Chapter 2

Historical Background of Thai and the Grimms' Fairy Tales

Famous folklore theories and hypotheses concerning sources as well as the transmission of tales have been proposed for decades. Two opposing theories: monogenesis and polygenesis, are the most well-known and will be discussed here. Then, specific details about the sources and developments of Thai and the Grimms' fairy tales will be examined.

Origins of Fairy Tales

Anthropologists and tale scholars believe that fairy tales are products of oral tradition and consider them part of folk wisdom. The oral art of tale telling is far older than historical accounts, and it is not confined within a society. However, the purposes and the subjects of tales may vary from place to place and from century to century (Thompson, 1946 : 5). Anonymous storytellers recount tales in order to entertain, explain natural phenomena, fulfill people's wishes and relieve their tension.

Initially, the tales were woven to explain terrifying natural phenomena and restore customs as well as social beliefs of people. It is likely that the tales are narrated when people know ways of practicing rituals and worship. The characters in the tales still believed in ghosts and spirits. Thus, the tales could have originated before the existence of religious doctrines such as Brahmanism. The ancient tales existing before the Buddhist era may have come from India, Greece and Persia. The tales were handed down by word of mouth. The tales of these regions share some similarities in terms of plot structures and themes, although there is no solid evidence to state from where and when these tales originally came (Pat Pengpala, 1985 : 10). As times went on, the tales were a mixture of mythology, legends and hero tales. Scholars also maintained the remnants of nature myths, religious beliefs, rituals and ancient customs. Later, oral tales were compiled and revised by taletellers. Some of

the tales were rewritten and published as classic tales, such as "The Little Red Riding Hood", "The Sleeping Beauty", "Hansel and Grethel" and "Cinderella".

India and Greece were probably great sources of most traditional tales around the world, however the information about tale origins of both regions are inadequate. Famous tales of the two areas recurred all over the world, such as Aesop's tales (Greek oral tales) and *Jataka*. Tales in *Jataka*, in fact, existed before the Buddhist era and were prevalent among the Indian people for a long time (Pat Pengpala, 1985 : 9-10). These are good examples of the sources of traditional tales.

Folklorists and anthropologists propose two theories concerning the origins of fairy tales—monogenesis and polygenesis theories (Goforth, 1998 : 67). According to the monogenesis theory, tales originally come from one place and later spread across other regions. As asserted by Leeming (1997 : 141) "the similar motifs and tale types found across the globe share a common origin and then diffused across boundaries, altering according to the influence of each culture". Moreover, three prominent folklorists –Theodor Benfey, Loiseleur Deslongchamps and Stith Thompson--agreed that fairy tales and fables originally came from India and spread to other parts of the world afterwards (Thompson, 1946 : 392).

However, the polygenesis theory opposes the above proposition, stating that the tales are created in various places independently. According to this theory, many themes and motifs of the tales in one region are similar to those of other tales in various areas because people have their own conventional wisdom and experiences formed by teachings and social incidents. Andrew Lang and Carl Gustav Jung accept this theory. The English folklorist and anthropologist Lang thinks that close resemblances of such tale elements as plot and theme of each region came from "independent invention" of people whose basic needs and social beliefs correspond to those of the same stage of culture (Thompson, 1946 : 380).

Jung, a psychologist and an anthropologist, supports the polygenesis theory with the collective unconscious theory. He claims that people have universal modes of behaviour and psychological needs; they show their psychological experiences together with social beliefs, such as problems within families. People's images and

imagination recurring in both nightmares and fantasies as depicted in history, traditional tales and literature illustrate that people around the world seemingly have universal unconsciousness (Allen and Santrock, 1993 : 371). For Jung, the collective unconscious theory is applicable to the principle of archetypes--the individual psyche stored in the collective unconscious of the mind. Both Lang and Jung believe that tales of various cultures have similar themes and plot structures because people all share similar psychological experiences.

