

history or post-colonial Africa but also from anyone trying to move beyond the dominant but sterile interpretation of Sierra Leone history and politics.

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IMAGES ET COLONIES: NATURE, DISCOURS ET INFLUENCE DE L'ICONOGRAPHIE COLONIALE LIEE A LA PROPAGANDE COLONIALE ET A LA REPRESENTATION DES AFRICAINS ET DE L'AFRIQUE EN FRANCE, DE 1920 AUX INDEPENDANCES. *Edited by Pascal Blanchard and Armelle Chatelier.* Paris: ACHAC, 1993. Pp. 157; 80 illustrations. 185 FF, paper.

*Images et colonies* is an edited volume resulting from a conference of the same name held at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris in January 1993. Organized by the Association Connaissance de l'Histoire de l'Afrique Contemporaine (ACHAC), the conference set out to explore the European (albeit largely French) visual image of Africa from about 1870 to 1963. This handsome, illustrated volume brings together the writings of approximately half of the thirty-eight conference participants—a multidisciplinary group comprised of art historians, anthropologists, literary critics, economists, sociologists, historians, photographers, journalists, and collectors. The contributions consist of short position papers that summarize the arguments and findings of larger research projects. In addition to a clear and synthetic introduction by Pascal Blanchard and Armelle Chatelier which serves to outline the major conference themes and conclusions, each essay is introduced by the editors with a synopsis of the discussion that followed the reading of the paper.

The volume is divided into four major sections. The first, "Myth, Reality, and Dialogue," examines the range of visual media that were used to broadcast French images of Africa during the colonial period, and considers specific sites of colonial myth-making where the collective unconscious of the French public might have been most profoundly influenced. Although images of Africa permeated all aspects of French everyday life, the colonial expositions are shown to be among the most powerful tools of European propaganda—where both schoolchildren and financial investors alike were targeted as an audience whose idea of Africa could readily be shaped by visual images and displays.

In her intervention, Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch notes that the French press took the representation of Africa at the colonial expositions to be so "real" that they covered news and events from the expositions as though they were reporting

from Africa itself. A rapid rise in the diffusion of visual images after 1880 is linked to changing technologies, as Annie Rey-Goldzeiguer demonstrates in her paper. While before this time, images were primarily available only to the educated and elite, after 1880 there ensues a "democratization" of the iconography which made visual images more accessible to a broader public.

The second section, "Images and Messages," presents some of the types of visual data that are available for research today: political posters (Laurent Gervereau), illustrated newspapers (Daniel Rivet), comic strips (Yann Holo), and missionary tracts (Anne Hugon). The relationship between image and caption is stressed in this section, where it is demonstrated that the meaning of an image could change simply by the words used to direct the viewers' interpretation. Thus, an early nineteenth-century postcard of a Senegalese colonial soldier holding in his arms a young boy was labelled "A Future *Tirailleur*"—turning an otherwise "innocent" scene of paternal affection into a highly suggestive image that insinuates the reproduction of colonial loyalty and the promise of uninterrupted French rule in the African colonies from one generation to the next.

The third section, "Art and Seduction," looks at the relationship between colonial images of Africa and European stereotypes and phantasms. Gilles Boëtsch's contribution explores the topic most literally by examining erotic postcards from Algeria. Drawing heavily on Alloula's seminal work on the subject,<sup>1</sup> Boëtsch offers useful insights into the unveiling of the "orientalized" female body. Jean-Barthélemy Debost's offers a different take on the notion of "seduction" by analyzing the stereotyped image of the African in French commercial advertising and its associated seduction, as it were, of European capital. Finally, Marcel Oms reports on the image of Africa in colonial cinematography and the imaginary worlds that were created on film.

The final section, "Crossed Gaze" (*Regards Croisés*), is the most complex and perhaps for that reason the most interesting. The first part of this section is devoted to colonial imagery of Africa generated in other European countries—Alessandro Triulzi on Italy, Isabel de Castro Henriques on Portugal, Nathalie Tousignant on Belgium, and Raymond Betts on Great Britain. In the second part of this section, Tayeb Chenntouf comments on the colonial image of the Maghreb and Achille Mbembe reacts to the images of sub-Saharan Africa. These two contributions were explicitly invited by the conference organizers to provide an African response to these European images of Africa. Mbembe, in particular, is troubled by his role as "native" commentator. He is concerned that the only Black African voice in the conference is his, and that prior to his closing remarks the indigenous outlook had been silent and invisible. Where, he asks, are the African images of Europeans that are so prevalent in African rituals, myths, novels, oral

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<sup>1</sup> Malek Alloula, *The Colonial Harem*, trans. Myrna Godzich and Wlad Godzich (Minneapolis, 1986).

traditions, and sculptural forms? Presenting colonial stereotypes without counterpoints or alternatives perpetuates, Mbembe argues, the colonial tragedy and its self-serving narcissistic compulsions.

In the end, we are left with a difficult dilemma. Can one exhibit to the public these stereotyped and largely racist representations of Africa unmediated by critical commentaries and warnings? Do these images, when displayed without an objective interpretive discourse, simply promulgate their original colonialist messages? As research on visual representations of "the other" grows steadily in African studies,<sup>2</sup> these are among the major issues that need to be addressed in the years to come.

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PUBLIC DOCUMENTS FROM SINNAR. *Edited by Jay Spaulding and Muhammad Ibrahim Abu Salim.* African Historical Sources, Number 1. East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 1989. Pp. xvi, 426; introduction, appendices, glossary, bibliography, index of names.

This is one of a growing corpus of original African historical sources edited and translated into English, and a volume in the distinguished *Fontes Historiae Africanae Series Arabica* published under the auspices of the Conseil International de la Philosophie et Sciences Humaines. It is the fruit of several decades of prodigious labor, primarily by the two editors themselves, in the collection, editing, analysis, and publication of Arabic documents from the Funj kingdom of Sinnar (fl. 1504-1821) in the present Republic of the Sudan.

It would be difficult to overestimate the importance and value of this collection of sixty-seven documents to Sudanese, African, and Islamic historiography, or to the comparative study of land tenure and diplomatics. All but fourteen of the documents are charters (*hujja*) bestowing or confirming rights in land issued by representatives of the central, provincial or local authorities, and their chronological range is 1702 to 1820. For each document, there is a brief

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Raymond Bachollet and others, *Negripub: L'Image des Noire dans la publicité* (Paris, 1992); Annie E. Coombes, *Reinventing Africa: Museums, Material Culture and Popular Imagination* (New Haven, 1994); Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture* (New Haven, 1992).