

Die Industrialisierung der Saarregion, 1815–1914. Band 2: Take-Off Phase und Hochindustrialisierung, 1850–1914 [The Industrialization of the Saar Region, 1815–1914. Vol. 2: Take-Off Phase and Intensive Industrialization, 1850–1914]. By *Ralf Banken*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2003. 653 pp. + CD-ROM disk. Tables, figures, bibliography, notes, index. Cloth, €88. ISBN 3-515-07828-2.

Reviewed by Frank B. Tipton

Reading this book is like stepping back in time. Forty years ago German economic historians regularly produced histories of “regional” industrialization. While it presented large amounts of information, the old style of regional history suffered from a number of problems. One was the absence of a systematic comparative framework. Another was the absence of aggregate measures of growth. A third was the lack of economic analysis. Although they described growth, they did not explain it.

True to the strengths of the old style, Ralf Banken has presented large amounts of information for the “Saar” region, a construct that combines county (*Kreis*) level data for the southern corner of the Prussian Rheinprovinz, the northwestern section of the Bavarian Rheinpfalz, and part of eastern Lorraine. These comprise, but only roughly, the present-day German federal state of Saarland. Banken covered the period of “early industrialization” up to 1850 in a previous volume. The present volume contains two chapters. Chapter Three, which is 592 pages, considers “the Saar region in the take-off phase and in the period of intensive industrialization 1850–1914,” and Chapter Four, which is 16 pages, offers a summary of “the pattern of development of industrialization in the Saar region.”

The sections of Chapter Three detail the growth of hard-coal mining and coke production (pp. 24–285), the iron industry (pp. 285–516), metalworking and machinery (pp. 516–33), the glass industry (pp. 533–53), the ceramics industry (pp. 553–72), and “other” industrial branches (pp. 572–76). The number of pages is a pretty clear indication of Banken’s subjective evaluation of each industry’s importance, a judgment based primarily on employment numbers as recorded in the industrial censuses. Textiles and clothing are virtually absent; services and handcrafts are mentioned but not

described. Each section is arranged in parallel subsections, of which the two on “firm and market structure” and “economic outcomes” will be of most interest to readers of this journal. Discussion of organizational structure is limited to noting events such as joint-stock listings, but it is possible to trace something of the history of individual firms (Stinnes and Stumm in coal and iron, and Villeroy & Boch in ceramics, for instance) through the decades; under “economic outcomes” Banken presents the reported profitability of enterprises in each sector.

But true to the weaknesses of the old style, Banken has no explanatory framework. In the first section of Chapter Three, on “the political, social, and economic development 1850–1914,” he observes that the political boundaries within the region remained constant and then remarks that the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine in 1871 changed what had been an external boundary into an internal one, commenting further, in a footnote, that this may have accelerated a process of “region building” that had already begun in the 1860s due to the effects of the tariff treaty between France and the Zollverein (p. 13, note 1). Although Banken has evidently been at pains to include the entire Saar River valley in his coverage, this is the only point at which the “region” appears as an entity with an internal structure. Population, employment, and output figures for the county units are added together, but there is no analysis of the ways in which districts within the region interacted. Railways are mentioned in passing, but the effects of changes in the transportation system are not examined.

There are some comparisons of growth rates with other industrial districts in Germany in Chapter Four, but there is no sense of how the Saar fit into the developing German national economy. Growth rates varied over time and between industries, and Saar industrialists complained of competition from other regions, but the local stories of each industry are not placed in a national or international context (the railway shipment statistics collected by the Prussian State Railway Office might have been used here, for instance). Thinking of the Saar economy as a unit may make sense, but there are no aggregate figures. Output figures for individual industry branches are not used to estimate total industrial output. So although we have figures that compare, for instance, the growth of coal production in the Saar with other German coal-mining districts, we do not have any sense of how the Saar’s industrial sector as a whole performed.

There is no economic analysis. At the macro level the only theoretical construct in evidence is Walt Rostow's idea of a "take-off," which Banken accepts and applies without question. Banken believes a "take-off" took place in the Saar in the 1850s because industrial employment rose particularly rapidly, but this was a decade of general upswing, and his data do not provide evidence of a structural transformation within industry (capital intensity, for example) unique to this particular decade. There is only one supporting reference in the bibliography, and it is not *The Stages of Economic Growth*, or any of the subsequent criticism, but Rostow's 1963 article on leading sectors, a possible idea that is not pursued.

Microeconomic analysis is also lacking. Banken's treatment of the region as a single unit precludes the use of location theory. Although individual firms' performance is described, productivity is not systematically considered. There are ad hoc judgments regarding the adequacy of investment in new technology. The large number of negative comments by contemporaries in this regard suggests that the Saar's business leaders (and the Prussian government, which owned a number of the coal mines) may have been remiss here, but it is not possible to say in the absence of analysis. For social historians, there is some discussion of the union movement and the opposition of owners, but not much comparison across industries and none with other regions. Gender is absent. The workers in the industries that predominated in the Saar would have been overwhelmingly men, but one wonders what the women were doing if there was no textile or clothing industry. Here and throughout the book the questions that might have enlivened the text, and provided a framework for the mass of information, have not been asked.

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