

## BOOK REVIEWS

### GENERAL

CAILLOIS, ROGER. *The Mystery Novel*. Transl. Roberto Yahni and A. W. Sadler. Bronxville, N. Y.: The Laughing Buddha Press, 1984. 49 pages.

In this little booklet the Laughing Buddha Press respectfully presents Roger Caillois' introduction to the mystery novel. Throughout the booklet interesting observations sparkle and enkindle interest in this critically neglected genre. The essay is in three parts. The first describes the evolution of detective fiction in contrast to the novel. Detective fiction follows a set of self-imposed rules, starts with an effect and works back to the cause, and appeals to the intellect. The second and third parts show how the mystery novel becomes a game and how, even though it tends to exclude passion, it depends upon drama to maintain reader involvement. In the end it is not so far removed from the novel after all.

After this pleasant aperitif, one is ready for the more meaty *Detective Fiction* edited by Robin W. Winks. Both books remind us that mystery novels are also indicators of a particular culture, providing glimpses into the on-going mystery of the human being.

### REFERENCE CITED:

ROBIN, W. Winks, ed.

1980 *Detective fiction*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

David R. Mayer  
Nanzan University  
Nagoya / Japan

### JAPAN

BOCK, FELICIA G., translated and annotated. *Classical Learning and Taoist Practices in Early Japan. With Translation of Books XVI and XX of the Engi-Shiki*. Occasional Paper No. 17. Tempe: Center for Asian Studies, Arizona State University, 1985. 102 pages. Paper US\$8.00. ISBN 0-939252-13-9.

The *Engi-shiki* is a compendium of Japanese governmental procedures compiled during the Engi era (901-922). So little material is available in Western languages for the study of early Japan that all reliable translations from the *Engi-shiki* are welcome, and Dr. Bock is a scholar with considerable experience translating such material.

The present volume is organized around translations of two chapters of the *Engi-shiki*. Those chapters focus upon the government offices devoted to certain elements of Chinese civilization which the early Japanese government had found reason to appropriate—"the Bureau of Higher Learning" (*daigaku-ryō* 大學寮) and "the Yin-

Yang Bureau" (*onyō-ryō* 陰陽寮). Prima facie, this volume would seem to be of general interest to many students of East Asian cultures, serving as a rare bridge between the study of early China and the study of early Japan. But while Dr. Bock's analyses provide basic background data and succinct interpretive observations, they fail to probe the broader issues raised in the title of the volume.

The structure of this slim work is bipartite. Part I comprises Bock's discussion of the topics raised in the texts; Part II contains the translations. Chapter 1 constitutes an informative survey of the historical introduction of continental cultural traditions into Japan. Chapters 2 and 3 address the contents of the texts themselves. The discussions in those two chapters, however, jump disconcertingly from topic to topic, and often make sense only when one turns forward to the translations in Part II. The reader would have been better served had those two chapters been appended to the respective translations.

A particularly confusing aspect of the volume is the author's imprecise use of such interpretive categories as "Confucianism" and "Taoism." Bock employs the term "Taoism" in an especially ambiguous manner. On occasion, she equates "Taoism" with "yin-yang belief" (e.g., 22), but she never defines "yin-yang belief," or explains why it may be referred to as "Taoism." In reality, the title of the work is fairly misleading, for the activities of "the Yin-Yang Bureau" do not represent "Taoist practices" as currently understood by specialists in Taoist studies. According to the *Engi-shiki*, the functions of the Japanese "Yin-Yang Bureau" were (1) the calculation of the calendar; (2) astronomical and meteorological observation; and (3) the observation and reporting of portents (21). None of those activities bear any direct relationship either to the Taoist philosophy of Lao-zi 老子 and Zhuang-zi 莊子, or to the Taoist religion, which was flourishing in China during precisely the time that the Japanese were most energetically importing Chinese cultural elements. One's impression that Bock is generally unfamiliar with the nature of Chinese Taoism is confirmed by the surprising fact that her bibliography makes no reference to any scholarly study of Taoism, from either Japanese scholars (e.g., Miyakawa, Kubo, Yoshioka) or Western scholars (e.g., Seidel, Schipper, Strickmann).

