

# Between Metropole and Colony

## Rethinking a Research Agenda

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Europe's colonies were never empty spaces to be made over in Europe's image or fashioned in its interests; nor, indeed, were European states self-contained entities that at one point projected themselves overseas. Europe was made by its imperial projects, as much as colonial encounters were shaped by conflicts within Europe itself. How one goes about identifying the social and political reverberations between colony and metropole is a difficult task. This collection is built on extensive appraisals that are occurring within history, anthropology, and literary studies and contributes to efforts to revamp both our terrains of inquiry and the very questions that we need to pose. Our focus within the burgeoning scholarship on colonialism is on the contingency of metropolitan-colonial connections and its consequences for patterns of imperial rule.

Conquest, exploitation, and subjugation are old themes in world history. What was new in the Europe of the Enlightenment, of the development of liberalism, of the French Revolution, and of the classical economists was that such processes were set off against increasingly powerful claims in late eighteenth-century political discourse to universal principles as the basis for organizing a polity. Such claims—and competing visions of the universal public good—were bitterly contested within Europe, not least over questions of the social criteria (gender important among them) by which some groups would be included in the body politic while others would not. Ruling elites trying to claim power on the basis of generalized citizenship and inclusive social rights were forced to confront a basic question: whether those principles were applicable—and to whom—in old overseas empires and in newly conquered territory that were now becoming the dependencies of nation-states.

The French Revolution was still being fought in the streets of Paris when the “gens de couleur” of Saint Domingue—property-owning, slave-owning people descended from mixed unions of African slaves and French planters—asserted that the Rights of Man applied to them too. Shortly thereafter, many slaves—mostly first-generation Africans—began to challenge the white planocracy and the gens de couleur, claiming the Rights of Man extended to them as well. Mobilizing African religious practices in a “revolution within the revolution,” they rejected the very premise of French sovereignty and the notions of property that it entailed (James 1963; Fick 1990; Trouillot 1995). The escalating radicalism of the Saint Domingue revolution called into question the idea that slavery could remain a normal part of global commerce well before the antislavery movement in Europe had established its influence. It also raised doubts about the viability and legitimacy of colonization a century and a half before its demise as an accepted part of international politics. But the pioneer of free labor, Great Britain, the victor of a war for independence, the United States, and the country of the Rights of Man, France, did not hail the emergent nation of Haiti, with its newly freed peasantry, as the vanguard of liberation. Instead, their architects turned it into a symbol of backwardness and danger—not unlike what it remains today.

The image of Haiti would haunt French ruling elites even as they reasserted France’s imperial aspirations under Napoleon, pushed for the conquest of Algeria in the 1830s, and extended French power to parts of Africa and Southeast Asia toward the end of the century. Haiti haunted British rulers too as they moved in the 1830s to transform the slave regime of its Caribbean islands while firmly maintaining a colonial relationship. The specter of Haiti remained vividly alive in Spain as well as it tried to keep Cuba a sugar-producing slave colony while its empire elsewhere in Latin America disintegrated. Most important, the danger that black Jacobins might demand to be included in an expanding version of citizenship in European empires—as well as the danger that African rebels or creole nationalists might seek to opt *out* of European civilization—raised profound questions about the universality of citizenship and civil rights within Europe. The colonial question was present from the start in such debates, and in transfigured form it remains resilient today.

The “new” colonialism of the nineteenth century certainly built on the experience of rule and the construction of cultural difference of the old empires. Its newness was part of the making of bourgeois Europe, with its contradictions and pretensions as much as its technological, organizational, and ideological accomplishments. The European bourgeoisie aspired to be, as Karl Marx called it, a “universal class,” yet it marked its distinctiveness in particular cultural forms. The claims of property-owning classes to wealth and progress via free markets and entrepreneurship were mediated by the role of states in guaranteeing property, putting down the social disorders to which accumulation gave

rise, and advancing the cause of specifically national classes.<sup>1</sup> European bourgeoisies valued technological advance, the growing capacity and rationality of European systems of government, and the very idea of social and economic progress and used those ideas to demarcate more clearly than in previous eras the distinctiveness of what it meant to be European. The European bourgeoisie fostered and embraced the idea of citizenship, but also a sense that citizenship was “a faculty to be learned and a privilege to be earned” (Eley 1991: 300; Mehta, this volume).

