

deutlich. Für ihn gibt es keine universellen Werte und demokratische Institutionen lassen sich weder kopieren, noch führen sie zwangsläufig zu Erfolg. Eine Regierung sollte nach ihrer Effizienz im Hinblick auf das gesamte Volk beurteilt werden. Kapitel neun gibt einen Einblick, wie sich das strategische Denken Lees über die Zeit gewandelt hat. Erneut werden seine Befürwortung von Pragmatismus, individuellem Anreiz und gemeinschaftlicher Ordnung betont.

Das Buch ist eine Ehrerbietung an Lee und die Autoren unternehmen auch nicht den Versuch, diesen Eindruck zu verhindern. Auf das kurz gehaltene Vorwort von Henry A. Kissinger folgt ein Unterkapitel, welches die Frage „Who is Lee Kuan Yew?“ simpel mit „A strategist's strategist, A leader's leader, A mentor's mentor“ beantwortet. Es folgen Lobpreisungen von Führungspersönlichkeiten aus Politik, Wirtschaft und meinungsbildenden Kreisen, bei denen einzig das Zitat von Nicholas Kristof der New York Times einen Ansatz von möglichen negativen Aspekten des Schaffens Lee verrät. Auch die erarbeiteten Antworten auf die eigentlich interessant zusammengestellten Fragen bleiben unreflektiert stehen.

Die Machart des Werkes ist als simpel zu bezeichnen. Die Antworten stammen zwar von Lee, sind jedoch aus Versatzstücken anderer Werke und verschiedener Epochen zusammengesetzt. So wundert man sich als Leser, wenn in Absätzen, die für das 21. Jahrhundert Einsichten bieten sollen, von den zwei großen weltpolitischen Blöcken oder dem störenden Einfluss mächtiger britischer Gewerkschaften die Rede ist. Das Zusammensetzen thematisch zusammenhängender Antworten wäre wohl ähnlich jemandem möglich, der Lee seit Jahren verfolgt. Dass die Autoren im abschließenden 10. Kapitel auf eigene Einsichten verzichten und nur die für sie bedeutendsten zwanzig Abschnitte einfach wiederholen, unterstreicht diesen Eindruck.

Das Paradoxe ist daher, dass das Buch dennoch für ein gewisses Publikum ein kurz-

weiliges Lesevergnügen bieten kann, was aber einzig an Lee Kuan Yew liegt. Jedoch ist der unkritische Umgang fehlleitend für jene ohne Vorwissen, und für diejenigen, die sich bereits intensiver mit Lee auseinandergesetzt haben, bietet diese fast gläubige Hommage kaum Mehrwert.

Christoph Unrast

Patricia L. Maclachlan:
The People's Post Office. The History and Politics of the Japanese Postal System, 1971–2010

Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2011.
 358 S., EUR 36,00

The history of a postal system may not seem to appear as the most intellectually exciting subject matter. Yet Japan's Post Office was and remains unique – in its original developmental objectives, as a public-private partnership, with its privileged role as a huge savings bank and life insurer, as a major source of finance for Japan's secondary public work's budget, and last but not least as a reliable deliverer of votes within the LDP's political machine in the countryside. This eminent political role also explains the privatization and reform attempts undertaken by PMs Nakasone, Hashimoto and Koizumi, and the fierce resistance which they encountered.

Professor Maclachlan has researched her subject for almost a decade in meticulous detail with lots of archive work, field visits and impressive lists of interviews. Few questions are left unanswered. Yet unfortunately for the reader her writing style follows the academic format currently in fashion and is excessively repetitive: The same facts and circumstances are announced in each chapter, elaborated and then summarized, as well as often enough repeated in later chapters.

Japan's modern postal system in the Meiji era was modelled after the British pattern.

Yet most of its postmasters were unique in running local post offices from their private owned facilities originally without remuneration. Typically they were notables, large landowners, village headmen or local politicians. The function of commissioned postmaster was usually handed on from one generation to the next. After WWII the institution was attacked by the left wing postal workers union as a remnant of Japan's feudal past. Yet it was defended by conservative politicians, thus cementing an electoral alliance which lasted well until PM Koizumi's privatization initiatives of 2002–2005. Since they were designed as “civil servants” in 1948, the postmasters had to abstain from overt electoral activities. Yet they did so through retired colleagues, their wives and relatives and became one of the backbones of LDP MP's local party organizations, and were typically allied with postal tribesmen (*yosei zoku*) of the Tanaka faction and its successors. At the height of their power in 1980 the postmasters were able to mobilize more than one million votes for their Upper House candidate.

With their tax exempt status and government guarantees for deposits and insurance policies and their nationwide networks and close customer contacts the post offices were very successful in attracting deposits and life insurance policies, dwarfing their private sector competitors. Funds were almost all channelled into Japan's secondary budget, the Fiscal Investment and Loan Programme (FILP), where they initially financed industrial development, but later since the 1990s mostly funded public works.

Already his grandfather as Minister for Posts and Communications in 1929/31 had in vain attempted to privatize the telephone and telegraph services. Koizumi as prime minister wished to break the support of the post masters to his intra party enemies and the FILP nexus which funded their pork barrel projects. The drama of the reform and privatization struggle – and the postmasters' (now allied with the unions fearing for their jobs)

dogged resistance – rightly forms a large part of the book. Although the postal service was popular with the Japanese public – due also to its low cost efficiency, friendly paternalism and numerous social services in the depopulating countryside –, Koizumi's charisma, single mindedness and centralization of power helped to isolate his intraparty opponents of the reforms (as well as the postmasters and their employees) and to push through a two step reform and privatization process in 2002 and 2005: The corporatization of the former state organization, the end of its tax and guarantee privileges and its disaggregation into four separate business lines: mail services, postal bank, life insurance, networks and a holding company, which was to be privatized until 2017.

Although efficiency gains have been made since and new cost effective parcel delivery services have been introduced, the future of the four separate postal services does not look bright. Mail services are in terminal decline, while wage and delivery costs remain high. Savings deposits are going down in a dissaving aging population. Equally the life insurance business is shrinking.

With the DPJ's landslide victory in 2009 the enemies of the privatization process were back in power. Until 2011 they did their best to water down the reform and to delay the sales.

The author presents these positions and the tactics employed by both sides in great detail backed-up by open sources as well as interviews with key actors. As a result she has produced an impressive history of this uniquely important institution, which however now seems to go the way towards a nondescript logistics and financial services group. It is very useful that this analytical history has been written. Yet a more succinct and better structured version would have greatly enhanced reading pleasures.

Albrecht Rothacher