

such as fashion, mass media and food the author assumes that "[there] is no 'Japanization' of Singaporeans [...] there is no significant 'Japanese-ness' in the Singaporean consumer culture" (p.134).

Globalization forms the wider theoretical background to this book wherein the way Japanese expatriates view themselves – their sense of homogeneity and uniqueness – and of Singaporean identity – drawn from the background of colonialism – as well as their relationship to each other must be seen. But while most of the articles in this book deal with some of the most important aspects of globalization, other aspects are missing: such as the role of Japan as an increasingly important destination for labour migration from Southeast Asia, the discrepancy between the importance of Japanese studies at Southeast Asian universities compared to Southeast Asian studies at Japanese universities, or the rise of criticism in Southeast Asia of Japan's economic dominance and 'cultural imperialism'. While 'Japan in Singapore' gives a good insight into the thematic field of 'culture contact' under globalization, it also needs further research and discussion on this issue.

Rolf Jordan

MARIE SOEDERBERG, IAN READER (eds.), *Japanese Influences and Presences in Asia*. (NIAS Studies in Asian Topics 25). Richmond: Curzon Press, 2000. 266 pages, £ 40.00. ISBN 0-7007-1110-4

This is an interesting volume on an interesting subject. But the frequently contradictory conclusions of its individual contributors leave a certain feeling of ambivalence, which not even the editors' (over-)long preface can remedy. A few authors see a strong influence of Japan as Asia's largest economic and technological power notably on the East Asian political economies and on their people's lifestyles, while most, however, more or less emphatically deny any significant Japanese cultural or political influence outside its insular borders.

The ten articles of this volume were originally presented at a workshop in Stockholm in 1996. Admittedly the subject of inquiry is complex. The influence of a national culture, of its political system and its economy on its neighbors is difficult to define and to quantify. Some authors, like Brian Moeran and Eyal Ben-Ari, attempt scientific purity in employing long-winded definitions and home-made concepts which however do not seem to yield much insight. Most articles cover narrower subjects and leave it to the reader to draw conclusions.

In his empirical research Ben-Ari treats Japanese business executives in Singapore. Their perception in corporate headquarters back home is of prime importance for their future career. The views of locals are of no importance and consequence. Mitchell Sedgwick reviews Japanese industrial investments in Thailand which are managed conventionally. None of the famed Japanese production techniques (quality circles, job rotation, just-in-time delivery etc) are being applied. Rather, Japanese expatriate managers remain in full control, with little management and know-how transfers to local Thai employees. Marie Soederberg gives a brief account of the declining role of the Japanese general trading companies (*sogo shosha*). However, the purpose of this article remains unclear.

David Arase looks at the international activities of Japanese prefectures in general, and at the Japan Sea cooperation of Niigata prefecture in particular. He expects great things of this, but conveniently overlooks the prefecture's lack of resources, of autonomy and of competences in a central state like Japan. This prevents the well-intended *jumelage* from leading to anything more substantial than cheap PR for the governor.

Purnendra Jain analyses Japan's trade, investment, ODA and political and cultural links with the Indian subcontinent. He sadly observes Japanese disinterest in the region compared to its strong presence in East and South East Asia. In contrast Pavidad Samad sees strong Japanese influence in Malaysia and with Prime Minister Mahatir's "Look East" policy even an unplanned political success: Japan as a declared model for economic and technological development with its Confucian work and family ethic still intact. Yet, Samad also notes Malaysian disappointment about the limited Japanese market access for Malaysian exports, little R&D transfer and poor political cooperation. To nobody's surprise the Malaysian elite prefers to continue to educate its offspring in the US and in the UK rather than in Japan. This feeling of ambivalence is also shared by the large number of Chinese students currently studying in Japan. In Paul Scott's analysis they form the largest contingent among foreign students in Japan where they have to work hard to pay high fees for an often only mediocre academic education.

Most interesting are two essays, one written by Kenn Steffensen, a Ph.D. student, the other by Professor Jean-Pierre Lehmann. Steffensen demonstrates convincingly how the Japanese theories of "Nihojinron" (Japanese uniqueness) moved towards anti-liberal Asianism in constructing an idealized version of Asian development and contrasting it with negative stereotypes of the West which is reduced to decadent materialism, with Europe in decline and the US in social disintegration. Yet he rightly sees Japanese realities catch up with "Asianism": A continued security dependence on the US and increased pressures to adjust towards free market capitalism which Japan in its sustained economic predicament is ill prepared to resist.

