

timate relationship. The Cultural Asset Team, for example, is a group whose members and activities are known to other Koreans through publications, cassette tapes, and radio and TV programs; without such media exposure no one outside of Chindo would be aware of the team and its activities, nor feel part of the same Korean spiritual community and its great cultural heritage. Yet nowhere in Howard's book is this relationship adequately considered—the topic receives only passing mention in the first chapter. The present work follows the approach of most previous folk music research in restricting itself to a specific area, but this is clearly inadequate in the context of a modern, media-oriented society.

However, this does not significantly detract from the overall worth of the book. *Bands, Songs, and Shamanistic Rituals* is a good example of careful musical ethnography that considers both musical sound and social process. The wide-ranging knowledge of the author—a trained social anthropologist as well as a musicologist—makes this a work accessible not only to specialists but to those uninitiated to Korean studies and music. Scholars in various fields, including national studies, urban culture, and tourism, should find this a work of great interest and value.

UEMURA Yukio
Yokohama

SELIGSON, FRED JEREMY. *Oriental Birth Dreams*. Seoul: Hollym, 1989. 266 pages. References, index, illustrations. Paper. Korean won 7,500. ISBN: 0-930878-67-1.

A middle-aged Korean woman, a recent immigrant met in a Honolulu clinic, explained why, against her best intentions, she thought that she was pregnant: her breasts were swollen and tender, her period was late, and she had dreamt of dates and chestnuts being showered upon her lap. “*T’aemong*,” I asked her, “a birth dream?” She chuckled because I *did* understand. She, perhaps, had been testing me. By such matter-of-fact associations, many other Korean women I know use their dreaming to make sense of their waking lives. Sharing Jeremy Seligson's enthusiasm for the sheer poetry of Korean birth dreams and for the importance accorded them as biographical insight, I found his *Oriental Birth Dreams* to be both an exasperating and an occasionally wonderful little book.

It is exasperating in its self-conscious imitation of so many “how-to” books on the shelves of occult book stores. The reader is invited to master an “Oriental” system of great antiquity and gain greater insight into the portents of his or her own dreaming. Dream texts illustrating common dream motifs—“Dreams of Heaven and Earth,” “Dream Zoos,” “Dream Gardens”—are presented as a reference guide, and the reader is eventually invited to interpret the practice examples of dreams provided in the final chapter. Simple interpretations are offered for each dream presented in the body of the text: “Flowers, like girls, are soft, colorful and pretty” (55), “Ginseng dreams: 82% [male], since roots are stimulating, or *yang*” (75). These blurbs often ring a hollow anticlimax to the rich and complex dreaming they purport to explicate, and the source of their authority is never specified. Are the interpretations based upon Seligson's own informed judgement? The teaching of his “Taoist” mentor? The local knowledge of his informants?

Anyone familiar with the Korean *Tale of Ch'unhyang* knows that dream interpretations are contingent; a nuanced reading by a skilled diviner subverts the seemingly

obvious message of a dream, and any interpretation makes sense only when it is read against the dreamer's present circumstances. The woman in the Honolulu clinic, mentioned above, had transformed the auspicious fertility symbols, dates and chestnuts, into a nightmare anticipation of an unwanted pregnancy. The divination manual, by contrast, promises a mechanical and precise guide to interpretation. As a validation of the predictive value of common dream symbols, Seligson correlates forty-five common motifs against the gender and character attributes of the children whose births the dreams foretold. The author offers no speculation upon the retrospective quality of much of his material. He has not recorded dreams so much as stories told about dreams, often years later, to confirm the inevitability of a grown child's, or even a historical figure's, destiny.

As a work of scholarship, *Oriental Birth Dreams* fails. As a treasure box of the Korean imagination, it sometimes manages to transcend the limitations of its divination-manual genre. Seligson asked his numerous students to provide him with accounts of birth dreams, and they responded not only with prophecies of their own or their children's births, but with stories of siblings, cousins, other kin, and even neighbors. While this may not be Seligson's intention, his methodology reveals the importance of dream texts as part of a shared history, a group autobiography. His dreamers also show a playful capacity for incorporating new material, including visions of Christian churches, past Korean presidents, and Santa Claus. Seligson is a good writer who does justice to the power and beauty of the dreams he records. He shares a romantic account of his own first encounter with Korea and makes it seem utterly comprehensible that his own dreams should follow upon a Korean logic of dreaming.

Laurel KENDALL

American Museum of Natural History
New York

CHINA

GOODRICH, ANNE S. *Peking Paper Gods: A Look at Home Worship*. Monumenta Serica Monograph Series Vol. 23. Roman Malik, general editor. Nettetal, Germany: Steyler Verlag, 1991. 427 pages. Illustrations not numbered, 8 appendices, bibliography, index. Hardcover DM 112.—; ISBN 3-8050-0284-X; ISSN 0179-261X.

This book on popular religion and paper gods contains two introductory essays followed by sixteen chapters, each devoted to a particular deity. The wealth of information in the volume—gathered primarily during the author's pre-World War II stay in Beijing—relates to the illustrations on the cheaply printed, sometimes hand-colored keepsakes of deities for home use. The representations include gods of medicine, wealth, and childbirth; sky deities; and Buddhist and Taoist deities and saints. The purpose of these divine figures is to provide assistance in the various circumstances of daily life—relief during illness, good fortune in marriage, wisdom in business—and to secure the influence of the sun and moon in family affairs.

There is nothing doctrinaire in these images. They invoke all manner of spiritual powers, whether of ancient Chinese myth, local folk tradition, physical entities (like a river with its capacity to flood), or the Buddhist or Taoist heavens. The latter two are peacefully arranged next to each other in the pantheons illustrated in chapter 18. There does not seem to be any hierarchy among these powers: they gain privilege of