The colonies of France, England, and the Netherlands—more ambivalently, of Spain and Portugal—did more than reflect the bounded universality of metropolitan political culture: they constituted an imaginary and physical space in which the inclusions and exclusions built into the notions of citizenship, sovereignty, and participation were worked out. Reformist politics in the colonies, as with British or French antislavery, were more than the hypocritical ruses of bourgeois rhetoric. Efforts to define what a dominant class or a government could and could not do helped to create *Homo europeaus* and the social projects for which that entity stood, and thereby clarify who was most fit to rule, at home and abroad.

Eric Hobsbawm (1987: 81) argues that imperialism “dramatized the triumph” of the ruling and middle classes of Europe. But one could argue the other way around: colonial projects also showed up the fundamental contradictions inherent in bourgeois projects and the way universal claims were bound up in particularistic assertions. Joseph Schumpeter (1951) even asserted that modern imperialism represented a militaristic and aristocratic throwback to Europe’s past: in the colonies conquest and command took pride of place over market and bureaucratic rationalities. It is more convincing, however, to suggest that the rationalizing, accumulating, and civilizing tendencies of European expansion both built on and could not escape the violence of militarism as that expansion blended coercive and persuasive strategies of racial rule.

Our subtitle, “Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World,” is thus not meant to imply that the world indeed was remade in the image of European propertied classes or that bourgeois norms became the aspiration of the people of colonies. Our interest is more in how both colonies and metropolises shared in the dialectics of inclusion and exclusion, and in what ways the colonial domain was distinct from the metropolitan one. We hope to explore within the shared but differentiated space of empire the hierarchies of production, power, and knowledge that emerged in tension with the extension of the domain of universal reason, of market economics, and of citizenship.

This introductory essay begins with a consideration of different approaches to colonial studies, arguing that scholars need to attend more directly to the tendency of colonial regimes to draw a stark dichotomy of colonizer and colonized without themselves falling into such a Manichaean conception. Here we explore a most basic tension of empire: how a grammar of difference was

continuously and vigilantly crafted as people in colonies refashioned and contested European claims to superiority. We turn next to examine the relationship of knowledge and rule, of how colonizers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries tried to make the categories through which they classified and surveilled their subjects—from “tribe” or “caste” to the very idea of “India” or “Africa”—into organizing principles of daily life. We take it as well that the colonial contexts in which the disciplines of geography, anthropology, history, and literature developed are a part of the history we are examining. We then look to the tendency in recent scholarship—reversing trends two decades ago—to focus more on the culture of colonialism and its relationship to modernity than on political economy. We argue for a more dynamic relationship between the two approaches, and above all for careful interrogation of the relationship of colonial state to metropolitan state and of the making of nation to the making of empire. We ask as well how the ways in which colonial states organized knowledge constrain the scholar who returns to those archives (oral as well as written) in an attempt to analyze the colonial situation. The reproduction of colonial societies is our next topic, but it is a theme evident throughout the essay. We are concerned here not only with the ways—complicated as they are—in which colonial regimes regulated sexuality and biological reproduction but also with how categories of race, class, and gender helped to define moral superiority and maintain cultural differences that in turn justified different intensities of violence.

A central concern of this essay and one treated most directly in the section on the dynamics of empire questions how one studies empires over time, in relation to one another, and in relation to their component parts. With a founding premise that social transformations are a product of both global patterns and local struggles, we treat metropole and colony in a single analytic field, addressing the weight one gives to causal connections and the primacy of agency in its different parts. Finally, we wonder if our stress on contingency, contested categories, and engagement within colonial states and societies should not lead to a reexamination of recent scholarship on “postcolonial” situations. Even larger and more elusive is the question of how the dynamics of exclusion and inclusion in a bourgeois world continue to play themselves out today.

## **Colonial Studies and the Ambiguities of Difference**

Over the past decades, students of colonialism have taken different issues to be at the heart of the colonial question. To some, colonies were a domain of exploitation where European powers could extract land, labor, and produce in ways that were becoming economically less feasible and politically impossible at home. In this view colonies were places where European merchants could find privileged markets sheltered from cross-national competition and

stock those markets with goods produced by slaves, indentured laborers, and, selectively always, free workers (Barratt Brown 1974; Meillassoux 1975). To others, colonies have marked a place beyond the inhibitions of the increasingly bourgeois cultures of Europe (Hyam 1990). In this repressive model of history, the colonies were sites of unfettered economic and sexual opportunity where masculine self-indulgence could be given free vent (Stoler 1995a). Still other analyses have looked at colonies as laboratories of modernity, where missionaries, educators, and doctors could carry out experiments in social engineering without confronting the popular resistances and bourgeois rigidities of European society at home (Rabinow 1989; Wright 1991, this volume; Anderson 1995). Within this frame, the “measures of man” were rationality, technology, progress, and reason—carefully calibrated scales on which Africans and Asians rated low (Adas 1989). Finally, a flood of recent scholars has located in the colonies the Other against whom the very idea of Europeanness was expressed (Said 1978; Todorov 1993; Behdad 1994).

