

Colonial Connections, 1815–1845: Patronage, the Information Revolution and Colonial Government. By Zoe Laidlaw. Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York, 2005. 241 pp. US price: \$80.00. ISBN 0-7190-6918-1.

COLONIAL CONNECTIONS IS A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION to the history of early nineteenth-century British imperialism. It is well researched and well written, offering a compelling and nuanced interpretation of metropolitan power and colonial governance in the 1820s and 1830s particularly. Published as part of the ‘Studies in Imperialism’ series, Zoe Laidlaw’s book is linked to other titles in the series by an underlying conviction that British imperialism cannot be analyzed separately from British domestic culture. Laidlaw’s exploration of colonial networking is framed within the context of political and intellectual developments in Britain. She conveys a strong sense, supported with detailed examples, of the way in which domestic and colonial affairs remained inextricably intertwined throughout this period. While the title suggests an emphasis on colonial perspectives, *Colonial Connections* is primarily focused on London as the metropolitan centre of imperial power-broking. The other two main sites of investigation are New South Wales and the Cape Colony, both used as case studies to illuminate the complicated relationships connecting imperial centre and colonial peripheries.

The first section of the book looks at ‘metropolitan concerns’. Laidlaw begins with a lucid discussion of ‘networks’ as her primary tool of analysis. For the period between 1815 and 1845 she foregrounds four different networks crucial to the implementation and perception of imperial power. The personal connections of Robert Hay, permanent under-secretary at the Colonial Office between 1825 and 1836, the network of Peninsular veterans who had served together in the military, a broad network of humanitarians and a somewhat looser network of imperial scientists illustrate the importance of patronage, personality, politics and information to early nineteenth-century colonial governance. Laidlaw also acknowledges the influence of other professional, family and political networks, suggesting that legal and ecclesiastical connections in particular deserve greater scholarly attention. She goes on to discuss the challenges of colonial rule in the 1820s and 1830s, and the metropolitan response. Imperial historians have typically portrayed James Stephen’s appointment as permanent under-secretary in 1836 as a critical juncture marking the start of a new era of Colonial Office rationality and efficiency. Laidlaw questions the notion of a bureaucratic revolution by framing Stephen’s appointment and administration within political and personal context, and describing earlier metropolitan attempts to standardize colonial practice and assert greater control over governors and settlers. Historians have credited Stephen with creating the Colonial Office archive, but Laidlaw shows that in usurping Robert Hay, with his enormous resource of private connections, Stephen actually destroyed the department’s existing institutional memory. In consequence, he was forced to seek other means of gathering information and establishing imperial authority: ‘the ever more active official regulation of colonial officials’ behaviour and a greater emphasis on the collection of statistical data’ (p.53).

The second section of *Colonial Connections* deals with ‘colonial struggles’. Laidlaw looks at the awkward position of governors as the mediators between centre and periphery, using private and official correspondence to chart their relationship with the metropolitan government. Case studies of Richard and Dick Bourke in New South Wales and Benjamin D’Urban at the Cape serve to demonstrate the importance of personal communications and metropolitan representatives. These sections are particularly effective. Laidlaw also looks at the unofficial correspondence of colonial officials and at the tactics and networks of colonial lobbyists, two groups who have received relatively little attention from historians. She shows that personal metropolitan connections were also crucial for them, whether to gain promotion or to influence government. Again, case studies from New South Wales and Cape Colony provide convincing evidence. There were several

instances, in fact, where the hint of a good story left me wishing for more. In the section on colonial officials, for example, Laidlaw refers to two ‘particularly poignant letters’ from Sir John Jamison to Governor Bourke which discuss ‘the exclusion of his natural daughter from Government House’ (p.107). In cases such as this I would have loved some excerpts from the letters, or at least a few more details.

The final section of the book explores agendas for colonial reform in the later 1830s. Laidlaw argues that ‘the challenges of controlling an ever-expanding empire, when combined with personal politics, domestic pressure, and metropolitan intellectual movements, forced the Colonial Office to reassess the means by which imperial influence was exerted’ (p.169). The colonial ‘information crisis’ which had been building since the 1820s came to a head in 1836 with the loss of Robert Hay’s personal networks. Understood as part of the wider metropolitan enthusiasm for facts and for classifying, Laidlaw shows how the collection and comparison of colonial information was a means of establishing and maintaining imperial authority, and of unifying an overwhelmingly diverse empire. But while she acknowledges the emerging science of statistics as crucial to this ‘information revolution’, Laidlaw misses the opportunity to develop her analysis of colonial networks in relation to the broader intellectual context of mid-Victorian Britain. Scientific and humanitarian networks, for example, remained invaluable sources of colonial information throughout this period. Though the information collected and collated at the Colonial Office was now more carefully ordered and arranged, it still flowed in through a range of different networks all loosely bound together as part of the broader imperial project.

While I would have liked a more careful analysis of the altered form in which personal networks survived the ‘information revolution’ and continued to influence colonial governance, this is an excellent book which is accessible and enjoyable to read. It provides a solid basis for understanding imperial networks in the early nineteenth century and is richly suggestive of further avenues for historical research and analysis.

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Kanaky. By Jean-Marie Tjibaou. Edited by Alban Bensa and Eric Wittersheim. Translated by Helen Fraser and John Trotter. Pandanus Books, Canberra, 2006. 327 pp. Australian price: \$34.95. ISBN 1-74076-175-8.

KANAKY IS THE LONG-AWAITED ENGLISH TRANSLATION of *La Présence Kanak* (1996), an edited collection of essays by, and interviews with, the late leader of the Kanak independence movement, Jean-Marie Tjibaou (1936–1989). The 34 texts are arranged chronologically and divided into five parts corresponding with different phases of the struggle for Kanak independence in New Caledonia; they encompass Tjibaou’s political career, beginning with the organization of the Melanesia 2000 festival held in 1975 and ending with a speech given only minutes before his assassination in 1989.

Tjibaou came into prominence as spokesperson of the campaign for recognition of Kanak culture and identity. Organizing the Melanesia 2000 festival, Tjibaou helped Kanak present themselves to the world for the first time on their own terms; his eloquent articulation of what it meant to be Melanesian in New Caledonia identified him as one of the voices of the Melanesian Way, comparable in many respects with Bernard Narakobi of Papua New Guinea and Walter Lini of Vanuatu. As one of the leaders of the Union Calédonienne, which came out in support of independence in 1977, and later as leader of the Front de Libération Nationale Kanak et Socialiste (FLNKS) (from 1984), Tjibaou reflected publicly on the possible meanings of Kanaky and Kanak independence, interdependence, sovereignty, decolonization and development.