

**Janne Lahti (ed.): German and United States Colonialism in a Connected World: Entangled Empires (Cambridge Imperial and Post-Colonial Studies), London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021, xx+319 pp.**

Reviewed by  
Julius Wilm, Leipzig

This anthology, edited by Helsinki historian Janne Lahti, seeks to re-examine US and German colonialism from a transimperial perspective. It is concerned with how colonial actors, practices, policies, patterns of cultural experience, and codes were intertwined, exchanged, copied, and otherwise related to one another in the United States and Germany. The book does not claim that there was a particularly privileged or important relationship between the two countries. Rather, the two countries' entanglements are examined as examples of larger circulations of colonial discourses, policies, and actors. Germany and the United States were "relational empires" – but so were others as well.

The contributions contained in the volume are divided into three main sections entitled "Portabilities", "Passages", and "Parallels". The first section focuses on how intellectuals got to know and advocated transfers of colonial models. The second section takes us to the level of larger debates and implemented colonial practices and policies. The third section focuses on colonial representations. As the editor points out, the division of the texts is not

always obvious, as there are thematic overlaps. Some contributions connect to more than one section.

In the first section, Gregor Thum and Robert L. Nelson examine how economists Friedrich List and Max Sering looked at the western expansion of the United States and tried to draw political and economic lessons for Germany's own economic development and eastward expansion. Tracey Reimann-Dawe's essay is devoted to geographer Gerhard Rohlfs's attempt to derive lessons from American railroad development for the infrastructural penetration of Central Africa. George Steinmetz's essay presents Raymond Aron as a critical theorist of colonialism and empire.

The second section opens with an analysis by Jens-Uwe Guettel of debates in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries about which route German colonialism should take. As he shows, the option of expanding overseas colonies was often thought of in opposition to territorial expansion eastwards. Dörte Lerp examines German imperial population policies in East Prussia and Southwest Africa in a transimperial perspective. As she shows, German administrators drew on US models of settlement and racialization in some examples; in others, European empires were more important inspirations. Jeannette Eileen Jones examines how the private Kolonial-Wirtschaftliches Komitee and the official Reichskolonialamt sought to draw on American agricultural expertise for turning colonized lands in Southwest Africa into white settlements. Eriks Bredovskis's contribution analyses the 1905 voyage of the German ship *Falke* to the Pacific Northwest as an example of Germans' interaction with colonial spaces

in areas controlled by other powers than their own government.

The third section is opened with a contribution by Volker M. Langbehn on cartoons depicting Chinese in German and US satire magazines. A. Dana Weber explores gender fluidities in Karl May's fiction and their theatrical adaptations. Lahti and Michelle R. Moyd compare the enlistment of Apache scouts by the army in the US West and African askari fighters by the Schutztruppe in German East Africa, with an emphasis on the larger effects these enlistments had on the fighters' families and social status. The final contribution, by Edward B. Westermann, compares the rhetoric and practice of the US government's conquest of the West and Nazi Germany's warfare of annihilation in Eastern Europe, which despite some rhetorical overlaps were very different.

The contributions are all carefully developed investigations, and they often build on larger projects or finished publications by the authors. As a reader, one therefore has the opportunity to appreciate the results of many extensive studies in a quite compact form.

If one takes seriously the claim made in the book's title and introduction that transimperial entanglements between Germany and the United States are to be the topic, it is however striking that the flows are examined almost exclusively in one direction: The United States was a role model for Germany. That German practices, ideas, and participants played a significant role in the colonization of the US West is not discussed in any of the contributions. On the level of the participants, there would have been many examples: from German frontier settlers and miners, who

participated very directly in the dispossession and warfare against native nations, to elites such as Carl Schurz, who as secretary of the interior in 1877–1881 pushed for the establishment of native boarding schools and promoted the allotment and sale of reservation lands that was later implemented under the Dawes Act of 1887. On the other hand, there probably were few precedent ideas and policies from Germany that could have served as models for the conquest and incorporation of the US West. The United States was seen as a model of successful expansion and colonial rule that German elites tried to emulate. Read that way, the apparent one-sidedness of the flows becomes an interesting historical argument: while there is debate among historians today as to whether the US westward expansion should be read as an imperial history or rather as a history of nation-building, there was apparently little controversy among contemporary international observers and emulators.[1] They saw a successful imperial model for their projects in the conquest and incorporation of the US West. There was no doubt about the fundamental identity of these endeavours.

On a methodological level, it would be worth asking what significance is attached to transimperial exchanges and to what extent this global perspective differs substantially from critical histories that remain oriented towards the national scope. The individual contributions show how German actors – from Friedrich List, Max Sering, and Gerhard Rohlfs to Adolf Hitler – thought about US colonial models or what they held to be models and how they then attempted to adapt and modify parts of them for Germany's own projects. Na-

tional concerns and particularities therefore appear to be in the driver's seat more than the flows, transfers, and circulations that German elites selectively drew upon. How exactly, then, does this approach differ from a critical history in a national framing?

The anthology offers excellent special studies on a variety of aspects of transimperial exchange between the United States and Germany. The chapters are written in an accessible manner and are very well documented so that at the points where one might disagree, one always knows what evidence and reasoning the authors base their judgments on. The book does not cover all aspects of the entanglement, and it offers no overarching theory. The book never promised either, however, and the editor and contributors can only be congratulated on this interesting anthology.

Note:

- 1 See the critical discussions of A. G. Hopkins generally well-received *American Empire: A Global History* (2018), which dismisses the idea that US western expansionism in the nineteenth century constituted empire. See, for example, M. A. Hill, Review of A. G. Hopkins, *American Empire: A Global History*. *H-Nationalism*, *H-Net Reviews*. March, 2021, <https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showpdf.php?id=55921>; „Roundtable XX-33 on A. G. Hopkins. *American Empire: A Global History*“, *H-Diplo*, 23 April 2019, <http://www.tiny.cc/Roundtable-XX-33>.

**Abigail Green/Simon Levis Sullam**  
(eds.): **Jews, Liberalism, Antisemitism:**  
**A Global History (Palgrave Critical**  
**Studies of Antisemitism and Racism),**  
**Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020, 429**  
**pp.**

Reviewed by  
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The global and imperial turns in history have been influencing the profession for more than two decades. As a consequence, historians have questioned narratives and concepts that derive from Eurocentrism and in turn included perspectives that explore history from the vantage point of transnational networks, geographical peripheries, and subaltern groups. This excellent volume, originating from a seminar and a concluding conference at the University of Oxford in 2016/17, joins a growing number of books dedicated to incorporating these historiographical trends into the field of modern Jewish history. It asks how one of the latter's central problems – the relationship between Jews, liberalism, and antisemitism – appears different if examined from angles informed by the historical sensibilities of the twenty-first century.

In their introduction, the editors formulate an ambitious research agenda that seeks to challenge traditional scholarship by overcoming Euro- and Anglocentric perspectives, favouring transnational and comparative approaches over methodological nationalism and breaking with