

An Annotated Translation of Mao Xiang's *Reminiscences
of the Convent of Shadowy Plum-blossoms* (Part One)

by Yasushi OKI

Mao Xiang recorded his memories of his concubine Dong Xiao-wan, who died an early death. The translation published in this issue presents the first third of his account, to the time Dong Xiao-wan succeeded in marrying into Mao's family.

Dong Xiao-wan was a courtesan in the Qinhuai district of the southern capital, Nanjing. Mao first learned of her reputation from his literary friend Fang Yi-zhi, and repeatedly tried to visit her without success. At last he caught a glimpse of her.

Mao was associated with another famous courtesan Chen Yuan-yuan, and he was heartbroken when she was taken to Beijing by a maternal relative of the Emperor. When Mao was able to see Dong Xiao-wan, she expressed her willingness to marry him. He hoped to redeem her from her bondage as a singing girl, and then learned it would be difficult to buy her out because she had fallen into debt in Suzhou. It was the prominent literary figure Qian Qian-yi who helped to redeem her and sent her to Ru-gao, Mao's hometown.