

describe the agony of both father and son. She displays remarkable psychological acuity as she probes the motives, the fears, and the passions that seemed to make a tragic denouement almost inevitable. She concludes that, as Haboush says, "the human psyche is unknowable" (31) and the workings of Heaven are unfathomable.

This book is an example of scholarship at its best. The translation is superb: it is fluent, elegant, and closes the distance between reader and narrator. We come to know Lady Hye-gyōng, at least the persona she presents us with; we hear her voice, we feel her anger and despair. Never mind the centuries that separate our time from hers; never mind the cultural, political, philosophical, social, and class differences: through her writing we come to know her as a flesh-and-blood human being, struggling to cope with the extraordinary difficulties and complexities of the time, place, and circumstances in which she found herself.

Haboush has made Lady Hye-gyōng available to us, the modern reader, and for that we owe her a debt of gratitude. We are also grateful to Haboush for making this a reader-friendly book. She provides us with appendices giving us the genealogical charts for the main players in the story: the Yi royal family, the Hong family, and the Kyōngju Kim family. She has also provided excellent endnotes and footnotes that illuminate, but do not overwhelm, the text. At the beginning of the book she presents a list of the principal actors in the story and a brief description of each—very useful when you are trying to keep track of who is who.

For this work, Professor Haboush was given the Korean Literature Translation Award established by the Korean Culture and Arts Foundation. I predict that this book will (and should) become required reading in all courses on Asian literature, history, and culture, where heretofore Korean literature has not been well represented. It will also be invaluable to scholars and students in the field of women's studies. My advice to readers of this review is: Get this book, order a copy for your school library, but above all, read it!

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CHINA

PORTER, DEBORAH LYNN. *From Deluge to Discourse: Myth, History, and the Generation of Chinese Fiction*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996. xviii + 284. Figures, bibliography, index. Paper US\$24.95 pages; ISBN 0-7914-3034-0.

The author, an assistant professor in the Department of Languages and Literature at the University of Utah, tries to draw a bold picture in this book about the generation of Chinese fiction, focusing on the interpretation of a single narrative work, the *Mu T'ien-tzu chuan* (Narrative of the Son of Heaven, King Mu).

The first chapter, "Contextualizing the Text: The Discovery, Compilation, Transmission, and Traditional Appreciation of the *Mu T'ien-tzu chuan*," begins with a description of the discovery of this text, which narrates King Mu's westward trip to K'un-lun mountain, during the era of the Chin emperor Wu-ti (AD 279). The vault where the text was found is generally believed to have been the tomb of King Hsiang of Wei (d. 296 BC) and contained a number of texts as well as objects of jade and precious metal. Structured as a daily record of events, the *Mu T'ien-tzu chuan* was at first thought by many scholars to be a historical record of King Mu's journey. Other scholars, however, questioned the text's historical authenticity because

of the fantastical nature of the events narrated in it. Porter aptly summarizes and evaluates the arguments of both sides, and then presents her own view: the text is not a contemporary record of King Mu's activities but rather represents a fictional account of the fourth-century B.C. The author observes that the places visited by King Mu in the text coincide with those prominent in myths: place-names such as Yang-yu, K'un-lun, and Yen Mountain in *Mu T'ien-tzu chuan* also appear in cosmogonic myths, especially those related to the flood myths. Porter therefore assumes that the text implicitly compares King Mu's journey with the flood myths of Kun and Yu.

The second chapter, "See Yu later: A New Interpretation of Chinese Flood Myths," is perhaps the most original, innovative, and controversial section of the book. In order to understand the significance and nature of *Mu T'ien-tzu chuan* more fully, the author first analyzes the cosmogonic intentions underlying the flood myths. Since the Chinese have often regarded astronomical phenomena as crucial in determining the fate of individuals as well as states, Porter argues that the flood myths were also possibly meant as indicators of such phenomena. Furthermore, for the ancient Chinese the particular astronomical phenomenon in question must have been a process of transition as flood myths describe world destruction and renewal. Porter then suggests that one such astronomical transition is a gradual shift in the position of the equinoxes, the phenomenon known as the "precession" of the equinoxes.

Chapter three, "Toward an Aesthetic of Symbol in Early Chinese Thought," considers the shared cosmogonic concerns of the Yu flood myth, early Taoist thought, and the *Book of Changes (I ching)*. The *Mu T'ien-tzu chuan*'s apparent appropriation of fragments of cosmogonic myths suggests that it uses symbolism in a way similar to the *I ching*, thus indicating a preference for a literary, rather than a historic, reading of the text.

