

Nai-tung TING: *A Type Index of Chinese Folktales in the Oral Tradition and Major Works of Non-religious Classical Literature*. (FF Communications, no. 223) Helsinki, Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1978. 294 pages.

When this reviewer published the first Type Index of Chinese Folktales (*Typen chinesischer Volksmärchen*, FFC Communications, no. 120, Helsinki 1937) Chinese tales were almost unknown in Western countries; books which purported to bring us Chinese folktales, contained for the most part literary stories either taken from Chinese books or told to Westerners by Chinese scholars. Chinese folklore began to develop between 1919 and 1937 with the publication of a number, often short-lived periodicals and a couple of books, usually for younger readers or the general public. The outbreak of the Japanese-Chinese War (1937) set an end to this first and very productive period. The next wave began in the 1950'ies and continued to about 1965. Professor Ting's Type Index uses all publications of both periods as far as he could get hold of them. While the publications of the first period were hard to find because they were often contained in small, local journals or even the entertainment pages of larger newspapers (most of them have been reprinted recently in Taiwan), those of the second period published by governmental or semi-governmental agencies often did not get into the libraries of the United States, on which the author had to rely in most cases. In spite of such difficulties, the author has brought together an admirable work which contains more than four times as much data than this reviewer's book (which the author does not mention at all, though he mentions some, though not all publications of this reviewer who had planned to prepare a new edition of his Index and collected a good amount of new material). One of the weaknesses of the first period was that only some provinces of China were fairly well represented: tales from the north and west of China were poorly studied and the tales of China's minorities were almost not collected. During the second period, special attention was shown to the folklore of minorities. Ting's bibliography enumerates at least 42 publications fully or partially devoted to the minorities of South and South-West China, 16 to Tibet, 7 to Sinkiang, 7 to Mongolia, 3 to the province of Kansu and 8 to Manchuria.

Prof. Ting has set up certain limitations. He has excluded myths and legends. Myths were collected mainly during the first period; legends also more often in the first period than in the second one. This reviewer agrees that there are very many legends and as far as he can judge, by far not all have been collected and published. Legends also pose a problem of classification. Prof. Ting has further excluded typically Buddhist tales. These tales should be analyzed in a volume devoted to legends; most important would be an analysis of the sermons of Buddhist priests which, I guess, will contain what we call 'exempla'. We know that in earlier times of Chinese Buddhism, the priests widely used such exempla, and Buddhist priests in South-East Asia still do so. One source of these exempla are the large collections which were translated from Indian sources between the 4th and 6th centuries (translated into French by E. CHAVANNES, *Cinq Cents Contes et Apologues*, Paris 1910–34, 4 volumes). I will come to the importance of this source later.

Prof. Ting's Index is certainly the most up-to-date Index available and will be a valuable, perhaps indispensable sourcebook for folklorists who are careful. Yet, the user should be warned, especially if he/she is unable to read Chinese. Few collections of Chinese tales in Western languages are mentioned in this Index; in fact, few of them bring genuine folk tales.

1) While we agree with the author that legends and etiological stories should be left out of the Index, other omissions seem to me to be more serious: „Stories based primarily

on superstitions really believed by a large fraction of illiterate Chinese peasantry (and sometimes even by the literate) not many years ago are clearly legends“ (page 11). As examples of such „superstitions“ Prof. Ting mentions such as the fox (badger), the ghost, the dragon, geomancy, forms of divination, and the like“ (p. 11). I myself have stated that stories of foxes which in the shape of a beautiful girl seducing an unsuspecting young scholar may be the product of some writers (especially P'u Sung-ling) who used this form to enable them to write and to publish somewhat sexy stories which otherwise could offend the governmental censors.<sup>1</sup> But the fact that fox stories of this type are limited to North China, Korea and Japan, while similar stories in South China replace the fox by a monkey-like mountain ghost (shan-hsiao), indicated that fox stories are not a priori a product of the fantasy of a scholar. „Superstitious“ they may be – but then all stories in which animals speak to one another or to humans are „superstition“ and should be eliminated. Prof. Ting seems to follow here the party line of the People's Republic and its fight against „superstitions“. He has also left out stories „designed primarily to explain the meanings of bird and animal songs“ (p. 11).

