



Michael Perraudin, Jürgen Zimmerer. *German Colonialism and National Identity*. London: Routledge, 2010. 340 S. \$110.00, e-book, ISBN 978-0-203-85259-0.



Reviewed by Roberta Pergher

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The volume under review is part of a sustained scholarly interest in German colonialism which began nearly two decades ago. After an earlier generation of studies in the 1960s and 1970s had examined the development of an overseas empire from a political angle, this more recent wave of investigations has been informed by postcolonial theory and characterized by interdisciplinary exchange. Research has focused on discourses and cultures circulating between metropole and colony; explored questions of race and gender, self-identification, and "othering"; and paid attention to the fantasies, memories, and legacies that preceded, accompanied, and succeeded German imperialism. In the English language, the establishment of this new line of scholarship was marked by the publication of a volume 13 years ago, *The Imperialist Imagination: German Colonialism and Its Legacy*, edited by Sara Friedrichsmeyer, Sara Lennox, and Susanne Zantop (1998). Much has been written and debated since then, in particular the question of possible "continuities" in German goals, methods, and atti-

tudes from the Herero genocide in Southwest Africa in 1904-06 to the Holocaust in Europe half a century later.[1] What does the volume under review here add to this growing body of literature on German colonialism?

The collection comprises twenty-two essays exploring narratives and representations of German colonialism, from its prehistory to its legacy. The volume emerged out of an interdisciplinary conference, "War, Genocide and Memory: German Colonialism and National Identity," held at the University of Sheffield in 2006 and hosting over sixty participants.[2] The authors published here come from a variety of fields; they are historians (Germanists as well as Africanists), sociologists, literary scholars, and linguists. They are active predominantly in Europe and the United States, but also in Africa and Australia. Their contributions focus on the "cultural processing" of colonial aspiration, conquest, rule, and memory. The chapters are divided into four chronological parts ("Colonialism from before the empire," "Colonialism and Popular Utterance in the Imperial Phase,"

"Colonialism and the End of Empire," and "German Colonialism in the Era of Decolonization"), followed by a final section on local histories, memories, and legacies. Only a few of the many interesting contributions can be mentioned here.

More than any other section of the volume, the first highlights the importance of studying German aspirations in Eastern Europe as part of a broader, European colonial outlook focused on overseas expansion. Brian Vick shows that while the Frankfurt National Parliament of 1848 did not concern itself with the possibility of German colonialism overseas in any meaningful way, it did discuss settlement issues and identified Southeast Europe as a possible outlet for the "excess population" of a unified Germany. This discussion was increasingly informed by biologically determinist views of racial difference and depicted the Slavic people, who inhabited the territories coveted for German settlement, in less and less human terms. Kristin Kopp follows Vick's line of argument and asserts that Germany's desire for eastward expansion needs to be placed within the broader scholarly framework of European colonialism. While Kopp is certainly right that the conceptualization of Poland as a colonial space can yield valuable insights into German-Polish relations, discussions about the East in nineteenth-century Germany did not merely follow from a European colonialist mind-set but hinged just as much on Germany's own longstanding geopolitical ambitions and cultural traditions of eastward expansion. Surprisingly, connections and resonances between overseas colonialism and Germany's interests in Eastern Europe are not pursued further in the sections of the volume devoted to Germany's imperial phase and the interwar years. They are only raised again in the context of the memory (rather than the practice) of the war of extermination perpetrated by the German army in Southwest Africa.

The literary and pictorial production of empire lies at the heart of the volume's second sec-

tion on the years of imperial rule. Jeff Bowersox explores representation of empire and gender in youth literature. His incisive study shows how the German acquisition of colonies influenced the ways in which youth magazines reported on far-away lands. While little changed in terms of the adventurous narrations in boys' magazines, girls' magazines started to represent women's roles in more active terms, as women were now afforded the domestic task of establishing a German home in the colonies. An insightful analysis of the imagery of empire is provided also by David Ciarlo. His essay shows how German advertising resorted to different imagery in the wake of the Herero war. On the one hand, we see the emergence of the German colonial war hero as a new marketing ploy; on the other, Africans were now represented in more ambiguous and contradictory ways. The use of more humorous depictions of Africans allowed advertisers to retain established images while deflecting attention away from the war of extermination fought in Africa. Yet some visual clues also allowed for a more sinister and ominous reading, one that approved of and embraced extermination. The only piece referring to German colonial interests in Asia comes from Yixu Lü, which analyzes the media coverage of the Boxer Rebellion in the German press. It demonstrates that the "Berliner Morgenpost" was driven by sensationalism and patriotism rather than objectivity in reporting on the German's army involvement in suppressing the rebellion.

