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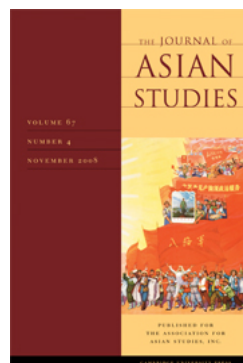
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***The Boxers, China, and the World.* Edited by Robert Bickers and R. G. Tiedemann. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007. xxviii, 231 pp. \\$75.00 (cloth); \\$28.95 (paper).**

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The essays in this volume, prepared for a 2001 conference with the same title at the School of Oriental and African Studies, collectively aim to normalize our understanding of the Boxers and to see both the events and their impacts in local as well as global settings. Collectively, they argue that what is more correctly termed the Boxer War than the Boxer Uprising or the Boxer Rebellion not only represents a watershed in Chinese history, but also provides a window for viewing the changing international arena at the turn of the century in terms of shifts in imperialism and native resistance to it. As Robert Bickers states in the introduction, “[T]he Boxer War was a wholly modern episode and a wholly modern resistance to globalizing power, representing new trends in modern China and in international relations” (p. xii). The essays take this more humanly rational and less exotic approach to the Boxers in order to place them in nuanced local and globally connected contexts, thereby allowing the events in 1899 and 1900 to become part of global trends and world history, as well as Chinese history.

While there are no pervasive themes organizing the book, the essays can be categorized into three types of encounters with the Boxers: narratives of occurrence, experiential perceptions, and global representations—encounters that in some ways echo Paul Cohen’s influential *History in Three Keys: The Boxers as Event, Experience, and Myth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997). Through these engagements, the authors explore questions concerning local, global, and universal experience; subaltern identity; and meanings of imperialism, especially imperialism as a civilizing force. Henrietta Harrison starts the collection with a reassessment of the Boxer narrative in Shanxi. Violence was not simply defined in Boxer versus Christian terms; rather, Harrison shows that it followed “preexisting intervillage power structures,” making villages, not individuals, both the “targets and the perpetrators of Boxer violence” (p. 8) as Boxers tried to stabilize what they perceived to be a threatened moral order. R. G. Tiedemann, too, reevaluates Boxer versus Christian activity in North China by examining the collective defensive strategies of Christians against Boxer violence. Roger Thompson deconstructs the widespread accounts of the massacre of Christians in Taiyuan, attributed to Shanxi governor Yuxian, and seen as the “defining representation of the madness of the Chinese state in the midst of the Boxer Uprising” (p. 65). By separating problematic sources recounting the massacre from those that clearly originated in the summer of 1900, he demonstrates the influence of the Christian hagiographic tradition in the narrative and the Qing court’s need for a scapegoat in fueling the myth of Yuxian as the “Butcher of Shanxi.” In doing so, Thompson restores legitimacy to the military conservative position of Yuxian as a potentially rational response to the threats of the day.

Anand Yang moves the discussion to experiential perceptions with his analysis of the writings of Gadhadhar Singh, an Indian Rajput soldier dispatched to China

as part of the British contingent of the international expedition that ended the siege of Beijing. Singh's words display a subaltern self-consciousness that questions British moral superiority and expresses pan-Asian sympathies for the Boxers. C. A. Bayly's essay places the Boxer War in a global context, stressing the advances in communication that created worldwide accessibility to information, allowing for comparisons between the Boxer War and the Boer War. Yang's and Bayly's essays both point to contemporary critiques of the imperialist civilizing mission. Likewise, James Hevia's comparison of the looting of Beijing in 1860 and 1900 demonstrates how perceptions had changed by 1900, when the looting shone the spotlight on the failings of the moralizing mission of imperialism. Ben Middleton's chapter continues this approach by showing how *Yorozu Chōhō*'s exposé of the Japanese Imperial Army's participation in the looting of North China sparked controversy within Japan of the country's ability to lead Asia to civilized modernity. All four essays demonstrate the concern of contemporary imperialist participants for the polluting effects of proximity to "barbarian" cultures and work to demythologize the superiority of the West in terms of its civilizing mission and assumed superiority.

Lewis Bernstein and T. G. Otte's contributions place Western participation in Boxer affairs in the international context. Otte places British concerns in China within a complicated equation that involved a changing terrain for imperialist expansion at the turn of the century, which led to a shift away from the British policy of isolation. Bernstein examines the rebuilding of Tianjin as part of an international effort led by the allied forces' Tianjin Provisional Government, which resulted in the creation of an expanded hygienic city during the government's twenty-five-month rule.

Finally, Paul Cohen's chapter aims to go beyond the one-dimensional portrayals and myths of the Boxers that ground them in caricature and instead place them within world history, not as an anomaly but as a reasonable human response to a particular set of historical circumstances. The Boxers, in his view, reflect human experience and responses across time and space; they are familiar rather than an anomaly. The placement of Cohen's essay at the end of the collection works well, as his essay reminds us of commonalities and the dangers of essentializing the other.

As a whole, the book achieves its aim of deepening our understanding of the Boxers and the Boxer War by reconfiguring the landscape to include scrutiny of imperialist forces' behavior and motives, as well as allowing for diversity within the Chinese world and connections to the global experience. That is not to say there are no weaknesses in the book; Bernstein's chapter, for instance, seems somewhat out of date, considering the work that has been published on early modernization projects in Chinese cities and on Tianjin since his 1988 dissertation. Nonetheless, his essay helps demonstrate the relevance of the history of the Tianjin Provisional Government and the Boxer War as a whole to our own times. The volume's reexamination of the Boxer War within a more international context presents an intriguing interpretation that has currency for today's world.

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