

## ■ Contents

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS ix

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS xi

FOREWORD BY JACK ZIPES xiii

Introduction: Rediscovering Fairy Tales in China 1

### PART ONE. LOVE WITH A FAIRY

1. The Dragon Daughter 17
2. The Golden Pin 21
3. The Fisherman's Lover 27
4. The Silkworm 32
5. On the Celestial Riverbank 35
6. The Flute Player 38
7. The Pheasant Feather Cloak 41
8. The Sea Dragon King 44
9. The Celestial Fairy 46
10. The Daughter of the Dragon King of the Sea 53

### PART TWO. PREDESTINED LOVE

11. The Paper Bride 69
12. The Human-Bear's Death for Love 71

13. The Snake Spirit 74
14. The Garden Snake 78
15. Spouses from Two Worlds 83
16. The Peasant's Wife 86
17. The Marriage of a Human and a Ghost 88
18. The Ghost Marriage 92
19. Golden Frog 95
20. The Toad Son 98
21. The Chicken Egg 103
22. No Giving Up before Seeing the Yellow River 106
23. The Reward of the Snake 111
24. Everyone Is Content 116

#### PART THREE. THE HATRED AND LOVE OF SIBLINGS

25. The Two Brothers 123
26. The Yellow Bag 127
27. The Two Sisters 133
28. The Elder Daughter 135
29. The Three Brothers 138
30. Elder Brother and Younger Brother 143
31. The Melon King 151

#### PART FOUR. OTHER ODD TALES

32. The Weird Brothers 157
33. After Replacing the Heart 161
34. The Hairy Girl on the Pine Tree 164

© Copyright, Princeton University Press. No part of this book may be distributed, posted, or reproduced in any form by digital or mechanical means without prior written permission of the publisher.

- 35. The Shedding Winter Plum 167
- 36. Old Wolf 170
- 37. Old Wolf's Wife 181
- 38. Brother Moon and Sister Sun 184
- 39. The Ghost Brother 186
- 40. The One-Legged Child 194
- 41. The Fairy Cave 196
- 42. Increasing Fortune and Snatching Fortune 199

BIBLIOGRAPHIC SOURCES AND TALE TYPES 201

BIBLIOGRAPHY 215

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON IMPORTANT WRITERS  
AND CONTRIBUTORS 219

## ■ Introduction

# Rediscovering Fairy Tales in China

Unknown in English-speaking countries, the small selection of Lin Lan tales presented here is intended to fill a gap in the international history of folk and fairy tales. In the past century or so, folklorists and fairy-tale scholars in many countries have demonstrated how widespread the influence of the Brothers Grimm has been throughout the world. If we consider that there were “Brothers Grimm” in virtually every country of the West in the nineteenth century—for example, Peter Christen Asbjørnsen and Jorgen Moe in Norway, Elias Lönnrot in Finland, Hans Christian Andersen and Sven Grundtvig in Denmark, Vuk Karadzic in Serbia, Božena Němcová in Czechoslovakia, Alexander Afanasyev in Russia, Adolfo Coelho in Portugal, Emmanuel Cosquin in France, and Giuseppe Pitriè in Italy—it is not surprising to see a similar development in early twentieth-century China—namely, the Lin Lan tales.

The emergence of Lin Lan as the Grimms of China, however, has rarely been studied or explored inside or outside China (Zhang 2020). Consequently, this introduction is intended to provide a sociohistorical context for understanding the development of the Lin Lan tales.

The pseudonym “Lin Lan,” created on July 12, 1924, was first used as a pen name by one author, Li Xiaofeng, who published a set of literary stories about a legendary figure in Chinese history. The

success of these stories eventually led the author to work on the newly imported “genre” of fairy tales (*tonghua*, 童话), and he was later joined by several other editors and writers who shared the pen name “Lin Lan” (林兰) or “Lady Lin Lan” (林兰女士) for collecting and publishing a series of fairy tales from different parts of China.

The Lin Lan Series was published from the late 1920s to the early 1930s by North New Books (*beixin shuju*) in Shanghai, which also published many important works by the leading literary figures at that time, including Lu Xun (鲁迅, 1881–1936). The series was divided into three subgenres: *minjian chuanshuo* (folk legends and tales), *minjian tonghua* (folk fairy tales), and *minjian qushi* (comic folk tales), with a total of 43 volumes containing nearly one thousand tales. All of the tales were provided by informants, who collected the tales from oral storytellers in different parts of China in response to a call from the publisher, as the Brothers Grimm did in 1815. Each volume was about one hundred pages, containing approximately twenty tales. Many of these volumes were reprinted, sometimes several times, indicating that most of the children in urban schools were familiar with these tales in the early part of the twentieth century.

