



Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism

Mahmood Mamdani , Geoff Eley (Editor) , Nicholas B. Dirks (Editor) , Sherry B. Ortner (Editor)

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In this provocative analysis of the obstacles to democratization in post-independence Africa, Mahmood Mamdani offers a bold, insightful account of colonialism's legacy: a bifurcated power that mediated racial domination through tribally organized local authorities, reproducing racial identity in citizens and ethnic identity in subjects. By tapping authoritarian possibilities in culture, and by giving culture an authoritative bent, British indirect rule (decentralized despotism) set the pace for Africa; other colonial powers followed suit, South Africa being the last. Apartheid, Mamdani maintains, was actually the generic form of the colonial state in Africa.

Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism Details

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From Reader Review Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism for online ebook

Faez says

An excellent study of colonial and post colonial legacy in Africa. It is about how Europeans ruled Africa and how Africans responded to it.

The main approach is to focus on two elements in the colonial and post colonial power game in Africa: the civil (modernist) and the customary (traditionalist). As Mamdani states, his approach is analytical rather than programmatic. The book problematizes all sides and concepts and provides insightful discussions of the dilemma of starting civil societies in Africa, indirect rule, and what Mamdani terms decentralized despotism in which the agency of customary rule is foregrounded by the colonial claims of modernization and civic rule.

This book is relevant now in the light of the dramatic changes in The Middle East and the confusing would-be marriage between Islamist movements (customary) and dreamers of true democracy (civic). It provides an opportunity to go far beyond the superficial slogans of the media. Strongly recommended for the ones interested in such issues.

Nicholas says

Very readable and organized study of indirect rule in South Africa and Uganda, arguing that apartheid was not a singular system but rather an extended version of indirect rule as deployed elsewhere on the African continent.

H. Ryan says

recommended by Mark Lowell

Mills College Library says

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