All of these approaches point to key aspects of empire in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe, but each can be misleading in specific ways. These “laboratories of modernity,” as the authors cited above note, could never produce “controlled conditions” on colonial ground. What Europeans encountered in the colonies was not open terrain for economic domination, but people capable of circumventing and undermining the principles and practices on which extraction or capitalist development was based. The managing of a transition to wage labor in Africa and the West Indies, for example, ran up against the ability of former slaves to make themselves into something other than wage laborers (Cooper 1980; Holt 1990; Cooper et al. 1993; Harries 1994). In Africa and Southeast Asia, the inconsistent efforts of colonial regimes to encourage peasant production at one moment and to subordinate peasants to plantation regimes at another ran up against resiliencies that were neither anticipated nor controllable by French, British, and Dutch colonial states (Mintz 1974; Beinart 1982; Stoler 1985a; Beinart and Bundy 1987; Trouillot 1989; Atkins 1993).

While the colonies were marketed by colonial elites as a domain where colonizing men could indulge their sexual fantasies, those same elites were intent to mark the boundaries of a colonizing population, to prevent those men from “going native,” to curb a proliferating mixed-race population that compromised their claims to superiority and thus the legitimacy of white rule (Ballhatchet 1980; Stoler 1991). In colonial societies as in Europe, “racial survival” was often seen to be precariously predicated on a strict adherence to cultural—and specifically gendered—prescriptions (Wildenthal, this volume; Stoler, this volume; Inglis 1975; van Onselen 1982; Knapman 1986).

Other approaches to the colonial encounter have come from anthropologists and historians concerned with the consequences of conquest for the colonized and the impact of physical and cultural violence on indigenous social and

economic organization. Despite anthropology's successful efforts to move away from the isolated community studies of earlier generations, it has been harder than expected to get beyond treating colonialism as an abstract process, to take apart the shifts and tensions within colonial projects with the same precision devoted to analyzing the actions of those who were made their objects (Fabian 1983; Stoler 1989; Comaroff, this volume). For their part, historians of Africa and Asia have tried, since the 1960s, to counter the assumptions of an earlier tradition of imperial history by seeking to establish the complexity of non-Western reactions to European political and economic dominance (e.g., Boahen 1987; and for a review, Cooper 1994). Both disciplines have assumed more coherence to colonial enterprises than they warrant. Neither discipline has sufficiently explored how the rulers of empire reexamined their own hegemony and altered their visions when faced with cleavages within their own camp and challenges from the people they were trying to rule.

Colonial regimes were neither monolithic nor omnipotent. Closer investigation reveals competing agendas for using power, competing strategies for maintaining control, and doubts about the legitimacy of the venture. It is not clear that the idea of ruling an empire captivated European publics for more than brief periods or that a coherent set of agendas and strategies for rule was convincing to a broad metropolitan population, any more than the terms in which regimes articulated their power inspired awe or conviction among a broad range of the colonized.<sup>2</sup> Nor is it altogether clear how those we have assumed were reliable "agents of empire"—planters, low-level bureaucrats, and subordinate members of colonial armies—participated in those ventures (Heussler 1963, 1983, 1987; Arnold 1979, 1983; Kuklick 1979; Ballhatchet 1980; Ming 1983; Conklin forthcoming).

Identifying the competing agendas of colonizers and analyzing how cultural boundaries were maintained are not academic exercises in historical refinement. Social taxonomies allowed for specific forms of violence at specific times. How a person was labeled could determine that a certain category of persons could be killed or raped with impunity, but not others (Taussig 1984; Stoler 1985b; Breman 1989; Scully 1995). It could open or close down the possibilities for marriage, housing, education, or pensions. At the same time, the criteria used to determine who belonged where underscored the permeability of boundaries, opening possibilities for assertion among interstitial groups of "mixed-bloods" and "poor whites" as well as those more squarely identified as "the colonized." The idea of an indigenous "response" or "resistance" to an imperialist initiative—a favorite among scholars since the 1960s—does not capture the dynamics of either side of the encounter or how those sides were drawn (Ortner 1995; Stoler, forthcoming, b). The ambiguous lines that divided engagement from appropriation, deflection from denial, and desire from discipline not only confounded the colonial encounter, it positioned contestation over the very categories of ruler and ruled at the heart of colonial politics.