With respect to Thai folklore study, Sathirakoses, a prominent folklorist believes in both theories—monogenesis and polygenesis. He proposes that some Thai tales included in *Pannasa Jataka* tales may have come from Indian classical tales, such as those in *Kathasaritasakorn*, "the source of knowledge", while others probably come from other regions. He studies the tale transmission of "Pra Rot Meree", "Pra Suthon Manohra" and "Sang Thong" and concludes that these tales share some similarities in terms of characters and themes, despite their different contexts (Prakong Nimmanhaemin, 1998 : 116-117).

In general, although certain features of the tales in different regions are noticeably similar, lines of transmission can be traced in only some cases and only to a certain extent. As a result, the monogenesis theory must be accepted with reservation until evidence is indisputable. In the following section, possible sources and transmission of the selected Thai and the Grimms' tales will be elaborated to establish possible contexts of the tales.

Transmission of Thai and the Grimms' Fairy Tales

Tales are not only circulated round families or communities, but are also handed down from people to people in both oral and written or published forms. Many traditional tales are revised as well as altered and they later become well known among audiences. Some of them are considered classic tales, such as "Hansel and Grethel" and "The Sleeping Beauty". A good example is the tales in *Panchatantra* which were rewritten many times and translated into many languages. Like Thai and

the Grimms' fairy tales, they have been compiled repeatedly. Some of the tales have captivated people's minds, such as "Pla Boo Thong" and "Sang Thong" (classical Thai tales), "Cinderella" and "Snow White"(classical Grimm's fairy tales).

Tales of one region may be the same as those of other lands. Travelers, merchants, soldiers and peasants convey the tales from place to place. The taletellers usually alter famous tales of one region by changing characters' names, creating social incidents while maintaining plot structures and motifs so that the tales are compatible with their culture and social norms. The tales can be transmitted orally or in written versions. Sometimes, oral tales are revised and spread to other areas in a published version.

1. Transmission of Thai Tales

Two prominent sources of Thai tales are local tales and *Jataka* tales; the latter can be found in Thailand as well as her neighboring countries such as Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia. Thai folklorists like Prakong Nimmanhaemin (2000 : 59) believe that the dissemination of tales from India to Thailand is an incidental benefit of Hinduism and Buddhism. Later, with the introduction of Western civilization to Southeast Asia, European tales also circulated round many countries including Thailand. The Thais are familiar with European tales, such as "Cinderella", "Sleeping Beauty", and "Snow-White".

Jataka is regarded as a great source of traditional tales of many countries. Originating in India, *Jataka* tales have some themes and plots similar to those tales in Hindu texts. As one of the oldest religions, Hinduism is the principal source of Indian folk tales and religious literary works, including such Buddhist texts as *Nipata Jataka* and *Pannasa Jataka* (Pat Pengpala, 1987 : 10). Composed around 422 by a monk in Sri Lanka, *Nipata Jataka* includes 547 stories about the Buddha's former lives. There is no evidence when *Nipata Jataka* came to Thailand (Pat Pengpala, 1985 : 37). However, the tales in *Nipata Jataka* could have circulated round Thailand around the eighth century. A piece of good evidence is the pictures on stone inscriptions found in

Northern Thailand which depict Buddhist teachings, such as *Karma,* or the law of nature or the law of cause and effect. Some of these pictures refer to *Nipata Jataka* tales*,* such as that in the 2^(nd) stone inscription at the tunnel of Sri-Chum temple in Sukothai province, which portrays Bhodhisattava's former lives (Wannee Wibulsawas Anderson, 1988 : 4).

