

Reviews

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

Bernhard Dahm, Emanzipationsversuche von kolonialer Herrschaft in Südostasien. Die Philippinen und Indonesien, ein Vergleich. (Schriften des Instituts für Asienkunde in Hamburg, Bd. 37). Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1974. 171 pages. (English summary) DM 58,-.

This is the first of two volumes dealing with the struggle for independence in the Philippines, Indonesia, Burma and Thailand. Although, as the author notes, the Philippines and Indonesia share a similar geographical structure, racial composition, mode of production and climatic conditions, their responses to the colonial powers differed widely. He analyses the reasons for this divergent development and finds four main factors. Firstly, the Spanish came to the Philippines with much religious zeal and immediately penetrated the interior to Christianize the population. The Dutch colony was long run by a private company, interested in trade only. Thus, Islam had time to establish itself before the Dutch started trying to Christianize Indonesia. The Indonesian islands had their own strong cultures, which the Philippines lacked. So, during their struggle for emancipation, the Indonesians were able to fall back on their own cultures with their animistic, Buddhist, Hindu and Islamic elements. In contrast, the leaders of the Philippine revolutionary groups identified with the Christian values and philosophy of their colonial masters. Finally, the Dutch put the Chinese between themselves and the Indonesians, thus preventing the development of an Indonesian middle class, whereas the Philippine middle class was indigenous. What makes this work so interesting is that the author pays considerable attention to the relations between the leaders of revolutionary groups and their "masses" and shows how the leaders appealed to and dealt with their followers. The leaders in the Philippines were influenced by liberal ideas (independence came in 1898, when the USA had taken over from Spain). In Indonesia, to which independence came half a century later, after the Japanese had been thrown out in 1945, socialist and communist ideas influenced the leaders. The difference lies in the fact in the Philippines western culture penetrated the whole population, because every village had its priest; whereas the Indonesian "masses" were hardly affected by western ideas. Some less careful treatment of concepts (e.g. Minangkabau is a matrilineal, not a matriarchal society; pusako means family or state property; adat refers to the whole way of life, customary law is hukum adat) does not lessen the importance of this new way of viewing revolutionary movements.

Keebet von Benda-Beckmann

Peter Dittmar, Wörterbuch der chinesischen Revolution. Freiburg im Breisgau, 1975. 224 pages, DM 6,90.

Those who try to follow the twisting roads of Chinese domestic politics are often puzzled by odd expressions and new creations of Communist terminology. Dittmar has written a book to meet their needs.

There are already some books – dictionary-like – which help the expert and the interested layman to understand Chinese terminology (political as well as scientific), but a certain knowledge of Chinese is the necessary prerequisite of reading them.

Dittmar compiled about 180 key-words (terms and historical events), to which the Chinese name is given in transcription, followed by a more or less sufficient explanation. All this

is arranged in alphabetical order with a detailed index as an additional aid. A chronological table from the Shang Dynasty (1500 to 1030 B. C.) up to January 1974 A. D. and a bibliography provide the reader with additional information. The unannotated bibliography is divided into 13 sections. Because literature of extremely different quality and written from different political standpoints is mentioned, this compilation is not very helpful.

Dittmar attempts to give his book an academic touch. The passage on Chinese language, pronunciation and transcription is not really necessary. The text is more confusing than instructive. The author writes that "mao-tun" means contradiction and antagonism. However, in Chinese Communist literature "tui-k'ang hsing" is used for antagonism and not "mao-tun". This is just a small example which underlines the reviewer's feeling that the pages on the Chinese language are — in their present form — not necessary, but a ballast which should be revised in the next edition or dropped.

The explanations given in the book for the more complex terms are somewhat vague, but this is tolerable as well as understandable. The condensed information is handy but presents some statements which should not be accepted without critical thought.

For example, were Tseng Kuo-fan and Li Hung-chang really models for the warlords as Dittmar states on page 177? Was Mao Tse-tung really the undisputed leader after the Tsunyi Conference in 1935 as stated on page 189?

All this can be regarded, however, as minor criticism. The book presents a great amount of information which is necessary in order to understand modern China. This publication is a very useful compilation especially since the author does not confine himself to the events of the People's Republic but includes the period beginning with the Opium War.

Werner Pfennig

Helmut Erlinghagen, Japan. Ein deutscher Japaner über die Japaner. Stuttgart (Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt) 1974. 439 pages, DM 35,—.

To give a summary in advance: this is the most widely informative and didactically most intensive book on Japan to be written in any European language since the last world war. The abundance of information flows from the author's 34 years' experience of living and working together with the Japanese; the didactic intensity, from his striving to narrow the gap of mutual misunderstanding between the Japanese and the Europeans.

Helmut Erlinghagen avoids — for the most part of his book — the most dangerous temptation facing any writer on Japan: to try to describe this country by comparing it directly with Europe. Without confronting a "center" of Japan with a "center" of Europe, Erlinghagen unfolds his insights into Japan in a complex pattern of arguments: by tracing back each single phenomenon of Japanese strangeness to its historical origin and by connecting every one of these details with some strands of contemporary society. The impression on the reader resulting from such a process of presentation is that of an unparalleled continuity of Japanese tradition and consistency of the attitude of the Japanese towards themselves and their role in society — the most significant result that an introduction into Japan can produce. Thus, in a very inconspicuous manner, the reader is made to realize the uniqueness of this social entity which, over long periods of its development, was totally cut off from the rest of the world, i.e. from "world history" according to its European definition.

The presentation of the historical background — including the geographic pre-conditions — contains surveys of the history of religion and the history of literature and art (parts 1, 6 and 7); within the explanation of present day Japan the strongest emphasis is laid on the analysis of the socio-economic complex (parts 2, 3 and 4).

It is with great precision, precaution and didactic energy, that the reader is led to accept the strangeness of Japan as an alternative to European civilisation. The special attraction of some parts of Erlinghagen's book stems from the fact that in some situations depicted as model-situations of social importance, for example a Japanese wedding-ceremony (396 ff.), the European stranger (gaijin) is present as sceptical spectator but at the same time as a loyal and understanding participant, reflecting his own behaviour among the Japanese and showing (not without self-irony) the reactions of the Japanese to him.

Quite unexpectedly, the last parts of the book tend to return to an evaluation of Japan in "absolute" terms, which, as far as I can see, is not quite up to the standards already set