



BRITAIN AND THE WORLD



# The MacKenzie Moment and Imperial History

Essays in Honour of John M. MacKenzie

EDITED BY

Stephanie Barczewski · Martin Farr



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# Britain and the World

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Editors

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# CONTENTS

## Part I Introduction

- 1 Introduction: The ‘MacKenzian Moment’ Past and Present 3  
Stephanie Barczewski
- 2 Foreword: The Moving Frontier of MacKenzie’s Empire 15  
Stuart Ward

## Part II The Cultural Impact of Empire

- 3 Exhibiting the ‘Strangest of All Empires’: The East India Company, East India House, and Britain’s Asian Empire 25  
John McAleer
- 4 “Jumboism Is Akin to Jingoism”: Race, Nation, and Empire in the Elephant Craze of 1882 47  
Peter Yeandle
- 5 Popular Imperialism and the Textual Cultures of Empire 75  
Justin D. Livingstone

- 6 Projections of Empire: The Architecture of Colonial Museums in East Africa** 97  
Sarah Longair
- 7 Swinging Imperialism: Days in the Life of the Commonwealth Office, 1966–1968** 121  
Martin Farr

**Part III Four-Nations History**

- 8 Scottish Landed-Estate Purchases, Empire, and Union, 1700–1900** 171  
Stephanie Barczewski
- 9 Electoral Politics and Lord Seaforth as a Landed Proprietor in Scotland and as Governor of Barbados** 189  
Finlay McKichan
- 10 Making John Redmond ‘the Irish [Louis] Botha’: The Dominion Dimensions of the Anglo-Irish Settlement, c. 1906–1922** 211  
Donal Lowry
- 11 Pro-Empire Sentiment in Twentieth-Century Scotland Before Decolonisation** 237  
Esther Breitenbach
- 12 What Has the Four Nations and Empire Model Achieved?** 261  
Andrew Mackillop

**Part IV Global and Transnational Perspectives**

- 13 Brothers in Arms: Crossing Imperial Boundaries in the Eighteenth-Century Dutch West Indies** 287  
Douglas Hamilton

<b>14</b>	<b>Chartism in the British World and Beyond</b>	<b>311</b>
	Fabrice Bensimon	
<b>15</b>	<b>Lumumba's Ghost: A Historiography of Belgian Colonial Culture</b>	<b>337</b>
	Matthew G. Stanard	
<b>16</b>	<b>'The <u>Brightness</u> You Bring into Our Otherwise Very Dull Existence': Responses to Dutch Global Radio Broadcasts from the British Empire in the 1920s and 1930s</b>	<b>361</b>
	Vincent Kuitenbrouwer	
<b>17</b>	<b>MacKenzie-ites Without Borders: Or How a Set of Concepts, Ideas, and Methods Went Global</b>	<b>383</b>
	Berny Sèbe	
<b>18</b>	<b>Afterword</b>	<b>403</b>
	John Darwin	
	<b>Index</b>	<b>409</b>



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rights and self-determination? The Scottish labour movement and the British empire from the 1920s to the 1960s’, in *Scottish Labour History*, 51 (2016); and ‘The making of a missionary icon: Mary Slessor as “Heroine of Empire”’, *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies*, 37:2 (2017).

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# LIST OF FIGURES

## Chapter 4

- Fig. 1 'Jumbo's Journey to the Docks', *Illustrated London News*, 1 April 1882 (Author's collection) 48
- Fig. 2 'The Attempted Removal of Jumbo from the Zoological Gardens', *Graphic*, 25 February 1882 (Author's collection) 64

## Chapter 6

- Fig. 1 Original elevation of the Peace Memorial Museum, 1920, Zanzibar. Drawing by Livia Wang 109
- Fig. 2 Revised elevation of the Peace Memorial Museum, 1923, Zanzibar. Drawing by Livia Wang 110
- Fig. 3 Peace Memorial Museum, Zanzibar. *Photograph* Author's own 111
- Fig. 4 Nairobi National Museum, formerly the Coryndon Memorial Museum, Nairobi. *Photograph* Author's own 115
- Fig. 5 National Museum of Tanzania, formerly the King George V Memorial Museum, Dar es Salaam. *Photograph* Author's own 118

