



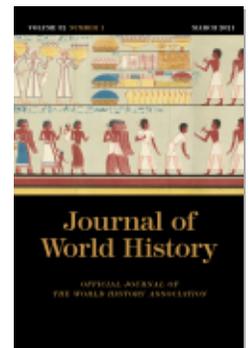
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*German Science in the Age of Empire: Enterprise, Opportunity
and the Schlagintweit Brothers* by Moritz Von Brescius
(review)

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Journal of World History, Volume 32, Number 1, March 2021, pp. 173-176
(Review)

Published by University of Hawai'i Press



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of a permanent British Consul in China and a British commercial settlement independent of the East India Company. The George Smiths also engaged in the tide turning against the East India Company as they advised Henry Dundas, William Pitt the Younger and Charles Cathcart, leader of the first Embassy to China (1786).

Jessica Hanser, in her clever and incisive disentangling of the affairs of the three George Smiths provides a window into operations of Britain's trade with India and China and some of its great events. Not just the George Smiths, but characters from David Scott, the nawab of Arcot, Henry Dundas, Governor Li Zhiying, Cathcart and Macartney, William Pitt the younger and Adam Smith feature in this drama of commerce, finance and political crisis, their own backgrounds, contexts and the parts they played clearly outlined.

Through the George Smiths and their families, Jessica Hanser's beautifully-written book brings us into the precarious lives of European merchants on ship, in expatriate communities in Canton, Macau, Madras and Bombay, and in their family networks back in the UK. Scattered and meticulously stitched together records unlock much business, family and political history of her characters, but less of their personalities, their private passions, anxieties and disappointments. Her book opens many future directions for research. What part did other European traders play in the affairs of the George Smiths, for example, the Scots, Irish and Germans who passed in an out of private trade and participation in the Danish, Swedish and Dutch East India Companies? And what of the borrowers, the Hong merchants, such as Geowqua, Yngshaw and Pinqua? They remain shadowy figures, their personal and family experiences of debt and financial crisis unexplored. Jessica Hanser concludes welcoming the prospect from more historians of the many "as-yet-untold stories" of merchants and traders at the edges of empire.

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German Science in the Age of Empire: Enterprise, Opportunity and the Schlagintweit Brothers. By MORITZ VON BRESCIUS.

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018. xiv + 414 pp.
ISBN 978-1-108-42732-6. \$120.00 (hardcover).

There is something romantic about the distinctly nineteenth-century phrase "itinerant naturalist." That romanticisation, however,

also comes at a certain cost. In the nineteenth century, European scientists were often agents of empire, their theories and methods tied to the expansionist imperial aspirations of the European powers. Crucially, however, that agency was surprisingly transnational, and the scientists who furthered the imperialist frontiers often did so not for their own native countries but for others. Henry Morton Stanley may today be best remembered for finding his fellow Briton David Livingstone, but Stanley had already served in the American Civil War (on both sides), and then entered the service of the Belgian crown, paving the way for the brutal Belgian colonisation of the Congo. Moritz von Brescius, in his new work, examines the lives of Livingstone and Stanley's contemporaries—Adolph, Hermann, and Robert Schlagintweit—whose careers offer similar, sometimes surprising insights not only into the development of science in the nineteenth century, but how this pursuit of knowledge dovetailed with larger, geopolitical objectives.

This work is “the first monograph on the contested careers of German scientific travellers in a foreign empire in the nineteenth century” (p. 4). It is difficult to understand *how* the Schlagintweits have escaped greater attention. While Brescius focuses on the three aforementioned brothers, there were six Schlagintweit siblings, each making an impact on ethnography, geography, and colonial studies, ranging between British India, Tibet, Morocco, and Asia Minor, and in the services of the British, the Spanish, and the Ottoman Empire. Indeed, Adolph, Hermann, and Robert were hardly obscure figures in their own times, garnering the explicit support and advocacy of Alexander von Humboldt and the Prussian crown (in spite of being Bavarian; their father, a prominent Munich-based eye surgeon, operated on Maximilian II's mistress, the actress Lola Montez). Part of the answer comes from the low regard in which the Schlagintweits were held by the same scientific community that they so tirelessly served. Humboldt's intervention, for example, was accompanied by a corresponding British scepticism; far from being pioneers, the Schlagintweits were, to the British, little more than “contributors.” Time and again, their skills and expertise were called into question. In 1854, at the start of their careers, Nathaniel Wallich dismissed them as “arch-puffers.” When Adolph was captured by Wali Khan during the Kashgar uprising in 1857, and subsequently beheaded, his death was greeted by the British whom he was serving at the time with noted apathy, leading his guide to write a series of increasingly exasperated letters to the authorities. Scientific authorities were similarly scathing, with the leading journal *Athenaeum* ridiculing them for their “absolute

worthlessness" (p. 316). (The author, with some understatement, refers to the "mixed legacy" of the brothers in Britain; he should be commended for his restraint.)

