

be seen as a rather conventional perspective but Todd Shepard connects the theme in a very interesting way to the end of the French-Algerian war in 1962. In contrast and at the same time as a welcome complement, Jing Jing Chang looks at patterns of masculinity through the lens of martial arts films making Hong Kong known as a place of popular cinema production where the Cold War gender stereotypes play out in a particular way. Alejandro J. Gomez-del-Moral explores the confrontation of Franco's dictatorship over Spain and the emerging consumer society which resists more and more to traditional form of disciplinization. In Karen L. Ishizuka's analysis of Asian-Americans looking at the Vietnam War very personal identification with the subject comes to the fore and we learn that the seemingly exotic configurations being at the centre of attention in this volume exist already for quite some time so that they impact on the biographies of mid-career academics.

Jérôme Bourdon with his study of Israel's image in the 1960s and Maha Nasser's investigation into the leftist vocabularies among Palestinian citizens of Israel remind us of conflictual constellations that last since the global 1960s and make the period to a certain extent a close neighbour exactly at the moment when the activists of this time demission. The volume will certainly serve as an introduction to a turbulent decade for students who have been born after the millennium but it is also an important complement to the existing research literature on the many facets of a time when – to mention an element of stability in a period of turmoil – Brazilian football was so dominant that it won three times out of four possibilities the world

championships: 1958 in Stockholm, 1962 in Santiago, and 1970 in Mexico-City.

Matthias Middell

Ngonlardje Kabra Mbaidjol: African Countries and the Scramble for China. A Contribution to Africa's Preparedness and Rehearsal, Leiden/Boston: Brill 2019, xvii + 190 pp.

This is a manifesto for developing Sino-African relations rather than an academic book. The author, Ngonlardje Kabra Mbaidjol, is a Chadian diplomat joined the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) agency in 1984. Among others he is a former UNHCR regional representative in the Central African Region (2000–2003), director of the New York UN High Commissioner for Human Rights office (2007–2009), director of the UNHCR Ethics Office in Geneva (2009–2012), and chairperson of the Ethics Committee of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (2010–2015). He holds a PhD from the University of Geneva's Graduate Institute of International Studies and Development (1985). Since 2012, he is working as an international consultant, based in New Jersey.

In this lean book (the main text, divided into eleven chapters, stretches over just 158 pages), Mbaidjol calls "for strategic" thinking of African states in engaging with the People's Republic of China to benefit from economic and financial cooperation. The book is premised on the assumption that China "is nowadays a respectable global economic partner" (p. x). It offers "competitive trade opportunities, high investment returns, and other mutually

advantageous ties” (ibid.). The book takes what some may would call a “refreshing” stance against any critical perspective on Sino-African relations. Rather than engaging with this scholarship – which, by the way, certainly represents the mainstream of academic work on this topic, and not just in the West –, Mbaidjol constructs a position which allegedly “condemns” or even “bans” Sino-African relations. It remains unclear whether this is an academic or a political position, and where it comes from. Writing against this “position”, the author furthermore claims that African countries are not yet fully prepared to engage with China. This statement, too, is not substantiated, but simply dropped as a pre-given.

From this vantage point, Mbaidjol introduces the 1955 Bandung Conference as the asserted historic beginning of South-South relations (chap. 2), then continues to discuss the nature of the Non-Aligned Movement (chap. 3) and the BRICS (chap. 4). These chapters could have provided an opportunity to seriously engage with some academic debate, but the author only very superficially refers to some texts, if at all (and the criteria for selecting these references remain unclear). The remaining chapters are dealing with China and its Asian neighbours and Asian regional institutions (chap. 4 and 5) as well as Chinese foreign aid, trade, and foreign direct investment in Africa (chap. 7, 8, and 9). The core of the argument is presented in chapters 10 on “gaps and opportunities in Sino-Africa Relations” and 11 on “harmonizing legal and administrative infrastructures in Africa”.

In this book, “Africa” usually appears as a collective. There is little understanding, or

interest, for historically different kinds of relationships between single African states and China; as there is also no attempt to understand the history of the relations between African countries and China as developed by the Organisation of African Unity (1963–2002) and its successor, the African Union, or the various regional economic communities. Interestingly, the author always talks about “Sino-African” relations, rather than considering “Afro-Chinese” relations.

The book is published in a series called “International Comparative Social Studies”, edited by Mehdi P. Amineh. Like in many of the by now 49 volumes published in this series, there is little “comparison” involved in this particular book. Copy editing missed a number of issues, to start with in the first line of the text China is referred to as the “Popular Republic”!

Finally, there is a stark contrast between the length of the bibliography (pp. 159–184) and the rather minimalistic references to any academic debate in the text. The bibliography only serves as a token; the author does not know the academic debate and he clearly has no interest in it. The majority of references is a list of are loveless glued monographs – journal articles or publications in edited volumes do not exist. Mainly, Mbaidjol draws on (few) sources and news accessed through the internet – which are mainly meant to serve his memory. Quite surprisingly the book has received some acclaim, though only politically (see, for instance, *Research Africa Reviews* 3 [2019] 3, pp. 41–43). In short, written from a practitioner’s point of view this text provides some legal and strategic orientation for connoisseurs of strengthened Sino-African relations, void

of any critical academic reasoning or discussion current political debates in many African countries about relations with China. While in many places, the levels of enchantment have certainly increased, the conditions for engagement between African countries and China certainly still call for a serious academic debate.

Ulf Engel

**Robert A. Olwell / James M. Vaughn (eds.):
Envisioning Empire: The New British World
from 1763 to 1773, London: Bloomsbury
Academic 2019, 256 pp.**

The edited volume, *Envisioning Empire*, captures the imperial moment of 1763, the end of the Seven Years' War. The prominent contributors to this volume, all situated at universities in the US and UK, were asked to think of this moment without the hindsight of the approaching American Revolution and other longer-term repercussions of the Seven Years' War. Instead, the chapter contributions investigate different plans and visions for empire from a variety of perspectives as new subjects and new territories fell under British rule in 1763.

Indeed, while the American Revolution has been studied recently as a result of clashing visions of the British Empire, it makes sense to take a step back and ask how the multiple actors from various sites in the British Empire envisioned the Empire in the decade that preceded the war. A recent monograph from S. Max Edelson, *The New Map of Empire*, asks some

parallel questions to this volume through the lens of mapmaking endeavors that accompanied imperial reform agendas for British America. This Bloomsbury volume does not tackle the history of cartography, but does ask how actors such as imperial agents and local elite, some with competing agendas, envisioned empire after 1763 in a more expansive lens, both topically and geographically.

The book contains eight chapter contributions as well as an introduction and an epilogue, each single-authored by one of the two editors. The slim volume manages to shed light on how central themes were reimagined for the British empire post-1763 such as religion, trade, company rule, and subjecthood; moreover, the volume also incorporates regional perspectives from India, Africa, North America, and Britain. Most successfully, the volume brings together Indian and North American developments and does a good job of including local power structures like princes and Native communities. Local elite are not eclipsed here by the focus on Britain; rather, British visions of empire are altered by these encounters and accommodations. The book has an index but unfortunately no collective bibliography.

This book is recommended for historians of the British Empire, the American Revolution, Atlantic Empires, British India, and neighboring topics. Though contributors were asked to think small in terms of the limited timespan the volume addresses, 19th century historians will also find inspiration in this pivotal imperial moment.

Megan Maruschke