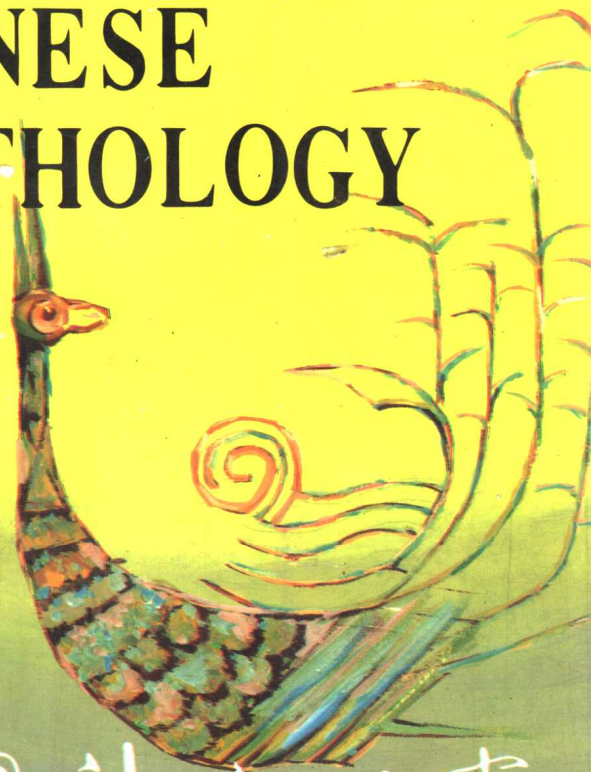


# STORIES FROM CHINESE MYTHOLOGY



## 中國神話故事

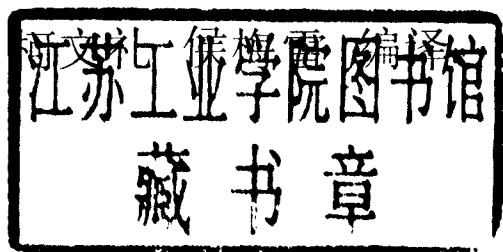
柯文礼 侯梅雪 编译

● 南开大学出版社

NANKAI UNIVERSITY PRESS



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## 中国神话故事

柯文礼 侯梅雪 编译

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## 出版说明

《中国神话故事》一书是南开大学英语副教授柯文礼、侯梅雪先生根据袁珂的《神话故事新编》、《神话选译百题》以英文编译而成的。

该书以生动流畅的语言叙述了盘古开天辟地、女娲补天、精卫填海、愚公移山、牛郎织女、嫦娥奔月、李冰治水等65个神话故事，编译者在故事编排和遣词用字上都用心良苦，收到了重点突出，言简意赅的效果。

本书不仅适合对中国和中国文化感兴趣的外国读者阅读，也适合于海外华人及其后裔阅读。本书对国内欲提高英语的理解和表达能力、丰富历史知识和了解中国古代文化的英语爱好者，亦不失为一本好书。

当前对外交流日渐深入，中外文化比较与研究的领域日益广阔，愿《中国神话故事》发挥它的一份作用。

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1. Chinese proper names in this book are spelled in accordance with the *pinyin* system, invented by the Chinese and used internationally.

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## INTRODUCTION

As China's part in world affairs grows apace, more and more people in the world wish to become acquainted with her. *Stories from Chinese Mythology* is our tentative effort to provide some entertainment for, as well as to give some idea of Chinese mythology to, those who are curious about China and her cultural heritage.

Primitive man, filled with wonder and amazement at such kaleidoscopic natural phenomena as fire, thunder and lightning, wind and rain, the motion of the sun and moon, the gathering and dispersal of clouds, was as yet unable to interpret them. Instead he regarded these elements as "gods" or believed that these phenomena were governed by "gods". To his way of thinking, gods populated the natural world; there was the god of wind, the god of rain, the god of thunder. Primitive humans created the gods in their own image and then worshipped them.

Before the picto- ideographic system of writing

developed in China, these myths about the activities and conflicts of man's gods were circulated by word of mouth and, like poetry, evolved into a form of popular literature. When China entered class society (c. 2000 B. C. ), these tales became imbued with elements of class struggle. Myths appeared in Chinese mythology characterizing such rebellious gods as Chi You, Kua Fu, Xing Tian and Gong Gong, who symbolized man's oppression by the ruling classes.

