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Pascal Blanchard, Sandrine Lemaire, Nicolas Bancel and Dominic Thomas, eds., *Colonial Culture in France Since the Revolution*. Translated by Alexis Pernsteiner. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014. x + 633 pp. Notes, bibliography, list of contributors, and index. \$60.00 U.S. (cl). ISBN 978-0-253-01045-2; \$49.99 U.S. (eb). ISBN 978-0-253-01053-7.

Review by Mark McKinney, Miami University.

In their introductory essay, Pascal Blanchard, Sandrine Lemaire, Nicolas Bancel and Dominic Thomas present the volume as the culmination of a research program begun in the early 1990s. Bancel, Blanchard and Lemaire are core members of ACHAC, or Association Connaissance de l'Histoire de l'Afrique Contemporaine, created in 1989.^[1] Its website lists six programs or areas of specialty: "colonisation & post-colonialisme," "immigrations des Suds," "zoos humains," "mémoires combattantes," "diasporas en France," and "sports et diversités."^[2] Members of ACHAC have published many books, regularly with each other as co-authors and co-editors, and often with contributions by other scholars from a range of disciplinary backgrounds (e.g., history, literary studies, cinema studies).^[3] *Colonial Culture in France Since the Revolution* is the second ACHAC edited volume to be published in English translation.^[4] It brings together fifty-three essays by fifty authors, in France and abroad, specializing in French colonial history and culture. Quite a few essays are co-authored, including twenty-two with ACHAC's directors and regular participants (Bancel, Blanchard, Gilles Boëtsch, Éric Deroo and Lemaire).

Previous versions of the work appeared in French in three separate volumes focusing on three successive time periods, and then in a collected French edition. The majority of the essays deal with the period ranging from 1870 to the present, as indicated in their titles (listed below). The dating is designed to support the general argument of the editors, who posit that "an initial period that covers 1763 to 1870...saw the emergence of a 'pre-colonial' culture in metropolitan France" (p. 4). They argue that a colonial culture began to arise in France "when slavery was first abolished" (p. 1), and "reached its apogee" in 1930-1931 around the two major sets of French colonial celebrations and expositions in those two years, in Algeria and Paris (p. 3). Subsequently, "imperial culture" (p. 17) or "[a] multifaceted *colonial culture* rooted itself into French society in the years 1931-1961" (authors' emphasis, p. 19). So, they argue, the national, republican culture was also a colonial one: "the colony, like the army and the schools, was now...part of the fabric of Republican gesture" (p. 9). The book's aim is "not to give a unique and totalizing definition of *colonial culture*...[but] to offer a number of empirical studies that might begin to sketch the contours of such a phenomenon" (p. 5). They nonetheless define colonial culture as "a host of discursive materials, images, and practices" (p. 9) and say that the French became "colonials by dint of the often unconscious incorporation of imperial discourse, norms, attitudes, indeed of a *habitus* into the collective mentality and psyche" (p. 5). The editors further argue that a colonial fracture between the French and colonized peoples began to emerge in mainland France in the 1920s and 1930s and still exists today. They refer to both Henry Rousso on the Vichy regime and Benjamin Stora on the Algerian War to suggest that after the Algerian War there was a hiatus or caesura, a forgetting of colonialism, and that colonial history has been repressed, but -- or perhaps *therefore* --

continues to haunt France. They argue that a postcolonial studies approach can allow scholars to "begin to think a 'colonial' memory" in contemporary France (p. 26). This involves a focus throughout the essays on events, agents and discourses that produced colonial culture and transmitted it to the postcolonial period.

There is a special emphasis here—as in previous ACHAC publications, films, exhibitions and conferences—on the role of (post)colonial exhibits and expositions in creating (post)colonial culture. So, for example, after an initial chapter on the abolition of slavery, Lemaire, Blanchard and Bancel discuss colonial exhibits, especially Algerian, in the universal expositions in Paris in 1855 and 1867, as "[m]ilestones in colonial culture under the Second Empire" (the title of chapter two). Subsequent chapters discuss later colonial exhibitions and ethnological exhibits or "human zoos" (chapter three), including the role of the latter in the development of anthropology (chapter four). Two chapters (fifteen and sixteen), by Steven Ungar and Blanchard, examine the 1931 Colonial Exposition, which Didier Daeninckx also evokes in conjunction with violence against the Kanaks (pp. 143-9), and its enduring importance for their descendants today—he explored this earlier in his novels *Cannibale* and *Le retour d'Ataï*.^[5] The 1931 exhibition is recalled by Herman Lebovics in his chapter on "Modernism, colonialism, and cultural hybridity," (chapter thirty) as "a negative reference point" for Jean-Hubert Martin's 1989 exhibit, *Magiciens de la terre*, with "often very large installations by fifty artists from Asia, Africa, and Latin America" at La Villette (p. 395). In his chapter (thirty-five) on French museography and colonialism, "[t]he difficult art of exhibiting the colonies," Robert Aldrich reflects on the creation of colonial collections and museums, including the contested transformation of the former Musée permanent des colonies, built for the 1931 event, into the Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration. He notes that, although one of its early exhibitions was on "Les étrangers au temps de l'Exposition coloniale," "it could be regretted that the history of the colonial project, the very raison d'être of the remarkable building, does not receive greater prominence" and critical reflection (p. 450).

