

## THE PRINCE'S WINGS: POSSIBLE ORIGIN OF THE TALE TYPE AND ITS EARLY CHINESE VARIANTS

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### ABSTRACT

The article\* aims to clarify the relations between the early versions of tale type ATU 575. Examining the range of Chinese accounts concerning various wooden birds, the author concludes that two groups can be distinguished. The first consists of stories about flying wooden kite-like birds that are not used as vehicles, while in the second, we deal with wooden birds that can carry people. Records belonging to the second group and evidently having their origin in Indian and Central Asian folk tradition appear later in China. An attempt is made to restore possible outlines of the tale type's ancestral stories. The article states that the tale of an enamoured weaver in the *Panchatantra* evolves from the structure of such an ancestral story.

KEYWORDS: Buddhist tales • Chinese folklore • cross-cultural study • *Katthavāhana* • *Panchatantra* • *Taiping guangji*

### INTRODUCTION

The tale of the artful flying object, be it a wooden bird, mechanical wings, or just a suitcase used by a protagonist to ride through the air to a fair lady, has been classified in the ATU index as type 575 (Uther 2011). It features a craftsman constructing marvelous artefacts and a hero who obtains a flying object has an affair with a princess, and is then sentenced to death but escapes with his lover using this object. As a rule, the tale is

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traced back to the *Panchatantra* with its story about the enamoured weaver. In this story, the weaver, with the help of his friend, the carpenter, mounts the sacred bird Garuda's wooden effigy and pretends to be the great god Vishnu in order to marry a princess. This deception is not mandatory to the type although it occurs in many versions. The salt of the *Panchatantra* story is a string of deceits that finally come true: Vishnu himself covers lies told by the hero, and everybody lives happily ever after.

However, this is not the earliest occurrence of the tale type. Ji Xianlin (Ji 1958: 118) and Boris Riftin (1974: 81–83) had already pointed out perspicaciously that two Chinese texts from the Tang period<sup>1</sup> were at least connected with the *Panchatantra* tale. Ding Naitong<sup>2</sup> (Ding 1978: 106) in his Chinese tale type index cites the source identified by Ji (1958) as belonging to type ATU 575 and adds another Tang story, featuring only a flying wooden bird but no other elements of the tale type. Moreover, Liu Shouhua (Liu 2003: 362) had suggested that the Indian *Panchatantra* story could have Chinese origins. Later, he pointed out the problematic nature of directly deriving the Tang tales from the *Panchatantra* (Liu 2012: 221). The existing studies generally do not consider earlier mentions of tales about wooden birds as vehicles both in Indian and Chinese traditions; they also did not aim to restore the process of the development of the tale.

This article endeavours to answer questions raised by previous researchers and to clarify the relations between early versions of the tale. This is undertaken by tracing the ways in which it borrowed and evolved based on the broader basis of material. An attempt is made to discover the possible outlines of the tale type's ancestral stories.

#### TANG TALES FROM THE DING'S INDEX

In most Chinese tale type indices, the tale type with such a core is absent. It was only Ding, in his famous *Type Index of Chinese Folktales* (1978), who put two tales written during the end of the Tang period under type ATU 575 *The Prince's Wings* among other stories of much later fixation.<sup>3</sup> Both of those Tang tales had been included in the *Taiping Guangji* (hereafter TPGJ, 'Extensive Records of the Taiping Era', 978), an encyclopaedic collection of stories spanning more than 1,000 years edited by Li Fang (Li 2006). They are: *The Old Man from Xiangyang* (TPGJ volume 287 in Li 2006: 2286–2287)<sup>4</sup> and *Han Zhihe* (TPGJ volume 75 in Li 2006: 472).

The first story, *The Old Man from Xiangyang*, originally comes from the collection known as *Xiao Xiang lu*, ('Records from the Xiao and Xiang Regions'), now unfortunately lost. It was written approximately at the end of the 9th century (as to the dating of the story, see Li 2019: 33–35). It is a tale of a carpenter called Bing Hua. While lying drunk near the riverbank in Xiangyang, he was suddenly presented with a magic axe by a mysterious stranger, an old man. The donor warned him "not to burden himself with women". (Li 2006: 2286) Using the present, Bing produced all kinds of mechanically moving things ("if he wanted them to fly, they flew; if he wanted them to go, they went"). While working for a rich man in the Anlu region, Bing encountered his beautiful, widowed daughter and entered her chamber in the night, menacing her with death if she did not comply with his desires. Later, though, she became accustomed to him and the rendezvous continued. When the father wished to dismiss the carpenter, the latter proposed making two wooden cranes for him as a farewell gift. Here the author

remarked that the rich man approved the plan as he had heard about such things before. Bing told the rich man to fast until he added the finishing touch, that is, dotted the eyes (an allusion to a belief that dotting the eyes can enable the work of art to come to life). While the father was absent fasting, the carpenter and his beloved mounted the wooden cranes and escaped to Xiangyang, Bing's home city. The father asked the local magistrate to persecute the abductor. Eventually, the carpenter was captured and executed, and the cranes lost their ability to fly.

