

other hand, however, this also restricts its use. The book may not qualify to be used for scholarly purposes, and it is a pity, because a scholarly work on the topic is needed and because the author who is a leading Scandinavian authority in the field, could easily have written it. The author has undoubtedly been through all relevant source material and has had a clear idea when making the selection of texts. The problem is that it does not show in the book.

The book consists mostly of texts about China, but they do not stand alone. In every chapter you will find outlines of relevant European and Scandinavian history, missionary history and history of ideas, which provide a background to the texts and put them into the right context. Given the length of the book (only 164 pages) and the extensive topic it is obvious that there is only little space for background essays, but sometimes they are so short that it would have made little difference if they had been left out. This is for instance the case when the fact that the Danish king, unlike the Swedish, participated in the early trade with Asia merely is explained by saying that "apparently he had a bigger surplus than the Swedish king" (p. 30). However, the background essays in general serve their purpose, and the interested reader may find material for further studies in the selected references.

The book is entertaining and instructive. It is a pleasure to leaf through the many beautiful illustrations, and the amusing and sometimes also rather terrifying descriptions, stories and selected citations are enjoyable reading. I can strongly recommend Eide's work to anyone interested in this particular subject.

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Sachiko Schierbeck: *Japanese Women Novelists*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 1995, 400 pp.

So far, Japanese literature has mainly been known for great male novelists, such as, for example, Oe Kenzaburo who has become particularly known for receiving the Nobel Prize in literature. In her book *Japanese Women Novelists*, Sachiko Schierbeck presents a hitherto rather unknown subject, namely the female novelists in Japan. Ever since the heyday of women novelists in the Heian-period (794-

1185) the impact of female novelists in Japan has been insignificant, but in this century, especially after the Second World War, women have increasingly become actors to be taken into account in the Japanese literary world. With great accuracy Sachiko Schierbeck has made biographies of 104 modern women novelists - all of whom have been active in the period 1900-1993 - and all have received at least one of several literary prizes in Japan. Each biography contains a short curriculum vitae followed by a description of the most important literary production and a list of the concerned author's publications in Japanese and Western languages. Some of the biographies were included in an earlier publication by Mrs Schierbeck (*Postwar Japanese Women Writers - An up-to-date bibliography with biographical sketches*, East Asian Institute Occasional Papers, No. 5, Copenhagen 1989).

As stated in the introduction of the biography it is a reference book, and a very useful one indeed. It gives a well-rounded description of the diversity and great variety of modern Japanese literature as written by women. The topics these women deal with are many, ranging from intentionally subdued descriptions of women's daily life over politics to satire and science fiction. *Japanese Women Novelists* deserves to be on the bookshelf of anyone interested in Japanese literature.

The weakness of the work is found in its theoretical framework. Apparently, the very fact that all the novelists are women provides enough of a reason to treat them in the same volume. Is the criterium for selection strictly biological or is it implied that we are dealing with feminist literature? Is there an assumption that there is a special feminine way of expressing oneself? It would have been interesting if Mrs Schierbeck had addressed these questions. Also, it would have been illuminating if more of the terms she uses were defined, terms such as "self-awakened", "new woman" or "*shinjinrui*".

In the list of contents the authors are divided into groups, partly chronological, partly topical. It would have been interesting to have heard Mrs Schierbeck's ideas concerning this categorisation, but that certainly would have required a larger part of the volume to be devoted to theory and method, which was hardly the original intention.

In the appendix there is a list of 22 novelists divided into groups depending on the topics they deal with. Each category is introduced

by a short description of the category and then followed by short biographies and lists of selected publications. It remains unclear, however, how the 22 writers were selected.

At the end one finds two lists useful for further studies. One is a list of reference works in Western languages on Japanese literature, the other is a list written in Japanese of authors' names and the titles of their publications. This will be very useful to anyone who wish to further study the topic.

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Torstein Hjellum: *Kinesisk politikk*. (Chinese Politics) Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1995. 278 pp.

Torstein Hjellum's aim with this political history of China from 1840 to the present is to answer central and well-posed questions of concern for historians and social scientists in China studies. According to his introduction the central issue is with which means the Chinese have sought to regain inner strength and political independence after the Opium War. He enumerates five such "projects" during the period: (1) The imperial reform measures before the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911; (2) the efforts to build a republican system under Yuan Shikai 1912-1919; (3) the nationalist government of Chiang Kaishek 1927-1937; (4) the PRC under Mao 1949-1976; and (5) finally the Dengist reforms since 1978. The analysis is informed by three "historic confrontations": the clash between civilizations; the meeting of production modes; and the struggle between different models for change. The arrangement of the book is accordingly five chapters, each dealing with one of the reform projects with a summary and, for the last two chapters on Maoism and Dengism, a short evaluation of the period in question.

A work on modern Chinese political history in a Scandinavian language is to be highly welcomed. Far too little is being published on this subject for the general public, who is not fluent in English. The target group for the book is not explicitly stated, but a guess would be students and journalists, as well as people generally interested in Asian affairs. The language and presentation, though, most-