



THE MARRIAGE OF MISS MOUSE



SINOLINGUA

老鼠嫁女

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老鼠嫁女

“老鼠嫁女”是中国家喻户晓的民间故事。大意是这样的：老鼠一家常年住在阴暗的墙洞里，过着担惊受怕的日子。为了摆脱这种生活，年迈的父母准备为女儿选择一个有权有势的女婿。它们首先想到了太阳，因为太阳照亮四方，万物生长都离不开它，所以便前来说亲。太阳听了以后忙说：“我虽然光照四方，但乌云一来便把我遮住了，我不如乌云，还是去找乌云吧。”老鼠又去找乌云，乌云连连摇头道：“虽然我能挡住太阳的光芒，但大风一吹，就把我吹散了，还是去找大风吧。”老鼠又去找大风，大风说：“我也不行，遇到墙一挡，我就走不通了。”老鼠又去找墙，墙说：“我虽然能挡住大风，但老鼠一打洞我就垮了。”老鼠找了一圈又找到了自己，不过这一圈没有白跑，老鼠从中得到一个启发：太阳怕乌云；乌云怕大风；大风怕墙；墙怕老鼠，那么老鼠最怕谁呢？猛然想到了老鼠的天敌——猫。老鼠全家都为这个高妙的选择而高兴。心想，如果老鼠和猫结了亲，还用怕谁呢！于是，便去向猫提亲，猫一听要做老鼠的新郎，便很爽快地答应了。就这样，老鼠全家忙嫁妆，择定吉日过门。新婚这天，一群老鼠吹吹打打，用花轿抬着新娘进了猫家，新娘一入洞房就没有再出来。到了回门的日子，老鼠父母不见女儿女婿回家，便去猫家探望，猫告诉他们：“因为怕别人欺负新娘，就把她放在肚子里保护起来了。”老鼠

父母一听，吓得抱头便跑。

“老鼠嫁女”这个有趣的民间故事，虽不见于古籍记载，但在民间却广泛流传。其内容因地而异。有的地方叫《老鼠嫁女》，有的地方叫《老鼠娶亲》。据《延绥镇志》记载：“十日（新正）名老鼠嫁女，是夜家人灭烛早寝，恐惊之也。”这一夜，老人们都催孩子们早上床睡觉，并提醒孩子们把鞋子放好，以防被老鼠偷去做花轿，还要在屋角撒盐和米送给老鼠，俗名“老鼠分钱”。孩子们却总是不肯早睡，都想亲眼看看老鼠娶亲的热烈场面。

关于“老鼠嫁女”的“吉日”，由于地域风俗不同，时间也不同。苏州卖《老鼠嫁女》年画的人唱道：“年三十夜里闹嘈嘈，老鼠娶亲真热闹。”北京地区则有“十七、十八，耗子成家”的说法。山东高密一带则说“正月初七为老鼠嫁女日”。陕西延绥则为“新正十日”。还有民谣称：“初一场，初二场，初三老鼠娶新娘。”从各地民间传说来看，老鼠嫁女的“吉日”，从腊月到正月，差不多有十几个日子。尽管娶亲日期不同，但内容上几乎大同小异，都是把老鼠拟人化，按照人间结婚仪仗进行排列，这在民间木版年画中可以看到。

中国木版年画已有上千年历史。据北宋孟元老《东京梦华录》记载，当时年节前的开封市面上多有卖年画的。后来江苏的桃花坞、天津的杨柳青、山东的潍县等逐

渐形成中国印刷出版年画的中心。在各地出版的年画中,几乎都有《老鼠嫁女》的故事。鲁迅先生在回忆童年生活时记述说:“我的床前就贴着两张花纸,一是‘八戒招赘’满纸长嘴大耳,我以为不甚雅观;别的一张‘老鼠成亲’却可爱,自新郎、新娘以至傣相,宾客、执事,没有一个不是尖腮细腿、象煞读书人的,但穿的都是红衫绿裤。”木版年画除了各种鼠形外,还刻有少许文字。山东平度的一幅木版年画上刻的文字是:“老鼠本姓强,家住在仓房;择定娶亲日,假伴装新郎”。山东潍县的年画题句是:“一伙小老鼠,作怪成了精;猫王心生气,连皮一口吞。”陕西凤翔县年画上的文字为:“佳期百日庆回门,胆大老鼠来迎婚;三遇狸猫山后立,一口吞去命归阴。”