The most basic tension of empire lies in what has become a central, if now obvious, point of recent colonial scholarship: namely, that the otherness of colonized persons was neither inherent nor stable; his or her difference had to be defined and maintained. That analytic opening, however, has not focused as much as one might expect on what the quotidian repercussions of those moving categories were. Social boundaries that were at one point clear would not necessarily remain so. In pursuing a “civilizing mission” designed to make colonized populations into disciplined agriculturalists or workers and obedient subjects of a bureaucratic state, colonial states opened up a discourse on the question of just how much “civilizing” would promote their projects and what sorts of political consequences “too much civilizing” would have in store. As Fanny Colonna (this volume) has argued for French educational policy in colonial Algeria, the criterion of an “excellent” student was not to be “taken for a Frenchman” but was one’s ability to function as a balanced intermediary, neither too removed from Kabyle society nor too close to French norms. Different approaches to such questions shaped the self-image of colonial regimes: British officials congratulated themselves and mocked the French by saying their own goal was to create better Africans while the French wanted to make Africans into Frenchmen. They were wrong on both counts: the Africans British officials wanted to make were of their own imagining, while French policy makers were highly ambivalent about how French their subjects could or should be (Cooper 1996). More curious still, Dutch officials in the Dutch East Indies made much the same argument, but in reference to a population that was not obviously “indigenous.” They had in mind the children of European fathers and Asian mothers, for whom a carefully constructed educational curriculum and vocational environment would be devised to make them into what one Dutch official called “perfected natives, not imitation Europeans” (Stoler, forthcoming, a).

Colonial efforts at social engineering did not constitute the whole story. They do however provide entry points to question how people who lived inside those categories could turn them around. Luise White (this volume) shows that Africans took seriously European pretensions to technological and medical knowledge—and the new kinds of labor that imported technologies entailed—but interpreted them in idioms of power and danger that colonial officials could not grasp. In the Philippines as much as in Africa, people heard what Christian missionaries had to say but scrambled the message—sometimes finding in the mission community something valuable and meaningful to them, sometimes using their mission education to gain secular advantage, sometimes insisting that their conversion should entitle them to run the religious organizations themselves, and sometimes dismantling both doctrine and organization to build a religious edifice or even a revolutionary movement that was wholly new, neither the Christianity of Europe nor a recognizable variant of local religious practices. Vincent Rafael (1993) explores Tagalog “containment” of

missionary discourse in the Philippines and Reynaldo Ileto (1979) examines the ways in which Spanish Christian passion plays and other devotional writings were reworked by those nonelite members of the population mobilizing against Spanish rule (see also Beidelman 1982; Comaroff 1985; Kipp 1990; Comaroff and Comaroff 1991; Keesing 1992; Chretien 1993; Mbembe 1993).

As Karen Fields (1985) shows, offshoots of Christian missionizing in Africa, notably Watchtower, were a direct affront to colonial officials' well-laid plans. Watchtower participants constructed religious networks and beliefs that stressed the utter irrelevance of the legitimizing structure that officials had attempted to put in place, one built around the idea of traditional authority that was negotiated with African chiefs under the system of indirect rule. Edward Said (1993) has made a related point about colonial intellectuals: they both used their own "civilized" participation in education and commerce to expose the hypocrisies of colonial rule and insisted that indigenous cultures offered viable alternatives to the norms of European bourgeois culture (see also Chakrabarty, this volume; Vaillant 1990; Appiah 1992). Colonial students, meanwhile, challenged representations of indigenous cultures as well as European claims to technological and scientific superiority: Vietnamese students in France, for instance, openly protested the idealized portrayal of their own society at the 1931 Colonial Exhibition in Paris (Lebovics 1992; Brocheux and Hémery 1995).

Paul Gilroy (1993) has shown that various expressions of popular culture as well as literary and philosophical productions coming out of the African diaspora—in Africa, the Americas, and Europe—evinced a complex engagement with "Western" culture entailing more than either its repudiation or an attempt to build an "authentic" alternative. He argues that slavery, colonialism, and racism gave those who experienced them a vantage point on modernity that starkly revealed the limits to economic progress, political participation, and social inclusiveness. The "black Atlantic" became a critical transformative site of that modernity, not least because of the ambiguous encounter of the African diaspora with it.

