

emerged from biology and law, prepared by legal experts like Levin Goldschmidt and Otto Gierke as well as biologists like Oscar Hertwig and August Weismann” (15). This is a strong thesis. Yet the evidence for this supposed cross-fertilization is somewhat thin. Just setting (generic) statements on the history of biological inheritance research alongside (generic) statements on the legal disputes over inheritance and family law is interesting but insufficient as a proof. It would have been instructive to read, for instance, if the legal experts actually knew about the embryological cutting-edge research of those years. Yet Goldschmidt is not mentioned again in the book. In chapter seven, the author tries to demonstrate an interference between Hertwig and Gierke. Yet the principal evidence she adduces is that they were colleagues in Berlin, as professor of anatomy and professor of criminal law, and that both supported organicist views. However, organicism, even organicist theories of the state, had many varieties, and none of these contained specific views on inheritance. Therefore, the reader wonders whether these jurists actually incorporated specific embryological knowledge into their bills or at least used it as justification, or whether biological and legal views just developed on a common ideological ground. The book does not always satisfy the great expectations it raises, and I do not agree with all of its conclusions. Nevertheless, Bock von Wülfling’s book is an intriguing and stimulating read and a seminal piece.

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Experten der Erschliessung. Akteure der deutschen Kolonialtechnik in Afrika und Europa 1890–1943

By Sebastian Beese. Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2021. Pp. 338. Cloth €89.00. ISBN: 978-3506760456.

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In March 1914, the German Empire inaugurated the so-called Central Line in its colony German East Africa (today’s Tanzania, Rwanda, and Burundi), a railway line stretching 1,250 kilometers inland from the Indian Ocean. The railway turned out to be of little use to the empire: within months of its inauguration, the First World War reached the colony and put an end to Germany’s colonial ambitions.

Sebastian Beese’s book, which is also published open access, draws our attention to the European engineers employed in this and other infrastructure projects in Germany’s African empire, focusing on the East African colony. The main aim of the book, situated “at the intersection of history of technology and colonial history” (3), is to provide insights into the motivations and activities of this group of experts. Drawing on published memoirs as well as a broad range of unpublished sources, mostly found in the German National Archives and the Tanzanian National Archives, Beese sets out to trace the careers of German colonial engineers, discusses their motivations, and explores their work and life in the colonial world.

Proposing Pierre Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus and capital as a conceptual framework, the study provides in-depth analyses of four forms of capital embodied in Germany’s colonial engineers: physical, economic, social, and cultural. Beese demonstrates that colonial engineering was a prestigious profession that not only allowed aspiring engineers to work on large-scale infrastructure projects but also to accumulate these different forms of capital.

On the downside, as Beese convincingly shows, the colonial service entailed dangers for the health and status of engineers. While the book is thus very successful in achieving its proclaimed aim, it leaves some questions regarding the colonial aspects of this history unanswered, as will become evident from a brief discussion of the different chapters.

Following an outline of the job profile, its prestige, and the training of engineers in the German Empire in chapter 2, the third chapter with its six subchapters forms the main part of Beese's book. The author opens the chapter with a thorough discussion of what he calls "Ideologie der Erschliessung" (the ideology of development or opening up), a "shared belief in the certain benefit of technical infrastructure" (78) underlying the engineers' work. Fundamental to this belief was the depiction of Africa as an empty space, which is why development, and not exploitation, was the main principle of railway construction in German East Africa: "a central aspect of *Erschliessung* is that it is geared towards the future" (98). Beese thus convincingly argues that colonial infrastructure did not "annihilate space," as geographer David Harvey would have it, but instead was meant to create spaces.

Chapter 3.2 studies the activities of colonial engineers on the scene by providing a detailed account of colonial railway construction. Mostly focusing on the Central Line in Tanzania, Beese gives an account of the different steps in the construction process (from initial planning to laying rails) and briefly explains how these works were carried out by a labor force of up to 12,000 Africans. Unfortunately, the author pays only limited attention to these workers. The pull-and-push factors that brought them to the construction sites, their work rhythms and day-to-day activities remain unexplored in the book. Even though the author makes it clear in his introduction that his focus is on the German side of the story, a discussion of these issues – if only based on the existing literature – would have benefitted the book's argument. Thaddeus Sunseri's study *Vilimani* (2002), for instance, has already provided important insights into the lives of Tanzanian migrant workers. Engaging with this and other studies and trying to tease African agency out of the available source material would have helped Beese to investigate the interaction between African workers and German engineers.

