those different and sometimes opposing interpretations are.

WESTERN COLONIALISM

As most of the articles in the Encyclopedia point out, such terms and concepts as “colonialism,” and “imperialism” are far from simple and self-evident words that all scholars define in the same way. Because the history of Western colonialism and imperialism is politically, economically, and culturally relevant to contemporary issues and, therefore, controversial, these terms themselves are no less contested. Nevertheless, it is possible to provide cautious yet useful definitions. Throughout human history empires have been defined by the political domination of one or more territories by a powerful polity or state, often called an imperial metropole. *Imperial* in the English language was borrowed from the old French term *emperial*, which was derived from the Latin word *imperāre*, meaning to command, to rule and from the word *imperium*, meaning power, mastery, and sovereignty. Imperialism can be defined as the domination and rule by a strong state over a subordinate state, territory and people that exist beyond the boundaries

of the imperial metropole. Again throughout history, empires have possessed *colonies*. Once again the English word came directly or indirectly from the Latin verb *colere*, meaning to cultivate and till the land. The Romans established *coloniae* as their empire expanded, including *Colônia Agrippina* or what is today called the city of Cologne, a beautiful German city on the Rhine. Colonies are dependent territories and populations that are possessed and ruled by an empire. “Colonialism” refers to the processes, policies and ideologies used by metropolises to establish, conquer, settle, govern, and economically exploit colonies. In the age of Western colonization, as well as before, colonization meant not only ruling other peoples but also sending one’s own people to settle a foreign territory, or colony.

The history of Western colonialism and imperialism since the fifteenth-century has been organized and classified by historians and scholars in a number of different ways. The political scientist Professor David B. Abernethy provides one of the best or least problematic schemas. By creating a chronology of five periods, Abernethy reminds us that the history of Western colonialism was not a simple “rise and fall” nor the once standard two-stage chronology of “Early” and “Modern” European empires. Abernethy’s classification demonstrates some of the complexity that accompanied Western expansion, colonialism and imperialism, contractions, and, finally, decolonization. Abernethy presents the chronology in Table 1.

In the first phase, European oceanic expansion led to the possession of a significant portion of the Americas (and claims to the entire hemisphere) through conquest and colonization, as well as the establishment of coastal enclaves and trading-post settlements on the coasts of West and East Africa, Arabia, India, China, the Spice Islands, and Japan. Western colonialism during these centuries, however, was largely an Atlantic endeavor. In the East, European traders and missionaries integrated themselves into the larger and richer economies of the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. The European settler societies in the Americas during the fifty-year period from 1775 to 1825, as part of the wider Atlantic Age of Revolution, rebelled against imperial rule and established independent nation-states in the United States, the former colonies of Spanish America and Portuguese Brazil. The descendants of European colonists were not the only revolutionaries in this second phase, a time of imperial contraction. Native Americans, Mestizos, Mulattos, and African slaves rebelled as well during this period. In the French sugar island of Saint Domingue in the Caribbean, a slave rebellion in the 1790s defeated European armies and established the black republic of Haiti in 1804.

Western Colonial and Imperial Phases			
Phase	Duration	Direction	Territorial focus
1	1415–1775	Expansion	The Americas
2	1775–1825	Contraction	The Americas
3	1825–1914	Expansion	Africa, Asia, the Pacific
4	1914–1940	Unstable Equilibrium	The Middle East
5	1940–1980	Contraction	Africa, Asia, the Pacific

SOURCE: David B. Abernethy, *The Dynamics of Global Dominance: European Overseas Empires, 1415-1980* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), Table 2.2, p. 24.

Table 1.

The Extent of European Colonialism, 1939				
	Great Britain	France	Belgium	The Netherlands
Area of Colonies (Square Miles):	13,100,000	4,300,000	940,000	1,100,000
Population of Colonies:	470,000,000	65,000,000	13,000,000	66,000,000
Colonial Territory of the Four Empires:				19,440,000
Colonial Population of the Four Empires:				614,000,000

SOURCE: Mary Evelyn Townsend, *European Colonial Expansion Since 1871* (Chicago: J.P. Lippincott Company, 1941), p. 19. This table does not include the Portuguese, Spanish, and Italian overseas colonies. Just prior to the Second World War the populations of all of the European colonies constituted somewhat more than one third of the total population of the world.

Table 2.

During the third phase, what is often called the age of “modern imperialism,” a new period of European expansion took off in Africa, Asia, and the Pacific. Europeans had long been established in trading “factories” and castles on the coasts of Africa and Asia but in the nineteenth century they used these enclaves as bases to move into the interior of these great continents and seize political control. During this phase of expansion the disparity of power between Europeans and non-Europeans grew as a result of the Industrial Revolution, which provided European empires with steamships and gunboats, repeating rifles and machine guns, railroads, new tropical medicines, as well as attractive and seductive manufactured goods. Between 1824 and 1870 the European empires added approximately five million square miles of new territory in Africa, India, Australia and New Zealand, and Southeast Asia. Between 1878 and 1913 Europeans acquired an additional eight million square miles, or roughly one-sixth of the land surface of the world.

During the fourth phase, World War I (1914–1918) and the Great Depression of the 1930s weakened Western Europe and European colonial power and legitimacy. The World War marked the end of German overseas colonialism and began the process within the British Empire of devolving power to the settlement colonies of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. The war, on the other hand, led to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East, which permitted the British and the French, under the League of Nations mandate system, to move into Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Trans-Jordan, and Iraq. This period of unstable equilibrium saw both an erosion of European colonial power and self-confidence as well as some new imperial expansion. By 1939 the European empires had reached the zenith of their territorial and political control. Table 2 provides an accounting of four of the European empires by that year.

