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Ed Naylor, ed., *France's Modernising Mission: Citizenship, Welfare and the Ends of Empire*. London: Palgrave MacMillan, St Antony's Series, 2018. xli + 258 pp. List of Figures, Notes, Index. \$99.99 U.S. (hb). ISBN 978-1-137-55132-0; \$79.99 (eb, all devices). ISBN 978-1-137-55133-7.

Review by Anndal Narayanan, University of North Florida.

This rich collection builds on fruitful conversations in the study of the French empire, presents innovative conceptual tools, and points out promising new terrain to mine. The editor, Ed Naylor, a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow in the School of Languages and Area Studies at the University of Portsmouth, specializes in decolonization, the politics of migration, housing, and the welfare state. The idea for the book stemmed from a 2014 workshop at Oxford titled “Decolonisation and welfare during France’s *Trente glorieuses*.” The resulting collection contains chapters written by six historians, one sociologist, one political scientist, and one anthropologist. These nine essays reflect the authors’ shared interest in the ways that the French colonial empire—and its dissolution—influenced the boundaries of France’s political, social, and moral community.

The “modernizing mission,” a concept originating with global historians Frederick Cooper and Matthew Connelly, aptly describes the French state’s strategic reaction to global challenges after 1945.^[1] Naylor’s introduction defines the phrase as “an attempt to counter the anachronistic connotations of colonialism by seeking to align the French imperial project with contemporary notions of progress and modernity” (p. xviii). The term itself is a play on the “civilizing mission” or “*mission civilisatrice*,” an ideology presenting France’s overseas presence as a benevolent duty, and obscuring the contradictions inherent to Republican empire.^[2] The transition from “civilizing mission” to “modernizing mission” proved an appealing rhetorical device to French politicians and bureaucrats after World War II, when empire-building and racial hierarchy had lost some of their credibility, and France’s empire faced new levels of contestation.

Against threats including a new global order dominated by the United States, the Soviet Union, and the nascent United Nations, and the rising determination of anticolonial activists, the “modernizing mission” seemed to promise both a justification and a means to hold onto empire. Not only did this attempt include infrastructure development and educational reform, but it required reckoning with the implications of the new federal French Union, which transformed colonial “subjects” into citizens (p. xxii). With this watershed, “the refounding of the French welfare state and the technocratic planning of France’s own post-war economic reconstruction all saw corresponding initiatives in French overseas territories” (p. xxii). Yet, as the essays in this volume demonstrate, the “modernizing mission” offered new platforms for French officials

and anticolonial activists to debate the relationship of France with its colonies, and the logic of an imperial Republic itself.

Broadly, this collection intersects with two recent conversations in French history. The first concerns the overlapping timelines of decolonization, and the period of post-World War II reconstruction known as the “*trente glorieuses*”.[3] Here, this book further rejects a simplistic vision of recovering postwar France, identifies legacies of the colonial in the postcolonial era in the Metropole as well as former colonies, and emphasizes the continuity of surveillance, repression, and inequality facing postcolonial communities on territory that is or used to be French. The second conversation involves questioning a teleological narrative of decolonization, and investigating “French strategic calculations and the processes through which decolonisation unfolded in various locations: the ends of empire” (p. xxiv), often focusing on questions of citizenship and belonging.[4] The essays in this work contribute a wealth of information and perspectives to this project, through case studies of how the French national community was debated after World War II, in the Metropole and the colonies, in arenas such as education and housing.

The structure of this book, and the coverage of the chapters themselves, emphasize continuity from the colonial to the postcolonial, and the extent to which “modernization” was a reactive rhetorical cover for the French state, and a mobilizing tool for those seeking to challenge it. Beginning part one, “Rethinking Education and Citizenship,” Tony Chafer’s essay examines education in French West Africa (FWA) as a site of “power relations,” addressing the conflict between French bureaucrats and African activists over the quality of education colonial subjects should receive (p. 5). Chafer finds that “the impact [...] of the original FWA education system] was to legitimise a form of segregation between French and Africans” (p. 4), and that even after West African activists achieved the victory of an “an educational system [...] closely modelled on that of Metropolitan France [...],” this ironically “provided a small minority of Africans with access to a French education [and] ultimately excluded the great majority” (p. 25). The irony of seeding a new elite within colonial and ultimately postcolonial West African societies neatly transitions to Liz Fink’s chapter on reforming the chieftaincy in West Africa. The chieftaincy was a highly visible site of grievance because of its role as enforcer for colonial authorities, and Fink finds that, after the creation of the French Union, African leaders “successfully mobilized around reform of the chieftaincy by using it as a wedge issue to expand the power of the new territorial assemblies” (pp. 32-33), demonstrating how the “modernizing mission” offered “a new terrain of contestation for African political representatives” (p. 51). Benoît Trépiéd’s contribution at the end of part one examines the case study of New Caledonia, which became a French Overseas Territory in 1946 rather than remaining a colony. Trépiéd traces the ways that political organizers in New Caledonia deployed the idea of “the colonial.” He finds that Kanak and white Communist activists in the Caledonian Union succeeded in mobilizing across ethnic lines, by denouncing as “colonialism” not only “the colonial oppression and racism suffered by the Kanaks but also the socio-economic domination of the local business owners over ‘ordinary Whites’” (p. 75).

