

historical and symbolic background of Japanese weddings.

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MACÉ, FRANÇOIS. *Kojiki shinwa no kōzō* 古事記神話の構造 [The structure of Kojiki myths]. Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1989. 248 pages. Tables, diagrams, references. Hardcover, Yen 1900; ISBN 4-12-001805-9.

One cannot but be surprised when acknowledging the fact that, despite the great quality of Japanese mythological studies, rare are the specialists who deal with myths per se. This paradox is presumably linked to three factors: 1) many authors continue to be inspired by an out-dated reductionism (looking in the *Kojiki* for some clues to the existence of an ever-elusive Volksseele, for the reflection of some historical events, or for shades of some Jungian archetypes); 2) an often hasty comparativism reinforces the tendency to cut off the "motifs" from their context and to study them as independent entities; 3) finally, the idea that the narratives of the *Kojiki* are not "genuine myths" but rather represent the last stage of a long process of manipulation or decay leads too many scholars to give precedence to the prehistory of the texts over the texts themselves. True, the authors of commentaries (Kurano Kenji, Saigō Nobutsuna, Nakaniishi Susumu) follow more closely the "letter" of the narratives, but nevertheless they shy away from the problem of the systematicity of the myths.

Even though Macé considers Mishina Akihide and Ōbayashi Taryō to have been precursors in the field, one should have no qualms about stating that Macé is the first to study the *Kojiki* as a coherent narrative system. He has convincingly demonstrated the homogeneity of the narrative and established that "mythical thought" was at work even in the second and third books of the *Kojiki*.

Notwithstanding the fact that Macé differs from Lévi-Strauss by avoiding any reference to the sociological context of the myths, by limiting himself to the textual analysis of a single book, and by declining to search for a "canonic formula," his approach can still be labeled structural: he endeavours to describe a network of binary oppositions, adopts the principle of functional equivalence, and endorses Lévi-Strauss's idea that all the details of a myth are significant.

The first step taken by Macé is to define a narrative unit bigger than the mytheme: what he calls the "sequence" (*renzoku* 連続) offers the advantage of putting together episodes traditionally considered independent. Macé uses the Tenson kōrin 天孫降臨 episode as a "reference sequence" and in the process gives it a new extension, since the *Jinmu-ki* is also included. He divides this sequence into four episodes (five if we take into account the introduction): a) Kuniyuzuri, 1) Tenson kōrin, 2) KonōFana nō

SakuyaFime, 3) Umisati/Yamasati, 4) Jinmu. And this is where we behold the master-stroke that is at the center of Macé's study: according to him, the whole narrative of the *Kojiki* is built on a structure similar to the reference sequence. The first and second books of the *Kojiki* are broken into six sequences each divided into four parts: (I) Izanaki/Izanami, (II) Susanōwo, (III) OFokuninusi, (IV) reference sequence, (V) Sujin/Suinin/Keiko, (VI) Seimu/Chuui/Jingu/Ōjin. For those who might be taken aback by that outline, let me remind them that the criteria used to separate the episodes are: the distribution of the genealogies (end of II, of III, of IV), the internal logic of the sequences, and the analogies with the myth of reference. The only anomalies in the model are to be found at the beginning of sequences I and IV (in the form of an introduction) and in II (absence of any first part). Not only are the different parts of each individual sequence connected by links of analogy or opposition (1=4; 2 ↔ 3), but the parts themselves also correspond to parts in other sequences (I.3=III.3=IV.3, etc.; see pp. 46, 72, 89, 120, 121, 122, 154, 155, 156, 182, 183, 184, 221).

Thus, the framework of the narrative having been duly described, Macé puts a final touch to the analysis by studying the arrangement of the connecting themes (*musubitsuki* 結び付き) and their variations: birth in the fire, establishment of order, birth in (or near) the water (193).

This work has definitely an overall quality of strength and clarity. Macé stresses the homogeneity of the *Kojiki* but does not overdo it; he never gives in to the temptation of formalism, that is to say, singlemindedly tracking down invariant motifs and reducing everything to one single pattern. While matching each sequence up against the myth of reference, he carefully sums up at the end of every chapter the specificities, structural or semantic, of the sequences in case. The model outlined by Macé might not be the answer to every question, but it provides us with an explanation of some episodes (or some elements of the narrative) that were previously thought to be gratuitous insertions because nobody could find their *raison d'être*. The fight against the Yamata nō wōrōti becomes meaningful when put into perspective with the fourth part of the other sequences. The reference to Umisati sheds some light on the drowning of SarutaFiko; moreover, the link between IV.1 and IV.3 is explained by the *Jinmu-ki*. In the same way, some puzzling elements of the Fotiwaku myth (*Suinin-ki*) can be deciphered by considering the reference sequence.

