

foreign ideology, totally alien to the rich native cultural tradition.

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COHEN, ALVIN P. *Tales of Vengeful Souls: A Sixth Century Collection of Chinese Avenging Ghost Stories*. Tapei, Paris, Hongkong: Ricci Institute, 1982. Variétés Sinologiques, New Series 68. Paper, 166+xxiii pp., appendices, bibliography, index and glossary.

As the title suggests, this is a collection of ghost stories. There are sixty-three of them in all, as well as an introduction and appendix supplied by the translator. The tales themselves were originally part of a little known collection from the latter part of the sixth century known (in the translator's Romanization) as *Iuan-hwen jyh* 冤魂志, or "Accounts of vengeful souls," made by Yan Jy-tuei 顏也推 (531-591⁺), a famous sixth century scholar. They are a part, as Professor Cohen notes in his introduction, of a flourishing tradition of ghost stories in China.

The collection from which these stories were taken—*Iuan-hwen jyh*—for all intents and purposes ceased to exist independently sometime during the T'ang dynasty (618-907). It has been combined with another collection, re-collected into a single book, and seen its stories used in other, larger collections of tales. Hence the sixty-three tales in this translations are stories we can be reasonably certain to have been in the original text, but there is, of course, no evidence that they comprised the whole of that collection when it was first made (see Introduction, pp. ix-x). The sources of some of the stories can be identified, and some are suspected of having been composed by the original collector for his work (p. x). Clearly the tales span a great period of time in Chinese literary history, and one must be grateful to Cohen for having made them available in readable English. It is difficult for the reader who has never had the experience of playing hide-and-seek through the morass of complicated textual history to fully appreciate the spade work that was necessary to harvest a collection of apparently "simple" stories.

Thirteen centuries of transmission does tend to weaken a text's credibility, and often the translator must chose from among a variety of texts the interpretation of a given passage that makes the most sense, or must emendate certain characters, or must even guess outright at the meaning of a given passage. This is no picnic for the translator, and Cohen is to be congratulated for providing us with stories that can be simply read and enjoyed.

The stories themselves are generally brief, and seldom exceed two printed pages. The entire collection occupies only 104 pages and makes for fairly fast reading (which to my mind would be even faster if Cohen had used a more standard Romanization than the Gwoyeu Romatzyh). The plots are nearly always simple, though on occasion just enough characters are introduced to send the reader back through the preceding sentences in an effort to figure out who one of them is. The basic plot of nearly all the stories runs something like this: A is the cause of B's death, but A himself is brought to an end through B's post-death activities. Sometimes B will appear before A and explain that he has lodged a petition with the proper authorities, his suit has been recognized and he has received permission to extract his revenge. Sometimes, however, A will simply die of problems obviously caused by B. One of the other striking motifs is the pre-death vow, such as in story 38 (p. 66), where the wrongly

executed person says before dying, "If the dead are without cognition, then all is over. But if they have cognition, then before three years are out I shall cause your lordship to be cognizant of it." (In this tale the dead man more than lives up to his promise, coming back the following year to strike down his murderer.) Another motif is the intervention of a third party—the ghost will sometimes appear before someone else to plead its case and see that justice is done.

The translator has provided notes to the stories, but these nearly take the form of explanations of family relationships between characters, presentation of historical background, explanation of ranks and positions, or discussions of the different ideographs appearing in the different texts. They are seldom, if ever, interpretative. Hence the reader cries out on occasion for more complete explanations. Cohen says that he has made a detailed analysis of motifs in the tales, but intends to include it in a later study (p. 111); this may well be his best course of action, but it is of little comfort to the reader whose curiosity has been aroused by *this* book to be referred to a work that has yet to appear (or perhaps it has—in his preface Cohen informs us that he completed the manuscript for the book several years before publication, but has not revised it, and notes an article he has written in the interim: could this be the "forthcoming" study?). Some questions I would liked to have seen dealt with are why some ghosts take direct revenge while others must go through an intermediary; what is the significance of garlic (story 48, p. 82); why ghosts appear as (usually) white dogs (tales 8, 14, 57, and 58), and to what extent will one find the stepmother motif in Chinese ghost stories (as in story 26).

One also wishes for a little more introductory material, though this would probably have inflated the cost of the volume. Cohen states that the collection has been assumed by many scholars to be "nothing more than a Buddhist evangelical tract that preaches a doctrine of retribution for killing" (p. viii), but he rejects this view, pointing to the many non-Buddhist and pre-Buddhist writings that went into it (p. ix). He concludes that the goal of the collection was to encourage moral conduct by inculcating fear of avenging ghosts (p. ix). The tales also demonstrate that justice exists, even when the wrongdoer is socially powerful and seemingly beyond the law (p. ix). Interesting in this regard is the fact that tales such as these hardly exist in Japan, even though we can be sure that such Chinese collections were known to the ancient Japanese. The question of why the Japanese did not use the stories or similar ones could, I suspect, throw some light on the nature of the Chinese tales. Just what was it in China (and not Japan) that led to the production of these tales? This is an interesting question, and one I hope Cohen might someday turn his energies to. In the meantime, he has produced a readable and informative volume, which is to be highly recommended.

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SCHIPPER, KRISTOFER. *Le corps taoïste, corps physique—corps social*. Collection "L'espace intérieur" 25. Paris: Arthème Fayard, 1982. 344 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Paper, 115,000 fFr. ISBN 2-213-00785-3.

As the first overall account of Taoism in about twenty years, the book by K. M. Schipper, *Le corps taoïste*, proves a comprehensive guide to the native Chinese religion. Beginning with folk religion as part of everyday life, Schipper leads the reader into rituals