Pannasa Jataka was presumably composed by a monk living in Haripunchai before 1265 (Niyada Laosunthorn, 1995 : 274). The sources of *Pannasa Jataka* are Buddhist literary works in Pali and Sanskrit, traditional annals and Indian folktales. A prominent source of *Pannasa Jataka* tales is said to be *Nipata Jataka* which is about the Bhodhisatava's practicing *paramita*-- the highest goodness. Some Thai scholars, Prakong Nimmanhaemin (1974) and Pat Pengpala (1985), believe that the *Pannasa Jataka* tales are traditional narratives that imitate the format and style of those in *Nipata Jataka*, composed in Pali, both in prose and verse. A manuscript of the *Pannasa Jataka* tales is the 50 bundles of texts made from a fan of palm leaves. These tales can be found in Northern Thailand, Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia (Prakong Nimmanhaemin, 1974 : 24, Saksri Yamnadda, 2000 : 95). The texts of *Pannasa Jataka* are simpler than those of *Nipata Jataka*, and have been translated into the languages of these countries (Niyada Laosunthorn 1995 : 275). The tales in *Pannasa Jataka*, therefore, are prevalent among the people of Southeast Asia, and maintain similar plot structures, themes and characters. In Thailand, *Pannasa Jataka* of the National Library version is the most comprehensive version, comprising 61 tales (Niyada Laosunthorn, 1995 : 274-275).

Udom Nuthong (2000 : 79-84) outlines how the tales in *Pannasa Jataka* works have been disseminated. In his discussion, the tales in *Pannasa Jataka* can be found in every region of Thailand. Most likely, the tales of *Pannasa Jataka* circulated round the north of Thailand first. Later, they extended to other areas, especially the central and the Southern regions, as presented below.

South	Central	North	North-East
Pra Suthon-Nang Manohra	Poem by Duen Bunnag	Suthon *Jataka* (*Pannasa Jataka*)	Thao Sri Thon
Pra Rot-Meree	Pra Rot-Meree (play)	Rothasen *Jataka* (*Pannasa Jataka*)	-
Hoi-Sang (4 versions)	Sang Thong (play)	Suwannasang *Jataka* (*Pannasa Jataka*)	-
Sua Kho Kham Kaap, Holwichai-Khawee	Sua Kho KhamChan	Pahalakhawee *Jataka* (*Pannasa Jataka*)	Nang Phom Hom

The contents of the tales of both the Southern and the central parts seem to be modified versions of *Pannasa Jataka*. Some Thai poets borrowed some themes as well as plots and they sometimes rewrote the tales in verse. Many of them have become Thai classic literature of the central region, such as "Sang Thong", "Khawee", "Pra Suthon Nang Manohra" and "Pra Rothasen" (Prakong Nimmanhaemin, 1976 : 30-31).

Under this present study, four tales come from *Pannasa Jataka* tales-- "Manohra"("Suthon *Jataka*"), "Holwichai and Khawee" ("Pahalakhawee *Jataka*"), "Sang Thong"("Suwannasang *Jataka*"), and "Nang Sib Song"("Rothasen *Jataka*") (*Pannasa Jataka* of the National Library version : 1956) and the other three tales probably come from Thai folktales of the central and the Northeastern regions—"Pla Boo Thong", "Sang Silp Chai" and "Jampa Si Ton". "Pla Boo Thong" may be a folktale from the central part of Thailand, because there is no solid evidence concerning "Pla Boo Thong" in other regions of Thailand, except in the central part of Thailand (Thawat Punnothok, 2000 : 69). Two Thai researchers, Kanya Bureerat (1989) and Jarubut Ruangsuwan (1977) consider "Sang Silp Chai" a prominent literary work of the North-Eastern region. Kanya Bureerat (1989 : 126) claims that this tale has the same plot as that of the Lan-Chang historical literary work around 1643-1690, the golden epoch of Lan-Chang literature. "Sang Silp Chai" was, however, also said to be part of the *Pannasa Jataka* tales. Its contents were

particularly about *Karma* and the *Bhodhisatva* like those in the *Panasa Jataka* (Kanya Bureerat, 1989 : 26*)*. This tale was later known in the Northeast of Thailand and is very famous among people of this region. Jarubut Ruaungsuwan (1977 : 96) states that the traditional literature of this region is "Sang Silp Chai" or "Sin Sai". Its text portrays the society and ways of people's lives in the Northeast. Another tale of the Northeastern region is "Jampa Si Ton". There is no evidence about this tale in other parts of Thailand (Fine Arts Department, 1989 : 116-118).