Eight volumes out of the series were categorized as “folk fairy tales.” The concept of “fairy tale” was introduced to China at the turn of the twentieth century, along with such terms as “folklore” and “nationalism.” This concept was then further developed through the translation of fairy tales or *Märchen* from Europe; the publication of tales collected in China; and the creation of Chinese *tonghua* imitating the form of European fairy tales with content adapted from Chinese tales.

In 1909, *tonghua* was first used in China as the title of a series of publications, edited by Sun Yuxiu (孙毓修, 1871–1922), in which

European fairy tales served as examples of the literary tradition. Sun thus created a new category in publications and library catalogues. Today, Sun Yuxiu is heralded as the father of “Chinese *tonghua*.” His ultimate goal was to promote “children’s education,” as other intellectuals and writers had done, such as Zhou Zuoren (周作人, 1885–1967), who introduced the term *minsu* (folklore; folk customs) to China in 1913, and who translated fairy tales by Oscar Wilde, Hans Christian Andersen, the Brothers Grimm, and other authors in the 1910s.

By the 1920s, *tonghua* became widely accepted as a new genre of literature (that is, folk literature). During this period, leading Chinese scholars absorbed ideas and influences from both Europe and Japan. Both Lu Xun and his younger brother Zhou Zuoren spent some years in Japan and knew the leading Japanese folklorists. As a result of their work, the efforts of the extensive New Culture Movement made people more aware of Chinese folk literature. In particular, *tonghua* produced by Chinese writers were gradually accepted and welcomed by large segments of Chinese.

In addition to the great popularity of the series, there are three significant reasons that “Lin Lan” should be regarded as “the Grimms of China”: (1) the influence of the Grimms on the Lin Lan Series; (2) the exemplary dedication of the series to the oral tradition of the lower classes; and (3) the social and literary impact in historical perspective.

When the Brothers Grimm began to collect folk and fairy tales with a clear goal of searching for the true voice of the folk and the pride of their culture and history, the Prussian-dominated German Empire was in a crisis that eventually led to the establishment of the German Confederation (1815). It was during the rise of Germany as a nation-state that the first edition of *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*

(*Children's and Household Tales*) was published (1812–1815), which doubtlessly helped create support for a unified nation.

In this sense, the Grimms developed what can be called “the Brothers Grimm spirit.” As Jack Zipes has written, “the Grimms hoped to find great truth about the German people and their laws and customs by collecting their tales, for they believed that language was what created national bonds and stamped the national character of a people” (Zipes 1987: xxviii). This spirit was also part of a romantic nationalism that was characteristic of German ideas in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It was this spirit that became a driving force for many countries seeking to maintain their cultural traditions by establishing the sources and roots of a national culture. It was precisely for this reason that the Lin Lan phenomenon took place in China in the early twentieth century.

The effort to record oral tales from storytellers—that is, the common people—was the principle behind the Lin Lan Series, more so than in other similar collections published in China. There is clear evidence that the Lin Lan creators, like the literati at that time, knew a good deal about the Brothers Grimm’s 1815 letter “Circular wegen der Aufsammlung der Volkspoesie” (Circular-Letter Concerned with Collecting of Folk Poetry), along with the second volume of the first edition of *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, which recognized the status of ordinary storytellers and the scope of their efforts to collect tales. In this sense, the Lin Lan Series was exemplary.

Even from a contemporary viewpoint, the Lin Lan Series has contributed greatly to the continuity of the oral and literary traditions in China, linking the previous oral and written records to those that are retold today. Tale-type and motif studies demonstrate that the fairy tales in the Lin Lan Series not only mediated

between the oral and literary traditions but also stimulated the rise of Chinese *tonghua*. For example, the publication of the best-known indigenous *tonghua*, *The Strawman* (*Daocaoren*, 1922) by Ye Shengtao (叶圣陶, 1894–1988), marked the first success of Sinitification under the influence of Andersen’s “The Steadfast Tin Soldier.”

