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Marianne Bechhaus-Gerst, Mechthild Leutner, Hauke Neddermann, eds. *Frauen in den deutschen Kolonien.* Berlin: Links, 2009. 284 pp. EUR 24.90 (paper), ISBN 978-3-86153-526-3.

Reviewed by Daniel Walther (History Department, Wartburg College)
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Commissioned by Susan R. Boettcher

Women and the Colonies

Frauen in den deutschen Kolonien expands the breadth and depth of our understanding of women's roles and positions in the colonial endeavor. This edited collection builds upon previous works that have dealt exclusively with German women active in the colonial field.[1] It goes beyond previous books, however, by bringing together the experiences of women, European and non-European, from across Germany's overseas empire and the metropole into a single volume that covers not just the period of effective German colonialism but also the subsequent interwar period. The multifaceted comparative aspect of the collection offers the reader great potential to draw significant conclusions about the role of women in German colonialism.

The book begins with a brief introduction by the editors, which is then followed by a well-written introduction by Martha Mamozai. The rest of the book is divided into four thematic sections: colonial self-image; colonial women's worlds; colonial women's mission; and colonial women's portraits. According to the editors, the purpose of this volume is to give the first insight into the historical problematic of "women and colonies"' and hence act as a corrective to the abundance of "historical and popular accounts" of German colonialism (p. 9). They note that closer examination reveals that women's roles were often complex and full of contradictions. Both European and non-European women were actors and victims, and they all shaped in some way the colonial endeavor and environment. Mamozai clearly illustrates this insight in her introductory essay. In it, she describes the beginnings of German women's involvement in the colonial enterprise in acting as advocates for colonialism in the metropole and eventually in contributing to the establishment and maintenance of German rule in actual overseas possessions. She also discusses the relationship between European and indigenous women; "rivals," as she accurately describes them. Because of this relationship, women in both "worlds" possessed agency, especially in terms of acquiring a means to affect their position in colonial society.

In the first main section of the book, "Colonial Self-Image," the essays include examinations of women's colonial education in the homeland, the experiences of German women traveling through Africa, the everyday life and self-perception of women in Germany's South Sea possessions, and the perspectives of two women active in German colonialism, Frieda von Bülow (who spent time German East Africa) and Elisabeth von Heykings (one of the first German women to travel to China). These various contributions create the perception that these women had a contribution to make to German colonialism. In fact, as Dörte Lerp illustrates in her essay, the colonial women's schools in Witzenhausen and Bad Weilbach provided theoretical and practical knowledge for women, in particular those of the middle class, to utilize in the colonies in support of the colonial endeavor. As Livia Loosen reveals in her study of women's everyday life in the Pacific, these women often assumed this role, though not necessarily in the same fashion as their counterparts in German Africa. At any rate, doing so often meant supporting German racial views of the colonial "Other," as Marianne Bechhaus-Gerst demonstrates in her essay on Bülow. However, as Mechthild Leuter points out, this perspective was not accepted uncritically. Indeed, though initially supportive of the colonial endeavor, Heykings came to criticize European exploitation of China and even Europeans' belief in their own superiority.

The second section of the book, "Colonial Women's Worlds," explores the worlds experienced by those who often challenged the dominant racial paradigm. Thus, this section includes two essays that look at miscegenation: Dag Henrichsen's on German southwest Africa from the perspective of the colonial regime, and Katja

Kaiser's on Kiautschou through the lens of a German-Chinese family. Meanwhile, Ursula Tripper attempts to reconstruct the details of the life in Germany of Marie Hegner, a woman who became aware that she was the product of miscegenation. In his essay, Klaus Mühlhahn provides a brief excursion into the world of prostitution in Kiautschou, which brought Europeans and non-Europeans into sexual contact with one other. While sexual contact itself was not ultimately looked down upon, the resulting spread of sexually transmitted diseases did cause colonial authorities to extend their power over Chinese prostitutes in the name of protecting the empire. Kaier's other essay in this section also focuses on China, but this time on the lives of women in the territory, which were similar to the lives of women in other German possessions. Finally, Stefanie Michels's contribution takes us back to Africa, where she examines the world of indigenous soldiers' wives, focusing primarily on Cameroon.