The Manichaean world of high colonialism that we have etched so deeply in our historiographies was thus nothing of the sort. How to demarcate the boundaries of the "colonizers" and analyze how those boundaries were produced is proving as elusive a task as probing the multiple layers of oppositional discourse and politics. As we engage colonial archives further, we see how much protracted debate, how much political and cultural energy went into defining dichotomies and distinctions that did not have the predicted effects. Concubinary arrangements between European men and Asian women that were condoned by the Dutch East Indies state buttressed some of the hierarchies of rule but produced domestic milieus and cultural styles that subverted others (Taylor 1983). The point is that these colonial states were often in the business of defining an order of things according to untenable principles that themselves undermined their ability to rule.



This is not to suggest that our focus on the blurring of categories should reduce the discourse on racial fixities to a fiction alone. We are interested in understanding why Manichaeic dichotomies had such sustaining power in the face of such obvious hybridity and variation. Why did so many people—contemporary actors, not just latter-day historians—subscribe to divisions out of sync with the quotidian experiences that they shared?

It would be misleading to think that the intellectual efforts that set indigenous cultures starkly against European ones were those of colonizing elites alone. John Pemberton (1995) points to the way in which a discourse on “Java” flourished in Javanese texts in spite of colonial conditions—as well as because of them. Nancy Florida (1995) similarly shows—via a very different set of texts and methodologies—how contemporary understandings of a “pure high Javanese culture” were produced out of the joint efforts of Dutch Javanologists and conservative native elites (see also Chatterjee 1989 on elite writing on British/Indian difference). In analyzing this distinction making, we need to find ways of attending to its force—understanding how this process arose within colonial situations—without being caught up in such dichotomies ourselves (see also Bhabha, this volume).

One thing is clear. It does us no service to reify a colonial moment of binary oppositions so that we can enjoy the postcolonial confidence that our world today is infinitely more complicated, more fragmented and more blurred. Hybridities of richly varied sorts existed not only in the French and Spanish Caribbean but in more starkly binary racial contexts. As early as 1848, Dutch authorities in the Indies worried openly that creole whites saw themselves more as part of a new “Indische fatherland,” and sometimes even as “world citizens,” rather than as partisans of a Netherlands homeland and Dutch rule. In South Africa in the 1930s, the Carnegie Commission openly tackled the fear that poor whites shared more of the habitus of their nonwhite co-workers than that of their middle-class European compatriots (Albertyn 1932). We need to think through not only a colonial history that appears as Manichaeic but a historiography that has invested in that myth as well.

As we begin to look at the similarities and differences in social policy in Europe and the world it made colonial, it is clear that the resonance and reverberation between European class politics and colonial racial policies was far more complicated than we have imagined. Sidney Mintz (1985) has argued, for example, that the demand in Europe for sugar produced in the colonies was crucial to European working-class formation. If there were places where the European language of class provided a template for how the colonized racial “residuum” was conceived, sometimes the template worked the other way around. The language of class itself in Europe drew on a range of images and metaphors that were racialized to the core (Thorne, this volume; Comaroff, this volume; Comaroff and Comaroff 1992; Stoler 1995a). How the hierarchies of race and class played off one another had profound consequence: Edmund

Morgan (1975) shows that the desire of Virginia's planters in the eighteenth century to challenge British authority and build a republican ideology with appeal beyond their own class led them to break apart the ambiguous and overlapping connections among indentured white servants and black slaves. In this variant of liberalism, class—for whites—was being made into a relationship of co-optation and alliance while race became a line of exclusion far clearer than it had been before.

If at any one moment one could plausibly argue that the attitudes and policies of a metropolitan ruling class toward lower classes, local speech, and regional social practices in Europe were comparable to attitudes and policies toward colonized people, the exceptionalism of the colonial domain was more marked at specific times. The wave of nineteenth-century colonizations prompted Europe's ruling classes to reaffirm their own distinctiveness at the very moment when European states were emphasizing incorporation of parts of the popular classes into some form of citizenship and recognition of their accepted place in the polity (Brubaker 1992). But such incorporations were always bounded. What is striking is how much the consolidation of bourgeois power at home and abroad drew on a polyvalent discourse of civility that emphasized different criteria for its measure and at different moments could move state policy in opposite directions.