While many others published folk and fairy tales in the early twentieth century in China, the Lin Lan Series emerged at a unique historical moment and played an essential role in the continuity of collecting and publishing folk and fairy tales at the time. This was owing to several factors. The first is that North New Books was perhaps the most influential publisher during the New Culture Movement, thus promoting modern literature. It published books by Lu Xun, considered the most prominent writer in twentieth-century China, and by his brother Zhou Zuoren, a key figure in the development of folklore and the fairy tale in China who also became a member of the Lin Lan team. The editor-in-chief of North New Books, Li Xiaofeng (李晓峰, 1897–1971), was Lu Xun’s closest student and friend, and used Lin Lan as a pen name for some publications. Another factor is the content of the fairy tales and their role in the transmission of the oral and literary traditions in China.

Important social and economic factors also contributed to the emergence of the Lin Lan phenomenon. The May Fourth Movement in 1919 certainly encouraged the Chinese to reflect on the domestic history that led to the “backwardness” of China. Chinese elites sought to advance the nation through a “new culture” (represented by Western science, technology, and ideas in contrast to the traditional Confucian values and lifestyle). The new vernacular speech (*baihua*, 白话) also promoted new ideas through publication.



The need for “the Brothers Grimm spirit” in China initiated the New Culture Movement, including the Ballads Movement. In the twenty-first century, a revival of academic interest in the Lin Lan phenomenon has resulted in efforts to safeguard the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) and the reconstruction of China’s national identity.

When the name Lin Lan first appeared in 1924, it clearly was the pen name of Li Xiaofeng, a student of philosophy at Beijing University, who graduated in 1923. He was one of the founders of a publishing house named New Wave Press (*xinchaoshe*). Soon after he published the literary stories mentioned here, he changed the name of the press to North New Books and moved to Shanghai. He continued using the pen name Lin Lan to publish other stories until 1925. At the same time, Zhao Jingshen (赵景深, 1902–1984), who was then a leading scholar of fairy-tale studies, became Li’s business partner. In 1928, Li invited Zhao to come to Shanghai to work with him, and paid his travel expenses. In April 1930, Zhao married Li’s younger sister, Li Xitong (李希同), and, in June, he became the editor-in-chief of North New Books.

Soon after Zhao arrived in Shanghai, he took charge of the designing and publishing of the Lin Lan Series. By then, he had already published some important works about *tonghua* and established himself as one of the genre’s most important scholars. Indeed, it was through their common interest in *tonghua* that Li and Zhao began their close collaboration. For instance, one of their major accomplishments was the translation of the Grimms’ *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* in 1932. Two years later, Zhao published his first book on drama, which marked a change in his research interests, and he never published anything on *tonghua* thereafter. This might be a key reason that the Lin Lan Series ended in 1933.

Working as a team, Li was initially the strategist and Zhao was the editor-in-chief, assisted by other editors. Based on this history and personal experience, folklorist Che Xilun, who was Zhao's student in the 1960s, reasoned that Lin Lan was the name used by Li and Zhao, along with others involved in the publication of the Lin Lan Series at North New Books. Che also recalled that Zhao once introduced Li's wife, Cai Shuliu (蔡漱六, 1900–?), to him as Lin Lan—partly because she also worked as an editor at North New Books, and partly because she embodied (Lady) Lin Lan herself. In fact, when the Lin Lan Series became popular, readers demanded to see Lin Lan, who was assumed to be a female based on the name, and Cai Shuliu was chosen to represent the fictional author in public. Decades later, Cai Shuliu confirmed that Li used the name Lin Lan and even suggested changing her name to Lady Lin Lan (*Lin Lan nüshi*).

Indeed, during the early twentieth century it was fashionable for Chinese elites to publish literary works with a female name or title. It seems reasonable to guess that, on certain occasions, Lin Lan was the name used by a team of two or more people, but on other occasions, Lin Lan was the pen name of one particular person in charge of editing a particular tale or collection.

Furthermore, some of the contributors to the Lin Lan Series were also editors and authors of other volumes of fairy tales published by North New Books. Sun Jiaxun, for example, contributed the tales “After Replacing the Heart” and “The Golden Pin,” but as an editor also published other volumes of fairy tales for children in the 1930s.

To some extent, it is no longer as meaningful to identify which writers and editors were part of Lin Lan as to understand the symbolism of Lin Lan in promoting the fairy-tale genre in China and

introducing European fairy tales to the Chinese, especially to young people growing up from the 1920s to the 1940s. The tales helped them to gain a sense of their cultural roots through unique Chinese tales that aroused national pride, and led many to fight in the Sino-Japanese War for national independence in the 1930s to 1940s.

The Brothers Grimm and the Grimms of China had many similarities—among them the spirit of creating a national identity, the principles of collecting folk and fairy tales, and the social and literary impact—but two differences deserve to be mentioned as well.

