more granular and dialogical history that does not shy away from acknowledging the perspective multiscalarity and rippled patterns of Asian-American relations with all their contradictions and complexities. The book pinpoints the core of these contradictions in the fact that "(w)hile people in the West have been mesmerized by the potential economic fortunes to be made in and from this region, they have also been repelled by its peoples, cultures, and environments, which are seen as incompatible to the West" (p. 2). By confronting these often-painful histories imbued with colonial exploitation and racism, Pacific America allocates largely understudied epistemic connections that help in comprehending the issues of a contemporary global order, whose center of gravity continues to shift toward the Asian-Pacific region and its interplays with the United States.

Notes

1 L. Kurashige, Two Faces of Exclusion. The Untold History of Anti-Asian Racism in the United States, Chapel Hill 2016, L. Kurashige, Global Americans. A History of the United States, Andover 2017.

2 See, e.g., Y. Shu / D. E. Pease (eds.), American Studies as Transnational Practice. Turning toward the Transpacific, Lebanon (NH) 2015; B. R. Roberts / M. A. Stephens (eds.), Archipelagic American Studies, Durham 2017.

3 See, e.g., J. Hoskins / V. T. Nguyen, Transpacific Studies. Framing an Emerging Field, Honolulu 2014.

Krishan Kumar: Visions of Empire. How Five Imperial Regimes Shaped the World, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 2017, 576 pp.

Reviewed by
Carolien Stolte, Leiden

In this wide-ranging volume, sociologist Krishan Kumar asks what the histories of five major European empires – Ottoman, Habsburg, Russian, British, and French – might have to teach the contemporary world about governance in general, and about managing difference and diversity in particular. The justification of his choice of case studies is brief: "that is in a sense arbitrary, a reflection of my own tastes and interests as well as of the limits of my knowledge … at least I can say that the empires I have chosen represent by any standard – size, power, impact – the most important of the modern empires…" (p. xv). For a book that covers five empires – six if you count the Romans, who provide the imperial blueprint at the beginning of the book – this gives the impression of a very personal work. And indeed, the author appears quite attached to "his" empires: "of all the empires discussed in this book, the Habsburg Empire is the most tortuous, treacherous, and protean … at the same time, it is also – if such a thing is permitted of empires – the most lovable" (p. 145). However, if one's point of departure is the Roman empire and the administrative as well as symbolic legacies of

both its western and eastern parts, which other empires would one choose? The Safavids hardly claimed to take up the Roman mantle, nor did the Dutch imperial enterprise suffer from universalist aspirations. Given the focus on imperial elites, this is an eminently defensible selection.

The focus on rulers and metropoles itself, however, rubs against the historiography of recent decades. Somewhat unfashionably, Kumar takes "the global" out of the history of empire and places the attention firmly on Europe. That some of the action in the book takes place outside of Europe is a matter of circumstance rather than method. This is a work of European history, which sits uncomfortably with the subtitle of the book. However, the book succeeds in a number of important ways. One of the driving arguments is that the carving up of territory by these empires was not about competition between nativist epistemologies – a notion that has long been dominant in European historiography – but about rival universalisms. The author traces the intellectual ideology of these universalisms, from the Holy Roman Empire to Ottoman notions of reconstituting the Byzantine Empire. This provides coherence to the wide-ranging subject matter while remaining attentive to ruptures and the introduction of new elements to imperial identities. The Russian Empire, as the book shows, also cast itself as a successor to Tatar rule, not just to the Orthodox church of the Byzantines (p. 228). In a similar vein, this book resurrects a stage to nineteenth-century thinkers on the nature of empire such as John Seeley who have in recent generations been reduced to a single quote (pp. 332–335). A corrective is implied here to recent trends in historiography that privilege the impact and lived realities of imperial rule, but these trends remain unspecified.

The book is at its best when highlighting the importance of culture in the making of imperial elites, especially in the Habsburg chapter. It is here, Kumar argues, that empires were especially successful in managing difference. Great stress is placed on underplaying ethnicity in favour of an inclusive culture: "any educated and cultivated denizen of the empire would think of and call himself an Osmanli" (p. 95). Russianness is portrayed as civic rather than ethnic, especially in the later Russian Empire (p. 252). Overall, this is an optimistic account of empire, of inclusive court cultures and the safeguarding of minority rights. So much so, that the reader is left a bit sceptical. In order to make this argument for all five empires across the periods, a lot of historical contingencies must be overcome. Who gets to be part of the elite and by what mechanism? How does it matter that the book deals with the courtly elites of dynastic rule as well as with the urban elites of the nineteenth century France? It is here that the narrative struggles because the question of "who speaks for the empire" is left unresolved. However enjoyable the multitude of voices, the criterion for inclusion in this book appears to be loyalty to empire rather than membership of the ruling circle. The chapters quote a range of intellectuals, both from the metropole and, to an extent, from colonial territories. But the uninformed reader could be forgiven for thinking that public spheres across empires were largely grateful for imperial rule. Moreover, in extending the book's ambition beyond "visions of empire" and

into the history of these empires themselves, the silence on dissenting voices is noticeable. This silence becomes louder in the latter part of the book, where the formal colonialism of the modern period plays a larger role. Likewise, little attention is paid to the mobility of people and ideas. Borders, after all, are notoriously porous. That the existence of an international civil society does not appear until page 474 as part of the post-imperial world, is telling.
Overall, readers will enjoy five portraits of empire, painted from a wealth of well-chosen literature. They will not find a synthesis or even a conclusion. For that, the five empires present too vast a canvas. Even hints of comparisons across empires are made with some hesitation (p. 266, for instance). "Have I been too kind to empire?" Kumar rhetorically asks in the preface (p. xv). His answer is "perhaps", this reviewer's answer is "yes". Had this book indeed been confined to the question of how imperial elites saw themselves as carriers and missionaries of universal civilization – in short, to visions of empire – the answer would have been different. In its current form, however, this is a more ambitious project that reaches deep into the workings of empire. This makes the exclusion of forms of resistance and dissent, whether from individuals, groups, or populations, correspondingly problematic.

Jutta Wimmler: The Sun King's Atlantic. Drugs, Demons and Dyestuffs in the Atlantic World, 1640–1730, Leiden: Brill Publisher 2017, 229 pp.

Reviewed by
Alexander Engel, Göttingen

Global history in the age of colonialism tends to be interpreted in terms of a European transformation of the world. Yet undoubtedly, as a consequence of new trans-continental involvements, European societies and economics transformed as well. This is very much the central point of emphasis in Jutta Wimmler's book in which she studies the material and conceptual impact of the Atlantic world on France from the mid-seventeenth century to the 1720s. More specifically, she is concerned with the impact of goods and ideas ("drugs, demons, and dyestuffs") that were flowing into France due to its engagement in America and Africa (and also Asia).
The book consists of a ten-page introduction, six main chapters, a short epilogue, and an annex of tables with import data for different commodities. While it makes sense how the chapters are ordered, the reader is explicitly free to pick and choose, as she or he would from an anthology. The six parts do not build on each other like stair steps: they approach the problem of the Atlantic worlds' impact on France from different perspectives, studying different aspects, which are in part wholly independent of each other. Each chapter is