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INTRODUCTION

Rethinking 'Late Colonialisms' in Africa: An Introduction.

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Abstract

'Late colonialism' is a widely used concept in African, colonial, and imperial history and neighbouring fields. It evokes a particular chronological moment, but also suggests distinctive, novel processes of colonial governance. The concept has been used to interrogate and explain different trajectories of late colonial governance and decolonisation, addressing distinct chronologies and specific, but comparable, historical dynamics associated with the political disintegration of European colonial empires. What – if anything – characterised 'late colonialism' across Africa? What were the roots and genealogies of late colonial ideas and practices? And what were the connections and variations between late colonialism within, and across, African territories and regions? How can we think about them in a comparative, meaningful way? This special issue seeks to interrogate and elucidate the concept of 'late colonialisms' in Africa, contributing to debates around these questions. Engaging with varying chronologies, geographies, themes, and case studies, this collection of texts explores the plurality of idioms and repertoires that shaped late colonialisms in Africa, from political and cultural imaginaries and practices to security and developmental policies.

Keywords: Africa; Agency; Colonial State; Colonial Rule; Contemporary History; Decolonisation; Development; European Empires; Late Colonialism

'Late colonialism' is a widely used concept in African, colonial, and imperial history, as well as in neighbouring disciplines. It suggests a new and distinctive phase of governance as European powers tried, and ultimately failed, to reinvent colonial rule in the new contexts of the mid-twentieth century.

Africans who experienced late colonialism first hand often had a keen understanding of its characteristics and tensions. The 1964 novel *One Man, One Matchet* by the Nigerian author T.M. Aluko (1918-2010), for example, is set in the later 1940s and captures some of the innovations of late colonial Africa. Black Africans are appointed to colonial state posts that had formerly been restricted to white Europeans. When Udo Akpan is appointed as a colonial administrator, many local people are incredulous. 'But, but – but how can a black man be a District Officer?', asks one.[1] The novel documents as well new and more intrusive

[1] T.M. Aluko, *One Man, One Matchet* (London: Heinemann, 1964), 16. See also Tim Livsey, "Grave Reservations: Nigerian Literature and Histories of 'European Reservations' during Decolonization", *Journal of West African History* 7: 2 (2021), 3-5.

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forms of colonial governance, including the destruction of diseased cocoa trees. 'Waves of Government officials, white and black, invaded the town from Headquarters. Some went round the farms and subjected cocoa trees to microscopic scrutiny', while local farmers warily viewed a black African agricultural assistant, 'impressive in his khaki outfit – helmet, shirt, shorts and heavy cumbersome boots'.[2] They 'did not like his looks, nor his abrupt manners. He spoke a tongue different from theirs for he did not belong to their own tribe'.[3] When the 'gang of tree-cutters' arrive at the farm of Chef Momo, his household attacks them, unleashing 'miniature chaos'.[4]

Aluko returned to the years after the Second World War in *His Worshipful Majesty* of 1973, which addresses a fictional 'new Local Government Law' introduced in 1951.[5] After the law is implemented, the municipal council becomes, the narrator explains, 'the centre of the politics of our town', which 'was strange in our own circumstances; here our King had ruled his territory with the assistance of, and through, his senior chiefs, ward chiefs, and district chiefs, and guided by the prognostications about the future by the Ifa Oracle'.[6] Soon a new constitution is introduced 'in which our own countrymen were Ministers of State and fully responsible for the whole range of Government business in the length and breadth of the land'.[7] 'The world is changing', one chief reflects.[8]

Historians have long grappled with these changes. In 1962 Roland Oliver and J.D. Fage, for example, posited a 'third phase' of European colonialism in Africa that emerged from the 1940s, characterised by colonial states' more active economic interventions and increased emphasis on the 'welfare' of colonised Africans.[9] These new policies produced a 'new European invasion of Africa' as development specialists converged on the continent.[10] Oliver and Fage considered the political changes of this era as a separate development, though, suggesting the challenges in analysing the interrelationships between different elements of late colonialism.[11] The concluding volumes of the *Cambridge History of Africa*, published in 1985, and the UNESCO *General History of Africa*, published in 1993, also viewed the years around the Second World War as a rupture which saw the emergence of more assertive forms of nationalism, the transformation of Africans' expectations, and new developmental discourses and methods of colonial governance.[12]

[2] Aluko, *One Man, One Matchet*, 77, 78.

[3] Aluko, *One Man, One Matchet*, 78.

[4] Aluko, *One Man, One Matchet*, 82, 83.

[5] T.M. Aluko, *His Worshipful Majesty* (London: Heinemann, 1973), 1, also see 88.

[6] Aluko, *His Worshipful Majesty*, 86.

[7] Aluko, *His Worshipful Majesty*, 109.

[8] Aluko, *His Worshipful Majesty*, 146.

[9] They contended that the 'first phase' ran from the partition of Africa to the First World War, and the 'second phase' comprised the interwar years. Roland Oliver and J.D. Fage, *A Short History of Africa* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962), 196-225.

[10] Oliver and Fage, *Short History of Africa*, 216-225, quotation at 224. This passage anticipates D.A. Low and John Lonsdale's well-known concept of the 'second colonial occupation': D.A. Low and J.M. Lonsdale, "Introduction: towards the new order 1945–1963", in D.A. Low and Alison Smith, eds., *A History of East Africa* Vol. III (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 12-15.

[11] Oliver and Fage, *Short History of Africa*, 239-51.