One difference concerns religion. The Brothers Grimm had clear religious sentiments. To a certain extent, as Jack Zipes writes, “Wilhelm Grimm (more than Jacob) revised and altered most of the tales over a period of approximately forty years to make them more graceful and suitable for children and a proper Christian upbringing” (Zipes 1987: xxviii). By contrast, Lin Lan, whether as an individual or a team, reflected an inclusive Chinese polytheist tradition. The editors were attached to modernism and nationalism almost as a faith, although some tales expressed Confucian ethical teaching and the Buddhist “karma” idea.

The other difference concerns the pivotal role of the projects themselves. The Grimms published, often for the first time, tales that were “a few hundred years old before they had been gathered and told by the Grimms’ informants,” passed down through oral tradition (Zipes 2013: xxiii). In contrast, most of the Lin Lan tales (or tale types) can be found in historical records and are still told in contemporary everyday life. The Lin Lan tales transmitted literary as well as oral tales and also played a particular role in promoting vernacular speech in the early twentieth century, even though the name of Lin Lan is little known today.

The foremost value of the Lin Lan Series lies in the preservation of tales from particular regions during a particular time in Chinese history. Besides the social and political impact, these tales bear the personal marks of the storytellers who kept them in their memory and told them for a purpose.

The history of collecting and publishing oral tales and songs dates back to some of the earliest extant documents in Chinese, such as *The Book of Songs* (*Shijing*, ca. eleventh century to sixth century BCE), a collection of folk songs, and *The Classic of Mountains and Seas* (*Shanhaijing*, ca. third century BCE to third century CE), a collection of myths. These classics recorded many popular myths, fables, jokes, tales, and legends that often were used as analogies for political advice. From then on, folk tales were written down or compiled in each dynasty in Chinese history, forming a literary instead of an oral tradition.

In the long history of collecting tales, a few collections are of special relevance to this book. *Youyang Zazu*, a thirty-volume collection produced by Duan Chengshi (段成式, 803–863), categorized its tales by such genres as *zhiguai* (strange/wonder/ghost tales) and *nuogao*, a Daoist term for summoning ghosts and spirits, including the Chinese “Cinderella” tale (Ye Xian, 叶限) ATU510A, first introduced to the West by R. D. Jameson (1932).

Another collection, *Yi Jian Zhi* by Hong Mai (洪迈, 1123–1202), which contains more than 2,700 tales, is one of many literary collections or anthologies that demonstrate the continuing history of collecting and publishing tales in China. Approximately one hundred of its tales can be defined as complete folk tales or legends, including several tales about snake spirits that can be defined as fairy tales, which are also seen in the Lin Lan Series.

“The Snake Wife” is a common theme in Chinese folk and fairy tales, as seen in both the ancient records and the Lin Lan Series. Through extensive studies of Chinese and non-Chinese tales, however, folklorist Nai-tung Ting came to the conclusion that this type was initially formed in Western Asia or Central Asia, where there was no such practice as snake worship, and that it later entered India, Western Europe, and then China as a very common tale type or theme represented by “The Story of White Snake” (*baishe zhuan*) (Ting 1974; Liu 2017: 308–309). In this collection, “The Garden Snake” and “The Snake Spirit” are two variants of this tale type.

The tradition of collecting and publishing tales was greatly hampered during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in China, largely owing to wars and other social upheavals. The Lin Lan Series in the early twentieth century, along with the New Cultural Movement and the introduction of folklore and fairy tales in China, therefore played an important role in continuing that tradition.

The Sino-Japanese War and civil war in the 1930s to 1940s in China put an end to the rising trend of folklore studies of the 1920s and 1930s, but the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949 provided an opportunity for folklore studies to “serve the people.” In 1957, the China Folk Literature and Art Society recommended that folklore studies should be continued as a part of the construction of the New China. A wave of collecting and publishing folk and fairy tales followed during the 1950s and 1970s, but it was limited to the “proletarian” working-class literature—that is, stories by workers and peasants praising the new society, along with a wave of translated Russian fairy tales. While the collection of local tales continued in many regions, tales often were edited or rewritten

by the collectors. Other than these narratives, most traditional tales were labeled as “superstitious” and were suppressed in public life.

It was in this particular social context that the Lin Lan Series disappeared from public and academic life. Aside from ideological issues, there were practical factors: the New China after 1949 began to promote a new standard and simplified writing system (*jiantizi*) in order to let the common people learn to read and write. The format of printing in newspapers and books officially changed from a vertical line to a horizontal line, which eliminated the possibility of reprinting from previous editions of older books in mainland China. In Taiwan, however, the traditional writing (*fantizi*) and format of printing remained unchanged, which enabled the publication of two reprints of selected Lin Lan tales, in 1971 and 1981.

