

Burgess shows, steamships began the process of globalization so important to any study and understanding of modern society.

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C&A: A Family Business in Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, 1911–1961. *By Mark Spoerer, with translation by Jefferson Chase, Patricia C. Sutcliffe, and Patricia Szobar.* Munich: C.H. Beck, 2016. 480 pp. Figures, tables, appendices, bibliography, index. Cloth, €34.95. ISBN: 978-34-0669-8262.

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Reviewed by Jan-Otmar Hesse

Those who grew up in Germany or the Netherlands in the 1970s and 1980s had a high probability of being dressed by the clothing retailer C&A. Subsidiaries of that corporation were to be found in most mid-sized German cities. However, the company's history has been less well known. This book by the German economic historian Mark Spoerer now ends this situation: it unfolds a remarkable history of the Brenninkmeijer family, who started a peddling business and transformed it into a successful international retailing company, operating in several countries, European and non-European. Surprisingly, the fast-growing family—deeply rooted in Catholic values and traditions—continues to run the corporation today. The family council commissioned this company history to deal with its role in the Nazi period, but it opened its archive only up to 1961.

The book proceeds in a strictly chronological order, thereby elaborating on the company's history country by country. Two brothers, Clemens and August Brenninkmeijer, became the forefathers of the later C&A company when they opened a shop for selling fabrics and ladies' wear in Sneek, a small town in the far North of the Netherlands, in 1841, taking the first step away from the peddling business and toward a retailing infrastructure. While living in the small German town of Mettingen, where the family still holds its traditional property, the Brenninkmeijer brothers, together with their eight sons, started to expand their

business and open subsidiaries in the larger Dutch and German cities. The third generation, born around the turn of the century, consisted of no less than twenty-four grandsons of the founders, nearly each of which was equipped with his own shop in the Netherlands, Germany, or the United Kingdom. The company also expanded horizontally, to include men's wear and children's wear, as well as vertically, by opening sewing companies, of which one of the most important was located in Berlin.

Though an international company led by a Dutch Catholic family that regularly gave a certain share of profits to Catholic institutions, the German Brenninkmeijer affiliate participated in the exploitation of Jewish property. Without any scruples—so Spoerer's research suggests—the German Brenninkmeijers bought the property of Jewish competitors at the lowest possible price. The story of Chaim and Fanny Bialystock in Bremen is the most shocking (pp. 168–71): C&A not only insisted it pay no more than two-thirds of the 1931 market value for the house and clothing shop, but also requested a lease for letting the Jewish owners live in their former property until their departure to Belgium was organized. When the shop was destroyed in 1938 on the "Night of Broken Glass," C&A even urged the former owner to compensate Brenninkmeijer for damages to the building. Furthermore, the German company shifted its charity grants from the Catholic Church to the Nazi Party in the 1930s, apparently in exchange for favors in connection with the opening of a shop in Leipzig and protection against the party's attacks on warehouses. A 1938 C&A advertisement, reprinted by Spoerer, describes the company as "pure aryan" (p. 150). In short, the international company run by Dutch Catholic entrepreneurs acted like a straightforward German firm. It even commissioned sewing and other work to the ghetto of Lodz, where SS officials exploited the work of 150,000 Jews, most of them dying, until the end of the war. Spoerer reports on all of these dark parts of the company's history very frankly and in detail. It is certainly deserving of the greatest respect that business historians, as well as the marketing department in charge of commissioning this company history, are able to deal critically with these sad issues.

Two aspects have to be addressed more critically: Spoerer's book takes the bird's-eye view of an economist rather than discussing the evolution of the entrepreneurial decisions in the making. The book is filled with tables on profit-to-revenue ratios, and contains a list of the foundation of all the subcompanies, but does not unfold the decision making behind the numbers. Why did the company really decide to expand to the United States after the war? How did the Dutch and English branches of the family really discuss the practices of the German company during

the Nazi period? The microlevel of decision making is largely absent from Spoerer's book, and there is no information as to whether a lack of sources is the reason.

However, the book ends with a more general chapter on the organization of the family network and the interference between family and business in the case of Brenninkmeijer, which should find the greatest attention among business historians, especially among family-business experts. The Brenninkmeijers chartered a set of rules shortly after World War I on the relation between the company and the family, which is documented as "unitas-principle" in the appendix (p. 371). Spoerer suggests that the very strict application of the "unitas" charter was important for the company's success. The core and decision-making body was the "owner's group." Only male direct successors of the founders were promoted to become members of that circle—as long as they were married to a Catholic woman and proved capable during their apprenticeship in the company. They also had to be between twenty-four and twenty-eight and had to resign from active business at the age of fifty-five. Only in that period could they become owners of the company, though not allowed to manage their own capital; a company-owned investment company was in charge of investment decisions so that the capital of family members was reinvested into the family business. The large number of sons guaranteed the efficiency of this company rule, and expansion opportunities allowed the integration of an ever-larger number of family members into the business. It is a pity that Spoerer only loosely connects these very interesting findings with the vast empirical research on other family firms in the Netherlands and abroad. This would have been very helpful in better understanding what sectoral, historical, generational, and economic preconditions of the company actually drove the applicability of the "unitas-principle." How did it evolve over time? And did it also hold in times of economic crises for the textile business in the 1980s?

The lack of cross-corporate comparison (national and international) is a typical weakness of commissioned company histories for which Spoerer cannot be made responsible and that his book shares with a good amount of similar books that have resulted from the current bull market for company histories in Germany. One therefore has to worry that current academic writing in business history in Germany may become increasingly detached from international scholarship as it continues to specialize in paid projects.

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Jenkins of Mexico: How a Southern Farm Boy Became a Mexican Magnate. *By Andrew Paxman*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. 509 pp. Notes, illustrations, photographs, bibliography, index. Cloth, \$34.95. ISBN: 978-0-19-045574-3.

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Reviewed by Susan Gauss

Today, the world's wealthiest people—like Mexico's Carlos Slim—are household names, so it is striking that so few have heard of William Jenkins. Even in Mexico, where Jenkins was once arguably the richest person, he is relatively unknown, despite his wealth being linked to Slim's later rise. But as Andrew Paxman reveals in this deeply researched and vividly written biography, Jenkins deserves remembering, not least because, despite being American-born, he embodies Mexico's twentieth-century economic growth. Paxman covers a lot of ground, from Jenkins's years as a farm boy in Tennessee to his prerevolutionary forays into Mexican business, his bold, revolutionary-era entrepreneurialism, and his textile, sugar, film, and cotton ventures, and finally through his philanthropic years. In the end, Paxman has produced a novel and often brilliant analysis of business and politics in modern Mexico.

Puebla is at the heart of Jenkins's story. According to Paxman, with its dominant textile industry, parochial elites, cronyism, labor unrest, and undercapitalized hosiery sector, it was, contrary to conventional wisdom, the ideal setting for an ambitious entrepreneur. When the Revolution exacerbated weaknesses in Puebla's industrial and agricultural sectors, entrepreneurs like Jenkins pounced. Jenkins quickly outpaced competitors in the hosiery industry using technological innovation, building capital that enabled him to then diversify. He also learned the importance of political connections to business success. However, as Paxman shows, Jenkins understood throughout his career that connections alone could not replace innovation and hard work if one wanted to succeed.

During more than six decades in Mexico, Jenkins displayed a preternatural ability to read and respond to the prevailing zeitgeists. The revolutionary violence that unsettled many businesses was, to Jenkins, an opportunity to make predatory loans to enfeebled owners. Persistent political instability prompted him to cultivate relationships with diverse political, military, and church officials. Business savvy explains