

BOOK REVIEWS

president of the University of Michigan, James Burrill Angell, recalled his departure from Beijing in October, 1881, similarly: "It was not without deep emotion that we parted from those whose society had been so dear to us."² Secondly, now as then, for outlanders or foreigners China remains a formidable challenge, in terms expressed by one American teacher, a "precious insanity." Readers of *Dear Alice* will note how that challenge was met by thirty-six Americans and, as importantly, how that challenge impacted on the lives of thirty-six Americans.

Kudos to Phyllis L. Thompson, a former American teacher in China as well, for outstanding editorial work. Structurally, *Dear Alice* includes fourteen maps (thirteen focused on China, one indicating American urban sites of post-China correspondence to Alice Renouf by participants), chapter-by-chapter pinyin vocabulary lists of Chinese terms, and an end-of-book comprehensive word list of Chinese terms translated into English. Effective as these structured components of *Dear Alice* are, Thompson's chief editorial strength is her willingness to allow Alice Renouf's correspondents to speak for themselves. This they do and the result is all the more meaningful, including Thompson's brief commentary, with her 1992 "Cheating or Cooperating? a.k.a. The Individual vs. the Group."

Finally, a word about audiences for this latest University of California Institute of East Asian Studies China Research Monographs publication. Three come to mind: East Asian Studies majors, graduate and undergraduate, will find *Dear Alice* invaluable as a resource for exploring cross-cultural adaptation in East Asia, generally, and the People's Republic of China, specifically. Moreover, *Dear Alice* should appeal as background reading for the unfortu-

nately small but growing number of Americans interested in an extended living and working experience in East Asia. *Dear Alice* is appropriate reading as well for any university course which addresses issues implicit to end-of-century cultural and global diversity. At *Dear Alice*'s conclusion we are reminded that in *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There*, when Alice asked the Cheshire Cat where from here she ought to go, the Cat replied: "That depends a good deal on where you want to get to." Thanks to Alice Renouf, Phyllis L. Thompson and thirty-six American teachers in China, our vision of where we want to get to is profoundly broadened. ■

NOTES

1. Robert A. McCaughey, *International Studies and Academic Enterprise: A Chapter in the Enclosure of American Learning* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 54.
2. James B. Angell, "Chapter VI: The Mission to China," 40. *James B. Angell Papers*, Box No. 11, Folder No. 504, Michigan Historical Collections, Bentley Historical Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Malcolm B. Campbell

MALCOLM B. CAMPBELL is Professor Emeritus of Education at Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, Ohio, and a long-standing member of that university's Asian Studies Committee.

Transnational Chinese Cinemas

Identity, Nationhood, Gender

By Sheldon Hsiao-peng Lu

HONOLULU: UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII PRESS, 1997

Although this is not the only recent book which uses Chinese new cinema to analyze Chinese identity and politics, it is still a useful contribution to the limited literature in this field. A collection of fifteen loosely connected essays which are of various levels of theoretical sophistication and academic quality, this volume can serve as a reference book to academics. It can also be used as supplementary materials for undergraduate film teaching. The book is divided into three parts which deal respectively with (1) the films of mainland China; (2) films of Hong Kong, Taiwan and overseas; and (3) gender issues.

Following the editor's introduction which outlines themes of the book, Zhiwei Xiao presents a historical study of film censorship by the Nanjing government during the period of 1927-37. The author

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concludes that when foreign films were censored because of content that degraded the Chinese, the film industry hailed the government policy because it helped the industry in its competition with foreign rivals. The government also made political gains by appearing patriotic in front of the public. But when the censorship was used in controlling domestic films, the relationship between the industry and the government became problematic.

In analyzing *Two Stage Sisters* made by Xie Jin in 1964, Gina Marchetti concludes that in terms of film styles, it was a combination of Hollywood, Soviet, and Chinese tradition; in terms of politics, it was more in line with the leftist Shanghai tradition, instead of the Yan'an communist tradition. Theoretically sophisticated and academically excellent, Yingin Zhang's essay, which was previously published elsewhere, deals with the minority films. The author makes the interesting point that in making films about minorities, the real interest of the filmmakers was really the Han identity (pp. 90, 92). Part I of the book concludes with the editor's essay about the transnational nature of the films by Zhang Yimou. Lu argues that in Zhang's mind, the audience was people outside of China, because the funding came primarily from overseas.

While every essay in Part I addresses politics and the Chinese identity to varying degrees, the five essays in Part II, which include films made by Hong Kong and Taiwan directors, may or may not do so, especially regarding those made by Hong Kong filmmakers. June Yip discusses the politicization of Taiwanese films which before 1987 had described Taiwan, not mainland China, as the legitimate inheritor of the Chinese tradition. Those Taiwanese films made after the lifting of martial law, however, have intended to distinguish mainland China from Taiwan by creating a distinct Taiwanese identity. In their study of the films by Ang Lee, a well-known Taiwanese filmmaker, Wei Ming Dariotis and Eileen Fung assert that the identity crisis in *Wedding Banquet* was caused by the fact that the protagonist was not only a Chinese who settled in America, but also gay, which was traditionally considered to be part of Western rather than Chinese culture.

In their studies of Hong Kong filmmakers John Woo and Jackie Chan, Anne T. Ciecko and Steve Fore do not focus on the problem of identity, politics and gender issues, in spite of the fact that Ciecko mentions in the beginning of his essay that Kung Fu was very political. Instead, their studies focus on how the Hong Kong filmmakers tried to get into the Hollywood mainstream. The authors also realize the fact that the cultural identity of the people in Hong Kong has always been ambiguous. However, the authors never inform us how ambiguous this identity was.