The second story, *Han Zhihe*, is much shorter. Derived from the collection of Daoist stories called *Xianzhuàn Shìyì* ('Lost and Found Biographies of Immortals'), also now lost, it was written by hagiographer Du Guangting (850–933) roughly at the same time. The hero, a skilled carpenter from Japan, called Han Zhihe, served in China as an imperial guard. He could make wooden phoenixes, cranes, ravens and magpies with an engine in their bellies so that they could fly to a height of 200 or 300 feet and descend only after flying 100 steps or so. He also made a mechanical bed with a moving wooden dragon hidden inside. Then he presented the emperor with live dancing lizards and received abundant gifts from the court, which he immediately gave away. In the end, the carpenter vanished. To be precise, the source of the story is the second part of *Duyang Zabian* ('Miscellaneous collection from Duyang' by Su E, from the second part of the 9th century): Du was good at writing digests of the tales that interested him without giving the slightest reference. The detail concerning wooden birds that Du had omitted was that they could move, eat, and drink as real birds do (Su 2000: 1385–1386).

If the first story can be viewed as close to the type ATU 575, the second one is quite different: the point of the tale is the master's impartiality to worldly possessions. His ability to construct moving wooden objects just illustrates the mysterious nature of the person. If we use Stith Thompson's (1989) motif-index here to find what this story has in common with classic versions of ATU 575, there will be F675 *Ingenious Carpenter* and D1620 *Magic Automata*, and that is it. Ding's (1978: 106) remark about *Han Zhihe* also reads: "artificial flying bird only".

*Han Zhihe* clearly cannot be classified as ATU 575 although it is still worth mentioning. The matter is that *The Old Man from Xiangyang* and *Han Zhihe* can be viewed as samples of two tale groups concerning wooden birds in China. Researchers studying the history of ATU 575 in China inevitably have to deal with both.

#### THE FIRST GROUP OF CHINESE WOODEN BIRD STORIES

One of those groups, the one to which *Han Zhihe* belongs, is significantly more ancient. It has its representatives in such texts as *Han Feizi* (3rd century BC) and *Mozi* (4th–2nd centuries BC). Those texts contain information about Lu Ban (also Gongshu Ban or Gongshu-zi) making a wooden bird. The stories of a craftsman building a wooden bird (be it a magpie, a hawk, or a pheasant) resurface in Chinese written tradition from time to time. There were even claims that they should be viewed as accurate records of the achievements of ancient Chinese science (Yan 2007: 273). Lu Ban here is a semi-legendary carpenter, an acquaintance of Mo Di (also Mozi fl. around 5th century BC, founder of the Mohist school and a proficient engineer), and his skill rival. When there are full stories and not just mentions of the extraordinary craft of Gongshu-zi, as a

rule, in the early stage, they are moralistic; Mohists, who valued usefulness above all, mocked the artisan making useless things. According to *Mozi* (volume XLIX, see Wu 1993: 738; see also Johnston 2010: 723), Gongshu-zi constructed a magpie from bamboo and wood that could stay in the air for three days, and Mozi told him that this trifle was futile and useless.

*Han Feizi* (volume 32), a Legalist book, then, states that Mozi himself constructed the bird, and it was a kite (or milvus). The construction took him three years, but the bird broke after flying for just one day; Mozi was remorseful and said that his work was worthless. (Wang 1998: 266–267)

After that, during the Han dynasty (202 BC – 220 AD), there are mentions of a wooden bird (a hawk) in *Huainan-zi* (2nd century BC; He 1998: 812) and in *Lunheng* (1st century, Huang 1990: 365, 918). Both texts suggest that such birds were made by Lu Ban and by Mozi. In *Lunheng*, the moralistic element is lost, and the motif of the wooden bird serves as evidence of the carpenters' skill.

The *Wenshi Zhuan* ('Record of the Scholars', 4th–5th centuries) collection is now lost, but it is cited in *Taiping yulan* (hereafter TPYL, 'Imperial Review of the Taiping Era'.<sup>5</sup> See TPYL volume 752 in Li 1960: 3339). There was a mention of great inventor Zhang Heng (78–139) making a flying wooden bird: "Heng once made a wooden bird, equipped it with feathery wings, put an engine in its belly, and it could fly for a few li [Chinese miles]". Earlier, *Lunheng's* author musing on the possibility of building a flying bird also suggested that such a construction could be propelled by a mechanism (Huang 1990: 365).

In the second half of the 5th century, in his *Shu yi ji* ('Records of Strange Things'), Ren Fang (see Ren 1962: 21, 460–508) stated:

Long ago, Lu Ban carved wood to make a crane. When it took off, it flew 700 li. Afterward, the crane was put on the western peak of the northern mountains. Han emperor Wu-di<sup>6</sup> ordered somebody to take it and bring it to him, and the crane flew over to the southern peak, which is also called Tianlaoshan. Often, when it is going to rain, the wooden crane flaps his wings as if willing to soar up.

