A CRITICAL STUDY OF LIAOZhai ZHIYi

SUMMARY

The thesis consists of nine chapters and a conclusion. The main body of the thesis can be divided into the following four parts, namely, the life and career of Pu Sungling (1640-1715), his thoughts, the literary merits of the Liaozhai Zhiyi and the writing techniques the Liaozhai Zhiyi inherited from the traditional genre.

Having made a deeper survey of Pu Songling's life and his times, and having examined the 500 stories from the Liaozhai Zhiyi (especially those subtle and symbolic ones), with the help of the rare materials kept by Keio University in Tokyo, the following original findings have been made by the author of this thesis.

The number of times P'u sat for civil examinations is being solved and that the Liaozhai Zhiyi has 16 Chüan is being confirmed. Pu's correspondences with his friends, a large number of the transcribed copies of Pu's works kept by Keio University are identified as authentic. Methods of identification are to verify the events recorded with Pu's curriculum vitae, or to see whether the thoughts reflected in these writings are identical with that of the Liaozhai zhiyi and the Pu Sungling Ji. The author of this thesis strongly believes that the 60 odd pien of prose poems kept by the Keio University are authentic. They composed an important part of P'u's works and are of high value in understanding P'u's life and thought. They should be included in Pu Songling's collected works if the later is to be republished in the future.

On P'u's nationalism, new evidences from the Liaozhai Zhiyi are discussed and deeper verification with the historical facts of the Ming & Qing transitional period proves that the assertion is true. Besides, a new perspective on P'u's views on dynastic legitimacy has been brought out.

On religion, the author makes a systematic and extensive survey of P'u's religious beliefs and concludes that he was an eclectic of the three teachings.
Moreover, the author of this thesis disagrees that Pu was an atheist, instead, he proves that Pu's view was very conventional. Pu's views on the origin of the Universe, on history and his attitude towards life, which have seldom been discussed before, are given full attention.

A more complete picture of Pu's literary theories is patched. The rare materials reveal that Pu was a Confucian literary critic. He recognized the function of literature and believed that literature was evolusive. He also emphasized the theme of originality and his attitude towards writing was serious.

The discussion about the relationship between the Taiping Guangji and the Liaozhai Zhiji is extensive and unique. It brings to light how P'u Songling inherited his writing techniques from this tradition. The whole section concentrates on the forty odd stories which were not previously discussed by any researchers in this field.

Sporadic original findings can also be found in the thesis such as Pu's attack on the eight legged essays and the examination system, his criticism of the corrupt officers, his views on women's independent personality, his advocacy for liberation of human nature, his compromising view on parental role in marriages and his proletarian view of marriage, his attack on "blind" filial piety, his attack on the conflicts between brothers especially between half brothers for status and property, his condemnation of aggressive wives and his praise of true friendship between male with his female counterparts.