[12] See, for example, in Michael Crowder, "Introduction"; Michael Crowder; "The Second World War: Prelude to Decolonisation in Africa"; and Billy J. Dudley, "Decolonisation and the Problems of Independence" in Michael Crowder, ed., *The Cambridge History of Africa* Vol. VIII (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); and Majhemout Diop, David Birmingham, Ivan Hrbek, Alfredo Margarido and Djibril Tamsir Niane, "Tropical and Equatorial Africa under French, Portuguese and Spanish Domination, 1935-45"; Michael Crowder, "Africa under British and Belgian Domination, 1935-45"; and Ali A. Mazrui, "Seek Ye First the Political Kingdom", in Ali A. Mazrui, ed., *General History of Africa* Vol. VIII (Paris: UNESCO, 1993).

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During the 1980s, historians started to refer to what Oliver and Fage called the 'third phase' of colonialism in Africa as 'late colonialism'.[13] In a 1980 book review, W.G. Clarence-Smith delineated what he saw as the features of late colonialism in Angola, including the growing reach of the state, the expansion of primary education and health facilities, a rapid influx of white settlers, as well as rural resettlement schemes and counter-insurgency.[14] In 1984 Bill Freund suggested that late colonial Africa was distinguished by new approaches to economic development, and an influx of academics and 'so-called development experts' who produced new forms of knowledge about the continent.[15] The following year, William Beinart wrote about the 'late colonial technical imagination' in Malawi, arguing that colonial officials drew on modernist technical and scientific ideas to imagine Africa and its future in new ways, planning authoritarian development projects that side-lined African people's knowledge.[16] Their work suggests an emerging recognition of late colonialism in Africa as a distinct area of enquiry.

This research proliferated during the 1990s, but exactly what defined late colonialism across Africa often remained implicit. Two of the most influential works of the decade invoked the term. Mahmood Mamdani's 1996 book *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* included little explicit discussion of late colonialism or the later 1940s and 1950s, despite its title, focusing instead on 'indirect rule' approaches most associated with earlier forms of colonial governance.[17] Fredrick Cooper's *Decolonization and African Society: the Labor Question in French and British Africa*, also published in 1996, mentions 'late colonialism' without seeking to define the term.[18] The whole book was by implication a study of late colonialism in Africa, though, arguing that from the time of the Second World War new approaches to governance enabled Africans to make new claims on colonial states that helped to make European rule untenable.

A conference held at Leiden in October 1999 was a milestone in assessing late colonialism's historiographical significance.[19] By focusing on the 'late colonial state', the conference created the opportunity for more comparative analysis of how late colonialism worked at different locations.[20] A collection of articles from the conference was published

[13] During the 1960s and 1970s, historians of Latin and North America were most likely to refer to the 'late colonial'. See, for example, Christon I. Archer, "To Serve the King: Military Recruitment in Late Colonial Mexico", *Hispanic American Historical Review* 55: 2 (1975), 226-50. A few scholars did refer to the 'late colonial' in African contexts, mostly social scientists who used the term as a simple form of periodisation, with little discussion of what distinguished the late colonial years, or even much consensus about when they were. See, for example, J.E. Goldthorpe, *An African Elite: Makerere College Students 1922-1960* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 2, 60, 83; Claude E. Welch, "Soldier and State in Africa", *Journal of Modern African Studies* 5: 3 (1967), 319; Wyatt MacGaffey, "Kongo and the King of the Americans", *Journal of Modern African Studies* 6: 2 (1968), 181; Immanuel Wallerstein and Michael Hechter, "Social Rank and Nationalism: Some African Data", *Public Opinion Quarterly* 34: 3 (1970), 369, 370.

[14] W.G. Clarence-Smith, "Class Structure and Class Struggles in Angola in the 1970s", *Journal of Southern African Studies* 7: 1 (1980), 109-126.

[15] Bill Freund, "Labor and Labor History in Africa: A Review of the Literature", *African Studies Review* 27: 2 (1984), esp. 3-4, quotation at 3.

[16] William Beinart, "Agricultural Planning and the Late Colonial Technical Imagination: the Lower Shire Valley in Malawi, 1940-1960", in J.M. McCracken, ed., *Malawi: An Alternative Pattern of Development* (Edinburgh: Centre of African Studies, 1985), 93-148.

[17] Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); see also John Lonsdale, review of *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* by Mahmood Mamdani, *The Journal of African History* 38: 3 (1997), 552.

[18] Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 3.

[19] The conference was held at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study, Wassenaar, and organised by the Institute for the History of European Expansion, Leiden University, 29-30 October 1999.

[20] Contributors drew on research from around two decades earlier seeking to explore the significance of the 'colonial state'. See, for example, John Lonsdale and Bruce Berman, "Coping with the Contradictions: The

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in *Itinerario* soon afterwards.[21] In the present special issue, we return to this theme more than two decades later, following a conference in September 2022.[22]

Back in 1999, in a now-classic article, John Darwin offered a rich set of arguments that suggested the need to scrutinise the specificities of late colonialism and its distinctive forms of politics.[23] The terminal phase of European colonialism during the twentieth century saw European empires, and individual colonial states, encounter new internal and external challenges, while pursuing novel and well-established goals relating to extraction, labour and taxation, maintaining control, managing a 'politics of difference', and myriad forms of 'contingent accommodation'.[24] Colonial authorities often responded by seeking to expand colonial states' capacity to intervene in African societies.[25] Darwin argued that studying the features that defined the late colonial state could help in 'identifying the circumstances in which colonial authority became unsustainable'.[26]

Darwin proposed six 'routes to "lateness"' associated with late colonial states: the 'proactive or developmental state' that replaced the 'nightwatchman state'; a 'dense state' that encompassed more parapolitical institutions; a 'big' state that aimed to project power into every corner of its territory; a 'security' state that developed in response to evolving resistance; a 'self-destruct' state, which recognised its coming demise and positioned itself as 'a self-consciously transitional institution'; and, finally, an 'open' state increasingly prone to external influences, from international anticolonial pressures to Cold War rivalries.[27] Darwin implied that there can be no single late colonialism or late colonial state: 'lateness' means the coexistence, in different degrees, of many – or all – of these characteristics. By definition, late colonialism was plural, shaped by diverse contexts and forms of contestation; hence the reference in the title of this special issue to 'late colonialisms'. In his contribution here, Darwin fruitfully revisits some of these ideas.

