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ANNE FRIEDRICHS, *Das Empire als Aufgabe des Historikers. Historiographie in imperialen Nationalstaaten: Großbritannien und Frankreich 1919–1968* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2011), 370 pp. ISBN 978 3 593 39481 7. €39.90

It is more than an act of professional self-flattery to argue that historians have played a crucial role in state-building. Among the scholars who have recently provided compelling confirmation of this proposition are Lutz Raphael, Peter Schöttler, who has written of history as a *Legitimationswissenschaft*, and Matthias Middell, who supervised the dissertation of Anne Friedrichs, which is under review here. Friedrichs has extended the proposition to the colonial empires of Great Britain and France during the twentieth century. Studying the impact of colonial empire on French and British historiography, she seeks to explore the ways in which historians constructed 'ordering narratives' (p. 17) or 'master narratives for their societies' (p. 21). To this end the author focuses on the 'communicative nodal points in the historiographical field' (p. 20), that is, historical handbooks and leading professional journals in the two countries (particularly the book reviews in these journals). She calculates that this literature not only represented current historical thinking, but was also the most likely to influence the practice of colonialism via the training of British and French colonial officials. This approach then guides the historiographical survey through its three phases: the 'challenges' to colonial empire between 1919 and 1945, the attempt to establish colonial 'partnerships' between 1945 and 1956, and the putative end of empires thereafter.

The result is an extended survey of this historical literature, together with biographical information about some of the principal authors, most of whom were academics and retired colonial officials, and an account of institutional changes that bore on the historiography of colonialism, in the first instance, new professorships, institutes, and journals. Friedrichs shows that despite the blows inflicted by the First World War, French and British historians alike remained confident in the colonial project. While the French wrote of assimilating colonial peoples and insisted anew on a civilizing mission as the rationale for empire, their British counterparts wrote approvingly of the renewal and liberalization of empire, particularly the growing autonomy of the dominions (if not India) as it found form in the

British Commonwealth. The British view modulated but little in the aftermath of the Second World War, as historians began to treat the history of the British empire in the light of the worldwide promotion of freedom. French historians, on the other hand, found discussion of overseas empire painful after 1945 and preferred to say little about the *Union française*. Then, in the 1960s, the historiographical focus turned in both countries to the states that had emerged from colonial empire, although historians in neither country had done much to champion decolonization.

If the results of this study are a little meagre, the fault is not entirely the author's. The survey is devoted in the main to describing chapters in handbooks. To judge from the sources that she has chosen to use, colonialism was not a controversial subject among professional historians in Britain or France, particularly at the elite universities. Debates over the fundamental causes and historical significance of imperialism did not make it into the leading journals or historical surveys, where the views of Lenin, Luxemburg, Hilferding, or, for that matter, J. A. Hobson, had no supporters. More echoes of a socialist critique of imperialism found their way into the French literature after the Second World War, because Marxist historians there enjoyed more access to the standard works than Friedrichs surveys. Despite the intentions initially signalled in *Past and Present*, British Marxists were not much interested in the history of empire. The only debate of significance that surfaces in Friedrichs' survey is the controversy over Gallagher's and Robinson's ideas about free-trade imperialism, which primarily occupied younger British scholars at the red-brick universities. It must remain a matter of conjecture, however, whether this debate, which emphasized the economic roots of imperial expansion, touched on deeper issues in a 'general theory of imperialism'.

As if to concede that the historiography of colonial empire did not generate a lot of heat, the author wanders off in several directions in search of additional issues. Extended portions of the study treat the parliamentary politics of colonial empire, the historiography of international relations and Vichy France, and the development of world history, economic history, the *Annales* school, and area studies. It is not always clear, however, how these broader subjects bore on the historiography of colonial empire. Braudel gets credit for introducing a 'global historical approach' (p. 287) by virtue of his including the

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Ottoman Turks in his work on the Mediterranean. The resulting diffusion of the subject matter is compounded by frequent repetitions, so the argument is difficult to follow in places. In the end, the principal value of the study resides in its description of the standard historical literature on colonial empire in the two countries and its survey of the institutional landscape in which this literature was composed.

ROGER CHICKERING is Professor Emeritus of History, Georgetown University, and now resides on the Oregon coast. His many publications include, most recently, *The Cambridge History of Modern War*, iv. *War in the Modern World* (co-ed. with Dennis Showalter and Hans van de Ven, 2012); *War in an Age of Revolution: The Wars of American Independence and the French Revolution, 1775–1815* (co-ed. with Stig Förster, 2010); and *Freiburg im Ersten Weltkrieg: Totaler Krieg und städtischer Alltag 1914–1918* (2009).