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Review of Oermann, N.O. : Mission, church and state relations in South West Africa under German rule (1884-1915)

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Torstein Jorgensen demonstrates the effect of the union of religious and political power in the Zulu king Mpande. Deborah Gaitskell examines the gender-specific educational efforts of mission institutions in South Africa. Jonathan Miran sums up Ethiopian Christianity. Niels Kastfelt writes about the relationship between 'tribe' and Christian, vs. 'state' and Muslim identities in Northern Nigeria. Jarle Simensen writes a less satisfying chapter on Akim Abuakwa, Ghana. Holger Hansen's chapter usefully summarizes Lugard's history in Uganda and the state's tolerant recognition of Catholics and Anglicans. John McCracken writes about Malawi and Livingstonia. John Lonsdale's chapter is incisive and entertaining as usual, if also difficult to resolve into a unitary thesis. He compares Kenya and Rhodesia, as a sort of companion piece to Terry Ranger's book on the subject. Harry Langworthy writes about the extraordinary radical missionary Joseph Booth, whose demands for non-racial social justice he places squarely within, if on one end of, the British missionary tradition (in introducing Langworthy's chapter, Twaddle oddly impugns Booth's character as a gentleman). James Campbell condenses some aspects of his excellent book about the African Methodist Episcopal Church in South Africa, *Songs of Zion*, but cannot do it full justice in a single chapter. Michael West looks at Church Independency in 1920s Rhodesia. A nice essay by Andrew Wheeler on Christians and Muslims in Sudan links ethnogenesis and religion.

Mary Turner discusses religion and labor control in Jamaica, arguing that churches offered associative forms that countered the hegemonic fragmentation of laborers. Donald Wood writes about the Rev. John Wray, a missionary on the edge of political expression in Guiana. There are also chapters on Haitian Voodoo, and on Protestants and Catholics in Columbia. It seems a bit brash for a book about 'the Third World' to leave out the early modern era, the Arab world, India, China and the French empire. Perhaps more seriously it substitutes non-Africanist bookends for a real synthesis of Africanist with non-Africanist scholarship. Twaddle writes, 'elites rather than tribal peoples as a whole provided many missionaries with their first converts'. What are 'tribal peoples'? The Ganda? Ethiopians? Are they to be grouped with Fijians? What is a 'non-mainstream Christian' mission? Twaddle's introduction is really a set of 'remarks', a mix of observations and small and common-sensical conclusions. The central essays are the pieces about evangelism and politics in British Africa, many of them nice redactions of large parts of the authors' recent monographs, and that is the book's value for Africanists.

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MISSIONARIES AND THE STATE IN GERMAN SOUTH WEST AFRICA

DOI: 10.1017/S0021853703378661

Mission Colonialism and Liberation: The Lutheran Church in Namibia, 1840-1966.

By CARL-J. HELLBERG. Windhoek: New Namibia Books, 1997 (distributed by African Books Collective, Oxford). Pp. xi + 321. No price given, paperback (ISBN 99916-31-59-3).

Mission, Church and State Relations in South West Africa under German Rule (1884-1915). By NILS OLE OERMANN. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1999.

Pp. 267. No price given (ISBN 3-515-067578-x).

KEY WORDS: Namibia, colonial, missions.

Following President Nujoma's comments ordering church leaders to seek spies in their missionary past, it is to be hoped that the work under review will go some way to quieting the president's paranoia, and filling the gaps that exist in Namibian historiography. Hellberg's study, dedicated to President Nujoma, stands in contrast to Oermann's more balanced work and will be discussed first.

