

monarchy. The second and fourth chapters thus constitute a chronicle of medieval dissent. The final chapter covers the decline of papal credibility in the Babylonian Captivity and the Great Schism, and the dislocation of society due to the Black Death and peasant revolts. Despite any claims that this represents the state of the historical art, it must be noted that the preponderance of the selections reflect a preoccupation with the elite culture of the High and Later Middle Ages. Indeed, the entire conceptualization of the period's distinctiveness and the mode of organization demand such a preoccupation. Those primarily or even significantly interested in exploring the social history of the period or the impact of intercultural contacts will be disappointed that so distinguished an effort by so distinguished a group is so conceptually narrow.

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Joseph M. McCarthy

C. A. Bayly. *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780-1830*. London and New York: Longman, 1989. Pp. xv, 295. Cloth, \$37.95; paper, \$19.50.

Here is a book that had the potential of being a welcome addition to the literature on imperial history. That potential is negated by a major flaw: the author's writing style.

Imperial Meridian is a volume in the *Studies in Modern History* series, which is designed to provide students with an introduction to important historical periods in works that are "stimulating and scholarly." The author, C. A. Bayly, is reader in Modern Indian History and a fellow of St. Catherine's College at the University of Cambridge. He is also joint editor of the *New Cambridge History of India*.

An increase of approximately 150 million people in the population of the British Empire is certainly a topic that can be studied with benefit. Bayly begins this study by looking at changes and problems in the Muslim World and conditions in Great Britain and its empire to 1790. He then examines the events world wide that led to the "Second British Empire," and finally discusses how that empire functioned. There may be questions about a few interpretations, but the author certainly has a thorough knowledge of the subject.

Two practical aspects of the book are particularly impressive and should serve as models for other historical works: a glossary of terms is provided at the beginning and a series of maps at the end. They are excellent guides to the material being discussed.

There is no doubt that a general survey of this type is needed. The book covers an often overlooked period in the growth of the British Empire and places that growth in the context of imperial, British, and world history.

Regretfully *Imperial Meridian* does not fulfill the primary goals of the *Studies in Modern History* series because it is extremely difficult to read. The author's writing style is unnecessarily complex and frequently requires the reader to go over a sentence several times to make sure its meaning is clear; sometimes even that is not sufficient. The following is a personal prejudice, but use of the parenthetical reference method makes comprehension more difficult; periodic parentheses that contain seemingly unrelated names and numbers interrupt the flow of words. This style becomes even more confusing when parenthetical explanations are used as well.

Graduate students and people particularly interested in this important period in British imperial development can use *Imperial Meridian* with benefit, although they too will find the work difficult. The book is not recommended for high school or undergraduate college students.

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K. Gird Romer

Thomas E. Skidmore and Peter H. Smith. *Modern Latin America*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989. Second edition. Pp. xii, 436. Cloth \$39.95; paper, \$14.95.

A course in Latin American history, unfortunately, often becomes simply a class in the individual histories of various Latin American countries. This absence of any common bonds tends to have a "centrifugal" effect upon understanding, with students holding dearly to a number of disparate facts and questioning whether it was Esteban or Luis Echeverría who was president of Mexico. Through their synthesis of both the modernization and dependency theories, Thomas Skidmore and Peter Smith pull together into a "composite portrait" a history which they state