H-Net Reviews
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Douglas W. Leonard. *Anthropology, Colonial Policy and the Decline of French Empire in Africa.* London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020. 248 pp. $115.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-78831-520-3.

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Published on H-Africa (September, 2020)

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A tight connection between anthropology and colonialism—its political and moral justification and practice—is sometimes regarded as anthropology's "original sin."[1] Although in reality the intellectual, sociocultural, and political roots of anthropology as an academic discipline are much deeper and much more branched, its inextricable link with colonialism is still evident and undeniable. Today, many anthropologists view "decolonizing" the discipline as an urgent and important task. The "decolonization" of anthropology has become a dominant trend in both the academic writing and social activism of anthropologists from the former colonial powers and former colonial possessions, from the "Global North" and "Global South."

In connection with the above, Douglas W. Leonard's book is no doubt timely. It is also innovative in at least two respects. Firstly, it is about the link between colonialism and French anthropology, about which not very much has been written (especially compared to the number of publications on British anthropology's encounters with colonialism). Secondly, Leonard studies this link from a specific perspective: while it is quite common to come across publications that describe and discuss how anthropology helped colonialists annex and rule possessions, his aim is to study why and how anthropologists failed to provide colonial practitioners with intellectual tools and vision for effectively dealing with cultural "others" in both North and sub-Saharan Africa. Leonard argues that the failure of that task contributed significantly to the eventual crash of the French colonial project—to the collapse of France's overseas empire, particularly on the African continent.

Leonard sees the way that French anthropologists looked at Africans as the fundamental reason for their inability to help colonialists gain consent of the governed and thus make colonialism a sustainable political form. They looked at Africans from a positivist and Eurocentric view that was typical for their time. Africans were considered by anthropologists to be passive objects of study and sources of information on which scholars were to formulate their ostensibly objective—"scientific"—explanations of African cultures and recommendations for colonial administrators. Anthropologists did not engage Africans in intercultural intellectual dialogue through which the latter could be equal participants encouraged to interpret their cultures the way they saw them themselves. So anthropologists focused on differences between cultures instead of looking for similarities between them. This approach generated "intellectual resistance" in colonies "that sustained French social and ethnological thinkers as they sought to understand colonial groups" (p. 2). As a result, none of

the strategies of interaction that colonialists used with African peoples—association with local social and political institutions that acknowledged difference and assimilation that favored bringing indigenous institutions to the French "gold standard"—made the colonial system stable and durable.

Leonard describes in vivid detail the activities of anthropologists, Africanists, and sociologists, such as Maurice Delafosse, Paul Marty, Marcel Mauss, and Pierre Bourdieu; the politician Jacques Soustelle; and military leaders and prominent colonial administrators, including Louis Faidherbe, Hubert Lyautey, and Joseph Gallieni. In doing so, he argues that the main mistake that undermined the effort to implement the associationist approach (and assimilationist even more so) in French colonies was the desire to "translate" African ideas and norms into the cultural language of European (particularly French) modernity. This occurred because "European academics sought to build a social and political associationist state to link Africans to France across what anthropologist Arjun Appadurai has described as the rupture between past and present; modernity thus became an absolute, a singular achievement to which all others could only aspire" (p. 3). They neither were able to make the colonial system effective, nor did they oppose colonialism. On the contrary, the academics—anthropologists and others—believed that colonialism as a political system, if perfected, could promote the smooth transition of Africans to modernity and integration into the modern world, that is, the world of Western, basically European, modernity in which the West leads and directs the whole humankind as its most "developed" and "progressive" part.

What Leonard's book tells us first and foremost, beyond its immediate topic, is how the general mindset of an epoch manifests itself both in intellectual life (particularly anthropology as a science) and politics (colonial practices in this case), and how its manifestations in different spheres can strengthen a mindset within a single sociocultural system (the French society of the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries). For several decades now, cultural relativism has been a dominant trend in the Western mindset, and it manifests itself equally expressively in anthropology (especially in such a powerful intellectual tradition as poststructuralism) and the sociopolitical life of the decolonized world. It is not by chance that at the turn of the twentieth century, a reexamination of the notion of modernity began, and the concept of "multiple modernities" that radically rejects equating of modernity in general to its Western model as ostensibly the only possible and universal is becoming more and more popular among anthropologists, historians, and sociologists.[2] Leonard shows how in the preceding historical period, the unquestionable Eurocentrism and "progressivism" of the Western mindset fueled both anthropological thought and colonial ideology and practice. Colonialism neither gave birth to anthropology nor, even more so, vice versa. They both were creations of the same period in the history of the same civilization, and that is why they had a common mental background. That is why Eurocentrist anthropology and colonialism went hand in hand until things changed and they were substituted for anticolonialism coupled with cultural relativist anthropology.

Leonard's rich evidence and profound analysis makes ***Anthropology, Colonial Policy and the Decline of French Empire in Africa*** a valuable source of knowledge and inspiration for historians of anthropological thought and for students of African history and European colonialist ideologies and practices. This book will also become important reading for all those interested in cultural and sociopolitical dynamics of the world in the times of colonialism and postcolonialism.

Notes

[1]. See, for example, among many others, Talal Asad, ed., ***Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*** (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press,

1973); Diane Lewis, "Anthropology and Colonialism," *Current Anthropology* 14 (1973): 581-602; Peter Pels and Oscar Salemink, eds., *Colonial Subjects: Essays on the Practical History of Anthropology* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999); Peter Pels, "What Has Anthropology Learned from the Anthropology of Colonialism?," *Social Anthropology* 16 (2008): 280-99; and Michael Asch, "Anthropology, Colonialism and the Reflexive Turn: Finding a Place to Stand," *Anthropologica* 57 (2015): 481-89.

[2]. See, for example, Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, ed., *Alternative Modernities: A Millennial Quartet Book* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001); Peter Wagner, *Theorizing Modernity: Inescapability and Attainability in Social Theory* (London: SAGE, 2001); Peter Wagner, *Modernity as Experience and Interpretation: A New Sociology of Modernity* (London: Polity Press, 2008); Peter Wagner, ed., *African, American and European Trajectories of Modernity: Past Oppression, Future Justice?* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015); and Göran Therborn, "Entangled Modernities," *European Journal of Social Theory* 6 (2003): 293-305. On the "multiple modernities" concept, see especially Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, "Multiple Modernities," *Daedalus* 129 (2000): 1-29; Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, ed., *Multiple Modernities* (London: Routledge, 2002); and Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, *Comparative Civilizations and Multiple Modernities*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2003). See also, for example, Eliezer Ben-Rafael and Yitzak Sternberg, eds., *Comparing Modernities: Pluralism versus Homogenity; Essays in Homage to Shmuel N. Eisenstadt* (Leiden: Brill, 2005); and Gerhard Preyer and Michael Sussmann, eds., *Varieties of Multiple Modernities* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

Citation: Dmitri M. Bondarenko. Review of Leonard, Douglas W. *Anthropology, Colonial Policy and the Decline of French Empire in Africa.* H-Africa, H-Net Reviews. September, 2020.

URL: https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=55644