For the first time the bird mentioned is a crane, a traditional vehicle of immortals, and assumes magic qualities.

Su's (and Du's) account of the skilful Japanese carpenter belongs to this group. Overall, those are stories of an artful carpenter, capable of making the flying wooden bird. These birds do not carry people. Their function is to demonstrate carpenters' skills. Additionally, stories told by Ren, Su, and Du suggest a hint of Taoist magic in the movements of wooden birds.

## THE SECOND GROUP OF CHINESE WOODEN BIRD STORIES

Tales in which wooden devices carry people can be put in the second group. In the 3rd century, there had already been accounts about wooden flying vehicles, but not birds. Zhang Hua (Zhang 2009), in his *Bowu Zhi* ('Records of Diverse Matters'), talked about a far western kingdom called Qigong where skilful people lived who made flying vehicles that moved using the force of the wind. Long ago, at the beginning of the Shang epoch (2nd millennium BC), they had flown to the realm of China. The first ruler of

Shang ordered them to break their air chariots. After ten years, they managed to return riding their vehicles with the eastern wind (Zhang 2009: 190; cited in TPGJ volume 482; Li 2006: 3967–3968). According to volume 783 of TPYL (Li 1960: 3470), the same story appeared in Later Han (25–220 AD) *Kuodi Tu*, now lost and written perhaps 50 years earlier than *Bowu Zhi*. The story was repeated in the already cited *Shu yi ji* (Ren 1962: 26). For a lengthy discussion of these vehicles, see Needham and Wang 1965: 570–574. A vivid and fanciful description of the Qigong land in the famous book by Edward Theodore Chalmers Werner (1922: 391) caught the attention of Thompson (1989), who introduced the motif of flying carts (F861.2.1) into his index.

Stories about flying wooden *birds* as vehicles are absent in known Chinese texts until the 5th century. In Liu Jingshu's (Liu 2009) *Yi Yuan* ('Garden of Marvels', early 5th century), we encounter a tale about king Anxi of Wei (d. 243 BC) who watched flying swans and said that he would wish to fly like a swan. One of his guests made a wooden swan and presented it to the king. The king in Mohist tune noticed that this thing was useless, and one who made such devices was a criminal. When the king wanted to punish the carpenter, the carpenter said: "The great king knows about the use of useful things and does not know about the use of useless" (chapter 4 of *Zhuangzi* in Wang 1954: 29). Then he left, riding through the air on the wooden swan (Liu 2009: 683; also cited in TPGJ volume 284 in Li 2006: 2262). In this first Chinese tale about a wooden bird that can be used as a vehicle, the author is playing with the motif of uselessness from the first group, combining it with the new plot of the carpenter escaping from an ungrateful king.

In the Tang period, and significantly earlier than *The Old Man from Xiangyang*, Zhang Zhuo (658–730) added a tale belonging to this group in his collection *Chaoye Qianzai* ('A Complete Collection [of News] from the Court and the Outskirts'). It is absent in the surviving text of *Chaoye Qianzai* (see Zhang 2000), and is known to us only because it was cited at length in Duan Chengshi's (Duan 2007) (d. 863) *Youyang Zazu* ('The Miscellaneous Morsels from Youyang'). Here is the summary:

Lu Ban was a resident of Dunhuang in Suzhou prefecture. The time of his life is uncertain. A skilled artisan, he worked in Liangzhou prefecture building a Buddhist temple. Then he made a wooden hawk, and whenever he pushed its switch peg three times, he could return home riding it. His wife became pregnant, and when her parents-in-law started to accuse her, she told them about her husband's visits. Afterward, Lu Ban's father secretly mounted the bird and pushed the switch peg about ten times so that it carried him far away, to the land of Wu. Frightened locals thought that it was some kind of evil magic and killed the old man. Lu Ban built a wooden hawk once more and went to look for his father. Realising that he had been murdered, Lu Ban, as revenge, constructed a wooden 'immortal', a statue whose hand was pointing to the south-east. After that, Wu suffered a drought for three years. When the people through divination methods knew that Lu Ban had caused the disaster, they presented him with money. Then Lu Ban cut off the wooden man's hand, and the same day a heavy rain befell the land. At the beginning of the Tang period, locals still prayed to the statue.

He adds: "At the time of th Six States,<sup>7</sup> Gongshu Ban had also made a wooden kite to spying on the Song state's fortress" (Duan 2007: 172; see also TPGJ volume 225 in Li 2006: 1729).

Two things in this remark are worth noting. First, it is evident that an ancient carpenter surnamed Gongshu and Lu Ban were not the same people to this author. During the Tang period Lu Ban already seemed a semi-god. He was credit as builder of many ancient buildings (Duan 2007: 172; also Li 2013: 137) and the gap between this image and the earthly, arrogant rival of Mozi was widening. The opinion, according to which Gongshu-zi and Lu Ban were two separate people, already existed at the beginning of the Tang period. The historian Yan Shigu (581–645), in his commentary to the *Han Shu* ('Book of Han', 1st century), wrote: "Some say that Ban here means *Lu Ban* and he is not the same person as Mr Gongshu; they both were highly skillful" (*Han Shu* 100, part 1 in Ban 1962: 4233).

