Review: [untitled]
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Reviewed work(s):
"Friedliche Imperialisten": Deutsche Auslandsvereine und auswärtige Kulturpolitik, 1906-1918 by Jürgen Kloosterhuis
Published by: Cambridge University Press on behalf of Conference Group for Central European History of the American Historical Association
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/4547366
Accessed: 30/12/2009 14:59

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writer’s and poet’s role in creating new forms of prose and poetry that abandoned the traditional narrative structures was not viewed as a regression into earlier literary modes. Rather narrative fragments serve as subjective memory packets and patterns that delineate essential and universal forms. Pan closes his account with a description and analysis of Einstein’s collection of Afrikanische Legenden, focusing on the southeast Thonga legend of “The Wanderer of the Plain,” and attempting to suggest that the story is a performative rather than representational example of myth. Thus, Pan invokes the early twentieth-century’s engagement with primitivism and sees it, not necessarily as a modernist critique nor as a romantic retreat, but as “[its] persistence . . . in our mind’s eye” (p. 188).

The author’s basic premise is an engaging one, though the clarity of his argument frequently becomes shrouded in attempts to distinguish his readings of primitivism from that of others who have explored the topic. This is especially the case in his first chapter on Nietzsche, where he critiques modernist and postmodernist readings of the philosopher, such as the analyses by Arthur Danto, Jürgen Habermas, Paul de Man, and Allan Megill. Occasionally the reader is left with the impression that the author’s interpretative model gets obscured in the multiple readings. But beyond the periodic murkiness of his prose and argument, one must commend Pan for his economic tackling of a large subject using a great variety of multidisciplinary materials and sources within which to frame his discussion.

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When I told my Berlin book dealer that I wanted “Friedliche Imperialisten,” he replied sourly: “That’s what they all say!” Certainly the skepticism of that old ’68er will be shared by many historians. But Jürgen Kloosterhuis has produced two books in one, and even those who will not accept the revisionist argument of his monograph will be in his debt for the handbook that accompanies it. I myself find his picture of a transformation of Germany’s imperialist energies after the embarrassment of the first Moroccan crisis (the “Jena of German diplomacy” [p. 59], in the words of Maximilian Harden) persuasive. If, as some have assumed, the sales of Heinrich Class’s Wenn ich der Kaiser wär (1912) can be taken as an index for the spread of pan-German ideology, then what are we
to make of the fact that it took massive subsidies by Class's wealthy backers (concerned with its "Totschweigen" [p. 74]) in the press to pump up publication figures to 35,000 copies — by 1925? Paul Rohrbach's rival conception, Der Deutsche Gedanke in der Welt, also published in 1912, promising Germans influence by "moral conquest," had sold 90,000 copies in two years and 192,000 by 1920. Rohrbach's prescription for winning hearts and minds abroad was emblematic of an upsurge of cultural and developmental (Kloosterhuis is careful to avoid the word "humanitarian") activity in the decade before and during the war. These "peaceful imperialists," and the numerous societies they founded, believed that cultural export would be the "pacemaker" (p. 63) for commercial expansion and for a healthy political influence based upon private initiative, nonpredatory economic relations, and mutual respect (Germans needed to learn about "the peoples of the East, with their thousand-year-old cultures" [p. 294], as the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Kunde des Ostens insisted).

The means were much as they are now: language courses, area studies programs, exchange students, visiting professorships and apprenticeships, as well as investments abroad in clinics, libraries, film societies, exhibition centers, and above all, schools — for girls as well as boys. Trade did not necessarily follow the flag, supporters argued, but it did follow language. The years right before the war saw an explosive growth of German schools abroad. Twenty-one thousand marks were raised for a medical school in Shanghai; 100,000 marks in 1914 alone for a college in Adana. The model was the Alliance Française, on the one hand, and Robert College, founded by American (misidentified as English) Presbyterians in Constantinople, on the other. Peace was a precondition. So was the desire of the recipient country.

Kloosterhuis looks imperialism in the eye, exposing the hand of the Foreign Office behind much of this activity and devoting a chapter to the Reichsmarine-Amt's role in cultural propaganda. But he finds the new conception affecting even the German Colonial Society, in some branches displacing the original program of territorial acquisition and "directing" immigration. One of the society's most successful branches, in Berlin-Charlottenburg, emancipated itself from the colonialism of the mother society entirely; the Regensburg branch announced "No colonization with German blood in Asia Minor, but civilization of the Orient." Not settlers, but engineers, technicians, businessmen, doctors, "and not least, the German schoolmaster!" must take Germany's message to the world (pp. 402–5).

Cultural projects, unlike their military counterparts, served to integrate Germany's disparate elites — business, cultural, and political. The Reichstag, from Conservatives to Social Democrats, united in pressing the government to devote more resources to Kulturaussenpolitik. (Thus although the SPD initially demanded that Germany return Kiaochow to China, eventually even its left wing supported the plan to found a German college there, seeing its advantages
for China's fledgling republic.) Overseas cultural projects built bridges between parties and between the deputies and the Foreign Office, encouraging the Reichstag to exercise influence on the formation of the government's own policies.

