

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### Statement of the Problem

Many types of traditional tales such as myths, legends, ballads and folk tales share common characteristics in that they are adapted from oral tradition and have no identifiable authors. However, each type of the tales also has its own distinguishing aspect. Myths are tales about cosmology, the creation of the world, heaven, the underworld and other objects in natural phenomena. In contrast, legends are recounts of social incidents, often more secular than sacred, and their principal characters are human. The contexts of legends may involve local beliefs of the past. Stories told in the forms of songs or poems, often with repeated lines at the end of each verse, are called ballads. Folk tales refer to fictional prose narratives and include many subcategories such as cumulative tales (tales with repetition of the character's actions being built up until the story reaches its climax), realistic tales (tales about people who could have existed) and fairy tales (a synthesis of oral and written folk tale traditions) (Norton, 1987 : 203).

Like all other traditional tales, fairy tales tend to share similarities in types of tales and motifs across national boundaries. Common narrative motifs such as supernatural adversaries, supernatural helpers, tasks and quests are embodied in fairy tales. The setting of fairy tales is often timeless and marked by a formulaic opening like "Once upon a time..." or "There was once...." The story frequently takes place in a remote area, a far-away mountain village or an unknown land. Most characters in fairy tales are supernatural and magical people. A structuring device in fairy tales is repetitive, predictable patterns, for example, three tasks, three adventures and three trips. The tone of most fairy tales is playful, yet events are violent and painful. Heroes and heroines are usually young, innocent and isolated, but ideally beautiful and good. They typically have a reverence for nature. At the end of the tale, nature--trees, animals, weather--helps them. Common themes in fairy tales center on dreams of getting rid of social inequality and attaining a better way of life. The simple style,

magical characters and rapid plot development are significant features of fairy tales (Wanee Wibulsawas Anderson, 1988 : 120-123).

However, fairy tales also have certain special elements which other traditional tales do not. Such elements become transparent when the definition of fairy tales is taken into consideration. They involve a succession of motifs or episodes, which are filled with the marvelous and move in an unreal world. Fairy tales are not necessarily about fairies or angels. Clark (1963 : 23) defines the fairy tale as a prose narrative with lowly heroes who win fame and fortune in an unreal world; magic, transformation, ogres and quests abound. According to Krapp (1964 : 1), “fairy tales are a continuous narrative concerning the ability of a protagonist who meets a series of exciting adventure in which the supernatural element plays a conspicuous part and attains its goal.” Lane (1994 : 5) defines a fairy tale as “a literary or folk tradition that has a sense of the numinous power, the feeling or sensation of the supernatural or the mysterious.” In conclusion, fairy tales are a kind of prose narratives under the folk tale category. They involve magical people and the supernatural. Their theme usually concerns the adventure of the protagonist.

Fairy tales prevail in many cultural areas of the world. In Europe, fairy tales usually relate to witches, trolls and giants. Across Africa, tales of personified animals and witty-tricksters are well-known. In Asia, some of the tales concern religions of East and Southeast Asia; ruling classes and the symbols of imperial authority are also depicted (Norton, 1987 : 202-203).

Among the fairy tale collectors, Charles Perrault (1628-1703), Jacob Grimm (1785-1863), Wilhelm Grimm (1786-1859) and Hans Christian Andersen (1805-1875) are considered the most famous. Perrault collected and selected many famous fairy stories such as “Cinderella” and “The Little Red Riding Hood”. All of these stories appeared in the collection of *Histoires ou Contes du temps passé avec des moralitiés*. Worried about the book’s sexual contents, Perrault later changed its name into *Contes de ma mère l’Oye*. His work was translated into English, and is well known in both the United Kingdom and the United States. In general, it is often said that Perrault’s version of these tales becomes the standard version among readers (Siriporn Maneerin, 1985 : 119).

Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm seem to be the most popular German fairy tale collectors of the past two hundred years. The Grimms were among the earlier students of European folk tales to take what might be called scientific interest in fairy tales. The older of the two by a year, Jacob was primarily a grammarian and philologist. Wilhelm compiled, translated and wrote about heroic legends, sagas, epics and ballads from the German cultures. They cooperated for “contributions to the areas of folklore, history, ethnology, religion, jurisprudence, lexicography and literary criticism” (Zipes, 1989 : 9). The Grimms collected tales mainly from peasants and neighbors. They also extended and improved the tales and the characters together with the original meanings. The Grimm brothers regarded their works as part of a social effort to maintain a sense of justice among the German people as well as to create pride in folk traditions, since the brothers wanted to preserve German heritage. They collected the tales not only to do a service to the history of poetry and mythology, but also to write books that could provide pleasure and learning (Zipes, 1991 : 48). On comparing Perrault’s version of fairy tales to the Grimms’, it is found that the world of Perrault’s tales usually concerns urbanites more than the Grimms’ (Griffith and Frey, 1987 : 30). In addition, while the Grimm brothers got fairy tales from their research on the study of German culture, Perrault intended to collect and compose fairy tales in order to give them to his son and people.

Another great maker of fairy tales is Hans Christian Andersen. Most of his tales relate to his direct experiences when he was young. He wrote 168 fairy tales and other short stories. He presented human life in miniature under the conditions of unexpected variety. Several of his fairy tales are traditional folk tales retold with his personal style. He is often given credit for introducing into Danish literature an informal, idiomatic style that it had previously lacked. Andersen got some plots of tales from literary sources and retold them in his own words. An example is “The Emperor’s New Clothes” which Andersen said he had got from a skit by Cervantes (Griffith and Frey, 1987 : 94). Also, there are tales that Andersen invented himself; they often expressed his own yearning for success, admiration and love. On comparing Andersen’s fairy tales to the Grimms’, it is found that the world of

Andersen relates to his personal experiences whereas the Grimm brothers fabricated their world out of the tales collected from their neighbors.

In Thailand, stories were told by older generations in order to entertain, to teach and to keep record of certain events. The Thais also absorbed stories from other ethnic groups such as the Mons, Khmers and Laotians (MacDonald, 1994 : 13). There are stories of the giant serpent or Naga and the Hindu Gods: Indra, Vishnu and Brahma. Some are clearly of Buddhist origin like the *Jataka* tales, which are prose narratives concerning the rebirths of the Buddha. They also basically elaborate on *Karma*, the actions in Buddhists' lives which influence what will happen to them in their future lives.

*Pannasa Jataka* is one of the most important sources that supply themes for many Thai poetical works. This inspiring source is believed to have been written before 1265 in northern Thailand, in the city of Haripunchai (Lamphun province at present), and was later introduced into the neighboring countries: Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia (Niyada Sarikabhuti, 1981 : 4-5). *Pannasa Jataka* is also a main source of *Nithan Song Kruang*, a kind of prose narrative relating to the royal family. According to Watcharee Rammayanand (1978-1979 : 9775), its story line concerns the adventures of a protagonist who is often a prince or a princess. Some story lines are about jealousy among siblings or between a wife and a minor wife. The motifs of *Nithan Song Kruang* usually relate to fighting, adventure and magical power (Chamnan Rothetpai, 1974 : 57 quoted in Sumalee Krajaaisri, 1985 : 39). *Nithan Song Kruang*, therefore, is similar to fairy tales with respect to motifs, plots, settings and characters.

Three main analytical and interpretative approaches to folk and fairy tales are sociological, psychological and literary approaches adapted for children literature. The sociological approaches focus on the interpretation of tales in their historical and social contexts. Sociologists relate folk tales to beliefs and practices current in the community as well as to the narrators' world and their perceptions and attitudes. Folklorists in particular help sharpen our understanding of the origin and the development of tales together with their narrative modes and functions. Stith Thompson (1946), a prominent folklorist, classifies tales into three types: animal tales,

ordinary folk tales and jokes, as well as anecdotes. He also proposes a motif index and suggests that tales of one area are similar to those of other areas and the same motifs can reappear independently. It is, therefore, possible to assemble hundreds or even thousands of instances of a motif from all parts of the world. Many motifs that are very common in European tales also recur in tales in other parts of the world.

Among psychologists, Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) and Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1946) were deeply interested in myths and folktales, and exploited them for maximum benefit in the field of psychology and literary criticism. Freud's controversial psychoanalysis was a sensation when it first appeared, and it helped launch a new epoch in literary study. His analysis relates to sexual drives, dream symbolism and phases of sexual development and maturation. In working on Freud's theory of unconsciousness, Jung furthered the study of tales with his concepts of the archetypes (the images or motifs of objects and people which are universal symbols) and of the collective unconsciousness. Jung's study of archetypes, similar to Thompson's *Index of Motifs*, which was developed much later, symbolically reflects human spirit in folk and fairy tales.

