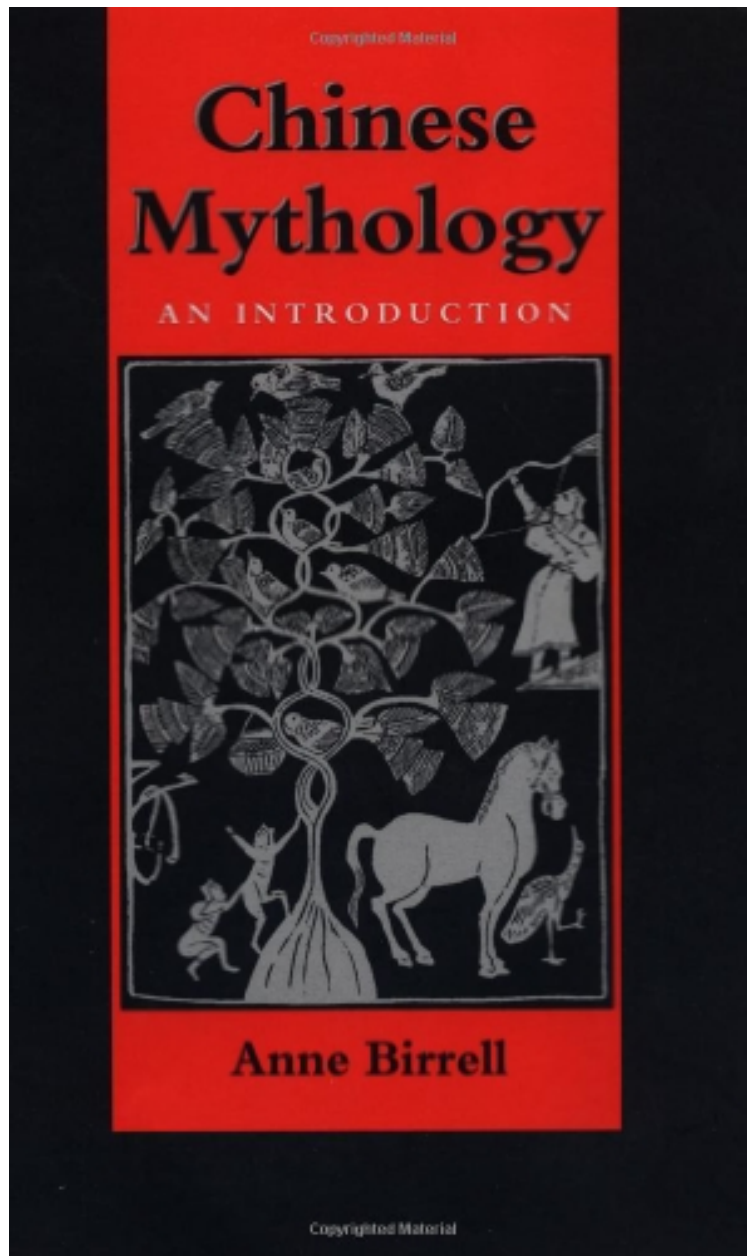


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Chinese Mythology: An Introduction

Anne M. Birrell

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Anne M. Birrell : Chinese Mythology: An Introduction before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Chinese Mythology: An Introduction:

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Very Tough Student TextBy ShakespearemomI selected this book

for a class on myth, mainly after reading reviews discussing how well the stories were told compared to other resources. All I can assume is that other resources include almost incomprehensible stories. Birrell has obviously done a great deal of research, and she is trying to compile hundreds of sources into some sort of meaningful whole, but the result is very difficult to read. Her introductions to the stories are more meaningful than the tiny tales themselves, and I fear I will use this text only sparingly in the coming semester, giving more time to books explaining other mythic systems, not because I dislike Chinese myth, but because this text does little to clarify it. My students will have a hard time with these readings, and I will need to supplement them as much as possible so that the students can see what's at work within each story and understand the sociological and historical context. I know trying to tackle all of Chinese myth is hard in itself--much harder than Greek or Norse myth--but after reading this, I am not sure I have a better sense of Chinese myth than I did before I opened the book. As an introduction, it may tend to be more daunting than it should be, and less accessible to a student course. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. perfect for a serious college student or professor By Timothy G. DeMarte It's an academic nonfiction work, perfect for a serious college student or professor. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Not a story book, but a collection for study. By chaosweb I feel that this is an upper level college course text book. The stories are arranged by category, and no attempt is made to place the collection of stories into a cultural context that would relate to how they would be told by a story teller to an audience.

In *Chinese Mythology*, Anne Birrell provides English translations of some 300 representative myth narratives selected from over 100 classical texts, many of which have never before been translated into any Western language. Organizing the narratives according to themes and motifs common to world mythology, Birrell addresses issues of source, dating, attribution, textual variants, multiforms, and context. Drawing on exhaustive work in comparative mythology, she surveys the development of Chinese myth studies, summarizes the contribution of Chinese and Japanese scholars to the study of Chinese myth since the 1920s, and examines special aspects of traditional approaches to Chinese myth. The result is an unprecedented guide to the study of Chinese myth for specialists and nonspecialists alike.

"The first serious and comprehensive introduction to Chinese mythology aimed at both the specialist and general reader. It is splendidly organized with well-chosen texts, lucid commentary, and useful supplementary matter... Sets new standards in the presentation of Chinese mythology." (Asian Affairs) "We must all thank Professor Birrell for providing an incredibly bountiful source, containing all manner of practical and fascinating information within its framework of myths. This book should find many uses and readers it is a superb resource for teaching about Chinese myth, literature, history, religion, culture, and thought." (Suzanne Cahill *Journal of Asian Studies*) "One can safely expect to see this volume in all libraries that serve educated general readers as well as even the most modest academic libraries. Anne Birrell is to be congratulated for bringing this arcane subject matter into the grasp of a wide variety of readers outside the China-studies area." (Robert E. Hegel *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, s*) "Goes far beyond anything in or out of print on this subject. Nothing remotely of this stimulating nature and high quality exists in English. It will be very much sought after by sinologists, but especially by non-sinologist comparativists. Birrell has singlehandedly saved the scholarly world at least a decade in its attempts to come to grips with this fragmented, refractory body of narratives... [A] marvelous work of humanistic scholarship." (Victor H. Mair, University of Pennsylvania) "Goes far beyond anything in or out of print on this subject. Nothing remotely of this stimulating nature and high quality exists in English. It will be very much sought after by sinologists, but especially by non-sinologist comparativists. Birrell has singlehandedly saved the scholarly world at least a decade in its attempts to come to grips with this fragmented, refractory body of narratives... [A] marvelous work of humanistic scholarship." -- Victor H. Mair, University of Pennsylvania

About the Author Anne M. Birrell, whose previous books include *Popular Songs and Ballads of Han China* and *New Songs from a Jade Terrace*, has taught Chinese literature at the City University of New York and the University of Cambridge.