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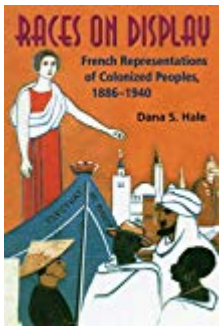

Dana S. Hale. *Races on Display: French Representations of Colonized Peoples, 1886-1940.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008. x + 215 pp. $24.95, paper, ISBN 978-0-253-21899-5.

Reviewed by Michael G. Vann

Published on H-French-Colonial (April, 2009)

Commissioned by Jyoti Mohan (Morgan State University)

While reading Dana S. Hale's *Races on Display*, my mind frequently bounced back to a personal memory. As a child in Hawai'i in the 1970s, I experienced many things "mainlanders" saw as exotic. For example, my elementary school's dress code stipulated that students either wear shoes or come to class with bare feet; no sandals or "rubber slippers" (in Pidgin, the local vernacular) were allowed for fear of children running and slipping on wet floors. I recall watching workers load pineapple barges in Kaunakakai, Moloka'i, and being given beautiful fresh fruit by the workers. I remember sugarcane workers giving me freshly cut cane stalks that I chewed on. When I arrived at the University of California in the 1980s, I shared these stories with my dorm mates. Several times they responded with laughs or smiles at best and snickers or sneers at worst but almost always with the comment: "you are the C & H kid!" I had no idea what they were talking about but hid my ignorance out of embarrassment. Years later I chanced upon a documentary on nostalgic television advertisements that included a segment on California and Hawaii Sugar (C & H). In the spot a barefoot Hawaiian boy trades a marble to a jovial elderly woman, a classic "Tutu" or grandmother type with a touch of Aunt Jemima, for a stick of sugarcane. Happily, the boy skips home sucking on the sugarcane and enjoying the tropical paradise. This commercial, while filmed in Hawai'i with local actors, never aired in the islands. Obviously, with its trafficking in racial stereotypes, the marketing team recognized that the spot would not have gone over well in the local community. However, for many on the mainland, this was a common representation of life in this exotic, tropical state. My own personal experience with the commercial use of racial (and, indeed, racist) images directly parallels Hale's analysis of the French Third Republic's commercial and political production of race.

Races on Display is a study of the construction of images of the colonial "other." Hale carefully sets the parameters of her study on a specific and crucial period in French history. The Third Republic saw the rise of several forces: industrial

consumer capitalism, mass media, and imperial expansion. She notes that within this period, World War I marked a turning point when these forces became increasingly intertwined. Hale bases her analysis on two groups of sources: registered trademarks and colonial exhibitions. From these two pools, she teases out broad patterns in the French racial imagination. The strength of her two types of sources lies in the diversity of representations.

First, the various trademarks show how producers conceived of the colonized subjects. While Hale does not provide an analysis of the consumption of these racial images, she does show what people of the empire looked like to shoppers who most likely met few people of Asian, Arab, or sub-Saharan African origin. Without the information on the reception of these images we do not get the "pull forces," but we do see the "push forces" at work. Importantly, her research shows the widespread use of racial stereotypes to sell commodities ranging from soap and ink to rice and coffee. Obviously, certain ethnicities or "races" were associated with certain commodities. Sometimes advertisers used people to represent the regional origin of a product, such as Asians and tea. Other producers used exotic images to create an image for a product, such as veiled Muslim women and perfume. In more disturbing cases, manufacturers chose to deploy racist stereotypes--for example, hardworking Asians or childlike black Africans--to sell a commodity. In some cases, such as the selling of bleach supposedly so strong it could turn black people into white, French companies used racist humor to reach white consumers.

