

การศึกษาเปรียบเทียบลิลิตพระลอและม่านประเพณี: สัญลักษณ์และภาพแทนของคตินิยม ในมุมมองสังคมวัฒนธรรมไทยและจีน

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A Comparative Study on Lilit Phra Lo and Butterfly Lovers: Symbols and Representation of Ideologies in Thai and Chinese Socio-cultural Perspectives

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บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษานี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อวิเคราะห์สัญลักษณ์และภาพแทนของคตินิยมและระบบความเชื่อในสังคมไทยและจีนและความเหมือนและความแตกต่างของมุมมองทางความคิด อิทธิพลทางศาสนาและบริบททางสังคมวัฒนธรรมในลิลิตพระลอและม่านประเพณี การศึกษาใช้วิธีการเชิงคุณภาพ โดยการรวบรวมข้อมูลทุติยภูมิและงานวิจัยที่เกี่ยวข้องและคำอธิบายเชิงวิเคราะหของบริบททางสังคมวัฒนธรรมไทยและจีน โดยใช้วิธีการการวิเคราะห์เชิงเปรียบเทียบและการวิเคราะห์เนื้อหาเพื่อวิเคราะห์กลุ่มตัวอย่างที่เลือก ลิลิตพระลอเป็นภาพแทนของความเชื่อเรื่องภูติผีวิญญาณหรือสิ่งลี้ลับเหนือธรรมชาติที่ผสมผสานกับพระพุทธศาสนาและศาสนาพราหมณ์-ฮินดูที่หล่อหลอมเอกลักษณ์ของวัฒนธรรมไทย ม่านประเพณีเป็นนิทานพื้นบ้านของจีนที่สะท้อนให้เห็นองค์ประกอบของลัทธิขงจื้อและลัทธิเต๋าอันเป็นแก่นแท้ของสังคมจีนดั้งเดิม นิทานทั้งสองเรื่องมีบทบาทสำคัญในการสะท้อนคตินิยม ระบบความเชื่อและสร้างคุณค่าทางวัฒนธรรมในประเทศไทยและประเทศจีน การวิเคราะห์ความเหมือนและความแตกต่าง พบว่า ทั้งสองวัฒนธรรมต่างปลูกฝังแนวคิดเรื่องการเคารพ ผู้อาวุโสและเชื่อฟังพ่อแม่ อย่างไรก็ตาม อิทธิพลทางค่านิยมความคิดและศาสนากลับมีความแตกต่างเนื่องจากบริบททางสังคมและวัฒนธรรมหลายประการปรัชญาจีนจะให้ความสำคัญกับหลักการในการอยู่ร่วมกันในสังคมอย่างสมานฉันท์ แต่คนไทยเชื่อในเหตุและผลของการกระทำ นอกจากนี้ ลิลิตพระลอและม่านประเพณียังแสดงให้เห็นถึงความไม่เท่าเทียมกันและนัยของลำดับชั้นทางเพศภายใต้ระบบอุปถัมภ์และสังคมปิตาธิปไตยอีกด้วย

Abstract

This study examined symbols and representations of ideologies and belief systems as well as similarities and differences of ideological perspectives, religious influences, and socio-cultural contexts in *Lilit Phra Lo* and *Butterfly Lovers*. This study applied a qualitative method by collecting secondary data and related research via documents and analytical descriptions of the socio-cultural context using a comparative approach and a content analysis approach to analyze the selected sample. *Lilit Phra Lo* represents syncretism of animist beliefs or supernatural power with Buddhism and Hinduism, which shape the identity of Thai culture. *Butterfly Lovers*, a Chinese folktale, reflects the elements of Confucianism and Taoism, the core of traditional Chinese society. Both tales play a significant role in reflecting ideologies and belief systems and constructing the cultural values in Thailand and China. The analysis indicates that both cultures cultivate respecting elders and obeying parents; however, there are several differences in ideological and religious influence due to social and cultural contexts. Chinese philosophies emphasize the principle of living harmoniously in society, but Thai people believe in the cause and effect of action. Moreover, both tales conveyed inequality and implications of gender hierarchy under a patronage system and a patriarchal society.

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1. Introduction

Through oral traditions, the folktales that often derive from the imagination combined with the beliefs of the people in each culture are passed through the generations. Various cultures may share some similarities in social structure and represent cultural and social differences. *Butterfly Lovers* and *Lilit Phra Lo* were selected for comparison in this study because of the tragic theme. Although the historical backgrounds and narratives of the two tales are different, the plots are based on historical folktales that end with early death, and both present beliefs and ideologies that illustrate severe restrictions to personal freedom under feudal society and patronage. In addition, the two tales also demonstrate cultural values and images of ancient Thailand and China.

Butterfly Lovers, or the tale of Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai, is one of the four great folktales of China. It is well-known as a love tragedy, reflecting ancient Chinese social norms that restricted women from accessing higher education and encouraged arranged marriage following the custom of well-matched social and economic status. *Lilit Phra Lo* is a narrative poem derived from a tale in Northern Thailand. It is a masterpiece of Thai tragic romance, which is approvingly regarded as a crucial part of the poetic heritage of Thailand (Bickner, 2020).

This study examines symbols and the representation of ideological and belief systems in Thai and Chinese society through *Lilit Phra Lo* and *Butterfly Lovers*. The study explores the similarities and differences of the socio-cultural context in terms of ideological perspectives, religious influence, and socio-cultural context, which include belief systems and how people from Thai and Chinese societies adhere to their traditional cultural values and how these elements shape the role and behavior of the female characters. The result of this study would assist in further comprehension of the similarities and differences of ideologies in Thai and Chinese socio-cultural perspectives. In addition, this study would deepen the understanding of the cultural backgrounds that appear in Thai and Chinese folktales.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Synopsis of *Lilit Phra Lo*

Lilit Phra Lo is a masterpiece of Thai tragic romance, which is approvingly regarded as a crucial part of the poetic heritage of Thailand. It is a narrative poem that counts among the five great works of Thai literature. It was praised in 1916 by the Literature Society of Thailand and received royal acclaim by the decree of King Rama VI as the best example of the "Lilit" poetic form. On the other hand, it has been controversial among scholars in Thailand for generations because of its erotic scene narration (Bickner, 2020). Many Thai scholars assume that it was initiated in northern Thailand, but it is still uncertain who was the original author. The text can be approximately dated back to the pre-Ayutthaya era and the early Rattanakosin era because some verses and details in the story appeared in works written in these periods. It narrates the love story between Phra Lo, the king of Suang, and the two princesses of Song, Phra Phuean and Phra Phaeng. It begins with a conflict between the two cities, Song and Suang, that results in the death of the king of Song and the abdication of the king of Suang.

