

historical importance. This timely, lucid, and highly engaging book needs to find as wide an audience as possible.

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ZHANG, MENG. *Timber and Forestry in Qing China. Sustaining the Market.* [Culture, Place, and Nature.] University of Washington Press, Seattle (WA) 2021. xxi, 255 pp. Ill. Maps. \$99.00. (Paper: \$30.00.)

Meng Zhang's book *Timber and Forestry in Qing China: Sustaining the Market* explores the development and expansion of the timber market in late imperial China. Examining complex commercial networks, timber trade routes, property rights, and forestry institutions, Zhang shows how a constant supply of timber was ensured by a diverse group of local actors, mainly landowners, growers, lumberjacks, porters, rafters, manufacturers, brokers, and sellers. Contrary to the generally accepted view that the country suffered from massive deforestation in the late imperial period, Zhang presents a success story in terms of forest management and sustainability. In underlining the essential role of intermediary actors in the timber trade and describing market-oriented replantation practices as effective examples of reforestation, Zhang also challenges the universality of state-centred environmentalism. Her book is impressive in using rich empirical data and in providing important theoretical insights into the interrelationship between state, market, and forestry.

The book is organized into five main chapters, each touching upon different aspects of forestry in Qing China. The first two chapters set the stage by portraying the structure of the interregional trade system. The first chapter examines the question of changes in how the state procured timber throughout the late imperial period. Zhang states that there was a transition in this period from direct state control over forests and labour to indirect control through various market actors in the timber supply chain. As a result of the incorporation of remote forests into timber trade networks, the state dramatically increased market purchases to meet its demand for timber. Zhang demonstrates that state expansion and market development mutually reinforced each other throughout this period. As a continuation of this discussion, the second chapter focuses on the expansion of the timber market and the evolution of state management of customs revenues in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. How the administration attempted to find a balance between increasing revenues and avoiding overburdening commerce, how the centres of interregional timber trade shifted throughout these two centuries, what role plantation forestry played in sustaining a consistent supply of timber, and how the system of timber measurement and pricing was standardized are some of the topics that Zhang discusses in this chapter.

In the third chapter, Zhang traces the practices helping to sustain a regime of resource production that enabled a reliable supply of timber. After explaining how

the increasing demand from the market and the state for timber triggered the expansion of plantation forestry in China, Zhang addresses the potential risks related to this process. According to her, one major challenge was the long growth duration of China fir – the most widely used tree species in plantation forestry. She argues that it was the flexible regime of property and tenancy – based on private smallholding, rotational planting, and shareholding, which allowed shares to be divided and transferred through written contracts – that made it possible for the landowners and planters to avoid the risks associated with the long period of tree growth. In other words, the combination of private ownership, local practices, and market dynamics played a significant role in reducing potential risks and ensuring a constant supply of timber.

The importance of economic institutions in interregional trade and administrative practices is the focal point of the following chapters. In these, Zhang mainly focuses on licensed timber brokers and commercial associations. The fourth chapter discusses the role of brokers in long-distance trade. Zhang stresses that the importance of licensed timber brokers stemmed from their extensive knowledge of market tendencies. In addition to matching sellers and buyers and enabling credit flow from urban centres to rural areas, licensed timber brokers constituted a vital actor in sustaining the resources for imperial needs as the official procurement of timber was gradually delegated to these intermediaries. The influence of these mediators increased in parallel with the Qing state's shift from bureaucratic forest management to indirect measures. Zhang also draws attention to the role of timber brokers in hiring skilled labourers, who were specialized in various steps of timber supply, such as logging, manufacturing, measurement, and transportation. As rafting was a prominent method of transportation, the mobilization of labourers specialized in manoeuvring timber rafts and raft fastening was important.

The fifth chapter focuses on the functions of trade associations in the second half of the nineteenth century. The major aim of this chapter is to reveal the connections between the administrative responsibilities of trade associations and the state and the economic functions of these associations in the market. Zhang emphasizes that even though the state's capacity to tax directly increased considerably in the 1850s, it remained incapable of replacing old indirect practices. Instead, merchant organizations were incorporated into the local taxation regime through the rhetoric of undertaking official duties. In performing this task, merchant organizations played a mediating role between their members and the state. Moreover, these organizations provided their members with exclusive access to certain benefits, including legal assistance, market information, and collective taxation. In treating the administrative and economic functions of trade associations as connected roles, Zhang goes beyond the dichotomy of state versus market. She also makes a comparison between Chinese trade associations and European merchant guilds in terms of their rights and their relationship with the government. According to Zhang, the coexistence of multiple associations in the same local trade and their limited and constantly challenged authority were the major differences among trade associations in China.

*Timber and Forestry in Qing China* contributes to the economic and environmental history of early modern China, but also to more general debates in environmental studies such as sustainability, the function of local institutions in natural resource

management, forest property, and environmental governance. In highlighting the continuities in Chinese forestry, this book also provides hints on the potential of historical practices to contribute to contemporary environmental issues. Furthermore, offering vivid insights into labourers, who played a crucial role in different stages of timber production, such as cutting, processing, and transportation, Zhang's book fills a gap in current knowledge about the history of forest labourers. In short, this thoroughly researched study is of significant value to environmental, economic, and social historians dealing with forestry institutions, timber trade, and forestry labour.

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GREEN, JOHN. Willi Münzenberg. Fighter against Fascism and Stalinism. [Routledge Studies in Radical History and Politics.] Routledge, London [etc.] 2019. xiii, 288 pp. Ill. £120.00. (Paper, E-book: £34.99.)

During the second and third decades of the twentieth century, the German Willi (birth name Wilhelm) Münzenberg, born in 1889 in Erfurt, a town in Thuringia, was a prominent propagandist and creative organizer, as well as an initiator of various media concerns supportive of socialist internationalism and solidarity, and of the Soviet Union as leader of the communist movement. He fought capitalism, imperialism, war, and fascism. In the early summer of 1940, as a refugee in France, shortly after the Reichstag fire on 27 February 1933, he died a still not clarified violent death as he sought to escape the persecuting Nazi occupier. What prompted John Green to write a new (the fifth) biography of Münzenberg?

In the "Introduction" he enumerates multiple yet interrelated reasons for his endeavour by reviewing three of his biographical predecessors: Babette Gross, Münzenberg's life partner since the early 1920s: *Willi Münzenberg. Eine politische Biographie* (1967, English translation 1974); Sean McMeekin: *The Red Millionaire: A Political Biography of Willi Münzenberg: Moscow's Secret Propaganda Tsar in the West, 1917–1940* (2003); and Stephen Koch: *Double Lives: Stalin, Willi Münzenberg and the Seduction of the Intellectuals* (2004). He does not include Alain Dugrand and Frédéric Laurent: *Willi Münzenberg. Artiste en révolution (1889–1940)* (2008), though it is in the "Select Bibliography".

Besides the account of personal and political eyewitness Babette Gross, whose work he judges "undoubtedly the most accurate portrayal" (p. 3), Green, following the "Select Bibliography" and the "Acknowledgements", relies on well-researched case studies, particularly those published in the last ten to twenty years, as well as on re-edited or translated reminiscences of contemporaries up to those of Babette, and those of her son from an earlier marriage, Peter Gross, *Willi Münzenberg – A Memory* (2007). Green draws also on autobiographical writings of Münzenberg