

standards of comfort could be found in long-distance steamship travel and hotel sojourns. In these contexts, the male Asian servant became an important figure that commercial concerns used to promulgate visions of exotic colonial lifestyles, made possible by Asian “boys” catering to the traveler’s every demand. In practice, hotel and steamship stewards, freed from the intimate controls that defined domestic service in private homes, were more successful in organizing and exercising autonomy on-and-off the job.

Histories of domestic service have always had to contend with the absence of workers’ voices and the difficulties that attend to “getting closer to the motivations and concerns of servants” (p. 21). The authors’ attention to servants’ agency is creatively foregrounded in Chapters 4 and 7. Chapter 4 unearths photographs where Asian servants seized control over their visual representation and used dress and composition as “a means of talking back to employers” (p. 131), thereby contesting stereotypes about their emasculation, docility, and primitiveness. Chapter 7, in a section on Vietnam, calls attention to the importance that Phan Boi Chau, the nationalist revolutionary, assigned to servants as an underground network who spied on French officials. Chinese servants in Hong Kong engaged in similar acts of solidarity against the British colonial regime there.

Far ranging, *Colonialism and Male Domestic Service across the Asia Pacific* provides an excellent collection of case studies that highlight the cultural, economic, and political significance of male domestic service in the Asia Pacific. It offers a model for linking specific sites of intimate labor to what became shared strategies for the gendered and racial division of labor across imperial regimes.

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ANDREW URBAN

The Chinese Lady: Afong Moy in Early America. By Nancy E. Davis.
(New York, Oxford University Press, 2019. xii + 332 pp.)

Nancy Davis’s scrupulously researched and elegantly written monograph on Afong Moy, the first known Chinese woman in the United States, provides a fresh look at American culture in the Jacksonian Era. Although early American fascination with the live exhibition of the “Chinese Lady” has been noted by scholars, Davis is the first to trace Afong Moy’s entire career in great detail. As she follows Afong Moy’s journey from Guangzhou to New York, Charleston, Havana, New Orleans, and Pittsburgh, among many other

places, Davis convincingly argues for her national significance and challenges us to consider the complexity of the racial landscape in antebellum America.

Davis's book is organized into four sections that focus on different phases of Afong Moy's career, each section serving as a window into a different area of American life. The first examines the Old China Trade by tracking the lives of the American merchants and sea captain who brought Afong Moy to New York in 1834. The second explains middle-class consumer culture by exploring various Chinese imports that were presented alongside Afong Moy in the sea captain's Park Place home, such as firecrackers, game sets, fans, silk shawls, and small household items. The third focuses on public culture by following Afong Moy's tour in different parts of North America, where she herself became the main spectacle in auditoriums, museums, and even Andrew Jackson's White House. The final part explains the emergence of mass entertainment industry by telling of Afong Moy's incorporation into P. T. Barnum's shows in the late 1840s, following years of hiatus due to her original managers' business failures during the Panic of 1837. Throughout her career, Afong Moy's physical and social mobilities were limited due to her bound feet and foreign tongue. She could not extricate herself from the images of the "exotic" Orient Americans projected onto her body.

Yet as Davis shows, many Americans considered her a "lady," worthy of respect. When it was discovered that Afong Moy had been abandoned by her manager during the panic and reduced to subsisting in a New Jersey poorhouse, local citizens came to her rescue and publicized her abandonment, eventually forcing her guardians to come forward and contribute to her care. Such a sympathetic reaction contrasted sharply with what Chinese in the United States would face later. By the time Afong Moy made her last public appearance in 1851, Chinese had begun to arrive in the American West as contracted miners and prostitutes. The gendered racial animosity would get codified into the Page Act (1875), which prohibited the entry of Chinese prostitutes and placed the burden of proof on Chinese women to demonstrate their respectability.

Davis's book is useful for scholars interested in material culture as well as race and gender in Jacksonian America. Richly textured with analysis of material, visual, and consumer culture, the story of Afong Moy in America demonstrates that the period known for Indian removal and chattel slavery was also a time when a Chinese woman could be accepted as a "lady."

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