**Reviews**

*da cidian* does not contain every compound—he promotes the idea that there cannot be one definitive understanding of the text, and by inviting comparison of widely different interpretations of *Huo Guang*, he suggests that understanding the words of a text is only the beginning of making meaning out of it.

This textbook also reaffirms, indirectly, our need for more and better reference tools. Wagner complains quite properly about the shortcomings of Mathews' and the *New practica* dictionaries, but as he has found, students will continue to want a Classical English dictionary, so we need a better one. An equal need though, is for more textbooks like this one. Now that we have *A Classical Chinese Reader*, please could we have some similar works dealing with different genres?

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Verner Worm's comparison of Chinese and Scandinavian psychology and their consequent attitudes towards personal and business relations serves multifarious purposes for any Sinologist or those wanting to do business in China. It allows us to learn about the problems of managing joint-ventures and wholly owned subsidiaries; it allows an insight into Chinese thinking; in discussing Scandinavian psychology it allows others to understand more fully this disproportionately important group while at the same time providing an opportunity for other Westerners to compare themselves to both. This last
aspect is important in a field dominated by Americans, where European contributions are often overlooked and where many studies often reveal more about America and American attitudes than about China itself. While learning about America is not a bad thing, any chance to learn about Europeans as well as China should be grasped and European contributions appreciated. In this case, the issues and problems discussed by Worm show that while much has changed, many of the problems encountered by Bill Purves in the early 1980s (Barefoot in the Boardroom), remain. Vikings and Mandarins does not tell us all we need to know about running an enterprise in China but it goes a long way to filling the gaps left by many recent books that concentrate on the initial negotiations and hammering out of the deals needed to establish such enterprises rather than on how best to run them once the deals have been concluded.

To provide a basis for understanding, Worm sets out the historical factors (such as religion) which underlie Chinese and Scandinavian outlooks, while doing his best to avoid overgeneralisations. Worm lists the important influences behind attitudes towards the family, personal relations, the importance of networks, the much harder to grasp concept of ‘face’, time, privacy, materialism, the importance of hierarchy and status, tactics, attitudes to outsiders etc. These factors exert a profound influence on the structures and decision-making procedures of firms. At the end of each chapter is a valuable summary with recommendations on how to overcome problems and minimise differences.

Worm’s process of explaining the basis of beliefs and how they affect behaviour is often very effective. For example, his explanation of the general Chinese attitude towards ‘truth’ highlights the absence of a firm Chinese belief in the concept of absolute truth. This absence allows truth to have a relativity literally unimaginable to many Westerners firmly grounded in Judaeo-Christian, and particularly Protestant religious traditions. For many potential readers, if it averts misunderstand-
ings and curses about perceived Chinese duplicity, this explanation alone should be a revelation worth the cost of the book and the time needed to read it. Ditto the explanation of the nature of time (monochronic versus polychronic), and how this is reflected in the two cultures. Similar clear explanations are developed for the varying manifestations of many other vital concepts, such as loyalty to the firm, individualism versus collectivism and the like. I was particularly struck by the treatment of the concept of face. While by no means unique to China, the 'giving' and 'losing' of face in China is more subtle and important. Worm’s discussion of the factors surrounding this issue certainly gave this writer pause for thought. The effects of the influences of these factors on management are well covered.

Worm finishes with several chapters comparing management ethos: specific chapters cover such issues as planning and organisational structures. Important differences towards responsibility, status, hierarchy and other factors often lead to problems for the Scandinavian managers. These differences result in much more centralised organisations than would be the case in the managers' home countries and there is a constant struggle by managers who assume that the Chinese should have internalised rules and norms to the same extent as themselves. The relativity of 'common sense' is revealed repeatedly. Worm's comprehensive approach means he uncovers important oversights by Scandinavian managers: for example, the apparent almost total neglect of non-material motivations to inspire workers.

I would be very surprised if the problems encountered by Scandinavian managers differ markedly from those experienced by Germans, Americans, Australians or other Westerners operating in China. A few typing errors and other very minor issues of style and translation notwithstanding, Verner Worm has done an admirable job of covering many complex issues in a straightforward, clear and concise way. The organisation of
his material, both overall and within each chapter, is very sys-
tematic and comprehensible. However, more practical exam-
pies of issues, problems and their solutions would have been
more useful than many of the quotes about attitudes towards
them. This quibble notwithstanding, Worm's book will be very
useful to those contemplating setting up business in China and
it works equally well as a very useful text for those wishing to
advance their knowledge of Chinese psychology and inter-cul-
tural communication. For those wishing to learn about Scandi-
avians, this book is also a good place to start.

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Yoichi Nagashima, *Objective Description of the Self: The Literary
Theory of Iwano Homei*. Aarhus, Denmark: Aarhus University

The work under review appears at a time of renewed interest in
the related questions of subjectivity and autobiographical
fiction. In this first full-length study in English, Nagashima has
provided an exposition on the theoretical position of Iwano
Hōmei (1873-1920) that is part biographical exegesis, part
translation, and part comparative commentary. Nagashima
interrogates Hōmei's work from the standpoint of narrative
structure—a logical choice given the enormous emphasis
Hōmei placed on the relationship among author, protagonist
and narrative style. Although the work is clearly written,
Hōmei's unusual view of logic makes it seem turgid at times, a
sense pleasantly meliorated by moments of light humour inter-
spersed throughout the text.