



Review: [Untitled]

Reviewed Work(s):

Die deutsch-chinesischen Beziehungen von 1860-1880 (Sino-German Relations from 1860-1880) by Yü Wen-Tang

William Kirby

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The outbreak of war between Japan and China in July 1937 and the increasing momentum of the war caused Germany great embarrassment. Having an Anti-Comintern Pact with Japan and having “unofficial” military advisers assisting the Chinese war effort, she was a natural candidate to be looked to for mediation. This was conducted through von Dirksen in Tokyo who had become identified with Nazi policy in the Far East and Trautman, the ambassador to China. Of the latter, Dr Fox writes: “one can only praise [his] professional and personal qualities . . . and the strong impression gained is of that rarity at a time when the quality of public and private life in Germany was daily being debased, a gentleman” (page 336). The attempted mediation failed in January 1938 and was in any case swallowed up in major changes in the Wilhelmstrasse. In an attempt to “nazify” the Foreign Ministry and armed forces, Hitler appointed Von Ribbentrop as foreign minister in February. In the months that followed, Germany recognized Manchukuo and withdrew her advisers and ambassador from China. By the summer Germany’s attempt to keep a balance between China and Japan – threadbare as it was – had given way to a more resolute policy of commitment to the Japanese.

This invaluable study of one of the important triangular relationships of the 1930s is of course Germany-centred. But it contains plenty of interest for specialists on China and Japan, though the information relevant to the history of these countries is interpreted through German eyes. For example, China specialists will be intrigued by the details given of the visits paid by Kung Hsiang-hsi to Berlin in 1933 and June and August 1937, while Japan specialists will find interest in the accounts of the Berlin tactics of Ambassadors Mushakōji and Tōgō. All in all, Dr Fox has provided a useful, many-sided study, covering commercial, strategic and political relations.

IAN NISH

Die deutsch-chinesischen Beziehungen von 1860–1880 (Sino-German Relations From 1860–1880). By YÜ WEN-TANG. [Bochum: Studienverlag Brockmeyer, 1981. 327 pp.]

Germany and China began their modern relations in an era that witnessed Germany’s unification and rise to global economic power and China’s first programmatic attempt to acquire western technology. To the extent that Chinese authorities sought in German expertise and products a means for China’s “self-strengthening,” their relations were mutually beneficial. When, however, power politics determined German efforts in China, their interests clashed. In both respects, the years from 1860 to 1880 set patterns for the development of Sino-German relations ever since. Although Yü Wen-tang does not draw such long-range conclusions, his competent narrative (with appended documents) is a welcome addition to the literature on the still understudied relationship between two nations whose successes and failures dominated the East Asian and European arenas for much of the 19th and 20th centuries.

Based on Chinese and German source materials, Yü’s sound if often unexciting account centres on the negotiations to establish relations in

1861, and the emerging economic and military ties of the following decades. If the Germans gained legal status in China at a time when, as John Schrecker has put it, “ the Chinese knew little and cared less about Germans,” Yü shows that by the early 1870s German firms were already establishing a strong position in Chinese military-economic development of the early “ self-strengthening ” period. His discussion of Alfred Krupp’s dealings with Li Hung-chang gives a new dimension to a topic first touched on by Helmuth Stoecker. One only wishes that Yü had investigated more deeply the non-material aspects of the relationship, particularly the favourable image held by Li and others of the new German Reich as a progressive, rapidly modernizing power that posed no threat to China. (Surprisingly, Wang T’ao’s influential *Record of the Franco-Prussian War* [*P’u-Fa chan-chi* (1871)] does not appear in the bibliography.) This image was not entirely correct, but it could be held as long as the “ other face ” of Germany in China – shown by the early and persistent desire by commercial and naval circles to gain a “ German Hong Kong ” – remained in the shadows. Yü recounts but does not really interpret these efforts, which when finally successful in 1898 (only to be undone in 1914) would actually work to the detriment of the very interests they sought to promote.

WILLIAM KIRBY

The Great Wall. By LUO ZEWEN, DAI WENBAO, DICK WILSON, JEAN-PIERRE DREGE and HUBERT DELAHAYE. [London: Michael Joseph, 1981. 191 pp. £14·95.]

The Great Wall, or more accurately the Great Walls, of China have for long exercised a fascination over the mind of the westerner, if only because of the grandeur of the concept, the extent of its execution and the part that this line of defence has played in Chinese history for over 2,000 years. During this long history, the wall has filled several roles other than that of defence. It has served to prevent deserters from evading Chinese tax-gatherers, recruiting officers or judicial officials; it has provided a protected roadway for the conveyance of Chinese caravans to the west and for passage by eastbound travellers from the Middle East. Depending on the origins, ambitions and fears of each dynasty, so have the functions of the wall changed and developed from one century to another, until in the 20th century its principal duty may well be that of attracting tourists.

The present volume takes a traveller along the course of the wall from west to east, explaining the geographical, historical and strategic considerations that affect each sector. Illustrations, in half tone and colour, are provided in great profusion and variety to explain the text and to disclose the ethnic and cultural distinctions that cannot escape the traveller’s eye. The book includes satellite photographs of the lay of the land; Ming woodcuts of military activity and constructional methods; photographs of archaeological discoveries that depict Chinese life since the walls were first planned; and photographs of human activity, topographical features and landscapes of the latter part of the 20th century.