H-Net Reviews
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Volker Langbehn, Mohammad Salama, eds. *German Colonialism: Race, the Holocaust, and Postwar Germany.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2011. 327 pp. $89.50 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-231-14972-3; $29.50 (paper), ISBN 978-0-231-14973-0.

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Published on H-War (July, 2012)
Commissioned by Margaret Sankey

New Perspectives on German Colonialism

Although the short-lived period of German colonialism (1884-1914) once remained on the margins of academic research, it has become a topic of serious investigation in recent years. Holocaust scholars in particular grapple with the question of continuity, assessing to what extent–if at all–the origins of the Nazi genocide can be found in the colonial experiment. The German military's conduct in southwest Africa during the Herero and Nama War (1904-1907), which resulted in the near total annihilation of the Herero population, stands at the center of this debate over continuity. While some scholars go so far as to posit a direct link between the two incidents, others stress the dissimilarities between colonial and Nazi violence. An important component to this discussion rests on the question of how different German colonial rule was from that of other colonizers who, after all, did not instigate genocide on the European continent. *German Colonialism*, edited by Volker Langbehn and Mohammad Salama, is a valuable contribution to this ever-growing body of scholarship. This collection contains thirteen stimulating essays that approach the question of continuity from multiple vantage points. Unfortunately, this review can only discuss a few of the essays in any depth; nonetheless, it will attempt to highlight the diversity of interpretations found within the collection.

The book is divided into five thematic sections. In the first section, "Colonial (Dis)Continuities: Framing the Issue," Birthe Kundrus's essay places German imperialism within a transnational framework, assessing "to what extent German colonialism differed from the hegemonic modes of other imperial powers" (p. 30). While all colonizers shared similar ruling methods, she acknowledges that the Reich's late entrance into the colonial sphere set Germany apart from more established colonizers. The perceived need to catch up with Great Britain, for instance, resulted in the creation of more radical policies in the German protectorates. Kundrus nonetheless cautions us against drawing any peculiarly German lines of continuity between the colonial and postcolonial periods. Indeed, perceptions of race often stemmed from a "European reservoir of colonial knowledge," a point that highlights the need to integrate the study of German colonialism within a wider European framework (p. 38).

In the second section, "Lebensraum and Genocide," Shelley Baranowski forgoes the typical focus on overseas colonialism and instead concentrates on Germany as a continental empire. Lebensraum refers to the Nazi's plan to provide Germans with more "living space" through their conquest of eastern Europe. As Baranowski points out, this preoccupation with the East can be traced back to German unification in 1871, which exacerbated ethnic tensions along Prussia's eastern frontier. Radical nationalists, angered by the presence of Poles and the influx of Austro-Hungarian and Russian Jews, pushed for the expansion of "living space" while advocating for the expulsion and disenfranchisement of the Jewish and Slavic populations. In the author's estimation, the subsequent loss of Germany's eastern territories through the Treaty of Versailles (1919) amplified the obsession with the eastern borderlands and was thus more significant to the Nazi's conception of Lebensraum than was the legacy of overseas imperialism.

One of the most original contributions of this volume is A. Dirk Moses's analysis of Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951). In recent years, scholars have used Arendt's work to argue for continuity between the "Western imperial tradition" and the outcome of Nazi totalitarianism: the Holocaust. Moses, however, criticizes this use of Arendt, claiming that scholars have misinterpreted her argument. Based on a close reading of her text, Moses posits that Arendt viewed German, Austrian, and Russian continental imperialism as the precursor to

National Socialist violence while arguing that "Western" colonialism was fundamentally different. Arendt, in an effort to distinguish the Nazi genocide from acts of colonial brutality, even relegated the atrocities committed in the Belgian Congo to a mere footnote–a point that Moses is quick to castigate. Although Moses does not offer his own continuity or discontinuity thesis, he nevertheless maintains that National Socialist policies were more in line with the Western tradition than Arendt allowed.

Each of the essays in part 3, "Looking East: Poland, the Ottoman Empire and Politicized Jihadism," aim to expand the spatial and temporal framework of German colonial studies. Building on work that she has published elsewhere, Kristin Kopp, more forcefully than Baranowski, compellingly argues that Poland should be considered within the realm of German colonialism. Kopp points out that "both literary texts and the mainstream press" depicted the eastern borderlands as colonial space long before the National Socialist period (p. 149). The notion that "Poland" was an uncivilized land in need of German development, for example, could be found in such well-known novels as Gustav Freytag's *Soll und Haben* (1855). While this discursive continuity persisted for over a century, it would have found concrete expression in the Nazi's Generalplan Ost: an ambitious, yet failed plan to create a colonial state between the Oder and Dnieper rivers. In the author's analysis, continuity is thus not found in the connections between colonial violence and the Holocaust but rather in the German continental colonial imagination. Kopp's unique observations offer a promising way of framing German colonialism and her essay opens up exciting new avenues of investigation.

