

West Africa alive in a vivid fashion; the continuation of this theme highlights leaders in East and north-east Africa. Such cross-regional comparisons effectively provide coherence to the work, although more might have been made of the sophisticated structural foundations provided by Islamic institutions for commercial expansion, in both internal networks and external alliances. Consideration of the role of religion is not limited to Islam, however. Early Protestant and Catholic presence is discussed in Sierra Leone, Abeokuta, Buganda, Basutoland and elsewhere, and early Christian ties to colonialism are made evident in an observation by Harry Johnstone, a renowned British colonial administrator: 'Each mission station is an essay in colonialism' (p. 241). Furthermore, one of the innovations of this work is its stress on the role of 'animist' religions in organizing both resistance and the expansion of certain West African polities (Asante and Dahomey, in particular).

Those examples may be well known for certain regions, but what is remarkable is the way this volume introduces different perspectives for all regions. For example, this volume provides full consideration to North Africa, Egypt, and Ethiopia. It also addresses controversies in the discipline. For example, the full summary of the debates on the rise of the Zulu in South Africa serves as an effective introduction to many other themes of South African history. Coquery-Vidrovitch's deconstruction of the misrepresentation of the Maasai as 'traditional' people, when in fact their nineteenth-century history was both a product of and an example of massive ecological change and great social dynamics. And her discussions of internal innovations (the longest chapter by far), is rich with example and detail. Of course, a volume such as this cannot do justice to every topic, to every corner of the continent, or to every significant theme. It deals with only one century – though a very significant one, from many angles. It often overlooks structural aspects in favor of individual actions: it would benefit greatly from supplementary lectures, readings, discussions – as would any book of this nature. And it privileges state actors, institutions, and effects at the expense of providing insight to the dynamics of deeper social structures, cultural expressions, and individuals outside state paradigms (such as slaves, or workers in the mines, or economic migrants). But those drawbacks are a product of the genre: the dominant feature of this work (and its most magnificent achievement) is the way this single volume covers the continent in a balanced manner, presents complicated themes clearly, and illuminates how historical understanding is a construction formed of debate, critique, and ongoing research. In a brisk and concise style, this volume both provides clear synopses of regional dynamics and illuminates the comparisons and shared conditions across regions. It is gracefully written, and the translation from French is fluid, if not lyrical. In short this work, on a turbulent century across the continent, provides a fitting capstone to an extremely productive career.

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IMPERIAL 'HEROES'

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Heroes of Empire: Five Charismatic Men and the Conquest of Africa. By EDWARD BERENSON. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011. Pp. xii + 360. \$29.95, hardback (ISBN 978-0-520-23427-7).

KEY WORDS: Exploration/travel, imperialism, memory.

Edward Berenson, Professor of History at New York University, comes to Africa from the European past and French Studies in particular. Leaving aside the

customary battalion-length list of thanks, tributes, and acknowledgements one associates with North American books, this is an utterly enthralling and elegantly-crafted work which grips from its arresting opening sentence. On the opening page of the author's introduction to his *Heroes of Africa*, we learn that 'in March 1896, while France and Britain dickered over who would control Western and Central Africa, the government in Paris took a bold, if reckless, step. It sent a young army captain, Jean-Baptiste Marchand, up the Congo River and across the forbidding, malarial landscape of Central Africa, tugging a dismantled steamboat all the way' (p. 1).

Professor Berenson's legendary imperial heroes are the vaulting characters whose perceived charisma and heart-stopping colonial exploits earned them good press at a time when the penny dreadfuls of the 'new journalism' were becoming increasingly widespread and sensationalist. Indeed, the ravenous role of the new popular press in egging on grand African colonial conquests is one of the central arguments of this study of several of the major figures who embodied the dynamics of the era of European 'new imperialism'. As the author sets out to demonstrate, the 'aura' of their beavering presence in a varied and testing African environment helped to lay on a thick 'emotional' gloss to the imperial enterprise and to ensure that the national hopes and anxieties of 'a broad public' would come to be 'invested' in imperial success (p. 21).

The core of this impressively researched and probing study consists of seven finely crafted chapters, topped and tailed by a conceptually informative introduction and a crisp and sober epilogue. Following an opening, partly historiographical section on approaches to the culture of empire, to empire as compensation for one or other kind of national deficit, and to sociological and psychological notions of charisma in the larger-than-life colonial figure, Edward Berenson picks away at five anointed African imperial heroes, characters 'who gave imperialism a recognizable, human face' (p. 2). While these are, by and large, the usual suspects (with the absence of Rhodes a merciful relief), here they are depicted and evaluated in some fresh and intriguing ways, through analytical prisms which include manliness and gender, and celebrity and charisma.