民间剪纸表现“老鼠嫁女”的内容,和木版年画一样

有着悠久的历史,而且场面宏大,往往有几百甚至上千只老鼠。千姿百态的老鼠各司其职,前呼后拥,浩浩荡荡。完全依据各种民间传说和传统结婚仪式,将老鼠嫁女的宏大场面作以叙述。从鼠打灯笼开始,到鼠官压阵为止,中间内容有:鸣锣开道、旗牌伞扇、锣鼓花轿、骑马伴郎、陪送嫁妆、车队傣相、娘家客人,嫁女队伍过山梁,走小桥,肩抬车运一派繁忙。

在民间“老鼠嫁女”除了用木版年画和剪纸表现以外,还有以泥、布玩具及皮影来表现的。到了现代,“老鼠嫁女”还被搬上了银幕和屏幕。多少年来,“老鼠嫁女”这一民间传说,既包含着人们化灾为吉的传统思想,同时又为儿童的生活增添了无穷的乐趣。

THE MARRIAGE OF MISS MOUSE

The story of *The Marriage of Miss Mouse* is based on "The Mouse Marrying Off His Daughter", a folktale well-known in most Chinese households. The original story is as follows: The aging Mouse lives with his family in a dark, dismal hole in the corner of a wall and leads a frightened and worried life all the year round. The Mouse and his wife, in order to better their life, plan to marry their daughter to someone powerful and influential. They first settle on the Sun, who sheds light on the universe and on whom all things on earth depend for their growth. When they broach the matter to the Sun, he answers: "Although I shed light on the universe, when the Black Cloud comes he obstructs me. The Black Cloud is more powerful than I. You'd better go to him." When the Mouse approaches the Black Cloud, the Black Cloud shakes his head vigorously. "Although I can obstruct the brilliance of the Sun, the Wind always scatters me. You'd better go to him." So the Mouse seeks out the Wind, who replies, "I'm no good. When a Wall blocks my way, I can't go anywhere." Next the Mouse approaches the Wall and is told: "Although I can block the path of the Wind, I am prone to crumble when the Mouse makes holes in me." So the Mouse's excursion brings him back to himself. Nevertheless, the Mouse's efforts are not wasted. He is enlightened by what he has found out: The Sun fears the Cloud, the Cloud fears the Wind, the Wind fears the Wall, the Wall fears the Mouse. Who, then, does the Mouse fear?

The Cat, the Mouse's natural enemy, suddenly comes to his mind! The entire family is very happy with this wonderful choice. Think of it, if the Mouse were to be linked in marriage with the Cat, then, from that time on, whom would he fear? Therefore, the Mouse approaches the Cat and proposes the Cat marry his daughter. The Cat, upon hearing the proposal of marriage to a Mouse, agrees readily. So the Mouse and his household immediately busy themselves preparing their daughter's dowry and choose an auspicious day for the wedding. On the day of the wedding, a group of mice, preceded by a band, carry the bride in a sedan chair to the Cat's home. Once the bride enters her bridal chamber, the mice never set eyes on her again. Because their daughter and son-in-law do not come calling on the day the bride is supposed to visit her parents, the Mouse and his wife go to visit the young couple. But the Cat tells them, "To protect my wife from possible bullies, I have put her in safekeeping in my stomach." Taken aback, the Mouse and his wife scurry away in fright.

This interesting story, although not recorded in the classics, is extremely popular throughout China. Its title and content differ from place to place. In some areas, it is called "The Mouse Marrying Off His Daughter"; in others, "The Mouse Taking a Wife". According to the "Annals of Yansui Town": "On the tenth day of the first lunar month, the Mouse marries off his daughter. On that night,

they holler: "On the seventeenth and the eighteenth of the first lunar month, the Mouse gets married." In the vicinity of Gaomi, Shandong Province, they say: "On the seventh day of the first lunar month, the Mouse marries off his daughter." In Yansui, Shaanxi Province, it is: "On the tenth day of the first lunar month." A folk song puts it this way: "On the first day, on the second day and on the third, the Mouse marries." So the Mouse can have more than ten wedding days between the last month of one lunar year and the first month of the next. The dates may differ, but there are few discrepancies in the contents of the stories. The mice are always anthropomorphized, and the wedding equipage is similar to that of human beings. This can be seen in the wood-block New Year's posters.

