

Japanologist, whether novice or expert, who will find many topics raised in the book to be worthy of further research.

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KOREA

LEE, PETER H. *A Korean Storyteller's Miscellany: The P'aegwan chapki of Ŏ Sukkwŏn*. Princeton Library of Asian Translations. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989. xviii+312 pages. Appendices, bibliography, index. Cloth US\$38.00; ISBN 0-691-06771-6.

I am indebted to Peter Lee for introducing me to the Yi dynasty writer-scholar Ŏ Sukkwŏn, whose *P'aegwan chapki* Dr Lee has translated in *A Korean Storyteller's Miscellany*. But Dr Lee's book is more than just a translation, for he has done a splendid job of locating both Ŏ Sukkwŏn and the miscellany (*chapki*) form in Korean history, literature, and culture. In fact, even those who may be unfamiliar with Korean history, literature, and culture will learn a great deal about all of those domains from this book and will undoubtedly want to know more when they finish reading it.

The *Miscellany* is a collection of 237 "random jottings" on a great variety of topics, including poetry, textual criticism, bibliography, Sino-Korean relations, contemporary mores, portraits, autobiographical sketches, and others. What makes Ŏ Sukkwŏn's observations interesting are his intelligence, his character, his curiosity, his ability as a writer, as well as his location in Korean history and society. As an illegitimate son who was educated to be a scholar-official, he could never aspire to a place in the elite *yangban* class but would by the strictures of Korean society forever be limited to a lower status. While he was a man very much of the scholar-literati class and accepted its standards, beliefs, and ideals, he nevertheless resented the limitations imposed upon him by his illegitimate birth. This marginality gives him something of an insider-outsider perspective that provides unusual insights into his life and times. While he was not a dissenter in any sense, he was nevertheless capable of making observations implicitly critical of the rigid Confucianist ethos that he subscribed to. Such, for example, is his remark about the lack of recognition for the literary gifts of women: "Alas! How can one overlook these works simply because they were done by women! How can one condemn such pursuits as unsuitable for women?" (250). Elsewhere he comments on the lot of illegitimate sons such as himself: "Even when they had outstanding talents, such sons have been thwarted in their aspirations and have usually died in obscurity. . . . How pitiable!" (250).

In his preface Dr Lee discusses the formation of the literary canon in Korea and the place of the literary miscellany in relation to the canon. While it occupied a "low place in the hierarchy of prose genres" (xi), the miscellany was nonetheless important as "an antigenre that scoffs at the prescriptive conventions and stilted rhetoric of formal prose genres" (xi). Writers turned to the literary miscellany "for its freedom, spontaneity and diversity" (xi). Lee believes that the miscellany, because it allows a critical subjectivity in response to tradition, performs a valuable hermeneutic function in understanding Korean history, society, and literature.

Lee's introductory essays on Rhetoric and Style, the Favored Topics, The Value

System, and Self as Subject could stand alone as examples of scholarly writing that is lucid, informed, extremely well-crafted, and a pleasure to read. In the first essay Lee tells us that Ŏ Sukkwŏn used the "plain style" in his writing because he associated this with a nonchalant attitude suitable for expressing his views on whatever struck his fancy. This seeming nonchalance, however, may disguise the "studied art that he put into his work" (14).

In his essay on the value system Lee makes it clear that Ŏ Sukkwŏn adhered to the Confucianist values that structured and permeated Korean society. The Chinese emperor was ideologically the father of the Korean king and the Korean king was father of the Korean people. To be known in China was "the highest honor a writer could hope for" (46). In his work as an official interpreter Ŏ Sukkwŏn made seven trips to Peking, and his miscellany draws upon the China experience. But the "jottings" he provides for us are not from the official records but rather from his own experience with Chinese as well as Korean officials, statesmen, poets, and fellow humans of high and low degree. The word experience is key here, for Ŏ writes out of his own experience and his knowledge of the experience of others. It is this candid, experiential, subjective level of writing that moves Ŏ's writing close to the European essay form (with important differences) and makes it a beginning on the way to the formation of the novel.

This book belongs on the shelf of anyone interested in Korea, China, or East Asia, or, indeed, anyone interested in literature anywhere. Lee's scholarly comparisons of Ŏ Sukkwŏn's writing with cognate Western literary forms makes it accessible to students of comparative literature. And there is literally almost something for everyone in the *Miscellany*. My colleagues in anthropology will be most interested in Ŏ's comments on shamanism and folk beliefs. Most of all, Ŏ Sukkwŏn was an astute and wise observer of the human condition and for that alone he deserves a wide audience.

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CHINA

CUTTER, ROBERT JOE. *The Brush and the Spur: Chinese Culture and the Cockfight*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1989. xiv + 255 pages. Appendix, notes, bibliography, index, illustrations, maps. Hardcover US\$28.00; ISBN 962-201-417-8.

This work aims to discuss China's traditional culture by means of the cockfight. There have been almost no previous examples of an attempt to study China's traditional culture by focussing on cockfighting or other amusements. For one thing, most people would think that a trivial activity like amusement would not provide sufficient material for a discussion of Chinese culture. A reading of Cutter's book, however, readily makes clear just how wrong such a view is.

Historical materials dealing with cockfighting exist in abundance; Cutter cites materials from the Zhou period (sixth century B.C.) that have the first mention of cockfighting, and sources up to the Qing: approximately 2,500 years of source material. On top of this, cockfighting appears throughout a wide spread of Chinese literature, from the works of such historical literature as the *Zuo zhuan* 左傳 to philosophical works such as *Zhuang xi* 莊子 and *Lie xi* 列子, to the various forms of poetry produced by Court poets (*shi* 詩, *fu* 賦, *qu shi* 古詩, *ci* 詞, *yue fu* 樂府, etc.), and often enough it