The first two men made by Africa, who both get a couple of chapters, are Henry Morton Stanley and another figure who fell into sniffing about the Congo, the Italian-born French explorer, Pierre Savorgnan de Brazza, whose pushiness in equatorial Africa provided a triumphal sideshow to smooth over the ruffled self-image of France's Third Republic. Then there is the saintly British General, Charles 'Chinese' Gordon, the knightly Christian hero-martyr felled by the rampaging Islamists of Khartoum. The fourth colonial personality is Jean-Baptiste Marchand, whose trampings about the Upper Nile and expeditionary encounter with the British at Fashoda served as an Egyptian antidote to the domestic political mess of the Dreyfus affair. The last biographical assessment is that of another florid Frenchman, the aristocratic Hubert Lyautey, for whom national regeneration lay in nabbing Morocco through the protectorate ideal of pacific conquest.

In a book strong on mixed personal and national initiatives and their muddled African legacies, the author ends on a deliciously sober overall note. His 'charismatic heroes and exemplars of empire' (p. 263) all lived on long after the end of their careers and lives; even when their exploits and expeditions were contaminated by irrefutable cruelty and gratuitous violence—as in the case of Stanley—they still enjoyed an enduring after-life of famous or 'celebrity' status.

Or, they can become reinvented and raised anew, as in the example of Brazza, whose cultivated memory once served political ends in France. In the early years of

the present century, with the Republic of the Congo stuck in its neo-colonial bind of European economic domination, poverty, inter-ethnic violence, and corrosive corruption, Brazza reared his head again, but this time as a Congolese Lazarus. The 2005 centennial of his death would have been too politically indigestible for any official commemoration in France. Brazzaville, however, was more consenting, as Congo-Brazzaville leaders aided by French hangers-on raised a monument in homage to the explorer's anti-slavery instincts and stature as a powerful *outsider*, a magnetic bridge between the destiny of Africa and the destiny of Europe, 'implicated in none of the Congo's ethnic and ideological conflicts' (p. 285) and thus a wishfully pristine symbol of peace.

Edward Berenson is anything but rosy-eyed on such matters, viewing it correctly as rhetorical cloud cover for the largely predatory interests of a narrow political and economic elite. But he is equally clear that ordinary Africans – here, the Congolese – are not dupes always to be led by the nose. The Brazza charismatic myth can also be seen as an expression of the everyday desire of common inhabitants 'to connect to a developed world governed by the rule of law', an alluring world they 'never enjoy themselves' (p. 286). Written in limpid prose and presenting a complex picture of the interplay of European nationalist impulses, imperial popular culture, emotional projections and giddy male hero-worship, Professor Berenson keeps in sight the hub upon which everything turns, the byzantine challenges and complexities of the Africa which so gripped his heroes. His book is considerably more than its dust jacket description as the first comparative history of colonial heroes in Britain and France.

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HOW CHOLERA BECAME AN AFRICAN DISEASE

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Africa in the Time of Cholera: A History of Pandemics from 1817 to the Present.

By MYRON ECHENBERG. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011. Pp. xvi + 208. \$85.00, hardback (ISBN 978-1-107-00149-7); \$27.99, paperback (ISBN 978-1-521-18820-3).

KEY WORDS: Health, medicine.

Myron Echenberg, the author of the Herskovits award-winning *Colonial Conscripts: The Tirailleurs Sénégalais in French West Africa* (1991), has also written two important works on the history of the black plague (*Black Death, White Medicine: Bubonic Plague and the Politics of Public Health in Colonial Senegal, 1914–1945* [2002] and *Plague Ports: The Global Urban Impact of Bubonic Plague, 1894–1901* [2007]). In *Africa in the Time of Cholera*, he continues his research into the historical epidemiology of Africa.

His introduction describes the ecology of the *Vibrio cholerae* bacterium, the etiology and progress of human infection by the bacterium, and the life-saving oral rehydration therapy (ORT) that has been known to be an effective intervention for several generations. It familiarizes the reader with the basic science of cholera. The rest of the book is organized into two parts. The first provides an overview of Africa's experience with the first six cholera pandemics, from 1817 to 1947. The author describes the early nineteenth-century networks of international trade and patterns of warfare and pilgrimage that facilitated the diffusion of the