Using secondary sources and some archival material, Hellberg attempts to present the history of the relationship between the Rhenish and Finnish missionary societies, colonialism and liberation in Namibia between 1840 and 1966. Hellberg's background in the solidarity and church movement is reflected in his belief that there has been a continual 'fight for human rights and freedom from oppression from the very beginning of European colonisation. In this struggle the Christian ideology was an important source of inspiration' (pp. ix-x). It is this belief that underlies the book. Namibia's history is presented in a rather confusing mix of settler and africanist historiography. Hellberg explicitly dismisses settler history, only to reintroduce a conceptual framework of tribes as closed social systems in which 'Each tribe had a distinct political, social and religious pattern of life' (p. 9). Stereotypes abound, a timeless ethnographic present pervades the work and Bushmen 'seem capable of "smelling" their way to water' (p. 10). Except for the last chapter, the book is lacking on developments in Ovamboland, which Hellberg presents as by-passed by events in the wider world - no mention is made of southern traders and hunters, who had been travelling to Ovamboland from at least the 1850s, nor of southern Angolan traders and slavers who had been active since the early eighteenth century. The work is badly edited. The maps show the Waterberg too far west. Names are given incorrectly (thus it should be Hendrik Jacob Wikar not Hans Johan Wiker [p. 23]). Jan Jonker Afrikaner died whilst fighting *against* Hendrik Witbooi, not as his ally (p. 93). The work is essentially a narrative history of central Namibia. It is conspicuously thin on the role of the mission and the mission itself. Written by a partial insider, one would have expected more on developments and relations between the liberation movements and the church. Unfortunately the foundations upon which this work is based are flawed.

Oermann's book, based on an Oxford D.Phil., analyses the general interaction between mission, church and state in German South West Africa (GSWA), and evaluates the political impact of those relations. Using primary evidence, Oermann seeks to gain insight into social and political life in the colony and colonial politics in Berlin. Though Oermann concentrates on the activities of the Rhenish and Finnish missionary societies, he seeks to include all the missions and churches formally active. Dismissing blanket terms, such as 'the mission', Oermann traces the changing political perspectives, attitudes and subsequent impacts of individual missionaries and mission societies. Not for Oermann sweeping claims regarding the support of Rhenish missionaries for colonial aspirations. Instead he traces the attitudes of individual missionaries to the activities of Imperial Germany. For Oermann, the missionaries as individuals, as 'fathers, jurors, German citizens, soldiers and African teachers in one person' (p. 23), matters. The relations of individuals, and not only political decisions made by Berlin, Barmen or Windhoek, determined how mission, church and state relations developed.

Oermann is interesting on the origins and development of the Rhenish Mission Society (RMS) in Wuppertal-Barmen, particularly his emphasis on the differences that existed between individual missionaries. He gives a valuable exposition of the conflict within the RMS between those interested in the expansion of Christianity integrated with German identity and culture and the theologically motivated interest of those seeking to bring the 'light of Christianity' to the un-enlightened world. He warns: 'By simplifying the theological tensions between evangelical-revivalist and more liberal missionaries, between seminarians and

theologians, one may wrongly assume that there was only one kind of Christianity and preaching with which Africans were confronted' (p. 44).

Oermann argues that African chiefs actively sought out and used missionaries for their own purposes. Meanwhile, in the troubled conditions that existed in central Namibia from the 1840s onwards, missionaries were anxious for any form of European protection, English or German. In a cutting aside to those who rely on published contemporary material, he notes that there are differences in expressed opinion regarding German colonization in published missionary accounts and the letters written by missionaries to their superiors in Germany. Thus, the letters of missionary Viehe were critical of German colonization, whereas the published accounts, written for the benefit of German funders, were positive.

Oermann provides a detailed and readable introduction to the development of German colonial administration. Particularly innovative is his analysis of the differing religious affiliations of colonial officials and the impact of these commitments on their activities. In keeping with Oermann's emphasis on the importance of the individual, individual conflicts with regard to all manner of issues between missionaries and administrators are discussed. The genocide perpetrated upon the Herero and Nama between 1904 and 1908 occupies a substantial part of the book. Oermann is struck by the manner in which the RMS, whose missionaries were accused of having aided the Herero, stood unified. Oermann emphasizes that the mission was uniquely placed to provide first-hand accounts of what was taking place in GSWA, and that the mission actively used this information to exert pressure on the government and colonial administration. Indeed, the mission actively underplayed the war by not exposing in public the activities of German settlers and soldiers. Oermann considers how it could be 'that missionaries who were deeply moved by the acts of cruelty and injustice did not hesitate to co-operate with the colonial government and the military which were effectively responsible for these cruelties' (p. 107). He argues that a reciprocal relationship developed in which the German government assisted the RMS in improving its image and the missionaries actively assisted in the collection of Herero into camps.

