



Raj's responses to these demands and the policy adopted of slowly accommodating the pressure in a manner intended to extend for as long as possible overall British control of the Indian military.

Where Imy's *Faithful Fighters* truly shines is in how it combines the micro with the macro. Without losing sight of the big picture, the details of soldiers' lives, their aspirations, and responses, are brought forth in vivid detail. In achieving this, Imy has made an enduring contribution to the historical literature on colonial South Asia. One hopes that Imy finds a wide audience and continues to excavate the colonial period.

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## **Helen Johnston, Barry Godfrey and David J. Cox. *Penal Servitude: Convicts and Long-Term Imprisonment, 1853–1948***

**States, People, and the History of Social Change. London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2022. Pp. 272. \$130.00 (cloth).**

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*Penal Servitude: Convicts and Long-Term Imprisonment, 1853–1948* is an important book that will be essential reading for scholars interested in the history of punishment in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and how and why this history matters now. It adds nuance and depth to our understanding of incarceration and penal transportation by providing a detailed narrative and analysis of the operation and experience of the convict prison system under the Penal Servitude Acts of 1853 and 1857. As Helen Johnston, Barry Godfrey, and David J. Cox explain in their opening introduction, penal servitude was a sentence of long-term imprisonment during which prisoners journeyed through a progressive system, dependent on time served, behavior, and compliance. They moved from separate to associated confinement and labor, and ultimately conditional release. We learn that the acts owed a debt to the “towering figure” (25) of Joshua Jebb and were accompanied by a new prison estate in London and the south of England. They also enveloped older model prisons such as Pentonville, Portland, and perhaps most famously, Dartmoor. The 1853 Act came in the wake of the increasing employment of prisoners on public works labor and overlapped with other forms of punishment, including the continued use of transportation. The 1857 Act sounded the “death knell” (44) for the abolition of the latter, removing it as a judicial sentence. From this date on, prisoners shipped to the hulks of Bermuda and Gibraltar or to Western Australia were transported under sentences of penal servitude, not transportation. Note also that a key feature of penal servitude was the implementation of a system of release on license. Following a major review in 1878 (the Kimberley Commission), penal servitude continued, and though the Gladstone Commission of 1895 ushered in changes regarding the “balance between deterrence and rehabilitation” (182) it remained in use until 1948. A key proposition put forward by Johnston, Godfrey, and Cox is that the sentence and its infrastructure have left an “enduring legacy” in the criminal justice system today (9).

Until now, the history of punishment at home and transportation overseas has remained separate. In this book, Johnston, Godfrey, and Cox construct a “bridge between the two systems” (19) which creates a new understanding of the relationship between them. Beyond the substitution of one for the other in legislation, they show how in its adaptation of practices used in the penal colonies of Australia (most notably the “mark system” and probationary tickets-of-leave) and the sending of penal servitude prisoners overseas, the two Acts had significant imperial dimensions. So too did convict experiences of them. One fascinating passage in *Penal Servitude* recalls unrest at Portland Prison in 1858 and the Chatham Prison riot of 1861. The latter broke out against a background of discontent, not long after a group of prisoners arrived from the Bermuda hulks. Both incidents were in part compelled by the inequities experienced by penal servitude prisoners following the passing of the second 1857 Act: prisoners convicted under the 1853 legislation had no hope of remission, but those sentenced after 1857 did, creating “a sense of injustice” (99). It is worth noting that during this period there was unrest on the Bermuda hulks too, compelled by the same feelings of unfairness and despair.

Though the presentation of the institutional and legislative history of the 1853 Act is by itself a hugely welcome addition to the literature on prisons (this reader particularly appreciated the rich detail on the hierarchy of prisons personnel), Johnston, Godfrey, and Cox also use a set of hitherto almost untouched prison record archives that enable insights into individual journeys through the penal system. This allows them to write the history of penal servitude as a social and cultural history, powerfully highlighting the lived experiences of the ordinary plebian men and women who became prisoners. In juxtaposition with better known records, including the freely available Digital Panopticon and Old Bailey Online, they have reconstructed the lives of 650 men and women who served at least one sentence of penal servitude. They use a method of “‘whole-life’ histories and life grids” (6). This pays rich dividends, as the authors can give voice and agency to prisoners, as they adapted to or resisted the system, and as they faced challenges in their personal lives. For example, we learn of the experiences of young women like Edith Jenkins and Anne Griffin (convicted at the Gloucester and York Assizes in 1885 and 1881), which in some cases in keeping with the research methodology are presented as discrete case studies. We read of the letters that prisoners sent and received, and the difficulties they faced in maintaining relationships, alongside aspects of their religious practice, health and diet, and the complexities of prison dress across different penal classes.

Historians are often surprised at the lack of awareness of the long histories of present-day penal practices in related academic disciplines and among practitioners. This book is a model of connecting the past to present-day concerns. Then, as now, the public fears and berates the early release of prisoners. One such example is the licensing system, which as Johnston, Godfrey, and Cox demonstrate is “largely (but not completely) unaltered from its nineteenth-century form” (43). Though there has been some positive change in sentencing practices, discussions about released prisoners and repeat-offending “has structured prison as a system (and how society can make it tougher) for over a century—nearly two, in fact” (43). And yet, as this book powerfully shows, despite the ideals expressed in the decades leading up to and following the passing of the Penal Servitude Acts, prison was and is not a place of rehabilitation. *Penal Servitude* represents a powerful evidence base in the drive for reform.

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