The inclusionary impulse was not confined to metropolitan Europe alone. Colonial projects were fundamentally predicated on a tension between notions of incorporation and differentiation that were weighted differently at different times (Sider 1987; Mehta, this volume; Stoler, this volume). This should not be construed as the difference between a liberal impulse, on the one hand, and a conservative reaction to it, on the other. Social reform policies were invariably derived from a tenuous balance between programs that would bind the interests of specific groups to the colonial state and policies that would maintain a range of cultural distinctions designed to contain and curtail the aspirations of those to be ruled (Fasseur 1993; Colonna, this volume).

Racial thinking was an organizing principle and a powerful rhetorical theme, but not always in the blatant ways that the common focus on scientific racism might lead us to expect. For the term "race" was shunned as often as it was applied. This is not to suggest that the criterion of race disappeared with an official rhetoric in which it was condemned. In the Netherlands Indies, for example, just when the "criterion of race" as a means to establish European equivalent status was to be removed from the Indies constitution in 1920, a subtle range of cultural distinctions (proficiency in Dutch by the age of seven, upbringing in a "European milieu") secured the same protections of privilege on which racial discrimination would continue to rest (Brugmans 1938; Stoler, this volume). Similarly, when French and British policy makers finally convinced themselves in the 1940s that Africans could come out of their "tribal" milieu and become disciplined workers, enterprising farmers, or responsible

civil servants, their condemnation of the cultural backwardness of those Africans who had not made the transition took on a harshness not so evident in the days of “indirect rule” (Cooper 1996). That race underwrote the distinctions of rule long after racial equality and development were hailed as tenets of late colonial states is clear: the more interesting observation is how much what we now take to be the principles of “cultural racism” were honed as part of the intimate workings of empire in debates over domestic arrangements, the upbringing of small children, early pedagogy, and language use that are still seen as sites of subversion and threats to the “interior frontiers” of the United States and European nations today (Stoler, forthcoming, a).

## Knowledge and Rule

While Michel Foucault’s insistence on the inextricable relationship between knowledge and power has had a major impact on the last decade of colonial scholarship, such questions were not prompted by him alone.<sup>3</sup> Bernard Cohn’s work (collected in 1987) has long emphasized the conscious way in which a model colonial regime—the Raj—went about creating the categories in which “British” and “Indian” were to define themselves. A large colonial bureaucracy occupied itself, especially from the 1860s, with classifying people and their attributes, with censuses, surveys, and ethnographies, with recording transactions, marking space, establishing routines, and standardizing practices. The total effect exceeded the sum of each appropriation of information: colonial regimes were trying to *define* the constituents of a certain kind of society, even as they embedded that act of creation within a notion that society was a natural occurrence and the state a nonpartisan regulator and neutral observer (see also Appadurai 1992). Self-conscious projects of collecting and organizing knowledge could be applied as a virtual package in different parts of different empires: the Dutch East Indies, Indochina, and less systematically in much of Africa. In the Philippines under American colonial rule, knowledge and surveillance of disease and of subversion went hand in hand (Ileto 1992). Regimes sought to tame the visual as well (Mitchell 1988; Wright, this volume; Bancel, Blanchard, and Gervereau 1993; Dirks 1994).

“Caste” in India and “tribe” in Africa were in part colonial constructs, efforts to render fluid and confusing social and political relationships into categories sufficiently static and reified and thereby useful to colonial understanding and control. But they could not be simply colonial categories: their elaboration required the knowledge of elders or pandits who were sought to manipulate the creation of knowledge for their own purposes (Dirks 1987; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Chanock 1985). These competing visions did not necessarily create and naturalize the subunits of control: the very ideas of “India” and “Africa” were homogenizing and essentializing devices useful both for imperial definitions of what it was they ruled and for nationalists to

claim a broad domain that their cultural knowledge qualified them to govern (Mudimbe 1988; Chatterjee 1993; Kaviraj 1993).

Visions of empire were created and clarified out of metropolitan discourses as well as by those fashioned in the colonies themselves. The relationship between Social Darwinism, ethnology, and colonial projects has been the most extensively and carefully explored (Rich 1984; Stocking 1987; Rich 1990). Other academic and popular discussions have received less attention. The class politics of Europe in the late nineteenth century gave rise to a profusion of debates by scientists, social reformers, and state agents over the biological and moral nature of the rapidly expanding European working-class populations (Stedman Jones 1971; Stepan 1982; Noordman 1989). As elites worried over the political mobilization of the underclasses, so did the bourgeoisie rivet their attention on the forms of child rearing, sexual standards, medical care, and moral instruction by which they would distinguish themselves and reproduce the social conditions for continued rule at “home” (Davin, this volume; Stuurman 1983; Regt 1984; Bock and Thane 1991; Koven and Michel 1993). One task is to analyze how (and when) the debates and terminologies of medicine, urban planning, social welfare, and industrial relations fed off one another and borrowed one another’s idioms, without assuming that they were functionally compatible or that they reinforced imperial policy in all places and at all times (Arnold 1988; Adas 1989; Packard 1989; Rabinow 1989; Tolen 1991; Vaughan 1991).