Other scholars tested the usefulness of the concepts of late colonialism and the late colonial state in the pages of the 1999 *Itinerario* special issue. They explored a range of dimensions of late colonialism, across diverse geographical areas from Malawi and Portuguese-controlled Africa to *Afrique Occidentale Française* and *Afrique Équatoriale Française*, Indonesia, India, and nomadic societies in the Sahara that found themselves under French rule.[28] Such arid areas were in theory less susceptible to big schemes of social, economic, or

Development of the Colonial State in Kenya, 1895-1914", *The Journal of African History* 20: 4 (1979), 487-505; Ankie M. M. Hoogvelt and Anthony M. Tinker, "The Role of Colonial and Post-Colonial States in Imperialism: A Case-Study of the Sierra Leone Development Company", *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 16: 1 (1978), 67-79; and John Lonsdale, "States and Social Processes in Africa: A Historiographical Survey" *African Studies Review* 24: 2–3 (1981), 139-225.

[21] *Itinerario* 23: 3-4 (1999).

[22] This special issue results from a conference called 'Rethinking "Late Colonialisms" in Africa', organised by Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo and Tim Livsey, online, 14-16 September 2022. The meeting included 26 papers and 2 keynotes, by John Darwin and Patience Mususa. We would like to thank all of the participants, whose presentations and discussion greatly enriched this introduction and the articles of the special issue.

[23] John Darwin, "What was the Late Colonial State?", *Itinerario* 23: 3-4 (1999), 73-82.

[24] Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

[25] Crawford Young, "The African Colonial State Revisited", *Governance* 11: 1 (1998), 105-106.

[26] Darwin, "What was the Late Colonial State?", 81.

[27] Darwin, "What was the Late Colonial State?", 76-81.

[28] Besides John Darwin's contribution, the texts were: Andrew Fairweather-Tall, "The Late Colonial State in Malawi: Some Ideas on the Transition from Inter-War Timidity to Post-War Confidence, 1930-1950"; Pierre Boilley, "The Late Colonial State in the AOF and the Nomadic Societies"; Malyn Newitt, "The Late Colonial State in Portuguese Africa"; Larry J. Butler, "Industrialisation in Late Colonial Africa: A British Perspective"; Florence Bernault, "Fin des Etats coloniaux et nouvelles donnes du politique en Afrique equatoriale francaise"; Jeroen Touwen, "Moving towards a National Economy in Late Colonial Indonesia"; and Benjamin Zachariah, "British and Indian Ideas of 'Development': Decoding Political Conventions in the Late Colonial State".

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political intervention, and offered the opportunity to test the usefulness of the late colonial concept, as Pierre Boilley argued in his piece.[29]

The 1999 articles also considered how the concepts of late colonialism and the late colonial state can elucidate our understanding of post-colonial societies and polities. Analysis of late colonial processes can contribute towards a sharper appreciation of the continuities and ruptures entailed by 'transfers of power'. The changes that restructured governance in the last decades of European colonialism, and their many intended and unintended consequences, shaped the trajectories of decolonisation.[30] The political activities of anticolonial and postcolonial actors could represent an engagement with late colonial policies and practices that involved new forms of interaction with local societies, and implied new patterns of inclusion and exclusion. Among the legacies of late colonialism, Florence Bernault argued in her 1999 *Itinerario* piece, was a particular 'culture of politics' (*culture du politique*) that fostered 'effects of continuity' after the 'transfer of power'. These could range from forms of political expression and legitimation – some with spiritual and religious dimensions – to the use of violence. Bernault concluded that late colonialism facilitated, and strongly shaped, the 'emergence of contemporary forms of politics' in Equatorial Africa. Especially in the immediate aftermath of decolonisation, postcolonial societies and politics can hardly be understood without proper scrutiny of late colonialism.[31] Postcolonial African nations have had, in different ways, to contend with late colonialism's political, economic, social, and cultural legacies for decades after formal 'transfers of power'.[32]

Since 1999, the term 'late colonialism' has become well established, used by scholars to refer to a distinct, transformative phase of colonial governance, from around the time of the Second World War through to 'transfers of power' in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s.[33] It has been used to interrogate different trajectories of late colonial governance and decolonisation,[34] addressing distinct chronologies and specific, but comparable, historical dynamics associated with the disintegration of European colonial empires. As Darwin noted, '"lateness" was a moveable feast in colonial politics'.[35]

The concept of late colonialism has, however, been deployed with varying degrees of focus and precision,[36] and can usefully be seen as having dimensions extending beyond the late colonial state. What we might call the late colonial 'shift' involved many other dynamics, not least momentous changes in the ways that the colonial situation was understood.[37] The concept has been mobilised to capture diverse historical processes and experiences – the plural trajectories of decolonisation – while enabling comparative study. This last aspect was already noted by Malyn Newitt's 1999 *Itinerario* article, which focused on the

[29] Pierre Boilley, "The Late Colonial State in the AOF and the Nomadic Societies", *Itinerario* 23: 3-4 (1999), 98-99, 103, 107.