## Chapter 8

- Chart 1 Landed-estate purchases from imperial wealth by nation, 1700–1930 179
- Chart 2 Landed-estate purchases from colonial profits, 1700–17500 182
- Chart 3 Landed-estate purchases from colonial profits, 1750–1800 183

Chart 4	Landed-estate purchases from colonial profits in England and Scotland, 1750–1800, adjusted for population	184
Chart 5	Landed-estate purchases from imperial wealth by decade, 1700–1930	186
Chart 6	Landed-estate purchases from colonial profits, 1800–1900	187

## Chapter 14

Fig. 1	Membership card of the Fraternal Democrats, c. 1845, with the slogan ‘All men are brethern’ in twelve languages. ( <i>Source</i> Private collection; copy in <i>The Democratic Review</i> , April 1850, p. 450)	319
Fig. 2	A page from the French magazine <i>L’Illustration</i> , 22 April 1848. The same picture of the Chartist meeting at Kennington Common on 10 April had been published by the <i>Illustrated London News</i>	327
Fig. 3	The Chartist Cooperative Land Company was founded by Feargus O’Connor in 1845. This settlement near Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire, became known as ‘O’Connorville’ (Photo credit: British Library)	329
Fig. 4	August Bebel (top left), Wilhelm Liebknecht (top right), and Ferdinand Lassalle (bottom right), along with the German Social Democrat Carl Wilhelm Tölcke, surround Karl Marx in this late-nineteenth-century engraving ( <i>Source</i> Public domain)	334

## Chapter 15

Fig. 1	Gérard Koninckx Frères building (1927) (Photo by the author, 2013)	348
Fig. 2	Chéri Samba’s <i>Porte de Namur Porte de l’Amour</i> (Photo by the author, 2013)	350
Fig. 3	Monument to Leopold II, Place du Trône, December 2009 (Photo by the author, 2013)	353



# LIST OF TABLES

## **Chapter 9**

Table 1	Barbados Assembly members who supported the Slave Protection Bill and still owned slaves 1817	204
Table 2	Barbados assembly members who opposed the Slave Protection Bill and still owned slaves in 1817	206

## **Chapter 14**

Table 1	The People's Charter (1838) and the Ballarat Reform League (1854)	323
Table 2	Political reforms in the Australian colonies and in the UK	324



## CHAPTER 1

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# Introduction: The ‘MacKenzie Moment’ Past and Present

*Stephanie Barczewski*

As this collection is intended to summarise the career of John MacKenzie, this introduction will begin by doing so simply and succinctly: he changed how British imperial history is conceived, researched, and written about. The evolution from the understanding of the British Empire as something that the dominant metropolis imposed upon the colonial periphery to something that had, via culture rather than political or military power, a massive impact upon that selfsame metropolis, has been enormous, so much so that its momentum has yet to be arrested, despite the best efforts of some of MacKenzie’s doubters.<sup>1</sup> The way that British imperial history is approached today is still heavily influenced by his original vision, now a third of a century old, but as vital as it has ever been.

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<sup>1</sup>See in particular Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