Of course, these are also „superstitions“, but I find them of particular interest because many known to me express tensions between daughter-in-law and mother-in-law; they give vent to a serious problem of traditional Chinese society. Also omitted are stories „mainly concerned with the interests and problems of certain particular professions (carpenters, masons, etc.)“ (p. 11). My Index contained a number of such stories which are of importance because they express a social thought, namely „do treat craftsmen well, because they can take revenge for poor treatment“. Finally, „stories always attributed to only one historical or pseudo-historical characters or concerned with presumably real events have also been left out“ (p. 11). For instance, the „Great Yü“, a mythical ruler of China, is connected, together with his father, with the flood and its regulation. This is certainly not a historical event, but if we look into the variants of this story we find hidden here a real flood story comparable to similar stories all over the world. Also, stories about the sun and the moon may be regarded as myths and, therefore, be omitted, but a folklorist would like to find them in such an index, the more so, as some variants cannot really be called myths.

This leads us to a problem specific for China. In a study done by me<sup>2</sup> I established that many so-called literary stories are also told by common people, and that stories of the folk entered the books of literati. Folk-tales in China are not the stuff of the peasantry; this opinion is based upon the erroneous belief that the peasantry was unable to read and had no way to know what their writers produced. Today we know that a fairly large segment of Chinese population could read and write, though only to a limited degree – the degree which was important for them; we also know that the upper class did know what the other classes told: as children they heard stories told by peasants and servants, and later their own servants told them stories which then, in a more elegant form entered their works. There was a constant exchange between the classes. At the present time such a view seems not to be popular in the People's Republic, and it seems to me for this reason Prof. Ting has left out all references to folklore mentioned in earlier works produced by traditional Chinese scholars. I would not criticize him for his attitude, if he had not made some statements concerning the relation of Chinese tales to tales of other parts of Asia and Europe (p. 17). I am certain that Western folklorists who see so many similarities between Chinese tales and Western tales, will try to generate new hypotheses about the spread of folk tales. As long as we cannot establish the history of Chinese folk tales, such an enterprise should not be started. It is correct that Prof. Ting says the Chinese sources

in which folk tales in toto or in allusion could be found are so large that no single scholar in his whole lifetime can read all of them or even a considerable part of them (p. 14). But for some tales we already have some data for an occurrence prior to the last centuries. Ku Chieh-kang's study on the Meng Chiang Wife<sup>3</sup> is one such attempt to show the development of a famous story (not in the Index) from pre-Christian times to the present time. In the future more such studies will, I am sure, be written. Only then we can speculate whether a story may have originated in China and spread to the West or vice versa.

But there is another side to this problem. Prof. Ting says „International tale types located almost exclusively, and almost certainly originating, in East China are, so far as I am aware, limited in number“ (p. 17). I agree in general with the statement that the number of such stories is limited, but it seems to me to be questionable whether such stories originated in East China and not in West Asia.<sup>4</sup> There are not a few stories for which we have no indication of their occurrence in pre-19th century Chinese sources but which have great similarities to Aesop's fables, while others are similar to La Fontaine and to Andersen. As an example take Type nr. 1620, titled „The king's new clothers“. This is the title of nr. 1620 in the Aarne-Thompson Index.<sup>5</sup> Prof. Ting brings only one modern source and summarizes it as „Man satisfied only with fabric he cannot see“. The source (which is not accessible to me) has the title „Selected Satiric Jokes“ and was published in HongKong in 1961. The title does not say that all stories are stories from China, and numerous collections of jokes published in recent years bring jokes from many countries. The story is so similar to the Andersen story that I have strong doubts that it is not of Eastern Chinese origin.