Although the discussion of Thai tale transmission seems inadequate, we can say that Thai tales were first disseminated around Thailand in the oral tradition in the late eighth century and in written versions by the 13th century. A significant number of Thai tales come from *Pannasa Jataka* as well as local tales of Southeast Asia. Therefore, we may conclude that most tales found in *Pannasa Jataka* had already existed in Thailand because *Pannasa Jataka* was written by a Thai monk in Thailand. These tales portray Buddhist beliefs since Buddhism has taken root around Thailand for a long time. About six centuries later, some of these popular tales, "Sang Thong", "Holwichai and Khawee" and "Sang Silp Chai" were written in verse by King Rama II and King Rama III. The royal versions are well known as much as the variously folk versions nowadays.

2. Transmission of the Grimms' Fairy Tales

Actually, the Grimm brothers intended to make a systematic study of folklore by compiling folk and fairy tales in Northern Germany (Smith, 1991 : 61). Most German folk tales were spread around the Rhine river plain where primitive German people were settled. While many people believe that most European folk tales belong to Germany, the Grimms' tales share some similarities with those of other cultures, such as the Baltic countries, Bohemia, and Holland. Geographically, German territory is surrounded by the Slavic countries in the East and other European countries in both the West and the South. The tales in Germany, therefore, could be influenced by other European cultures (Kulap Mullikamas, 1966 : 103).

However, the anthropologist Theodor Benfey, believes that European tales came from India. In the 10th century, there was a religious war in India between Arabian countries and India. After the war, tales from India were translated into many languages, such as Persian and Arabic. The tales were circulated round Islamic countries for a very short time. Later, the Muslims communicated with the Christians, so the tales were transported to European countries, such as Byzantium, Italy and Spain (Thompson, 1946 : 376-377).

Many of the brothers Grimm's fairy tales share some similarities with those of Perrault (French fairy tales). There is no substantial evidence to identify the origin of the tales. The tales of the present day have been said to derive from peasant oral art. The literary fairy tales have been well known since the middle of the 16th century: Giovanni Francesco Straparola's *Le Piacevoli* in 1550-1553, Giambaltista Basile's *Pentamarone* in 1634-1636. Later tales collectors are Charles Perrault in the 17th century, Hans Christian Andersen and the Grimm brothers in the 19th century. By the seventeenth century (1647), the French fairy tale collector Charles Perrault, revised the simple version of the tales. In 1696, he published the tales entitled "Stories from Times Past, With Morals—Tales of My Mother Goose" and it was translated into English thirty years later (Griffith and Frey, 1987 : 3). Of the Grimms' fairy tales collection, some tales were published in 1812 under the title of "Kinder-und-Hausmächen" (Children's and Household Tales) (Wannee Wibulsawas Anderson, 1988 : 21-22). The first edition contained eighty-six old German folk and fairy tales, and the second edition, which was published in 1815, added seventy more tales (Goforth, 1998 : 86). Later, the tales were translated into approximately 70 languages and have remained the most influential and widely known collection of folk and fairy tales around the world.

The Grimms' basic method of collecting fairy tales was to keep records from the multiple groups of narrators. The prominent groups were the French aristocrats including educated women and travelers. The first group of taletellers gathered the tales in the salon as a type of parlor game. In the early 18th century, the salon fairy tales in France were well known. Notable writers of this sort are Madame D' Aulnoy,

Charles Perrault, Madame de Murat, Mademoiselle L'Héritire or Mademoiselle de La Force, especially the Hassenpflug (Amalie, Jeanette and Marie). All of them attempted to increase the value of fairy tales. For the Grimm brothers, in collecting tales, Dorothy Viehmann, a French dressmaker, was invited to their house to narrate many French tales. This is how some of the French tales came to Germany (Wannee Wibulsawas Anderson, 1988 : 22). Also, Johann Friedrich, a retired soldier, brought some tales for the brothers in exchange for clothes (Zipes, 1989 : 11). The second group of taletellers was travelers. They passed on the tales, which were in both oral and literary forms, in central Europe, from the authors or the tellers to the audiences. The Grimms tried to restore the social experiences, which derived from anonymous travelers. In addition, the brothers took tales directly from books, journals, annals and letters. Afterward, they collected tales from their favorite printed media. Later, they revised the tales and created a small edition of fairy tales, altering erotic or brutal elements of the tales. Thus the brothers' varied sources were compiled and modified to suit their values.

