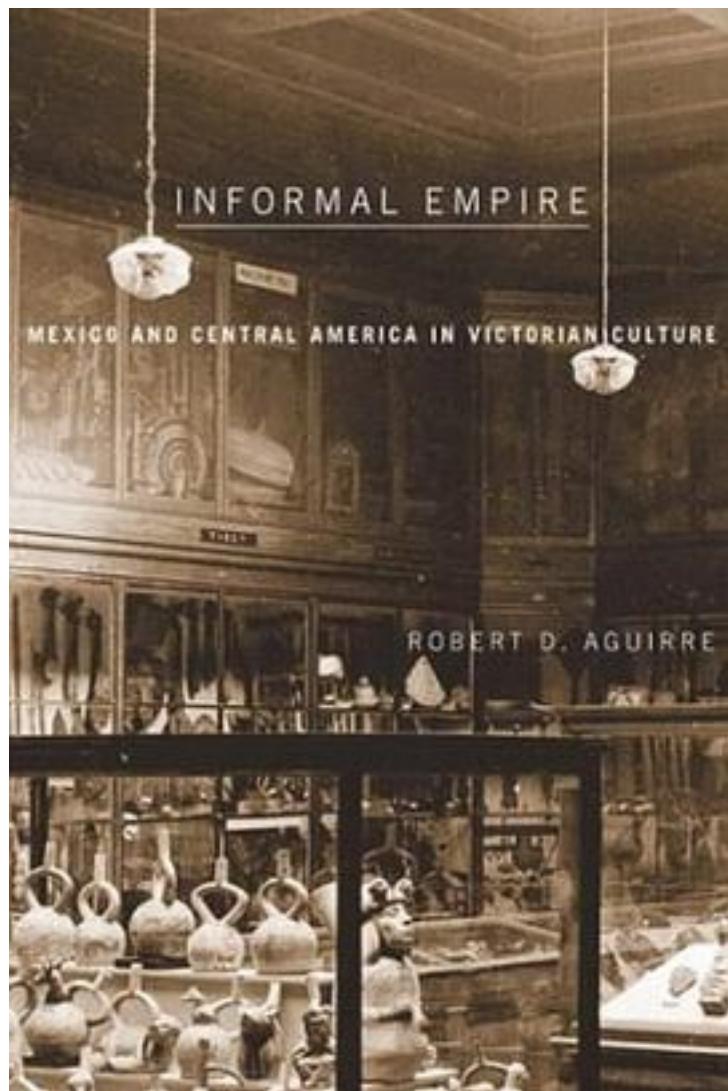


Informal Empire



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Behind the ancient artifacts displayed in our museums lies a secret history--of travel, desire, the quest for knowledge, and even theft. Such is the case with the objects of Mesoamerican culture so avidly collected, cataloged, and displayed by the British in the nineteenth century. "Informal Empire recaptures the history of those artifacts from Mexico and Central America that stirred Victorian interest--a history that reveals how such objects and the cultures they embodied were incorporated into British museum collections, panoramas, freak shows, adventure novels, and records of imperial administrators. Robert D. Aguirre draws on a wealth of previously untapped historical information to show how the British colonial experience in Africa and the Near East gave rise to an "informal imperialism" in Mexico and Central America. Aguirre's work helps us to understand what motivated the British to beg, borrow, buy, and steal from peripheral cultures they did not govern. With its original insights, "Informal Empire points to a new way of thinking about British imperialism and, more generally, about the styles and forms of imperialism itself.

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