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By the mid-1980s, when the ‘MacKenzie moment’ began with the publication of *Propaganda and Empire* (1984) and the edited volume *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (1986), the scholarly study of the British Empire was in danger of becoming moribund.<sup>2</sup> While in the rest of the historical profession, the traditional emphasis on political, military, and diplomatic topics had given way to newer foci on social and cultural forces, imperial history had retained its long-standing concentration on the men who built the British Empire, the battles they won, and the administrative structures they created. The ‘MacKenzie moment’ was, in this context, a revolution, as British imperial history would never be the same thereafter. It took some time, to be sure, for its full impact to be felt; more than a decade after the publication of *Propaganda and Empire*, David Cannadine noted ‘the general lack of interest shown in the British Empire by historians of Britain’.<sup>3</sup> In the last two decades, however, imperial history has swept all before it. So great was the change that we now refer to the ‘new imperial history’, a protean term that encompasses many things—including post-colonial approaches about which MacKenzie had serious qualms.<sup>4</sup> But at its core, it refers to the recognition of the mutual relationship between the culture of the colonial ‘periphery’ and that of the British metropolis, something that MacKenzie’s work has been crucial in bringing to the fore. MacKenzie’s work had such impact because it was simultaneously revolutionary and in alignment with broader trends in the historical profession. For the cultural artefacts that he highlighted were not canonical texts by authors who still feature on university syllabi today, but rather popular cultural productions that had previously have been dismissed as ephemera.

<sup>2</sup>The term ‘MacKenzie moment’ was coined by Stuart Ward, in his essay ‘The MacKenzie Moment in Retrospect (or How One Hundred Volumes Bloomed)’, in Andrew Thompson, ed., *Writing Imperial Histories* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 29–48; John M. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880–1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984); and John M. MacKenzie, ed., *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986). For a summary of MacKenzie’s views, see his ‘The Persistence of Empire in Metropolitan Culture’, in Stuart Ward, ed., *British Culture and the End of Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 21–56.

<sup>3</sup>David Cannadine, ‘Review Article: The Empire Strikes Back’, *Past and Present* 147 (1995), 184.

<sup>4</sup>See Stephen Howe, *The New Imperial Histories Reader* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 1–21.

As their validity as windows into the past has long since been confirmed, I will not belabour the point here, but from today's perspective, in which the unearthing and examination of such sources has become commonplace, it is easy to forget just how novel an approach this was. The first section of this volume confirms the enduring impact and value of MacKenzie's approach.

MacKenzie's position as the primary architect of the new imperial history would, were it to be his only achievement, be a staggering one. But it is far from his sole contribution to scholarship. In 1975 in the *Journal of Modern History*, J. G. A. Pocock issued one of the most famous manifestos in British historiography: a rousing diatribe directed against both the arrogance of Anglocentric British historians and the nationalist isolationism of their Celtic counterparts. Pocock called for the 'separate historiographical traditions' of England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland to be merged into a single, cohesive British history, which he defined as 'the plural history of a group of cultures situated along an Anglo-Celtic frontier and marked by an increasing English political and cultural domination'.<sup>5</sup> Initially, some historians acknowledged the validity of Pocock's clarion call, but others resisted mightily. Citing 'competing research priorities', Michael Hechter subjected the study of the non-English parts of the British Isles to a cost-benefit analysis in which the study of 'peripheral groups' such as the Welsh, Scottish, and Irish came out very much the loser.<sup>6</sup> The historians of the non-English parts of the British Isles, meanwhile, remained reluctant to relinquish their independence<sup>7</sup>:

Gradually, however, Pocock's ideas began to wield greater influence, as British historians began to tamp down their Anglocentrism and acknowledge the existence—and importance—of Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. This led to the emergence of the 'new British history',

<sup>5</sup>J. G. A. Pocock, 'British History: A Plea for a New Subject', *Journal of Modern History* 47 (1975), 604–5.

<sup>6</sup>The use of this term is contentious, and though I acknowledge that it is severely problematic regarding Ireland in particular, I am using it because the alternatives are even less satisfactory. 'Atlantic archipelago' is both insufficiently specific and a clunky avoidance that only further highlights the problem, while 'British archipelago' seems a less desirable substitute that changes the non-offending word but leaves the offending one.

