

Competing Kingdoms rethinks the importance of women and religion within U.S. imperial culture from the early nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth. In an era when the United States was emerging as a world power to challenge the hegemony of European imperial powers, American women missionaries strove to create a new Kingdom of God. They did much to shape a Protestant empire based on American values and institutions. This book examines American women's activism in a broad transnational context. It offers a complex array of engagements with their efforts to provide rich intercultural histories about the global expansion of American culture and American Protestantism. An international and interdisciplinary group of scholars, the contributors bring under-utilized evidence from U.S. and non-U.S. sources to bear on the study of American women missionaries abroad and at home. Focusing on women from several denominations, they build on the insights of postcolonial scholarship to incorporate the agency of the people among whom missionaries lived. They explore how people in China, the Congo Free State, Egypt, India, Japan, Ndebeleland (colonial Rhodesia), Ottoman Bulgaria, and the Philippines perceived, experienced, and negotiated American cultural expansion. They also consider missionary work among people within the United States who were constructed as foreign, including African Americans, Native Americans, and Chinese immigrants. By presenting multiple cultural perspectives, this important collection challenges simplistic notions about missionary cultural imperialism, revealing the complexity of American missionary attitudes toward race and the ways that ideas of domesticity were reworked and appropriated in various settings. It expands the field of U.S. women's history into the international arena, increases understanding of the global spread of American culture, and offers new concepts for analyzing the history of American empire. Contributors: Beth Baron, Betty Bergland, Mary Kupiec Cayton, Derek Chang, Sue Gronewold, Jane Hunter, Sylvia Jacobs, Susan Haskell Khan, Rui Kohiyama, Laura Prieto, Barbara Reeves-Ellington, Mary Renda, Connie A. Shemo, Kathryn Kish Sklar, Ian Tyrrell, Wendy Urban-Mead

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