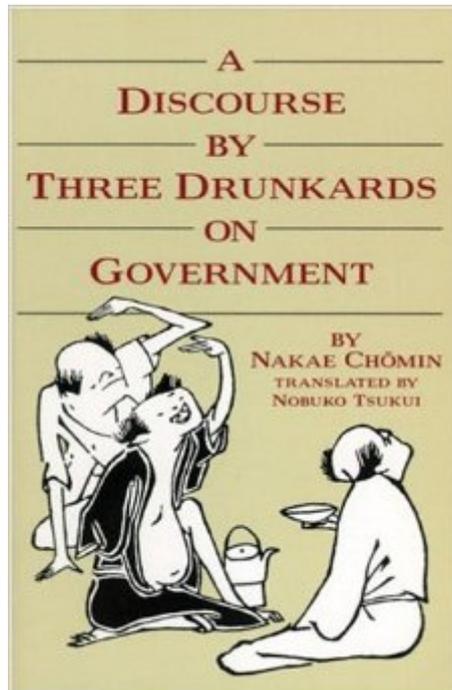


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A Discourse By Three Drunkards On Government



Synopsis

A Discourse by Three Drunkards on Government takes the form of a debate between a spokesman for Western ideals of democracy and progress, and an advocate for adherence to traditional samurai values. Their discussion is moderated by the imperturbable Master Nankai, who loves nothing more than to drink and argue politics. The fiction of the drinking bout allowed Chomin to debate freely topical political issues, in a discussion that offers an astute analysis of contemporary European politics and a prophetic vision of Japan's direction. This lucid and precise translation of a delightful work has been designated one of the UNESCO series of classics of world literature.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This short work, from the end of the 19th century, taught me a lot about Japan's course since then. Two disputants, under blanket amnesty granted by brandy, present supposedly opposing views. The first, in Western clothes, orates at length on democracy, personal freedom, education, world relations, and (of course) national wealth. The second, representing Japanese tradition, argues for military expansionism in order to attain a secure place in international politics and (of course) to attain national wealth. I say supposed opposition - it seemed to me that the two were really discussing different aspects of the cultural identity. The master, in the end, advises modernization within reason and defensive armament within reason. Although his house set the stage for the other two and his point made the most sense, I found it the least interesting part of the text. The two extremes held my attention much more closely. In retrospect, we can see that Japan has followed both courses. It

armed heavily up to mid 20th century, and has since participated on an even footing with the major Western powers. This book seems have predicted both. I don't know whether to file this little book closer to Confucius or Johnathan Swift - no matter, I welcome it to my library.

The Discourse here is an excellent pre-war subversive missive which will give significant insight to those who wish to understand the underlying internal soul-searching going on in Japan during the period between the arrival of Perry and the Black Ships until the modern soul-searching debate surrounding the essential illegality and absurdity of Article IX in the Japanese Constitution. The title itself should clue in the reader that this is definitely one of those books which like Voltaire and Machiavelli, got the author in quite a bit of trouble with the secret police for being too close to the truth for thier liking. The debate takes on a similar form to the traditional greek diatribes in that it is in the form of a conversation between master and seekers. However, the Discourse here is a conversation between the Master Power Drinker and two drinking buddies; The Lover of the Old and the Lover of the New. After the boys have had a few bottles of sake a piece, and are "full of thier cups" as it were, they are allowed to speak thier minds freely in the Japanese tradition as a Jester is with his cap. Hence, the drinking becomes a token of the true face of each of the debaters and the heated philosophical arguements that always insue after one has had enough to drink as to become loquacious, but not yet enough to slur one's words, yet what is said cannot be held against the speakers the next day as they try to sleep off thier hangovers. Anyone interested in the essential debate for the Japanese soul as Japan moved from a fuedal isolationist society to dreams of empire in complete immitation of the British and United States empires should certainly read this book.

This is a beautifully simple discussion of the pros and cons of different forms of government. Despite being a couple of hundred years old, it makes a lot of sense and seems highly pertinent in the current world crisis of governance.

This work was a required read for a course on Japanese history course, and it is a refreshing way to study notions of governing and being governed.

Bought this book for history class. Okay read.

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