

powers and kill him when he enters) are, indeed, very widespread all over the Eurasian continent, although the actors vary. Are the tale type and the motif so self-evident that they may have come into existence spontaneously in various places? Or is it a question of diffusion?

The volume under review thus raises many questions, and should serve as a reminder of how important for international folklore studies it is that tales from the Far East be made available for research.

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RIFTIN, BORIS L'VOVICH. *Zhongguo shenhua gushi lunji* 中國神話故事論集 [Collected essays on Chinese myth and lore]. Taipei: Student Bookstore, 1991. Paper, n.p. (In Chinese)

Boris Lvovich Riftin (b. 1932) is easily the leading Russian scholar on Chinese myth, folklore, and popular literature. Between 1951 and 1987 alone the number of his publications comes to 178 (see pages 341–59). His control of the materials, the languages, and the bibliographies is astounding.

The present volume is a selective translation of a number of his works (some only in part), edited by the late Ma Changyi 馬昌儀, a PRC authority on folk and oral literature who contributed a preface (xvii–xxxviii). The translations include:

1. "Legend of Emperor Mu from a Literary Perspective" (1967), 1–13;
2. "From Myth to the Serial Novel" (1979), 15–85;
3. "Chinese Myth" (1980), 87–112;
4. "On the Study of Chinese Myth" (1987), 113–217;
5. "The Development of the Historical Narrative Seen from the Tales of the Three Kingdoms" (1964), 219–28;
6. "Character and Plot in Han Folk Tales" (1972), 229–49;
7. "The Artistic World of Ethnic Hui Stories" (1977), 251–92;
8. "Chinese Idioms as a Means for Researching the Common People's Worldview" (1960), 293–315;
9. "Legends of the Great Wall of China and the Question of Form in Chinese Popular Literature" (1961), 317–40.

Item 9 comes from Riftin's doctoral dissertation work on the story of Meng Jiang, the devoted wife who went looking for her spouse drafted into building the Great Wall of China. Her tears eventually brought the wall down. Riftin sidesteps the *Zuo Zhuan* legend of the wife of Liang Qi whose tears also brought a wall down. Riftin prefers to trace this protest story to the folk ditties that complain of the general sufferings caused by the First Emperor. The study traces the story from its first appearance in the Tang all the way down to a Buddhist "precious scroll" in the Ming. Genre often determines how the story is told. The funeral procession liturgy stresses

her journey; poetry plays up the personal feelings; and the theater insists on historicity.

Items 2, 3, and 4 can be read together as Rifting's view of Chinese mythology and popular literature. Item 4 is originally appended to his translation of the revised edition of Yuan Ke's modern anthology, *Zhongguo gudai shenhua* [Ancient Chinese myths]. Yuan Ke had dropped the old positivist equation of myth with superstition and revived the field by presenting myth as stories told with religious imagination. After correcting Yuan Ke's diluted use of Gorky's view of myth, Rifting offers a critical review of the whole history of the field, from the first modern study of Chinese mythology (a Russian work of 1892) through the major studies to date in Russia, Europe, America, China, and Japan. Though intent on socioeconomic accountability, Rifting is by no means a dry, doctrinaire Marxist scholar. As his work is too rich and dense to summarize, I will pick up one theme, the "Ur-form of Fuxi and Nuwa" (19–82), which also runs through a number of the other essays.

Sinological humanism, both Confucian and European, has preferred to remember the ancestress Nuwa as a woman. Han tomb rubbings show her paired with Fuxi as a divine couple, often with their lower serpentine bodies intertwined. Working through extensive early source materials, Rifting shows conclusively that Nuwa once stood by herself, predating Fuxi and their pairing as a couple, and that this Great Mother was fully animalian, a zoomorphic hybrid composed of "cow's head with a serpent's body, etc.," before she even faintly possessed a human face. The oracle script *Wa* shows her to be a snail, a frog, or some insect with ties to water and moon. Like the once animalian Queen Mother of the West, she acquired human traits only later, and usually from the top (face, head, upper torso) down. As a clan totem or tribal ancestress she was *continuous* with humanity and therefore should not be called a "god," if by "god" is meant something *totally other* than man. In both East and West, demi-urges like her were given nonordinary forms—such as double eyes, multiple limbs, joint bodies, shared teeth, etc.—to distinguish them from the ordinary. Rifting characterizes Nuwa's original role as "passive." (I would have said "classificatory.") He would align an "active" narrative with the coming of cultural heroes, as with the myth of Fuxi and Nuwa founding marriage and other social institutions.

The same would apply to the Sage-kings of China, who as collective personalities (totemic ancestors) were never real, historical people. The humanization of these animalian ancestors came with the still later rise of kings who claimed some form of supernatural conception. The more anthropocentric human culture became, the more it would regard its pre-human ties as "symbolic." Simply put, metaphor became simile when people learned to say "The emperor is like a dragon" instead of "Sage-King Yu is a dragon." By the Han, Nuwa's full animalian form was nearly forgotten....

But compared with the West, where Christianity erased the memory of man's subhuman ties, Buddhism brought into China a rich, Indian animal lore that kept that memory alive, such that the popular literature that rose under the Ming in the twelfth–fourteenth centuries would have this Chinese penchant to highlight the human characters' personalities with dramatic, animalian analogies. So even as the archaic ties of men to their animal totems—passive and collective—were severed, a new, dynamic, and individualized literary animalian characterology flourished. (This is doubly interesting, since item 5 also registers how, relative to the West, the agrarian China has few animal stories, and how her folklore shuns "once upon a time" fantasy and unrealistic "palace or castle" settings and prefers real, everyday, social environs.) All in all, Rifting's broad observations drawn from in-depth studies are refreshingly sound, sharp, and worthy of serious consideration.

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