

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.

Stephan FEUCHTWANG  
City University  
London

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

and trade envoys in need, supporting the imperial efforts to develop overseas trade. Under the Qing such trade was of lesser importance, and so was the goddess.

The translation of the text (of which an original Chinese version is also appended on pages 271–338), makes up the bulk of the work (pages 102–270). It is rendered into very readable, carefully phrased German and supplemented with relevant annotation wherever necessary. In addition to the fifty-seven episodes themselves there are three prefaces and two postfaces, dated differently and providing information on the compilation history of the document.

The introductory portion of the book (17–101) is divided into seven chapters. A brief general introduction is followed by a chapter on the basic concept of “deity,” which describes in abstract terms the political relevance of traditional gods and the role the government played in both transforming them into national factors and at the same time controlling them. Chapter 3 (31–37) describes the compilation history of the text, followed by a discussion of variant versions and a detailed description of the contents.

A fascinating and unique study is contained in chapter 6 (73–98), which analyzes the various names and titles of the deity. Not only are there clear differences between the popular appellations and official titles, but the interrelationship between the two shows how gods and goddesses shift in their closeness to the people and their relevance to the state.

Moreover, Wädow shows how the increasingly longer titles that governments tend to bestow upon deities in China are in fact attempts at limitation and control. He calls this phenomenon “narrowing by means of expansion” (*Einengung durch Erweiterung* [85]). In other words, the longer the title the more clearly delimited are the powers and spheres of influence of a given deity. The seventh and last chapter of the introductory portion prepares the reader for the German translation.

This translation of the *Tianfei xiansheng lu* is the first in any Western language. Overall the work is meticulously prepared and neither shies away from difficult areas nor skimps on prefaces or other relevant peripherals. It would be a credit to any sinologist. Furthermore, Wädow’s discussion of the political implications of the titles conferred upon deities and of the episodes made public about them fruitfully continues the work of Valerie HANSEN (1991), using a different approach to a similar topic. Where Hansen studies all the various gods honored in one district and during one time period, Wädow looks at one single goddess in different places and over the course of several centuries. His work greatly enhances our understanding of the nature of Chinese traditional religiosity and the relation between the popular worship of gods and their official acknowledgment.

#### REFERENCE CITED

HANSEN, Valerie

1991 *Changing gods in medieval China*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Livia KOHN  
Boston University  
Boston