



**Review: [Untitled]**

Reviewed Work(s):

*Chinese Boycotts versus Japanese Bombs: The Failure of China's "Revolutionary Diplomacy," 1931-32* by Donald A. Jordan

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intellectual orientations of students and faculty members who struggled to live up to their nationalist principles, their socialist feelings, their faith in liberal Western values, and often ended in disillusion, aestheticism and withdrawal from "an alien world" (ch. 7).

In researching her important study Yeh Wen-hsin has drawn upon a great variety of original documents (university records, government archives, college magazines) as well as upon literary sources. She combines an intellectual approach founded on erudition and reflexion with a keen intuitive perception. This is bi-culturalism at its best.

Ideally, of course, one should be multi-cultural. A European reader may have some doubts about the validity of the "campus" concept for analysing the experience of Chinese colleges, many of which were not founded by American missionaries nor patterned after the American model. Beida and its "Latin district," of which Yeh Wen-hsin gives an excellent description, so resembles old European intra-city universities that one is left wondering whether the phenomenon to be explained is not the presence rather than absence of campuses in China. Should "campus" be understood as just a synonym for "institution of higher learning"? And "campus culture" as a synonym for the intelligentsia culture?

This problem of terminology however must not obscure the great quality of Yeh Wen-hsin's book. A learned study, so vividly presented and elegantly written, should interest many more people than China specialists and students: historians of culture, of education and of thought, as well as social historians and a wider audience of educated persons may share the enjoyment brought about by reading this book.

MARIE-CLAIRE BERGÈRE

*Chinese Boycotts versus Japanese Bombs: The Failure of China's "Revolutionary Diplomacy," 1931-32.* By DONALD A. JORDAN. [Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1991. 363 pp. £35.00. ISBN 0 472 10172 2.]

It is now taken for granted that economic sanctions do not work, or work very poorly, as a diplomatic instrument in international relations. This is in no small measure because of the failure of international sanctions to impede Japanese expansion in China in the 1930s. This book takes the treatment of sanctions a step further by asking whether Chinese economic sanctions against Japan, in the form of the boycotts of 1931-32, not only failed to deter Japanese aggression but in fact helped to bring it about in the first place.

This is obviously an important and timely question, which Donald Jordan poses more carefully than this, and answers with a very qualified yes. The principal aim of the study was to investigate the degree to which economic tensions contributed to Sino-Japanese enmity. Jordan explores in detail the conflicting (and sometimes overlapping) economic interests of Chinese, Japanese and Western players in Shanghai's textile industry, which was central to the boycott movement. He examines, too, the role played by policy preferences of different players in the Chinese and Japanese economic bureaucracies. At times he entertains conclusions that place economic con-

siderations at the core of the matter. But the author is too good a historian to contemplate a crude economic determinism. His research shows how the boycotts had a marginal effect on the Japanese export economy, and a greater psychological than economic impact on Japanese textile manufacturers in China, who actually increased their share of manufacturing capacity in China from 1931 to 1932 (p. 171). He overstates the economic case only—though here seriously and without convincing evidence—in suggesting that the substitution of British and American for Japanese cotton exports to China somehow explains Anglo-American reactions to the Far Eastern crisis (as it was known at the time) by concentrating London and Washington's attention on “where their investments were concentrated” (p. 341).

The boycotts were very important, but their economic aspects cannot be easily separated from political, military and emotional considerations. Jordan shows that the boycotts before and after the Mukden incident came to be viewed in Japan as a severing of economic relations in violation of existing treaties and ultimately as a *casus belli*. He argues that Japanese suspicions of Kuomintang political manipulation of the boycotts were correct (p. 54) and that the boycotts themselves were the product less of spontaneous nationalism or economic rationalism than of a combination of Nanjing's “revolutionary diplomacy,” the economic interests of the Chinese textile industry, and the contradictory emphases of the Chinese ministries of industry and finance. The result on the Chinese side was less a coherent strategy for influencing Japanese behaviour than a set of Chinese actors, with different agendas, temporarily and warily allied. The scope of disorganization on the Chinese side (complicated by tensions between Nanjing and Canton, which opposed the boycott), which is set out here in great detail, would in turn frustrate Japanese attempts to moderate Chinese behaviour, and ultimately preclude a coherent Chinese response (until it was too late) to Japanese pressure to cease boycott activity at Shanghai in 1932. In all this Jordan adds considerably to our understanding of the pressures, disputes and misperceptions that were part of the immediate setting of the Mukden and Shanghai incidents of 1931–32.

In providing yet another historical example of how problematic a weapon economic warfare can be, the study nevertheless highlights why sanctions, boycotts and embargoes continue to be practised in international relations. They are often the only weapons available to states that are in no position to resort to force; and it is easier to build a consensus around policies whose long-term costs are not readily apparent. In focusing on how economic tensions contributed to the break between leading trade partners, and in highlighting the Chinese boycott as the chief protagonist, the study suggests China's co-responsibility for the struggles that took place on its soil in 1931–32. It goes so far as to imply that the Pacific War was “the eventual outcome” of a policy of economic sanctions begun by the Chinese boycotts and carried forward by the United States (p. 265). This is enough to ensure that this very detailed and scholarly book will receive attention in historical and political circles in East Asia and the West.

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