At the beginning of part two, “Mental Maps and the Territory,” James McDougall’s chapter investigates the role of “colonial expertise.” McDougall’s case study examines the work of colonial administrator and celebrated sociologist Robert Montagne (1893-1954), an excellent example of “the imbrication of colonial service with emergent social science” (p. 90). McDougall argues that Montagne’s sociological work on “modernisation” was imbued with “a worldview

that was quite unable to see [...] participation in the conditions of modernity outside, let alone against, the European empires” (p. 103). Neil MacMaster’s essay traces French bureaucrats’ attempts to enforce what he calls the “ideology of settlement,” a notion linking progress with settled villages “that reproduced the *commune* of metropolitan France” (p. 110). MacMaster compares the rhetoric surrounding both land expropriation in the nineteenth century and “resettlement camps” in the mid-twentieth century, an integral part of France’s counterinsurgency operations against the pro-independence National Liberation Front. These case studies illustrate the “underlying continuity in the colonial mind-set, one predicated on the ideology of progress and high modernity” (p. 125). Jim House’s final chapter in part two examines the debates around the two largest shantytowns in French North Africa (p. 132). In analyzing shantytowns as “welfare arenas,” House argues that clearing them out, thus eliminating a site of anticolonial criticism, was a greater priority for French officials than rehousing residents; “shantytown demolition and rehousing policies often simply displaced or reconfigured ethnic segregation rather than diminishing it” (p. 134-5). Furthermore, he concludes that the “modernising ethos that underlay” these policies present some “striking similarities with the way in which shantytown and rehousing issues were approached by the authorities in metropolitan France when dealing with Algerians there,” as well as in postcolonial Algeria and Morocco (pp.155-6).

Part three of this work considers “Metropolitan Legacies.” Ed Naylor’s contribution, examining the private Catholic charity Assistance to Workers from Overseas (ATOM), traces how the “modernizing mission” persisted from the late colonial era to the 1970s in order to understand “the prolongation of colonial phenomena in France after empire” (p. 169). Naylor finds continuity but also contingency and ambivalence toward the state in ATOM’s mission of “promoting ‘harmonious cohabitation’: initially by assisting colonial migrants from Algeria, and later deprived families of various origins, to ‘adapt’ to the demands of life in metropolitan France” (p. 188). Françoise de Barros’ essay compares mentalities regarding two Paris-region slums during and after the Algerian War—Nanterre, consisting primarily of Algerian immigrants, and Champigny, housing Portuguese immigrants. She identifies a “racialised essentialism” in complaints about shantytown residents by neighbors, and a related racialization of officials’ treatment of shantytown residents in both Nanterre and Champigny, as “former colonial officials [...] extended their racialised understanding of Algerians to all foreigners in the course of slum clearance operations” (pp. 207, 219). Her work on such “colonial redeployments” adds to a body of research which suggests that “colonial continuities are inseparable from ‘metropolitan’ dynamics” (pp. 216, 218). Abdellali Hajjat’s final essay in the book extends the chronology almost to the present day, relying on statistical and archival evidence to unearth the backstory to urban uprisings that took place in the Minguettes neighborhood of Vénissieux in the Rhône in 1981-1982, the first televised riots in contemporary France and the trigger of a nationwide debate on the “crisis of the *banlieues*.” Hajjat usefully defines “colonial legacy [...] as a collection of symbolic resources and practices constructed in the colonial context [...] which extend *beyond* the colonial context and are *reactivated* with regard to post-colonial immigration” (p. 226). Concerning Minguettes, “a laboratory of post-colonial urban disaggregation,” he finds that “colonial categories” were reactivated in both its housing policies, and in police attempts to prevent riots (pp. 227, 236).

Together and separately, these essays present a convincing defense of the central argument of the work. The “modernizing mission” is a useful historical *and* analytical concept because it “opened up multiple sites of negotiation and contestation throughout the French empire-state.

