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Brigitte Bapandier, *The Lady of Linshui: A Chinese Female Cult*

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objectively real mental illness, or was it primarily a social construction designed to control deviance? Gutierrez concludes that only by understanding most madness as socially constructed can we explain the great increase in diagnoses of insanity during the nineteenth century, especially for women. Husbands often had their wives committed to asylums for religious deviance, such as the embrace of Spiritualism.

Meanwhile, Gutierrez shows that Spiritualism fought with the emerging science of psychology over the construction and understanding of the unconscious. Both Spiritualism and psychology took from Mesmerism the concept that besides the everyday self, there was another self accessible through the technique that came to be known as hypnosis. The Spiritualists conceived this second self as the soul, connected to the ideal; psychologists came to view it as the reservoir of an individual's hidden, dark impulses. Both Spiritualism and psychology claimed the mantle of science, but by the late nineteenth century, Gutierrez argues, psychology was able to do so more plausibly, providing a wholly naturalistic explanation of Spiritualist phenomena. In the twentieth century, psychology supplanted Spiritualism.

DEAN GRODZINS, *Cambridge, Massachusetts*.

BAPTANDIER, BRIGITTE. *The Lady of Linshui: A Chinese Female Cult*. Translated by Kristin Ingrid Fryklund. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008. 392 pp. \$65.00 (cloth).

This book was originally published in French as *La Dame-du-bord-de-l'eau* (Nanterre, 1988). After revision and supplementation by further research and fieldwork by the author, it is offered again, this time in an English translation. The book discusses the many gifts of prodigy Chen Jinggu, her resistance to marriage, and her leaving home to study Daoism. She pacifies demons, practices the magic of “liberating the fetus from her to pray for rain” (*tuotai qiyü*), and finally conquers the White Snake to become a goddess, the Lady of Linshui. Baptandier shows how this story combines different religions (shamanism, tantric Buddhism, and various Daoist sects), novels (*Fengshen yanyi* and *Xiyou ji*), Confucianism, and local traditions to provide a wealth of material for understanding Chinese notions of the feminine and sexual categories. While the book's argument is mainly based on a textual analysis of an old vernacular novel, *Linshui pingyao* (chaps. 1–6), the author also adds data on rituals collected in Taiwan and China (chaps. 7–9), and a chapter on Chen Jinggu's spirit medium in Tainan (Taiwan). These aspects are combined in a thoughtful way to give a complete picture of beliefs related to this goddess, and therefore this book constitutes an important contribution to its subject.

Since the book details multiple beliefs, rites, and myths, and because it cuts across different historical periods and geographical locations, it is not easy to distill clear Chinese concepts of the feminine from such diverse resources. However, Baptandier disagrees with treating these elements separately, as previous studies have done (261). She points out that even though the novel presents a mosaic of stories, one can still discern a fundamental symbolic unity among them (22), consisting of local cultural manifestations of unconscious representations (24).

The above statement, appearing in the introduction, shows the author's inclination toward structuralism. The following textual analyses reinforce this

## The Journal of Religion

impression. The book begins with a fascinating story of the construction of a bridge in the Min kingdom (909–45 AD). With two monsters in the Luoyang River devouring passengers trying to cross, the goddess Guanyin pitied them and decided to help build a bridge. Taking the form of a beautiful woman floating on the water, she promised to marry anyone who was able to hit her with a coin. A huge crowd, among them the peddler Wang Xiao'er, came to try their luck. As he sat by the river sighing over his failed attempts, a fairy, Lü Dongbin, spotted him and helped the next coin he tossed to hit a hair of Guanyin. She plucked the hair out and threw it into the water whereupon it turned into a white snake and disappeared into the depths. Knowing that this snake would become a scourge of the people, Guanyin cast a drop of her own blood into the river, from which Chen Jinggu was born. Wang, seeing the beautiful Guanyin fading away, sorrowfully committed suicide by drowning himself. Guanyin later turned him into Liu Qi, who would go on to marry Chen Jinggu.

We see that from the outset in Baptandier's analysis, Chen Jinggu : White Snake, blood : hair, and righteous : evil (or even man : woman) form "two opposing lines" (64). These binary contrasts continue developing and intersecting in later chapters until Chen kills the White Snake and sits astride its head, an act that transforms her into a divinity—the Lady of Linshui. In the book there are also other accounts of binary opposites that later experience transformation, such as the Zhangken Ghost (representing yin) and the Cinnabar Monkey (yang). The lewd monkey is eventually castrated by Chen Jinggu and can thus attain Dao.

