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Bradley Naranch, Geoff Eley, eds. *German Colonialism in a Global Age*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2014. 419 pp. \$29.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8223-5723-0.

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In *Le Petit Journal's* January 16, 1898 issue, it published a political cartoon that shows the great powers at a table carving up the Chinese pie. A bellicose Wilhelm II in uniform complete with *Pickelhaube* is at the center, slicing out Germany's portion while figures representing Britain, Russia, France, and Japan look on with knives at hand awaiting their turn. A frantic Mandarin representing China looks on with helpless exasperation. While the focus here is on China, a similar cartoon might have been drawn for other parts of Asia, or Africa, or the Pacific island territories. The point in part is that imperialism and colonial acquisition are a competition among the most powerful countries in the world. What the cartoon does not make clear is that some of the players in this little scene were latecomers to the table, including the German Empire. The *Kaiserreich's* founders—especially Otto von Bismarck and the emperor Wilhelm I—had little interest in making Germany a major overseas imperialist power. It was not until 1884 that Germany began to develop a colonial policy, and that would accelerate under Wilhelm II, though Germany always lagged behind the British and French overseas empires.

One result of the history of colonial policy in Germany is that Germany's colonial empire has often received only passing attention in histories of the period. There are important exceptions, of course, but most histories of the *Kaiserreich* have treated imperialism as a secondary subject, if they treat it at all. Classic examples include the works of Hans-Ulrich Wehler, who largely ignores colonialism in his studies of the *Kaiserreich* and economic history. Recent scholarship has begun to call this sidelining of colonialism into question. The essays collected and edited by Bradley Naranch and Geoff Eley

in this volume, *German Colonialism in a Global Age*, emphasize the “thoroughgoing pervasiveness” of colonialism in modern German history (p. 22).

The introduction and opening chapter by the two editors establish the goal of this volume and examine the historiography of colonialism in Germany. Naranch explains that the approach which he, Eley, and the fifteen other contributors have taken is to look less at comparison and causality in order to look more closely at the scale of the German colonial endeavor. How did German colonial ambitions expand and what impact did they have on German social, political, and economic life? What persistence did themes of colonialism have after the German defeat in 1918?

The subsequent chapters, each written by a different scholar, provide the reader with an examination of German colonial imperialism through a different lens. These chapters are arranged to explore four different themes: (1) colonialism as a field of academic study, (2) the forms which German colonial ventures took, (3) the relationship between colonialism and the German political far Right, and (4) the limits of empire—how the colonial idea was reshaped in the Weimar and Nazi eras. Readers for whom the history of Germany's non-European empire is “terra incognita” and also those who know much of the larger story will learn much from this book. The authors of these essays outline a wide variety of approaches to the study of German colonialism.

The boundaries of the first theme are set by Naranch in his introduction, where he makes the point that after the First World War, “the League of Nations trustees who assumed sovereignty over Germany's lost empire did so

on the basis of a discourse of Western scientific authority and economic rationality, that German experts had helped to construct” (p. 11). Germans developed expertise in a number of related fields and shared that expertise with academics and colonial leaders in other countries. This involved some of the most prominent German scholars in their fields: sociologists Max Weber, Wilhelm Mühlmann, and Richard Thurnwald, and medical doctors and researchers such as Robert Koch. All of them collaborated with scholars in other countries and thus played a part in the larger study of the colonial enterprise.

Andrew Zimmerman provides an example in his study of “scientific colonialism”—the effort to bring a rational, research-based mind set to the management of colonial holdings. Zimmerman argues that “science was an integral part of colonial sovereignty” and that “Germany was a model colonizer in precisely this sense” (p. 95). German East Africa’s leaders, for example, drew on resources from other parts of the world, including the United States, to transform the economy of the colony. Germans introduced household cotton farming, which was based in part on the practice of sharecropping found in the post-Civil War American South (even drawing on African American instructors from the Tuskegee Institute as part of this project).