Lehmann bluntly calls the Japan of the late 20th century a "pretty uninspiring place". Japan's waste of human and financial capital no longer stimulates any interest in "lessons from Japanese management", a now embarrassing fad from the 1980s. Japan's suspected plans for a takeover of the world economy had been a grossly inflated fear of the early 1990s. Today Japan does not even exercise regional leadership. It has no inspiring domestic ideology, nor does it project a national lifestyle like the US or the leisured classes in the UK, Italy, Spain or France which others seek to imitate. Japan is no longer at the technological forefront. With their exclusion of non-Japanese managers Japanese companies are far less attractive international employers than US or European firms. Its universities are mediocre, its diplomacy incompetent, and its political and intellectual class now more than ever insular and handicapped by linguistic deficiencies. In consequence US cultural and economic influence in East Asia is much stronger than Japan's. Lehmann's thought-provoking essay is somewhat devalued by his lengthy, emotional outburst claiming that Japan's lack of inspirational influence is also due to the political incorrectness of its collective memory of World War II. This reproach is profoundly unfair. It does not do justice to serious attempts by Japanese historians to differentiate between

different stages and events of the war: the Chinese war (with Japan as the aggressor), the Pacific war (with the Western allies provoking a Japanese attack), and the final stages of the war (with the Soviet Union as aggressor and the US bombing terror against Japanese civilian centers, including Hiroshima and Nagasaki). It is grossly unfair and historically highly problematic to attribute squarely and without proper research the main share of war crimes committed in Asia to the loser of this war.

In substance Moeran neatly summarizes most authors' findings: Japan spreads its merchandise, but no clear messages, lifestyle, behavior or ways of thinking are associated. For more than 50 years Walt Disney's Mickey Mouse has borne a clear ideological message. The Japanese manga and the short-lived marketing fads like Pokemon, Tamagochi and the other brainless bleeps of Sega and Nintendo remain speechless despite all their noise. As a Japanese contribution to the world Karaoke is not by accident an "empty orchestra", the contents being supplied by others. The Taliban may use Toyota pick-ups in their pursuit of the barbarous destruction of the non-Islamic heritage. New York brokers may regularly conspire in sushi bars. Nonetheless, neither of them will ever aspire to emulate Japanese thinking or lifestyle.

Other traditional contributions, whether Zen-Buddhism, architecture and design, the martial arts, Ikebana, or the tea ceremony require, curiously enough, no ideological commitment, which perhaps makes them so attractive. The speechlessness of Japan's arts and traditions is matched by the autistic exclusiveness of its conformist expatriate ghettos and the remote control of its overseas investments.

The fact that this volume does not contain any single Japanese contribution may in itself have been an accident, but in light of this conclusion, it seems like a significant confirmation.

Albrecht Rothacher

HARRO VON SENGER, *Strategeme. Lebens- und Überlebenslisten aus drei Jahrtausenden. Band 2: Strategeme 19–36*. Bern: Scherz Verlag, 2000. 816 Seiten, DM 89,-. ISBN 3-502-15654-9

HARRO VON SENGER (Hg.), *Die List*. (edition suhrkamp 2039). Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1999. 500 Seiten, DM 29,80. ISBN 3-518-12039-5

HARRO VON SENGER, *Die Kunst der List. Strategeme durchschauen und anwenden*. (Beck'sche Reihe 1442). München: C.H. Beck, 2001. 197 Seiten, DM 19,90. ISBN 3-406-47568-X

Listiges Handeln wird in der chinesischen Kultur nicht von vornherein negativ, sondern nur mit Blick auf die zugrunde liegenden Ziele bewertet. Deshalb hat Harro von Senger (1999, S. 22), das neutrale Wort „Strategem“ als Übersetzung für den chinesischen Begriff „*ji*“ (in *sanshiliu ji* – sechsunddreißig Strategeme) gewählt. Den Strategemgeschichten – dem Phänomen der in China neutral bis positiv besetzten Listen – widmet er deshalb so viel Aufmerksamkeit, weil sie „auf einer ganz anderen Ebene die Durchsetzungskraft chinesischer Individuen bei der Verwirklichung von Zielsetzungen von – aus der Sicht des heutigen Menschen – individualistisch-menschenrechtlichem Zuschnitt“ beweisen. (1999, S. 30) Es geht hier demzufolge um neue Aspekte der chinesischen Zivilisation, die mehr als alle anderen