

CHINA

FIELD, STEPHEN, translation and introduction. *Tian Wen. A Chinese Book of Origin*. A New Directions Book. New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1986. Xvii+123 pages. With introduction and notes. Cloth US\$22.95. ISBN 0-8112-1010-3; ND Paperback 624 US\$8.95, ISBN 0-8112-1011-1.

Stephen Field who is presently teaching at Mary and Williams College in Williamsburg, Virginia/USA, gives us a new translation of *Tian Wen, A Chinese Book of Origins*, a work well known in Chinese classical literature but which has not always been so familiarly known in the Western world.

About *Chu ci* 楚辞 (Songs of Chu), which includes *Tian Wen* 天問, however, we can not say that this famous anthology has been completely neglected by scholars in the West. There are precursors in the translations of some Europeans. A. Pfizmaier's German version of *Li Sao* 離騷 and *Nine Songs* 九歌 are among the oldest works (1852). More recently, we can mention two English translations, one by Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang (1953), the other by D. Hawkes (1959).

This new English translation has its own special characteristics. First, it is concerned only with *Tian Wen*, which is obviously the most enchanting and mysterious poem in *Chu ci*. This poem contains 186 questions concerning the origins of life and the meanings for a wide variety of happenings—startling and mundane, earthly and celestial. This poem practically comprises a catalogue of ancient Chinese mythology and pre-Imperial legends.

Second, the translator divides these 186 questions into three categories: 1) the pattern of heaven; 2) the pattern of earth; and 3) the affairs of man. Further, readers will find the Chinese text written in brush on one page and the English text rendered verse by verse on a facing page. Each English verse is numbered accordingly. This is a quite remarkable device and facilitates the reader's understanding of this baffling poem.

Third, the lines of the Chinese text, each of which as a rule has eight letters, are rendered strictly into eight lines of English on the right page. The translator's notes are not listed on each page but are included at the end of the book; thus, each page of the text offers a more artistic impression with ample space around the printed lines. I appreciate this sort of presentation for the reader's sake since it is helpful in leading him directly to the intellectual world of ancient Chinese people and for finding his own answers to questions posed in this poem. In fact, *Tian Wen* composed as a long list of questions is a kind of mysterious game of solving puzzles, as D. Hawkes once pointed out. It is quite probable that answers to the questions once existed, but were subsequently lost.

Field's book consists of an introduction, the text, and notes. He explains the technical principles of translation and his own views on the origin of *Tian Wen* in a long introduction of nine pages. He criticizes traditional theories and explains that the original form was composed by a group of scholars in Lin Zi 臨淄, the capital of Qi 齊. He also suggests that if this poem should be the work of Qu Yaun 屈原, then he might have been acquainted with the original form of *Tian Wen* when he visited Lin Zi and later completed the present form of this work. It is worth mentioning that Field would not rely on any traditional or established opinions about *Tian Wen*.

On the other hand, it is quite clear that in this book Field does not intend to publish only the results of solely an academic effort. As he admits, this is not just a work of annotating a classic. But with the notes he provides, it is not always possible to

know his reasons for a particular interpretation. It seems to me that in his effort to provide a more artistic expression, exactness has sometimes been sacrificed. As well, there are some erroneous renderings: for example, Xi Ho 羲和 can not be said to be the daughter of sage-king Shun 舜; rather, she is a wife of Jun 俊. Such defects are, however, not of a very serious kind. As a whole this is a very successful translation. I congratulate Stephen Field for his remarkable achievement to render such an important and elusive classical work as this into a language which is so much different from the language of the original. Since Field's main field of study is the poems and the mythology of the classical period of Chinese literature, we can expect and hope that he will publish further results of his research concerning *Tian Wen* in the near future.

REFERENCES CITED:

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1959 *Ch'u Tz'u, the songs of the south. An ancient Chinese anthology.* London: Oxford University Press.

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JOCHIM, CHRISTIAN. *Chinese Religions. A Cultural Perspective.* Prentice-Hall Series in World Religions. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1986. Xiv+202 pages. Bibliography, glossary, index, photographs. Paper US\$21.50; ISBN 0-13-132994-4.

The challenge of presenting in a scholarly way within the constraints of less than 200 pages a well-balanced synthesis of Chinese religions has been taken up in a most effective and successful way by Christian Jochim. Following in the footsteps of recent publications by C. K. Yang (*Religion in Chinese Society*, 1961) and L. Thompson (*Chinese Religion: An Introduction*, 1969), the author has moved further ahead by taking into account recent advances in the archeology and historiography of traditional China and by blending this new knowledge with a refined analysis of the religious component of Chinese culture.

At the outset, the author addresses the question of the diversity and unity of Chinese religions: should Chinese religion be approached as a whole or should Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism (the Three Teachings that constitute the "great tradition") and folk religion (the "little tradition") be studied discriminately? For Jochim, the answer is unequivocal: ". . . these factors yield sufficient reason to treat Chinese religion as a unified system (. . .) this unity was rooted in beliefs and practices whose origins predated Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism as organized religions in China" (16). Of course, not all scholars would agree with this supposition, but Jochim has the merit of arguing his case and making his standpoint explicit.

Another aspect of the author's general approach is underlined by the expression "Cultural Perspective" in the title. For Jochim, religion is foremost the ultimate