<sup>7</sup>Gordon Donaldson, for example, insisted that 'despite some assimilation into England, Scotland preserved and developed its own institutions'. A. J. P. Taylor, Gordon Donaldson, and Michael Hechter, 'British History: A Plea for a New Subject: Comments', *Journal of Modern History* 47 (1975), 622–26.

which attempted to show how the histories of the four nations of the British Isles had interacted over the centuries. The new British history's signature work was Hugh Kearney's *The British Isles: A History of Four Nations* (1989), which began by stirringly declaring that 'this is not a piece of national history', by which Kearney meant that 'no single national interpretation, whether English, Irish, Scottish or Welsh, can be treated as self-contained'.<sup>8</sup> A bevy of other similarly themed works followed in its wake.<sup>9</sup> Still, not everyone was convinced. In 1994, John Brewer wrote that he found it 'hard to imagine a history of the British state that was not written from the point of view of the metropolitan or of one or several of the putative subordinate powers'.<sup>10</sup> Historians of the non-English constituents of the British Isles, meanwhile, continued to protest that the new British history exaggerated the unity of the four nations and ignored the real power imbalances and constant pushes for independence among them. In 1995, Nicholas Canny protested that 'much of what appears as "new British history" is nothing but "old English history" in "Three-Kingdoms" clothing, with the concern still

<sup>8</sup>Hugh Kearney, *The British Isles: A History of Four Nations*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1.

<sup>9</sup>See Brendan Bradshaw and John Morrill, eds., *The British Problem, c. 1534–1707: State Formation in the Atlantic Archipelago* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996); Brendan Bradshaw and Peter Roberts, eds., *British Consciousness and Identity: The Making of Britain, 1522–1707* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Lawrence Brockliss and David Eastwood, eds., *A Union of Multiple Identities: The British Isles, c. 1750–c. 1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997); R. R. Davies, ed., *The British Isles, 1100–1500: Comparisons, Contrasts and Connections* (Edinburgh: Donald, 1988); Steven G. Ellis and Sarah Barber, eds., *Conquest and Union: Fashioning a British State 1485–1735* (London: Longman, 1995); Alexander Grant and Keith J. Stringer, eds., *Uniting the Kingdom? The Making of British History* (London: Routledge, 1995); Ronald Hutton, *The British Republic 1649–1660* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990); Alexander Murdoch, *British History, 1660–1832: National Identity and Local Culture* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998); and David L. Smith, *A History of the Modern British Isles 1603–1707: The Double Crown* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). As this list suggests, the new British history was most successful in recasting the early modern period, less so the modern.

<sup>10</sup>John Brewer, 'The Eighteenth-Century British State: Contexts and Issues', in Lawrence Stone, ed., *An Imperial State at War: Britain from 1689 to 1815* (London: Routledge, 1993), 66. See also Tony Claydon, 'Problems with the British Problem', *Parliamentary History* 16 (1997), 221–27.

being to explain the origin of events that have always been regarded as pivotal in England's historical development'.<sup>11</sup>

Today, almost a half-century on, both high-handed declarations of English supremacy and dismissals of the possibility of a truly four nations approach seem quaint relics. No historian would now use the terms 'English' and 'British' interchangeably and certainly not founded upon the assumption that England's political and cultural supremacy merits such fungibility. The term 'Celtic fringe' is equally unacceptable as intrinsically marginalising, and most British historians now endeavour to incorporate some degree of Welsh, Scottish, and Irish perspectives into their research and teaching. But at the same time, they continue to struggle with how best to do so and how not be exhausted by the need to provide four perspectives instead of one. And Canny, too, had a point. The danger of trying to write 'British' history is that it can elide the separate and distinctive experiences of Wales, Scotland, and Ireland; it thus becomes, as Glenn Burgess has noted, 'a covert form of Anglocentrism'.<sup>12</sup>

Delving into the issue with greater specificity, British historians still tend to treat Irish history with particular trepidation, as if the green-flag-waving nationalists will descend upon them in a fit of republican wrath for daring to dip a toe into their historiographical waters. Wales, meanwhile, tends to make only an occasional appearance relating to its romantic preservation of its language or its post-industrial economic struggles. Only Scotland has succeeded in making itself in a major way onto the British historical agenda, as the current debate over independence has