Phra Lo became the new king of Suang. He was famous for his good looks, and the rumor of his handsomeness is widely spread, even reaching the city of Song, his enemy kingdom. Phra Phuean and Phra Phaeng heard this rumor and were enthusiastic to see him. Their female servants volunteered to help them by sending a musician to sing about the beauty of the two princesses in the city of Suang. They asked the sorcerer Samingphrai to use a spell to attract him and send a salahoen, a magical flying betel nut tray, to enchant the King of Suang. Under the magic power, Phra Lo

desires to meet the two princesses and asks his mother's permission to journey to the city of Song. When he arrives at the Kalong River, he receives an ominous sign of prophecy that warns him to cancel the meeting with the princesses.

The sorcerer Saming Phrai uses magic again to create a beautiful wild rooster to lure the king into the royal garden and meet the two princesses. As the trio and all their servants meet, they fall in love at first sight. They secretly live together in the inner palace. When the King of Song finds out about their relationship, he is initially angry, but he later understands their love and plans to arrange a royal wedding. However, the grandmother of the princesses opposes the marriage due to her resentment over her husband's death in war. During the fight, the trio sacrifice their lives for love. The two cities go into mourning for their death, the story ends with the two cities reconciling their political relations and making peace (Bickner, 2020; Ruengruglikit, 2002).

2.2 Synopsis of *Butterfly Lovers*

Butterfly Lovers, or the *Tale of Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai*, is a famous folktale in China. The story originated in the Eastern Jin Dynasty (317–420). It was primarily transmitted orally throughout Zhejiang Province in East China and became well-known throughout China by storytelling retold for centuries. It has been adapted into prevalent local operas, films, TV dramas, violin concertos, etc., which make it transmitted worldwide. In addition, the tale of Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai was included in the first collection of China's national intangible cultural heritage in 2006 (Zhang, 2008).

According to *The Legend of Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai: Four Versions with Related Texts* by Wilt L. Idema (2010), every version of the tale concludes the story with the death of the lovers and their transformation into butterflies. Although it is considered a tragic love story, pure and simple, it also may have been understood as a cautionary tale in the traditional society of the Ming and Qing dynasties, teaching that a woman should accept her allotted role in society and should not appear to be too intelligent because that would lead to a disastrous result. However, in the early twentieth century, the traditional Chinese family began to be seen as a hindrance to progress. Women's illiteracy was assumed to be a critical cause of China's international weakness. The arranged marriage was maligned and seen as a social disorder. The tale declares the desire for higher education and gender equality for women and the free love of people in traditional society. The two protagonists increasingly became the explicit representatives of these ideals in modern adaptations.

Butterfly Lovers recounts the story of Zhu Yingtai who disguises herself as a man to pursue education. She falls in love with her male fellow student, Liang Shanbo. When she leaves the academy, she tells him to visit her home and ask for her younger sister in marriage. When he reaches her residence, he discovers the truth that Zhu Yingtai is a woman. They express their love for each other but sadly say farewell because Zhu Yingtai's father arranges to marry her to Ma, the son of a wealthy local official. When Liang Shanbo returns home, he falls ill and eventually dies due to his emotional suffering, loneliness, and longing for his beloved. Zhu Yingtai is heartbroken when she finds out about the news of his death. During the procession on her wedding day, she jumps into a grave, and two butterflies flutter away, symbolizing their love (Idema, 2010).

2.3 Related works on *Lilit Phra Lo* and *Butterfly Lovers*

Some researchers have studied *Lilit Phra Lo* from sociocultural perspectives, such as the significance of magical features in the story, political lessons, etc. *Butterfly Lovers* was compared with *Romeo and Juliet* as two romantic tragedies from the West and the East, analyzing different aspects. For example, Cholada Ruengruglikit (2009) unveils the hidden meaning of “Salahoen (สลาเหิน)”, or flying betel nut tray, and “Kaikaeo (ไก่อแก้ว)” in *Lilit Phra Lo*, which are considered magical objects to aid the protagonists in fulfilling their desire and acquiring their love. The study presents a new and different interpretation of these two items that relate to the Tai ethnic tradition and belief. Tang Minli (2017) compared

Plum in the Golden Vase and *Lilit Phra Lo*, which narrates the female sense of individual existence from a literary perspective. The study reflects material and spiritual pursuits under the feudal system by confronting the feelings and desires of women. In addition, the study by Somkiat Wanthana (2019) stated that except its aesthetic and literary value poetry, *Lilit Phra Lo* conveys political lessons that the king must be considerate and refrain from being extreme in love affairs; otherwise, the king himself and his kingdom will encounter the loss that might cause the destruction to the state.

Many Chinese scholars compare *Butterfly Lovers* and *Romeo and Juliet* as love tragedies from the East and the West by analyzing them from different aspects, such as different views on love due to historical and cultural influences, the concept of dying for love, etc. However, there is no previous published research offering a comparative analysis of *Butterfly Lovers* and *Lilit Phra Lo*, nor any research exploring the symbols and representations of ideologies and belief systems in both stories.

2.4 Cultural Symbols and Representation

According to Geertz (1973) and Turner (1967), a symbol can represent a person, object, event, tradition, word, behavior, and more. Geertz (1973) believes that humans require symbolic sources of explanation to understand the meaning within a particular culture, while Turner (1967) states that symbols initiate social action and are determinable influences that incline persons and groups to do something. In symbolic anthropology, Turner (1948) and Geertz (1973) suppose culture lies within the basis of the individual's interpretation of their surrounding environment and does not exist beyond the individuals themselves. Correspondingly, the meaning assigned to people's behavior is expressed by their culturally established symbols, which aim to represent how individuals allocate meaning to certain things and express culture (McGee & Warms, 2013).