The brothers Grimm's fairy tales present some real social incidents experienced by taletellers. When the Grimms collected and revised their tales during the early 19th century (1812), there were many significant social incidents affecting fairy tale collectors, especially the rise of the bourgeoisie and war. Throughout the 18th century, the bourgeois culture permeated German society. The bourgeois class who controlled trade and business both in France and Germany later gained prominence over the nobility ("Eighteenth Century", *Encyclopedia Americana International*, 1977 : 67). In Germany, the bourgeoisie was considered as Germany's settlers. They influenced art and literature including fairy tales. Many of the Grimms' fairy tales were adapted and revised many times by some of these people. As they rejected some erotic contents in fairy tales, which circulated in salons as an entertainment for a long time, certain elements of the tales were rearranged and altered by the educated editors which included some women. They developed the fairy tales for literate audiences (usually people of the middle class) who preferred to read romantic stories (Zipes, 1979 : 50). Later, they gradually inserted into the tales

the bourgeois virtues in general, such as industry, thriftiness, and orderliness (Zipes, 1979 : 21).

Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, many important events and changes occurred in Germany: the Napoleonic war (1803-1813), the reformation of Germany (1812-1857) and the revolution in 1848. As a direct result of the Napoleonic war, some tales presented soldiers' vulgarity, brutality as well as war. Another significant event is the German reformation, which continued for a long time, almost the entire first half of the 19th century (1812-1857). Many crucial social incidents also took place, such as a struggle for liberation, the conquering of Rhineland (1814), and the revolution of the 1830s. The peasant revolution around 1848 was very serious. The economic situation especially unemployment was in crisis as there were a downfall of industrial businesses and famine followed by the peasants' violent riots against the German government in several states during 1848-1849 ("Germany, History of", *Britannica Encyclopaedia*, 105-108). Ten tales of the Grimms' portraying soldiers as heroes are "The Three Snake Leaves", "How Six Made Their Way in the World", "Brother Lustig", "Bearskin", "The Devil's Sooty Brother, "The Blue Light", "The Devil and His Grandmother", "The Worn-Out Dancing Shoes", "The Boots of Buffalo Leather", and "The Grave Mound" (Zipes, 1989 : 54). However, the Grimm brothers did not want to insist on the soldier's cruelty; they attempted to show what peasants should do when they faced difficulties (*The Brothers Grimm: From the Enchanted Forests to the Modern World*, 1989 :55).

Besides, France, other sources of the Grimms' fairy tales are the traditional German and European tales. Taletellers and tramps (usually from France) wandering around Germany brought tales along with them. The tales were taken from many European regions and were later revised or re-created. Thus, some of the Grimms' fairy tales seem familiar. Yet, according to some critics, the Grimm brothers' Protestant background and values are found underlying their modified tales (Zipes,1989 : 31).

Historically, the tales of both Thai and the brothers Grimm share some similarities in terms of origins and their transmission. Many tales of the two cultures

originally come from local tales and others are transmitted by foreign narrators in both oral and written forms. The tale tellers, sometimes, conveyed their social or religious beliefs in their narration. Buddhist concepts, for example, can be found in some of the Thai tales recorded by Buddhist monks. The Grimms' tales, similarly, were collected from local tales, as well as from foreign narrators, many of them from the Protestant bourgeois class. This is why their ethics was incorporated in the Grimms' tales. These cultural backgrounds of both groups of tales relate to the tale patterns, themes, and characters types to be pursued in detail in the next two chapters.