Some metropolitan discourses resonated in the colonies; others did not. Debates over the reproductive advantages of miscegenation, for example, rarely surfaced in Asia and Africa as much as did the contrary theories arguing that racial mixing would result in the degeneration and disappearance of those whites who stayed in the colonies “too long” (Union Géographique Internationale 1938; Price 1939). The interesting question is how much the racist tendencies in medical science, eugenics in particular, received new credibility in the colonies and then reverberated at home.<sup>4</sup>

How European scientific knowledge—as well as political philosophy—would articulate with specific visions of empire is not self-evident. Leading French socialists justified the taking and holding of colonies in light of their vision of attaining a just, socialist society via a path that indigenous peoples, confined to their primitive or precapitalist worlds, could not by themselves follow (Liauzu 1982; Wall 1986).<sup>5</sup> Still, certain relativist social theories—arguments that each people has its own integrity, its own values, and its own path to the future—could be put to perhaps even more insidious uses. Cultural relativism provided the intellectual justification for segregated schools and housing, sexual sanctions, and ultimately, as in South Africa, for apartheid (Rich 1986; Gordon 1988; Ashforth 1990). Our questions are not directed at the intrinsic merits of universalizing or relativizing ideologies but at the ways

in which they were harnessed and mobilized for particular political projects by colonial elites.

The struggle over whose knowledge was to prevail was unequal but not without its battles. Partha Chatterjee (1989) and Dipesh Chakrabarty (this volume) both argue that Indian (male) nationalist writers of the late nineteenth century conceded the realm of economics to British pandits but claimed knowledge of how to organize the domestic domain for Indian (middle-class) women and the spiritual domain for themselves. On the other hand, when colonial regimes were beginning to concede in the 1940s and 1950s that indigenous leaders were capable of running states and organizing economies, they did so in terms of “modernization” and “Westernization”—and a European-based concept of how states collected and used knowledge—that discredited the validity of African and Asian cultural epistemologies. Such struggles over what counts as knowledge are political ones, not just part of a wider battle, but a conflict over the nature of the battlefield itself.

The production of colonial knowledge occurred not only within the bounds of nation-states and in relationship to their subject colonized populations but also transnationally, across imperial centers. To what extent—and by what processes—did the knowledge of individual empires become a collective imperial knowledge, shared among colonizing powers? Was there ever a language of domination, crossing the distinct metropolitan politics and linguistic barriers of French, English, Spanish, German, and Dutch? Should we be looking toward a “modular” model of colonialisms as Benedict Anderson (1983) has suggested for the origins of nationalism? How much did the international congresses accompanying the world and colonial expositions that proliferated throughout Europe in the late nineteenth century provide a site not only to construct and affirm shared notions of race and civility but also to secure the relationship between the forging of a consensual notion of *Homo europeaus* and heightened feelings of national belonging at the same time?<sup>6</sup>

It has become widely accepted that imperial expansion was deeply implicated in the reconfiguration of European culture and science in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: attention to the ways in which European literary forms have at once effaced empire and been shaped by it is at the charged political center of an important trend in contemporary literary criticism (Said 1978, 1993; Miller 1985; Spivak 1988; Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 1989; Eagleton, Jameson, and Said 1990; Lowe 1991; Mills 1991; Ahmad 1992; Mellman 1992; Suleri 1992; Behdad 1994). Private collection of “primitive” art has long signaled the distinctions of a bourgeois home while museum collections continue to celebrate the preserving and ordering of the Others’ cultural artifacts as part of the high culture of a European public sphere (Stocking 1985; Clifford 1988; Price 1989; Torgovnick 1990; Karp 1991). Others have argued that the modes of social discipline and discourses of

sexuality that have defined the European bourgeois order derive from “models, inspirations and testing grounds” of imperial ventures (Pratt 1992: 36, Stoler 1995a).

While the disciplines of geography and anthropology helped to make the expanding world intelligible and manageable, the relationship of disciplinary knowledge and colonial rule was an ambiguous one. Geography brought the same conceit of science to domestic state building—making terrain, roads, sites of possible military conflicts, and resources knowable quantities—as to overseas ventures. But it would be more accurate to say that geographers’ ways of looking at the world were shaped in the same historical process as state expansionism, rather than that the discipline grew up to serve the colonizing state (Pyenson 1993; Godlewska 1994).

