

H. L. Wesseling. *Divide and Rule: The Partition of Africa, 1880-1914*. Arnold J. Pomerans, trans. (Westport and London: Praeger, 1996) 446 pp.

With the publication of this English translation of *Verdeel en heers*, scholars are generally well served by one of the few comprehensive surveys of African partition. Advocating an empirical approach to historical inquiry (6), Wesseling concerns himself with the European side of this period in African history and on those key individuals and groups of the partition era.

In his choice of territories to include, Wesseling seeks to examine the Scramble, and not merely focus on partition *per se*. His coverage of Madagascar, which became a French colony in 1885, is germane because Great Britain and Germany recognized France's control of this island in exchange for France's acknowledgment of their claims in East Africa. Although Wesseling concedes that the French conquest of Morocco is more relevant to European history (333), he shows its significance to African studies by comparing the geopolitics revolving around Morocco with those of Fashoda. Indeed, rising Franco-German tensions concerning Morocco were more likely to have precipitated warfare throughout Europe than was the case with Sudan, the author posits (356). For Wesseling, the South African War was a special case of African resistance, albeit that most of the combatants were Europeans.

In this book, Wesseling argues that the partition of Africa was the product of "a series of independent and more or less 'accidental' decisions" (369). Rejecting the view that the Berlin Conference triggered the partition, he maintains that its genesis came partially from the renewed penetration of the Western Sudan and Upper Senegal by the French military in 1879 and 1880. This plan was the brainchild of Charles de Saulses de Freycinet, the head of the French Republic, and his friend, Admiral Jauréguiberry, the new naval minister (180).

Wesseling hints that Great Britain's role in launching the Scramble was nearly as important as that of her Gaelic neighbor. He argues that the British occupation of Egypt determined the course and form of African partition, but did not cause it (68). This is illustrated by Lord Salisbury's successful challenge to many of Germany's and Portugal's imperial plans. This senior British Prime Minister foiled

Portugal's goal of linking Angola and Mozambique by creating the Bechuanaland protectorate, and he halted German expansionism in East Africa with the Zanzibar-Heligoland Treaty of 1890 (159, 297).

There are other items in this volume that also serve the author well. Wesseling shows that the "hinterland doctrine," the effective possession of territories by treaties concluded with the indigenous rulers, and the "effective occupation" of land had nothing to do with the Berlin Conference, although they were instrumental in the Scramble. As for the significance of the Berlin Conference, Wesseling notes, "The conference therefore did not so much preside over the partition of Africa as serve as a symbol of it" (126-28). His sketch biographies of such notables as George Goldie, Otto von Bismarck and Joseph Chamberlain, as well as writing on the *parti colonial* and other groups of pivotal importance to the establishment of European hegemony in Africa, form a finely-woven tapestry of the era. The author's analysis of the roles of causation and motivation in the creation of historical developments is a powerful challenge to monocausal explanations of the Scramble.

Regrettably, Wesseling posits that Europeans had little impact on African political, economic and social institutions during the colonial era (372), a view that Wesseling does not substantiate. Such a comment flies in the face of the wealth of evidence to the contrary, and Wesseling's comment is bound to rankle scholars holding Afrocentric views.

The strength of *Divide and Rule* lies in Wesseling's treatment of the actions of governmental officials and colonialist lobbies in dividing up Africa. His prose is fluid, and as long as one does not look here for the tangible effects of partition on the indigenous peoples, this worthwhile addition to the body of scholarly literature will not disappoint.

Brian P. Thompson