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## Review of "Dominion of Race: Rethinking Canada's International History" by Laura Madokoro, Francine McKenzie and David Meren, eds.

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Laura Madokoro, Francine McKenzie and David Meren, eds. *Dominion of Race: Rethinking Canada's International History*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2017.

*Dominion of Race* is an ambitious collection that challenges the understanding and writing of Canada's international history. Editors Laura Madokoro, Francine McKenzie, and David Meren bring together twelve essays aimed at exposing the deep and damaging seeds of racism that influenced Canadian foreign and domestic policies during the twentieth century. The book's underlying premise contends that race is a social construction, described in the introduction as "an essentializing logic that informs the creation of an 'other' against which one defines oneself and one's larger community" (p. 4). In other words, race is not biological. Race is an idea used to create a social hierarchy that justifies, in the mind of the oppressor, the marginalisation or repression of other people based on imagined dissimilarities. That ideas of race and racism form in the human mind and take root as learned social behaviour is not a new insight. The editors merely apply a well-developed and evolving school of thought to the study of Canadian international history, offering a valuable collection written by an impressive group of scholars.

Although not the primary focus of *Dominion of Race*, a number of chapters in the book broach the theme of war and peace to investigate Canada's international history. John Price delivers a sweeping discussion of white supremacy in Canadian domestic affairs, demonstrating the unjust marginalisation of Chinese, Japanese, and Sikh communities in Canada during the First World War. Francine McKenzie provides a parallel perspective of external affairs, making clear the racialised influence of British imperialism on Robert Borden and Canadian objectives at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919. In response to Japan's racial equality proposals, Borden advocated for an international order that upheld the legitimacy of a racialised hierarchy and discriminatory barriers to preserve Canada's British identity. The prime minister wanted to advance the dominion's international role, but only according to an external policy inextricably shaped by ideas of race and masculinity.

Curiously, the book pays scant attention to the interwar years. No chapter examines the 1920s in depth, and Sean Mills' original essay about language and race in French Canada's relations with

Haiti is the only chapter focused on the 1930s and early 1940s. David Webster's comparative analysis of the 1920s and 1960s is the lone exception. Webster traces the efforts of Cayuga Nation Chief Deskaheh, who petitioned against involuntary enfranchisement on behalf of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy of Six Nations from 1921 to 1925. Enfranchisement granted Indigenous peoples the right to vote in exchange for status rights, encouraging cultural assimilation to reduce the number of "Indians" the federal government was financially responsible for under the *Indian Act*. Deskaheh's efforts met resistance from government officials who were unwilling to share sovereignty with a non-white community inside Canadian borders. Webster draws parallels between the Six Nations case and the cause of the Papuan, Indigenous peoples of West Papua in Southeast Asia who sought United Nations support for independence in the 1960s. In the latter, Canadian policy-makers chose not to intervene. Racial perceptions of backwardness and primitiveness, Webster argues, "set boundaries beyond which Canadian policy would not go" (p. 277).

Notwithstanding Whitney Lackenbauer's chapter on inter-racial relations in Northwest Canada, the Second World War also receives little direct attention, serving instead to introduce policy topics dedicated almost exclusively to analysing Canadian affairs in the context of the post-1945 period. Lackenbauer examines issues of race and gender between 1942 and 1948, describing why Canadian officials protected Indigenous women by blaming African-American soldiers for the spread of venereal disease (VD) in northern Canada. "By absolving white society of responsibility for introducing VD to the North," writes Lackenbauer, "Canadian policy-makers could focus their energies on ensuring that 'their' Aboriginal peoples were safe from disease-ridden African American males. Inuit women were not dirty but pure, needing paternal protection by their Great White Father" (p. 114). This policy of protection, based on flawed perceptions of inter-racial behaviour, justified claims to moral and physical stewardship over northern Canada for civil servants and politicians in Ottawa. As ideological and stereotypical assumptions about authority and health informed government discourse, Northwest Canada underwent a gendered and racialised militarisation in the period under examination.

The book's remaining chapters explore and investigate Canada's international history from the late 1940s through the late 1960s. Laura Madokoro offers a well-crafted essay on race-thinking that analyses

Canada's approach toward the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. Canadian immigration officials, Madokoro explains, promoted a selective worldview that maintained their Eurocentric vision for Canada and their role as the nation's gatekeepers. Kevin Spooner's contribution on Canadian-African relations further illustrates the centrality of senior government officials for exploring the impact of race on Canadian policymaking. "Much can be gleaned from bringing together diplomatic history's emphasis on key actors in policy formation with the cultural turn in international history and its key goal of understanding context and meaning," Spooner concludes in his discussion of Canada's foreign policy elites and postwar Africa (p. 224).

Unfortunately, the resonance of this book seems spoiled by the editors' combative tone and dismissal of foundational texts that remain important for the continued development of Canadian international history. The introductory and concluding remarks suggest historical scholarship about Canada's involvement in world affairs has been "raceless," excluded by historians who were preoccupied with nation-building questions or the primacy of Canada-US relations (p. 7). No one will deny the analytical importance of class, gender, and race for understanding and challenging the repressive structures that reinforce the policies and practices of the settler colonial Canadian state. Nor will scholars of Canada's international history refute critical approaches that reflect upon how race informs historical inquiry. But chastising the canon for overlooking specific categories of analysis denies the scholarly progression of the cultural turn, ultimately misrepresenting the purpose and value of the core publications that laid the groundwork for the field's current growth and richness.

Nevertheless, *Dominion of Race* delivers on its promise to expose and address the deep-rooted hierarchies of power and privilege inherent in Canadian policymaking and the writing of Canada's international history. Written for an academic audience versed in theoretical approaches to historical study, the collection might not appeal to readers seeking a clear and accessible book about Canada's foreign and domestic policies in the twentieth century. On the other hand, readers seeking a deep interrogation of the racial structures underpinning the history of Canadian international relations will find the book appropriately detailed and thought provoking. Jargon-heavy text aside, there is certainly much to appreciate and acknowledge in

the chapters offered here. Madokoro, McKenzie, and Meren should be quite pleased, as should the contributing authors, for collectively producing a notable book that will surely inspire future work in the field.

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