With all this in mind, then, it is already clear that a reappraisal such as that presented by Brescius here is long overdue. Were this simply a collective biography, this would already be the case. But the work does much more than this, using the example of the Schlagintweits as a stand-in for itinerant scientists in general in the service of empire. Along the way, the author encourages the reader to reflect on what the role science plays in imperial expansion, although some questions remain tantalisingly unaddressed. In his aforementioned letters after Adolph's execution, for instance, the companion and guide Mohammad Amin castigated the British for forgetting Adolph, as "that man was killed and was a patriot who wholeheartedly sacrificed his life for the good of his government and compatriots" (p. 195). This statement, on the face of it, is an extraordinary outburst, addressed to the British about a Bavarian with Prussian patronage who was killed while travelling through India. Such notions, especially given the typically "nationalist" reading of empire, beg for a reappraisal of what it meant to be a "patriot"—something admittedly beyond the scope of this work, but teased within it even so.

In another example, Brescius demonstrates the central role the Schlagintweits played in the building of the scientific institutions of British India. Hermann, in particular, conducted a number of crucial experiments involving 250 weather stations situated across the length and breadth of the Raj. As a result of these labours, Hermann pioneered meteorological measurement in India; it was Hermann who determined with scientific certainty that every Indian region enjoyed higher average temperatures throughout the year than their English counterparts (which may, on the face of it, seem an elementary conclusion to draw, but had vital significance for colonial agricultural and settlement practices). Hermann also used the topography of the Himalayas to explain the complex meteorology of Tibet. Yet, as the author reminds us, none of this work was conducted in a geopolitical vacuum, and much of his meteorological work was used to plan retreats and settlements for Europeans, for which he favoured Kashmir. Not even the study of the weather was immune to the pressures of colonial expansionism.

The author's work is an ambitious undertaking and, it must be said, a successful one. *German Science in the Age of Empire* is engagingly written and impressively researched. It covers ground at once familiar and unknown. The author could be forgiven for feeling aggrieved that

the subjects of his study have so far been shamefully unrepresented in the existing historiography; to his great credit, while there is clearly a degree of admiration for the voluminous work of the Schlagintweits (and a not unjustified peevishness that they were maligned by their contemporaries), Brescius does not fall into the trap of writing a hagiography. His subjects are treated critically and their role in furthering the explicitly discriminatory edifices of imperialism is not neglected. Especially in this historical moment, when the instruments of imperialism are subject to welcome reappraisal and in-built systemic exclusionary practices are called into question, an understanding of how science functioned on the ground at the moment of its global expansion is necessary, and it is for this reason among many that this book is highly recommended.

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Peace on Our Terms: The Global Battle for Women's Rights After the First World War. By MONA L. SIEGEL. New York: Columbia University Press, 2020. xii + 321 pp. ISBN 978-0-231-19510-2. \$35.00 (hardcover).

Using the Paris Peace negotiations following World War I as the central catalyst, this work details the feminist activism of women from several different nations in and around the diplomatic proceedings of 1919. As such, it fits with recent scholarly efforts to examine the transnational movements that developed in the twentieth century, broadening investigation to include those that have been neglected in histories of international diplomacy primarily focused on white male actors.

Siegel begins with an investigation of the proceedings of the Inter-Allied Women's Congress that coincided with the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, based on newly accessible evidence, specifically records of the conference secretary, French Jewish feminist Suzanne Grinberg (seized by the Nazis during World War II and subsequently by the Soviets in 1945, only being returned to France at the beginning of the twenty-first century). Women's delegations from the United States, Europe, Egypt, China, and Japan went to Paris in an attempt to ensure women's voices were heard in the peace process. The delegates argued that women should be rewarded with rights and opportunities in return