

Renata Fu-Sheng Franke/Wolfgang Franke eds., *Otto Franke: "Sagt an, ihr fremden Lande", Ostasienreisen Tagebücher und Fotografien (1888-1901)*, Collectanea Serica, Nettetal, Institut Monumenta Serica, 2009. 527 pp.

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As Renata Fu-Sheng Franke explains at the start of her insightful foreword and introduction to this book, Otto Franke—actually her grandfather—held the first full chair of Sinology at the Colonial Institute, Hamburg (later to become Hamburg University). The book is dedicated to the memory of Wolfgang Franke, Renata's father and Otto's son, who passed away three years ago and who had followed in his father's footsteps to become one of the leading German Sinologists of his generation. The present work was edited by Renata and her father after the serendipitous find of five handwritten unpublished journals by Otto Franke recording his exploratory journey to China and neighboring lands at the end of the nineteenth century. The present compilation is mainly composed of these journals, to which several other writings by the great Sinologist have also been added. It is evident that Renata and her father wished to make what were essentially daily jottings of the journey more interesting to readers by incorporating photographs in the family collection that belonged to Otto's brave enterprise. The result has been a rather old-fashioned but nevertheless charming travel journal.

Otto Franke is regarded by many as the grand old man of German Sinology, whose *magnus opus*, *Geschichte des chinesischen Reiches* (History of the Chinese State), published in five volumes from 1930 to 1952—the fifth volume appearing six years after his death—broke new ground in the field of Chinese historiography for the West. He is presented here not so much a scholar as an explorer. For the mentioned reasons the reader also encounters him in a more intimate role, as diary keeper and photographer. The subtitle of the book in German is in fact "East Asia Journey: Journal and Photographs (1888-1901)".

The title of the book includes the cryptic phrase, *Sagt an, ihr fremden Lande*, which may well appear puzzling and irrelevant, until it is realized that it is actually a line taken from rather nostalgic verses written by Otto Franke on the last day of his onward journey to China, as the sun sets before the closed gates of Beijing. In this particular verse the traveler apprehensively questions the strange countries he is about to encounter and asks what they have in store for him. From this it is clear that Otto Franke's journey of exploration was typical of the Romantic era in the West. They bring to mind the setting suns and the longing for oriental splendour of Charles Baudelaire's *L'invitation au voyage*. In fact, if anyone wishes to fully comprehend the allure that the "mysterious" East had at the time on many a Western traveler, including Otto Franke, they should refer to Baudelaire's seminal poem. Even at the turn of the century for most Americans and Europeans China still remained a closed unknown distant land with a culture imbued with exoticism and sensuality. However, as Berkelbach van der Sprenkel has already noted, it was to be Otto Franke's task in his monumental History of the Chinese State to turn this unrealistic vision of China to that of a country where men and women had created a very real history. In this sense his history is also a reflection of the end of the Romantic era. The photographs in this book are indeed further evidence of Franke's new way of looking at China and its

neighbors. The countries that the German Sinologist would explore would include China, Mongolia, Siberia, Korea and Taiwan. His journey also included a six week return trip from Shanghai to Japan, of which there are only four postcards in the book.

Records in the diary start in Berlin, where he embarked on his journey by train, steamboat and various other means of transport at the end of July 1888. They stop in early November of 1893, when his travels in China practically ended in the scenic 天台山 (Tiantai Mountain), in Zhejiang Province. From there he would proceed to Japan, and later undertake a final four month journey that would take him to Manchuria, Mongolia and Siberia. Interestingly, the last leg of his travels was partly inspired by the previous undertaking of the Jesuits Thomas Pereira and Jean François Gerbillon in the late seventeenth century in connection with the historic 尼布楚條約 (Treaty of Nerchinsk). Finally Otto Franke proceeded overland to Moscow and finally Berlin, where he arrived at the end of 1896. That is, it had been an exhausting journey of discovery that had taken just over eight years. Laudably, the reader finds a reproduction of an old 1892 map on pages 216 and 217, on which his route through Europe and across the Russian and Chinese empires has been superimposed. It visually helps the reader to grasp the magnitude of the trip and the fortitude of the traveler.

A book in German will no doubt be considered almost inaccessible by many who may be interested in the figure of Otto Franke but who do not read that language. Such readers are encouraged to at least browse through its pages and enjoy the quaint black and white photographs. They alone tell much about a China once thought to be unique because it was unchanging, but which Otto Franke revealed in a more realistic light, not only through his writings, but as evident in this book, also with the camera.