<sup>11</sup>Nicholas Canny, 'Irish, Scottish and Welsh Responses to Centralization, c. 1530–c. 1640', in Alexander Grant and Keith J. Stringer, eds., *Uniting the Kingdom? The Making of British History* (London: Routledge, 1995), 147–48. See also T. C. Barnard, 'British History and Irish History', in Glenn Burgess, ed., *The New British History: Founding a Modern State 1603–1715* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 1999), 201–37; Keith M. Brown, 'Seducing the Scottish Clio: Has Scottish History Anything to Fear from the New British History?', in Glenn Burgess, ed., *The New British History: Founding a Modern State 1603–1715* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 1999), 238–65; and Nicholas Canny, 'The Attempted Anglicization of Ireland in the Seventeenth Century: An Exemplar of "British History"', in R. G. Asch, ed., *Three Nations—A Common History?* (Bochum: Brockmeyer, 1993), 49–82.

<sup>12</sup>Glenn Burgess, 'Introduction: The New British History', in Glenn Burgess, ed., *The New British History: Founding a Modern State 1603–1715* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 1999), 13.

compelled us to consider the contours of Scottish history since 1707 anew. And as we have done so, both English condescension towards Scotland's contribution to British history and the 'Braveheart' vision of Scotland as the victim of English oppression have given way to new interpretations that grapple with the true complexity of Anglo-Scottish relations over the centuries. This process has led to reassessments of many of the key points of intersection between England and Scotland that both change our perspective and reveal that, even if power imbalances existed, negotiation was as important to the construction and sustenance of the UK as was coercion and resistance. Recent examinations of the Act of Union with Scotland in 1707, for example, have emphasised its voluntary nature and the degree to which the Scots succeeded in extracting key concessions, in particular the continued independence of their Presbyterian Kirk.<sup>13</sup>

Perhaps the most fruitful area of inquiry, however, has been the increasing attention paid to the role of the Scots in building the British Empire, which is now recognised to be central and which brings us back to MacKenzie's work.<sup>14</sup> This confluence of the new British and imperial history is no coincidence, but rather a merging of two strands of historical inquiry that simultaneously moved to the forefront of British studies in the 1990s. In the final pages of his essay, Pocock linked the history of the four nations of the British Isles to that of the British Empire. He did this in two ways. Firstly, he pointed out that the establishment of English control over nearly the entire British Isles by 1700 allowed a 'commercial expansion beyond the oceans into North America and Southern Asia'. Secondly, he noted that the new colonies were settled not only by the English but also by people from other parts of the British Isles.<sup>15</sup> Pocock was using the Empire to bolster his case that British history needed to move away from its traditional Anglocentrism and towards a more unified approach. He showed how the Empire, by providing a zone in

<sup>13</sup>See Michael Fry, *The Union: England, Scotland and the Treaty of 1707* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2006); and Christopher Whatley, *The Scots and the Union: Then and Now* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014).

<sup>14</sup>See, as an introduction to what has become a large historiography, T. M. Devine, *Scotland's Empire 1600–1815* (London: Allen Lane, 2003); Michael Fry, *The Scottish Empire* (Edinburgh: Tuckwell Press and Birlinn, 2001); John M. MacKenzie and T. M. Devine, eds., *Scotland and the British Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>15</sup>Pocock, 'British History', 617.

which all the inhabitants of the British Isles were engaged in a common enterprise, was a place in which the unity and diversity of the UK could be seen on full display.