This structuralist-oriented approach is also evident in the author's discussion of the Sovereign of Azure Clouds and the Lady of Birth Register. She regards them as "homologues" of Chen Jinggu (169); they are "different aspects of a particular Chinese notion of the feminine" (160). In the chapters depicting rituals, such as "cultivating flowers" (*zaihua*) and "crossing thresholds" (*guoguan*), the account is straightforwardly descriptive, giving an impression that the rituals are ways to show the existence of mythical ideas. Furthermore, in the discussion of Chen Jinggu's spirit medium, Xie Fuzhu, Baptandier sees her life as "turn[ing] key points of the legend into a reality" (256). This structural analysis of texts, rituals, and spirit medium is attended by typical problems. For instance, how does one judge who corresponds to yin or yang, particularly since characters who are identified with yin or yang do not always hold opposite relationships to each other? Focusing on the explication of structural ideas, the author has not examined the rituals themselves or the agency of the spirit medium; for they do not only demonstrate fixed, transcendental ideas but have continued to acquire new significances in different places and even in contemporary times.

In addition to structuralist implications, Baptandier also hints at her interest in psychoanalysis. For instance, she sees the White Snake as Chen Jinggu's "demon" alter ego (72); they are two aspects of the same character, continually competing with each other during their lives but ending in union. This interest in psychoanalysis is indicative of the author's wide-ranging theoretical interests. At the same time, though, she never makes explicit her own theoretical stance in the whole book.

Chen Jinggu's life, moreover, is analyzed in the book from the perspective of Chinese patrilineal social structure. For the author, even though Chen had outstanding shamanistic gifts, she still could not break through patrilineal ide-

ology and had to marry and bear a son. She died because she rejected learning the magic art of fertility but finally became a goddess of childbirth. Examining Chen through this patrilineal model, however, runs the risk of narrowing her power. If we read the seventeenth-century novel *Linshui pingyao* (Baptandier's principal text), we discover that most of the men appearing in it are rather weak. There are licentious emperors and bureaucrats, incompetent Daoist priests who fail to perform rituals, and scholars who hold high moral standards but are too frail to protect themselves. In stark contrast, women—particularly Chen Jinggu and her team of women—are not only producers of families but also uphold the Min kingdom and maintain cosmological order. The unusual status and significance of women in this novel, due in part perhaps to the particular historical period in which it was written, deserve further investigation.

In the study of Chinese religion, there are very few books that concentrate so intensively on a single goddess. Previous studies mostly focus on the goddess Mazu or Guanyin and overlook this important divinity. Many of them are also more concerned with the political process of making a deity than with the symbolic representation of a Chinese goddess. This book, therefore, enriches our understanding of Chinese religion, and I recommend it to readers interested in religious studies, anthropology, and gender studies.

WEI-PING LIN, *National Taiwan University*.

AKBARI, SUZANNE CONKLIN. *Idols in the East: European Representations of Islam and the Orient, 1100–1450*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009. xii+323 pp. \$49.95 (cloth).

Suzanne Akbari's wide-ranging and ambitious book examines portrayals of the Saracens and the Orient in texts of diverse nature written in Latin and European vernaculars between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries. While earlier work has tended to place European discourse on "Saracens" into the contexts of the history of discourse on the religious other (comparing Christian depiction of Islam with that of Judaism, paganism, and heresy) or into a sometimes teleological framework of premodern Orientalism, Akbari here places it in the context of medieval geographical and ethnographical traditions, as found in a broad range of Latin and vernacular texts.

Classical Greek (and subsequently medieval Arab) geographers had portrayed the Mediterranean climes as moderate and therefore congenial to human habitation and to the development of civilization (stone buildings, cities, philosophical thought, the arts). The far north and far south, because of excessive cold or heat, were less conducive to human development: hence the inhabitants of these regions were rude and beastly, wore rough clothes, and built in wood or straw. Akbari shows how European geographers adapted and modified this schema, making Europe a land of temperate climate that facilitates reason and reflection while the southern and eastern lands are marked by a torrid climate that encourages lust and violence. This transformation, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, coincides with the increasing tendency to view "Saracens" as irrational beings whose lasciviousness and desire for power makes impossible rational discussion of the merits of Christianity. For Akbari, this marks the outset of medieval "Orientalism," but she uses the term with nuance, exploring the complexities and ambiguities of European discourse on the East.

One of Akbari's main objectives is to explore—and explode—the apparent