The second theme of the book is a multifaceted examination of the forms which the German colonial venture took. German colonialism was hardly distinctive. While there are some characteristics peculiar to the German experience—the interplay between overseas colonialism and German policies in Prussian/German Poland, for example—much of what the Germans did was of a type with other colonial and imperialist powers. The nature of German colonial experience varied from region to region. In Africa, the interaction among people at all levels of colonial society—from the senior officials to the native peoples—played a part in the construction of the colony’s social system. The community of German expatriates from Russia (mostly refugees fleeing the Bolsheviks during and after the Russian Revolution) created a different form of German presence in regions outside of Europe. Imperialism also had important domestic consequences as colonial lobbyists such as the German Colonial Society and businesses dependent on the colonial venture (for example, coffee and chocolate producers) influenced the economy and politics.

Jeff Bowersox explores one example of this in his examination of how the colonial empire became a part

of the German school curriculum. His analysis shows the impact of colonies and colonialism on the study of geography, which became the “chief point of contact with the non-European world” for pre-university education in Germany (p. 171). In 1892, the Prussian secondary curriculum was revised to include a study of Germany’s overseas empire. But, even before these revisions, the colonies were an important aspect of school geography courses. After 1900, German school geography concentrated on the German imperial world with an eye to stressing “Germany’s efforts to civilize their own colonies” and “Germany’s positive contributions to world development” (p. 183).

The relationship of colonial supporters to the political far Right in Germany forms the third major theme of the book. This theme begins with an analysis by John Phillip Short of the 1907 Reichstag election, which was fought out in part over the German colonial leadership’s handling of a major uprising in German southwest Africa by the Herero and Nama peoples. German authorities employed genocidal methods in this conflict, and the uprising and its aftermath formed one of the principal themes for the 1907 Reichstag election (sometimes referred to as the “Hottentot” election because of propaganda drawing on the Herero War employed by some parties and pressure groups). Colonialism functioned on one hand to support a nationalist and patriotic discourse, but also served to mobilize the Social Democrats and other opponents of German colonial policy.

Other chapters explore the ways in which various political movements intersected with or were influenced by colonialism. German antisemitic parties, for example, found the colonial rhetoric to be useful in articulating their own racial ideals. Proponents of “Germanizing” the eastern Prussian territories with largely Polish populations understood what they proposed as a form of “internal colonialism.” Pan-German interest groups—here especially focusing on the Pan-German League—were more than merely ethnic nationalist movements. They were also supporters of a broader German mission that could be defined in imperial terms.

Despite lofty dreams of expansion articulated by imperialist advocates, there were limits to empire, a fact acknowledged in one form or another by all of the essays collected here. But the final three chapters are specifically focused on this, the fourth and final theme of the book. Wilhelmine Germany’s naval expansion was based in large part on a strategy that was shared by naval leaders in the United States—the primacy of the

Flottenkampf—the decisive fleet-level engagement. This decision created real limitations on the German Empire’s ability to protect sea access to those colonies. Yet another form of limitation is explored by Brett M. Van Hoesen in a visually rich chapter on the postwar Rhineland occupation. She draws together two related expressions of limitation: the national sense of loss when Germany was stripped of her colonies and the experience of occupation. The French decision to use a large number of colonial soldiers from Africa as part of the occupation force was portrayed by some Germans as a form of “reverse colonization.” Van Hoesen traces this phenomenon through various forms of visual communication, focusing on the so-called Black Horror on the Rhine, and notes the ways in which this propaganda employed colonial themes such as

the emphasis on racial difference and fear of miscegenation. The final chapter analyzes the ways in which certain lessons of German colonialism during the Kaiserreich—its successes and limitations—were incorporated by the Nazis into the Third Reich’s policies in conquered territories.

German Colonialism in a Global Age is a solid contribution to the study of German imperialism. It expands the study of Germany’s colonialist past beyond earlier scholarship. However, its greatest contribution is to provide the wider community of scholars a window (or perhaps more accurately, a number of windows) into current research into the nature of German colonialism as part of the larger European colonial venture.

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