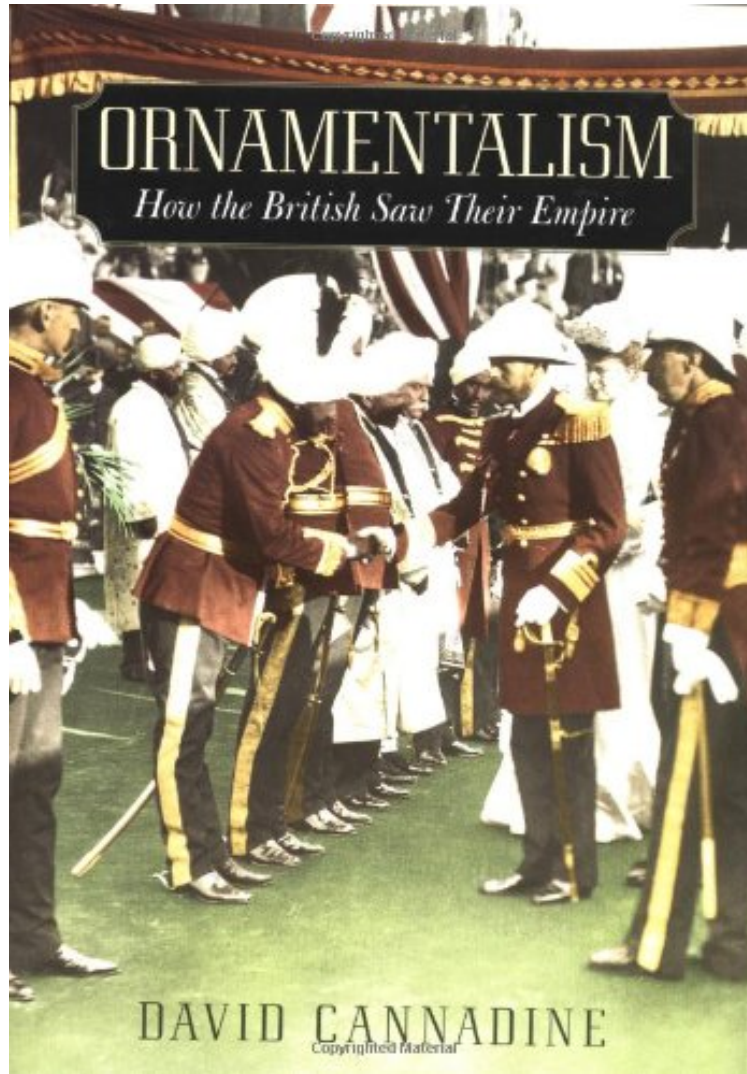


[Ebook pdf] Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire

Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire

David Cannadine

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David Cannadine : Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire:

26 of 29 people found the following review helpful. An Empire where class trumps raceBy Bernard KwanDavid Cannadine, a self declared "Child of Empire" has what can only be described as an obsession with the British Aristocracy. Unlike some of his other works such as "Decline and fall of the British Aristocracy" where he allows bittersweet emotions such as nostalgia to be evoked at the passing of an era, or the undisguised glee of an outsider indulging in schadenfreude in "Aspects of Aristocracy: grandeur or decline" this book presents a much more balanced analysis.His thesis is that there was a complex interplay of class and race in the Empire, but in most cases class trumps

race. The defining example from the book is an excerpt from the "Raj quartet" where the British aristocrat identifies more clearly with his Indian counterpart who went to public school than to the uncouth white police constable. However the police constable viewed himself as superior to the Indian because of his race. Its thesis accords well with my experience in public school at Winchester College in England where I felt accepted as a peer despite being Asian. But my same peers were openly disdainful of poor uneducated Pakistani and Bangladeshi immigrants. (They welcomed the educated Indians much more easily) Perhaps these sentiments were what prevented mass support for Oswald Mosley and Fascism in the 1930s despite prevalent anti-Semitism. It has been argued by John Lucas that Nazism as an ideology failed because Hitler had made his elite too small. The British extended their elites to the sultans, nawabs, emirs and kings all over the Empire and used them to bind the Empire together. This book provides an interesting contrast to America where race is so much more important. Black and white interracial marriages are quite commonplace in Britain. In my opinion it better to recognize nobility in another person and disdain the baseness in another person regardless of the colour of their skin. 8 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Elogy for Empire

By John D. Cofield David Cannadine has added another well written volume to his studies of the British aristocracy, the British class system in general, and other related topics. Ornamentalism covers the British attitudes towards their Empire during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Cannadine argues that the British took a hierarchical view of their empire, ruling it on the basis of what they supposed to be traditional English government, which devolved from the monarch to the local nobility and gentry. In the empire colonial governments made use of local grandees, such as the numerous Indian princes, so that Britain ruled not so much over them as through them. Thus Cannadine disagrees with prevailing historical opinion, that the Empire was based on race, by demonstrating its basis in existing class structure. As always, Cannadine writes clearly with few wasted words. He continues to be a master of the short biographical/historical sketch. A short but fascinating read. 12 of 13 people found the following review helpful. Pomp, Circumstance and the Creation of the British Empire

