

JOCHEN HILTMANN, *Miruk. Die heiligen Steine Koreas*. With a preface by Hans-Joachim Lenger and a postscript by the Korean writer Song Kie-Sook. Frankfurt/M.: Edition Qumran/Campus Verlag, 1987. 232 pp., 90 illustr., DM 48.-

A small valley, called Mansan and situated in the remote south-west of the Korean peninsula, houses one of the most fascinating and enigmatic religious "environments" of the Far East. There, one finds about 120 stone monuments, scattered all over the valley-bottom and over the surrounding mountains. Among those monuments are rather strange pagodas and conspicuous, though crude, bits of rock. Most of the monuments, however, are more or less refined statues of the Maitreya Buddha (Sino-Kor. Mirŭk), standing, squatting, lying, or protruding from rocky walls, and all of them of quite unusual proportions. In former times, the number of Mirŭk statues appears to have been even larger than today. For, in the name of the hamlet located at the entrance to the valley "one thousand Buddhas" are mentioned.

The ordinary criteria of the art historian will hardly apply to the Mansan monuments. It would be equally inappropriate, however, rashly to qualify them as archaic and non-sophisticated. For although they are incommensurably strange and overpowering, the monuments are a testimony to Buddhism, and thus related to something decidedly sophisticated and non-archaic. Attempts at historical understanding do not lead far, either. For hitherto, nobody has succeeded in finding out who made and erected the monuments and why this was done. We do not even know when that happened. On the basis of peculiarities of style, some scholars point at the 10th century A.D., others at the 15th.

Jochen Hiltmann, professor of aesthetics and himself a sculptor besides being co-editor of the periodical *Spuren* (Traces), does not even try to approach the matter along the lines of conventional art criticism and historical scholarship. Instead, he makes Mansan valley and its documents "talk", as it were, by dealing with the environment as a riddle. Without, however, explicitly stating the riddle, he straightforwardly provides the surprising, yet plausible, clue to solve it: *minjung*.

The term is the Sino-Korean translation of the biblical *ochlos* (the chosen people). Primarily through the writings of Korean Protestant theologians *minjung* has come to mean the supposedly collective experience of the Korean lower classes throughout all ages, i.e., their suffering under a centralized, autocratic, and exploitive regime. At the same time, *minjung* holds the promise of a future world that is decentralized and egalitarian in nature. *Minjung* also applies to the people as a collective agent in history and politics.

This is why Koreans who are in favour of the concept of *minjung* talk of "the" *minjung*, and so does Professor Hiltmann. In his eyes, Mansan valley with its stone Miruks gives an inkling of such a better world. It does so by conveying the impression of a predominantly "ornamental" arrangement of mountains and waters, stones and people, which is the opposite of a thoroughly and geometrically organized whole.

The environment as such is at the centre of the book. Professor Hiltmann recognizes a profound mutual interdependence between the peculiarly Korean phenomenon on the one hand, universal hopes and aspirations on the other. He is above all concerned with the latter, things Korean at times being dealt with as merely exemplificatory, and *minjung* becomes the term to denote such universal hopes.

Though somewhat unusual, Professor Hiltmann's approach to a foreign phenomenon is both meaningful and stimulating, and it is beyond doubt legitimate. However, the author in a way needs to be protected from his own intentions. For not everybody will take *minjung* to be the answer to the Mansan riddle, let alone to universal problems. There is no doubt that *minjung* meaningfully applies to the Korean south-west. No other part of the Korean peninsula houses more statues of Miruk, the Buddha of future eras. Also, the area has many times been the hotbed of popular insurrections, some of which almost came to endanger the very continuity of centralized political power, as well as of numerous chiliastic movements and sects. As most readers will know, the south-west has also been in the vanguard of political opposition in more recent years. All this at the same time implies, however, that *minjung* cannot be fully equated with Korea, or vice versa. In other words, what one experiences in, and with, Mansan valley does not comprise the whole of Korea, not even of a future, better one.

Is Professor Hiltmann's book a scholarly one? It can be rated as such for the documentary record it contains, i.e., its many beautiful photographs, maps and other drawings. The author himself, however, may be inclined to qualify such features as merely accessory. He is more concerned with what H.-J. Lenger in his foreword so succinctly calls "loss of self" (*Selbstverlust*). Writing the book, and reading it as a visitor to Mansan valley, is a way of structuring a somewhat disconcerting experience, when both prior individual experiences and current interpretations fail to fulfil their task. As such, the book should be taken as a philosophical and literary achievement mainly. The author partakes of a wider discussion, a clue to which is "sensory awareness", (*Sinnenbewußtsein*, Rudolf zur Lippe) an awareness which is concerned with perception that goes beyond what art suggests and permits. The book is thus ultimately about assigning humanity a place in the world which is not pivotal.

This, in turn, is also a Buddhist concern. In a way, the book is therefore also one on Buddhism, although the author almost certainly did not so intend it. It has become such less by the recording of matter-of-fact knowledge on Buddhism than by the author allowing himself to become "entangled" in a particular Buddhist environment and its manifold ramifications. The reader, too, may like to become involved in the matter and thereby, though unintentionally, learn a lot about Buddhism, among other things. This is more praise than one can bestow on many a scholarly book on the topic.

Dieter Eikemeier

DAVID E. KAPLAN, ALEC DUBRO, *Yakuza. The Explosive Account of Japan's Criminal Underworld*. London: Macdonald & Co. (Futura Publications), 1987. 414 pages, £ 3,50.

Few textbooks on Japan's political economy bother to mention the role which organized crime plays in her political and social system. Kaplan and Dubro have synthesized the current state of public knowledge on the gangs' structure and mode of operation and added the results of research of their own.

The book begins with an account of the historical origins of the *yakuza* (which help to explain some of the - wholly unwarranted - *yakuza* mystique of latter day Robin Hoods) as gamblers (*bakuto*) or peddlers (*tekiya*).

More interesting, however, is a lengthy section on their postwar development: starting in black marketeering, in ethnic or subcultural gangs, linking up with rightwing extremists and dubious 'Kuromaku' (unseen wirepullers like Yoshio Kodama, Kenji Osano and Ryoichi Sasagawa), as well as LDP power brokers (most notably the former side-stream faction bosses Ichiro Kono, Bamboku Ono, and PM Nobusuke Kishi), most of whom are dead by now. The book moves on to describe the LDP/mob connections unearthed by the Lockheed scandal investigations. It also provides fairly impressive descriptions of the *yakuza* organizations' internal structure, with their feudalistic *oyabun-kobun* (boss-follower) ties; and finally focusses on the *yakuza's* emerging international role - basically around the Pacific Rim (Korea, Taiwan, Philippines, Hawaii, the US West Coast), searching for amphetamines, hand guns, prostitutes and money laundering opportunities.

Kaplan and Dubro describe the current 'modernizing' transition of this venerable Japanese social institution (where uniform black-striped dress codes, tattoos, and cut little fingers still abound) from its traditional extortion, prostitution, blackmail, strike-breaking and casual labour exploitation (at