Stuart Hall (1997) defines representation as the production of meaning through language, which explains relevant meanings for the words by presenting someone or something in a particular way, expressing meaning symbolically, or through symbolic actions. Representation connects meaning and language to culture. Hall (2013) emphasized that representation is the linguistic construction of the meaning of the ideas in the human mind, and the connection between concepts and language allows humans to refer to objects, people, and events, either in real-world or imaginary worlds (Hall, 1997, 2013).

2.5 Ideologies and Religion as a Cultural System

According to Geertz (1973), he describes a symbol as any object, act, event, quality, or relation that carries a conception, which are public, observable, concrete embodiments of ideas, attitudes, judgments, longings, or beliefs. Sacred symbols designate powerful and pervasive moods and motivations of people, shape human behavior, and provide a representation of things. He stated that the route to religion is culture. It is defined as a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols and a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms used for communicating, perpetuating, and developing their knowledge about attitudes toward life. Religion is a system of symbols that acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the mindsets and motivations seem uniquely realistic (Geertz, 1973, p. 90).

2.6 The Structure and Function of Folktale

Bronislaw Malinowski (1948) proposed that myths, the sacred lore of the tribe, play a crucial role as a powerful means of assisting humans in primitive society in expressing, enhancing, and codifying beliefs. It reflects a sociological strain, such as the difference in status and power, the issues between precedence and subordination, and profound

historical changes. It is a vital component of human civilization connected with religious rituals, moral influence, and sociological principles in each society. Thus, myth is not only a fanciful tale but an active force or a pragmatic charter of primitive faith and moral wisdom in society (Malinowski, 1948).

Claude Levi-Strauss (1955) illustrated that myths are still widely interpreted in conflicting ways as collective dreams, the outcome of a kind of aesthetic play, and the foundation of ritual. Mythological figures are considered personified abstractions, divinized heroes, or decayed gods, and the stories usually narrate events that are implied as taking place in the past, either before the world's creation or during its early phases. The mythical value is preserved despite imperfect translations. It mirrors a social structure and set of relations and proposes an outlet for repressed feelings by making everything possible; therefore, any incidents and characteristics may occur and appear in the stories without logical reason or continuity.

William Bascom (1965) supported the concept by Malinowski, which emphasized the function of myth as a charter for belief. The four functions of folklore are as follows:

- 1) Folklore may mirror the familiar details of culture and incorporate common situations from everyday life.
- 2) Folklore validates culture by justifying its rituals and institutions to those who perform and observe them.
- 3) Folklore plays a particular role in education, and not exclusively in non-literate societies.
- 4) Folklore fulfills the necessary but often overlooked procedure of maintaining conformity to accepted behavioral patterns of one's society and is influential as a means of applying social pressure and exercising social control (Bascom, 1965).

Furthermore, Alan Dundes (2007) demonstrates folklore as a mirror of culture, which often reveals the areas of particular concern in society. Analysis of folklore collections can provide the individual who studies folklore a way of seeing another culture from the inside out instead of from the outside as usual. He also bonded folkloristics to semiotics and suggested applying psychoanalytic concepts to study meaning in a cultural context. He cited a pattern and system in folklore, meaning that the symbol used in any given folkloristic context can be related to a general system of symbols.

2.7 Feminist Theory

Rosser (1992) stated that all feminist theory argues gender is a significant characteristic that interacts with other elements, such as race and class, to structure overall relationships between individuals, groups, and society. Each group of feminisms has different ways of positing gender as an organizing category of experience that varies widely, and every field has its approach to applying the tenets of these diverse feminisms. Feminist theory expresses the experience of being neglected, underestimated, or marginalized. There are issues frequently analyzed in feminist theory, including discrimination, sexual objectification, oppression, patriarchy, stereotyping, and aesthetics.

Folklorist feminist theories explore how gender, sexuality, and other social identities intersect with folklore and traditional cultural practices. Some of the key themes in this area of study include the representation of women in folklore, the role of women as creators and transmitters of folklore, and how folklore can be used to challenge and subvert dominant gender norms (Jordan & de Caro, 1986; Mill, 1993). Feminist folklorists study the relationship between gender and folklore by emphasizing the experiences and expressions of women in various forms to examine the actual life of women in different cultures and contexts (Kousaleos, 1999).

2.8 Binary Opposition

Binary opposites refer to a set of related concepts that are diametrically opposed to each other in meaning. Each pair of ideas can only be comprehended by their relationship. Claude Lévi-Strauss (1955) posited that binary oppositions

were essential in human cultures and ways of thought. He considered that two opposite elements formed the basic structure of all human societies, shaping the way individuals perceive and interpret the surrounding world. He believed the idea of binary oppositions was universal and played a crucial role in shaping human cognition and communication.

2.9 Ideologies and belief systems in Thailand and China

2.9.1 Ideologies and belief systems in Thailand

The syncretism of Buddhism with Animism and Hinduism is a significant feature of religion in Thailand. Various Thai beliefs and practices are fundamentally rooted in Brahmanism, an ancient form of Hinduism, and folk animist religions. These beliefs have harmoniously coexisted for a very long time (Scroope, 2016). Buddhism influences the psychological structures and attitudes within Thai culture, bringing far-reaching implications to Thai people's aesthetic tastes and folkloristic and artistic creations. Although there are several sects of Buddhism, Theravada Buddhism is the prominent form of Buddhism that people acknowledge and practice in Thailand (Tarling, 1992).

Animism believes that everything in nature possesses a spirit. It is often practiced by ethnic Tai peoples in mainland Southeast Asia, who use shamans, spirit mediums, and ancestor worship. However, animism conflicts with Buddhist ideals concerning sobriety and restraint as it involves practices such as drinking alcohol, dancing, and smoking, which are prohibited among Buddhist monks and some strict Thai devotees who follow the eight precepts. Considering the differences between Animism and Buddhism, monks still play a vital role in both practices (Carter, 2021; Shirayama et al., 2006).

Aside from Animism and Buddhism, Hinduism is another belief system in Thailand. Some Thais worship Hindu gods, such as Lord Ganesha (พระพิฆเนศ), God Shiva (พระศิวะ), Goddess Lakshmi (พระแม่ลักษมี), and Goddess Kali (พระแม่กาฬี), to wish for health, prosperity, and fortune. The combination of Hindu and Buddhist beliefs is exemplified through some rituals and traditions, such as the Royal Ploughing Ceremony (พระราชพิธีจรดพระนังคัลแรกนาขวัญ), the tradition that a man who will become a Buddhist monk as "Nak (นาค)" before they are ordained, which relates to Hindu mythology and many local folk traditions in South Asian and Southeast Asian.