The reason Macé can be credited with these undeniable achievements is that he is never satisfied with merely superficial similarities. But such a new approach cannot but raise some difficulties. The first one could be viewed more as an offshoot of the structural method itself than as a product of Macé's analysis. While not denying that the term "inversion" (*tōchi* 倒置) is used with utmost clarity (95, 113, 179), I must admit that I felt that the concept of "opposition" (*taishō* 対照, *tairitsu* 対立) tends to be blurred, drifting as it does from the sense of downright contradiction to the sense of mere difference, and referring alternatively to syntagmatic structures, to the thematic content, to given categories, or only to individual features. The idea of "order," because it is given a too wide meaning, is also responsible for some shaky connections. Likewise, the reader is likely to be occasionally puzzled by the overabundance of correlations drawn between the parts of the different sequences. While it is perfectly all right to provide an additional set of cross-correlations to make amends for the lack of flexibility in the parallel correlation system (III.1 can certainly be put in perspective simultaneously with IV.a, with IV.3, with IV.1 and with IV.4, as is done on p. 106), by compiling these links the author runs the risk of losing some of the power of the original pattern, and the sequences could even lose their *raison d'être* as narrative units.

Finally, let it be said that I still feel some uneasiness about the irregularity of

the sequences. If, as suggested by Macé, the process of structural homeomeria that molded the myths dates back to the very first composition of the *Kojiki*, how does one explain that one part consists of one sentence (II.4), while another part encompasses the period of a complete reign (IV.4)? And why not bestow on IV.a the distinction of a "full sequence," since it has four episodes that correspond to Tenson kōrin in its entirety?

Along the same line of thinking, faced with the thematic wealth of the Jinmu reign, I find it difficult to look at it simply as an appendix to Tenson kōrin. Macé is right, I believe, when he refuses to make a radical cut between Book I and Book II, but then why not take into account the fact that the *Jinmu-ki* is a recapitulation of the "age of the gods"?

These few objections do not weigh much when we consider the originality displayed in Macé's analysis. Beyond any doubt it is the most systematic and the most stimulating study of the *Kojiki* that I have read during the last ten years. From now on nobody is justified in writing, as Philippi did in earlier days, that the *Kojiki* is a mere patchwork of heterogeneous traditions unskillfully woven together. At a time when post-moderns find it fashionable to castigate Lévi-Strauss without having read his "Mythologiques," Macé has demonstrated that structuralism can still inspire some seminal works. I have no doubt that, if the first two books of the *Nihonshoki* were also submitted to the same analysis, our understanding would be greatly enriched by the exercise.

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CHINA

CAN XUE. *Dialogues in Paradise*. Translated by Ronald R. Janssen and Jian Zhang. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1989. x+173 pages. Cloth US\$17.95; ISBN 0-8101-0830-5. Paper US\$8.95.

Can Xue mixes bizarre fantasies with a steady stream of recollections of life in China during the Cultural Revolution because, she writes, "I believe that I have something to say about these ten years, and about the future." Readers who expect the usual Chinese fictional fare in support of a struggling but unified political vision will be surprised, however. "What I have to say," remarks the author, "is something beyond ordinary consciousness, beyond ordinary talk." Such is the genesis of *Dialogues in Paradise*, a collection of thirteen short stories, written and published in the period 1985-88 in a variety of Chinese journals, and gathered and translated here by Ronald R. Janssen and Jian Zhang.

Dialogues in Paradise is sure to be of interest for both the general and scholarly reader of contemporary Chinese fiction, but this particular sampling of the author's work runs the risk of promising more than it can deliver. Somewhere between the overtly Kafkaesque styling of the pieces and their unrelenting agony over the standstill of current China, the reader is likely to come up feeling empty-handed.

The use of the term "paradise" in the title, presumably in reference to Mao's vision of the 1950s, places this work squarely in the tradition of satiric voices exemplified in writers like Lu Xun (魯迅), Mao Dun (茅盾) of the May 4th era of Chinese intelligentsia, and Quian Chong Shu (錢鍾書) of the post-World-War-II period. The