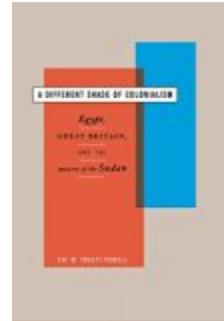


H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Eve M. Troutt Powell. *A Different Shade of Colonialism: Egypt, Great Britain, and the Mastery of the Sudan*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003. xi + 260 pp. ISBN 978-0-520-23316-4; ISBN 978-0-520-23317-1.

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Triangulated Conquest or the Colonized Colonizer: A New View of Imperialism in the Nile Valley

A Different Shade of Colonialism: Egypt, Great Britain, and the Mastery of the Sudan begins with the riveting tale of four Egyptian nationalists on trial for attempting to illegally enslave six Sudanese women in the late-nineteenth century. Emphasizing that the courtroom proceedings are reflective of a larger political climate where Egypt is aggressively attempting to colonize the Sudan while it is under the control of the British Empire, Eve Troutt Powell brilliantly weaves the details of the case into the narratives of pre-eminent Egyptian leaders who are shaping the discourses about race, empire, and nation in the Nile Valley from 1881-1925. In addition, the author provides an account of the role of slavery in the construction of ideologies of race and the formation of Egypt's cultural and national identity.

The primary thesis of the book is that Egypt's status as a "colonized-colonizer" is pivotal to its articulation of nationalism in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Powell's presentation of a more fluid relationship between European empires and non-European colonies debunks hegemonic notions of imperialism, which generally discuss colonialism in terms of a binary relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. Furthermore, her discussion of Egypt's nationalist response to colonialism is ground-breaking because of its emphasis on the centrality of race and the influence of the Sudanese presence in Egyptian understandings of "what defined Egypt as truly Egyptian" (p. 8). The most remarkable aspect of this book is its attention to the various lenses through which triangulated conquest

could be viewed. The author strives to give the reader the perspective of: the British authorities who believed the existence of the slave trade was an indication that Egypt was ill-equipped for self-rule; Egyptian elites who felt that their nation's identity was deeply intertwined with conquest of the Sudan; Egyptian soldiers who experienced the lived contradiction of colonialism; and the Sudanese who simultaneously struggled to participate in the representations of the Sudan and its people, and political independence against the British and the Egyptians. The result is a complex account that requires diligence on the part of readers, especially if they are not used to reading historical texts. Nevertheless, Powell's ability to combine concrete data, scrupulous analysis and a good story make the reader's effort worthwhile.

If there is one weakness of this text, it is the author's comments about racism. Powell is correct to emphasize that there are multiple forms of racism, and that race in the Nile Valley should not be conflated with notions of race in the United States. Furthermore, her assertion that discussions of race should not be limited to racism is quite cogent. What is befuddling is her argument that there was a racial consciousness in nineteenth-century Egypt though the Egyptians could not be construed as racist because they lack sufficient power. Even more disconcerting is her claim that a consideration of racism "clouds the discussion" (p. 16). What, then, are the implications of her data, such as the Egyptians in blackface and the plays written by Ya'qub Sanu'a? How can a nation that has the power to enslave a people, colonize them, stereo-

type them, misrepresent them, and silence them still be considered too powerless to be racist? Because this is the best rendering of race and colonialism in the Nile Valley thus far, it is unfortunate that the author did not believe that a more rigorous examination about this subject was important

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