

of Terence Ranger, Jan Bender Shetler, and others. This study is also part of a larger scholarly movement to move away from the determinative emphasis on the colonial experience by tracing longer histories of continuity and change using indigenous historical and temporal frameworks.

The road plays a prominent role in both the title and the framing of the text, and yet it moves in and out of the narrative as a subject and analytical device. A more robust theorization of the relationship between memory, place, environment, and mobility in the introduction might have helped to explain the ways in which these different parts of the analysis connect to the overarching framework. But this does not significantly detract from what is a thoughtful and provocative book that explores the interconnected processes of cultural, social, political, and economic change in West Africa.

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BRITAIN, FRANCE, AND THE DECOLONIZATION OF AFRICA

Britain, France and the Decolonization of Africa: Future Imperfect?

Edited by Andrew W. M. Smith and Chris Jeppesen.

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Over the last two-plus decades, numerous scholars have emphasized that one of the most significant challenges facing historians studying decolonization is that both historians and the communities they study know the end of the story. In their 2017 collection *Britain, France and the Decolonization of Africa*, Andrew W. M. Smith and Chris Jeppesen return historians' attention to teleology's ever-present threat in histories of decolonization as they bring together a collection of essays that not only aim to further problematize the history and conceptualization of decolonization, but also bring to the fore the uncertainty surrounding that particular historical moment. In their efforts to do so, the two historians uniquely turn to grammar as they seek to promote a historical approach to decolonization that, in many ways, transcends the simplified past tense and instead rests on the imperfect tense. As such, decolonization for them, as a process and experience, was a phenomenon that was necessarily both 'irresolute' and 'conditional' (1). In other words, it was a historical moment characterized by a lived experience in which most people understood something new was coming into being but were unsure what exactly that something was or even when or if that moment fully concluded.

In seven chapters divided into three parts, plus an afterward by Martin Shipway and an introduction and conclusion written by the editors, the collection explores the many complexities, contradictions, and uncertainties embedded in the end of empire. In the book's first three chapters, focusing on the theme of development, Michael Collins, Charlotte Lydia Riley, and Marta Musso individually interrogate the changing development regimes

of postwar Britain and France in Africa. At their most foundational level, Riley's and Musso's chapters in particular emphasize the new investments that both imperial powers dedicated to their colonies in the postwar years: Musso by looking at French Saharan oil interests and Riley by examining the British Labour Party's postwar worldview. At the core of each of these chapters, then, is an analysis of the ways in which the two imperial powers viewed their postwar investments as part of a shared mission of reconstruction that tied together the metropole and colony even as these links were supposedly unravelling.

Likewise, in the book's second section, constructed around the theme of 'contingency', Smith and Robert Skinner each focus their attention on questions of how colonial administrators, the public, and activists coped with the uncertainty surrounding the end of empire. Smith, for his part, undertakes a critical reading of three unique documents produced in the 1950s (Paul Mus's 1954 *Le destin de l'Union française*, students' homework assignments, and a French West African colonial official's report), while Skinner examines the changing nature of human rights discourse around international anti-apartheid activists during the 1960s. In the final section, framed around the theme of 'entanglement', Jeppesen's and Joanna Warson's essays aim to highlight the local and international ties that are necessarily drawn together in histories of decolonization. Warson's chapter stands out among all the chapters in the book. In it, Warson — uniquely in the collection — frames her essay around African experiences with the uncertainties of decolonization. In doing so, she skillfully interrogates the ways in which groups of francophone West Africans thought within and beyond the confines of French West Africa as they negotiated the changing political and social terrain associated with the end of empire in Afrique Occidentale Française (AOF) and, most interestingly, across empires with her analysis of francophone migrants' participation in the Gold Coast's decolonization-era politics.

In all, the essays that comprise *Britain, France and the Decolonization of Africa* go a long way in adding to the growing literature surrounding the uncertainty and 'imperfection' — to borrow and slightly misuse Smith's and Jeppesen's term — of decolonization. Essays like Musso's on French Algerian oil exploration and Warson's read as truly innovative conceptually and methodologically. However, in reading the book as an Africanist, one cannot help but be overwhelmed by the strong European focus of the essays, for it is largely European actors, interests, and concerns that drive the collection; Warson's essay is the exception. The result is the presumably unintended re-creation of a view of African-European relations in which Africa largely serves as a stage upon which Europeans negotiated and acted out their interests and anxieties about decolonization. What is lost in the collection, then, is an explicit and empirically realized appreciation of the fact that Africans themselves were integral actors in the continent's decolonization: actors with their own interests and anxieties about the changing world around them that, in differing places and times, intersected and opposed those of their European counterparts.

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