author's sketchy comparative remarks about Kafka, E. T. Hoffman, and Edgar Allan Poe.

Folklorists may have to search a bit through finely drawn literary criticism, but should not be disappointed with the author's observations about the magical power of emotion as depicted in the early literary *fu* and as expressed in the scores of conflicts and ambiguities strewn throughout the pages of popular literature in late Ming and early Ch'ing China. Not to be forgotten are the author's accomplished literary translations of quoted passages, a bounty of informative footnotes, and the fine reproduction on the text's dust jacket of a Yuan-dynasty silk print from the Cincinnati Art Museum.

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PO SUNG-NIEN and DAVID JOHNSON. *Domesticated Deities and Auspicious Emblems: The Iconography of Everyday Life in Village China.* Popular Prints and Papercuts from the Collection of Po Sung-nien. Publications of the Chinese Popular Culture Project 2. Berkeley: The Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1992. 208 pages. 96 illustrations (11 in color), select bibliography, glossary. Paper US$20.00 ($2.50 for shipping); ISBN 0-9624327-1-7.

In 1991 Professor Po of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing, arranged a colorful exhibition of wood-block prints and paper cuts from the collection he had assembled over a forty-year period. He was at the time a senior residential fellow of the Chinese Popular Culture Project, and the exhibition was one of its final activities. The display was an expression both of his personal and professional love of popular art and of his academic passion to probe the mentality underlying the desire of the largely illiterate common folk to put on a bright display of ephemera. This publication contains a large portion of the pieces exhibited, though it is considerably less colorful than the original display (only a ninth of the illustrations are in color).

During the Qing dynasty wood-block prints were bought by high and low to both enliven and sanctify their homes (their equivalents are turned out nowadays by mechanical presses using chemical, not natural, inks). They form a genre of Chinese art that deserves a far more favorable evaluation than it has received. The great variety of content and form displayed by this genre should not surprise anyone, considering the size of the market to which it catered (virtually every household in China) and the length of its tradition (mid-sixteenth to twentieth centuries). The prints in-

clude tableaux from operas and folktales, auspicious images and symbols, illustrations for moral instruction, genre scenes of the great ceremonial moments of everyday life (a category not included in this publication), and depictions of the shrines of the tutelary deities of the various parts of a farmhouse (a specialty of this collection). The paper-cut is as remarkable an art form as the wood-block print but with less scope and color. I will therefore pass it by, noting only that paper-cuts reproduce extremely well and that this collection includes a set of the twelve Chinese zodiacal animals cut with remarkable verve and invention by a contemporary master.

David Johnson introduces the collection with a number of important questions that will have to be answered before the prints can be fully understood. Do they indicate an iconography that was universal, and therefore point to a single core of popular religiosity in China? Was the understanding of the images the same regardless of the class or status of the buyer, and were the block-makers' intentions shared by the purchasers of the prints? Johnson suggests that only detailed research on the uses and users of the prints can answer these questions. But the huge variety of answers that detailed empirical research would provide could not supply an answer, but only a new starting point for the more central question: what processes of standardization were there (or are there still), and do they form anything like a shared iconography?

One fruitful approach to this question is suggested on page 17, where Johnson writes that prints embedded in a ritual-ceremonial matrix, including opera, probably meant more to their users and were understood with a greater degree of uniformity than those that were not. Although I doubt that the fact of performance alone provides evidence of a commonality of understanding beyond the circuits and traditions of the performers, performance is certainly the right intermediate context in which to place these prints. Very few of them are not related to a performance of some kind. The auspicious prints were probably bought for the setting up of new households, for wedding ceremonies, or for the inaugurations of new buildings. The prints of door gods and tutelary deities would have been bought when a house and its altar were inaugurated, or at New Year when they were renewed. The opera prints are obviously connected to performance. Least connected are the instructive prints concerning filial piety or the respective tasks of men and women. But similar images were and are used in altars for merit-making after funerals, so even they are related to performances.

Johnson wonders how the wordplays (so well deciphered in the notes to this collection) would have been understood by the illiterate. But once the performative contexts are noted certain answers suggest themselves: purchase of the prints, so many of which were obtained for the annual renewal of the household, would have been accompanied by requests to the literate to brush onto red paper strips mottoes to place over and on either side of doorways. The same literate patrons would in many places also have engaged in competitions to pose and solve riddles that relied on the wordplays displayed in the wood-block prints. In other words, the illiterate relied on their literate relatives, friends, or patrons, or they hired scribes to provide them with the decorative and divinatory power of the written word; the prints they bought could be expounded by the same people, a local elite who liked to play word games. This formed one channel of reference to a group of authority figures. Other channels existed, of course, to such groups as the elders who knew the steps in the performance of domestic rituals and who could also tell stories about the depicted deities, or to the ritual experts who were called in to perform healing rituals, exorcisms, or settlements of the house spirits,

and who added written talismans (*fu*) to the esoteric literacy surrounding the illiterate. Such channels of authority were linked, and each might be taken further up hierarchies of expertise, so that there was certainly a connectedness, a Chinese cultural geography. Whether it amounted to a consistent core of images encompassing such contradictory interpretations as undoubtedly existed is still an open question. This book, though it makes no claim to the authority of a lexicon, cannot but give the impression of there being an agreed-upon iconography simply by its effort to be informative about each print. But notwithstanding the lengths to which it goes to prove its own claim that a core iconography does indeed exist, this is a lovely and instructive volume. I wish only that it did not mark one of the last activities of a fine project.

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WÄDOW, GERD. T'ien-fei hsien-sheng lu: *Die Aufzeichnungen von der manifestierten Heiligkeit der Himmelsprinzessin. Einleitung, Übersetzung, Kommentar* [T'ien-fei hsien-sheng lu: Records of the manifest sageliness of the heavenly princess. Introduction, translation, commentary]. Monumenta Serica Monograph Series 29. Nettetal, Germany: Steyler Verlag, 1992. 374 pages. Illustrations, Chinese text, bibliography, index. Hardcover DM 65.—; ISSN 0179-261X; ISBN 3-8050-0310-2. (In German)

This book, the dissertation of a young German sinologist, presents a translation and discussion of a Qing-dynasty hagiographic document known as the *Tianfei xiansheng lu* [Records of the manifest sageliness of the heavenly princess]. This document presents in fifty-seven episodes the career of Mazu, the southern Chinese goddess of seafarers and timely rain.

The text begins with a record of the various imperial decrees, offerings, and titles given to the goddess between the Song and Qing dynasties (sections 1–2), then turns to her first worldly appearance (sections 3–19). The latter occurred in the beginning of the Song dynasty, when Mazu was born as the girl Lin Moniang to a family of fisherfolk in Meizhou in the south of China. She used her supernatural powers—apparent already from wondrous signs during pregnancy and birth—to save her father from a fierce storm. She also caused plants to sprout unusually quickly, traversed waters without the help of boats, prayed successfully for rain during a drought, subdued evil sprites, and so on. Transformed into a deity at the age of twenty-seven, her power only increased following her death.

During the various dynasties that followed, Mazu continued to show her divine powers in the interests both of the people and of the state. The political dimension of the documentation is obvious from the number and type of episodes given for the respective dynasties: seventeen for the Song (sections 20–36), two for the Yuan (sections 37–38), eleven for the Ming (sections 39–49), and eight for the Qing (sections 50–57). Mazu being a southern goddess concerned largely with fertility and the safety of seafarers, the Song, especially the Southern Song, had a great interest in her. In contrast the Yuan, located more to the north and relying more on land transportation, neglected her. During the Ming she was particularly celebrated for helping admirals