2.9.2 Ideologies and belief systems in China

Taoism, Confucianism, and Mahayana Buddhism are the three main religions that have persisted in China for a long time. The core of Chinese philosophy is humanism, and the unity of man and heaven is the overarching conclusion. Confucianism retained a dominant role, but Taoism also had a significant impact. From the Chinese cultural perspective, Taoism and Confucianism are comparable to humans and nature. The human and nature ideology constitutes the Chinese aesthetic perspective and the Chinese Oriental aesthetic feature. Therefore, this spirit of synthesis has characterized the entire history of Chinese philosophy (Mark, 2020; Stefon, 2019).

Confucianism proposed principles of self-guidance and noted that the key to building a harmonious life is to know how to treat others, whether our ancestors, leaders, parents, spouses, neighbors, or friends. Confucian morals emphasize harmony in relationships through principles of benevolence (仁), etiquette (礼), and reciprocity (恕). Filial piety (孝) is a fundamental moral for good behavior, which involves respecting parents and elders. Taoism is another influential Chinese philosophy that contends everything should return to nature. The core of Taoism emphasizes harmony with the observable world and the principle of non-action or wuwei (无为), recognizing the natural course of things and learning to cooperate with it. Furthermore, the concept of shade and light, or yin-yang (阴阳), focuses on balancing opposites and learning to collaborate with these opposites.

Buddhism is a foreign religion that has been accepted and persisted in Chinese society for a long time. Mahayana Buddhism intermingled with other Chinese belief systems for centuries and became Han Buddhism, the dominant branch of Chinese Buddhism that has blended with local belief systems, and it is now viewed as part of traditional Chinese culture and became a prevalent belief maintained in Chinese society due to its combination with Taoism that conveys the concept of the Bodhisattvas and the way of saving sentient beings in the mortal world. Moreover, it is deeply tied to Confucianism and other Chinese folk religions (Foy, 2019; Mark, 2020).

2.10 Historical Background and Socio-cultural Context of China and Thailand

China and Thailand have different historical backgrounds that cultivated people in society. Both *Lilit Phra Lo* and *Butterfly Lovers* represent the characteristics of distinct socio-cultural contexts that shape social values, attitudes, and ways of life.

2.10.1 Historical Background and Socio-cultural Context of China

China is one of the countries with the earliest developed civilization in the world, with a history of nearly four thousand years that can be traced back to written language. China developed from a slave society to a feudal society under the warlords competing for superiority and developed into a unified society under the emperor until the end of imperial system. Throughout Chinese civilization, there are ideological and academic activities were vigorous with the emergence of notable philosophers who had a profound influence on Chinese culture and society as the principle for people in later generations, such as Laozi, Confucius, Mencius, and Sun Wu, a military strategist, and so on (China Net, 2005).

Traditional Chinese culture focuses on an ethical tradition. The hierarchical relationship within a family (clan) is consistent with the power relationship of being ruled. Based on the patriarchal structure and concept, ethics has been applied to control decisions in social life. Chinese culture used morality to interpret the regulation of dynastic changes, explained the legitimacy of political power sources through morality, and formed a tradition of political-ethical integration. Chinese emphasized self-cultivation and education, which have initiated a tradition of moral governance, and the tradition of Confucianism was acceded to Chinese law. Chinese highlight the importance of ancestry and lineage, and the patriarchal system has continued in ancient Chinese society and persisted in some influences until now. Furthermore, the tradition of respecting ancestors and elders, filial piety, and the humanistic tradition of emphasizing moral cultivation and education, as well as related norms and concepts, have become unique spiritual symbols of China with distinctive national characteristics (Guan, 2019).

Traditional Chinese culture is holistic because of agricultural civilization, which gives rise to a sense of shared identity in society. People in this kind of society cannot be separated from the land, and settling down and relocating brings the blood ties between people closer, strengthening an individual's moral obligation to the whole. It demonstrates the collective action of a shared responsibility that requires grander overall stability and internal coordination, and the inseparability between individuals and the whole becomes increasingly significant. The purpose of regulation in the community is to enhance overall cohesion. Mencius, a famous Confucian philosopher, stated the concept of benevolent governance advocated for the implementation of a collective farming method of rural land sharing the same well and eight families jointly raising public land, which can strengthen the connections between people and cultivate a holistic moral concept. Chinese traditional culture was determined by its inherent spirit of harmony with diversity. The potential of Chinese culture is an innate spirit of inclusiveness, respecting differences and diversity, and embracing all attributes to

achieve its greatness, which drives Chinese culture to be passed down through generations until this day and emphasizes ethnic integration based on cultural identity (Guan, 2019).

In China, *mianzi* (面子), the concept of face refers to the level of social prestige that an individual carries. Saving face signifies to prevent others from losing respect for themselves or to avoid embarrassment. The Chinese people attach great importance to *mianzi*, which means paying attention to personal image and honor. For example, *hao mianzi* (好面子) is concerned about reputation and sensitive about one's pride, which is widely regarded as a characteristic Chinese cultural feature. Moreover, this tradition reflects the concept of image and honor that appeared for a long time, even during the Spring and Autumn Periods.

2.10.2 Historical Background and Socio-cultural Context of Thailand

In the recorded History of ancient Thailand, Mon and Khmer were the first groups of people who created the kingdom in this area before the Tai ethnic group, which migrated and dispersed across Yunan, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, and Thailand in the first millennium of the Common Era (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2020). Tai ethnics gradually became the majority group in the areas of Thailand. They acknowledged Hinduism and Buddhism through the previous kingdom such as the Khmer of Anchors, which was influenced by Indian culture. These cultural influences led to the basis of the social structure of Thai civilization that has been planted from generation to generation.

In traditional Thai society, a defined system of hierarchy and patronage governs how individuals relate to one another. Social interactions are often hierarchal and defined by patron-client relationships or a debt of gratitude (บุญคุณ), which is based on age, occupation, wealth, and residence. Although the country was developed in various aspects and maintained social mobility under the influence of globalization and world tendencies, Thai society cannot wipe these values out thoroughly. The social stratification in Thailand, which is based on past social hierarchies (ศักดิ์นา) and financial power is abolished from social regulations but still exists in Thai society (Hays, 2014).

