Presentation of Yukio Mishima’s book
« Ongaku » (The Music)

Nicolas Bosc, Ph.D
Tokyo, October 2010

We inaugurate this section with Mishima's book "Ongaku" (The Music) which is a treasure for anyone who seeks to approach the Japanese psychoanalysis. Above all, it should be noted the originality of this book which comes from real events. Indeed, Mishima himself says in the preface of the book, that he wrote this story from the clinical notes that it has received from a Japanese psychoanalyst which was interested in the remarkable story of one of her patients.

Published in Japanese in 1965 under the name "Ongaku", the story surrounds the activities of Dr Kazunori Shiomi, "local" psychoanalyst in a Tokyo district receiving the all-comers, customers representing as he says "a range of all representative trades of our time".

One day a patient, Reiko, will come to his office complaining of not being able to hear "music", a metaphor that the reader will understand throughout the book. Then begin to Dr. Shiomi a psychoanalytic work that will lead him little by little to discover the soul of her patient and her troubled history, her secrets, her hopes ... all forming a deep plot, halfway through lies, fantasies and reality.
But this book, much more than just a novel, is also a great clinical case where the reader can follow step by step the work of the psychoanalyst, his questions, his interpretation, his analysis, his linkages with Japanese culture... With several references to the great authors (Freud, Stekel, Rogers, Binswanger ...), Mishima also presents the bases of psychoanalysis, recalls some theoretical points viewed during the cure of Reiko, explains operation of unconscious mechanisms...

The numerous passages related to psychoanalysis are then good references for any practitioner by recalling through the practice, several bases of the psychodynamic approach.

We then see the practice of Dr. Shiomi full of common sense, simplicity but also instinct. The psychoanalyst shares with us his techniques, his work habits which reflects the meticulous nature of Shiomi where nothing is ever left to chance. His thoughts refer to philosophy, man's place in the universe, the mysteries it contains...

Also, throughout the reading, we might be surprised to find us back so easily in the thinking and practices of Dr. Shiomi. His thought process seems to follow an universal logic, truly human, making good use of Japanese cultural specificities which are finely involved in the conduct of the treatment of Reiko.

"Ongaku" is then a good book to read for those interested in psychoanalysis and Japan in general. It also contains passages which will tell us more about Japanese habits and may serve as an illustration for a larger study on Japanese psychology and its specific features.

Ongaku / 音楽
Mishima, Yukio / 三島由紀夫
Tōkyō : Chūō Kōronsha, Shōwa 40 [1965].
東京：中公文庫, 昭和 40 [1965] 245 p.; 20 cm.