

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

unclear which tales were told in the original language, who translated them, and which texts were possibly told in Chinese. Regrettably, up to now no bilingual collection of Ewenki-Chinese or Orochon-Chinese folktales has been published in China.

Like their Siberian Tungus relatives, the Orochons of northeastern China trace their origin back to a “totemic” marriage between a man and a she-bear (“The Legend of the Bear”). Likewise, the tale of the “ill-treated and revenging fire” (“The Legend of the Fire-God”) is widespread in Northern and Central Asia, and can be found from Estonia to Buryatia.

The volume contains several heroic tales with a *mergen* (skilled hunter, excellent marksman, and wise man) as the main character. Surprisingly, one finds these tales in the introduction classified as “myths,” a term that corresponds neither to their content nor to the Orochon’s own folkloristic terminology. The initial motif of these heroic tales is usually the need to recover and revenge an abducted parent, wife, or sister. This is not different from the heroic epics or tales of the Siberian Tungus peoples. In these Orochon tales, however, we find a demonic *manggi* (as in Daghur tales; cf. the Mongol *manggas*) as the main enemy. This figure varies between a rather manlike, ugly being and a hairy monster. Another important figure, unknown to the Siberian Tungus (or at least unknown by the Orochon name) is Bainacha, the master spirit of wood and wild game. Although not mentioned in the notes, this spirit originated from Daghur influence (< daghur. Bainačaa < bayan ačaa, meaning “rich father”).

Generally speaking, the heroic tales are less laconic and richer as to their descriptive elements than those of Siberia. “The Story of Wudanci” is a genuine heroic epic in prose displaying many motifs well known in Mongol epics. “The Story of Alatan Buto” has a helpful talking tree, and a helpful stag that form part of an environment that is more typically Tungus. The fiend is called “Dalai-lama-takan” here, which may indicate it is related to a Central Asian story or, more specifically, a Mongol Lamaist story. The hero of “Wuchenggui Mergen” is fighting against a man-devouring, gigantic eagle, which also appears in Orochon *mosukun* epics.

Many of the initial and other motifs of these heroic tales reoccur in other tales in this volume, though they are not classified as heroic tales (e.g., “Lunjishan and Ayijilun,” one of the best-known Orochon tales). A peculiar Orochon version of the Manchu shamanic tale “Nishan saman-i bithc” we find here under the title “Nixun saman.”

Sui’s collection of Orochon folktales contains a great number of animal tales, far more than could be found among the Manchu and Daghurs. This no doubt reflects the Orochons’ way of life as hunters and their constant contact with the animals in their area.

It is to be regretted that some interesting texts in the collection *Elunchun minjian wen xuexuan* (ZHANG 1980) were not included in this book. The book does, however, include annotations from which we can learn about the differences in variant texts and the meaning of some Orochon expressions. It also includes an appendix, and several additional variant texts. Since it is not possible to examine the original Orochon texts, this volume shows a high standard of scholarship based on texts of Orochon folktales in Chinese.

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