

## Notes on the Colloquial Stories of the Ming Dynasty

—The Short Stories: The “Three *Yen's*” (2-1)—

by Kanehide ONOYE

In this paper the author attempts to illustrate the various modes of people's life in the “Three *Yen's*” (三言) and classify the stories into four groups, especially with set phrases or proverbs as a clue.

- 1) The first group is concerned with the governing class, which is mainly based on literati and officialdom. They actually made their best endeavors to pass the imperial examination as the biggest object in life. The officials observed in the stories, however, lack the sense of responsibility for good government, while they take intense interests only in honor and privilege for exemption from statute labor.
- 2) The second group is the governed class, which comprises peasants, merchants and craftsmen.
- 3) The third group includes Buddhist monks and nuns who should have stood aloof from the mundane life.
- 4) The fourth group is the outlaws, namely, robbers and errants.

The present paper examines the relation between the senior officials in the first group and the imperial examination on the basis of analysis of the stories. As regarding the petty officials and other groups, it is expected to be mentioned in other papers.