GENERAL EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

The development of pseudo-scientific racism and the possession of empire were, in the British case, inseparably intertwined. Robert Knox, the notorious Edinburgh anatomist, derived many of his racial ideas from the period when he was a military doctor in the Cape Colony participating in the frontier wars. Later, Francis Galton combined his interests in genetics, statistics and anthropology from the studies he made while travelling extensively in Africa. James Hunt considered that the possession of an empire should prompt the British to a close study of race, while Henry Flower was a confirmed proponent of the central need for anthropological research. Any analysis of the sessions and addresses at various of the disciplinary sections of the British Association for the Advancement of Science reveals just how prominent were the concerns of scientists with the apparent opportunities and perceived responsibilities attendant upon the existence of the British Empire.

The science of genetics and the social variant which Galton called eugenics started out largely without any racial connotations, though class was always central to its studies. The racial dimension was however soon added, not least because this pseudo-scientific theory came to be disseminated within imperial territories and began to develop new theoretical positions, not only in relation to race, but also in respect of notions of criminality and psychiatric illness. Chloe Campbell here examines, in perceptive and penetrating detail, the manner in which a group of doctors began to put together this baleful set of ideas in the British colony of Kenya. Their work was very much based upon late-Victorian and Edwardian research, but was developed particularly in the years between the two world wars in the twentieth century. Kenya was a cockpit of such research for a number of reasons. It had a white settler population which was interested in such concepts as a way of supposedly legitimating and regulating their position in the territory and their relationship with its indigenous peoples. It had prisons and mental health institutions which doctors felt they could use as laboratories for their eugenics studies. And its profile was sufficiently high that the doctors were able to establish close relations with scientific institutions and prominent figures in the imperial metropole. Similar research was undertaken in South Africa and elsewhere.

From the standpoint of the twenty-first century, it is alarming that this research and the theoretical positions to which it gave rise found favour with prominent British scientists – like Julian Huxley – and allegedly progressive and liberal institutions. But the full-scale adoption of eugenicist theory by the Nazis had the effect of bringing it into disrepute. It soon encountered resistance in key areas of British politics and in the Colonial Office. As a result, the efforts of the Kenyan doctors to secure funding for a major research centre failed. Perhaps nothing better represents the social, cultural and political contexts in which pseudo-science (some might argue, all science) flourishes or dies. Yet we know

that eugenics had an 'after-life' in the post-Second World War era in the United States, Scandinavia and elsewhere. Even then it was closely bound up with the phenomena of migration, class formation and survival, and alleged racial difference. It also, shamefully, resurfaced in the era of Margaret Thatcher, when Keith Joseph found its ideas attractive when speaking controversially about the reproduction of what he viewed as a British social residuum.

Chloe Campbell's work reveals that any attempt to separate racist ideas and pseudo-scientific research and practices from the imperial context is doomed to failure. As with so many scientific activities of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the existence of the imperial laboratory was key. In the Kenyan case, the development of the Mau Mau campaign in the 1950s meant that some of the eugenicist ideas lingered on, but by then the settler context, and its attempted minority dominance, was doomed.

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