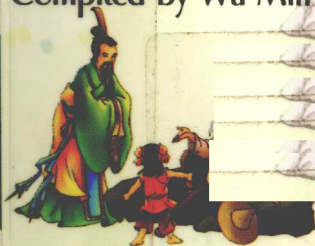


CLASSIC STORIES
OF
CHINA



Ancient Fables

Compiled by Wu Min

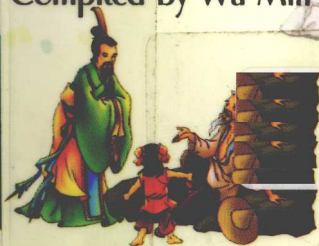


CHINA INTERCONTINENTAL PRESS

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Preface

In Chinese, the word “yuyan” (fable) is composed of two words: “Yu” means implying something or expressing something in a disguised manner, while “Yan” means words or languages. Therefore “yuyan” means to explain a certain principle through the personification of invented stories or natural objects. This is the literal interpretation of the word “yuyan”. In the daily life, the fable, a time-honored form of literature, often exists in long and large articles in the form of small stories to help explain the particular principle,



or persuade individuals of the principle so that readers can understand the profound meanings of the articles.

Chuang Tze, a great philosopher in the Warring States Period (475 BC-221 BC) of China, first used the word “yuyan” in his articles. He wrote, “Most of the fables need to be read between the lines,” which means that profound thoughts are expressed through simple stories. If further interpreted in the modern language, then Chuang Tze's statement can mean that the stories are used to express ideas of the authors—ideas that are hidden within the stories in which readers need to read between the lines.

In reality, fables are also a form of literature that matured a long time ago in both China and foreign countries. The well-known story—*The Farmer and the Snake*—is in fact a fable by a Greek called Aesop. In addition, *Bible* stories also contain many fable stories.

In general, fable stories are fictitious, that is, people invent them. True stories



often lack the overtones of fictitious ones, and therefore are very difficult to generate profound levels of wisdom. The power with which fables strike people is not whether they are true to reality, but rather the implied meaning that teaches people, advises people and enlightens people. Some fables have evolved into idioms. When we readily use these idioms, the wisdom of these fables will instantly spread into our intellectual space.

To this end, we have identified stories from the vast number of Chinese ancient fable stories, and compiled them into this collection. These fables are the finest and most famous in the Chinese history.



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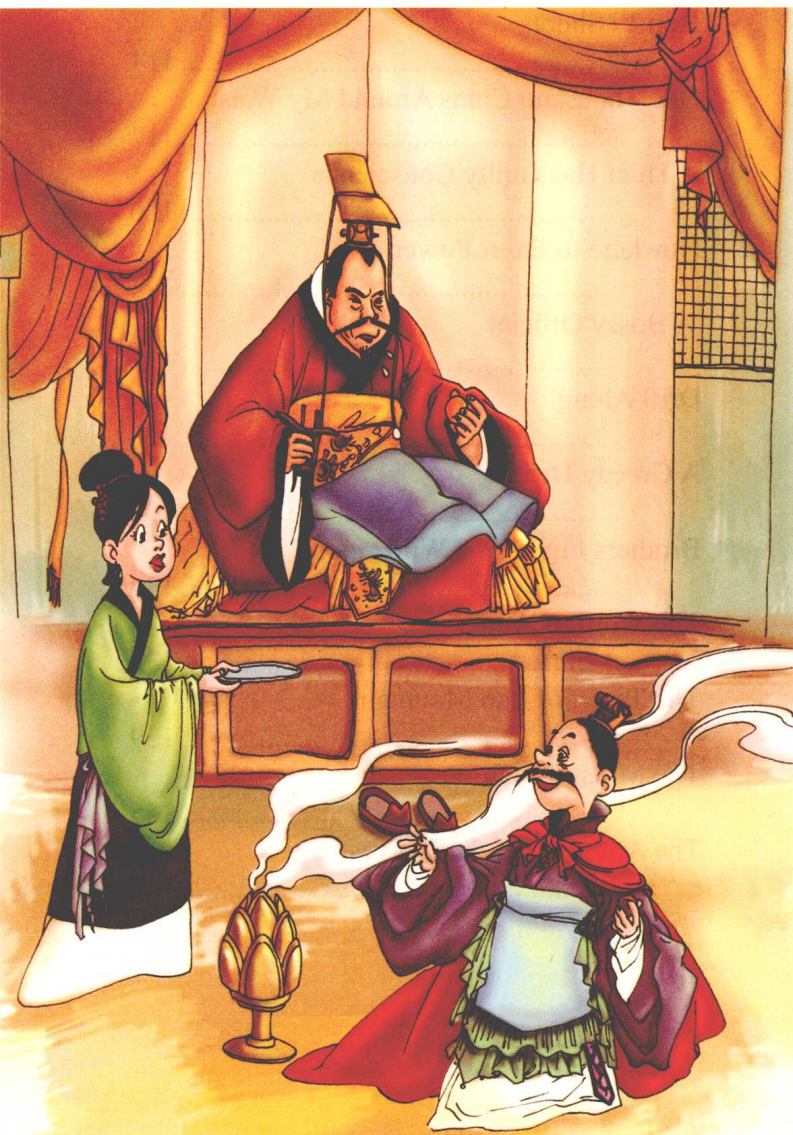


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水土不同 · 《晏子春秋》

Different Climates ©Yanzi's Spring and Autumn Annals



Different Climates

©*Yanzi's Spring and Autumn Annals*



Yanzi, a senior official of the State Qi in the Spring and Autumn Period (770 BC-476 BC), was to pay an official visit to the State Chu. Learning the news, King of Chu said to his ministers, “Yan Ying (formal name of Yanzi) is an eloquent person in the State Qi. Now he is coming to visit us. I am thinking of insulting him. Do you have any ideas?” A minister replied, “After he arrives here, we will tie up a person, and let him pass by Your Majesty. Then, you will ask, ‘Where does this criminal come from?’ We will answer, ‘He is



a Qi native.' Then, you will ask again, 'What crime has he committed?' We will answer, 'He has committed the crime of theft.'"

After Yanzi reached the State Qi, King of Chu entertained him with a big banquet, and conferred him wines. While they were enjoying the delicacy, two soldiers escorted a tied-up strong man to King of Chu. Seeing the man, King of Chu asked in a high voice, "Who is this tied-up man?" The soldiers replied, "Your Majesty, he is Qi native, and committed the crime of theft." Hearing the reply, King of Chu turned to Yanzi with joy, "Do your Qi natives like stealing things since birth?"

Yanzi rose from his seat, walked to King of Chu with respect, and answered, "According to my best knowledge, orange trees will yield oranges if they grow to the south of the Huaihe River, but will yield bitter fruits if they grow to the north of the Huaihe River. Though the leaves of the trees are very similar, the fruits they yield are very different: one is sweet, and the other is bitter.



How come? This is because of the different climates. The tied-up person didn't steal anything when he was in the State Qi, but rather he learned to steal after he came to the State Chu. Isn't it because the climate in the State Qi makes the residents to learn to steal easier?"

Hearing the eloquent remarks, King of Chu was fully convinced, and smiled, "It is really inadvisable to make fun of a clever person. Today, I have failed to fool you, but had myself fooled."



同舟共济 · 《孙子》

In the Same Boat ◎ Sun Tzu