China has the tradition of saving face, which is concerned with reputation and respects social prestige or esteem. Likewise, Thai people emphasize maintaining harmonious relations and interaction with others by being tolerant and avoiding conflicts. Social position and seniority are decisive in defining behavior towards each other. The person with the highest social status or the elder in a community or group commonly acquires the most respect. This characteristic is reflected through the kinship system or relationships with family members and relationships with friends and colleagues. Moreover, this system led to the misuse of power of authority and the cause of favoritism, cronyism, corruption, and undemocratic structures in Thai society (Hays, 2014).

3. Methodology

This study applied the qualitative method by collecting secondary data and related research including documents and analytical descriptions of the socio-cultural context of Thai and Chinese folktales. The researchers used content analysis and comparative analysis to examine two selected folktales from Thailand and China, namely, *Lilit Phra Lo*, a prominent narrative poem adapted from northern Thai folktales, and *Butterfly Lovers*, one of four famous ancient Chinese folktales remade to various genres of performances. These two folktales are connected by the central story of tragic love between hero and heroine, although the characters and background of the stories are otherwise thoroughly different.

3.1 Scope

This study discusses symbols and representations of ideologies or religion in *Lilit Phra Lo* from Thailand and *Butterfly Lovers* from China as the main content. The researchers explore the similarities and differences between the

two stories and analyzes Thai and Chinese folktales in a socio-cultural context by applying concepts and theories about symbols, representation, and the role of ideologies and religions in a cultural system.

3.2 Research design

This study used a documentary research design, carried out by collecting related information about the historical background, the plot of the tales, and academic works about *Lilit Phra Lo* and *Butterfly Lovers*. The researchers analyzed representations of ideologies and belief systems hidden in the stories and explored similarities and differences in Thai and Chinese culture, as well as the cultural structures that shaped the development of the stories. The comparison focused on the characters and behaviors female protagonists in the two folktales from the historical background, cultural tradition, religious influence, and social context in the two countries.

3.3 Data Analysis

The process of data analysis was divided into five steps as follows:

- 1) To collect qualitative data, this research focused on *Lilit Phra Lo* and *Butterfly Lovers*.
- 2) For a theoretical framework, this research organized and bonded all the data collected to examine the similarities and differences between the socio-cultural contexts and behaviors of the main characters and how those data represent ideologies through the narration of folktales in Thai and Chinese society.
- 3) Data was coded by exploring each kind of sample and all works related to describing the data.
- 4) Content was applied a content analysis and comparative analysis approach to analyze qualitative data for insights.
- 5) The results were used as the basis of a theoretical analysis to answer the research questions.

4. Results

4.1 Symbols appearing in *Lilit Phra Lo* and *Butterfly Lovers*

Lilit Phra Lo and *Butterfly Lovers* are folktales that convey symbols and representations of the ideological systems in Thai and Chinese culture. Symbolic elements in the tales indicate how people in both cultures interpret the meanings according to their cultural perspectives.

4.1.1 Analysis of Symbols in *Lilit Phra Lo*

In *Lilit Phra Lo*, symbols appear throughout the tale in the form of magical items that lead to the meeting of Phra Lo and the princesses. According to the anthropological analysis of *Salahoen* and *Kaikeao* by Cholada Ruengruglikit (2009), these magical items could not be directly interpreted as imaginary items with fixed meanings existing in the world, and they contain more than one dimension to comprehend. They were not only created for entertainment. Tai peoples in Southeast Asia share similar beliefs and traditions, including a strong bond with Animism.

Betel nut, also known as areca nut, is the fruit of the areca palm, which grows in tropical regions including Melanesia, Micronesia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and parts of East Africa. The tradition of chewing the betel nut with other herbs as a psychoactive drug is an activity that dates back thousand years ago and continues to the present day in many countries in South and Southeast Asia, particularly in rural areas. In *Lilit Phra Lo*, a *salahoen* (สลาเหิน), or flying betel nut, is a magical nut that transforms into a carpenter bee to bewitch people. Its cultural meaning can be interpreted as a symbol of love and a warm welcome. The custom of handing a betel nut tray in ethnic Tai culture expresses the human relationships of the host to guests by showing mutual respect, which was influenced by southern Indian tradition (Sathirakoset, 1954). A *salahoen* was transmitted to Phra Lo and invite him to visit the City of Song. The king received it

and decided to meet the princesses. This is the reason for both sides to follow their desires without hesitation (Ruengruglikit, 2009).

Kaikeao (ไก่แก้ว), or a wild rooster, may be interpreted as an ordinary rooster and a critical creature for dispelling bad fortune or foretelling. Cholada Ruengruglikit (2009) describes two reasons for Phra Lo to chase after the rooster. The first reason is to drive out bad luck. Another one is to foretell his future again after getting the prophecy from the Kalong River. However, Somkiat Wanthana (2018) opposed the analysis by Cholada Ruengruglikit because it could not answer why Phra Lo had to catch the rooster himself but did not instruct his subordinate to do it for him. He summarized that Phra Lo chasing the rooster is only normal behavior without any symbolic representation.

4.1.2 Analysis of Symbols in *Butterfly Lovers*

After the death of Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai in *Butterfly Lovers*, they transformed into butterflies. Butterflies flying together in the tale do not represent loyalty to love from the Chinese cultural perspective. Considering the hidden message at the end of *Butterfly Lovers*, the probable explanation is that butterflies symbolize the souls of the two main characters. In China, there is also a story of Zhuangzi's dreams of a butterfly (庄周梦蝶), which could be interpreted as an experience when the soul exits the body while dreaming and seeing oneself. Starting from this interpretation, the butterfly in *Butterfly Lovers* can be represented in the same way as a dream, emptiness, and the separation of soul and body (Yang, 2015). Moreover, turning into a butterfly (化蝶) is also a symbol of life and resurrection, as well as a symbol of the dead and the soul of newly deceased people in Chinese tradition.

4.2 Representation of Ideologies in *Lilit Phra Lo* and *Butterfly Lovers*

According to the studies related to *Lilit Phra Lo* and *Butterfly Lovers*, the results of the analysis reveal the representation of religious ideologies and cultural perspectives that can be summarized as follows.

