ABSTRACT

Among the many myths that have fascinated scholars, none is more so than that of the flood myth. While studies of flood myths have been active in the West since the beginning of the 18th century, the study of the flood myth in China is relatively new, beginning only at the turn of the 20th century. The resultant effect of this is that there are major inadequacies in this area of research. For instance, when studying China flood myths, many Western scholars commit the fallacy of assuming the flood myths of the minority groups of China are the same as those of the dominant Han-Chinese. Simply put, there is not a unified flood myth in China. On the contrary, there are flood myths of various themes in China. As this essay would show, the sum of the whole is not necessary equal to the sum of the parts.

This dissertation hopes to provide an overall symposium of the flood myths of China. Beginning with the better-known flood myths of the Han-Chinese, the discussion will move on to the discussion of the flood myths of the minority groups. This thesis will also touch on the reasons why one flood myth overrides the other to become the representative of the flood myth in China.

A point to note is that many scholars, both Western and Chinese, have failed to realise that many of the traits of the western flood myths are not common among the Chinese flood myths. For example, the flood myth of the Han-Chinese exhibits a pseudo-historical outlook that is clearly absent in other flood myths around the world. Therefore, besides providing an insight to the various themes of China’s flood myths, this thesis also aims to illustrate the differences between the various flood myths of China and that of Genesis in the Old Testament as well as those from ancient civilisations of Babylon and India.