

GERMAN IMPERIALISM AND GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTALISM

The Nature of German Imperialism: Conservation and the Politics of Wildlife in Colonial East Africa.
By Bernhard Gissibl.

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The Nature of German Imperialism is an important addition to a growing literature on imperialism and the origins of global environmentalism. Influenced by Alfred Crosby's *The Columbian Exchange* (1972) and *Ecological Imperialism* (1986), this scholarship includes John MacKenzie's *The Empire of Nature* (1988) as well as *Empires of Nature and the Nature of Empires* (1997), Richard Grove's *Green Imperialism* (1995), Tom Griffiths and Libby Robin's *Ecology and Empire* (1997), Peder Anker's *Imperial Ecology* (2001), William Adams and Martin Mulligan's *Decolonizing Nature* (2003), and William Beinart and Lotte Hughes's *Environment and Empire* (2007). But most of these works focus on the impact of colonialism on human–nature relationships in the former British Empire. Bernhard Gissibl's monograph therefore fills a significant lacuna by highlighting the legacy of German imperialism on environmental conservation not just in Germany's former colonies, but also globally. Indeed, the book amply demonstrates the enduring influence of Germany's otherwise short-lived imperial project on global environmental theory and practice.

Focusing mainly on the history of wildlife conservation in Tanzania between 1885 and 1914, Gissibl outlines a complex and dynamic web of relationships that runs from the pre-colonial to the postcolonial period. Drawing on data from a wide range of sources, the author shows how ties forged by various actors in the pre-World War I era have influenced global political ecology over time. In precolonial times, Tanzanian hunters and leaders interacted with regional ivory traders who were in turn linked into international markets. Meanwhile, the desire by Germans to control the exploitation of wildlife resources in Tanzania from the late nineteenth century not only affected relations with their colonial subjects, but also laid the groundwork for an international conservation lobby. Indeed, Gissibl asserts that the first conference for conservation of African wildlife held in London in 1900 by 'representatives of all European governments with colonial possessions in sub-Saharan Africa ... was the result of a remarkable Anglo-German trans-imperial cooperation between hunting-minded individuals in the European centers of imperial decision-making' (112–13). Even after German rule in Tanzania ended in 1920, the activities of German conservationists, government departments, and other agencies continued to influence wildlife conservation not only in Tanzania, but also globally.

In this book, Gissibl clearly demonstrates the complex nature of global environmental history by analyzing the nexus between local, regional, and global processes. In Tanzania, a narrative concerning declining wildlife resources in the early colonial period persuaded German administrators and conservationists of the need to control the utilization of wildlife — which resulted in game laws and other regulations. But members of both the indigenous and migrant communities resisted these laws. Indeed, Gissibl regards

the Maji Maji Rebellion (1905–7) as an environmental conflict caused by colonial endeavors to manage wildlife. Such opposition produced compromises between the colonial administration and local communities as well as changes in ideas about conservation in the metropole. As Gissibl observes, '[g]ame legislation after Maji Maji took place in an imperial public sphere that consisted of wildlife lobbyists at home and German settlers in the colony' (148).

At the regional level, German colonial authorities collaborated with their British counterparts in Kenya and elsewhere in Africa to develop game policies and to address 'the problem of the disease ecology of game and livestock' (179). While German authorities in Tanzania modelled their game management procedures on those of neighboring British colonies, German scientists like Robert Koch and Heinrich Bitter played a leading role in the fight against animal diseases. These activities gave birth to trans-imperial networks which greatly influenced the evolution of global environmentalism, such as at empire-specific fora, where colonial officials and others advocated for a broad goal of wildlife conservation. At the German Colonial Society meeting in June 1911, for example, 'elite hunters, colonial activists, and scientists congregating in Stuttgart saw developments in Germany East Africa [Tanzania] in a global and declensionist perspective and framed Africa's megafauna as an evolutionary heritage that only immediate action was able to safeguard' (183).

Despite Germany's isolation in the post-World War I era, the country's agencies and citizens continued to influence conservation internationally. In 1926, for example, German zoologists and former colonial officials set up the Society for Mammalian Zoology, to continue the drive for wildlife protection in Africa. Considering themselves pioneers of wildlife preservation in Africa, German conservationists sought to reclaim their place in the international conservation movement. To achieve this goal, they planned to organize an international conference on nature protection in Berlin in 1939. Though the conference did not take place, the internationalization of wildlife preservation from the mid-1950s allowed German players back on the scene. Bernhard Grzimek, a German zoologist, for example, promoted protections for wildlife in Tanzania in the 1950s and 1960s and also 'became the single most important campaigner to raise public awareness in Germany to the plight of wildlife worldwide' (304). In the more recent past, German organizations like the German Organisation for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) and the Frankfurt Zoological Society (ZGF) have collaborated with other international agencies like the United States-based African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) to promote sustainable management of wildlife around Africa's largest wildlife area: the Selous Game Reserve in Tanzania.

Gissibl's well-researched, well-written, and well-documented book is a treasure trove of information on the globalization of environmental conservation. Though centered on wildlife preservation in Tanzania under German rule, the book's coverage is wider. It not only treats nature–human relationships in the precolonial and colonial periods but also global environmentalism in the postcolonial period. Consequently, the book has a broad appeal.

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