Chinese mythology was recorded rather late in China's long history. It was not until the feudal society (c. 400 B. C. ) that *Shan Hai Jing* (*Book of Mountains and Seas*) appeared, recording fragments of myths. Contemporaneous with it was a book on divinity called *Gui Cang* (*Storage of All Creation*), likewise recording bits and pieces of myths, which, unfortunately, has been lost. Myths recorded in these two books are thought to reveal the seeds of science and the beginning of scientific exploration. For example, in *Shan Hai Jing* there were the records of mortality trees and an elixir used by wizards to bring the dying back to life. In *Gui Cang*, the record states, "After she took the drug given by Xi Wang Mu, Chang'e flew to the moon and became a goddess." Perhaps we can say

that this was not only an exploration of medicine but an amazing exploration of space as well.

Theoretically it should not be difficult to distinguish Chinese mythology from ancient history, but in actual fact, both are interwoven in Chinese classical literature. Mythology contains factual historical events and vice versa. Imagination springs out of life experience. The war between Huang Di and Chi You, for example, in which Chi You could summon wind and rain and fog, and Huang Di could take command of birds and beasts of all descriptions, is beyond doubt a myth, but who can deny that in the myth there was a shadow of history chronicling the strife between two primitive tribes? Conversely, who can deny the mythical elements contained in the supposedly true historical records of "the abdication of Yao and Shun" and "the revolution staged by Cheng Tang", not to mention the deeds of the so-called "Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors", all ancient history, indisputably remote in time and too fantastic not to contain voluminous elements of mythology?

Most of China's abundant myths have been lost, partly because Chinese mythology was historicized to serve the purposes of the ruling classes. History before

China's Spring and Autumn Period (774—476 B. C. ) was largely a history derived from mythology. Owing to the conversion of mythology into history, only fragments of unconnected myths remained in *Shan Hai Jing* and a few other classical works. Be that as it may, the fragmentary myths, recording two to three thousand years from the early Western Zhou Dynasty to the Wei and Jin Dynasties and even later, provide the world with a multitudinous collection. These abundant myths of splendid imagination and beautiful conception refute the careless remarks of some Chinese scholars who have maintained that China "possesses no mythology", that "Ours is not an imaginative nation." The only regret is, however, that these fragments, like scattered bits and pieces of gold and jade, have not yet been systematically reconstructed into an organic integral collection like Greek and Roman mythology. This great effort must be undertaken by future scholars.

The literature of mythology is treasured by every country and every culture. The works of many important writers are replete with allusions to Greek, Roman, Hebrew, Indian, and Chinese mythology. Chairman Mao Zedong, for instance, often quoted

myths, investing them with entirely new revolutionary implications. He spoke of "the Cowherd" in his poem "Farewell to the God of Plague"; "Chang'e", the lonely goddess, and "Wu Gang" in his poem "Reply to Li Shuyi"; "the mountain goddess" (that is, Yao Ji) in his poem "Swimming"; and "Gong Gong" who fought Zhuan Xu for the throne and in a fit of rage butted against the Buzhou Mountain, in his poem "Against the First 'Encirclement' Campaign."

Mythology, itself a form of literature, also exerts a far-reaching influence on other forms of literature and art. Greek art certainly derived nourishment from Greek mythology. The same is true of other cultures and other civilizations. Can the flowers of European art and literature since the 16th century have bloomed so luxuriantly without the nourishment of Greek and Roman mythology? Likewise, China could not have produced such great poets as Qu Yuan (c. 340—278 B. C. ) and Li Bai (701—762 A. D. ) and such great works as *Xi You Ji* (*Pilgrimage to the West* by Wu Cheng'en, c. 1500—1582 A. D. ) and *Jing Hua Yuan* (*Flowers in the Mirror* by Li Ruzhen, c. 1763—1830 A. D. ), without the rich tradition of imaginative literature. Such literary giants and excellent



works, representing the best half of China's garden of art and literature, would have been eclipsed. Even Du Fu (712—770 A. D. ), a realistic poet, made many mythical allusions in his poetry, to say nothing of others.

So it is that we make available to our English speaking friends this book consisting of sixty-five stories, each being separate and independent from, yet somehow consistent with the others. These stories, we think, are rich in content and far-reaching in significance. Their contents fall roughly into four categories;

A. Man's battle to survive the forces of nature

As a result of constant struggle with nature, primitive man sought explanations for his successes and failures. The myths, therefore, are not only primitive man's interpretations of natural phenomena but also ringing songs, lamenting or celebrating the battle. The stories extolling Pan Gu's separation of heaven and earth, Nü Wa's repairing the sky, Yi's shooting down of the suns and extermination of monsters, and Gun's and Yu's stemming of floods, are all stories of the struggle.

For example, we have the story "Yi Shot Down