The volume's end-of-empire section focuses on war and the emergence of a more genocidal racism. Here the Askari, the African soldier in the German colonial army, holds center stage in a number of essays. Jörg Lehmann shows the contradictory representations of blacks in German post-WWI literature: as comrades in arms and as barbaric savages, whereby both ultimately served to portray the Germans in a positive light. Along similar lines, Michael Pesek argues that the figure of the Askari functioned as a witness to German heroism in narratives of WWI in Africa. He also

shows how the European war on African soil shook the colonial order, threatening the distinction between Europeans and Africans. Susann Lewerenz too engages with the figure of the loyal Askari, juxtaposing this figure to the narrative of the *Schwarze Schmach*, the occupation of the Rheinland by Senegalese tirailleurs, which became a symbol of male powerlessness in Germany. Lewerenz asserts that these contradictory representations had an effect on the treatment of black people in interwar Germany, who received some government support in an effort to assert Germany's image as an able and benevolent (potential) colonial power, but who also faced deportations. Indeed, Africans in Germany came to invoke the Askari narrative to protect themselves well into the early years of Nazi rule.

Analyzing German reporting on worldwide decolonization in the 1950s and 1960s, Monika Albrecht argues that there was no "post-colonial amnesia" in Germany. Rather, positive as well as negative assessments of and allusions to German colonialism coexisted. Ingo Cornils explores the toppling of the statue of a former colonial officer at the University of Hamburg in 1967. In discussing the statue's afterlife in literature and art, Cornils detects a lack of interest in the colonial past among the public at large in Hamburg today. This theme of public lack of interest is picked up by other authors as well. It is the central point of Kathryn Jones's excellent comparison between the colonial memory of France and that of Germany.

Memory and legacy are the specific theme of the last section of the book. The essays focus on the memory of genocide in both Namibia and Germany. Here we also see an effort to discuss African perspectives. Reinhart Kössler, as well as Henning Melber, discusses inter-communal differences in memorialization within Namibia. Dominik Schaller shows how the Herero massacre became the epitome of imperial genocides, reflects on how the memory of the massacre be-

came infused with a global language of suffering, and explains how parallels and linkages drawn to the Holocaust are employed to bolster restitution demands. Dennis Laumann analyzes narratives of German Togoland as a "model colony" and juxtaposes them to present-day oral narratives in Ghana about German colonial rule. In the final essay of the volume, Arnd Witte discusses the role of German studies in sub-Saharan Africa today. His reflections resonate with an earlier piece in the volume by Kenneth Orosz, who explores the discussions surrounding the possible introduction of a simplified *Kolonialdeutsch* in the German colonies. Witte argues that African Germanists today are in the privileged position of enriching a postcolonial approach informed by developments in Western academia with a local African perspective to offer new insights into German colonialism.

Overall, the essays confirm the premises of that first volume on the imperialist imagination that appeared over a decade ago: studying the "cultures" of empire provides us with valuable insights into colonial relations; empire has a pre-history in fantasy and its legacy continues to shape our language and understanding of the world; and these linkages across time are worthwhile topics of research, as are broader, transnational connections in imperial relations and aspirations. The German empire that emerges from the volume edited by Michael Perraudin and Jürgen Zimmerer is one very much embedded in a broader European colonial discourse. Just like any other empire, Germany believed itself to be a "better" empire, more benevolent, more efficient, more civilized. Yet we learn that in spite of these propositions the German was a very violent, indeed genocidal, empire, whose brutal deeds were matched in its racist and aggressive representations. And we learn that while Germany's academic and political elite has sought to confront the colonial past, its general public remains for the most part detached and uninterested.

While the volume gives a rich and variegated overview of the cultural processes that relate to German colonialism, the individual essays are rather short, and some of them lack the evidence and stringency of argument that one would expect of a full-fledged essay. The short introduction to the volume outlines the individual contributions, but it does not provide a theoretical framework that reflects on the culturalist approach of the volume or the claim posited in the title of a nexus between German colonialism and "German identity." A more comprehensive treatment of these overarching questions in the introduction would significantly have improved this extensive and insightful collection.

Notes

[1]. For an overview of the controversy, see Birthe Kundrus, "From the Herero to the Holocaust? Some Remarks on the Current Debate," *Afrika Spectrum* 40, no. 2 (2005): 299-308. For a debate, see "Debatte: NS-Forschung und Genozidforschung," *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History* 5 (2008), <http://www.zeithistorische-forschungen.de/16126041-Debatte-3-2008>.

[2]. For a conference report, see <http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl?trx=vx&list=h-ger-man&month=0609&week=d&msg=MZ%2BYD6XgIvoGYPmF1fyIbQ&user=&pw=>.

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