



Imperial Underworld: An Escaped Convict and the Transformation of the British Colonial Order (Critical Perspectives on Empire)

Kirsten McKenzie

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During a major overhaul of British imperial policy following the Napoleonic Wars, an escaped convict reinvented himself as an improbable activist, renowned for his exposés of government misconduct and corruption in the Cape Colony and New South Wales. Charting scandals unleashed by the man known variously as Alexander Loe Kaye and William Edwards, *Imperial Underworld* offers a radical new account of the legal, constitutional and administrative transformations that unfolded during the British colonial order of the 1820s. In a narrative rife with daring jail breaks, infamous agents provocateurs, and allegations of sexual deviance, Professor Kirsten McKenzie argues that such colourful and salacious aspects of colonial administrations cannot be separated from the real business of political and social change. The book instead highlights the importance of taking gossip, paranoia, factional infighting and political spin seriously to show the extent to which ostensibly marginal figures and events influenced the transformation of the nineteenth-century British Empire.

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