

Mundus. A quarterley review of German research contributions on Asia, Africa, and Latin America arts and science.
Vol. XX., 1984, Nr. 3, S. 186 ff.

GRUNDER, HORST

Christian Missions and German Imperialism, 1884–1914. A Political History of their Relations during the German Colonial Period (1884–1914) with Special Reference to Africa and China

[“Christliche Mission und deutscher Imperialismus 1884–1914. Eine politische Geschichte ihrer Beziehungen während der deutschen Kolonialzeit (1884–1914) unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Afrikas und Chinas”]

Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh Verlag, 1982; 444 pp., 33 ill.

BADE, KLAUS J. (Ed.)

Imperialism and Colonial Missions. Imperial Germany and Colonial Empire

[“Imperialismus und Kolonialmission. Kaiserliches Deutschland und koloniales Imperium”]

(Beiträge zur Kolonial- und Überseegeschichte, Band 22)

Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1982; 333 pp.

German imperial history lasted for only three decades, from the mid-1880's until the First World War. From the German point of view it is merely an imperial episode, whereas for the former “Protectorates” of the Reich German colonial rule was in most cases a serious interruption with long-lasting consequences in the historical progression from colonialism to the Third World. By taking the example of the youngest and most short-lived European colonial power, two new books on this subject describe a special problematic area of colonial history: the encounter between Christian missions and world power in the period of high imperialism. They throw light upon the relations between the missions, the colonial movement and colonial policy in Imperial Germany and between missionary work, colonial rule and the colonial economy in the Reich's overseas empire.

Grunder's book is a habilitation dissertation for the History Department of Münster University's Faculty of Philosophy. This

study, which endeavours to analyze the network of relations between Christian missions and German imperialism, concentrates upon the former German "Protectorates" in Africa and upon the Kiaochow "leased territory" while only occasional reference is made to the German acquisition in the Pacific.

Although spreading the Gospel and Christianization of the world was one of the first and strongest reasons for western expansion, previous interpreters of imperialism have either ignored or paid little attention to the missions. In Gründer's view, the West's current intensive discussion of imperialism almost entirely omits the "mission factor". Interest is centred upon questions of power and economic policy, with a clear preference for the latter. Members of both denominations do in principle acknowledge the consequences and problems which have resulted from the interdependence of secular and missionary expansion since the Spanish Conquest in Central and South America. In other words, the current discussion of the missions is concerned with the problem of cultural Europeanism, i.e. the propagation of Christianity in the form of the culture of the "Christian Occident". The phase of extreme expansion precisely during the age of imperialism gives reason to suspect that the diverse inter-relationships between the missions and imperialism were by no means the undesired by-product of an autonomous missionary movement but, instead, derived from specific political, economic and social conditions in the home countries and possibly from socio-political changes in the colonies.

In his dissertation Gründer draws upon an extensive corpus of documentation which has so far been largely ignored by researchers. Usually well-filed or preserved, it is found particularly in the archives of missions and churches to which the author was given access for the first time. Some of the sources and literature employed are included in the extremely detailed and extensive appendix. The author intends to produce a separate volume of sources in the not-too-distant future.

The other book dealing with relations between imperialism and the colonial missions in Imperial Germany is a miscellany edited by Klaus J. Bade. The editor has managed to assemble an international team of authors from very diverse areas of research and experience: German and European spiritual and intellectual history, colonial history and the development of the Third World, ecclesiastical and religious history, missions and missionary history and missionary work.

European colonial imperialism can be viewed from two aspects – the European and the overseas angles. More recent research into imperialism takes both aspects and their interrelations into consid-

eration when forming its theories. Thus missionary history considers the history of the missionary societies at home, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the history of missionary work overseas. The missions and colonial rule are not necessarily and universally concomitant in history. Before the period of "modern" colonial imperialism with its steady expansion of formal direct territorial rule, Christian missionary work was carried on in many overseas regions without the special problems aroused by the "colonial situation", but missionary societies came within the spheres of colonial rule or zones of colonial influence in the early 1880's when the European nations rushed into competition over the political and economic distribution of undominated overseas regions.

The general concept of Bade's miscellany as outlined above is given body by the separate detailed contributions on selected themes with a wealth of empirical material. In his introduction the editor describes the genesis of the colonial empire of Imperial Germany and colonial and missionary history in Germany and in the overseas regions affected by it. His contribution deals with the links between the missions and western civilization and between indigenous culture and the colonial economy. Attention is also given to the interdenominational competition between the missions and the problem of spiritual authority and secular power in the overseas regions.

The first part of the book describes the conceptions of colonial missionary work in Germany, their genesis and positions. The second part concentrates upon the practical work of the colonial mission in the German Protectorates in Africa, the Pacific and Kiaochow. The book ends with an examination by Ernst Damann of "German missions in the former German colonies between the two world wars". As a guide for further study, the appendix contains a selection of literature and some maps of the colonies which make the text easier to understand.

Overall, these two books are important topical publications on imperialism and the colonial missions which can be recommended to all those interested in that subject. Whereas one book has the merit of a fundamental study of sources and the presentation of new, hitherto undisclosed sources, the miscellany is distinguished by the broad range of the subject-matter and the attempt as far as possible to provide complete historical coverage.

Dr. Karl-Heinz W. Bechtold, Tübingen