The rise of the new imperial history, to be sure, was not a direct outgrowth of the new British history. Instead, it was motivated by other forces. As the world became more global and the centrality of the nation-state to its history seemed to diminish, British historians turned to the Empire as a means of aligning their field of study with these changes. The academic job market, particularly in the United States, responded to the same pressures, with British imperial historians offering the advantage of being able to provide teaching coverage of both a European and a non-European area. But although they arose from different imperatives, once they had both arrived on the scene, the new British history and the new imperial history quickly found points of convergence. Looking at the history of Britain from an imperial perspective, as James Thompson observes, places 'metropole and periphery within the same analytical frame'.<sup>16</sup> In other words, it does exactly what Pocock had called for and what MacKenzie ultimately accomplished: it makes the 'periphery' part of the 'metropole', indicating in the process just how constantly in flux those two categories were. The new imperial history shares with the new British history a desire to blur boundaries and to show how realms that were previously thought to be distinct bled into one another.<sup>17</sup> As the impact of the British metropolis on the colonies has never been in doubt, for British historians this has translated into a project of tracing the impact of empire on metropolitan culture, and thereby reversing the traditional trajectory of influence and replacing it with one of mutual constitution.

We have thus now arrived at a conception of British history that asserts that we can regard neither the boundaries separating the nations of the British Isles nor those separating the metropolis from the colonial periphery as immutable. And here, too, MacKenzie has had something of major importance to say, by calling attention to the role of Scotland and

<sup>16</sup>James Thompson, 'Modern Britain and the New Imperial History', *History Compass* 5 (2007), 455.

<sup>17</sup>Antoinette Burton has been at the forefront of calls to rethink the category of 'nation' by dissolving the conceptual division between the metropole and the colonial periphery. See Antoinette Burton, 'Who Needs the Nation? Interrogating "British" History', *Journal of Historical Sociology* 10 (1997), 227–48.



the Scots in building the British Empire. In so doing, he has shown how the Empire, by providing a zone in which its inhabitants were engaged in a common endeavour, was a place in which the kingdom was in some ways a truly united one. In MacKenzie's work, the 'new British' and the 'new imperial history' thus merge; he shows how both the colonial and the Celtic 'peripheries' were part of the 'metropole', indicating in the process just how constantly in flux those categories were. In his work, the new imperial history shares with the new British history the ability to show how realms once thought to be distinct were all part of a whole.

At the same time, however, MacKenzie always acknowledges the real imbalances of power that existed between England and the other nations of the British Isles, as well as their separate identities. He has built, in short, a framework for British history that can encompass the way in which all four nations of the British Isles were engaged in the imperial project, but can still account for both their distinctiveness from one another and the power disparities between them. The 'MacKenzie moment' began in and continued through an era in which the European Union matured from an economic partnership into a political union, a development that some observers interpreted as pointing towards the end of the nation-state as Europe's primary political entity. MacKenzie was never deceived by this: his work always reserves a prominent place for the nation as an actor in global affairs. Thus, if on the one hand his work blurs the boundary between nation and empire, on the other it preserves the agency of the nation. In his skilled hands, this is not an inconsistency: it is a recognition of the massive complexity of the history of Britain and its empire.

MacKenzie's contribution has, of course, not gone unchallenged. In particular, his work has been the focal point of two historiographical debates that remain staple topics for discussion in graduate seminars. The first of these debates was with Bernard Porter, a fellow historian of the British Empire. With the publication of his book *The Absent-Minded Imperialists* (2004), Porter launched a direct attack on MacKenzie's claim that the presence of the Empire in Victorian culture was both multifaceted and deep. Challenging this argument head-on, Porter contended that the lives of the vast majority of nineteenth-century Britons were scarcely touched by imperial concerns. MacKenzie has continued to make the case for a potent imperial presence in the metropole via his own work and that of dozens of disciples, many of whom have chosen to publish in Manchester University Press's *Studies in Imperialism* series,

which he edited until the task was taken over by Andrew Thompson in 2015. Porter, meanwhile, has pressed his own line of argument further, to the empire beyond Britain’s shores, which he claims was far smaller and less powerful than is conventionally thought.<sup>18</sup>