The army was traditionally a major institution in the production and transmission of colonial ideology and culture, in part because its colonial actions were celebrated in expositions, but also prose fiction and song (chapter five), theater (chapter six), and cinema (chapter nine). Éric Deroo writes first about colonized troops in the First World War (chapter eight), and then on "[p]ostcolonial culture in the army and the memory of overseas combatants (1961-2006)" (chapter thirty-nine). He co-wrote the latter essay with Christian Benoît, "a retired lieutenant colonel in the French army (Service historique de l'armée de terre)," and Antoine Champeaux, "a curator at the Musée des troupes de Marine de Fréjus" (pp. 607-608). Their collective assertion that "[i]ndependent [sub-Saharan African] states welcomed" (p. 493) the presence of French troops after those countries gained formal independence ignores the brutal, neocolonial terms of French military, economic and political engagement there, through what François-Xavier Verschave called "la Françafrique"^[6] and Jean-Pierre Dozon describes as the "Franco-African state" or "system" in his essay on "[t]he illusion of decolonization" (chapter thirty-four). Strictly speaking, the affirmation by Benoît, Champeaux, and Deroo that the celebration of a colonial "culture of arms" at French military museums (including in Fréjus) and in military practices, is not "postcolonial" (p. 495) appears true, if, as Aldrich asserts, "the Musée des troupes de Marine de Fréjus (the former colonial troops)...[among others, has] kept a largely traditional, even laudatory, approach to France's colonial exploits" (p. 447). Judging from Aldrich's assessment and from much of what Deroo and his co-authors say, French military museums and practices have been unreconstructedly *colonial*, not *post-colonial*, if the latter is to mean either a critical or anticolonial perspective on the colonial past and present, or a decisive break from colonial systems and practices, a going beyond. By contrast with such military practice, the return to colonialism in postcolonial cinema, song, and literature (chapter forty-five) and non-military museums (chapter thirty-five) has been much more mixed and sometimes even refreshingly critical of conquest and colonialism.

Other chapters focus on the roles of a variety of other institutions and individuals in the production of colonial culture in France prior to 1961, including schools (chapter seven), the Agence générale des

colonies (chapter ten), scouting (chapter twenty), and the police (chapter twenty-nine). Authors focus on the complicity of many academic disciplines and branches of knowledge in the colonial project, including anthropology, colonial psychology, and geography. Suzanne Citron argues the need to bring the study of colonial culture in France further into historiography, citing *la nouvelle histoire*, including Pierre Nora's *Les lieux de mémoire*, for failure in this regard (chapter thirty-two). Lemaire sees the French school system as having made significant, but insufficient progress in integrating colonial history into the curriculum (chapter thirty-three). Several essays cite the law of 23 February 2005, and especially its article 4 (which initially included the following language, abrogated after fierce public debate: "Les programmes scolaires reconnaissent en particulier le rôle positif de la présence française outre-mer, notamment en Afrique du Nord"), as a misguided attempt by the government to reverse progress in this regard.[7]

The volume appropriately places considerable emphasis on (post)colonial ethnic minorities in France, including from sub-Saharan Africa (chapter twenty-seven) and North Africa (chapter twenty-eight). Françoise Vergès argues that the DOM-TOM, their inhabitants and their history, especially of slavery, are often excluded from discussions of postcolonial France (chapter thirty-six), while Esther Benbassa discusses "competition between victims" of violent histories in France today (chapter thirty-seven). Other authors focus on the brutal repression of colonial ethnic minorities during the Algerian War (chapter twenty-nine) and postcolonial racism (chapter forty-three). Mathieu Rigouste argues that French army leadership has played a major role in constructing postcolonial immigration as a threat in French society through annual sessions of the Institut des Hautes Etudes de la Défense Nationale (chapter thirty-eight), whereas Vincent Geisser underlines the role of Mitterrand in transferring colonial paradigms and practices associated with the concept of integration to the postcolonial period (chapter forty). Bancel attempts to separate out the (post)colonial from other aspects of ethnic tourism (chapter forty-six), whereas Gabrielle Parker analyzes the (post)colonial, and the possibility of moving beyond that, in the notion, institutions and practices of *francophonie* (chapter forty-seven).

Through a broad array of approaches and specific topics, the volume's authors provide a wide-ranging survey of, and engagement with, colonial and postcolonial issues in France and beyond.