The Herero-German war marks a break in Namibian history and in Oermann's work. The war speeded up the introduction of other missionary societies and churches. The activities of Catholic missionaries, their varying orders and interests, as well as Anglicans, Ethiopianists and the Dutch Reformed Church are all discussed, albeit in far less depth than the RMS, with the exception of the Finnish Mission Society (active in Ovamboland) which Oermann covers in detail. The activities of the German Evangelical Lutheran church was of central importance for the settler administration and society. As an example Oermann takes the building of the *Christuskirche* that dominates the skyline of Windhoek and argues that a Protestant church was regarded as a cultural institution rather than a house of God. As such, priests, sent out to minister to the settler community, hoped that the *Christuskirche* would become the centre of Christianity whilst settlers and press regarded it as an expression of German national pride.

Oermann provides an intense and disturbing insight into German colonial society. We are guided past courts that sentence 14- and 10-year-old children to 40 lashes and six months' imprisonment in chains, German settlers who repeatedly rape a 10-year-old girl and a missionary who ensures that these men go free on the basis of his testimony. The absence of information, except in the case of mission evangelist Franz Hoesemab, regarding the manner in which Africans viewed church and the missionary endeavour is unfortunate and exposes a major deficiency in Namibian history. Missing from the book are definitions as to what Oermann takes to be mission, church and state. In addition, one needs to have some prior understanding of German theology: references to 'Albrecht Ritschl

and the historical critical Tübingen school of Ferdinand Christian Baur' (p. 125) are beyond most readers. Nevertheless, this is a satisfying book to read, which has been written by somebody who kept an open mind, worked hard and truly knew his material.

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DELAFOSSÉ AND AFRICAN STUDIES

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Maurice Delafosse: entre orientalisme et ethnographie: l'itinéraire d'un africaniste (1870-1926). Edited by JEAN-LOUP AMSELLE and EMMANUELLE SIBEUD. Preface by Christophe Wondji. Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1998. Pp. 320. FF 145 (ISBN 2-7068-1356-3).

KEY WORDS: Colonial administration, anthropology, historiography, linguistics, method, social sciences.

This book presents the majority of the papers given at an international conference organized by Jean-Loup Amselle and Emmanuelle Sibeud at the École des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris in November 1996, thus coinciding with and commemorating the seventieth anniversary of the great scholar-administrator's death. Its sixteen essays are arranged in three sections: the first two are primarily concerned with evaluating Maurice Delafosse's ideological positions in the context of his times, while the third examines his contributions to then-budding academic disciplines.

The book does not (and probably was not intended to) present a comprehensive assessment of Delafosse's life and work, but it does illuminate numerous facets, thus very usefully complementing the scattered analyses of the French colonial venture. Indeed, its inclusion of widely divergent points of view is a significant merit, though greater coherence might have been achieved had some chapters explicitly examined a larger selection of Delafosse's writings. The book concludes with a 167-item bibliography of the pioneering author's publications that largely integrates and supersedes earlier lists, including the one provided by Henri Labouret, another scholar-administrator and Delafosse's successor as professor at the Ecole des Langues orientales in Paris, in his memorial tribute (*Académie des sciences coloniales: comptes rendus des séances*, 8 [1926-7], 537-51). The major source for Delafosse's life remains the hagiographical, but detailed and extensively documented, biography by his daughter Louise (*Maurice Delafosse: le Berrichon conquis par l'Afrique* [Paris: Société française d'histoire d'outre-mer, 1976], 428 pp.).

Several chapters explore Delafosse's judgements about African and other non-Western cultures, his understanding of the concept of 'civilization' and views about French colonial policies. Several more discuss his role in the emergence of the politically loaded concept of a specifically Black African Islam (*islam noir*). Jean Schmitz explores his simultaneous interest in 'orientalist' research, privileging the study of manuscripts written in Arabic or in African languages transcribed in Arabic characters, and in what we would now call ethnography, as well as the subsequent disjunction of these two fields (and near disappearance of the former) in later French research on sub-Saharan Africa. Indeed, the relationship between these two paradigms was a keynote of discussion at the conference, though not one fully reflected in the published articles. Several writers present contrasting viewpoints about the degree to which Delafosse influenced Marcel Griaule and his