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Review of Colonial Africa: 1884-1994

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***Colonial Africa: 1884-1994* (2nd. Ed.). Dennis Laumann. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019. 94pp. ISBN: 9780190647520**

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Instructors of African history know well the challenges of providing undergraduate students with adequate, yet approachable, background knowledge for the topics they will discuss in more detail over the course of a semester. With that in mind, concise histories such as Dennis Laumann's *Colonial Africa: 1884-1994* (2nd Ed.), are welcome. Part of a series, *African World Histories*, this slim volume provides important contextual information that will serve as a helpful text for courses about colonialism in Africa.

The book covers impressive ground in only 94 pages. The Introduction offers a valuable, broad overview of topics in colonial African history, which will be helpful for students. Laumann situates the book within historiographical themes and methods in African history, explaining the different approaches of historians and describing the challenges of reconstructing African history when most written sources are from European perspectives. These methodological questions will help undergraduate students grapple with some of the unique challenges facing Africanist scholars. The Conclusion contends with the legacy of colonialism in Africa, offering thought-provoking questions for undergraduates to discuss in classrooms.

The book is organized into four chapters, with the following themes: Economics, Administration, Violence, and Liberation. Each chapter concludes with a list of references and further readings, which will be helpful for students who want to know more about topics that a short volume cannot cover in depth.

Within these four chapters are a number of sub-topics that explore the theme further. In Chapter 1: Economics, the chapter discusses topics such as abolition and informal colonialism, the Scramble for Africa, colonial economies, and railways and minerals. This chapter will help students understand that the onset of colonialism was haphazard and negotiated, with European "rule" always tenuous and contingent upon the actions of African states and peoples.

In Chapter 2: Administration, Laumann explores the roles that different European actors played in colonialism (district officers, intermediaries, and missionaries), different models of colonial rule (particularly British and French), the shaping of ethnic and gender identities by Africans living under colonial rule, the role of Christianity, Islam, and trade unions on African political organizing, and features of settler colonialism. This chapter will help students understand the variable nature of colonialism.

In Chapter 3: Violence, the book focuses on conflicts during different parts of the colonial period, with the violence of European conquest and African resistance, European atrocities such as genocide against the Herrero and within the Congo Free State under Leopold II, the effects of the World Wars in Africa, and independence struggles such as the Algerian War and the Mau Mau movement. This chapter, and its various case studies, will help students understand the persistent violence of European colonialism.

In Chapter 4: Liberation, the book moves to challenges to colonial rule. The section on Pan-Africanism is particularly welcome, highlighting the intellectual and political roots of this important diasporic liberation tradition. Subsequent sections on the effects of World War II, the role of Marxism and the Cold War on independence struggles, and the struggle against apartheid in South Africa explore complementary aspects of independence struggles in different parts of the continent. The independence period is particularly complex, but Laumann does well to highlight trends and case studies in a way that will be helpful for undergraduate readers new to the topic.

Particularly useful are the additions that Laumann included in the Second Edition, in response to feedback about the first edition. The book includes new sections on Ethnicity and Gender, Religion and Politics, Railways, and additional discussions of precolonial Africa and missionaries. Short, excerpted primary source extracts within chapters pay attention to African perspectives of colonialism, such as sources by Jomo Kenyatta, Harry Thuku, Samuel Maherero, and others. Some women's voices are included, such as oral histories of women during Britain's war with the Mau Mau. Laumann also pays attention to the ways in which historical narratives about Africa have been constructed in the past and present, and challenges common stereotypes about pre-colonial Africa and assumptions about the inevitability of colonialism.

Some readers will surely be frustrated with the topics that were left out of this volume; however, with only 94 pages, many aspects of colonialism in Africa necessarily will be overlooked. Instructors who wish to use this book in their courses should plan on plentiful supplementary readings based on their own expertise and teaching interests. While the book does include some discussion of primary sources, a companion text with primary documents would make this book a particularly useful resource for undergraduate instructors. Overall, *Colonial Africa: 1884-1994* (2nd Ed.), with its concise but rich overview of colonialism in Africa, is a welcome addition to available texts for instructors of African history.