Second, this is a case of the reimagination of the story of a useless wooden kite after the fashion of second group stories. It seems that the author could hardly mean a 'flying camera in drone-mode', spying on the fortress all by itself, so Gongshu probably had to ride it. Approximately at the same time, Yu Zhigu (Yu 1935: 23–24), in his collection *Zhugong Jiushi* ('Past of the Zhugong Palace'), unambiguously wrote: "Gongshu [...] also once made a wooden hawk and riding it spied on the Song state's fortress".

There are clues to the image of Lu Ban, who was not Gongshu-zi, in Zhang's (2009) text. First, he definitely lived before the Tang period because the author stated that local people in Wu land "still" prayed to the wooden statue at the beginning of Tang. Second, this Lu Ban was from Dunhuang (now in the north-west of China's Gansu province). Dunhuang, known in the West as Throana, was a multicultural hub on the intersection of several trade routes and a part of the Silk Road. Further, Lu Ban from *Chaoye Qianzai* was building a Buddhist temple in Liangzhou, another international trade hub some 700 km south-west from Dunhuang.<sup>8</sup> It is known that at the beginning of the Tang period, builders in Dunhuang had already perceived Lu Ban as a deity, praying to him during the roof-beam ceremony (Li 2013: 137). Both Dunhuang and Liangzhou were far away from the places where ancient Gongshu-zi lived, and in his lifetime (if he did exist) this region was on the outer border of the Chinese oecumene.

During the subsequent centuries, the image gradually evolved of a wooden crane as a talisman presumably capable of taking its owner to the sky (a hint of this is already visible in the tales belonging to the first group). Empress Wu Zetian, believing that her lover Zhang Changzong (d. 705) was the reincarnation of Daoist immortal and musician Prince Qiao,<sup>9</sup> gave him clothes made of feathers. He, playing a flute and riding a wooden crane, portrayed an immortal ascending to Heaven, as stated in *Jiu Tang shu* ('The Old Book of Tang' see volume 78 in Liu 1975: 2706). And if this still was close to a game, the following was not: according to the volume 132 of the same *Jiu Tang shu*, Li Baozhen (733–794), a distinguished general from a Parthian family whose dream was to become an immortal, while taking alchemical pills and waiting to be summoned to Heaven, practiced riding a wooden crane (Liu 1975: 3649). Moreover, according to *The Old Man from Xiangyang*, belief in flying wooden cranes became not uncommon (the rich man for whom Bing worked "had heard about such things before": Li 2006: 2286). As 10th-century *Guangling Yaoluan Zhi* ('Records of Sorcerers' Chaos in Guangling') relates, sorcerer Lü Yongzhi (d. 887) once told Gao Pian (821–887), military general and believer in Daoist magic arts, that they would shortly be summoned to the Celestial Court. Then the sorcerer ordered a big wooden crane with moving wings to be constructed. (Cited according to TPGJ volume 290 in Li 2006: 2309.)

So, in the group with flying wooden vehicles we have the legend of Qigong land, the story from *Yi Yuan* (see Liu 2009) and then the Tang tales *Lu Ban* and *The Old Man from Xiangyang*. The practice of making wooden cranes for ascension into Heaven seems to be directly connected with this group.

For the sake of accuracy, there is at least one relatively early Chinese story describing a flight by means of a device, listed under F1021.1 *Flight on Artificial Wings* by Thompson (1989). In his youth, legendary ruler Shun was driven to jump from the roof escaping from a fire using two big straw hats. It seems that this tale goes back at least to the 2nd–1st centuries BC: see *Shi ji* ('The Grand Scribe's Records' in Sima 1994: 12) and *Lie nü zhuan* ('Exemplary Women' in Behnke Kinney 2014: 2). Shun's story seems not to be connected to any of the other tales about the flying devices mentioned above. Apart from details, the hero's escape from imminent danger using two straw hats is a link in a chain of similar episodes and is by no means central to the plot.

#### THE CONNECTION OF TWO TANG STORIES WITH INDIAN LORE: FIRST SUGGESTIONS

During the second half of the last century, several scholars wrote about the links of both the Tang tales mentioned above – *The Old Man from Xiangyang* (from the lost collection *Xiao Xiang lu*) and *Lu Ban* (from the lost collection *Chaoye Qianzai*, and from the collection *Youyang Zazu*, see Duan 2007) to Indian tradition. The question of the parallels between Tang tales and Indian lore was raised for the first time by Chinese indologist Ji Xianlin (1911–2009).

First in the article "Indian Literature in China" (Ji 1958: 118) and then in his preface to the second edition of his translation of the *Panchatantra* (first published in 1964 and reproduced in Ji 2016), Ji found a close parallel in the tale of the weaver as Vishnu and the story of *The Old Man from Xiangyang*. In 1958 he unequivocally wrote: "The eighth tale in Book I of the *Pañcatantra* is very likely to be the origin of this story" (Ji 1958: 118); in 1964, he more reservedly stated that the Indian and Chinese tales "probably have the same source" (Ji 2016: 41). In both cases, he provides no arguments other than giving a broader perspective of Indian influence on Tang literature.

