

market, and so the translation *The Karaoke Upstairs* is misleading. Nonetheless, this anthology, with its accurate and readable translations, makes a most valuable contribution to the understanding of developments in Chinese culture, society and theatre in recent times.

LI RURU

The Struggle for Modern Tibet: The Autobiography of Tashi Tsering.

By MELVYN GOLDSTEIN, WILLIAM SIEBENSCHUH and TASHI TSERING.
[Armonk, NY and London: M. E. Sharpe, 1997. 220 pp. \$27.95.
ISBN 1-56324-950-2.]

The autobiography of Tashi Tsering is a welcome addition to the accounts by individuals who have lived through the tumultuous changes in modern China, and will be of particular interest to those concerned with the Tibetan issue. Not only is the author in a position to compare life in Tibet before and after the Communist Chinese takeover, but he is probably unique in having chosen to return to Tibet from exile in America during the 1960s. It is clear from the opening description of a brutal flogging, administered to the youthful author during his period as a member of the Dalai Lama's dance troupe, that this work is not another product of the "Shangri-la school" of Tibetan history.

As a child in a small village four days ride from Lhasa, Tashi Tsering dreamed of gaining an education, dreams at odds with his relatively humble status. Opportunity came when he was chosen to train as a dancer in Lhasa, and he furthered his career by acting as the passive sexual partner of a monk-official. After clerical work in the Potala treasury, he travelled to India in search of further education. He was in India when the Dalai Lama fled into exile in 1959, and helped to compile the reports of exiles under the supervision of the Dalai Lama's brother, who he identifies as the CIA's main contact amongst the Tibetan exiles.

The author was subsequently invited to America, only to abandon his studies there and return to China in 1964, concluding that this would better enable him to work for the education of all sections of the Tibetan community. Despite reservations, he was drawn into supporting the Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution, only to find himself accused of being a counter-revolutionary. Imprisoned until 1973, he was officially exonerated in 1978 and returned to Lhasa in 1981, subsequently founding an English school in Lhasa and a number of elementary schools in small villages.

This is a fast-paced narrative, with no undue embellishment and little or no attempt at analysing the wider context of events. Tashi Tsering is clearly a strong-willed individual and his American co-authors have added only a brief preface. In only one or two phrases is their editorial hand otherwise apparent. But while the anti-elite perspective of the author is an interesting contrast to most works on the subject, the reader feels the lack of any wider context, particularly in regard to events in the post-Mao era. There is only passing reference to the riots of 1987 and 1988 and,

against all the evidence presented by the Tibetan government-in-exile, the Han population of Tibet is stated as being only "a few percent." There is no mention of the waves of execution and imprisonment in recent decades. What we are left with is the account of an individual seeking a middle path between Beijing and Dharamsala (seat of the exiled Dalai Lama). As such the great merit of this work is to present a fresh perspective, convincing in its sincerity, of a man working within the existing system. This provides a welcome insight into life in modern Tibet for those who seek progress rather than independence. Those seeking evidence of the injustices of Chinese imperialism will find many reliable sources elsewhere. This work may be read for interest (and indeed for pleasure), and for students it provides an alternative voice to the mainstream of Tibetan works. Whether the future of Tibet will follow such a middle path remains to be seen.

ALEX MCKAY

The Encyclopedia of the Chinese Overseas. Edited by LYNN PAN [Surrey: Curzon, 1998. 399 pp. £35.00. ISBN 0-7007-1122-8.]

At £35 this book is excellent value. Lynn Pan has pulled together a large team of specialists on the Overseas Chinese and set them to producing essays on the topics and communities which they know best. There is considerable variation in the length of treatment accorded to different headings, but the overall readability and homogeneity of approach indicates that the editor's hand has not been idle.

The work starts with a useful and thoughtful Introduction by Professor Wang Gungwu, the foremost historian of the Overseas Chinese. There follow sections on the places of origin of the migrants from China, on the patterns of migration they pursued, on the principal features of Chinese society both in China and overseas, and on the relations of the Overseas Chinese with China and with non-Chinese. This generalized matter occupies approximately one third of the book, and the remainder is devoted to detailed pen pictures of nearly forty different Chinese communities scattered around the world. The communities – some large, some tiny – are not an inclusive list of course, but there is sufficient variety of historical settlement and development to make them representative of the overall phenomenon. The text is quite lavishly illustrated with maps, with colour and monochrome photographs and, where essential, with tables, but the accent throughout is on continuous prose and coherent reader-friendly analysis. A long Bibliography is appended, divided up according to the sectional divisions of the book, the aim clearly being to facilitate further investigation into whatever topic the reader is tackling at the time. There is a Glossary, which gives the Chinese characters for all terms used in the text, and a large general Index.

This arrangement of the material is transparent and sensible, but it is not the alphabetical-topical format which conforms to the normal