Secondly, Bock's comparison of "yin-yang activities" in China and Japan is too shallow to afford an accurate appreciation of the continuities and discontinuities involved. The author once again seems somewhat uninformed regarding the original Chinese context of the cultural elements under discussion. In China, the functions of the Japanese Yin-Yang Bureau had been not "Taoist practices," but traditional functions of the imperial government. The political interest in portents there had been grounded not in Taoist thought, but rather in the Confucian cosmology of universal interaction which Han dynasty thinkers such as Dong Zhong-shu 董仲舒 had elaborated.

The author's insensitivity to the political significance of what she calls "yin-yang belief" is revealed in a statement on page 22: "In contrast to the intellectual and spiritual teachings of Buddhism, beliefs in supernatural portents and unseen forces of the cosmos fulfilled an emotional need in an age of credulity." It must be recalled that the initial success of Buddhism in East Asia has often been attributed precisely to its fulfillment of "emotional needs" in the supposedly turbulent and uncertain world of late Han and Six Dynasties China. All such condescending generalizations do an injustice to the complexities of historical realities, and provide little insight into the cultures of China or Japan. Had the author delved more deeply into the intellectual and institutional history of imperial China, she would have been in a position to contrast the Chinese and Japanese versions of "Confucianism" and "Taoism"

more productively. (Incidentally, such matters as calendar-making and portent-observation as functions of the Chinese government in the seventh century—when the Japanese “Yin-Yang Bureau” was established—have now been elucidated in Wechsler 1985.)

The sections of the *Engi-shiki* which are translated in this volume comprise little more than lists of the materials which the functionaries in the respective government offices were expected to gather for the conduct of their duties. If such austere texts are to permit significant insights into the adaptation of Chinese cultural traditions in early Japan, they would seem to require greater interpretive amplification than Bock undertakes in this volume. The present work appears to present itself as something more than a simple annotated translation, yet the author does not develop the material into a satisfying topical study.

In sum, this work is a disappointment. The title and opening chapter raise hopes for a significant contribution to our understanding of Chinese intellectual influences in early Japan. But the remainder of the volume constitutes a rudimentary explication of two chapters of the *Engi-shiki* with perfunctory interpretive analysis. One cannot but feel that the translated texts are, in the final analysis, too skeletal to anchor a meaningful scholarly monograph. As it is, Bock's work will benefit a regrettably small circle of readers.

#### REFERENCE CITED:

WECHSLER, Howard J.

1985 *Offerings of jade and silk: Ritual and symbol in the legitimation of the T'ang dynasty*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

J. Russell Kirkland  
University of Rochester  
Rochester NY

DYKSTRA, YOSHIKO KURATA, translated and annotated. *Miraculous Tales of the Lotus Sutra from Ancient Japan. The 'Dainihonkoku hokekyō-kenki' of Priest Chingen*. Osaka/Japan: Intercultural Research Institute, The Kansai University of Foreign Studies, 1983. X+159 pages. Appendix, bibliography, index. Distributed by the University of Hawaii Press. Hardcover US\$25.00. ISBN 4-87335-002-6.

The earliest collection of Buddhist tales extant in Japan is *Nihon Ryōiki* compiled in 822. *Hokekyōkenki*, commonly known as *Hokegenki*, was written in the 1040s, apparently adopting half a dozen tales from *Ryōiki*. In turn, *Hokegenki* influenced later collections, notably the all important *Konjaku monogatari* (ca. 1120), which contains no less than eighty stories related to those in *Hokegenki*. The famous tale about a love-crazed woman turning into a snake, for example, first appeared in *Hokegenki* (no. 129), was inherited by *Konjaku*, dramatized by the Noh theater in the fourteenth century, and bloomed into the popular Kabuki play *Dōjōji* in the seventeenth century. Some tales are important in tracing origins of motifs.

The 129 tales in *Hokegenki* are characterized by their predilection for the supernatural and fantasy in comparison with the realistic depiction of contemporary life as exemplified in *Ryōiki*. Accordingly, *Hokegenki* offers a wealth of folklore motifs in its Buddhist pseudo-biographies. To cite a prominent example, tale no. 1 is a mythic