After that, Riftin (1974: 81–83) (1932–2012), who was acquainted with Ji's opinion, suggested the connection with Indian lore for both *Lu Ban* and *The Old Man from Xiangyang* in his article on typology and the interconnection of medieval literature traditions. Specifically, he stated that *Lu Ban* was a result of a combination of the Indian tale about the weaver as Vishnu and Chinese legends about Lu Ban, while *The Old Man from Xiangyang* was based on motifs derived from Indian lore (*ibid.*).<sup>10</sup>

Analyzing *The Old Man from Xiangyang*, Riftin assumed that the basic Indian story had two kernel motifs: that of the magic wooden bird as a vehicle and that of the deceit needed to be successful in love. He stated that the Chinese tale's fantastic colouring led the author to neglect the second motif and concentrate on the first. Then, he pointed out that details in *Lu Ban* such as the bird's switch peg and the connection of the flight to the romantic attachment of the hero are reliable evidence of the borrowing (they are also present in the story of the weaver as Vishnu) (*ibid.*: 83).

In 1981, Liu, answering Ji's hypothesis, suggested that the opposite might be true: Chinese lore could be the origin of the *Panchatantra* story. According to his proposition, the *Panchatantra* tale "takes its roots from the Chinese story about Lu Ban; during the Sui and Tang periods,<sup>11</sup> when Chinese and Indian Buddhist monks were in frequent contact, these stories spread to India and evolved into Indian tales" (Liu 2003: 382).

There is a difficulty suggesting that one or both Tang tales had been derived from an ancient *Panchatantra* version. Ji, who first noticed the connection between the story of the weaver as Vishnu and *The Old Man from Xiangyang*, had been working with the *Pūrṇabhadra* version, alias known as 'textus ornatior' of the *Panchatantra* (finished in 1199). The *Pūrṇabhadra* version is the only recension of the *Panchatantra* containing the tale of the weaver as Vishnu (Sternbach 1971: 65). We have no reason to maintain that this later recension reflects the same version of the story that made it to China not later than the beginning of the 8th century. Liu (2012: 221), in his new work on the wooden hawk, had noticed it too.

Liu's suggestion seems even more unlikely. The ancient Chinese stories about Lu Ban and his wooden bird, and, indeed, all the first group stories, as was demonstrated above, are tales of superior craftsmanship. In the earliest versions, their point invariably is a condemnation of the master's senseless efforts. Those wooden birds never carried people, and it is unclear why Indian Buddhists needed Chinese stories about Lu Ban when they had plenty of their own even before "the frequent contacts of Chinese and Indian Buddhist monks" (Liu 2003: 382). In the next section, there will be a brief review of Buddhist tales concerning wooden birds.

Unfortunately, in the context of the history of the two Tang stories, neither the legend of the Qigong people nor the tale from *Yi Yuan* (Liu 2009: 683) was considered before. Nevertheless, as I hope to show below, these stories resemble the interpretation of the wooden bird motif in Indian tradition. It seems appropriate to start from the earlier texts to understand more of the tale type's formative process.

## BUDDHIST TALES ABOUT WOODEN BIRDS

Unquestionably, *Lu Ban* and *The Old Man from Xiangyang* do contain borrowed motifs, and the reasons are as follows. In the first place, albeit the two tales were created much earlier, they do indeed resemble the story about the weaver, and the similarities in the plots and suspicious details like the switch-peg are all indisputable. Second, as we have just seen, virtually all known tales about wooden birds in Chinese tradition before the beginning of the 5th century do not suggest that such a bird can be used as a flying machine. Even considering the legend of Qigong air chariots, one must remember that it appears in China only in about the 3rd century, and its protagonists are explicitly non-Chinese.

Next, more than one Buddhist source contains the motif of a wooden bird vehicle made by a carpenter. Volume 10 of the *Saṅghabhedavastu* (2016),<sup>12</sup> a Buddhist treatise of uncertain date, has a story about a youth taught by his master to ride a wooden peacock who then used the peacock without his master's permission and died.

This text was translated into Chinese at the end of the 7th century by monk Yijing (635–713). Here is a summary. A young man from a village, whose father was an artisan

and died early, found himself a teacher in another place to learn the skills from him. After a while, the youth wanted to marry a girl from the faraway village. Her father agreed but told him that the marriage could not be contracted unless he came on a stipulated day. Then the teacher suggested that they go together on a wooden peacock. They arrived at the girl's village just in time, and the teacher, apprentice, and new bride together mounted the bird and came back home. The teacher left the device at the apprentice's house but told his mother not to let the young man ride it. Of course, the son wanted to ride the peacock once more and he persuaded his mother that the teacher was just jealous. When the mother gave him the bird, he mounted it, switched the machine on, and rode off. He reached the big sea. It was raining heavily and the ropes that kept the mechanism together rotted. The youth fell into the sea and drowned. (*Sanghabhedavastu* 2016; for a full English translation from Tibetan see Rockhill 1884: 108–109.)

