

GENERAL INTRODUCTION
Readings in Imperialism and Orientalism
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ARCHIVES OF EMPIRE is a four-volume collection of original documents and primary source materials relating to the varied processes and various procedures of the colonial project. Ranging from East India Company charters to Cecil Rhodes's "last will and testament," and including such disparate but historically related artifacts as Salvation Army hymns, missionary tracts, parliamentary debates, adventurers' accounts, administrators' account books, satirical cartoons, popular appeals, and legislative records, the four volumes both provide critical research and teaching resources for students of empire and propose new directions for current inquiries into late-twentieth-century consequences of nineteenth-century imperialism.

Each volume of *Archives of Empire* emphasizes a particular period and its place in the history of British imperialism: *Volume 1: From the Company to the Canal*; *Volume 2: The Scramble for Africa*; *Volume 3: The Great Game*; and *Volume 4: Jubilee. From the Company to the Canal* covers the first half of the nineteenth century and British engagements in the Indian subcontinent and in Egypt, from the East India Company's exploits, to its handover to the Crown following the Sepoy Uprising in 1857–1858, to the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. The opening of the Suez Canal radically altered British relations with its colonial reaches; by shortening the distance—for transportation, commerce, and communication—between England and its representatives in India, the canal significantly transformed British interests along the coast of Africa, in particular in southern Africa. *The Scramble for Africa* concentrates on the European contest over that continent, its peoples, and its resources, particularly following the Berlin Conference of 1885 and the ensuing crises in Khartoum, in the Congo, and during the Anglo-Boer War. India, in its turn, was both the "jewel in the crown" of Victoria and a part of the board on which the "great game"—or the struggle over central Asia—was to be played out. *The Great Game* focuses on that game, its rules, its players, and the larger

gameboard from the Crimea to and through the Afghan passes. *Jubilee* examines the beginnings, means, and ends of empire as these conjunctures were staged “at home,” in Queen Victoria’s England, by schoolboys and scouts, by suffragettes, in the streets, and in the reviews and popular periodicals as well as in parliamentary debates.

Rather than celebrating the riches of empire, however, *Archives of Empire* instead emphasizes, through its sampling of imperialism’s documentary history, the richness of the substantial critical resources and the substantive grounds for the critique of imperialism. The volumes thus suggest as well that the imperial project was by no means an uncontested or unargued enterprise, but a much-debated one, even among its putative participants and apparent adherents—between Jonesian orientalists and Macauleyan anglicists, between “patriots” and “pro-Boers.” Those sympathetic to the independence-oriented causes of Tipu Sultan in Mysore or Arabi in Egypt argued with strict upholders of imperial law and order. Figures like Florence Nightingale battled against the generals in the Crimea, and Emily Hobhouse passionately called her audience’s attention to the dreadful conditions of concentration camps in South Africa. Rescue missions and reforms also highlighted fractures and divisions: Should “Chinese” Gordon be rescued in the Sudan? Could the Indian civil service be revised and reorganized? How to halt atrocities and reform King Leopold’s Congo?

In order to draw out such controversies, the four volumes of *Archives of Empire* follow several themes, in particular political economy, parliamentary debate, and popular culture. The issue of political economy, for example, can be traced through the history of charter companies, from the East India Company to the Suez Canal and British South African companies, and through disputes over free trade between jingoists and “little Englanders.” Such debates were heard in the houses of Parliament, recorded in Hansard’s and in Blue Books, disputed in journals such as the *Pall Mall Gazette* or the *Review of Reviews*, and caricatured in periodicals such as *Punch*. Missionaries supported imperial designs and protested them, explorers traversed and mapped imperial territories and encouraged others to follow in their footsteps, while bureaucrats and businessmen pursued their own interests; such observations, memoirs, and narratives also appear in these volumes. The writers of that time lived in the present moment and observed, by practice, by accident or, increasingly, by means of graphic and photographic representation, the cultural, political, and social changes that expansionism effected at home and abroad. Literary authors like Charles Dickens and Jules Verne, popular authors like G. A. Henty (writer of boys’ adventure novels), and everyday citizens like Flora Annie Steel (wife of a British civil servant stationed in India)

recorded the changing times and allowed their imaginations to be inspired or inflamed by travel accounts, news of sensational “discoveries” or spectacular colonial crises. The literatures of that time reflect these firsthand experiences or secondhand representational encounters with “native” peoples and lands. The culture of imperialism and colonialism were widespread and all encompassing. Sciences, political and governmental theories, and entertainment cultures were equally influenced by colonial trade, imperial exploration, and the material exploitation of foreign lands. Nineteenth-century forms of entertainment included the popular lecture circuit, with travelers like Henry M. Stanley and Mary Kingsley able to fill the house. Architectural innovations were designed to display colonial goods, both human and material; for example, the Crystal Palace was designed to showcase the products, collections, and inventions of both industry and empire. Indian-style bungalows were soon incorporated into the British landscape, and British fashion and cuisine were forever altered by colonial spices and fabrics. Among empire’s principal practitioners were men such as Robert Clive, Frederick Lugard, Cecil Rhodes, Benjamin Disraeli, and Gladstone, who envisioned the details. What were their shared interests? What were their dramatic differences?

While designed according to the historical specificities and the archival resources of the period, each volume of *Archives of Empire* attempts to address and highlight specific conflicts and crises so as to be useful in its own right but also to complement the other volumes in order to display the continuities, consistencies, and discordances of imperialism. Each individual volume is introduced by an editorial preface that lays out the features of the period, its major personnel, and the debates that accompanied the pursuit of empire there and then. Each volume is then organized into sections that are amply illustrated and preceded by brief introductions, with bibliographies, filmographies, maps, and chronologies included where appropriate, in order to enhance the pedagogical usefulness of the volumes and to offer suggestions for further investigation and research projects.

Archives of Empire builds on the single-volume documentary sourcebook *Imperialism and Orientalism* (Blackwell, 1999) but is significantly different, both in its expansion of the material bases of the archival register of the resources and in its organization into four distinct volumes. While coherent as a series, these volumes are also individually useful for pedagogical and scholarly use according to time and place: the early nineteenth century, the latter half of the nineteenth century, the Indian subcontinent, the African continent, and Great Britain itself. We hope that, as a set and each volume in turn, *Archives of Empire* will be of considerable interest and continuing usefulness to students, teachers, researchers, and readers of the imperial narrative.