The next, shortest, section looks at the world of female missionaries. It begins with an essay by Andreas Eckl, who introduces the reader to the outlines of feminist missionary historical writing. It is followed by three case studies in an apparent move to provide readers with the opportunity to compare women's missionary experiences in the three different colonies. The first, by Julia Besten, looks at the life of Lina Stahlhut and the Rhine Missionary Society in southwest Africa. In the next essay, Rea Brändle examines the lives of the sisters Regina, Annie, and Lisa Bruce in Togo. Vera Gaide, the last author in this section, returns to China to look at missionary activities there. In all three instances, the authors convey the protagonists' self-perceptions and their views of the objects of their missionary work.

In the final section of the book, various contributions examine the construction and perceptions of women in the colonial setting, with an emphasis on European racial constructions of the "Other." Thus, Annette Dietrich, Bechhaus-Gerst, Mechthild Leutner, and Peter Mesenhöller, in their respective essays, show how colonial women in Africa, China, and the Pacific were racially constructed through literature and photography. These various media broadcast the view of these women to a larger public. According to German observers, differences existed between the "races" and, in the case of China, even within the "race." But, for example, as Mesenhöller aptly demonstrates in the case of Samoa, this image was often consciously manufactured, and not merely a realization of German notions of race.

The greatest strength of the collection is its breadth of coverage in terms of location and agents. Consequently, the book covers almost all of Germany's overseas possessions as well as the metropole. In fact, unlike many edited collections focusing on German colonialism, this one possesses a significant number (nine of twenty-three) that examine Germany's Pacific territories (Qingdao, New Guinea, and Samoa). Moreover, the book contains essays from multiple perspectives from both colonizers and colonized. In terms of colonizers, views of missionaries, wives of diplomats, members of the middle class, housewives, and authors are explored. Meanwhile, several essays cover the lives of the colonized, including soldiers' wives, prostitutes, the heroine of 1900 in China, and a woman of mixed parentage.

Unfortunately, though, the collection contains neither a real introduction to situate the essays in the larger context of German colonialism, nor a summative essay that attempts to tie the different themes together. Admittedly, the editors state that "this book is the outcome of historical research, but is not, however, directed toward an academic public" (p. 11). Nevertheless, even for a non-academic audience, some effort by the editors to tease out different themes or leitmotifs could have contributed significantly to the reader's understanding of this under-investigated aspect of German colonialism. Further, the quality of the essays varies. Some are well researched and written, while others lack a clear focus or present information without a clear indication of the sources.

Despite these apparent shortcomings, however, this collection of essays makes a welcome and important addition to our understanding of German colonialism, especially to our awareness of the multitude of ways women shaped the endeavor. Readers well versed in German colonialism will already know much of what is contained in this volume. Nonetheless, because of the book's breadth, even members of this audience will enhance their knowledge of this period in German history. Those who know little or are just beginning will learn a great deal, despite the absence of any introduction or summative essay.

Note

[1]. Lora Wildenthal, *German Women for Empire, 1884-1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001); Krista O'Donnell, "The Colonial Woman Question: Gender, National Identity and Empire in the Colonial Society Female Emigration Program, 1896-1914" (Ph.D. diss., State University of New York-Binghamton, 1996); Karen Smidt, "'Germania führt die deutsche Frau nach Südwest': Auswanderung, Leben und soziale Konflikte deutscher Frauen in der ehemaligen Kolonie Deutsch-Südwestafrika 1884-1920: Eine sozial- und frauengeschichtliche Studie" (Ph.D. diss., Magdeburg, 1995).

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