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Review of *Lineages of Despotism and Development: British Colonialism and State Power*. Matthew Lange. Reviewed by James Midgley.

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Book Reviews

Matthew Lange, *Lineages of Despotism and Development: British Colonialism and State Power*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009. \$45.00 hardcover.

It seems incredible today that for centuries, Europeans ruled the majority of the world's nations. Beginning with the Portuguese and Spanish in the 15th century, the European powers gradually extended political control over much of the globe. In addition to the Europeans, other nations including the United States, Russia and Japan also embarked on imperial expeditions conquering and annexing territories populated by other people. Although a few countries escaped imperial rule, it must have seemed in the late 19th century that most of the world was destined to be subjected to foreign oppression for the foreseeable future. After the Second World War, however, the campaigns of nationalist independence movements intensified resulting by the end of the 20th century in the collapse of European imperialism and the emergence of many new sovereign nation states.

Although imperialism did not actually involve colonial settlement on an large scale, the economic, political and cultural preferences of the imperial powers were widely imposed. However, there are significant differences in the extent to which the imperial legacy shaped social and economic conditions. These differences can be detected not only among territories previously ruled by different European powers, but also among territories ruled by the same European power. For example, there are significant differences in the postcolonial experiences of countries that were previously ruled by Britain. These countries differ not only in their political systems and cultures but also in the way their economies have subsequently evolved.

In this interesting book, Matthew Lange investigates the different economic development trajectories of different British

colonial territories. He points out that some have performed extremely well while others have stagnated, resulting in widespread poverty for the majority of the population. Matthew believes that these differences can be explained by different patterns of imperial rule. In some cases, the British created a large and powerful central bureaucracy that governed the subjugated territory directly. In others, they governed through what was known as indirect rule. In this case, they ruled through indigenous leaders who were loyal to the British and carried out their mandates. Direct rule, the author believes, was more conducive to the adoption of successful economic development strategies in the postcolonial period, while indirect rule resulted in the emergence of weak states that generally failed to promote rapid economic and social development.

To test this hypothesis, the author reviewed the economic development experiences of countries that were previously ruled by Britain. He undertook a major statistical analysis correlating the type of colonial government imposed on different countries with their development performance and, in addition, focused on the development experiences of 15 countries. Of these, four countries—Botswana, Guyana, Mauritius and Sierra Leone—were analyzed in depth and form separate chapters of the book. The author also drew widely on governmental reports and previously published studies. He concludes that colonialism significantly affected the subsequent economic development of previously colonized territories. While there is support for the hypothesis that direct rule is associated with successful development, there are exceptions. Guyana, he points out, was directly ruled but has not performed well, while Botswana was subjected to indirect rule but has recorded sustained economic growth and social development.

Although this book may be reviewed by some as an intellectual exercise with little practical application, Matthew's work is important at a time when some powerful nations continue to dominate others. The author shows that governments do not easily shake off the imperial legacy which continues to influence their economic and social policies. Readers will draw their own conclusions for nations such as Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as Palestine and Tibet, which continue to be subjected to external political and military authority. The author's

careful research should also inspire future inquiry into the way colonialism and imperialism continue to affect social welfare policies and programs in the modern world.

James Midgley, University of California, Berkeley

Scott Myers-Lipton, *Rebuild America: Solving the Economic Crisis Through Civic Works*, Paradigm Publishers, 2009. \$82.00 hardcover, \$17.95 papercover.

Five years after Katrina the Gulf Coast is still a mess. Billions of federal dollars have been appropriated for reconstruction but billions were wasted. Foreign workers were imported instead of training and hiring local people. Thousands still lived in toxic FEMA trailers and a third of New Orleans' homes were empty.

In 2008 the nation joined the Gulf Coast in disaster mode. A total crash was averted but official unemployment hit 10% and real unemployment, according to the National Jobs for All Coalition (NJFAC), was double that. Experts predicted five years of high unemployment, but pundits, economists and politicians were slow with solutions. Very few advocated improved versions of the New Deal job programs that employed 10% of the labor force in the 1930s to build and repair roads, schools, forests, and culture. Excessive pragmatism and market idolatry was part of the refusal to face facts. Certainly the issue was not that historians had demonstrated that New Deal projects like the CCC and the WPA failed. Just the opposite. But despite a good historical record, there has been little support among experts and politicians for a what was needed: a large and varied federal public works program

So Scott Myers-Lipton is bucking a trend when he urges such a program to rehabilitate the Gulf Coast and provide a model for how the nation can respond to soaring unemployment. Myers-Lipton is Associate Professor of Sociology at San Jose State University; he specializes in service learning courses that link class work and social action. In 2006 several things combined to spark interest in Gulf Coast reconstruction, among them student activism against homelessness, a presentation of Spike Lee's Katrina film, and Myers-