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Manuel Perez-Garcia: Global History with Chinese Characteristics: Autocratic States along the Silk Road in the Decline of the Spanish and Qing Empires 1680–1796, Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021, 272 pp.

This book deals with empirical approaches to the global history of China and Europe. The book is organized into three chapters or sections, which work progressively out of the problem of including China into global history by “Sinocentered” approaches. Instead, Manuel Perez-Garcia works towards a more empirically based, connected history of China. That is, Sino-centrism does not counter Eurocentrism, and there is a need to develop truly global history approaches to China, which he seeks to do in this book through comparative and connective empirical studies developed in the book’s later chapters on Macao-Canton and Marseille-Seville networks in comparative perspectives and the larger picture of Qing China and Bourbon Spain, which he also studies through a rather de-centered lens or from their margins. This book is of interest to historians of the early modern world, its economic entanglements and their relations to political systems. More broadly, global historians and historians of comparative imperial studies will find much commendable and can explore ideas for how to integrate Chinese history into the fields’ western dominated focus.

Megan Maruschke

Mitchel P. Roth: Power on the Inside: A Global History of Prison Gangs, London: Reaktion Books, 2020, 414 pp.

Mitchel P. Roth, expert in the history of crime and punishment, wrote a well-illustrated history of prison gangs. Primarily based on existing literature, the author managed to offer a glimpse of counter/power, dis/order, and subcultures inside prisons on all continents – except for Antarctica, but there probably are not as many prisons there – from the mid-nineteenth century until the second decade of the twenty-first. This spatial and temporal broad range balances out the overwhelming preponderance of US American and of contemporary or very recent cases in research conducted so far. This broad range also warrants the label “global history”, even though the author at no point expresses the ambition to make a contribution to the academic field of global history. He rather addresses scholars of criminal and penitentiary studies, professionals in this domain, and general readers in an attempt to broaden their spatial and temporal scope.

It allows him to debunk some recurrent myths in the academic literature on prison gangs, e.g. substantiating that the alleged first US prison gang in 1950 (the Gypsy Jokers) was neither the first, nor an actual prison gang – but rather a gang that originated in the outside world and continued its activities in prison. This can be con-