



Constructing Gender: Power, Identity, and Language in Chinese Folktales

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Abstract: *Oral narratives predate the emergence of formal writing systems and serve as foundational repositories of cultural knowledge and cosmological understanding. Chinese folktales, as a vital component of this tradition, encapsulate social values, moral frameworks, and role expectations embedded within Chinese society. While these narratives function as instruments of moral education and cultural transmission, they also reflect and perpetuate entrenched social biases, particularly gender discrimination. This study examines the representation of men and women in selected Chinese folktales, focusing on how gender roles are constructed, reinforced, and normalized through narrative structures and linguistic choices. It explores whether these tales sustain traditional family ideologies and hierarchical social arrangements by shaping perceptions of masculinity and femininity. Drawing upon gender theory and traditional Chinese socio-cultural perspectives, the paper analyzes how such narratives contribute to the formation of social identity and the internalization of gender norms. Through close readings of popular folktales, the study highlights the enduring impact of folklore in reproducing gendered worldviews and underscores the need for critical engagement with these cultural texts.*

Key words: *folktales, gender, Chinese, Confucianism, dyads.*