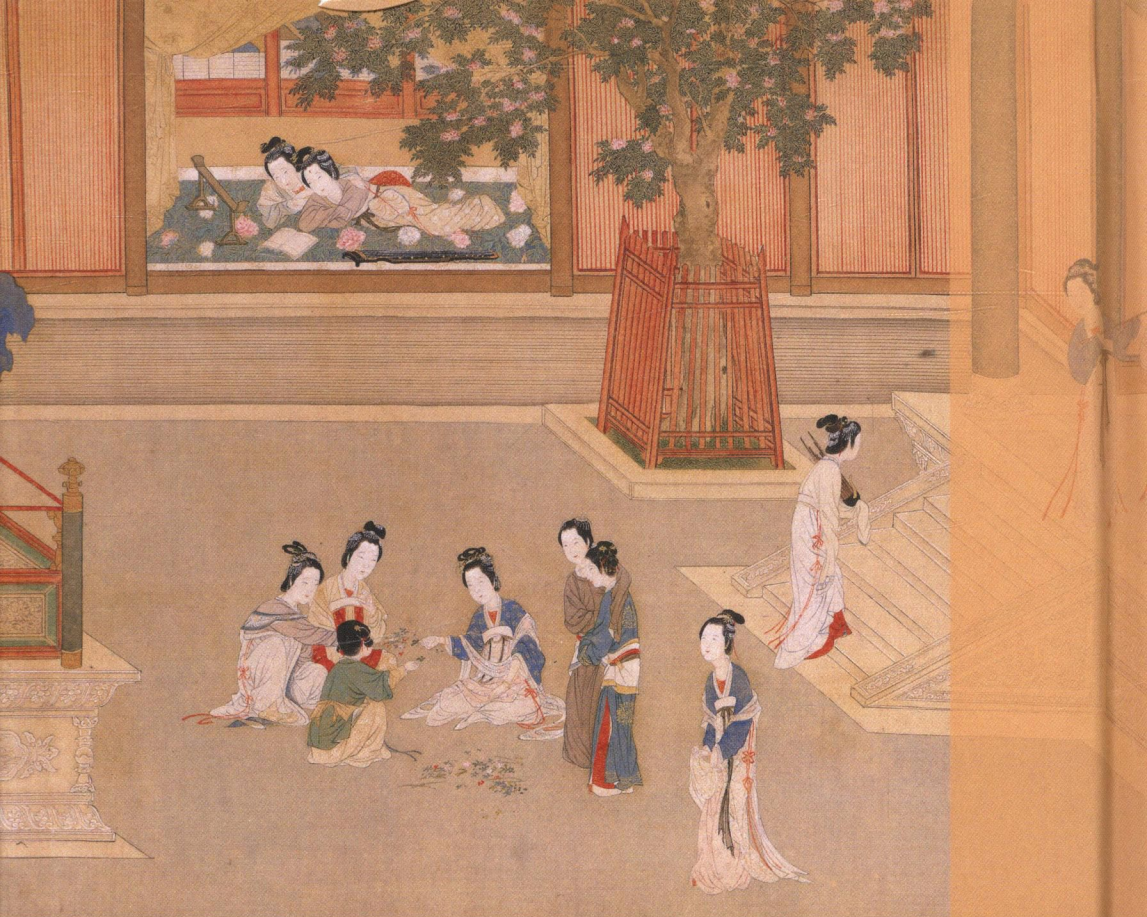




Zhenjun Zhang • Jing Wang

SONG DYNASTY TALES

A Guided Reader



SONG DYNASTY TALES

Together with the noted Tang dynasty tales, Song dynasty tales have long been highly valued and widely read in the Chinese world. As the first English translations of a selected collection of 12 Song dynasty tales, this book opens a window into the world of literature, culture, and the colorful lives of the royal house and common people in China during the 10th–13th centuries. In addition to the translation and the meticulous annotations, it offers a general introduction as well as commentaries on each tale.

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This volume is dedicated to
our teacher
William H Nienhauser, Jr.

