The Travels of Lao T'san: A Study of the Maladministration of "Pure Officials"

Acknowledgements

The Travels of Lao T'san is one of the four great novels of Late Ch'ing. It reveals certain phenomena in the official circle and the life of common people. The difference between the book and other Chinese novels is that it exposes the maladministration of the so-called "Pure Officials" who cause the instability of the country and the life of the people at large.

The novel witnesses the wilful deeds of the two "incorruptible" and "capable" officials through the evidence gathered by the traveller doctor Lao T'san. Yu Hsien is a capable official who is especially good in dealing with brigands. He is, however, fierce and anxious to pursue higher position. As to prove his capability, he spares no mercy in delivering many innocents from death. In spite of his boasted maxim "honesty", Kang Pi is both bigoted and unjust. He applies severe punishment deliberately as a means to drive suspects to confession.

The concise language and the distinctive content structure employed skillfully by the author to vividly present the main theme of the book — revelation of the maladministration of "Pure Officials" have thus contributed much to its excellent accomplishment.