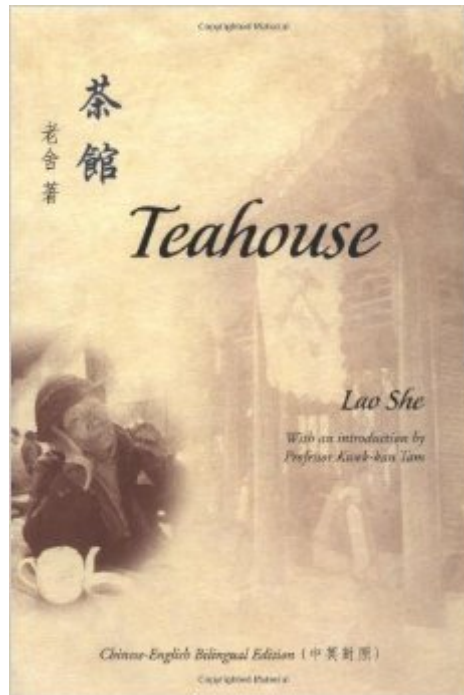


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Teahouse (Bilingual Series In Modern Chinese Literature)



Synopsis

Set in an old teahouse in Beijing, the play is typical of Lao She's art that seeks to provide a panoramic view of Chinese history and culture in their transformation from tradition to modernity. Teahouse spans fifty years in modern Chinese history from the collapse of the Qing dynasty and the Republican Revolution to the birth of the People's Republic. The play brings together over sixty characters, representing all walks of life in change. It is noted for its vivid portrayal of characters and lively use of Beijing dialect, but its main thrust lies in Lao She's vision of history, which is prophetic of later political movements and its disastrous effects on the average Chinese people. Teahouse is a rare masterpiece of the contemporary Chinese theatre. It has been performed in Japan, Europe and North America, and translated into major foreign languages.

Book Information

Series: Bilingual Series in Modern Chinese Literature

Paperback: 150 pages

Publisher: The Chinese University Press; Bilingual edition (October 27, 2004)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 9629961253

ISBN-13: 978-9629961251

Product Dimensions: 5.6 x 0.5 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 3.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (4 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #388,421 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #33 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > Dramas & Plays > Regional & Cultural > Asian](#) #72 in [Books > Textbooks > Humanities > Literature > World Literature > Asian](#) #463 in [Books > Textbooks > Humanities > Performing Arts > Theater](#)

Customer Reviews

Novelist and playwright Lao She's difficult life in China; his illustrious career there, in London and in New York; and his suicide by drowning in Beijing in 1966 were briefly described in Evan Osnos' recent book, "Age of Ambition." An urge to learn more about Lao She prompted me to buy this bilingual volume of his best play, which includes a superb Introduction to his life and works. Although the People's Republic of China honored Lao She as a "People's Artist" and a "Great Master of Language," fanatical Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution beat and humiliated him to the point of ultimate protest by suicide. The plot and dialogue of this drama display the same brave

authenticity as his death. Its three acts portray the social, economic, political and moral state of China during three generations: (1) in 1898, near the end of the Qing or Manchu Dynasty; (2) in 1917, during the early years of the Republic of China; and (3) in 1945, after the Japanese occupation but before establishment of the Peoples Republic in 1949. The eloquent, Brechtian orations of "Oddball Yang" that introduce each act are grouped in the single Appendix. This drama takes place in the traditional, but evolving, Yutai Teahouse in Beijing, where we hear the voices of more than 60 characters as they appear and re-appear in the play. Amid this diversity of lives over a span of 50 years, certain continuities are clear--poverty, corruption, and official notices on the teahouse walls, "Don't discuss state affairs." In addition to an arresting drama that evokes half a century of modern Chinese history, this bilingual edition (with English and simplified Hanzi characters on facing pages) is an excellent text for students of Chinese language, such as myself.

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