Chinese wood-block New Year's posters have a history of over a thousand years. According to the Reminiscences of the Eastern Capital by Meng Yuanlao of the Northern Song Dynasty, in his time numerous New Year's posters were sold in the city of Kaifeng. Later, the Daohuawa area of the city of Suzhou, the Yangliuqing section of the city of Tianjin and Weixian County in Shandong Province gradually developed into publishing centres for New Year's posters. And the story of "The Mouse Marrying Off His Daughter" often appears in these posters. In describing his childhood, Lu Xun wrote, "Two colourful pictures were pasted beside my bed. One was 'Piggy Marries into His Wife's Family'. I thought the pig's big ears and long snout ugly. The other one, 'The Mouse's Wedding', was quite lovely. The bridegroom and his bride, together with the best

men and bridesmaids, guests, and attendants, all had pointed mouths and thin legs. They looked like scholars, but were wearing red tunics and green trousers." On some wood-block New Year's posters, verses are inscribed along with the picture. One poster from Pingdu, Shandong Province, is inscribed as follows: "The Mouse is named Qiang, and he lives in a big granary. He chooses a day to take a wife and is decked out to be the groom." In another poster, made in Weixian County, Shandong Province, the inscription reads: "Naughty are the little mice, as mischievous as little elves. They get the Cat's back up, and he then gobbles them up skin and all." A poster from Fengxiang County, Shaanxi Province, has the following inscription: "A hundred days after the wedding, a brave Mouse comes to welcome his daughter home. Behind a mountain, the Cat waits, and swallows the brave Mouse whole."

Like wood-block New Year's posters, Chinese papercuts also have a long history and depict the same theme—sometimes with hundreds, or even thousands, of mice, each different in posture, assuming various positions in the ceremony. The large wedding equipage, presented according to tradition, begins with mice holding lanterns; mice officials bring up the rear. Those in between beat gongs and hold up banners, tablets, umbrellas and fans. The bride rides in a sedan chair. The best men ride on horseback beside the groom. There are loads of goods for the dowry, carts, bridesmaids, and the family and friends of the bride. The entourage crosses mountain ridges and small bridges. It is a really boisterous scene.

Besides being depicted in wood-block New Year's posters and papercuts, the theme of the Mouse marrying off his daughter also appears in clay and cloth toys and in shadow plays. In recent years, it has even been reproduced on television and

movie screens. For many years, besides embodying traditional thought about transforming suffering into good fortune, this folktale has enriched the lives of children.

于平任先
剪纸艺术

海右任美林





大紅喜字牆上挂，
老鼠女兒要出嫁。

Dà hóng xǐzì qiáng shàng
guà,
lǎoshǔ nǚ'ér yào chūjià.

The Double Happiness char-
acters are written up in
red.
Young Miss Mouse is about
to be wed.

女儿不知嫁给谁，
只得去问爸和妈。

Nǚ'er bùzhī jià gěi shuí,
zhǐdé qù wèn bà hé mā.

But she can't make her mind
up in choosing a spouse,
And leaves the decision to
Mr. and Mrs. Mouse.



女	兒	不	知	嫁	給	誰	只	得	去	問	爸	和	媽
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---



爸妈都是老糊涂，
争来争去定不下。

Bà mā dōu shì lǎo hútu,
zhēng lái zhēng qù dìng bu
xià.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Mouse
are advanced in years,
And argue over what's best
for their daughter dear.

父母二人细商量，
选婿要选势力强。

Fùmǔ èr rén xì shāngliang,
xuǎn xù yào xuǎn shìlì
qiáng.

Much discussion Mr. and
Mrs. Mouse go through,
And conclude only the most
powerful and mighty suit-
or will do.

父母二人细商量，
选婿要选势力强。





女兒聽罷仔細想
勢力最強是太陽

女兒听罢仔细想，
势力最强是太阳。

Nǚ'er tīngbuà zǐxì xiǎng,
shìlì zuì qiáng shì tàiyáng.

Her parents' idea Miss
Mouse mulls in her head,
And decides it is the Sun to
whom she should be wed.

女儿前去问太阳，
谁的势力比你强？

Nǚ'er qián qù wèn tàiyáng,
shuí de shìlì bǐ nǐ qiáng?

Approaching the Sun, Miss
Mouse inquires,
"Is there anyone whose power
than yours is higher?"



女
兒
前
去
問
太
陽
誰
的
勢
力
比
你
強