

Abstract

A day in the life of Kubo, the novelist **A study on the identity of a Korean intellectual**

The publication deals with so called “stories about Kubo” (*Kubo-hyŏng sosŏl*). The Korean literary tradition of “stories about Kubo” started in 1934, together with the publication of Pak T’ae-wŏn (1909–1986)’s novel, *A day in the life of Kubo, the novelist* (*Sosŏlga Kubo ssi ūi iril*). As the title may suggest, the novel of Pak T’aewŏn presents one day in the life of a young Korean intellectual named Kubo, who lives in Seoul during the Japanese colonization. The original story about Kubo became an inspiration for Ch’oe In-hun (1936~) and Chu In-sŏk (1963~) who also wrote stories about Kubo.

Although the protagonists of the three novels written by Pak T’ae-wŏn, Ch’oe In-hun and Chu In-sŏk, share the same name, they differ from each other as they live in different periods of Korean history. Pak T’ae-wŏn described the colonial reality of Korea, but Ch’oe In-hun and Chu In-sŏk presented the reality of the neocolonial or postcolonial era. In the novel of Ch’oe In-hun (*Sosŏlga Kubo ssi ūi iril*, 1969–1972), which consists of fifteen short stories, the protagonist Kubo reflects not only on the colonial past but also on the cold war, division of the Korean Peninsula and the authoritarian regime of President Pak Chŏng-hui. On the other hand, the novel of Chu In-sŏk (*Sosŏlga Kubo ssi ūi haru*, 1995), which is composed of five Kubo stories, presents five days in the life of a novelist, living in Seoul in the postindustrial society of the early 90s.

In this book the author approaches the question of the identity of all the writers Kubo by focusing on their roots, memory, body perception and plans for

future. The book presents the crucial problems of the Korean people living in the 20th century, such as the sense of uprooting, dominance of foreign culture and Western civilization followed not only by the progressive hybridization of the Korean nation but also the feeling of ambivalence and the fear of losing authenticity. The literary analysis of the “stories about Kubo” helps readers to understand more comprehensively the colonial situation of Korea, the situation of national division and the relations of dominance and subordination in the period of military regime in South Korea.