[30] Frederick Cooper, "Possibility and Constraint: African Independence in Historical Perspective", *The Journal of African History* 49: 2 (2008), 167–196.

[31] Florence Bernault, "Fin des Etats coloniaux et nouvelles donnes du politique en Afrique equatoriale francaise", *Itinerario* 23: 3-4 (1999), 136, 143.

[32] Crawford Young, *The Postcolonial State in Africa: Fifty Years of Independence, 1960–2010* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012).

[33] See, for example, the impressive collection of texts in Martin Thomas and Andrew S. Thompson, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the Ends of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

[34] See, for example, Matthew G. Stanard, "Revisiting Bula Matari and the Congo Crisis: Successes and Anxieties in Belgium's Late Colonial State", *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 46: 1 (2018), 144-168.

[35] Darwin, "What was the Late Colonial State?", 75.

[36] The concept has, for example, sometimes been used essentially as a loose form of periodization: see Footnote 13, above.

[37] Martin Shipway, *Decolonization and its Impact: a Comparative Approach to the End of the Colonial Empires* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 12-17.

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'uneven development' of the late colonial state in Portuguese colonies.[38] Here we see late colonialism not as a form of periodisation, but as a multifaceted concatenation of political, economic, social, and cultural processes. It assumed diverse forms and was manifested in different ways at different locations with different effects (not all of which can be considered in this introduction).[39]

The two great harbingers of late colonialism were the Great Depression and Second World War, which profoundly destabilised older approaches to colonial governance, destroyed the world order in which the European empires had grown, and transformed the expectations of colonised peoples. Disorders in the wake of the Depression, including strikes and protests in the British-controlled West Indies and the 1937 cocoa hold-ups in Ghana, pointed to the necessity of new approaches to colonial economic development and social welfare.[40] The Allies' war against Nazism raised pressing questions, including at an international level, about the legitimacy of the racialised hierarchies that had long underpinned colonial rule.[41] The old European colonial powers emerged from the war weakened and more vulnerable in the emerging new era of Cold War superpower competition. The end of colonial rule in India, Pakistan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia, together with the formation of the United Nations, which promised a new arena for emerging Third Worldist activism, offered new forms of inspiration to many people that still experienced colonial rule.

Furthermore, this transformed international context made efforts to reinvigorate European colonialism more challenging. Many late colonial initiatives sought to respond to this new global environment, in order to reconstruct, re-legitimise, and modernise empire. Contemporaries may have been surprised by historians later labelling these diverse programmes and processes as *late* colonial. But projects to re-energise colonialism often generated new tensions and contradictions that further undermined the basis of colonial rule.[42] At the same time, the outcome of processes that may now be seen in hindsight as late colonial was not at the time predictable, and did not necessarily weaken colonial power or help to produce independent nation states.[43] That late colonialism was indeed 'late' was only completely clear in retrospect.[44]

It was linked with the growth, expansion, and transformation of state institutions, and envisioned the creation of *new* societies, *new* women and men, and *new* political cultures and frameworks. In some – but not all – cases, this meant the so-called 'Africanisation' or 'indigenisation' of colonial bureaucracies, which could involve co-opting potential adversaries,

[38] Malyn Newitt, "The Late Colonial State in Portuguese Africa", *Itinerario* 23: 3-4 (1999), 121. For the Portuguese case see also Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo, "Ordering Resistance: The Late Colonial State in the Portuguese Empire (1940-1975)", *Political Power and Social Theory* 33 (2017), 109-128.

[39] We thank the reviewers for having productively highlighted the multiple dimensions and manifestations of late colonialism.

[40] Rod Alence, "The 1937-1938 Gold Coast Cocoa Crisis: The Political Economy of Commercial Stalemate", *African Economic History* 19 (1990-1991), 77-104.

[41] Michael Banton, *International Action against Racial Discrimination* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); Jenny Reardon, *Race to the Finish: Identity and Governance in an Age of Genomics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), esp. 23-31; Todd Shepard, "Algeria, France, Mexico, UNESCO: a Transnational History of Anti-racism and Decolonization, 1932–1962", *Journal of Global History* 6: 2 (2011), 273-297.

[42] See, for example, Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society*; John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 558-60.

[43] Frederick Cooper, *Citizenship Between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945–1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

[44] We thank one of the reviewers for prompting us to clarify that we do not see late colonialism as a moment, but as an uncertain, nonlinear bundle of historical processes. For an exemplary assessment, see Cooper, "Possibility and Constraint".

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and efforts to reduce late colonial states' wage bills, as well as the implementation of new developmental and welfarist policies.[45] (Beyond the colonial state, similar late colonial 'Africanisation', with variations across time and space, took place in church and missionary organisations.)[46] The growth of late colonial bureaucracies often involved the relative decline of 'indirect rule' alliances with African chiefs, the expansion of electoral politics, and sometimes saw African ministers taking up roles within late colonial states.[47] These late colonial projects of electoral reform fascinated contemporaries, contributed to reshaping political imaginaries and possibilities, and deserve more intensive research today.[48] In other cases, though, including the Belgian Congo and Portuguese-controlled Africa – under an authoritarian regime that prevented free elections at home – 'traditional' authorities persisted, and were indeed fostered, as part of projects to enhance social and political control. Older forms of politics and rights attribution did not disappear, and often coexisted with self-consciously modern political structures and forms of citizenship, to produce new, hybrid forms of politics.[49] Even in territories where African ministers were elected, white European officials worked hard to retain overall control of late colonial states for as long as they could, for example by retaining privileged access to the most sensitive state papers.[50]

The impacts of late colonialism were, moreover, not uniform or constant. The *spatialisation* of 'lateness', including the ways in which it enabled the persistence of segregationist logics, varied across and within colonised territories.[51] Many late colonial health and education projects, including hospitals and universities, disproportionately focused on urban areas and contributed to rapid urbanisation in Africa.[52] At the same time, other late colonial projects sought to transform agriculture and rural life.[53] Geographies of lateness were shaped by local patterns of engagement with – and resistance to – late colonial projects, as well as by late colonial states' varying levels of interventionist capacity and infrastructure.