Many of the debates and dynamics it produced also continued to play out after decolonisation. The late colonial modernising paradigm often cast a long shadow over the nation-building projects of newly independent states and their relations with the former metropole” (p. xxiv).

With its multidisciplinary perspectives, archival rigor, and the conceptual innovation of the essays, this book will be valuable to scholars in fields as diverse as French colonial and postcolonial history, the European welfare state, mass social movements, and housing and education policy. Several major lacunae do stand out, which means that the book indicates new terrain for historical inquiry using the “modernizing mission” framework. The first is geographic—“Indo-China remains a notable absence,” which the editor acknowledges but does not explain (p. xxv). Indochina frequently figures as a comparison in the introduction and essays, which makes it somewhat frustrating that there is not one chapter that concerns it directly. Hopefully, this book will inspire future studies on the “modernizing mission” in this corner of the French empire, the first to win independence through armed conflict. The second gap is topical, which the editor acknowledges as well: “the many lines of enquiry suggested by the ‘modernising mission’ but not pursued here include labour relations, health policy and communications technologies” (p. xxv). In a book whose title contains the word “welfare,” it is strange that housing and education are the only domains of welfare examined. This work is sure to inspire investigations of the “modernizing mission” in medicine and labor relations, certainly fruitful fields to pursue regarding Indochina and elsewhere. Finally, scholars may question the extent to which the “modernizing mission” was unique to the French Empire. Was this rhetoric and practice employed by other colonial empires at other moments of history? What role did “modernity” play in anticolonial movements in other empires? The depth of the questions it evokes only underscores the importance and originality of this collection of research.

LIST OF ESSAYS

Part I: Rethinking Education and Citizenship

Tony Chafer, “Conflicting Modernities: Battles Over France’s Policy of Adapted Education in French West Africa.”

Liz Fink, “Institutional *Terra Non Firma*: Representative Democracy and the Chieftaincy in French West Africa.”

Benoît Trépied, “Decolonisation Without Independence? Breaking with the Colonial in New Caledonia (1946-1975).”

Part II: Mental Maps and the Territory

James McDougall, “Rule of Experts? Governing Modernisation in Late Colonial French Africa.”

Neil MacMaster, “From Tent to Village *Regroupement*: The Colonial State and Social Engineering of Rural Space, 1843-1962.”

Jim House, “Shantytowns and Rehousing in Late Colonial Algiers and Casablanca.”

Part III: Metropolitan Legacies

Ed Naylor, "Prompting 'Harmonious Cohabitation' in the Metropole: The Welfare Charity Aide Aux Travailleurs D'Outre Mer (1950-1975)."

Françoise de Barros, "Protests Against Shantytowns in the 1950s and 1960s: Class Logics, Clientelist Relations and 'Colonial Redeployments.'"

Abdellali Hajjat, "Colonial Legacies: Housing Policy and Riot Prevention Strategies in the Minguettes District of Vénissieux."

NOTES

[1] Frederick Cooper, "Modernizing bureaucrats, backward Africans and the development concept," in *International Development and the Social Sciences: Essays on the History and Politics of Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 64-92; Matthew Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria's Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 54.

[2] Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1997).

[3] Jean Fourastié, *Les trente glorieuses, ou la révolution invisible de 1946 à 1975* (Paris: Fayard, 1979). This periodization inspires important work on the social and cultural evolution of postwar France, including Rosemary Wakeman, *Modernizing the Provincial City: Toulouse, 1945-1975* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1997); Rebecca J. Pulju, *Women and Mass Consumer Society in Postwar France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); and Nicole C. Rudolph, *At Home in Postwar France: Modern Mass Housing and the Right to Comfort* (New York: Berghahn, 2015). Much of the recent work complicating the history of the "trente glorieuses" uses cultural and social history to examine the entanglements between decolonization and France's postwar embrace of "modernity." See Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998); Benjamin Stora, *Le transfert d'une mémoire: de «l'Algérie française» au racisme anti-arabe* (Paris: Découverte, 1999); Daniel Sherman, *French Primitivism and the Ends of Empire, 1945-1975* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011); Félix F. Germain, *Decolonizing the Republic: African and Caribbean Migrants in Postwar Paris, 1946-1974* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2016); and Marie-Claude Blanc-Chaléard, *En finir avec les bidonvilles: immigration et politique du logement dans la France des Trente Glorieuses* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2016).

[4] See for instance Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006); Patrick Weil, *How to be French: Nationality in the Making Since 1789* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); Frederick Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa 1945-1960* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014); Émile Chabal, *A Divided Republic: Nation, State, and Citizenship in Contemporary France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); and Elizabeth Buettner, *Europe After Empire: Decolonization, Society, Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

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