Second, Hale's analysis of the Third Republic's colonial expositions probes the construction of the official image of the French Empire. Either as components of the world's fair (Paris 1878, 1889, and 1900) or their own as specifically colonial events (Marseilles 1922 and Paris 1931 and 1937), these displays conveyed what the state wanted citizens to know and to think about the empire. While the analysis of colonial expositions is not a new topic in the field (as opposed to Hale's original research on trademarks), her careful examination of the planning, organization, and implementation of the expositions provides a crucial complement to the commercial creation of images of empire and race. Of particular interest are her comments on the struggle for "authenticity" in the displays. Paired together, these groups of evidence cover the most commonly encountered images of the colonial "other" by French consumers and citizens in the Third Republic.

The book's structure is very clear and straightforward. The introduction is brief and refreshingly unencumbered with theoretical jargon; indeed, the work as a whole is free of the commonly cumbersome and overly complex intellectual gymnastics of many postcolonial studies of racial images. In these opening pages, Hale lays out her argument and gives the reader a clear blueprint for the text. Throughout the work, Hale blends historiography into the narrative flow in an almost seamless manner. The book as a whole is divided into two parts of four chapters each.

Part 1, "The Path to Civilization, 1886-1913," considers the Third Republic's construction of race during a time of conquest. After a short narrative chapter that lays out the process of imperial expansion, she devotes individual chapters to the people of the three main segments of the French colonial empire. The chapter on sub-Saharan Africans concludes that they were deemed the most uncivilized of the colonized peoples. Her research indicates a common generalized African type, a "Noir" or "Négre." Frequently, there was no distinction between Africans and Afro-Caribbeans. While many trademarks were registered decades after emancipation, slavelike relationships with whites predominated the images. Hale does find some important distinctions among representations of different black Africans. Early on, observers claimed that Sene-

galese (some of whom were from the Old Regime colonial municipalities of Dakar, Saint Louis, Rusfique, and Gorée Island) were "model natives" and on the way to be civilized. They stood in sharp contrast to the "savages" of Dahomey, a kingdom that fiercely resisted the brutal war of conquest well into the 1890s. In the chapter on North Africans, Hale finds a similar dichotomy between the image of fierce Arab and Berber warriors and a productive agricultural region ripe for French colonial development. This tension is seen in a variety of registered trademarks. Of note is the finding that some commercial images had Arab consumers in mind, thus fitting in with the scheme of building an empire to create a market for metropolitan products. At the 1900 world's fair, Hale argues that there was a clear conflict between the mission of modernizing the Arabs and the stereotype of impenetrable Arabs. The official and academic literature of the exhibition did not include an analysis of race or culture, focusing instead on commerce. The economic message was even stronger in the representation of the Indochinese. Here, a generalized image of industrious Asians, not in need of white supervision like the blacks, sold various products as exotic or of high quality. Those trademarks bore such stereotypical Asian motifs as dragons, conical hats, and Chinese characters. At the exhibitions, the official view of the Indochinese was that of a productive labor force and eager market. As one would expect, the various forms of Vietnamese anticolonial activity went unmentioned in the images of the colony.

The second part of the book, "Children of France, 1914-1940," describes the further categorization of the colonized people. In this period, Hale finds that the French viewed sub-Saharan Africans as loyal in a childish and simple manner but potentially fierce brutes on the battlefield. This new image came from the experience of World War I when "la force noire" helped to save France from the Germans. The quintessential image of this vision of black Africans was the ubiquitous Banania advertisement with the Senegalese rifleman foolishly grinning and declaring "Y'a bon!" (which Hale translates as "'Dis be good!"). Hale notes that commercial images of Africans could be categorized into three groups: soldiers, children, and entertainers. While no longer slaves, blacks were presented as immature beings whose purpose was to amuse and serve whites. The interwar colonial expositions stressed the service of sub-Saharan Africans to the French nation. As soldiers and as laborers, Africans were an important asset as imperial human capital. According to Hale, North African images remained consistent throughout the Third Republic. While expert opinion held that the impenetrable otherness of Islamic culture retarded French understanding of Arabs and Berbers, boosters of empire clung to the idea of North Africa as a productive agricultural region with a large supply of local labor. The official French view never resolved the tension between a region of overwhelming difference and the potential for modernization. In the commercial realm, marketers continued to associate Arab women with a mysterious and forbidden beauty, making much of the Western fetish of the veil. Arab and Berber warriors appeared in many trademarks and advertisements, symbolizing strength and power. Various stimulants, such as coffee, tobacco, and ironically alcohol, bore images of the greater Islamic world (including Turks). Hale utilizes a family metaphor to describe North Africans of the interwar period. They were the "eldest" or "first sons" of the imperial family. France, generally maternalized in this metaphor, considered the Indochinese to be the most talented or "gifted sons." Commercial images of the Indochinese colonies stressed the cultural exoticism of the regions and their products. These representations offered a view of Asians as hard-working servants or agricultural workers. Obviously, the commercial images ignored increasingly active and often violent Vietnamese anticolonial movements. At the expositions of 1922, 1931, and 1937, cultural traditions, rather than contem-