By Chris Lipscombe This is a much better book than I had originally expected. It is also a much easier read than I had anticipated. It's certainly not dry-as-dust narrative history. I had first read a review of the book in History Today which suggested that Ornamentalism by David Cannadine cast a new light on the importance of rank and ceremony in binding the British empire together across the globe, especially during its peak from the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. This was enough to whet my appetite. That, and an interesting reminder in the title that Edward Said had already written in his book Orientalism about the fascination that the East (Near, Middle or Far, depending on the distance from London as the epicentre) had for British empire-builders, and a suggestion that the ideological traffic of empire was more than just a one-way street. Ornamentalism certainly delivers on its promise in painting a complex cultural picture of cultural and ideological interchange between ruling hierarchies throughout the British Empire. The author shows how this order was identified and then explicitly sustained through mechanisms such as the British peerage system (think about all those thousands of OBEs). Cannadine also shows how order abroad confirmed and upheld order at home. This "Burkean" view of society bolstered (even upholstered) the fortunes of conservative British politicians from Disraeli to Churchill. As this world view dissolved through the twentieth century, so did British support for carefully constructed local elites overseas. In my own country, small conservative New Zealand, attachment to the Mother Country died hard. British titles were only abolished in New Zealand in 2000. Ornamentalism argues its own corner. It doesn't pretend to be a comprehensive history of the British Empire (go to the Cambridge History series for that). But it is an enjoyable read, and provided (at least for me) a different, richer way of thinking about empire. The book is also entertaining (some great anecdotes of the Raj in India); insightful (nice distinctions between the different experiences of the Dominions, the Colonies and the Mandates); idiosyncratic (the author provides a personal perspective of empire in an unexpected epilogue); and credible (check out the great notes/bibliography). If you are even vaguely interested in the British Empire, Britain in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, or your own country belongs to that odd international club called the British Commonwealth, do yourself a favour and read this book. You'll enjoy it.

With the return of Hong Kong to the Chinese government in 1997, the empire that had lasted three hundred years and upon which the sun never set loosened its hold on the world and slipped into history. But the question of how we understand the British Empire--its origins, nature, purpose, and effect on the world it ruled--is far from settled. In this incisive new work, already being hailed as a landmark, David Cannadine looks at the British Empire from a new perspective--through the eyes of those who created and ruled it--and offers fresh insight into the driving forces behind the Empire. Arguing against the views of Edward Said and others, Cannadine suggests that the British were motivated not by race but by class. The British wanted to domesticate the exotic world of their colonies and to reorder the societies they ruled according to an idealized image of their own class hierarchies. In reestablishing the connections between British society and colonial society, Cannadine shows that Imperialists loathed Indians and Africans no more nor less than they loathed the great majority of Englishmen and were far more willing to work with maharajahs, kings, and chiefs of whatever race than with "sordid" white settlers. Revolted by the triumph of democracy in Britain itself, the Empire's rulers embraced a feudal vision of the colonies which successfully endured until the 1950s. Written with verve, clarity, and wit--and characterized throughout by highly original thinking--Ornamentalism will fundamentally

alter the way we view the British Empire.

From *Library Journal* *Imperialism*, Cannadine argues, was a vehicle that enabled the British to replicate and export their own "hierarchical social structure" to their colonies. This need was especially pressing as industrialism changed the social order in their own country. In some undeveloped nations, such as Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, the Britons could start to build this stratified society from scratch. In other regions, such as India, Africa, and the Far East, they simply worked to preserve the already established order, such as the "caste-based indigenous Indian society" and the rule of the "Malayan sultans and African Kings." Cannadine stresses that the British system was not about race but about class and status. The British viewed most of their own people as far beneath these foreign chiefs, sultans, and pashas. Inevitably, though, the dominions became increasingly unimpressed by the pomp, ceremony, and British authority, and as nationalism grew stronger, all vestiges of British rule came under attack. Often repetitive and slow, this book reads like a university thesis, but the arguments and ideas are insightful. Appropriate for academic or large public libraries with British collections. Isabel Coates, Brampton, Ontario Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From *The New Yorker* This revisionist look at the British Empire argues that it was primarily based not on a conviction of racial superiority but, rather, on a vast and complex social hierarchy, in which rank trumped color. Britain exported its litessending aristocrats, Gothic architecture, and pheasant as far afield as Australiato create a simulacrum of Victorian society abroad, and also bolstered the status of indigenous rulers: Indian maharajas, Middle Eastern emirs, and West African chiefs. Cannadine is excellent on the uses of pageantry and on the kitschy extremes it had reached by the nineteen-twenties. He is convincing, too, in his assessment of how imperial grandeur was used to distract Britons from social upheavals at home. But although he tries to soft-pedal the racism of the Empire, he cannot disguise the prejudices of the colonists, and sometimes the anecdotes he cites to illustrate a non-racist world view seem to prove the opposite. Copyright 2005 *The New Yorker* "A thoughtful and spirited book.... In the privacy of their small worlds, away from the postmodernists and the radical historians writing 'peripheral' history, there can be heard fond retrospects of the empire and its pageantry by ordinary, unfashionable men and women. Were these people to tell us what they recall of the empire's doings, I suspect that they would echo some of the truths of Cannadine's subtle and learned retrieval of that imperial history."--Fouad Ajami, *The New York Times* Book "Like everything that Cannadine writes...Ornamentalism is vigorous, stimulating, and bursting with ideas.... It should be read by anyone who is interested in politics and society in the British Empire."--Philip Ziegler, *The Spectator* "Cannadine is excellent on the uses of pageantry and on the kitschy extremes it had reached by the nineteen-twenties."--*New Yorker* "David Cannadine's *Ornamentalism* is so stimulating and original that it will now and forever after be read hand in hand with Edward Said's *Orientalism*. Cannadine's vision is quite different. He brilliantly recovers the world-view and social presuppositions of those who dominated and ruled the Empire, and thus restores the Empire to British social history. No other work succeeds as well in putting the history of Britain back into the history of the empire, and the history of the empire back into the history of Britain."--Wm. Roger Louis, Editor-in-Chief, *The Oxford History of the British Empire*