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an account of the main internal events in the various South-east Asian countries. Unfortunately, this straight narrative integrates little consideration of their cultural, social and economic particularities or differences. The reader is provided with a detailed record of events but gets little feeling of how and why they happened and no impression of the individuality of the nations concerned. The next chapter discusses economic achievements since the Second World War. The real value of the book, however, lies in its last three chapters. They include a masterful analysis of the involvement of South-east Asian countries in the world game since 1943, probably one of the best general accounts now available. Another strong point is the precise, perceptive and reliable treatment of developments in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, which certainly outweighs what is to be found in other surveys of recent South-east Asian history, even if some experts may challenge the author's thesis that the Cambodian issue rules out almost any possibility for peace and stability in the area for the foreseeable future.

The volume is nicely illustrated with several maps and pictures. Although the bibliography is sometimes not quite up to date (for instance *Le Cambodge et la colonisation française* by A. Forest is missing), this book is a very useful tool of reference for anyone interested in the current political situation in South-east Asia, and for Chinese foreign policy watchers in particular.

MARIANNE BASTID

*Li's Chinese Dictionary.* Compiled by CHOH-MING LI (LI ZHUOMIN).  
[Hong Kong: Chinese University Press. 1980. Dictionary 370 pp.;  
Indexes 286 pp.; Preface 19 pp.; Total 675 pp. US\$20.00.]

Reviewing a dictionary has more in common with writing a report on a new car than it has with more conventional reviewing. The questions potential users will have are not altogether dissimilar from those that potential car-purchasers might ask about a new model. "What is its range of performance?" "How easy/difficult is it to use?" "What advantages (if any) does it have over existing works?" "Has it special 'extras' that may attract some purchasers?" "How does it perform in actual use?"

Subjecting Choh-ming Li's dictionary to these inquiries produces answers rather like this: *range of performance*: with a total coverage of more than 12,800 characters, its range is considerably wider than most (in fact, approaching *Ci Hai* standard) and, since readings are given *both* in Pinyin for putonghua *and* in IPA for Cantonese readings, it is a powerful tool for phonetic comparisons between these dialects; *ease/difficulty of use*: a dictionary that provides 286 pages of indexes to 370 pages of dictionary is, *prima facie*, at least designed to be easy to access; in practice, the first index (rather whimsically described as a "Folding fan held dropping downwards") is a logically worked out version of initial first, second, third, fourth and fifth strokes within total stroke-counts, arranged in the now fairly common "dot," "left-slant," "vertical," "right-slant," "horizontal" sequence; this is

supplemented by an alphabetic index in Pinyin for putonghua and an IPA index for Cantonese at the back of the book; Choh-ming Li quite deliberately excludes a radical-arranged index because of his dislike of such systems arising from the “ characters difficult to find ” problem that all such systems share; *advantages*: being a complete dictionary (rather than a mere glossary) uniquely arranged by 1,171 (mainly) phonetics, the work presents “ families ” of characters that, to this extent at least, are not normally seen gathered together – the possibilities for learning characters and for etymological studies that are created by this arrangement are strikingly obvious; *extras*: the foreword provides a fine, tightly reasoned exposition of the landmarks of Chinese lexicography and a convincing rationale for the various decisions that Choh-ming Li felt obliged to make that result in his dictionary being in numbers of important ways different from its predecessors.

In his introduction, Choh-ming Li disarmingly explains that the compilation of this dictionary was personal psychotherapy for him during those demanding years when he was the founding vice-chancellor of what was then the new Chinese University of Hong Kong. Within a tradition that is very old in China, he devoted those very few hours of leisure that his busy duties afforded him to the reflective tasks of lexicography. A pleasing and thoroughly commendable activity! Little wonder then that his definitions are spare to the point of being laconic – anything that is essential is there, and certainly one does not waste time on verbiage! It is perhaps a pity that he did not have a little more time to dilate somewhat on the phonetic and etymological significance of some of the groups he has associated together in this dictionary, for I am sure that he would be well qualified to do so. This is a work for professionals by a professional. It is at present only in a Chinese-Chinese form; someone should run it through a computer and make a Chinese-English version for the linguistically-weaker brethren among western Sinologists.

R. P. SLOSS