[45] Alexander Keese, *Living with Ambiguity: Integrating an African Elite in French and Portuguese Africa, 1930–61* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2007).

[46] Elizabeth Foster, *African Catholic: Decolonization and the Transformation of the Church* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2019).

[47] See, for instance, Elizabeth Schmidt, "Top Down or Bottom Up? Nationalist Mobilization Reconsidered, with Special Reference to Guinea (French West Africa)", *The American Historical Review* 110: 4 (2005), 975–1014; Liz Fink, "Institutional Terra Non Firma: The Chieftaincy and Representative Democracy, 1944-1952", in Ed Naylor, ed., *France's Modernising Mission: Welfare, Citizenship, and the Ends of Empire* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 31–57; and Pedro Cerdeira, "The Administrator, the Chief, and the Officer. Making and Remaking Local Administration in Late Colonial Guinea-Bissau (1961-1974)", PhD Thesis, Université de Genève, 2022.

[48] For an example of the possibilities, see Justin Willis, Gabrielle Lynch and Nic Cheeseman, "Voting, Nationhood, and Citizenship in Late-Colonial Africa", *The Historical Journal* 61: 4 (2018), 1113–1135.

[49] Cooper, *Citizenship Between Empire and Nation*; José Pedro Monteiro, "Race, développement, autodétermination: la 'thèse belge' et les politiques sociales de la période coloniale tardive", *Études Internationales* 54: 1 (2023), 129–156; Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo and José Pedro Monteiro, "Empires and Rights", in Samuel Moyn and Meredith Terretta, eds. *The Cambridge History of Human Rights: Twentieth and Twentieth-first centuries (Vol. 5)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

[50] Tim Livsey, "Open Secrets: the British 'Migrated Archives', Colonial History, and Postcolonial History", *History Workshop Journal* 93 (2022), 96-97.

[51] Tim Livsey, "State, Urban Space, Race: Late Colonialism and Segregation at the Ikoyi Reservation in Lagos, Nigeria", *The Journal of African History* 63: 2 (2022), 178-196.

[52] See, for example, Akin L. Mabogunje, *Urbanization in Nigeria* (London: University of London Press, 1968), 313-17.

[53] See, for example, Matteo Rizzo, "What Was Left of the Groundnut Scheme? Development Disaster and Labour Market in Southern Tanganyika 1946–1952", *Journal of Agrarian Change* 6: 2 (2006), 205-38.

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A proliferation of 'experts' and the intensified mobilisation of expertise in state-building and governance has long been seen as a distinctive feature of late colonialism.[54] Often misinterpreting the complexities of local societies,[55] western experts nevertheless assumed a key role in late colonial projects.[56] They were central to new educational policies, including at universities in colonised territories and European 'metropoles' alike.[57] Universities 'exemplified the central paradox of decolonisation', and of late colonialism, we might add: they were simultaneously bound up with projects to deepen and contest colonial intervention.[58] New forms of late colonial state intervention entailed new circulations of knowledge, and brought new kinds of foreign expert to Africa. The late colonial state's growing interventionism also mobilised growing numbers of African scientists, technicians, and administrators, but often in subordinate roles, and frequently facing – and fighting – discriminatory practices. These African experts could be trained in imperial capitals, but also in Africa, the United States, and the socialist world. They acquired new skills, new expectations,[59] and new strategies of resistance, and put them to work making new claims for social and economic status in profoundly unequal late colonial societies.[60] The roles assumed by Africans within late colonialism, and the consequences of these engagements, need further exploration.

Moreover, as the recent historiography of transimperial history shows, there are good reasons to approach late colonialism as inter-imperial: as the product of intensified circulations of ideas and repertoires of colonial governance between empires.[61] The multiple meanings and effects of the *internationalisation* of colonialism,[62] which arose from diverse interactions between groups and networks – from imperial states to international and inter-imperial bodies, from non-governmental organisations to anticolonial networks – is crucial in capturing the distinctiveness of late colonialism. Like other manifestations of late

[54] See also Joseph M. Hodge, *Triumph of the Expert: Agrarian Doctrines of Development and the Legacies of British Colonialism* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007).

[55] James McDougall, "Rule of Experts? Governing Modernisation in Late Colonial French Africa", in Naylor, ed., *France's Modernising Mission*, 87-108.

[56] Frederick Cooper, "Modernizing Bureaucrats, Backward Africans, and the Development Concept", in Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard, eds., *International Development and the Social Sciences: Essays on the History and Politics of Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 64-92.

[57] Tim Livsey, *Nigeria's University Age: Reframing Decolonisation and Development* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017). See also Damiano Matasci, "Réformer l'Empire. Éducation de base et développement en Afrique coloniale française, 1945-1956", *Paedagogica Historica* 57: 3 (2021), 228-245.

[58] Livsey, *Nigeria's University Age*, 41.

