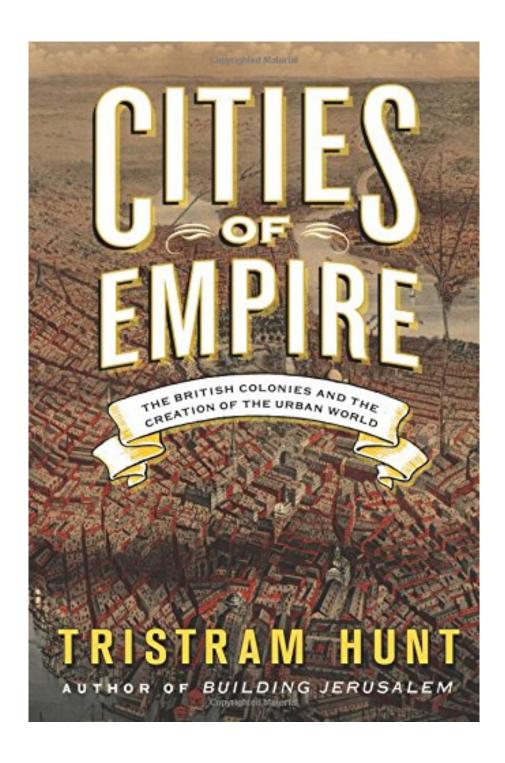


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#### Review

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10 of 10 people found the following review helpful.

Cities As The Story of Empire

By Matthew Ries

The legacy of the economic and political practices of the growth of the British Empire and the implemented of those practices in colonial cities are at the root of Tristram Hunt's "Cites of Empire". Instead of looking at the British Empire as either a good or bad "thing", Hunt examines how it grew and the impact it has on our world today while not forgetting the motivations of those who implemented the policies in the first place.

Hunt examines 10 cities connected to the spread of Britain's empire around the world, giving each city its own exclusive chapter. While each city is given its own history, Hunt shows how the British experiences in one city affected their decisions in others he was writing about. The history of a particular city is not the only thing covered with the individuals who impacted it; Hunt gives the reader a wonderful portrait of the cultural, social, and architectural developments along with those who promoted them.

While Hunt's descriptive writing of the architectural are wonderful, the text would have been enhanced with illustrations of some kind of the building he was describing (thought as I was reading an advanced reader's edition of the book there might be some in for sale edition). The maps at the opening of each chapter helped to place the buildings and other geographical issues into context if one got confused for any reason. Although Hunt's insights into the society of the cities he writes about, at times the information he writes feels like a redux of previous cities' and so slowed my reading as thought back on previous chapters.

Upon finishing "Cities of Empire" I had a better sense of the imperial history of British colonization, a topic in history that I have personally wanting to know more about. Although not perfect, Tristram Hunt's book gives the reader a history of the British Empire and its legacy in the 21st Century without judging or defending as good or evil. I whole recommend this book to those interested in the spread of British culture around the world.

I received an Advanced Reader's Edition of this book via LibraryThing Early Reviewers.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

The empire in cities, comes full circle (see the chapter on Liverpool).

By lyndonbrecht

I have some reservations about that "and the creation of the urban world" in the title. The book looks at not all cities but a number of cities which are the partial or whole creations of differing eras of the British Empire. That said, this is an extremely informative book and a compelling read. The book has an undercurrent of exploitation, the rich architecture and imperial regalia built on the backs of raw exploitation of--largely--nonwhite masses. The book notes that there were several famines in India, in which millions died, created mostly by British mismanagement, similarly to Ireland in the Famine. The book mentions this kind of thing more passing, than a theme--the book is not a polemic or a condemnation. In fact it rather admires the vigor and resilience of the British in building or rebuilding the cities.

The tour starts with the Boston Tea Party in the 1770s. Boston was a creation of trade, and one of the more important cities in the English speaking world at the time. This sets the frame for what follows. How the city was built, notable people both British and local, and brief but nicely written bits of context.

Chapter 2 in Bridgetown, in Barbados in the 1700s, creator of riches and the human misery attending the sugar industry.

City 3 is Dublin, with a lot of architecture and some Irish history, some of it rather gory.

City 4 is Capetown, in the 1800s, a colonial crossroads and way station, multicultural and not considered fully South African by some critics.

City 5 is Calcutta, and this chapter is as close to condemnatory as Hunt gets; he describes the once prosperous Bengal reduced to poverty and starvation caused by British trade policies.

City 6 is Hong Kong, outgrowth of trade with China, originally and forever evil, because it was made by forcing opium on China.

City 7 is Bombay, inherited from the Portuguese (a wedding gift as a Portuguese princess married a British king), a British creation and center of a cotton industry.

City 8 is Melbourne, based on gold. City 9 is New Delhi, then and now center of an ostentatious raj, that Hunt seems to think has seen Indian rule supplant British but not so different. City 10 is Liverpool, based on slavery (in the 1700s 5,000 slavers left Liverpool).

The book pivots on Liverpool, the end of Empire and the start of a new empire moving in--Hunt sees Liverpool as betting on Chinese trade and here the empire has come full circle, from motor of empire to entrepot for another empire.

The above may seem tedious, but it is not. This is a meaty, excellent, informative and well written book. It is given a personal touch by the author's having visited them all, and making observations of the physical traces left after empire receded.

 $0\ \mbox{of}\ 0$  people found the following review helpful. impressive book By Jeff Hunt

Very well written and interesting page turner. It is hard to imagine a small island off the coast of France constructing so many cities across the world and sparing no expense before the advent of steam! This author tracks the phases of empire through the history of spectacular cities that tell a linear story right through the present. I recommend this book to anyone interested in history or who lives in a former British colony.

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