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Zhenjun Zhang
9 September 2016

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Jing Wang
9 September 2016

Terms Regarding Weights and Measures

Dou 斗, a decaliter

Hu 斛, bushel, 10 *dou* before the Tang dynasty; 5 *dou* since the
Song dynasty

Sheng 升, pint, 1/10 of *dou*

Jin 斤, catty, half a kilogram

Liang 兩, 1/10 of *jin*

Dan 石, bushel, 10 *dou*

Yi 鎰, 24 *liang*

Chi 尺, foot

Cun 寸, inch, 1/10 *chi*

Duan 端, 20 *chi*

Fen 分, 1/10 *cun*

Li 里, half a kilometer, or approximately one-third of a mile

Zhang 丈, pole, 10 *chi*, approximately 3 1/3 meters

Pi 匹, bolt [of silk cloth]

Introduction

The period of the Tang 唐 (618–907) and Song 宋 (960–1279) dynasties marks the Golden Age in the 3000-year history of Chinese civilization. Besides economic prosperity and advances in business, Chinese arts and culture thrived during this period. In the realm of literature, Tang poetry and Song lyrics shine through the ages as the epitome of poetry and lyrics; they are the literary peaks of their respective eras and define the artistic heights ascended in each dynasty. As the substantial achievement of early classical fiction, the *chuanqi* 傳奇, literally “transmission of marvels” but widely accepted as “tales” in the West,¹ written during the Tang and Song have been repeatedly compared and mentioned together; in other words, the Tang and the Song share the fame of their tales.

First appearing in the Tang, the *chuanqi* is a much more advanced genre compared with the Six dynasties 六朝 (220–589) *zhiguai* 志怪, or “account of anomalies,”² though both genres

¹ Cf. William H Nienhauser, Jr., “Introduction: Notes for a History of the Translation of Tang Tales,” in his *Tang Dynasty Tales: A Guided Reader* (Singapore: World Scientific, 2010), p. xiii.

² Tales of the Six Dynasties are traditionally classified into two different categories or genres: *zhiguai* and *zhiren* 志人. As Kenneth DeWoskin puts it, *zhiguai* is the generic name for collections of brief prose entries, primarily but not exclusively narrative in nature, that discuss out-of-the-ordinary people and events (see the entry by Kenneth

belong to classical Chinese tales. Regarding the differences between these two genres, Lu Xun 魯迅 (1881–1936) says:

Fiction, like poetry, underwent radical changes in the Tang dynasty. Though tales were still written about marvels and strange phenomena, the plots became more elaborate and the language more polished. Compared with the tales of the Six Dynasties, which give the bare outlines of stories, there was a marked advance. Another and more significant fact was that by this time writers were consciously writing fiction.

小說亦如詩，至唐代而一變，雖尚不離於搜奇記逸，然敘述婉轉，文辭華豔，與六朝之粗陳梗概者較，演進之跡甚明，而尤顯者乃在是時則始有意為小說。³

As a more elaborate new genre as well as the earliest “consciously” created Chinese fiction, the *chuanqi* boomed during the Tang dynasty. Numerous brilliant tales were written by a multitude of writers, and many tale collections emerged.⁴

Although the *huaben* 話本 (storytellers’ script) is considered the representative fictional writing of the Song,⁵

DeWoskin on “*Chih-kuai*” in William H. Nienhauser, Jr., ed., *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*, 2nd ed. [Taipei: SMC Publishing Inc., 1987], p. 280). On the other hand, *zhiren* works focus mainly on the words and actions of real people. These two genres are often considered the earliest forms of Chinese fictional narrative literature.

³ Lu Xun 魯迅, *Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilue* 中國小說史略 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1973), p. 54; Yang Hsian-Yi and Gladys Yang, trans., *A Brief History of Chinese Fiction* (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1964), p. 85.

⁴ Cf. Li Jianguo 李劍國, *Tang Wudai zhiguai chuanqi xulu* 唐五代志怪傳奇敘錄 (Tianjin: Nankai daxue chubanshe, 1998).