[59] The expectations created by the multiple possibilities and closures of late colonialism for those dealing with the colonial situation need to be further understood. These new conditions led to new choices and expectations during decolonisation, new assessments of the challenges and possibilities of the postcolonial moment, and reinterpretations of the colonial period. See, for example, James Ferguson, *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); and Alexander Keese, "Just Like in Colonial Times? Administrative Practice and Local Reflections on 'Grassroots Neocolonialism' in Autonomous and Postcolonial Dahomey, 1958–1965", *The Journal of African History* 60: 2 (2019), 257-275.

[60] Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society.*

[61] For transimperial history see Daniel Hedinger and Nadine Heè, "Transimperial History – Connectivity, Cooperation and Competition", *Journal of Modern European History* 16: 4 (2018), 429-452; Damiano Matasci and Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo, "Une histoire transimpériale de l'Afrique: concepts, approches et perspectives", *Revue d'Histoire Contemporaine de l'Afrique* 3 (2022), 1-17.

[62] John Kent, *The Internationalisation of Colonialism: Britain, France and Black Africa, 1939–56* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

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colonialism, in education,[63] or health,[64] or development and social policies,[65] late colonial statecraft was a product of exchanges of knowledge rooted in multiple, disputed, dynamics of internationalisation, not merely national or imperial politics (although the limits to inter-imperial cooperation in practice should also not be overlooked).[66] The growing accountability of imperial and colonial governments as a result of evolving international scrutiny helped to stimulate these inter-imperial dynamics.

Finally, late colonialism and late colonial states were frequently characterised by securitisation, military repression, and extreme forms of violence and social control. Again, these deserve further study as international and transnational, not only national or imperial, dynamics.[67] Responding to new challenges, especially anticolonialism and nationalism, late colonial violence was often fused with developmental and welfarist projects and vocabularies, creating new forms of 'repressive developmentalism', with their own experts and objectives.[68]

For these reasons, examining the multiple historical trajectories of late colonialism(s) is fundamental for a critical, comparative revisiting of decolonisation, its contexts, motivations, and dynamics.[69]

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Despite widespread recognition of the importance of late colonial processes in African history, and frequent use of the term 'late colonialism', there have been few recent attempts to advance its conceptualisation. Scholarship on the topic is scattered across multiple geographical and thematic sub-disciplines. We need to know more about fundamental questions. What – if anything – characterised late colonialism across Africa? What were the roots and genealogies of late colonial ideas and practices? And what were the connections and variations between late colonialism within, and across, African territories and regions? How can we think about late colonialism, and its relationships with decolonisation, in a more comparative way? We need to know more, too, about Africans' role in making, adapting, and contesting late colonialism, and about the ways in which late colonial dynamics simultaneously opened and circumscribed the options available to postcolonial nations.

This special issue seeks to interrogate and elucidate late colonialism. Engaging with varying chronologies, geographies, themes, and case studies, it explores the plurality of idioms and repertoires that shaped late colonialism in Africa.[70] In his contribution, John Darwin revisits his 1999 *Itinerario* article, adding some noteworthy arguments to the debate. Neils Boender's article considers district-level late colonial politics in Kenya; Ruth Craggs, Jonathan Harris, and Fiona McConnell focus on diplomatic training; and Poppy Cullen addresses visions of federation by studying plans for an East African army. Victor M.

[63] Damiano Matasci, *Internationaliser l'éducation. La France, l'UNESCO et la fin des empires coloniaux en Afrique (1945-1961)* (Villeneuve D'Ascq: Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 2023).

[64] Jessica Pearson, *The Colonial Politics of Global Health* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2018).

[65] Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo, "Les organisations interimpériales et l'internationalisation des politiques sociales (années 1940-1960)", *Études Internationales* 54: 1 (2023), 23-50.

[66] Eva-Maria Muschik, *The United Nations, Development, and Decolonization, 1945-1965* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022).

[67] Martin Thomas and Gareth Curless, eds., *Decolonization and Conflict: Colonial Comparisons and Legacies* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017); Martin Thomas and Gareth Curless, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Late Colonial Insurgencies and Counter-Insurgencies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023).

[68] Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo, "Repressive Developmentalisms: Idioms, Repertoires, Trajectories in Late Colonialism", in Thomas and Thompson, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the Ends of Empire*, 537-554.

[69] Martin Thomas, *The End of Empires and a World Remade: A Global History of Decolonization* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2024). We are grateful to one of the reviewers for pointing out the need for a more explicit statement of this point in the introduction.

[70] This special issue focuses on late colonialism in Africa. More comparative study of late colonialism across other continents would also be productive.

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Gwande considers sanctions-busting in the very late colonial case of UDI-era Rhodesia; while Bonny Ibhawoh addresses the place of bills of rights in constitution-making. Naïma Maggetti's article scrutinises British rhetoric around community development, Emily Marker studies imaginaries of racial difference in the films of Jean Rouch, while Sarah Runcie analyses health development in French-controlled Africa, and Giovanni Tonolo considers the economic development of palm oil in late colonial Dahomey. Read together, these articles particularly illuminate three key aspects of late colonialism: the issue of agency and the 'lateness' of late colonialism; the scales of late colonialism; and its relationship with the idea of development.