Although folktales originated from the oral traditions of the uneducated in the remote past, they had been retold and adapted through history and later recorded by the literate middle class, especially for children in the eighteenth century (Zipes, 1979 : 23). Fairy tales have attracted a lot of children's attention because of their brevity, dramatic plots, themes and apparent 'simplicity.' These tales are said to help develop, enrich and humanize the child's psyche, since the characters struggle for justice, goodness and freedom (Chukovsky, 1963 : 122-230).

Many themes of fairy tales are relevant to children's experiences. Clear examples are tales about relationships within the family: children and their parents or, very often, their stepparents, or sibling rivalry, for instance. In most tales about sibling rivalry, it is noticeable that the youngest child tends to be the protagonist. He/She often overcomes the obstacles with the help of magical beings, as in "The Three Feathers" and "The Seven Ravens".

Although sibling relationships in the tales have been mentioned in previous research, comparative analysis across cultures on this point has not been attempted.

This study, therefore, aims to do a literary analysis of sibling relationships together with its psychological as well as sociological bases in selected fairy tales in both the Thai tradition and the brothers Grimm's collection which has been generally considered the most comprehensive and representative source of Western folk and fairy tales.

## **Reviewed Literature**

The literature reviewed in this study is selected from both Thai and English documents. They relate to children's literature criticism as well as to psychological, sociological and folklorist interpretations of fairy tales.

### **1. Children's Literature Criticism**

Critical attention to fairy tales as part of children's literature has been evident since the nineteenth century. Critics analyze fairy tales' content as well as literary elements such as plots, themes, and characters. Ruskin and Chesterton evaluate the moralistic content of fairy tales. Buchan and Paul compare children's literature with Victorian novels and feminine literature respectively.

Ruskin, a Romantic writer, criticizes certain features in written fairy tales: the satirical tone, the loss of the simplicity of the sense of beauty and love, and shallow morality (1868). For Ruskin, the satirical mocking of others is not suitable for children who should not yet act as judges of others. The sense of beauty and love in these 'modern' fairy tales, according to Ruskin, was distorted and darkened by shallow morality which lessened the genuine value of the tales which has been proved through generations.

Chesterton (1908 : 28) claims that the fairy tales he learned from a nurse gave him a life-long philosophy much superior to science or religion. For him, the nurse who told him these tales "priested at once of democracy and tradition." Like most critics of science and religion, Chesterton criticizes the limitation of rationality which underlies scientific or religious law. He maintains that magic, charm or enchantment

in fairy tales fulfill our ancient instinct of astonishment and constitute a higher form of ethics with political implications.

Buchan (1931) links fairy tales with Victorian novels, for both types of literature interpret life in a hopeful spirit, especially with the common themes of adventure and the reversal of fortune. Historically, the peasants derived comfort from folktales in which the weak and the lowly become strong and finally live happily in the world. Likewise, Victorian novels have plenty of adventures and happy surprises based on optimism, which consoled the readers. Both genres, more than others, tend to fulfill readers' wishes and provide them with inspiration.

Paul (1987) points out similarities between children's and women's literature with respect to themes and characters. Thematically, both types of literature deal with the protagonist's repression. For solutions, a child protagonist tends to create options that can protect him/her from dangers while a female protagonist is freed from the obstacles by deception.

Many critics and scholars attempt to link fairy tales and tale interpretation with social concepts. However, some limitations in tale interpretation have been presented; reasons and morals that the critics try to show probably reduce the value of tales. With regard to the literary elements, some points in fairy tales are relevant to those of adult literary works, such as themes and character development. It could be noted that the two latter findings are good examples in comparing children's literature with other genres.

## 2. Psychological Perspectives

Researchers and critics attempt to focus on psychological aspects in tales, such as personality traits and human psyche. Some of the interpretations are based on Freudian and Jungian theories.

A Thai researcher who relates her work to psychology is Ing-on Junlasap. She characterizes the protagonists by their trait patterns. In her study of the characters' traits in the folk literature of southern Thailand (1996), she focuses on eight southern folk tales such as "Champa Si Ton", "Nang U-Thai" and "Pla Boo Thong". She

elaborates on the protagonists' traits such as kindness, broad-mindedness, gratefulness and respectfulness. In "Champa Si Ton", she presents the traits of the youngest child as grateful and hot-tempered. His traits are said to be influenced by two major factors: a psychological need for love and understanding from other people, and the social need of security. Ing-on's personality patterns as a whole reflect Thai social values such as gratitude and honesty.