⁵ *Huaben* is the earliest form of the vernacular Chinese short story. It has greatly influenced traditional Chinese novels, the chapter-divided novels in the Ming and Qing dynasties.

classical language tales also flourished. According to Li Jianguo's 李劍國 observations, extant tale collections numbered more than two hundred, equivalent to that of the Tang.⁶ The population of Song enjoyed reading tales and the compilation of the *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (Extensive Recordings from the Taiping Reign Period) amplified the waves of this pastime, adding to the billows of the trend. In addition to its widespread popularity, Song tales also cannot be overlooked as an important link between Tang and Ming (1368–1644) tales.

I. Previous Views on Song Dynasty Tales

Some scholars from the Ming dynasty believed that “Song dynasty tales are not as good as Tang tales 宋人小說不及唐人。”⁷ The following commentary on Tang and Song tales by Hu Yinglin 胡應麟 (1551–1602) is most famous and influential:

Tang and earlier fiction mostly narrate fictional matters and their writings are elegant and polished; but the fiction since the Song mostly talks about real events and especially lacks literary elegance.

小說，唐人以前記述多虛，而藻繪可觀；宋人以後論次多實，而采艷殊乏。⁸

In terms of beauty in writing, Hu Yinglin considers Song tales to be inferior to Tang tales. Their differentiating feature, “mostly narrate fictional matters” and “mostly talk about real events,” may be understood as the difference between “imaginary” and “realistic.”

⁶ Li Jianguo, “Preface” in his *Songdai zhiguai chuanqi xulu* 宋代志怪傳奇敘錄 (Tianjin: Nankai daxue chubanshe, 1997), pp. 1–20.

⁷ Volume 71 “Xiaoshuo” 小說 in Yang Shen 楊慎 (1488–1559), *Sheng'an quanji* 昇庵全集. Cited from Li Jianguo, “Preface” in his *Songdai zhiguai chuanqi xulu*, p. 1.

⁸ Hu Yinglin 胡應麟, *Shaoshi shanfang bicong* 少室山房筆叢 (Taipei: Shijie shuju, 1963), 29: 377.

As the forerunner of ancient fiction studies in modern China, Lu Xun compiled not only the *Guxiaoshuo gouchen* 古小說鉤沉 (Recollected Old Stories) but also the *Tang Song chuanqi ji* 唐宋傳奇集 (A Collection of Tang and Song Dynasties Tales); both are important contributions to the field. However, he selected only 9 Song tales for Chapters 7 and 8 in his collection while including 32 Tang tales in Chapters 1 to 5 (the dates of the 6 pieces in Chapter 6 are unclear).⁹ Similar to Hu Yinglin, Lu Xun also undervalues Song tales:

The tales of the supernatural by Song dynasty scholars were plain and solid and lack literary elegance, while their longer prose romances usually avoided contemporary topics and dealt with the past; they were neither good imitations of earlier works nor yet original tales.

宋一代之文人之為志怪，既平實而乏文采，其傳奇，又多托往事而避近聞，擬古且遠不逮，更無獨創之可言矣。¹⁰

Song writers loved admonition and moral teachings, they collected materials in real life and stuck to them, so the charm of thought flying and moving cannot be expected. Consequently, the life of the *chuanqi* was terminated at that time.

宋好勸懲，摭實而泥，飛動之致，渺不可期。傳奇命脈，至斯以絕。¹¹

Lu Xun's comments above contain some insightful ideas. He concludes, for example, that Song tales are "plain and solid" 平實

⁹ See Lu Xun, ed., *Tang Song chuanqi ji* (Ji'nan: Qi Lu shushe, 1997). This collection was first published in 1927 by Beixin shuju, then republished by Shanghai Lianhua shuju (1934) and Wenxue guji kanxingshe (1956).

¹⁰ Lu Xun, *Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilue*, 71; the translation is revised from Yang Hsian-Yi and Gladys Yang, trans., *A Brief History of Chinese Fiction*, p. 139.

¹¹ Lu Xun, "Xuli" 序例 in his *Tang Song chuanqi ji*, p. 2.