LIST OF ESSAYS

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5. Alain Ruscio, "Literature, Song, and the Colonies (1900-1920)"

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Didier Daeninckx, "Foreword: History's Mark (1931-1961)"

9. Olivier Barlet and Pascal Blanchard, "Dreaming: The Fatal Attraction of Colonial Cinema (1920-1950)"
10. Sandrine Lemaire, "Spreading the Word: The Agence Générale des Colonies (1920-1931)"
11. Nicolas Bancel and Pascal Blanchard, "To Civilize: The Invention of the Native (1918-1940)"
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21. Sandrine Lemaire, "Manipulation: Conquering Taste (1931-1939)"
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23. Pascal Blanchard and Ruth Ginio, "Imperial Revolution: Vichy's Colonial Myth (1940-1944)"

24. Sandrine Lemaire, Catherine Hodeir, and Pascal Blanchard, "The Colonial Economy: Between Propaganda Myths and Economic Reality (1940-1955)"

25. Jacques Frémeaux, "French Unity: The Dream of a United France (1946-1960)"

Part Four: Toward the Postcolony

Abdourahman A. Waberi, "Foreword: Moussa the African's Blues"

26. Daniel Hémerly, "Decolonizing France: the 'Indochinese Syndrome' (1946-1954)"

27. Philippe Dewitte, "Immigration and an Emerging African Elite in the Metropole (1946-1961)"

28. Pascal Blanchard, Éric Deroo, Driss El Yazami, Pierre Fournié, and Gilles Manceron, "North Africans Settle in the Metropole (1946-1961)"

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30. Herman Lebovics, "Modernism, Colonialism, and Cultural Hybridity"

31. Nicolas Bancel and Pascal Blanchard, "The Meanders of Colonial Memory"

32. Suzanne Citron, "The Impossible Revision of France's History (1968-2006)"

33. Sandrine Lemaire, "National History and Colonial History: Parallel Histories (1961-2006)"

34. Jean-Pierre Dozon, "The Illusion of Decolonization (1956-2006)"

35. Robert Aldrich, "The Difficult Art of Exhibiting the Colonies"

Part Five: The Time of Inheritance

Bruno Étienne, "Foreword: The Age of Contempt, or the Legitimization of France's Civilizing Mission"

36. Françoise Vergès, "Trouble in the Republic: Disturbing Memories, Forgotten Territories"

37. Esther Benbassa, "Competition between Victims"

38. Mathieu Rigouste, "The Army and the Construction of Immigration as a Threat (1961-2006)"

39. Christian Benoît, Antoine Champeaux, and Éric Deroo, "Postcolonial Culture in the Army and the Memory of Overseas Combatants (1961-2006)"

40. Vincent Geisser, "Republican Integration: Reflections on a Postcolonial Issue (1961-2006)"

41. Jean-Marc Moura, "Colonial Influences and Tropes in the Field of Literature"

42. Dominique Vidal, "From Colonial History to the *Banlieues* (1961-2006)"

43. Saïd Bouamama and Pierre Tevanian, "Can We Speak of a Postcolonial Racism? (1961-2006)"

44. Dominique Wolton, "From Colonial Stereotypes to the Postcolonial Gaze: The Need for an Evolution of the Imaginary"
45. Delphine Robic-Diaz and Alain Ruscio, "Postcolonial Cinema, Song, and Literature: Continuity or Change? (1961-2006)"
46. Nicolas Bancel, "Ethnic Tourism: Symbolic Reconquest? (1961-2006)"
47. Gabrielle Parker, "Francophonie and Universality: The Evolution of Two Intertwined Notions (1961-2006)"

NOTES

[1] A joint publication indicated that Blanchard was president of the association and Bancel, its vice-president; in Pascal Blanchard and Nicolas Bancel, *De l'indigène à l'immigré* (Paris: Gallimard ["Découvertes" no. 345], 1998), p. 10.

[2] <http://www.achac.com/programmes>; accessed 16 June 2016.

[3] See, for example, Nicolas Bancel, Pascal Blanchard and Laurent Gervereau, eds., *Images et colonies: Iconographie et propagande coloniale sur l'Afrique française de 1880 à 1962* (Nanterre: BDIC; Paris: ACHAC, 1993); Nicolas Bancel, Pascal Blanchard, Gilles Boëtsch, Éric Deroo, and Sandrine Lemaire, eds., *Zoos humains: XIXe et XXe siècles* (Paris: La Découverte, 2002).

[4] The first was Pascal Blanchard, Nicolas Bancel, Gilles Boëtsch, Éric Deroo, Sandrine Lemaire and Charles Forsdick, eds., *Human Zoos: Science and Spectacle in the Age of Colonial Empires*, translated by Teresa Bridgeman (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008).

[5] *Cannibale* (Lagrasse: Verdier, 1998); *Le retour d'Ataï* (Lagrasse: Verdier, 2001).

[6] François-Xavier Verschave, *La Françafrique: Le plus long scandale de la république*, (Paris: Stock, 2001). [first ed. 1998]

[7] Liauzu, Claude, and Gilles Manceron, eds., *La colonisation, la loi et l'histoire*, pref. Henri Leclerc (Paris: Syllepse, 2006), p. 166.

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