In the fourth chapter, "Symbolic Foundations of the *Mu T'ien-tzu chuan*: K'un-lun, Ho-tsung, and Hsi-wang-mu," the mythic provenance of three of the most crucial elements in the work—K'un-lun mountain, Ho-tsung, and Hsi-wang-mu, each of which constitutes the center of its own substantial mythic tradition—is examined. In the author's opinion, as these elements are also symbols of the same astronomical events that led to the generation of the Yu flood myth, they should be understood as symbols of the same cosmogonic transition implied in the Yu myth (i.e., as symbols invested with regenerative significance). King Mu's westward journey can then be interpreted not as a historical narrative but as a literary expression of a symbolic journey involving his rebirth: his emergence in a new identity.

The fifth chapter, "The Generation of Symbolism in the *Mu T'ien-tzu chuan*," urges a reading of King Mu's journey not only as a narration of the emergence of an individual's new identity but also as a re-presentation of the emergence of a new collective identity: that of the Chou dynasty. Porter thus interprets King Mu's redefinition as a sign of the Chou dynasty's desire to redefine itself by means of the king's posthumous reputation. She contends that because the Chou dynasty's rulers were in psychological crisis and preoccupied with the question of legitimacy and the maintenance of political control, they had to redefine their country. The cause of this crisis was, in the author's opinion, the drowning of King Chao, King Mu's father, which is symbolically expressed in *Mu T'ien-tzu chuan*. The need to suppress the details surrounding this catastrophic event in effect prompted the production of *Mu T'ien-tzu chuan*, with its symbolic richness. The persistent references to elements of the cosmogonic myths indicates a way to decipher the underlying hidden discourse regarding King Chao's drowning encrypted within the text. What the work presents, therefore, is a symbolic, literary articulation of this crisis, and a resolution of it. Porter in addition notes that various modes deployed in the text reflect two discordant views of legitimacy, respectively represented by the annalistic form and by references to cosmogonic myths. In the author's opinion, the overlapping of their distinct literary functions eventually yielded a new form for representing

experience in narrative.

The final chapter, "Heaven's Text and the Invention of Fictional Discourse in China," considers the literary and cultural implications of this new form of narrative representation embodied in *Mu T'ien-tzu chuan*. In Porter's view, this literary development constitutes an initial stage of fictional representation in Chinese narrative tradition. She finds that the very mode itself can be construed as deriving from a specific traumatic source: the breakdown of order during the Warring States period. By rereading Chinese fiction from the perspective of symbol formation, she believes a new way of interpreting mainstays of Chinese fiction, such as fantastical and supernatural elements, becomes possible, with significant implications for the wider realm of the interconnections between history, discourse, literature, and culture.

Although the reviewer cannot judge the validity of Porter's arguments, there seems to be no denying that in recent years scholars of various branches of the humanities are finding the knowledge of astronomical movements an important source of doctrines, rituals, and myths in several ancient cultures; studying such movements may thus be an important key for deciphering the enigmatic aspects of those cultures. Porter herself cites a book on ancient Egyptian mythology (SELLERS 1993) as one example of work done from a similar perspective (185, n. 9). Another example known to this reviewer is ULANSEY's (1989) treatment of the ancient Roman mystery religion of Mithraism. Ulansey's analysis resembles Porter's closely in its insistence upon the knowledge of the precession of the equinoxes as the motivator of a new doctrine of salvation. Though I can point to a minor need for improvement in the bibliography (the transcriptions of Japanese are often inaccurate), for the most part Porter's work deserves high commendation. Together with careful philological analyses, she presents logical, well-articulated arguments and fresh, inspiring, and bold hypotheses concerning the nature of *Mu T'ien-tzu chuan* in particular, and Chinese fiction in general.

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SUI SHUJIN 隨書金 *Elunchunzu minjian gushixuan* 鄂倫春族民間故事選 (Selection of Orochon Folktales). Zhongguo Shaoshuminzu Minjian Wenxue Congshu. Shanghai: Shanghai Wenyi Chubanshe, 1988. 386 pages. Illustrations. Paper 4.50 Yuan; ISBN 7-5321-0020-0/I.33. (In Chinese)

This is the most complete collection of folktales of the Orochons of China's Inner Mongolia and Heilongjiang provinces. About one half of the texts were previously published in the periodical *Heilongjiang minjian wenxue* 黑龍江民間文學. The editor of the publishing house, Peng Xiaoming, did his utmost to faithfully recedit these texts, admitting only insignificant changes of the sometimes too literary style. As in the other volumes of this series, it remains