Russell A. Berman's insightful essay also aims to push the study of German colonialism beyond its existing frameworks. While Kopp focuses specifically on the case of Poland, Berman highlights several areas that warrant further consideration. He criticizes the use of national paradigms to assess Germany's colonial history and emphasizes the importance of transregional frames of inquiry when analyzing colonial relationships. Although his plea to move far beyond the thirty-year Wilhelminian period of formal colonialism to consider Germany's transformation from colonized–under the Roman Empire–to colonizer is well-taken, he perhaps pushes the colonial paradigm too far when he asserts that the German Democratic Republic (GDR) should be studied as a colonized land. In this way, Berman traces a line of continuity from imperialism to Communist internationalism, "on the basis of their shared world-conquest ambitions" (p. 181).

Although the purported aim of this volume is to approach the question of continuity from a "perspective that is not contained within geographical, political, or cultural boundaries," the contributors in the fourth section, "Of Missionaries, Economics, and Intranational Self-Perception," either address continuity in a very tangential manner or eschew the question altogether (p. xii). The essays do, however, offer fresh new perspectives on the nature of German colonialism. Hartmut Pogge von Strandmann examines the rationale behind Otto von Bismarck's overseas expansion. Contrary to popular interpretations, which emphasize the political considerations behind the chancellor's colonial policy, Strandmann insists that economic concerns provided the main rationale for overseas ventures. Bismarck granted state protection to business interests abroad in the hopes that they would administer colonial territories; nonetheless, the state became increasingly active in colonial administration. Post-Bismarckian colonial politics were also dominated by economic concerns in the form of the Kolonialrat (Colonial Office). The Kolonialrat, created in 1891 to administer colonial policy, included a number of prominent members of the business community, such as Adolf von Hanseman, who managed the largest bank in the German Empire: the Diskonto Society. While Strandmann does not pursue the question of continuity to any great lengths, he concludes that the Nazi's expansionist aims constituted a "departure" from the economically based overseas imperialism of the Kaisserreich (p. 206). As the author points out, Lebensraum was, after all, based on racial considerations and any economic gain that resulted was viewed merely as a positive side effect.

The contributors in the fifth and final section, "Postcolonial German Politics," attempt to trace the effects of colonialism on post-WWII German society. Martin Braach-Maksvytis offers a provocative yet thoughtful way of conceptualizing West Germany's postwar relationship with Israel. Braach-Maksvytis insists that the "West German adoration for Israel" cannot be attributed solely to the need to atone for the Holocaust. He argues instead that this represented a "form of a redemptive proxy colonialism" that drew on the prewar Jewish and German colonial imaginations (p. 295). While leading Zionists in the pre-WWII period typically cast Palestine as a land in need of civilization, postwar German political and popular discourse used these same colonial tropes when assessing Israel's role in the Middle East. Brach-Maksvytis highlights, for instance, a 1995 speech by the former West German ambassador to Israel, Rolf Pauls, who claimed that Israel had brought unheard-of levels of

civilization to the Middle East. This is only one of several compelling examples that Brach-Maksvytis provides. His essay opens up the field of German colonial studies to a memory-oriented approach and thus fills a much-needed gap in the historiography of German colonialism.

All in all, the greatest strength of *German Colonialism* lies in the diverse approaches the contributors take to the subject of German imperialism. While the question of continuity frames the parameters of the volume, continuity is not limited to the possible connections between the Herero and Nama War and the Holocaust, but is considered in a variety of contexts. The essays pave the way for a broader spatial and temporal understanding of German colonialism in all of its myriad manifestations and it remains to be seen what new scholarship will arise from this collection. Although the volume is geared more for a specialist audience, it would be suitable for a graduate seminar.

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Citation: Kristin Bertrand. Review of Langbehn, Volker; Salama, Mohammad, eds., *German Colonialism: Race, the Holocaust, and Postwar Germany.* H-War, H-Net Reviews. July, 2012.
URL: http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=36602

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