

Reviews

KLAUS F. GEIGER / MANFRED KIESERLING (eds.), *Asiatische Werte: Eine Debatte und ihr Kontext*. Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, 2000. 138 pages, € 15,30. ISBN 3-89691-489-8

In this book, four German and seven Asian authors discuss Asian values from different angles and based on different concepts. In his introduction Manfred Kieserling tries to explain the context of the debate on Asian values. Mentioning that a huge part of Asia is in fact excluded when Asian values are discussed, he points out that although Asian values are used to explain economic development, it might rather be a loss of values hand in hand with development. Manfred Kieserling discusses rapid urbanisation and migration as indicators of the diverse changes in Asian countries. His arguments are not very convincing, i.e. he states that 10% of the people of the region are migrants, but does not mention any time period for this calculation. Too many faults in orthography (i.e. "Kambodia", "materialiter", "konfzianisch", "Djakarta") and grammar make his text difficult reading.

Karl-Heinz Pohl gives a very interesting analysis of the "Chinese World" with the Confucian philosophy as the basis of Asian values and treats the impact of basic social norms on economic development. But he also points out that this development is linked with Western ideas and structures and emphasises the remarkable diversity within Asia, which makes it almost obsolete to talk about Asian values in general.

Eun-Jeung Lee starts with a historical overview of the debate about Asian values, which is in fact a debate about Confucianism. She shows that the philosophy of Confucianism was used to explain the rapid economic development of some Asian countries but was also seen as the reason for the economic crisis. Especially a strong self-discipline as a consequence of Confucianism is often seen as an explanation for development. Eun-Jeung Lee gives examples of how some "experts" ignore reality when talking about Asian values. She proposes to separate culture and development in the debate.

Beng Huat Chua shows that most Confucian values correspond with former Western values and are thus not unique to Asia. However, he points out that the concept of "collectivism" can hardly be found in Western societies, neither past or present. He sees collectivism as the key to Asian values and uses the term "Kommunitarismus" for his remarks on the revival of "the social".

Klaus F. Geiger analyses the debate on Asian values in the German context. He shows the strategic use of the debate, different connotations and explanations by different German authors and media. However, it is questionable whether it is justified to speak of a German context. Although German media are analysed, they only reflect personal ideas.

U-Seok Seo writes about his personal experience as an Asian socialised in a hierarchical world and living in a "society of individualism" in Germany.

Finally, Sabine Schlieper deals with East Asia as a topic in school and the experiences of German students living with guest families in South Korea.

Attached to the contributions is a paper from the Singaporean Parliament on "Shared Values" from 1991.

The quality of the articles in this book varies. While some give deep analysis, others are rather superficial. The main conclusion of this book is that Asian values are not Asian values, since Asian societies, ideologies, philosophies, lifestyles and also economies show many differences. Most authors therefore discuss Confucian values instead of Asian values. The debate on Asian values seems to be more strategic than a reflection of reality. Nor are Confucian values representative for all Asian societies. Since most of the authors concentrate on or even come from Chinese culture, where Confucianism is dominant, the editors contradict their own intention of drawing a differentiated picture of the debate on Asian values.

Harald Leisch

CHRISTIAN WENDEBOURG, *Östliche Religionen und evangelischer Glaube. Ein Unterrichtsprojekt für die 10. Jahrgangsstufe*. Arbeitshilfe für den evangelischen Religionsunterricht an Gymnasien. Herausgegeben von der Gymnasialpädagogischen Materialstelle der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche in Bayern. Marquardsenstraße 2, 91054 Erlangen. Bestellungen nur dort, kein Bezug über den Buchhandel

Band 1: Einführung und Unterrichtsentwürfe, mit Bibliographie und Medienverzeichnis. 2001. 159 Seiten, DIN A4. Schutzgebühr DM 15,-

Band 2: Materialien. 2001. 154 Seiten, DIN A4. Schutzgebühr DM 18,-

Band 3: Religionskundliche und religionstheologische Einführung. 2002. 365 Seiten, DIN A4. Schutzgebühr € 20,-

Äußerer Anlass dieses umfangreichen Projektes für den evangelischen Unterricht in der Untersekunda an bayerischen Gymnasien ist der Lehrplan von 1993, der die Beschäftigung mit „Fernöstlicher Religion und Religiosität“ verbindlich vorschreibt. Christian Wendebourg, Pfarrer an der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Apostelkirche in München-Solln und mit eigenen praktischen Erfahrungen auch im Schulunterricht, hatte diese Aufgabe zusätzlich zu den vielfältigen Verpflichtungen als Großstadt-Pfarrer übernommen, weil ihn neben den konkreten Inhalten der östlichen Religionen vor allem die hermeneutische Frage interessierte: „Wie soll und kann ich mit einem Gegenstand angemessen umgehen, dessen Sprachen mir fremd sind und dessen Begrifflichkeit sich mir – selbst wenn ich jene beherrschte – nur eingeschränkt erschließen kann. Es sind ja im Kern ‚mystische‘, ‚schweigende‘ Religionen. Auch Besuche in hinduistischen und buddhistischen Meditationszentren halfen hier nur bedingt weiter.“ (Bd. 1, S. 3) So ging es ihm bei seiner Arbeit auch nicht um eine „additive Religionskunde“, sondern vor allem um „eine eigene theologische Verhältnisbestimmung, um einen konsistenten ‚roten Faden‘ aus christlicher, speziell evangelischer