**Clare Anderson (ed), *A Global History of Convicts and Penal Colonies* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018)**

Reviewed by Katherine Roscoe (University of Liverpool)

This edited collection lives up to the promise, delivering a truly global history of convicts and penal colonies. It is, as Clare Anderson states in her introduction, ‘the first global overview of convict transportation and penal colonies’ covering a ‘range of contexts’ over ‘more than five centuries’ (p. 3). The volume’s title indicates its two-fold focus: on convicts, as individuals forcibly mobilised across the globe, and on penal colonies, as spatial assemblages where convicts were marginalised, punished and co-opted by the state and trading companies. Through a globally comparative framework, Anderson *et al.* persuasively demonstrate that convicts played a key role in the expansion of empires, modernisation of infrastructure and development of punishment systems in the twentieth century.

Each chapter offers an overview of the convict system in a separate geographical region, ideal for assigning to students. It begins with the Portuguese empire (Timothy Coates), who were the first to transport convicts to build a fort at Ceuta in North Africa in 1415. It is followed by other European empires: the Spanish (Christian De Vito), Scandinavian (Johan Heinsen), the French (Jean-Lucien Sanchez), Dutch (Matthias van Rossum) and the British Empires (Hamish-Maxwell Stewart and Clare Anderson). Collectively, these essays flip traditional conceptualisation of convict transportation on its head. Anderson’s introduction state that many convicts were transported between colonies, rather than from Europe to overseas colonies (p. 5). This approach challenges the presumptive whiteness that dominates understandings of convict transportation, drawing attention instead to the ‘scale of transportation of Asians, Africans and other non-Europeans’ (Anderson, p. 4). The multi-directionality of these convict flows is expertly visualised in maps by Laura Vann.

The second half of the volume examines the use of internal exile, either overland or to offshore islands, by nation states. It covers postcolonial Latin America (Ryan Edwards), Russia and the USSR (Sarah Badcock and Judith Pallot), Japan (Minako Sakata) and Modern Europe (Mary Gibson and Ilaria Poerio). By exploring historic continuities between penal transportation and deportation in modern Europe and USSR’s gulags, the collection underlines that penal ideologies, as well as people, circulated from the colonies back to Europe. Far from travelling ‘unidirectionally’ from metropole to colonies, the innovations of the modern penal system – notably the probation system – were modelled on the colonies (Gibson and Poerio, p. 364). As Ryan Edwards notes, convict transportation enabled ‘burgeoning nations’ to ‘develop the[ir] frontiers’ (p. 250). In her epilogue, Ann Laura Stoler reflects that today’s prison industrial complex replicates these historic patterns, punishing and displacing ‘disposable’ populations along class- and race lines, and then commodifying their labour for profit.

In Anderson’s wide ranging, introduction she lays out a conceptual framework to compare convict transportation with other global migrations. Though absolute numbers of convicts transported within European empires was relatively small (c. 1,490,000), she argues that penal transportation was ‘significant’ in longevity and scope (p. 7). Anderson notes that transportation ‘preceded and outlived enslavement’ (p. 16) and operated, in the Atlantic world, as an ‘ideological precursor’ to plantation slavery (Maxwell-Stewart, p. 191). Convicts sometimes competed with, but other times preceded the arrival of indentured, enslaved, military and free workers. There were slippage too between these categories, as rebellious enslaved people were transported in the Caribbean and convicts sentences of transportation commuted for military service in the Spanish Empire. Rather than positioning convicts on a ‘continuum of unfreedom’, Anderson suggests their place on a ‘continuum of mobility, particularly of coerced workers’ is more meaningful (p. 8). Nevertheless, the reliance of European powers on multiple, overlapping forms of unfree labour is strongly foregrounded throughout the collection.

It is through this focus on the modalities of punishment, which Stoler dubs ‘carceral motion’ that the volume ties together these distinct contexts over a vast time period. The essays all recognise the spatial interplay between convict mobility and carceral immobility at different stages of a convict’s journey. Rather than narrowing down on the legal definition of ‘convict transportation’, which varies by context, it focusses on the ‘serial displacements’ (Heinsen, p. 13) that convicts’ experienced along their carceral journeys. Penal colonies consisted of a series of carceral ‘constellations’ that include forts, dockyards, hulks, ‘female factories’ and prison islands among others (p. 13). As a whole, the volume decidedly contests Michel Foucault’s Eurocentric argument that cellular confinement became the dominant form of punishment in the nineteenth century. Taking the colonies into account, shows how convict transportation involved both global mobilization and local or individual immobilization.

Despite is vast scope, the essays maintain a clear focus on individual convicts’ agency and the ways in which their carceral experiences were shaped by race, gender and class. Though penal colonies were overwhelmingly ‘homosocial spaces’, small numbers of free- and convict women were sent as colonisers to some penal settlements (e.g. Australia, Brazil, New Caledonia, Sakhalin). Like Anderson’s *Subaltern Lives,* this volume centres convicts’ experiences within these expansive modalities of power. The essays give varied examples of convict agency, spanning outright resistance (escapes and mutinies) to the ‘carving out’ of social space (p. 22).

At the frontiers, convicts forged new ‘cosmopolitan’ communities, mixing with people from varied national and ethnic backgrounds at the frontier. The volume draws attention to lesser known cases of Indigenous-convict encounters, including in Latin America (Edwards) and the Ainu in Hokkaido (Sakata). Individual convicts operated as cultural intermediaries or traders with Indigenous people, but their collective labour helped dispossess Indigenous communities. As Anderson states, ‘convicts occupy a rather ambivalent position in the history of empire building, for they were both colonized and colonizers, repressed and repressive, settlers and evictors’ (p. 20).

This excellent, wide-ranging collection definitively places convict transportation centre-stage in the development of empires from the sixteenth-nineteenth centuries and to the creation of ‘modern’ forms of political punishment in the twentieth century. It is a key text for scholars of world history, punishment, carceral geography, and any of the many imperial and national contexts it covers. It is only in an edited collection, with multi-lingual and international array of contributors that such a global history could be told. But it is Anderson who conceptualises the greater import of convict transportation in relation to forced labour, mass migration, settler colonialism and penal reform, that means it will remain a key text for years to come.