

Søren Clausen, Roy Starrs and Anne Wedell-Wedellsborg eds., *Cultural Encounters: China, Japan, and the West. Essays Commemorating 25 Years of East Asian Studies at the University of Aarhus*. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1995, 495 pp.

East Asian studies began in the University of Aarhus in the late 1960s when Else Glahn was appointed to a position in Sinology in the Department of Linguistics. An independent Department of East Asian Studies was established in 1973 and there are now full degree programmes in China and Japan Studies covering languages, culture, history, politics and society, and, in co-operation with the Department of Political Science, a two-year programme in East Asia Area Studies for senior students and graduates in social sciences, law and journalism.

The volume in hand gives the immediate impression of solidity. It is a substantial book, carefully edited and published. The authors are eight permanent staff members associated with the programmes, three former colleagues, three of the guests who over the years have visited the department, and five graduate students. There is no contribution from Else Glahn but a sense of history, of both the department and Sinology, is found in the contribution by that indomitable professor of medicine, Knud Lundbæk (†1995), whose lifelong love affair with

Chinese studies has resulted in several books and articles on the history of European Sinology. Here he covers the period of the Napoleonic Wars.

Lundbæk's papers is classified among "Premodern" encounters which, of course, is correct if it is agreed that "Modern" dates only from the period after 1815. The editors should have made it clear whether they work from an East Asian definition of "Modern" (from the middle of the nineteenth century?) or a European one where it can be argued that "modern times" started in the eighteenth century, or even earlier. This is only one of the problems presented by the title "Cultural Encounters" and the subdivisions into Premodern, Artistic, Social and Political Encounters. The editors are keenly aware of such problems, at least for the title, where "[t]he framework of cultural encounters has been employed in a very open sense, but it is a framework nevertheless" (p. 11). The other essays in the pre-modern sections are about cultural exchanges in Northern Liang (395-460) by Susanne Juhl; about Chinese Manichaica and the translation of Manichaeism into Chinese by Gunner B. Mikkelsen; and about a Japanese language text recorded in 1776 by the Swedish botanist C. P. Thunberg, by Bjarke Frellesvig.

All essays in the artistic section deal in some way with works of fiction. Vibeke Børdahl begins with an essay on orality and literacy in Yangzhou storytelling; Roy Starrs writes about Kawabata's art of fiction; Anne Wedell-Wedellsborg about aspects of time in some recent Chinese prose; Wenwei Du about traditional Chinese theatre on Broadway; Wendy Larson about Zhang Yimou and international aesthetics and erotics; and the section ends with an interview with Bei Dao about secrecy and truth.

I find it more difficult to follow the divisions of social and political encounters. Three of the contributions in social encounters (swings of Japan's identity by Harumi Befu; cultural differences in Japanese-Danish marriages by Kirsten Refsing; and ethnic consciousness among intellectual Naxi by Mette Halskov Hansen) deal with ethnic or nationalistic identity, whereas the essays by Stig Thøgersen on Liang Shuming and the Danish model, by Greg Kulander on the assimilation of educational theories in China in the early 1980s, and by Marie Roesgaard on the concept of individuality in Japanese education deal more with the reflection (or mirroring) of "Western" concepts and ideas in East Asian societies. The same may be said about two

contributions in the section on political encounters: those by Graham Young on Liu Shaoqi and the sinification of Leninism, and by Flemming Christiansen on the Chinese appropriation and transmutation of dualism in economics. Søren Clausen's essay on the current Western perceptions of Chinese political culture is more a reflection (or mirroring) of Western ideas upon (not in) Chinese society, while Clemens Stubbe Østergaard's essay on China-EC [*sic*] relations finally deal with political encounters.

The task of the editors of composite volumes such as *festschrifts* is not easy. Should they attempt to compress all contributions into one or several moulds, or should they simply let each contribution stand for itself? The editors have in this volume tried the first solution and, as an advocate of the study of "interfaces" in cultural studies, this reviewer commends the editors for seeing that many of the contributions here have elements of either indigenous or exogenous encounters, but the division into sections appears to be superfluous, maybe even counterproductive.

The quality and length of each contribution vary. Some of the essays do not pretend to be more than preliminary presentations. We may expect to see these, and some of the other contributions, incorporated in a future work by the authors while others may be studied as background papers for future publications. They are all pieces in the intellectual biographies of each individual author, and of the Institution of East Asian Studies in Aarhus in its first twenty-five years. They are perhaps too diversified to be enjoyed as a single feast. But even when enjoyed in small courses, as I have done and can recommend, there appears to be a general theme running through a number of the essays: that ideas or cultures are not imported but translated, and that even the translation may only be a guise for advancing indigenous ideas or interests. This process is intriguing, and in order to understand it better, we may need a more profound understanding of the cultures from which the ideas have originated. The reading of this volume enhances, at least for me, the need for this reciprocal process, and it is perhaps by demonstrating this need that it will stand as a stepping-stone in our understanding of cultural encounters.

Leif Littrup
University of Copenhagen