During the late nineteenth-century and the first four decades of the twentieth-century the rise of popular nationalist movements in colonial India, Egypt, Indonesia, Vietnam, and in other European colonies prepared the way for decolonization after World War II. European colonialism was also threatened by the rise of powerful rivals such as Imperial

Japan, Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union and the United States that sought the creation of a new international order.

World War II (1939–1945) abruptly began the last phase of Western colonialism. The war dramatically assaulted the key European imperial powers, France, the Netherlands and Great Britain, at home and overseas. Most of France and all of the Netherlands were occupied by Hitler's Germany in 1940, while Britain's cities were bombed and its once formidable financial resources were bled dry. Abroad German armies threatened Egypt and Japanese armies seized French Indochina, Dutch Indonesia, and British Singapore and Malaya (as well as the American colony of the Philippines). Although German and Japanese militarism and imperialism were defeated in the war as a result of the intervention of the United States and the Soviet Union and the French, Dutch and British reestablished colonial rule in their Asian colonies after 1945, Europeans could no longer sustain foreign rule by force or collaboration. Colonial nationalists were determined to attain independence by peaceful negotiation or, if necessary, violent revolution. Thus, between 1940 and 1980 more than eighty colonies achieved their independence and were recognized as sovereign nation-states.

This brief outline of the history of Western colonialism is offered as a starting point in thinking about this vast subject. As readers explore and examine the articles in the Encyclopedia they will find the information, ideas, interpretations, and sources which will give them the tools to craft their own understanding of Western colonialism.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The *Encyclopedia of Western Colonialism since 1450* has taken over three years, and the creativity and hard work of hundreds of women and men, to complete. The title page lists all of the individuals involved in this project but I would like to give special attention and express my gratitude to a few people who were indispensable to the success of this work. Hélène Potter, our publisher at Macmillan Reference, developed the idea for the project, organized the editorial board, and guided and shaped our efforts with her unmatched knowledge of the world of publishing and her great interest in history from the beginning to the end. The first Editor in Chief, B.R. "Tom" Tomlinson, Dean of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, laid the foundation of the Encyclopedia by beginning the selection of the editorial board and identifying the key themes and topics the project needed to cover. When circumstances required Tom to withdraw from this position, he asked me to take over. Jenai Mynatt, our primary editor at Macmillan has worked with the editorial board and the contributors on a daily basis. Jenai has guided and pushed this project to conclusion with amazing patience, good cheer, professionalism, and skill. Judith Culligan, our chief copy editor, fact checked, improved our grammar, and transformed hundreds of different writing styles into one clear and consistent style. Finally, Professor Dennis Hidalgo (Adelphi University and Book Review Editor, *Latin American History, H-Web*) was brought on as a consultant to help us find and recruit scholars to write articles, particularly for the more difficult topics. Dennis enthusiastically used his people and electronic communication skills to search the world for potential contributors.

My colleagues in history, the five associate editors, were indispensable in guiding the project, developing broad themes and specific entries, recommending and vetting contributors, and reading the articles that they commissioned and guiding these pieces through the process of revision and rewriting. Below are very brief bibliographies of the members of the editorial board.

Editor in Chief Thomas Benjamin is professor of history at Central Michigan University. He has published several books in English and Spanish about modern Mexico and the Mexican Revolution including: *A Rich Land, A Poor People: Politics and Society in Modern Chiapas* (1989 and 1996), *Historia regional de la Revolución mexicana: La provincia enter 1910–1929* (1996), *La Revolución: Mexico's Great Revolution as Memory*,

Myth and History (2000), and *La Revolución Mexicana: Memoria, mito e historia*, 2003 and 2005). His primary interest and vision of research and writing in recent years has broadened to embrace the colonial Atlantic World. In 2001 he co-edited *The Atlantic World in the Age of Empire*. His long-awaited history of the Atlantic World, *The Atlantic World: Europeans, Africans and Indians & Their Shared History* will be published by Cambridge University Press in 2007.

Benjamin C. Fortna is Senior Lecturer in the Modern History of the Near and Modern East in the History Department at the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London. He is a highly respected scholar of the Ottoman Empire. He has written *Imperial Classroom: Islam, Education and the State in the Late Ottoman Empire* (2002) and has co-edited *The Modern Middle East: A Sourcebook* (2006). Professor Fortna is currently working on a history of reading and the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic.

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Anthony McFarlane is Professor of Latin American History in the History Department and in the School of Comparative American Studies at the University of Warwick, in the United Kingdom. He has published a number of books in English and Spanish about Spanish American history including *Columbia before Independence: Economy, Society and Politics under Bourbon Rule* (1993), *The British in the Americas, 1480–1815* (1994), and as co-editor *Reform and Insurrection in Bourbon New Granada and Peru* (1990). Professor McFarlane is increasingly interested in the comparative history of empires and is currently working on a book on the wars of independence in Spanish America.

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On behalf of Hélène, Jenai, Benjamin, Hendrik, Chima, Anthony and Eileen, and the more than 240 colleagues who contributed articles to this work, I invite readers to explore the fascinating and troubling issues and topics of exploration and expansion, colonization, resistance, slavery, evangelization, and much more in the *Encyclopedia of Western Colonialism since 1450*.

Thomas Benjamin

Editor in Chief