Moreover, geographers and other social scientists disagreed among themselves. The turn-of-the-century debate among colonial geographers over whether the colonial world should be seen as a space to be categorized and analyzed or as a space to be remade for the benefit of the imperial economy had repeated manifestations among social scientists.<sup>7</sup> The question of whether the impoverished economies of Africa or Asia fell under the same universal laws as the rich economies of Western states or whether they should be condemned as “backward” or celebrated as “natural” appeared in a Dutch debate over “dualism” in the 1930s and manifested itself in a variety of ways from the 1940s until today (Hirschman 1981; Kahn 1993).

When confronted with the complexity of the task of rule, colonial elites called on the sort of knowledge anthropologists could supply, and that demand affected the growth of the profession (Stocking 1987, 1995). Yet anthropologists did not always supply the kind of knowledge that fit the neat administrative categories (Vincent 1990). For they also opened debates on the integrity or adaptability of particular indigenous societies that officials did not always welcome; sometimes their very presence revealed settler practices and government ineptitudes that regimes did not necessarily want discussed. Even if anthropologists often gave theoretical vigor and intellectual respectability to a world divided into colonized “tribes” and “traditional” cultures versus civilized nations, they often complicated the picture of which they were a part (Asad 1973; Brown 1979; Stocking 1991, 1995; Moore 1993).

Lest one imagine that decolonization always had a liberating effect on scholarship—and studies of the diversity and dynamism of African and Asian cultures have indeed flourished since the 1960s—one should remember that this new knowledge was often compartmentalized and confined even as it was produced. The 1950s witnessed a division of labor in the social sciences in which the universals of social theory were privileged. Sociology, political science, and economics most often took notice of Africa or Asia insofar as those regions conformed to the seemingly universal course of development and modernization. When modernization theory failed to stand the tests of empirical

analysis, those disciplines largely pulled back from investigation of “exceptional” regions, leaving them to the allegedly particularistic disciplines of anthropology and history or to “area studies” in the era of decolonization and cold war.<sup>8</sup>

While the effort in this volume to underscore that metropole and colony, colonizer and colonized, need to be brought into one analytic field in some respects sets out a new agenda, in other ways it merely draws attention to a case that others have made earlier and well. Not least of all by George Balandier (1951), who cogently argued that the colonial situation had to be understood in its own right as the cultural and political construction of a particular moment and that those doing the colonizing were part of the story. Anthropologists, he insisted, could not assume that the “tribes” they studied had a pristine existence; they were part of a colonial system based on power, exploitation, and race. His argument owed something to the radical intellectuals Balandier had met in Dakar and the misery he had observed in Brazzaville; political mobilization against colonial authorities was making colonial realities hard to avoid. Yet his argument did not catch on at the time. Progressive social scientists of the 1950s were coming to share Balandier’s belief that colonial rule in Africa or Asia was morally unacceptable, but they were generally more interested in showing that non-European peoples were capable of moving toward modernity than in analyzing a colonial system which they were ready to consign to the past. In the triumph of developmentalist social science in the 1950s, colonialism was at best a side issue. Anthropologists and, later, historians were willing to complicate the picture with a focus on the diversity of local contexts, but the framework often remained the same.<sup>9</sup> “Tradition” and “modernization” were the keywords of postwar scholarship and of the rulers of postcolonial states; the production and investments in those categories went largely unexamined while colonialism was reduced to a problematic “legacy” of racialism and hierarchy. Some anthropological research complicated that story, most notably Peter Worsley’s (1957) study of cargo cults, which he understood not as a primitive and “irrational” curiosity but as a reasoned response to capitalist pressures and colonial demands.

For leftist scholars who began to critique the developmentalist framework in the 1970s, colonial issues were folded into the problem of global capitalism.<sup>10</sup> The sophisticated and subtle treatment that those such as Talal Asad and his colleagues (1973) offered concerning the connections between anthropology and colonial rule was taken up in some limited ways but not in others. While anthropology eagerly sought to show the effects of colonialism on contemporary populations, the ethnographic subject remained a specific Other—the colonized. Anthropologists rarely sought to examine the very making of that category itself (Stoler 1989). It was some years before Bernard Cohn’s (1980) call to examine colonized and colonial within the same analytic field was reflected in the kind of topics scholars chose to investigate.