

German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ)

DIJ History and Humanities Study Group



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Japan's Industrial Policy toward Technology Transfers and Business History: Signalling and Administrative Guidance, 1950-1975

Post-war Japanese industrial policy has been both hailed and criticized by a diverse range of scholars, including economists, sociologists and historians. For some researchers, the Japanese government's industrial policy was a major contributor to high economic growth in the 1950s and 1960s. Other researchers, however, hold the view that it was unnecessary for or even detrimental to growth. It stands to reason that one of the main factors preventing a consensus lies within the research designs usually applied to the analysis of Japan's political economy.

Traditional research examines industrial policy from a top-down perspective and largely ignores firm behaviour at the micro-level. This is problematic because such a perspective obstructs the researcher's view on the two principal channels through which industrial policy was actually implemented: signalling and administrative guidance. The former refers to the government conveying credible information on how it intends to act. The latter refers to informal bureaucratic action, commonly taking the form of recommendations or warnings, designed to influence the behaviour of firms in a desired direction.

In this talk, I will discuss how a business history approach can fruitfully be applied to the analysis of industrial policy and present two preliminary case studies from the chemical industry as concrete examples of signalling and administrative guidance in the international market for technology transfers.

Jonathan Krautter is a PhD candidate at the Chair of Social and Economic History of Humboldt University in Berlin. Currently, he holds a fellowship at the DIJ where he is conducting research into the history of Japan's industrial policy.

The DIJ History and Humanities Study Group is a forum open to scholars working on Japan in any field of the humanities. All are welcome to attend, but prior registration via our online registration or email (weber@dijtokyo.org) is greatly appreciated.

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