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MARIA PAULA DIOGO & DIRK VAN LAAK,
EUROPEANS GLOBALIZING:
MAPPING, EXPLOITING, EXCHANGING.

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Europeans Globalizing is part of a series on “Making Europe: Technology and Transformation, 1850-2000.” While other works in the series focus on internal European developments, this book deals with the relations between Europe and the rest of the world, especially the non-Western parts. Like others in the series, it views history through the lens of technology. Its theme is the responses of non-Western peoples to modern European technologies, from adoption to adaptation to hybridization to outright resistance.

The book contains seven substantive chapters: maps and mapping; Europe’s relations with “significant others,” namely Turkey, Russia, and the United States; wars, both world and colonial; relations with Africa; relations with India, China, and Japan; the collapse of

colonialism; and relations with the rest of the world since 1945. In short, the authors have undertaken a very challenging project.

Some aspects of the technological relationship between Europe and the non-Western world, such as the Suez Canal, the railways of India, and the Fashoda Incident, are well known. Others are here receiving a long-overdue emphasis. The chapter on exploration and mapping and their effect on the ground is particularly welcome. The book also discusses aspects of European imperialism that have been neglected in other books, such as the Portuguese claim to a swath of territory between Angola and Mozambique, an ambition that was thwarted by the British in 1890. It also describes several utopian technological schemes, such as plans to dam the entrances to the Mediterranean Sea, to divert its waters into the Sahara Desert, or to extract solar energy from the Sahara. More realistically, the book describes important recent exports of European technology, in particular the spread of European automobile manufacturing, specifically by the Volkswagen Company, to countries around the world, and the development of mass tourism by Club Med and other firms. Some of the cases in the book, such as the role of Florence Nightingale in the Crimean War and the founding of the Salvation Army, are only marginally related to the theme of the book.

Rather than specific technologies – e.g., railroads, rifles, telegraphs – and their impacts, the authors stress the *culture* of technology, the idea of “progress,” the purported superiority of Western technologies, the “civilizing mission” of Europe, and the like. Furthermore, the book tells the story largely from a European perspective, as the authors admit: “it would have been advantageous had we been able to tell more stories from the vantage point of non-European objects of colonization. However, such testimony is sparse and not easy to come by” (p. 275). Nonetheless, they do highlight some examples of non-Western reaction to Western technology, such as the Self-Strengthening Movement in China, the Meiji Restoration in Japan, and the modernizing efforts of Kemal Ataturk in Turkey after World War I, of Nehru in India after independence, and of Deng Xiao-ping in China after the death of Mao.

In a book of this size, it is inevitable that a few errors creep in. It is surprising to read that “aircraft and air power . . . completely revolutionized war, as the extensive use of the airplane in the First World War clearly showed” (p. 103), when actually airplanes played a marginal role in that war, unlike in World War II. It is also surprising to read of the “quasi-racist doctrine developed by

Georges Cuvier, Charles Lyell, Charles Darwin, and their worshipful disciples, a doctrine that placed Europe at the top of the evolutionary ladder” (p. 118-119); that some “worshipful disciples” were Eurocentric racists is not in question, but Darwin? And to state that South Africa had “an estimated one-third of global mineral resources” (p. 223) is clearly an exaggeration.

In conclusion, *Europeans Globalizing* is a welcome addition to the growing literature on the globalization of technology and the ambivalent reaction of non-Western peoples to the attractions and dangers of European technologies.