In chapter 3.3, Beese addresses the first of the different forms of capital outlined in the introduction, physical capital: "On the one hand, European bodies had to meet specific requirements to be considered fit for the tropics [*tropentauglich*], on the other hand these bodies exercised power over the indigenous population through corporal punishment" (127). In line with this observation, the author draws on a broad range of sources (medical reports, memoirs, and files drawn from the archival sites in Berlin and Dar es Salaam) to discuss how climate, environmental factors, and diseases conditioned the health and physical abilities of engineers and workers alike. He then briefly shows that the supposed inferiority of the bodies of African workers served as a justification for the enforcement of discipline.

Economic and social capital are at the center of chapters 3.4 and 3.5. Exploring the motivation of those applying for a position in the colony, Beese refutes the traditional narrative of the colonial service as a playground for "last chancers" and instead emphasizes that going to the colony was a career opportunity, holding the promises of prestige, adventure, and independence. Moreover, as the author details, colonial engineers received a very generous salary, a fact that also led to debates within the German parliament.

Beese's discussion of conflicts within the group of engineers in chapter 3.5 as well as chapter 3.6 is clearly the strongest contribution of his book. First, there was a divide between practitioners and academics. As the author shows, work in the colony allowed engineers to bridge this gap by compensating the lack of higher education with field experience. Second, engineers employed by private companies and those in official service fought battles over the question of who was superior in the colonial hierarchy, as the author convincingly shows using the example of travel classes. The private railway operator allowed its company agents to travel first class, while it placed state officials in the second class: "The three travel classes . . . played an important role for the social distinction in the colonial context; not only with regard to racial segregation, but also to Europeans in official or private

employment” (210). With the findings of these two subchapters, Beese adds to the existing literature on the settler society in German East Africa, providing important insights into the social structure of this group, which was not homogenous but conflict-ridden.

The fourth chapter traces the postcolonial careers of a number of former colonial engineers. After Germany lost its colonies in the First World War, they formed an organization, AKOTECH, and became avid supporters of a resurrection of the colonial realm (*Kolonialrevisionismus*). Interestingly, it was only in the 1920s that the term colonial engineer (*Kolonialingenieur*) entered the German language. As Beese points out, drawing our attention once more to questions of status and hierarchy, “working in the colonies was part of their professional life. Only when they lost the chance to pursue this profession, members of this group perceived the need to form a distinguished community within the field of engineering” (226).

Although the book is not always fully attentive to the agency of non-European actors, Sebastian Beese is indeed successful in illuminating the history of the small, yet important, community of colonial engineers. It is the author’s achievement to have made the status, ambitions, and work realities of Germany’s colonial engineers visible to his readers.

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Wärter, Brüder, neue Männer. Männliche Pflegekräfte in Deutschland ca. 1900–1980

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Christoph Schwamm reframes the twentieth-century history of German nursing around the experience of men. It is a fact uncontested among historians that men have long been actively involved in the care of the sick, especially in the German context. Yet they are rarely the subject of deeper historical inquiry and empirical study. Schwamm endeavors to explain why by pointing to a pattern of repeated marginalization or erasure within what he describes as a feminized historiographical narrative rooted in Claudia Bischoff’s classic text, *Frauen in der Krankenpflege* (1984). Like other professions and occupations, nursing history was written by middle-class reformers seeking to demonize past practice and amplify their own professional aspirations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While men held a significant-enough presence in the field to prompt gendered reinterpretation of nursing as women’s work, this is less visible than the ubiquitous legacy of these reform movements in the continued linguistic and cultural association between women and nursing.

Given so few chronological overviews of nursing, especially in the German context, Schwamm’s historiography and historical context is a useful temporal reference. The periodization begins with the nineteenth century, when men were active in the care of the sick in the traditionally masculine roles of hospital attendants/orderlies, monks, and soldiers. Chapter 2 serves to rebuke timeless gendered assumptions that presume nursing was *always* women’s work and introduces how women’s professional organizing recast public expectations over time. In chapters 3–6, the twentieth century is then divided into three eras. The first half of the century was dominated by military mobilization and religious