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Review: *American Radio in China: International Encounters with Technology and Communications, 1919–41* by Michael A. Krysko

Gerd Horten

Concordia University - Portland, ghorten@cu-portland.edu

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fundamentally similar to or different from that of other empires? Perhaps a publisher's page count (looking toward course adoptions) led to the cursory treatment of the punitive expeditions after August 1900, during which some allied units destroyed whole villages. It is unfortunate, too, that the only map providing an overview of the Dagu-Tianjin-Beijing corridor is indecipherable.

Shippensburg University

ROBERT SHAFFER

American Radio in China: International Encounters with Technology and Communications, 1919–41. By Michael A. Krysko. (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. xiii + 286 pp. \$85)

Michael Krysko's study demonstrates once again that a book about failures can still make for very intriguing and enlightening reading. As the author points out, none of the American radio ventures in East Asia in the 1920s and 1930s lasted very long or unfolded according to their optimistic designs. As Krysko concedes at the outset, the U.S. effort "to use radio as a means of expanding American economic and cultural power fell victim to the region's broader political, economic, and diplomatic struggles" (p. 3). Despite this "comedy of *mis*-communication" (p. 4), however, the author insightfully traces the complicated intersections between culture, politics, and diplomacy and highlights the significance of the U.S. radio stations for the expatriate American audiences during the few short years that they were in operation.

Krysko's book focuses on three American radio ventures in East Asia in the 1920s and 1930s: the futile attempts to develop transpacific radio communication (radio telegraphy), the impact of the short-wave radio station W6XBE (later renamed KGEL), based in San Francisco, and the short-lived career of the Christian broadcasting station XMHD, located in Shanghai. Of the six chapters in the book, the first two on radio telegraphy are slightly less engaging because they trace in great detail the paths of these failed business ventures. But Krysko does convincingly highlight the arrogance and myopia of American businessmen connected with the Federal Telegraph Company and later the Radio Corporation of America (RCA), who believed that they could simply impose their business plans on a weak Chinese government. Although politically and economically weaker, their Chinese counterparts still knew how to strangle these initiatives adroitly since they did not coincide with their own priorities and interests.

The increasingly tense relationship between the nationalist Chinese government and an expansionist Japan in the 1930s provides the backdrop to the latter chapters of the book. They also underscore one of Krysko's main points, which emphasizes that the utopian plans of broadcasting enthusiasts who saw radio as a vehicle for connectedness and mutual understanding often succumbed to political tensions and historical realities. This was certainly true for the short-wave radio station W6XBE-KGEL, which went on the air in 1939. For one, it never reached any significant Chinese audiences but rather became the home-away-from-home for the American expatriate community in East Asia. As the tensions between the United States and Japan increased, the station was the target of intensified jamming by the Japanese government.

Equally significant for American audiences in East Asia was the Christian and missionary-based station XMHD in Shanghai, which started its broadcasts in 1937. One of the real strengths of Krysko's study is that he captures the importance of these stations for their audiences through numerous listener responses and letters written by American expatriates. In addition, as the Japanese bombing raids intensified, station XMHD and its famed broadcaster Carroll Alcott became the last reliable source for both information and political and moral inspiration. Not surprisingly, this radio war heated up parallel to the deteriorating diplomatic situation between Japan and the United States, but in this case it united the American radio station and the Chinese government against a common Japanese enemy.

Overall, Krysko's well-researched and detailed study is a welcome addition to the literature on American radio. It covers an overlooked aspect of international broadcasting and includes instructive lessons for media historians, as well as for anyone interested in U.S.-East Asian relations in the decades prior to World War II.

Concordia University, Portland, Oregon

GERD HORTEN

The Vietnam War Debate: Hans J. Morgenthau and the Attempt to Halt the Drift into Disaster. By Louis B. Zimmer. (Lanham, Md., Lexington Books, 2011. xxxix + 389 pp. \$85)

As debates go, the Vietnam War occupies a special place in the literature of the twentieth century. Since America's hasty retreat from Saigon, a surfeit of scholarship has nearly made a sport of the