The second historiographical debate saw MacKenzie on the attack rather than on the defence, as he joined battle against the eminent post-colonial scholar Edward Said.<sup>19</sup> MacKenzie objected to Said’s categorisation in his massively influential *Orientalism* (1979) of all Western depictions of ‘the East’ as demeaning and controlling.<sup>20</sup> Instead, he argued for the possibility of a genuine admiration for and influence of Eastern art, architecture, music, and other cultural genres in the West. In MacKenzie’s eyes, Orientalism was not solely, an attempt to essentialise Eastern peoples as ‘other’ in the eyes of the West. Rather, though complex, it could take the form of an expression of a basic appreciation of Eastern cultural productions.<sup>21</sup>

Both of these debates, it should be noted, rely on clear-cut distinctions between two diametrically opposed and monolithic points of view. There is little room for compromise between MacKenzie and Porter: the British Empire either was of vast importance in Victorian British culture or none. Nor can much middle ground be found between MacKenzie and Said: Orientalism was either broadly positive in its view of Eastern culture or broadly negative. It is in this regard that MacKenzie’s work sits somewhat uneasily within the current state of play in British imperial historiography, in which the Empire is seen not as a single powerful entity, but rather a sprawling, inchoate mass riven with contradictions and conflicts. It was neither monolithic nor guided by an overarching vision that defined its function and objectives; its colonies and other zones of interest were acquired and administered very differently and

<sup>18</sup>Bernard Porter, ‘Further Thoughts on Imperial Absent-Mindedness’, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 36 (2008), 101–17; John M. MacKenzie, ‘“Comfort” and Conviction: A Response to Bernard Porter’, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 36 (2008), 659–68; and Bernard Porter, *British Imperial: What the British Empire Wasn’t* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2016).

<sup>19</sup>Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993).

<sup>20</sup>Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979).

<sup>21</sup>John M. MacKenzie, *Orientalism: History, Theory, and the Arts* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995). Somewhat ironically, Said’s later book *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) out-MacKenzied MacKenzie in making an argument for the pervasive presence of empire in British culture in the nineteenth century.

had little, if anything, in common with each other beyond the fact that the Union Jack flew over them. In asserting that ‘world-system’ is a better term than ‘empire’ for Britain’s overseas possessions and interests, John Darwin’s *The Empire Project* (2009) has been lauded as the best recent scholarly attempt to get a handle on this mess.<sup>22</sup> Other recent historians of the British Empire, meanwhile, have emphasised that the Empire rested on shaky foundations less because of its structural incoherence than because of the violence or the constant threat of rebellion that were essential components of its make-up.<sup>23</sup>

This inchoate empire is not one with which MacKenzie’s work coexists particularly well, as the argument that it was powerful in its impact at home would seem to imply that it was powerful beyond Britain’s shores as well.<sup>24</sup> In addition, the fact that MacKenzie has focused much of his attention on Scotland, the part of the UK most intensively engaged in empire and most intensively impacted by it, might be viewed as having a distorting effect on his conclusions. And finally, MacKenzie’s focus on the impact of empire on the metropolis, and relative lack of concern with its impact on colonial peoples, societies, and cultures, is out of alignment with current concerns.

The fact that John Darwin has written the conclusion to our collection reveals that we will address these tensions and will introduce some notes of nuance into the MacKenziean approach—and offer occasional criticisms—while still paying it the homage that it is due. The essays that follow will accomplish these tasks in three ways. First, they will not only follow MacKenzie in assessing the impact of the Empire on the metropolis, but also the impact of metropolitan culture on the colonies. Peter Yeandle’s close analysis of the story of Jumbo the elephant reveals much about British attitudes to race, nation, and empire in the early 1880s; as a case study in popular affection for the ‘exotic’, Yeandle makes the

<sup>22</sup>John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830–1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>23</sup>Richard Gott, *Britain’s Empire: Resistance, Repression and Revolt* (London and New York: Verso, 2011); and Antoinette Burton, *The Trouble with Empire: Challenges to Modern British Imperialism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

<sup>24</sup>MacKenzie’s successor as the editor of the *Studies in Imperialism* series, Andrew Thompson, has taken a much more sceptical view of the impact of empire both abroad and at home. See Andrew Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back? The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2005).

