

Traditions of China and Japan (MAP: World Cultures v55.0506) Spring 2008. Tue & Thurs 3:30-4:45. Prof. Roberts. Office 715 B'way, 3rd floor, CHECK BOOK PRICES WITH AMAZON.COM. or ABEBOOKS.COM

Readings, Topics, and Problems

1. The Tale of Kieu, Vietnam's national classic, written early in the 19th century by Nguyen Du and translated into English by Huynh Sanh Thong, Yale Univ Press paperback. Nguyen Du translates and adapts an older Chinese novella, which is set in the mid-16th century, that is, in the middle of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). Read Woodside's Historical Background and the translator's Introduction. The historical core of this work is the government campaign against the pirate-hero Tu Hai (Ch: Xu Hai) in Part V. Pay attention to the footnotes. Questions: 1) Why has the author chosen a time frame of 15 years? 2) When does Kieu's pre-incarnation, Dam Tien, leave the narrative? 3) Do Confucian or Buddhist values prevail in the end? Why did this novella sink into oblivion in China but achieve fame in Vietnam? **ASSIGNMENT:** one-two page paper describing any character and his or her role in the plot

2. Confucian Analects, translated by James Legge, Dover paperback. Sayings and dialogues of Confucius and / or his followers (and their followers) from the late 6th century B.C. down (perhaps) to the late 5th century B.C. Note key terms, *junzi* (superior man, literally ruler's son), *ren* (benevolence, perfect virtue, humaneness), *li* (ritual, ceremony, etiquette, forms and formalities), *yi* (righteousness, honor, duty, service, The Code; pronounced *gi* in Japanese), *xiao* (filial piety, devotion, service, pronounced *kō* in Japanese). The Analects has almost 500 passages divided into 20 short books. Read all. Book 1 introduces many terms and themes; Book 4 consists of direct quotes from Confucius (except 4.15); book 12 concentrates on the art of governing; book 18 (read twice) defends government service against the recluses (?daoists). Sample of noteworthy passages (for re-reading): 1.1, 1.2, 1.10, 1.11, 1.16. 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.19, 2.21, 2.23. 3.3, 3.8, 3.9. 5.6, 5.9, 5.11, 5.18. 6.20, 6.21, 6.28. 7.1, 7.21, 7.22, 7.29. 8.2, 8.8. 9.12, 9.13, 9.16, 9.17, 9.29. 14.23, 24, 25, 36, 37, 41. 15.28. 19.22. How does Confucius integrate his ideas on education, politics, poetry, and morality?

3. Laozi's Dao De Jing, translated by Moss Roberts, Univ of California Press. A set of 81 philosophical poems on ethics, government, aesthetics,

cosmology, and cosmogony attributed to Laozi (Old Master), generally critical of Confucian positions. Portions contemporary with (or slightly later than) the Analects. Terms: *wuwei* (non-action, action through inaction), *wanwu* (ten thousand things) *dao* (the Way), *ziran* (nature or things as they are). Questions: 1) Why does Laozi make the gender issue so prominent? 2) How does the *shengren* (sage, wise man) compare with the *junzi* of the Analects?

4. Kenkō's Essays in Idleness (*tsurezure gusa*), translated by Donald Keene, Columbia Univ. Press. 14th century Japanese Buddhist monk explores the concept of the identity of nirvana and samsara that underlies a 'religion' dedicated to observing. Terms: *zen*, *sabi*.

Takehome Quiz on readings 2, 3 and 4.

5. Four Plays of Chikamatsu, translated by Donald Keene, Columbia Univ. Press. Comedy, history, and tragedy by the 18th century Japanese playwright. Terms: *makoto* (sincerity), *giri* (honor), and *ninjō* (interest, emotion, passion), *shinju* (love suicide, compare *junshi*, vassal suicide). Certain modern themes foreshadowed. Read all four plays. Compare the status of the merchant in Chikamatsu and Kenkō. Compare the courtesans Ohatsu, Azuma, and Koharu with Kieu. Compare the rebel Coxinga with Tu Hai.

6. Dream of the Red Chamber, by Tsao Hsueh-chin (Cao Xueqin) translated by C.C. Wang, Penguin paperback. Read in full. Compare the heroine Black Jade with Kieu, the heroine of our first reading. Consider the roles of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism in the narrative and the influence of these philosophies on the characters. Why does Dream become a national classic in China while Tale of Kieu disappears?

7. Chinese Fairy Tales & Fantasies, translated by Moss Roberts, Pantheon paperback, various periods. Main author: Pu Songling (early 18th century). Compare Daoist and Confucian themes in the stories.

Quiz on readings 5,6,7.

8. Kokoro by Natsume Soseki, translated by Edwin McClellan (Gateway Books). Break down in generational continuity in late Meiji Japan. The novel was written shortly after the death of the Emperor Meiji in 1912 and after Japan had defeated China and Russia in brief wars (1895 and 1905).

9. Lu Xun's True Story of Ah Q, translated by Yang Xianyi. 1921. China's hopes for gaining equality among the nations were raised during WWI but dashed by the post-war actions of the Western Powers and Japan, setting the stage for mass protest in China (1919) and the birth of the Communist Party. Is Ah Q a figure of the past or the future?

FINAL EXAM WILL COVER LAST TWO READINGS. FINAL PAPER ON TOPIC OF YOUR CHOICE.