

Le Monde Britannique

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This year and next, at least, the history of the British Empire and Commonwealth is a subject of particular interest at French universities. ‘Le Monde Britannique, 1815–1931’ has been set for 2009/10 and 2010/11 as one of the History topics for two important examinations, the Agrégation and the CAPES, the qualifying exams for prospective university and secondary school teachers, respectively. In addition, the anti-slavery movement is one of the set topics for the English literature examination. This has stimulated something of a boom in terms of the publication in French of general texts about the British Empire, of which *Le Monde Britannique* is a noteworthy example.

For the purposes of the two examinations, the ‘British world’ is interpreted broadly, to encompass the entire formal and informal Empire, rather than to refer primarily to the ‘white settler’ dominions, as of late has been the trend in Anglophone historiography. *Le Monde Britannique* includes contributions from academics in France, Canada and Britain, and covers some of the long-running debates in the historiography of the British Empire (e.g. a chapter by Jean-François Klein discusses formal and informal empire in the Far East), as well as the more recent trend towards a ‘new imperial history’ (an essay by Charles-François Mathis and Laurent Colantonio considers cultures of Empire at home in Britain).

Hopefully, French interest in the history of the British Empire will now be reciprocated, and British and French historians will engage more directly with each other, to comprehend better the divergences and commonalities that marked the modern European experiences of Empire.