This story's connection with the Tang novels had already been noticed (Wang and Liu 2009: 61; Lin 2016). The story seems to be alluded to also in the *Avadāna Anthology from Merv, Turkmenistan* (ca. 5th century): "One, who does not follow faithfully the words of those who desire [others'] welfare and a benevolent and compassionate one, is carried by a bird, made of wood. He is ignorant and does not listen to anybody." (Karashima and Vorobyova-Desyatovskaya 2015: 287–289)

In "Commentary to Dhammapada" (English translation in Burlingame 1921), ascribed to Buddhaghosa (5th century), another story features a wooden bird. Prince Bodhi wanted to kill a builder called Katthavāhana, who built a magnificent palace for him. His motive was to prevent the builder from creating another architectural masterpiece. After discovering this the builder constructed a Garuda bird in secret inside one of the palace rooms and then escaped with his wife and children on the wooden bird through the window. "And alighting in the Himālaya country, [he] created by magical power a city to dwell in" (ibid.: 349–350).

"Suttanipata Commentary" (composed after the 5th century; see Bodhi 2017) contains another legend about an artisan of the same name (Katthavāhana). When tired of the work in Benares, he, with his pupils, built a fleet of flying machines and left the city for the far away Himālaya country (Malalasekera 1937: 488; 1938: 316–317; Bodhi 2017: 1221–1223).

Therefore, the motif of the artisan making a wooden bird was quite popular in India around the time it was recorded in Chinese written sources. It seems to have rather a high valence: in the story of the wooden peacock from the *Sanghabhedavastu* (2016), it is combined, for example, with such motifs as a suitor test, an extraordinary effect of high flight and death for breaking tabu. In "Commentary to Dhammapada" (Burlingame 1921), this motif is found within a story with the leading topic "the king kills the architect after the completion of a great building so that he may never again build one so great" (W181.2 in Thompson 1989). The tale from "Suttanipata Commentary" (Bodhi 2017) deals with the rare topic of the carpenters' kingdom. The two last stories, from commentaries to "Dhammapada" and "Suttanipata", probably initially belonged to a circle of legends regarding the life of king Katthavāhana (also known from *Katthahari-Jataka* 'Jataka Tales', which gives an entirely different account of his origin; see Francis and Thomas 1916: 16–17). It is not impossible that the first story, about the unlucky young carpenter, was somehow connected to this circle too.

After all, there was at least one precedent in Greek mythology when the skilful craftsman Daedalus built a palace for a jealous king and then managed to flee from his prison using artificial wings, on the way losing his son. The latter broke a taboo and, as a result, fell into the sea. I shall not speculate about whether there is a link between Greek and Indian tales; in any case, it is good evidence of the possibility of such a motif combination.

On the whole, pre-Buddhist China did not have any notion of people-carrying flying wooden devices. When they first appear in 3rd century, they are not bird-shaped. The legend of Qigong people reminds strongly of Katthavāhana's fleet of flying chariots. If it did not come from the same root, then in all probability from a related oral tradition. Tale from *Yi Yuan* (Liu 2009) includes the motif of "Escape by flying through the air" (D2165.1 in Thompson 1989). It plays a crucial role in the Qigong people's legend and the fragment from the "Commentary to Dhammapada" (Burlingame 1921). The central episode always has a connection to artisans escaping through the air against the wishes of a ruler. As stories constructed around such an event are absent in earlier Chinese literature, there is a high likelihood of their coming to China from outside, although not necessarily straight from India, they could be borrowed from any of the traditions on the road from India. The mechanism of borrowing was neither inevitably connected with written sources nor necessarily even Buddhist. Both the tale of the Qigong people and the tale from *Yi Yuan* (Liu 2009) are by no means direct borrowing; they were 'sinicised': the first includes details concerning Chinese deep antiquity, the second in essence is a work of authorship, built upon elements of lore and literary tradition, and is set in China in the 3rd century BC.

Be that as it may, neither of the Buddhist parables mentioned above can be validated as belonging to the ATU tale type 575. They are much shorter and less complicated and lack the specific combination of motifs. The next section will show what connection they could have with this tale type by comparing the two Tang stories.

## RESTORING THE ANCESTRAL STORIES

Among the Buddhist tales listed above, one seems to be especially close to both *Lu Ban* and *The Old Man from Xiangyang*: the story from the *Sanghabhedavastu* (2016) about the wooden peacock. In all three stories, there are:

- a) two male protagonists,
- b) a flight on a wooden bird to a woman and/or with a woman,
- c) the death of one of the protagonists because of taboo violation or misuse of the device.

Table 1.