The reestablishment of the China Folklore Society in 1983 reflected a change of social and academic climate in China. From 1984 to 2009, the Ministry of Culture initiated the national project to publish the *Grand Collection of Folktales*, *Grand Collection of Ballads and Songs*, and *Grand Collection of Proverbs*. These three grand collections include 298 volumes at the provincial level and more than 4,000 volumes at the county level, along with numerous unpublished archival materials. Similar projects, though at a smaller scale, have been conducted with a focus on certain regions, historical periods, or themes.

Many tales in the Lin Lan Series are not only variants of the previous written records, as discussed earlier, but also directly related to oral storytelling. In addition, the tales reflect the many cultural differences between the tales of the Brothers Grimm and the tales of the Grimms of China. While many European fairy tales are related to hunting in forests, the Lin Lan series depicts agricultural life in China, with tales told in the rice fields or next

to the stove. Protagonists in the Western tales are mostly hunters, traveling princes, or princesses asking questions, but those in Lin Lan's tales are mostly peasants, cooking girls transformed from garden snails or snakes, weavers, or dragon daughters who can build houses. The helpful creatures in Western tales are mostly forest animals like the wolf, the deer, or the eagle, but those in Lin Lan's tales are plowing cows, dogs, or domestic cats. In the Brothers Grimm tales, breaking taboos to obtain treasures reveals the spirit of the hunting culture, whereas in Lin Lan's tales breaking taboos is often related to losing treasure and credibility. Overall, the Lin Lan Series reflects the Chinese agricultural mentality and different values owing to different religious beliefs.

This present selection is intended to provide a complete and original picture of what the Lin Lan phenomenon signified in early twentieth-century China. Although the selection contains only about ten percent of the tales categorized as fairy tales in the Lin Lan Series, not to mention many tales from other categories, these tales indicate the richness and diversity of the oral and literary traditions in China.

The purpose of this collection is to restore the role of Lin Lan in the development or evolution of fairy tales in China, specifically in the 1920s and 1930s. It was the concept of the fairy tale that connected China to the West in form, particularly to the Brothers Grimm, as well as the nationalistic spirit in ideas behind the form.

The current collection thus highlights how fairy tales were understood, told, and discussed in China at that time. I have divided this collection into four parts to demonstrate similarities and differences between Chinese and European tales. For example, part 3, "The Hatred and Love of Siblings," shows the commonality among tales from all cultures, whereas part 2, "Predestined Love,"

represents Chinese notions of ghosts/souls as well as ethics and values concerning family. These tales were all selected from the original Lin Lan Series, which was published on a rolling schedule—as the tales were collected, they were roughly divided into fairy tales and legends and so on, and then published. (For more details, see the sections “Bibliographic Sources and Tale Types” and “Biographical Notes on Important Writers and Contributors,” at the end of this book.)

The forty-two tales collected here are published for the first time in English, except for four included in a collection by Wolfram Eberhard (1937a), which I have retranslated. All of the translations are meant to be colloquial and to retain the flavor of the original Chinese stories. In my translating Chinese into English, whether classic and modern academic text or literary and everyday speech, I have followed two principles: (1) to be faithful to the meaning of the Chinese text, and (2) to adapt the Chinese style so that it resonates in English.

“Chinese” in this discourse refers essentially to the Chinese language—that is, all of the tales in the Lin Lan Series were told in Chinese (some were in dialects), and recorded or printed in Chinese (standard writing system), though the regions represented in the tales were mostly the provinces in South and Central China.

To ensure readability, I have tried to avoid footnotes or endnotes by either providing explanatory translations or adding annotative words in brackets. Some culturally distinctive expressions are translated to retain the original meaning with some “uniqueness,” while avoiding direct association with the Western tradition. For example, in tale 6, the Chinese *wanyinghe* (万应盒, literally, “ten-thousand-answers box”) and *ruyibang* (如意棒, literally, “as-you-wish stick”) are translated respectively as “an All-Promise Box” and



“an All-Wish Stick,” although “magic box” and “magic wand” would make them more “familiar” to English readers. Some other examples are related to both cultural and textual issues.

Nearly a century after the Lin Lan Series was published seems to be a perfect time to recall the unusual tales that matched and, in some ways, surpassed the collection of the Brothers Grimm in quantity and cultural impact.