First, agency. Many experienced late colonialism as a euphoric moment of possibility, as an epochal opportunity for creative thought and transformation. After empire, what? Late colonial changes *did* broaden arenas for African action, in some ways, while narrowing the options open to declining colonial powers. And yet the concept of African agency is best deployed with caution, not least because of the dangers of exaggerating the options open to African actors.[71] By the late colonial era, most Africans operated in environments that had been structured by European colonialism over a long period, lasting decades in some places and centuries in others. A few years of late colonial reforms did not fundamentally change this. Giovanni Tonolo's article on the palm oil industry in late colonial Dahomey shows how creative new approaches to palm oil cultivation came up against well-established political and economic structures that had been largely created by Europeans for their own purposes. As a result, the postcolonial palm oil industry had much in common with its late colonial and colonial-era predecessors. Even when late colonial reforms were more transformative, they were often directed by white westerners. Many of these projects sought to co-opt Africans' agency, or reconstruct constraints on Africans' initiative, minimising opposition and preserving western actors' freedom of action in ways suited to the demands of a new era. Naïma Maggetti, in her work on community development programmes, captures some of the contradictions of agency and late colonialism, by exploring how projects directed by the British were intended to promote and guide African initiatives; while Poppy Cullen's article on the King's African Rifles in East Africa explores British authorities' determination to retain control of the commanding heights of the colonial state for as long as possible. At the same time, African agency could mean African elites appropriating late colonial ideas, methods, and structures for their own purposes. Neils Boender's account of politics in the Nyeri district of late colonial Kenya shows, for example, how elite nationalists inherited British officials' suspicion of mid-level 'bush' politicians. This reflects what Ruth Craggs, Jonathan Harris, and Fiona McConnell, in their article on late colonial diplomatic training, call the '(restricted) agency' of the late colonial moment.

This limited broadening of African people's late colonial possibilities poses significant questions about the very lateness of what Sarah Runcie, in her article about health regions in late colonial French-controlled Africa, cautiously calls '"late" colonialism'. These articles suggest the limits of mid-twentieth-century African liberation, and the tenacity with which western actors used the resources available to them to shape late colonialism in ways that continued to suit their own interests. This is seen in Victor M. Gwande's work on the role of western businesses evading sanctions on UDI-era Rhodesia, protecting their profits and propping up Ian Smith's regime, and in Runcie's work on the active role of France in the West African regional health organisation known as the *Organisation de Coordination et de Coopération pour la Lutte Contre Les Grandes Endémies*. The articles suggest that late colonialism is better thought of not so much as a decisive historical ending, but as a bundle of processes which often involved remaking colonial-era structures to meet the demands of an

[71] Cooper, "Possibility and Constraint"; Toby Green, *A Fistful of Shells: West Africa from the Rise of the Slave Trade to the Age of Revolution* (London: Allen Lane, 2019), xxvi-xxvii.

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ostensibly postcolonial era, with western actors seeking to preserve asymmetric relations between Africa and other parts of the world across formal 'transfers of power'.

'Race' offers an important example of this late colonial tension between possibility and constraint. During late colonialism, European authorities often proclaimed a shift towards 'non-racial' policies, but at the same time sought to reconstruct racialised understandings in new forms that pervaded late colonial initiatives across the continent, and particularly in areas with large numbers of European settlers.[72] Cullen reminds us that racialised ideas about development were used to assess African territories' suitability for independence, while Bonny Ibhawoh's article on late colonial bills of rights shows how they often served to protect colonial-era racial privilege. Craggs, Harris, and McConnell highlight the use of tacitly racialised western models for postcolonial diplomacy and statehood, while Emily Marker's article on the French film-maker Jean Rouch suggests that Europeans' reluctance to focus on the structures that underpinned racialised ideas helped to facilitate the reproduction of racialised forms of knowledge in a supposedly postcolonial world. Late colonialism was often about efforts to manage social change, reinvigorate unequal power relations, and reconstruct established hierarchies: about changing in an effort to remain the same.

Second, the articles sketch the variety of scales of late colonial dynamics, from localities to the individual colonised territory, regional and putative federal groupings, through to international institutions, and concepts like human rights that claimed universal relevance. The articles make a particular contribution to understanding the workings of late colonialism at an international level, where action – especially at the United Nations[73] – narrowed late colonial states' room for manoeuvre, rubbished their renewed claims to legitimacy, and played a significant role in making the continuation of old-style European colonialism impossible. At the same time, the articles capture some of the ambiguities of this international-level activity, reminding us that it was not inherently liberatory. Maggetti's research on British late colonial rhetoric shows how waning European powers sought use the concept of 'community development' to re-legitimise colonial rule at the UN, albeit unsuccessfully; while Gwande considers the ineffectiveness of UN-backed sanctions on Rhodesia. Craggs, Harris, and McConnell, together with Cullen and Darwin, explore different aspects of the ways that the global Cold War structured international relations, elucidating how Cold War rivalries motivated new forms of intervention by western powers in late colonial Africa.[74] Even concepts of human rights, as Ibhawoh shows, could be deployed in efforts to restrict postcolonial African states' freedom of action.[75] Read together, the articles show that as colonial powers faced increasing late colonial challenges at scales ranging from the local to the global, they nevertheless sought, often with some success, to retain enough freedom of action to protect what they saw as vital interests in late colonial and postcolonial territories.

Third, the articles offer new perspectives on the relationship between the concept of 'development' and late colonialism. Development was undoubtedly a late colonial keyword,

[72] The presence of settler communities was of course relevant to other significant late colonial issues, from education to health services, from development planning to citizenship policies.

[73] Eva-Maria Muschik, "Introduction: Towards a Global History of International Organizations and Decolonization", *Journal of Global History* 17: 2 (2022), 173-190.

[74] Jeffrey James Byrne, "Africa's Cold War", in Robert J. McMahon, ed., *The Cold War in the Third World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 101-123.