Franze (1996) outlines a psychological framework for the interpretation of fairy tales by using Jung's theory of dreams and archetypes and Hans Giehl's psychological theory. She devotes three chapters of her book to one of the Grimms' stories, "The Three Feathers". Using Jung's personality approach, Franze considers a hero or a heroine a normal human ego. Her analysis evolves on three aspects of human minds: id (the unconsciousness), ego (the central complex of consciousness), and the superego (the moral self or the highest aspect of consciousness). In "The Three Feathers", the role of the youngest child, Dunning, is outstanding. The child lives with inferiority in birth position, ability and intellect. He does not perform any masculine deeds, and is assisted by other people including his father. As Franze (1996 : 62) puts it, "Dunning is an archetypal figure which presents a model of an ego functioning in accord with the self." Franze also interprets symbols and images of characters and the supernatural, thus providing a wealth of insights into archetypal experience of humankind (1996 : 64).

Bettelheim (1991), a child psychologist, considers fairy tales important for the psychological development of a child. He describes the tales as a magic mirror which reflects the inner fears and fantasies of children. The tales reassure a child's consciousness because goodness always overcomes evil. Following the Freudian theory, Bettelheim analyzes the youngest child to show specifically how children free themselves from obstacles. Four fairy tales: "The Queen Bee", "Tales of Two Brothers", "Brother and Sister" and "The Three Feathers" are analyzed to illustrate the adventures of the siblings which symbolize personal development in the process of maturation. One of Bettelheim's findings is that magical people and animals help the youngest child fight the obstacles and misfortune.



On this point, Zipes (1979) disagrees with Bettelheim's theory. Zipes thinks that Bettelheim misinterprets some of Freud's key notions about psychoanalysis and twists the meaning of the tales to suit his theory. According to Zipes, Bettelheim does not understand symbols and implications of primitive societies and has only a one-dimensional way of examining fairy tales. Therefore, he thinks Bettelheim's shallow presentation about characters' inner conflicts is not very useful. In Zipes' analysis, Bettelheim eliminates Freud's dialectical antagonistic relationship between society and the individual (Zipes, 1979 : 167).

Both Jungian and Freudian theories are commonly used in analyzing traits and behavior of characters in tales. Jungian theory leads to the interpretation of archetypes and images of characters. By contrast, Freudian theory tends to focus on decoding behaviors. Sometimes, the drawbacks in psychological interpretation may transfer some subjective problems onto the fairy tales, because of misinterpretation of psychological implications.

### 3. Sociological and Folklorist Perspectives

Situations in fairy tales are generally associated with social incidents, human relationships, ways of life and cultures. As a sociologist, Zipes is interested in the relationship between tales and social situations: sexual abuse, corporal punishment, intense sibling rivalry and maltreatment of children by stepmother or stepfather (1979 : 42). Zipes explains that these social situations occurred in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries in Germany. He thinks that fairy tales recorded the breakdown of the social order together with the confusion of the world in transition (1979 : 61-62).

Zipes also discusses the psychological factors that led the Grimms to begin their work in folklore and provides a socio-historical approach for the achievement of the protagonists. He believes both Jacob and Wilhelm concerned themselves with the relationships among siblings and identified themselves closely with their tales, especially in this regard (1989 : 39).

Zipes specifically discusses the characters and the patterns of the Grimm brothers' fairy tales (1991). He thinks the pattern of the protagonists in the Grimms' tales presents a struggle for power and autonomy. This includes the male protagonist who usually leaves home or the family because he wants to satisfy his power and freedom requirement. The wandering protagonist leaves home to reconstitute home. Along the way, the hero learns to be active, competitive, industrious and cunning. His goal is for money, power and a woman. His happiness depends on the use of power. In contrast, the heroine learns to be passive, obedient, hard-working and patient. Her goal is for wealth, jewels and a man who can protect her rights. Her happiness depends on conformity to the patriarchal rule. He concludes that it is possible to say that the tales often imply a postponement of gratification until the protagonist reaches his/her goal (1991 : 57).

Two Thai researchers, Chantana Yennan and Siraporn Thitathan, should be mentioned in the sociological study of Thai folk tales in the central region of Thailand. Chantana Yennan (1986) analyzes 186 stories and finds that 62 stories present an outstanding virtue – kindness. Siraporn Thitathan (1989) focuses on the relationship among family members in fairy tales. She finds that the rivalry of the characters in fairy tales often mimics some of the family problems in reality. The relationship between a father-in-law and a son-in-law is as negative as that between co-wives. These studies portray the social problems that recur in many Thai tales.