The five essays in the third part focus on gender issues. In a very short essay on *Farewell My Concubine*, E. Ann Kaplan uses the allegory theory by writing that the play was about the fate of the country, not of individuals. In her study of *The New Woman*, which was made in 1935 and was in the tradition of Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, Kristin Harris discusses not only the film itself, but also the social and political events around it. *The New Woman* included actress Ruan Lingru, whose own fate was no better than the woman she depicted in the film.

In her study of Zhang Yimou's *Ju Dou*, Shuqin Cui argues that the film shows that in China, sexual instinct was always subordinated to social castration. In addition, "All men's burdens, desires, and losses are laid on a single woman's

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shoulders" (p. 328). In a well-written essay about *Farewell My Concubine*, Wendy Larson continues the discussion about social castration. She also points out the political significance of concubinage. The last chapter by Yi Zheng is intended to serve as a conclusion, because both identity and gender issues are addressed. The author makes the interesting point that when those filmmakers sought the Chinese identity, they looked through the "Other," i.e., women, intellectuals and peasants. From these people, it is relatively easy to find the old traits. Like some essays in this volume, this interesting point is not well developed. Exactly half of the notes come from one single book, which makes this essay look more like a book review than a research article. ■

Shiping Hua

SHIPING HUA is an Assistant Professor of Political Science at Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Florida. He is the author of two books, including *Scientism and Humanism: Two Cultures in Post-Mao China*, (State University of New York Press, 1995). He was an editor with China's Xinhua News Agency before coming to the United States in 1988.

Japan

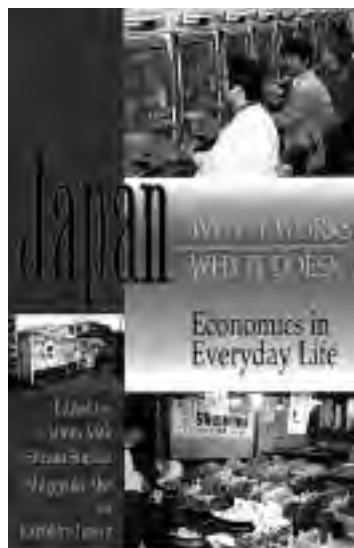
Why It Works, Why It Doesn't: Economics in Everyday Life

Edited by James Mak, Shyam Sunder,
Shigeyuki Abe, Kazuhiro Igawa

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII PRESS, 1998
219 PAGES

Japan: *Why It Works, Why It Doesn't* evolved out of a 1995 visit to Japan by American economics professors James Mak and Shyam Sunder. Arriving in Japan with little understanding of the society, Mak and Sunder began asking questions of their Kobe University hosts (including their co-editors, Shigeyuki Abe and Kazuhiro Igawa) about what they saw around them. Many of these questions became the titles of the various essays that make up the book. By focusing on everyday life, the book explains some interesting aspects of the internal dynamics of Japan's economy.

Each of the essays is around eight pages long, and they are organized into three sections—Living, Work, and System. The section on living discusses aspects of life and society, while the essays on work cover aspects of the business world. "System" refers to the economic structures of life in Japan and includes contributions on the *keiretsu* (Japanese industrial conglomerates), health care, and banking. The essays are wide ranging and tackle topics from "Why So Many Gifts?" to "Do the Japanese Work till They Drop?" to "Why Do Doctors Prescribe So Many Pills?" The book does not offer



comprehensive coverage of Japan; instead it gives an up-to-date introduction to a random variety of specific topics about the intersection of the society and economy of Japan. Designed for high school or college students, the language is intentionally simple, and technical language is kept to a minimum. The authors often discuss their own experiences, impressions and opinions. The writing is engaged and accessible.

Japan: Why It Works, Why It Doesn't would be

useful in a high school or undergraduate class about Japan. The eclectic choice of topics and fairly brief coverage of important issues mean that this book would not serve as a core text. As a supplementary text, however, it would keep students interested and intrigued. For students or anyone embarking on an excursion to Japan, it would be well worth reading and discussing some of the essays before and after the trip. As the essays discuss questions which come to the minds of curious short-term visitors to Japan, those visitors will be keen to read essays like "Why Can the Japanese Manage Without Personal Checking Accounts?" and "Why is Pachinko So Popular?" which cover topics seldom discussed in introductory texts.

While the book has many strengths, there are a few weaknesses. *Japan: Why It Works, Why It Doesn't* does not, for example, answer either of the questions posed in the book's title. Portions of the answers are provided in the various essays, but the authors do not provide an overarching analysis that addresses these fundamental—and fascinating—questions. As is evident by the short length of many of the chapters, coverage of individual subjects is brief and sometimes too simplistic for an academic audience. In a number of cases, the essays do not address the questions posed in the title, but rather provide a brief overview of the subject. Most importantly, there is a decidedly American focus to the examples and comparisons used in the essays. This makes the book of more limited interest to non-U.S. audiences or American audiences seeking broader comparisons. Nonetheless, there is much of value in *Japan: Why It Works, Why It Doesn't* and it will be of interest to those eager to learn more about some of the different aspects of economic life in Japan. ■

Carin Holroyd

CARIN HOLROYD teaches International Business at the Williams School of Business at Bishop's University, Lennoxville, Quebec. Previous to this appointment, she studied and taught Asian studies at the University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand. She holds a Master of Science degree in Japanese Business Studies and is completing her doctoral thesis on Japanese trade and investment.