porary political and social realities, took center stage. All the events made much of Khmer (Cambodian) culture, arguably at the expense of Vietnamese culture. Recreations of the architectural marvels of the Khmer Empire were crowd pleasers, despite the fact that the displays often mixed together different periods, styles, and religions (in 1937, the model of the Hindu Angkor Wat contained elements of the Bayon's depictions of Jayavarmann VII as a bodhisattva). The official representations also elided on-going political difficulties.

Hale concludes the book with a chapter that summarizes various aspects of her argument and her two pools of sources. This chapter continues the family metaphor, explaining the maternal construction of France in relation to her children. This final chapter notes the inherent contraction of the Third Republic's colonial empire: the conflict between a fraternal civilizing mission and a hierarchy of races with the French at the summit. Hale holds that the adoption of the maternal image of France allowed for the construction of the subject races as brothers under French parental authority. Hence there was the promise of unity but within the structured power-relationships of a nuclear family. In a book with sparse theoretical material, this concise conceptual model is very persuasive. Hale argues that to the end of the empire, the French colonial mission was to imagine and define the colonized subject in order to exert French dominance.

Hale's work is admirable and extremely useful, but it does beg a few critical questions and comments. First, the book contains less than twenty images. This is disappointing as many trademarks are described but not presented, leaving the reader to imagine what they looked like. For an argument so grounded in the visual, this is a serious shortcoming. Second, one wonders if Hale needed to include all the details and intricacies of the planning of the various colonial expositions. The larger argument is often lost in the details of these events. Third, the book has a strong discussion of the production of imperial images of race, but lacks in analysis of the reception of such images. Did race sell? Did race ever backfire in a commercial enterprise (we might think of businesses, such as the Las Vegas restaurant, that changed their name from French themes to American in the hyper-patriotism after 9/11 and during the invasion of Iraq or the unseen C & H advertisements of my youth)? How well did race work in selling commodities to colonized peoples? The colonies were supposed to become markets. What did African, Arab, or Asian consumers think of ethnically themed products? Did they reject or internalize the imperial image of race? How did racialized images fare against Western or neutral images? Hale mentions the use of "Chinese characters." We should know if these were Chinese or Nom (the Vietnamese language written phonetically in Sinitic characters, later replaced by the romanized script of quoc-ngu). This would tell us which ethnicity was the intended audience.

In all, this book is a strong offering. Hale has a clear methodology and draws appropriate conclusions form her research. The work is informed by secondary literature and has a clear command of the historiography but is not weighed down by complicated theoretical concerns. Experts in French colonialism will not find much that is new but will appreciate the precision of the argument and analysis. Those with a background in the history of other colonial empires will learn specifics of the Third Republic's colonial experience. French historians will gain insight into the ways in which the colonial thread can and should be woven into the French nation's narrative fabric. Hale's book will be a strong addition to graduate seminars and advanced undergraduate courses.

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Citation: Michael G. Vann. Review of Hale, Dana S. *Races on Display: French Representations of Colonized Peoples, 1886-1940.* H-French-Colonial, H-Net Reviews. April, 2009.

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