4.2.1 Representation of Ideologies in *Lilit Phra Lo*

Representation of Animism in Thai culture is portrayed through the belief in supernatural powers, such as magic spells, magic items, land gods, and other kinds of spirits, which affect the human mind and actions. Although Buddhism is the main religion in Thailand, Thai Theravada Buddhism is integrated with Animist beliefs and polytheistic religions such as Hinduism. *Lilit Phra Lo* explicitly relates to Animism because magic is mentioned in the original text, and it is the key that leads to the relationship between the protagonists. When the two princesses are distressed because they think it is impossible to meet Phra Lo, their grandmother and servants try to call their dispersed souls, or *Khwan*, to come back to their bodies. Furthermore, the identity of the sorcerer Samingphrai, other sorcerers, and the celestial lord or land gods demonstrates the significance of Animism in Thai culture, which acknowledges the existence of supernatural spirits as part of life. Aside from Animist belief, *Lilit Phra Lo* represents components and concepts of Buddhism, which adopted a worldview grounded in Hinduism, particularly cosmology and mythology.

Representation of Buddhism in *Lilit Phra Lo* is expressed through the teaching of Queen Mother Bunluea to Phra Lo for being a good king. The Queen practices giving and collecting merit. The story highlights the concept of Karma, or action, and the relation between cause and effect. For example, before Phra Lo left the City of Suang, he talked with his wife, Laksanawadi. He said that everything in this world is impermanent and changeable, except merit, which is persistent and is the thing that may protect us. The relation between cause and effect in Buddhism is narrated through the decisions of Phra Lo and the two princesses, who decide to fulfill their desire without consideration of political conflict and finally end up with tragedy. *Lilit Phra Lo* also shows a message of peace through the reconciliation of the two cities and a way to solve the hatred between people with forgiveness.

Representation of Hinduism is received through political ideas influenced by ancient India. Phra Lo was said to be a great king, who was equivalent to the *Trimurti* (God Brahma, God Vishnu and God Shiva – the three main Gods in the Hindu and Brahmanic pantheon) and also praised as an incarnation of God Vishnu (พระวิษณุ). He is frequently compared to the sun and the moon (Bickner, 2020). Some stanzas also called him Indra (พระอินทร์), the name of the King of the Gods, deities, and heaven in ancient Hinduism.

4.2.2 Representation of Ideologies in Butterfly Lovers

Butterfly Lovers represents Confucianism and Taoism, two Chinese traditional philosophies that shaped Chinese culture and how Chinese people behave.

Representation of Chinese philosophy indicates Confucius acknowledged education as a process of constant self-improvement and held that its preliminary function was the training of scholars or noblemen. Zhu Yingtai dressing up as a man to attend the academy not only depicts the struggle of women who were unable to access formal education under patriarchy, but also emphasizes the importance of education in the Confucian worldview. Unlike Phra Lo and the two princesses who develop their relationship before the right time and situation, Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai follow the norms and values of their society. Zhu Yingtai expresses her filial piety (孝顺) to her father by obeying an arranged marriage, and she still preserves her purity for her beloved until the end. The butterfly in the tale represents Taoism, which emphasizes that humans and animals should live in balance with the Dao, or the universe. Taoists believe in spiritual immortality, where the spirit of the body joins the universe after death.

4.2.3 Representation of Love and Death

Lilit Phra Lo and *Butterfly Lovers* recount the tales of different cultures with distinct ideological and belief systems and reflect different worldviews constructed in each culture.

Both tales show the **representation of persistent love**. As mentioned above, *Lilit Phra Lo* presents characteristics of animism that settled in Thai culture for a long time. The love between Phra Lo and the princesses starts from curiosity and magic power, but they fall in love after they first meet, and sacrifice their lives in the end. In contrast, *Butterfly Lovers* shows Confucianism as the fundamental ideology to live in Chinese society. Although Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai love each other, they still keep their love in mind and follow the custom until the day of marriage when Zhu Yingtai jumps into Liang's grave, and they become butterflies flying together.

Representation of death that leads to freedom is presented through transforming into a butterfly at the end of *Butterfly Lovers*. Death is usually interpreted as farewell and mourning; however, it can also represent souls or spirits set free from oppression and limitation in their society.

4.3 Similarities of Culture in Thailand and China from the Analysis of *Lilit Phra Lo* and *Butterfly Lovers*

Thailand and China are both collective societies with strong kinship systems. Respect for elders and obedience to parents are valued. Patriarchy is the norm in both societies, as seen in the stories of Phra Lo and *Butterfly Lovers*. There are some similarities in terms of gender definition in *Lilit Phra Lo* and *Butterfly Lovers* that can be described as follows:

4.3.1 Inequality and Implication of Gender Hierarchy

Although the cultural background in *Lilit Phra Lo* and *Butterfly Lovers* is a patriarchal and patronage society in which men hold higher positions than women, Phra Phuean and Phra Phaeng, the two female protagonists in *Lilit Phra Lo*, are born into a royal family. With this high social status, they seem to have the power to marry whomever they wanted; however, they also need to consider political benefits and their husband's social position. Phra Lo suits their requirements,

but the political conflict between the two countries results in the sorrowful death of the protagonists. Likewise, *Butterfly Lovers*, demonstrate a patriarchy and gender hierarchy in family life. Males control property and the lives of family members, in this case, through arranged marriages that restrain the freedom of love and the decisions of young adults. Therefore, ancient Chinese society was typically dominated by men, while women were viewed as property for family benefit (Yarapirom & Damrongpong, 2023).

According to the tales, women in Thai and Chinese society must adhere to traditional cultural values. Thailand and China are both Asian countries and regardless of the social values or the traditional culture, they share certain similarities in the standard of femininity. Female protagonists in *Lilit Phra Lo* and *Butterfly Lovers* do not directly take the lead in the relationship with the men. They indirectly approach the male protagonists and still maintain their good virtue in other people eyes, which means Thai and Chinese perspectives both cultivate that a woman should preserve herself and not be proactive in expressing her feelings to a man, and the belief that a good woman needs to follow the tradition.