This discussion is connected with a more important other question. The author has „tried consistently to adapt Chinese types to AT types rather than the other way around. This practice has led to the „placing of the same tale sometimes under four or five types and the same entry repeated as many times“ (p. 16). This may have made „the writing of this book a very long, arduous task“ (p. 16), but this is not the most important consequence. Of course, I admit that almost all folktale indices are made on the system developed by Aarne-Thompson. This practice may be suitable for indexing European and Near Eastern tales, but it is questionable whether it is the best way to indexing Chinese tales. I wish the author had discussed my *Types* in which I used a system especially designed for Chinese tales. The way which the author has chosen, was not only difficult for him, but also for his readers. I give one example: Type 8 has the title (which is usually the title given by AT or his successors) „The Fox Trades the Burned Bones of the Bear for Reindeer“. This is followed by „Man trades bones for meat“. The sources given are MCWH, May 1957, pp. 25–29 (1059+1536A+21); MTK pp. 218–220 (+327A+1536A+21). This means that in the first reference the Type 8 is only the second motif of a story which begins with type 1059 which is named „The Peasant Makes the Devil Sit on the Reversed Harrow“, and is followed by Type 1536A which is named „The Woman in the Chest“ and ends with Type 21, named „Eating his own Entrails“. I am unable to reconstruct the tale as given in the sources (which are not accessible to me at this time). As the fox and the reindeer are not mentioned in the *Index* on p. 285 and p. 290, I must assume that no animals are mentioned in the Chinese tale, though Type 8 is found under the animal tales (Type 1–299). The hero in this tale seems to be a woman, to judge from Type 1059, but in this tale (which occurs only once, namely in our example of Type 8) we find the Devil which is not a figure found in Chinese religion. The end of the story, Type 21, does not give any more clarification, on the contrary, the text added to the Type name is „Small animal tricks a predator into eating his own eyes or other parts of his body“, so that we have to assume

that the story after all still has something to do with animals. This is the consequence of the attempt of the author to fit Chinese tales into Aarne-Thomson's straight jacket. For European tales this arrangement would not be disastrous, because a folklorist of the old type, able to read at least,<sup>3</sup> usually more, European languages, could have consulted the quoted texts and would have been able to reconstruct the tale. But, for one, few folklorists can read Chinese and, therefore, have to rely fully upon N. T. Ting, and secondly, many of the Chinese books are very difficult, often impossible, to find in libraries, including libraries in China. Instead of cutting off a tale into small units, it would have been better to make a motif index, or to adopt the method I have used in my *Typen*, to report the tales as they belong together according to the Chinese text.

Another consequence of the Ting *Index* is that it cannot be used by persons who are interested in one detail, for instance in the role of the fox in Chinese folk tales: (a) sometimes the fox appears in the title of the Type, and it is unclear whether it appears also in the Chinese tale (Types 30 and 32 ). (b) Sometimes the fox appears, it seems, in the Chinese story, but the index under „Fox“ does not mention it, such as Types 5, 1, 41, 400D. So, the user has to go through the whole book and still cannot be sure that he has found all references which he may need. I could give similar references for other animals, for instance, the monkey (Type 41, 44, 66A), the rabbit (44), the lion (50C) and others. The rat is not in the Index (p. 290), but found in the title of Type 122B: the squirrel is not in the Index (but found in Type 75). I am unable to say whether these failures are the result of a poorly done index or of another cause, but a user should be warned not to rely upon the index.

