

PIGGOTT, JULIET. *Japanese Mythology*. Library of the World's Myths and Legends. London: Hamlyn, revised edition, 1982. Hardbound, oversized, 143 pp., illustrations in color and black-and-white. £6.95. ISBN 0-600-34284-0.

This is a coffee table book. Oversized and well produced, it contains a large number of beautiful reproductions, many of them in color. A handsome sight it is for the eyes.

Unfortunately, however, it has words as well as pictures, and these words add up to a completely misleading picture of Japanese oral traditions. I say "oral traditions" because this is, apparently, what the author means by the word "mythology" in the book's title. Very little of the book is actually concerned with myth (and even less with legend, another word that poses difficulties); the bulk of the pages are taken up with garbled accounts of folk tales, and with some misleading and uninformed statements about Japanese history and beliefs.

The text, then, is basically about tales, and one could perhaps overlook that fact (myths are tales, too, after all) were it not for the additional fact that the reproductions have virtually nothing in common with the text—they focus (insofar as they have a focus) on religious art, and primarily on Buddhist work at that. "Myth," then, seems to mean any story that sounds quaint, and to carry the additional connotation of "religious feeling." Since the dust jacket informs us that the volumes in this series are "fully illustrated with artefacts and paintings related to the myths," I think we are safe in assuming that myth and religion are equated. Perhaps it is overly pedantic of me, but I fail to understand the connection between Buddhism and myth in Japan.

The book's tendency to throw anything having to do with religion or stories into the general category of "myth" can be seen in the first three illustrations in the book. Here we have, in order, a nineteenth century sword-guard, depicting Lao-Tsu, Buddha and Confucius (cover); a wooden statue of Aizen Myōō made in 1281 (half-title page), and a Kuniyoshi print depicting "Yegara-no-Heida" killing a giant serpent (frontispiece). Thus one's eyes rest first, in this book on Japanese "mythology," on a picture of pure Chinese origin, having absolutely nothing to do with Japanese stories or belief; then on a Buddhist statue; then, finally, on a scene having some relevance to Japanese myth (though not much, and the significance of the picture is never even mentioned in the book's text).

Or there is the case of pp. 10-11, which, when opened out, make a visual feast. Here we have a Hiroshige print of "Fujiyama," a Buddhist deity of Hell (otherwise unidentified) and a picture of Amaterasu no Ōmikami emerging from her cave and restoring light to the world. The total lack of continuity, and the total lack of relevance to the book's text, has a charm all its own.

Then there is the prose. Piggott's method is to retell the stories in whatever form she thinks most interesting; this often results in distortions, in which elements from two or three separate versions are thrown together, resulting in a tale never before told. On the previously mentioned offending p. 11, for example, we are told of the births of the "Sun goddess, the Moon god and . . . Susano (*sic*) the Storm god"; according to Piggott, "In one version, it is told that these three were created from Izanagi's eyes." Actually, of course, the Sun Goddess came from the washing of the left eye, the Moon God from the washing of the right eye, and Susanowo from the washing of the nose. In a related vein, one might consider Piggott's recounting

of the myth of the white hare of Inaba (p. 109–10; she refers to this animal as the white hare of Oki), which gives it a mushy ending purely the product of the author's imagination—or at least, certainly not present in *Kojiki*, as is claimed.

One could go on and on. I will content myself with a final observation. This book was first published in 1969, and is being advertised as a “complete” revision, taking “recent scholarship” into account. I have not seen the 1969 version, but have serious doubts about the completeness of the revision. The reading list, for example, does not even include a work so vital and basic as Donald Philippi's translation of *Kojiki*, which appeared in 1969 (Princeton University Press), and indeed, this reading list notes only one post-1969 work (and that one published by the Chinese Materials Center Inc.). Certainly the book does not benefit from “recent,” or any other, scholarship. It is a mish-mash of exotica, stories that never were, put forth to represent a country that never will be.

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SCHNEIDER, LAURENCE A.: *A Madman of Ch'u. The Chinese Myth of Loyalty and Dissent*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1980. 270 pp.

Though no specific name is mentioned in the title, the reader immediately surmises Ch'ü Yüan 屈原 as the man in question. The author calls his book “a study in political mythology,” with the main subject being the place of individuality in politics and the relationship of personal sentiment to public duty. His research is concerned with the possibility of dissent for the loyal, and the necessity of revolt for the committed official. It is a study of the folklore of Ch'ü Yüan, heavily stressing the psychological implications of officials, poets and scholars who found themselves in predicaments similar to those of Ch'ü Yüan.

The *Bibliography* covers pp. 249–64. In his *Notes* (pp. 213–240) the author makes abundant use of the scholarship offered by Chinese and foreign research. The result is, in a sense, a summary, admirably done, of the many individual studies and attempts at solutions concerning the question of how and why Ch'ü Yüan's folkloristic picture had such an immense influence on later generations. It attracted not only the intelligentia, represented by officials, poets and scholars, but also the common illiterate countryfolk who have celebrated him with rich ceremonies through the centuries down to our days, which proves how great a benefit they derived from his cult.

In his *Conclusion* the author summarizes what has been in his heart. It is not the historicity of Ch'ü Yüan, nor the fact that each age of Chinese culture had its own version of Ch'ü Yüan, but rather how each period related itself to him. He and the symbols associated with him are considered as means, not as ends. The author asks himself: what has this or that form of lore and symbol meant in Chinese society through the centuries up to now. Why did the people choose a particular form, and when did they do it? He lets Chinese officials (or the folk) look at Ch'ü Yüan to find out what is relevant in him for their particular needs and problems. He paid great attention to the scrutiny and appreciation of these forms and to the psychological state of self and individuality which produced conflict, resentment and dissent.

When the author deals with the relationship of king and official/poet, his first