4.3.2 Gender Role and Negotiation for Gender Equality

In *Butterfly Lovers*, the plot that Zhu Yingtai has to hide her sexuality by dressing as the opposite sex represents the struggle for women's rights, and the tale also delivers the idea of arranged marriage. Owing to the third function of folklore by Bascom, people in society perceive this process through folklore because the tale has a particular role that affects the learning process and a tool for implantation of ideas through their mind and behaviors. Zhu Yingtai's behavior highlights gender issues and women's need for independence. The story showcases women's desire to participate in male activities and their strategies for elevating social status. Gender hierarchy in the tale is reflected via attitudes towards women. Under patriarchy, men hold superior authority while women are passive. *Butterfly Lovers* exemplifies how women can portray masculinity and explore how biological traits, social factors, and physical appearance shape femininity and masculinity. The protagonist manages social definitions of gender by expressing herself as male, showcasing that she can do anything without restriction. She does not have to stay home and learn embroidery, housework, and etiquette as an ideal woman should do. As a man, she can attend the academy as the scholars who prepare for the imperial examination. Gender role is inevitable as the manipulation of family life in the tale. Although the protagonist uses the vision of a man to overcome femininity, the woman remains in the eyes of men in a patriarchal environment. This is the same as Zhu Yingtai, who lives under the control of her father (Yarapirom & Damrongpong, 2023).

4.4 Differences of Culture in Thailand and China from the Analysis of *Lilit Phra Lo* and *Butterfly Lovers*

The cultural differences between the two tales are mainly due to the ideological and religious influences. In Thailand, Theravada Buddhism is the dominant religious ideology, along with Animism and Hinduism. These religious ideologies, especially Animism, shaped social and moral values and affect how Thai people interpret *Lilit Phra Lo*. According to the social structure in *Butterfly Lovers*, Confucianism is the core of traditional Chinese culture and is in a dominant position in the entire traditional cultural system from the historical perspective. Confucianism has an unmatched role and influence over other doctrines in China and the people, while Taoism is one of the philosophies that can be harmoniously mixed with the concept of Confucianism. Mahayana Buddhism is one of the crucial religious ideologies in China. Mahayana Buddhism is distinct from Theravada Buddhism in teaching and practices, even though comprehensive ideas and the core of Buddhist principles are the same. However, there is no Buddhist thought materialized in *Butterfly Lovers*.

4.5 Functions of *Lilit Phra Lo* and *Butterfly Lovers*

1) Both tales preserve and create value for the cultural heritage of Thailand and China by referring to the related origin and historical evidence of the folktales, such as architecture, relics, folk songs, traditional operas, literary works, and other creative applications in works of arts and cultural traditions influences by the tales.

2) *Lilit Phra Lo* transmits animist beliefs portrayed through magic and supernatural spirits, as well as Buddhism's principle of karma, which emphasizes cause and effect, through Phra Lo's decision to leave his city even though he knows he may fall into the trap. He acknowledges that everything in the universe is impermanent, and only the things he did are truly lasting. Whether good or bad, he would accept the karmic outcomes of the action, as stated in the original text. *Butterfly Lovers* conveys Confucianism via social norms and values such as filial piety, the importance of education, and abidance by the rules of society. Moreover, it also reflects the characteristics of Taoism that follow natural tendencies and beliefs that man is an integral part of nature, such as the souls of the butterflies at the end of the tale.

3) *Butterfly Lovers* expresses the negotiation of femininity by releasing grievances of socio-cultural pressures on women, frustration with social inequality, and the rights of women and the lower classes and portrays the frustration of societal norms limiting women's abilities. *Lilit Phra Lo* depicts a good woman who waits for men and does not directly take the initiative to approach men.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

5.1 Conclusion

Lilit Phra Lo and *Butterfly Lovers* play a significant role in reflecting ideologies and belief systems and shaping the cultural values in Thailand and China. Stuart Hall (1997) stated that representation connects meaning and language to culture. The meaning of culture is constantly mediated by language to be shared with members of a culture, and the importance of representation as a means of communication and social interaction asserts representation as a basic need for human interaction. By examining symbols and representations of ideological and belief systems in Thai and Chinese society through *Lilit Phra Lo* and *Butterfly Lovers*, it can be seen that both tales convey symbols and representations of ideological systems in Thai and Chinese culture.

In *Lilit Phra Lo*, the *Salahoen* (flying betel nut tray) and magical powers help the protagonists fulfill their desires and reveal the relations of cultural beliefs and practices in Thai culture. The flying betel nut tray in the tale expresses the warm welcome of the princesses and the invitation for Phra Lo to visit the City of Song. *Butterfly Lovers* demonstrates the ideologies of Taoism and Confucianism in China. Zhu Yingtai represents women's struggle under patriarchy, and the tale portrays how the Chinese attach importance to education and filial piety. Liang and Zhu always follow societal norms until they become butterflies after death and are released from all social pressure, symbolizing love and life spiritual immortality, and balance with nature in Taoism. Hence, religious ideologies play a significant role in shaping Thai and Chinese cultures. Theravada Buddhism, Animism, and Hinduism influence Thai social and moral values, while Confucianism is at the core of Chinese culture along with Taoism.

For similarities between China and Thailand, the socio-cultural context in both stories is the holistic culture. Thai and Chinese traditional cultures depict patriarchal society, patronage, and the importance of family and kinship systems. Social status and standpoint affect behavior and decisions in social life. Both cultures respect elders and obey their parents. Both tales highlight the importance of adhering to traditional cultural values and respecting traditional values in women. The tales serve several functions for culture and society. They help to preserve and create value for the cultural

heritage of Thailand and China, convey ideologies and belief systems, and express the struggles of femininity by addressing the socio-cultural pressures on women, frustration with social inequality, and the rights of women and the lower classes.

In Thailand, Theravada Buddhism, Animism, and Hinduism have influenced social and moral values and the interpretation of *Lilit Phra Lo*. On the other hand, *Butterfly Lovers* shows the characteristics of Confucianism that form Chinese traditional culture and social structure and Taoism that can be harmoniously mixed with the concept of Confucianism. These Chinese traditional philosophies are represented in the story without mention of any Buddhist principles. China and Thailand both acknowledge Buddhism; however, Mahayana Buddhism in China is distinct from Theravada Buddhism in Thailand in teaching and practices, even though comprehensive ideas and the core of Buddhist principles are the same.