<i>Sanghabhedavastu 10</i>	<i>Chaoye Qianzai</i>	<i>Xiao Xiang lu</i>
The apprentice and his teacher	Lu Ban and his father	Mysterious old man and carpenter Bing Hua
The flight on the wooden peacock to the girl's house and back to the apprentice's house with a bride	Lu Ban repeatedly flies on the back of a wooden hawk to his wife and back to work	Bing elopes with a girl on two wooden cranes
The teacher tells the apprentice's mother not to let him ride the bird, but the youth insists	Lu Ban's father, not instructed how to operate a switch-peg, unauthorised flight to faraway Wu land	Old master tells Bing "not to burden himself with women", but Bing still starts an affair
He mounts the peacock, flies over the sea and falls to his death	Local people beat him to death	Bing is flogged to his death
The machine is broken	[wooden hawk probably destroyed?]	The cranes lose the ability to fly

However, this table shows that dissimilarities in the three stories are conspicuous. We are dealing with two separate variants. Moreover, the story from the *Sanghabhedavastu* (2016) cannot be an immediate source of either Chinese tale. For example, in *Lu Ban*, taboo is violated by the father, not by a son or an apprentice; the subplot of Lu Ban's revenge is absent in the Indian story, as is the essential motif of impregnation by a faraway husband. As to *The Old Man from Xiangyang*, everything is even more complicated.

Here we must consider the share of the author's reworking in the two Chinese variants. Both *Chaoye Qianzai* and *Youyang Zazu* (Duan 2007), collections that included the *Lu Ban* story, are full of documental notes and direct records of the strange events written probably close to the oral origin. However, with *Xiao Xiang lu*, the part of which was *The Old Man from Xiangyang* it is essential to remember that overall, in this book, the role of the author's imagination is crucial. In *The Old Man from Xiangyang*, the author gives the original plot, whatever it might be, a Daoist flavour: the taboo concerns women (a topic repeatedly used in the collection); carpenter Bing and his beloved fly away on two wooden cranes, which is mocking depiction of a pair of Daoist immortals, typically riding two cranes (or two mythic birds called *luan*, for some examples see Hargett 1989: 253–254); or possibly, even an allusion to Cao Tang's (1993: 2109) (9th century) ironic poetic lines about the unsuccessful pursuit of immortality: "Two cranes return from the earthly world, nobody is riding them".

Keeping this in mind, one can imagine a cluster of oral and written stories with initial conflict and/or plot tension involving two generations of artisans. Such a cluster could contain elements of creating a wooden bird, riding it to get to a beloved woman or escape with her, violation of taboo, and a tragic end that would be quite natural in these circumstances. It was probably initially connected to a larger circle of legends regarding the life of king Katthavāhana. The structure of the cluster seems rather loose and allows multiple variations. According to data provided by the three texts, one can suggest that the active circulation of such stories can be estimated from at least the 6th to 10th centuries. If we count *Avadāna Anthology from Merv* (Karashima and Vorobyova-

Desyatovskaya 2015), then the earliest date would be the 5th century. The geographical scope goes from North India and Central Asia to Hubei.

This cluster in high probability was the origin of the renowned tale about Vishnu as weaver in *Pūrṇabhadra's* version of the *Panchatantra*. If so, then the story's evolution follows the general desire for a happy ending. The tale is remodelled after this logic, and the wise craftsman sometimes becomes an evil magician. His rash companion from the tragic Icarus-like figure becomes a brave and adventurous hero. In the tale from *Panchatantra*, the motif of conflict or competition between the two artisans is destroyed, and the two craftsmen appear as friends.

#### THE MOTIF OF SEDUCTION BY POSING AS A GOD

Accepting that the tale about Vishnu as weaver is a development of an original story that we have just hypothetically reconstructed, one finds an essential addition in the plot that is absent in earlier versions. It is the motif of *Seduction by posing as a god* (K1315.1 according to Thompson 1989). Karel Horálek (1984: 1359), in his article on ATU 575, states that it is typical for the extended version of the tale. We can find nothing like this in early versions, neither in the *Sanghabhedavastu* (2016) nor in *Chaoye Qianzai* or *The Old Man from Xiangyang*.

However, it must be noted that the tale about Lu Ban in *Chaoye Qianzai* (7th–8th centuries) seems to have some precursors of such a possibility. As stated above, in Tang times, Lu Ban had been deemed a semi-god, and the builders in western regions of western China offered him sacrifices during the roof-beam ceremony. His magical visits can then be interpreted as a transformation of K1301 (*Mortal woman seduced by a god* according to Thompson 1989). Sergey Neklyudov has pointed out (2011: 25) that the tale can be viewed as a “novelization of the mythological plot, in which heavenly god flew on a bird to date an earthly woman”.

The most probably explanation is that somewhere on its way through Central Asia, the sad legend of the carpenter (who broke the taboo and rode the prohibited wooden bird) had been combined with an ancient myth of a god flying to his earthly lover. After this, as the story was changing to an adventurous tale with a happy ending simultaneously losing moralistic elements, the K1301 motif was replaced by K1315.1. This process could influence the emergence of the story from the *Panchatantra textus ornatiore*.

