

The reviews in Internationales Asienforum try to give a brief evaluation of recent German publications.

HELMUT LAUMER: Die Warendistribution in Japan. Versuch eines Vergleiches mit der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. (Mitteilungen des Instituts für Asienkunde, Nr. 107). Hamburg: Selbstverlag, 1979. DM 15. -

Helmut Laumer, Ph.D. in economics and author of several books and essays, has been an associate of the Institute for Economic Research (Ifo) in Munich since 1955. In 1966-67 and 1969 he was in Uganda, where he served as an adviser to the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development. Subsequent study tours brought him to Latin America, the USA, South and East Asia. This author and his book apparently confirmed the theory which stipulates that comparative studies can only succeed when a person has a profound knowledge of his own country within the area under investigation and when, in the process, he can also transcend his own social context.

Other than in the area of production, where the leading technical and economic principles of rationalisation and productivity have by and large led to uniformity in the whole world, the area of commerce (distribution of commodities) is very strongly determined by the organisational structures, traditions and customs specific to a country. Very often, this makes it more difficult for someone familiar with the branch to gain an insight into this area. For example, the language of sales personnel is often so specific that an outsider requires additional explanations. Thus, the publication of Laumer's book, which attempts "to improve German exporters' level of knowledge about Japan's distribution economy" and to make a "comparison of the conditions in the Federal Republic of Germany, wherever possible and meaningful - in order to make the typical features and specific peculiarities clearer", is welcome.

The book consists of four main chapters. The first chapter deals with determining factors of trade structure in Japan. Historical and cultural influences, as well as Japan's general economic structure, are discussed here; at the same time, special attention is given to legislation favouring the middle class. The second chapter treats the economic significance of trade. The third chapter, which forms the core of the study, depicts commodity distribution in two parts. First, the wholesale trade is systematically examined by branch: textiles, garments and confection, agricultural products, animal and fishery products (the tragi-comic discussion over the extremely high price of beef, which took place all over Japan some time ago, must be kept in mind), food and beverages, pharmaceutical products and cosmetics, chemicals, minerals and mineral products, machines and vehicles, construction materials, furniture and furnishings. In the second part of the chapter the factors and char-

acteristic conditions distinguishing the current levels of the retail trade are analysed. The fourth chapter of the book summarizes the theses.

Long before the Second World war, Japan suffered from a high population growth rate which persisted in the form of latent unemployment in the area of agriculture. The Japanese government succeeded in accelerating industrialisation and inducing the population to make the transition from the primary to the secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy by enforcing economic and population policies. Today, Japan is generally proud of the fact that robots are increasingly employed working in factories and that the majority of the population is engaged in the tertiary sector. However, per capita worker productivity is lower there. Small family business predominate; commodity distribution is very labour-intensive. The moral obligations of shopkeepers towards wholesale firms are great. But the latter can and must offer certain protection in difficult circumstances.

The characteristics mentioned may seem "unclear" to Europeans and may create the impression that at some point the Japanese consumer will realize that the distribution system must adapt to western models. In Japan, however, most consumers share the opinion that in the end they derive many benefits from this system. The consumer wouldn't dream of doing without home delivery of beverages, vegetables, meat and warm meals, etc. Laumer himself doubts that significant changes will occur. For it is clear that in Japan's wholesale and retail trade traditional values such as harmony and willingness to oblige (*wa no seishin*, *otagaisama*) have left deep impressions.

Yoko Teichler-Urata

HI-YOUNG CHO: Die Bedeutung des Bankensystems für die wirtschaftliche Entwicklung Südkoreas. (Schriftenreihe zur Industrie- und Entwicklungspolitik, Band 22). Berlin-München: Duncker und Humblot, 1977. 219 pages, DM 68. -

The book, printed with the support of the "Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung" and of the West-German Ministry of Development and Cooperation - contains a lot of facts about the South Korean banking system (on most issues unfortunately only until 1971). The author does not present a theoretical framework that would help to situate the information provided in a specific context.

Of the four chapters the first gives a survey of the social and economic background and the second the historical development as well as the present form of the banking system in Korea. Chapter III investigates the quantitative and qualitative influences of the banking system on economic development in South