After collecting the data related to both tales to analyze religious ideologies, the result indicates that Thailand and China share some similarities in their social structure, such as respect for elders and gender hierarchy. Thailand and China have collective cultures exemplified through kinship systems by respecting their elders and obeying their parents. General ideas of kinship systems in China and Thailand are alike but differ in details and complexity.

By analyzing gender definition, *Lilit Phra Lo* and *Butterfly Lovers* can be seen to convey gender inequality and implications of gender hierarchy. Owing to cultural background, both tales reflect how men held higher positions than women. *Butterfly Lovers* demonstrates evidence of a gender hierarchy system through an arranged marriage, which is considered filial piety and an ideal principle for family life. A male leader of a family holds the authority over property with the power to manage spouse selection, for example, considering arranged marriages for his son or daughter.

Conversely, Phra Phuean and Phra Phaeng, the two female protagonists in *Lilit Phra Lo*, were born into a royal family. With high social status, they seemed to have the authority to choose the best bridegroom they wanted, but the political conflict between the two countries led to a tragic ending. Furthermore, Thailand and China share some similarities in the standard of a good woman. All the female protagonists do not directly take the lead in the relationship; however, they use some tricks to persuade the male protagonists, which signifies that women with good virtue in Thai and Chinese perspectives share some similarities, such as preserving purity, avoiding expressing her feelings directly, and needing to follow the tradition.

Thailand and China have several differences in social and cultural perspectives. By examining the cultural context of the selected tales, the differences are mainly due to the ideological and religious influences. *Lilit Phra Lo* portrays animist beliefs that combine with other religions and shape social norms, morals, and the Thai ways of life. Regarding the social structure in *Butterfly Lovers*, the tale presents characteristics of Confucianism, which is the core of traditional Chinese culture and dominates a crucial position in the entire traditional cultural system. Meanwhile, Taoism is harmoniously integrated with the concept of Confucianism, reflected through the Chinese worldview.

5.2 Discussion

Lilit Phra Lo and *Butterfly Lovers* can be categorized into the same genre as tragedies. However, the nature of both stories is thoroughly different, whether the protagonists' social status or the structure of the stories. *Lilit Phra Lo* narrates the story of royal families who must maintain royal power and honor and the core of the tale relate to lust, magic, immorality, sensuality, and how protagonists being unaware of national destruction. Contrarily, *Butterfly Lovers* presents the story of scholars under traditional customs. Unlike the protagonists in *Lilit Phra Lo*, the relationship between Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai is ideal love that expresses unrequited love under the feudal system without erotic portrayal.

Owing to these differences, this study selected to underline the ideological and religious aspects that image the ideas of people in the whole society, not only a group of social class, and use binary opposition to analyze the different points that appeared in each story. In the anthropological aspect, Claude Lévi-Strauss (1955) supposed that the binary opposite formed the basic structure of all cultures and all humans' ways of thought. This study applied binary opposition to analyze the interpretation of symbols, structure, and holistic elements in *Lilit Phra Lo* and *Butterfly Lovers* as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 *Binary Opposition Analysis in Lilit Phra Lo and Butterfly Lovers*

Binary opposition		Analysis
Masculinity	Femininity	<p>Considering gender representation, Zhu Yingtai in <i>Butterfly Lovers</i> dressed like a man and expresses masculine characteristics to conceal her femininity to pursue educational opportunity, unlike the feminine attributes of other ancient Chinese women who follow the concept of the ideal woman who has to be a good daughter and wife and struggle under the oppression of patriarchal society that can be characterized by the role expectation on gender identity in the tale, which show the opposition of male and female in ancient China under the influence of Confucianism.</p> <p>On the other hand, Phra Phuean and Phra Phaeng were cultivated to be reserved noble ladies with good manners. Their behavior portrays the characteristics of femininity, who were under the control of their family.</p>
Animism	Buddhism	<p>Although Buddhism is the major religion in Thailand, the ideological system in <i>Lilit Phra Lo</i> predominantly portrays Animist belief. Phra Lo's mother teaches her son to do good deeds and believes the cause of karma in Buddhist thought, but she cannot obstruct her son who was under the power of magic. The effect of supernatural power is fast and efficient in attracting him to the City of Song. Queen Bunluea and King of Song reconciled the political relations of the two city after the death of their son and daughters indicate the idea of forgiving in Buddhism, and Phra Lo's desire for the princesses at the beginning of the story demonstrates the influences of Animist beliefs, such as using magical items, or interaction with supernatural power.</p>
Confucianism (Social rule)	Taoism/Animism (Rule of nature)	<p>Confucianism and Taoism concurrently combined to create the complete core of aesthetics that shaped traditional Chinese society. Confucianism defined a rigid human social hierarchy, while Taoism emphasized the ever-changing rhythms and flows of the natural world, which includes humanity. Confucianism focused on societal rules and filial piety, while Taoism emphasized nature, freedom, and spiritual immortality, promoting a harmonious relationship between humans and nature among Chinese people. Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai follow the rules of society that are influenced by Confucian thought. Contrarily, the supernatural phenomena and butterflies at the end of the tale can be interpreted as the reincarnation of the protagonists, which represents the characteristics of Taoism and the belief in supernatural power, in that the spirits return to nature.</p>
Rich	Poor	<p>In <i>Butterfly Lovers</i>, the difference in status between Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai is the biggest obstacle to their love. Owing to the concept of arranged marriage and a well-matched status, Zhu Yingtai grew up in a wealthy family. Liang Shanbo was born to a lower status, and neither his social nor economic background could match her family's requirements. This restriction mirrors the condition of people who have to survive in a hierarchical society.</p>
Death (Freedom)	Life (Oppression)	<p>In <i>Butterfly Lovers</i>, life can be interpreted as oppression because the protagonists need to live under the conventional frame of society. Death is a sign of tragedy, and yet death in <i>Butterfly Lovers</i> signifies the final freedom from all constraints in society.</p>

6. Recommendations

Recommendations for further research are as follows:

- 1) Further research could analyze folktales from other cultures that reflect different perspectives or compare the results from folktale analysis with modern societies to explore any influence of the traditional culture that persists until now.
- 2) This study could be extended to study literature, folktales, and various media in other contexts, such as politics and aesthetic perspectives.
- 3) Researchers can define additional keywords for further study related to the adaptation or recreation of folktales by analyzing them with different concepts and theories.

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