[75] See also Roland Burke, *Decolonization and the Evolution of International Human Rights* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010); Steven L. B. Jensen, *The Making of International Human Rights: the 1960s, Decolonization and the Reconstruction of Global Values* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Roland Burke, Marco Duranti and A. Dirk Moses, eds., *Decolonization, Self-Determination, and the Rise of Global Human Rights Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

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not in spite of, but rather because of its flexible meaning and content.[76] Its progressive associations made development a useful concept for late colonial authorities. As Maggetti's article shows, development formed a significant element of late colonialism's propaganda armoury, and Darwin reminds us that it was often deployed as part of efforts to legitimise unprecedentedly intense intrusions into colonised territories. Boender shows how the uneven impact of late colonial economic development could produce new forms of difference that would complicate postcolonial politics, while Tonolo's study highlights certain similarities between the late colonial palm oil industry in Dahomey and earlier forms of colonial-era extraction. Projects presented by late colonial states as developmental could be motivated by 'ruling compassions'[77] rather than by Africans' welfare, and could feature securitised elements, as noted by Cullen in her assessment of British plans for East African armed forces. Even development projects focused on health, as Runcie shows, could open doors to continuing European influence in postcolonial Africa. Late colonial development produced some genuine improvements in the fields of medical care and education, often the product of colonial authorities' increased focus on colonial 'welfare', African politicians' growing influence within late colonial states, and terms of trade that favoured exporters of primary products.[78] At the same time, declining colonial powers did their best to make late colonial development work in their own interests as well.

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These articles testify to the formative significance of late colonialism, but at the same time serve to remind us that there is much that we still do not know about Africa and late colonialism. They suggest several areas for future research. We need to see more connected and comparative study of late colonialism, to deepen our understanding of late colonial processes as transnational, transimperial, international, and global. Most work on late colonialism focuses on individual case studies, of specific colonised territories or European colonial powers. This will remain a useful approach, but more attention is needed to the global topographies of late colonialism, to the networks that enabled and constrained late colonial projects across time and space, and to explaining the similarities and differences between late colonial dynamics at different locations within and beyond Africa. Over two decades of research on transnational, transimperial, and global history will offer valuable methodological and conceptual tools here.[79]

There is an urgent need, too, for research about how late colonialism was understood by African contemporaries. As Tonolo notes in his article, late colonialism is still most often understood from European perspectives. Knowing more about how Africans thought about late colonialism implies drawing on a distinct set of sources. Wale Adebanwi has argued that the works of African writers can offer sources for the analysis of social thought, suggesting the value of novels as sources for African understandings of the changes of late colonialism, and indeed for the conceptualisation of late colonialism itself.[80] African newspapers too can

[76] Joseph M. Hodge, Gerald Hodl and Martina Kopf, eds., *Developing Africa: Concepts and Practices in Twentieth-Century Colonialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014).

[77] Joanna Lewis, "The Ruling Compassions of the Late Colonial State: Welfare versus Force, Kenya, 1945-1952", *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 2:2 (2001): N/A.

[78] Frederick Cooper, *Africa since 1940: The Past of the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 107, 111.

[79] See, for example, Pierre-Yves Saunier, *Transnational History: Theory and History* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Hedinger and Heè, "Transimperial History"; Zaib un Nisa Aziz and Charlotte Kiechel, "Global History and Decolonization: A Moment of Possibility, a Call for Integration", *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 14: 1 (2023), 39-47.

[80] Wale Adebanwi, "The Writer as Social Thinker", *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 32: 4 (2014), 405-420.

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offer important perspectives on how Africans thought about and debated the changes of late colonialism, and for thinking about how late colonialism intersected with and reshaped public spheres in Africa.[81] Petitions too offer a route to considering African perspectives on late colonialism that may otherwise have now been lost.[82] Fundamentally, a deeper understanding of late colonialism in Africa is impossible without much more engagement with the ways in which Africans themselves understood, conceptualised, debated, channelled, and contested late colonial processes.

Finally, the articles suggest the value of further empirical, historical study of how late colonialism shaped postcolonial successor states. Such questions have often been considered from the perspective of social science, but in the light of recent reappraisals of 'postcolonial African archival pessimism', historians have a vital role to play in deepening our understanding of how late colonial institutions, concepts, and practices were put to work in different ways to shape postcolonial Africa.[83] Considering the ways in which late colonialism was – and was not – formative for Africa offers a route towards rethinking the fundamental chronologies of African history, including by considering exactly when – and indeed if – late colonialism can be said to have ended.

Above all, this special issue is presented in the spirit of further opening up the study of late colonialism, in the recognition that the scope for further research remains enormous.

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[81] Derek R. Peterson, Emma Hunter and Stephanie Newell, eds., *African Print Cultures: Newspapers and their Publics in the Twentieth Century* (Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 2016); Emma Hunter and Leslie James, "Introduction: Colonial Public Spheres and the Worlds of Print", *Itinerario* 44: 2 (2020), 227-242.

[82] Chima J. Korieh, "'May it Please Your Honour': Letters of Petition as Historical Evidence in an African Colonial Context", *History in Africa* 37 (2010), 83-106; Meredith Terretta, "Anticolonial Lawyering, Postwar Human Rights and Decolonization in Africa", *Canadian Journal of History* 52: 3 (2017), 448-78.

[83] Nana Osei-Opare, "'If You Trouble a Hungry Snake, You Will Force It to Bite You': Rethinking Postcolonial African Archival Pessimism, Worker Discontent, and Petition Writing in Ghana, 1957-66", *The Journal of African History* 62:1 (2021), 59-78; Livsey, "Open Secrets", 108-111.

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