In my mind the greatest weakness of the Ting *Type Index* is the omission of the place where a certain tale has been found and noted down. This seems to be a consequence of the author's belief that China with its present-day frontiers is a unit. He himself has briefly mentioned „Eastern Chinese tales“ (p. 17), and a tale in which the reindeer occurs cannot well be a tale from South China: if he had consulted my *Local Cultures of South and East China* (original German edition Peking 1943, English edition Leiden 1968) he would have seen that there are, even today, considerable differences in customs, beliefs, tales even in China proper, not to speak of such countries as Tibet or Sinkiang which are inhabited by people who differ in language, religion, and culture, Sinkiang even in physical type from the Chinese, though now infiltrated by Chinese colonists. Thus, the *Index* is not useable for any scholar who is interested, say, in the relation of tales from Mongolia to those of North China.

Prof. Ting states that „...the Tibetan tradition (of tales) is inseparable from the Han-Chinese tradition“ (p. 12), though he said, just before this sentence, that tales from „national minorities“ „are usually closer to the international types on the one hand, and undeniably connected with their Han-Chinese counterparts on the other“ (p. 11). There is only the question how this connection is: many Tibetan tales have their origin in India, stemming from collections like the Pancatantra; but many of these Indian collections were also translated into Chinese, as mentioned above. There is also the question of the definition of „Tibet“: parts of Eastern Tibet were integrated into China during the 20th century, and similarities of tales from Tibet proper and from Hsi-k'ang are not to be counted as similarities between Tibetan and Chinese tales.

A final, but important, point has to be made now. The tale texts published before 1937 were not made according to the standards which we demand today. Of course, there were no tape recorders available at that time. However, the published texts in only a very few

cases mention the name of the narrator, only the name of the publisher. I have the suspicion that in many cases the publisher published tales which he himself knew, so that publisher and narrator are identical. The language used in the publications is not the spoken language of the speaker but to some degree 'polished'. There was also a kind of censorship: stories which were regarded as directly or indirectly criticizing the government, and stories of a sexual character were not published. I know of a case in which a story which Chinese Muslims regarded as offensive brought on an attack of Muslims against the publisher who was induced to cut the offensive story out of his book. In texts published since the establishment of the People's Republic, we are often given the name or names of the narrator(s), but we have to keep in mind what Mao Tse-tung and before him Lenin have said about publications in general: any publication, especially in the social sciences and history, has to serve the aims and ideals of the revolution. Therefore, we find in a number of publications, especially of folk theatre plays but also in others, short notes indicating that certain episodes have been left out, that the end has been changed, that activities of deities have been left out (in fact, deities were often represented as stupid, and less effective than an ordinary farmer). We can see that stories in which persons belonging to the old upper class show these men in a negative light, while the peasants are shown as more intelligent than the educated men. Prof. Ting admits this in an open way by stating that „I can find but very few serious modifications of plots, for otherwise versions published in the 1950's and 1960's could not have been analyzed together with, and represented by the same code and numbers as versions published in the earlier period. Ideological trimmings are of course quite common...“ (p. 12). In my experience, the „trimmings“ are quite important, but even more important are the omissions of tales as well as the selection of tales for publication. Here, the user should use the Index with caution— though the user who does not read the Chinese texts will not be able to do so.

In general: I am sure that the *Index* will be used by many folklorists – and few of them will be able to use it critically. The sinologist should use it with greatest caution and always try to get at the original full text.

Wolfram Eberhard (Berkeley)

Notes:

- 1 W. EBERHARD, *Die chinesische Novelle des 17.–19. Jahrhunderts*, Artibus Asiae, Ascona 1948.
- 2 *Zum Problem der Transmission von Erzählungen* (not yet published); cf. W. EBERHARD, *Studies in Taiwanese Tales, Asian Folklore and Social Life Monographs*, Taipei 1970.
- 3 KU Chieh-kang, *Meng Chiang Nü*, Nat. Peking University, Peiping 1935.
- 4 cf. W. EBERHARD, *Studies in Chinese Folklore*, Bloomington 1970.
- 5 AARNE, Antti, *The Types of the Folktale* (Folklore Fellows Communications 184, 2. Ausgabe), Helsinki 1964.