The motif of *Seduction by posing as a god* (K1315.1) had been widely known before it found its way to ATU 575. At the beginning of the “Alexander Romance” by Pseudo-Calisthenes, Nectanebus becomes Alexander the Great's father persuading queen Olympias that he was the god Ammon (Stoneman 1991: 13–22). The book was translated into many languages, including Arabic, Syriac, Hebrew, and Persian. In all probability, this story has an Egyptian origin (Jasnow 1997: 97). In the *Antiquities of the Jews* (Flavius 1850: 392–393), pious Paulina is seduced by a youth posing as Anubis. In the second novella of the fourth day of *Decameron*, by Boccaccio (1956: 333–343), written in the 14th century under the influence of both *Antiquities of the Jews* and “Alexander Romance” (Radcliff-Umstead 1968: 175–176), a monk disguises himself as angel Gabriel to seduce a naïve lady. Hans-Jörg Uther (2011: 344) marks this last story as an “early European literary version” of tale type ATU 575, although in the strict sense it corresponds only to part of the extended version of this tale type.

It seems that this motif became known in China during the Tang period, and that it has no connection with the conception of a hero, as in "Antiquities of the Jews". One can find an example of its usage in the plot of a tale in Dai Fu's (1992) *Guang yi ji* ('Wide World of Marvels', 8th century). The tale can probably be viewed as distantly related to ATU 562 (*The Spirit in the Blue Light*). Its protagonist, with the help of a grateful dead person, manages to spend several nights with a woman with whom he is enamoured. (Dai 1992: 99–100; also in TPGJ volume 336 in Li 2006: 2667–2668; see also Dudbridge 2002: 199). She is convinced that she is in paradise, her lover is a deity, and the grateful dead is an angel (strictly speaking, *tian shi*, that is, 'Heaven's messenger'). However, we cannot make assumptions about whether there was a Tang story, written or otherwise, combining the bulk of ATU 575 with K1315.1.

## CONCLUSION

Among two groups of Chinese tales concerning wooden birds, the first, dealing with the birds that do not carry people, is by far more ancient. It goes back to pre-imperial times (i.e., the 3rd century BC or earlier) and is often connected with the names of Gongshu-zi and/or Mozi, bearing a strong moral flavour. Gradually, the tales about wooden birds start to have an association with the Daoist practice of immortality. The tales in which the devices carry people constitute the second group of Chinese wooden bird stories. The earliest mentions of such vehicles, though not bird-shaped, are found in the 3rd-century texts about ingenious Qigong people. The 5th century saw the first tale of a wooden bird carrying a person. Like the first, this group acquires a connection with the image of the Daoist immortal at some stage. In the Tang period we have at least two good examples of tales close to type ATU 575: the story about Lu Ban and his father from *Chaoye Qianzai* and *The Old Man from Xiangyang*. In both, the plot has an additional romantic element, which, along with a general outline and structure, allows us to classify them as early variants of ATU 575.

As mentioned before, during the second half of the 20th century there were some suggestions about the *Panchatantra* story about a weaver being the source of both Chinese tales (or vice versa). When a Chinese origin of the Indian tale is improbable, a direct borrowing from the *Panchatantra* tale in China is also not possible. The two Tang tales do contain borrowed motifs and were evidently influenced not by a single tale, but by a group of tales from a circle of legends concerning king Katthavāhana. Considering the significant difference between the two Chinese tales, it is probably safe to suppose the simultaneous existence of more than one version of the Indian legend, perhaps coming to China through Central Asian mediation.

On the basis of two Chinese variants and the Buddhist tale about the wooden peacock, considering all the collateral evidence, the ancestral story of tale type ATU 575 can be loosely recreated: a plot with a tragic end, combining two essential topics of the succession of artisan skills and of using a mechanical flying device during a romance, with two male protagonists, one of whom dies as a result of violating a taboo or misusing the device.

## NOTES

- 1 The Tang dynasty ruled in China during the period 618–907.
- 2 Also Nai-tung Ting (1915–1989).
- 3 These later stories are mainly Tibetan.
- 4 In the Index mistakenly volume 387.
- 5 The Taiping era, i.e. the period of Taiping Xingguo's reign (976–984).
- 6 The period of Wu-di's reign was 140–87 BC.
- 7 Here the Warring States are meant, 5th–3rd centuries BC.
- 8 When Lu Ban's father pushed a switch-peg ten times instead of three, he accordingly flew to Wu land, which is more than 2,000 km south-west of Dunhuang, which is mathematically understandable.
- 9 On the immortal Prince Qiao and his connection with cranes see 2nd century *Lie xian zhuan* 'Biographies of Immortals' (see Qiu 1996: 39–40); also Sterckx 2002: 185.
- 10 Lin Jifu (Lin 2016: 210) supposed that *The Old Man from Xiangyang* combined the Indian *Panchatantra* tale with some "Chinese folk legend"; he simultaneously cited Rifting 1974 about the origin of the Lu Ban tale.
- 11 The Sui and Tang periods together lasted from the end of the 6th century to the beginning of the 10th century.
- 12 *The Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādin*, in Chinese *Genben shuo yiqie youbu pinaiye poseng shi*.

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