At least 232 organizations were founded to encourage economic, artistic, cultural, and scholarly exchange between Germans and others, from Icelanders to Egyptians, Albanians to Auslandsdeutsche. The associations concentrated geographically on the three largest regions that had not yet come under European rule: Latin America (particularly the “A-B-C countries” of Argentina, Brazil, and Chile), and especially China and the Ottoman Empire, whose recent revolutions made them appear especially suitable for Germany's “Entwicklungshilfe.” No other power had so vital an interest in maintaining these countries' independence. Friendly exchange would also, supporters hoped, help Germany break out of its encirclement. Once war began, new societies cultivated ties with peoples colonized by the Entente powers: the Irish, Flemings, Poles, Lithuanians, Ukrainians, and Georgians. And in the Kulturbund deutscher Gelehrter und Künstler, Germany's crème de la crème set a defiant face to world opinion after the German army's destruction of the Louvain library.

By far the greater portion of Kloosterhuis's two volumes (pp. 283–844) is a reference work, cataloging these organizations. Modeled on Dieter Fricke's classic encyclopedia, Die bürgerlichen Parteien in Deutschland (Leipzig, 1968 and in 1983 expanded and reissued as Lexikon zur Parteiengeschichte: Die bürgerlichen und kleinbürgerlichen Parteien und Verbände in Deutschland 1789–1945), the entries are of varying length (with the 66-page essay on the Deutsch-Türkische Vereinigung as Prachtstück); but each gives the society's officers, branches, membership figures, and, whenever possible, the circulation statistics of its publications and a list of its members. A veritable Who's Who of deputies, diplomats, military men, and especially luminaries from the Bildungs- und Besitzbürgertum, these overlapping memberships reveal a true “establishment” in the decade before and during the war, such as had not existed, and could not have existed, earlier. Thus the leading lights of the Auslandsbund Deutscher Frauen, founded in 1915 to lend “a helping hand to sisters abroad” and to hold get-togethers with Turkish ladies “im Sinn einer waffenschwesterlichen Vereinigung” (p. 350), included not only Dr. Gertrud Bäumer and Fräulein Dr. Harnack, but also Countess Radolin and the Misses von Bredow, Stumm, Jagow, and Tirpitz. Here was German voluntarism in action. No one who was anyone in Wilhelmian Germany was, to use Robert Putnam's phrase, “bowling alone.”

Each entry relates the organization's context, history, allies, internal quarrels, and rivals competing for the same eleemosynary niche. Entries are generously spiced with quotes, juicy tidbits from Nachlasse and memoirs, and Kloosterhuis's own dry wit (here departing from the Fricke model, which was only dry).Footnotes to contemporary reviews (often negative) of a society's publications provide an essential critical control on the association's own publicity. When an
organization was *mehr Schein als Sein* the author’s superb archival detective work exposes that fact. Thus we see a Mannesmann–Werke official warning his chairman away from the Mitteleuropäischen Wirtschaftsverein: “But since one does not send a refusal to Roetger, the chairman of Krupp’s board of directors, I recommend you contribute 100 marks — right now the thing doesn’t seem worth more” (p. 499). Kloosterhuis concludes that the “most zealous user” of the Institut für Auslandskunde und Auslanddeutschum’s library, established in the residence of its founder, the geographer Hugo Grothe, “was probably Grothe himself.” Kloosterhuis’s characterizations are acute, and he has tracked down not only the pasts but also the futures of many of these organizational entrepreneurs. Thus we learn that only after 1933 was recognition, in the form of “the longed-for professor-title,” finally bestowed on the egregious Grothe, a busy promoter of Middle Eastern projects who pops up in one association after another, but who finally appears as simply “the SA-Mann” (p. 344).

How successful was Germany’s “moral conquest”? Far more Turks went to French than to German schools, most Chinese academics were trained in North America, and Latin American students divided themselves about evenly between France and the United States. Nevertheless, these organizations were a sign of truly imperial energies and of a cultural self-confidence that swept away the cultural pessimism, Kloosterhuis believes, of the nineties.

Those who have received the largesse of the DAAD, studied at a Goethe Institute, or been the guest of a German Historical Institute in one of the world’s capitals, will recognize modern continuities. Any scholar writing on Wilhelminian elites will welcome this treasure trove of hard-to-find information, and for someone investigating Germany’s transnational relations, these volumes are indispensable. Get your copy now. Peter Lang has announced that they will soon go out of print, and no respectable university library should be without them.

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Sean Dobson provides here a thorough account of the relations between workers and nonworkers in a major center of industrial activity that also became, at the end of the First World War, a major center of working-class protest against both the imperial regime and capitalist hegemony over the economy.