Prakong Nimmanhaemin, an important Thai folklore scholar, is interested in the background of folk tales and some analytical approaches. She also attempts to portray her works by employing the Western critics' descriptions such as those of Stith Thompson and Vladimír Propp. Prakong Nimmanhaemin (2000) outlines her work concerning the folk tales of both Thai and Western cultures. She devotes four chapters to the Western folk tales, unfolding types of the folklore, collective elements of folktales and the characteristics and the ways to study the Western folk tales. She also portrays types of Thai folk tales. Her views on Thai and Western folk tales are that some motifs and plots of Thai tales are compatible with those of Western folk tales.

Among folklorists, Stith Thompson and Vladimir Propp are the most prominent. Both of them attempt to outline the patterns of tales in order to trace and classify them. Thompson (1946) translates and enlarges a folklorist's, Antti Aarne's catalogue containing 2,499 tale types. Thompson divides these tales into five categories: animal tales, ordinary folktales, jokes and anecdotes, formula tales and unclassified tales. Thompson and Aarne provide a summary of the tales and motifs (the smallest narrative units). Also, Thompson devotes a six-volume reference work to his 22 categories, such as "The Wise and The Foolish", "Reversal of Fortune" and "Magic". He thinks differences in the tale forms are in style and are not based on deep psychological facts. His interest in the origin of many motifs of folk tales as survival forms of life and experience of primitive people is very notable among anthropologists and folklorists' issues.

Vladimir Propp, the Russian structuralist folklorist, proposes that all Russian magic tales have similar structures and contain the same elements in the same order. He concludes that there are 31 generic acts or what he later calls functions in the Russian folk tales. Later, these functions are applied to the study of fairy tales. Siriporn Maneerin (1985) sums up Propp's central concept as follows. First, characters' functions are invariable and form a tale's central elements. Second, whereas there are many characters, there are only 31 functions such as departure, forbidding, and transgression. Third, the sequences of these characters' functions are the same in any tale. Finally, all tales share the same structure, which can be written into comparative formulas.

Interesting insights and ways to study tales have been proposed by literary critics, psychologists, as well as sociologists and folklorists. Certain patterns of story lines, characters, presentations, as well as implied cultural values or practices can be further explored through the use of interdisciplinary approaches.

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To identify, analyze and compare characters' roles and sibling relationships in the selected Thai and the brothers Grimm's fairy tales

2. To make a comparative analysis of literary elements of these tales in order to see how the relationships are presented.

### **Significance of the Study**

The research results will provide readers with a better understanding of sibling relationships in both the Thai and the brothers Grimm's fairy tales as interpreted by different analytical approaches. This cross-cultural comparison will also give insights concerning the universal and the particular elements in tales.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Fairy tales in this study include only those in which the protagonists have at least one sibling. With the above criterion, the present study is limited to 48 of the brothers Grimm's fairy tales and seven Thai tales. The Grimms' fairy tales are used because they are generally considered the best representatives of Western folk and fairy tales since the two brothers relied on actual oral tradition to which they attempted to keep as close as possible in their written records. The English version used in this study is *The Complete Brothers Grimm Fairy Tales* edited by Lily Owens (1981). The titles of the 48 Grimms' tales are listed in Appendix 1; those of the seven Thai tales are in Appendix 2. Four sources of Thai tales under this present study are *Pannasa Jataka* tales in the 1956 National Library version, *Thai Tales* of Dokya Press version, as well as the royal literary works of King Rama II and King Rama III.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Sibling:** brother or sister with one or both parents in common.

**Fairy tale:** a kind of prose narrative with the setting in an imaginary land involving magical beings and the supernatural.

## **Research Methodology**

### 1. Selection and collection of information

1.1 Selecting Thai tales and the Grimms' fairy tales in which the protagonists have siblings.

1.2 Investigating literature concerning the historical backgrounds of the tales and applicable critical approaches.

### 2. Analysis and Comparison

2.1 Identifying, analyzing and comparing characters' roles and types of sibling relationships of the two groups of tales.

2.2 Analyzing and comparing elements of the tales, such as plot, themes and characterization, using relevant approaches.

### 3. Conclusion.