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Curating empire: Museums and the British imperial experience (Studies in Imperialism MUP)

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Curating empire explores the diverse roles played by museums and their curators in moulding and representing the British imperial experience.
The establishment of museums throughout the British Empire is increasingly recognised as part of the context of imperialism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, both practically and symbolically. Focusing on a range of curators and museums, this collection demonstrates how individuals, their curatorial practices, and intellectual and political agendas influenced the direction of their institutions, the interpretation of material, and the experiences of audiences in a variety of museums across the globe. Taken together, these contributions suggest that museums are not just sites for accessing history but need to be considered as historical sites of significance in themselves.
Individual essays examine the work of curators in museums in Britain and the colonies, the historical display and interpretation of empire in Britain, and the establishment of 'museum networks' in the British imperial context. Important themes emerge across the collection, including museums and their meanings in the colonial context; the role of objects and display in the formation of British and colonial identities; museum networks and the movement of objects and ideas in the British Empire. Curating empire sheds new light on the relationship between museums, as repositories for objects and cultural institutions for conveying knowledge, and the politics of culture and the formation of identities throughout the British Empire.
Curating empire will be essential reading for scholars and students interested in British history, the history of empire, art history, and the history of museums and collecting.

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