case that Jumbomania affords an opportunity to explore themes central to MacKenzie's work on imperialism, popular culture, environmental history, and the commodification of heroes. Justin Livingstone maps MacKenzie's influence on the critical trajectory of scholarship on popular imperial writing and calls for further attention to be paid to some still-neglected literary genres that he has championed, including heroic biography, colonial administrative fiction, and various forms of missionary textuality. John McAleer examines how the physical presence of the East India Company, in the form of its headquarters and the objects it collected, provided a key lens through which empire was viewed, even after the Company's demise in 1858. Reversing the lens to gaze from metropolis to the colonies—a perspective that MacKenzie is sometimes accused of under-emphasising—Sarah Longair makes a detailed examination of the museums built in Nairobi, Zanzibar, and Dar es Salaam between 1919 and 1939. She situates them within their local, regional, and global context to investigate the diverse influences of British officials, architects, museum progenitors, and local populations on these projections of empire in East Africa in the first half of the twentieth century. Martin Farr looks at how imperialism manifested itself in popular culture in the 1960s, when it was just becoming apparent that the Empire was gone for good.

Secondly, this volume will re-assess and extend MacKenzie's contribution to the new British—or as it is more commonly called today 'four-nations'—history. As befits a volume celebrating MacKenzie's work, several chapters focus on Scotland. Esther Breitenbach examines new evidence of Scottish support for empire in the first half of the twentieth century by focusing on various forms of its manifestation in the cities of Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow. Finlay McKichan contrasts the experiences of Francis Humberston MacKenzie, 1st Baron Seaforth, as a political operator in Scotland and Barbados; McKichan finds that the former was much more susceptible to elite control via methods such as electoral manipulation and patronage than the latter. Stephanie Barczewski explores the large and disproportionate number of landed-estate purchases made by Scottish colonial merchants, Indian nabobs, and West Indian planters after 1750. Her data demonstrate the links between imperial engagement and loyalty to the Union, thereby showing how MacKenzie's work has led scholars not only to consider the role of non-English nations in building and maintaining the Empire, but also to comprehend the very identity of the British nation and the

contexts in which it was united and disunited. Barczewski also compares Scotland's role as a venue for estate acquisition from imperial profits to that of Ireland. The Irish example is examined in more detail by Donal Lowry, who looks at how precedents from the dominions, and from South Africa in particular, played a key role in the Anglo-Irish constitutional negotiations that ultimately led to the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922. The consideration of Ireland as a point of comparison to Scotland allows an examination of just how exceptional Scotland was, and an assessment of whether the impact of empire on the metropolis diminishes depending on which part of that metropolis we consider. Finally, Andrew MacKillop considers the achievements—and limitations—of four nations history more broadly.

Thirdly, this collection introduces newer global and transnational approaches that attempt to move past the use of metropolitan Britain as what Stuart Ward terms in his framing essay 'the core unit of analysis', in order to gain a better understanding of 'the many transnational phenomena that made the empire tick'. Douglas Hamilton traces the story of the Scottish brothers James and Robert Douglas, who were among a number of British investors who bought plantations in Dutch Demerara, pushing us in the process to re-envision eighteenth-century empires as entities that transcended national boundaries. Fabrice Bensimon examines the interaction between the most popular of all nineteenth-century British political movements, Chartism and the British (and non-British) world. Matthew Stanard uses the 'MacKenzie model' to assess the cultural ramifications of the colonial experience for Belgium, a subject that until very recently has garnered little attention. And finally, Berny Sèbe shows how MacKenzie's work has inspired scholars of other European empires to look for the legacy of imperialism in metropolitan cultures.

The chapters in this volume will thus show that the 'MacKenziean moment' is thus ongoing and evolving. They demonstrate that the richness of MacKenzie's work lies in its ability to inspire both emulators and challengers, and that its influence on the study of the British Empire shows no sign of abating.

PART I

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# Introduction