



Stories of Chinese Children's Hats: Symbolism and Folklore

Edited by Phylis Lan Lin and Christi Lan Lin (1996) 64pp. With 48 color illustrations.

I. Acknowledgments

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II. Mothers' Love, Christi's Hat Collection, and Les Enphants Enterprises

"I was fascinated by the different patterns and motifs of the embroidery work on every hat."

"I could not help but try to read into the mothers' minds and hearts. The popular emblems and symbols they sewed on the hats are the pure expression of their hope and tender love for their children."

III. Introduction: A Sociological-Cultural Approach to Chinese Children's Hats

1. Where there was Chinese history, there were hats.
2. Different shapes and patterns have different meanings.
3. Story-telling enhances mother-child communication.
4. Embroidery was a symbol of femininity in ancient China.
5. The rite of passage for adulthood included a ceremony for wearing the adult cap (*kuan*).
6. Chinese culture is full of symbolism.
7. Hats were symbols of mothers' wishes and moral teaching for children.

8. The study of Chinese children's hats reveals the fabric of peasants' life in rural China.

IV. Characteristics of Folk Art

Folk art is the art of people. It is a social and psychological expression of people's daily lives. Therefore we can say that to appreciate folk art is to understand the culture of the people who have created it. Folk art is not created by a single artist; rather it is a collective expression of the people who live in a community and who share a common. Folk culture is a reflection of the minds of the ordinary people.

1. Folk art is produced for practical purposes.
2. Folk art is closely related to the locality.
3. Legends, tales, and stories are the chief subjects expressed in folk art.
4. Folk art reflects the well-wishes of common folk.
5. Folk art is an important vehicle for socialization and transmitting moral teachings.
6. Folk art reflects popular beliefs and religious practices of the community people.
7. Folk art includes children's toys.
8. Folk art reflects people's daily lifestyle and life attitudes.
9. Folk art is anonymity.
10. Folk art is a reflection of the larger culture characteristics (i.e. The symbolic nature of Chinese writings.)

V. Folklore and Children

The birth of a child is a happy event for families. Parents protect the newborn with proper clothing. The Chinese tradition is to cover the newborn from head to toe so the baby does not get sick. The Chinese considered the head a very important part of the human body. The head must be well protected. Oftentimes, head-wear was a necessary attire in everyday life.

1. The rites of passage: birth, marriage, and death
2. The birth rites: The new born son vs. the new born daughter
3. High infant mortality rates in rural China
4. The rituals of the third day and a hundred days
5. The ritual of *Kuan Li*
6. The wish for longevity
7. The Fifth Month of the Lunar Calendar and the Dragon Boat Festival

8. Naming of the child

9. Folk medicine

VI. Symbolism and Legends in Chinese Children's Hats

1. The Chinese use symbols to convey their desire for a good life. (Examples see #3, 5, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 22, 23, 32, & 33)

good luck (*fu*)

wealth (*lu*)

long life (*shou*)

happiness and blessing (*hsi*)

2. The Chinese celebrate accomplishments. (Examples see # 1, 6, 12, 16, 26, 28, & 29)

The carp reaches the Dragon Gate

The Three Accomplishments

The Champion Hat

The Elegant Guard's Hat

Five sons passed the civil examination

The Sky Top Cap

The official wardrobes with eight treasures

3. The Chinese cultivate five cardinal virtues: good morals, property (good behavior), justice, benevolence (humanity), and trust. (Examples see # 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 21, 23, & 31)

The Phoenix's five-color feathers

The emperor's dragon image

The rooster's five virtues: refinement, assertiveness, courage, benevolence, and reliability

The lotus: Purity and nobility

The Chinese cabbage: Simple but solid

Shelter in the Mulberry Garden

The majestic tiger (the Mountain Gentleman)

Jung Ball: The hero's courage

4. The Chinese create symbols to dispel and ward off evil spirits. (Examples see # 5, 15, 18, 23, 30, & 33)

The tiger image

The five poisonous insects: snake, the centipede, the scorpion, the lizard, and the spider or toad

The eight trigrams and the Taoist hats

Ya Sheng coins and Hundred Family Locks

The rooster eats insects

5. Many symbols in folk art are derived from homonyms: the fascination of Chinese words.

(Examples see # 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, & 14)

The five bats Deer Butterfly for happiness and longevity

Lotus vase Gold fish *Shi Shi Ju I* (Persimmon)

Lotus seeds Buddha's hands Rooster

6. The Chinese love the color red: A symbol for happiness and blessing . (Examples see #11, 27, 31, 32, & all hats in red)

See the book design

7. The Chinese believe certain animals are supernatural creatures. (Examples see # 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, & 23)

The four supernatural creatures: The tortoise, the dragon, the phoenix, and the unicorn (the white tiger)

The dragon: The Chinese heritage

The phoenix: My fair lady

The fish: A good year with surplus

The butterfly: Happiness and longevity

The bat: Happiness

8. We all want to live forever. The Chinese believe the possibility for all human beings to become immortals. (Examples see # 13, 18, and 22)

The peach and the God of Longevity

The eight immortals

Wan for ten thousand years

9. Love story is a tale for everybody. (Example see # 20)

Ch'i Hsi: A love story

10. The Chinese believe there is a cosmic force in the universe that is the source of life.

(examples see # 15, 16, 31)

T'ai Chi (The ultimate principles of all things)

The concept of dualism (Yin & Yang)

The Eight Trigrams

V. 1998 and the Tiger Culture (The Majestic Tiger Hat # 23)

1. The two polar views of the tiger

2. The King of Mountain and the big bug

3. The tiger and the dragon: Clouds come from the dragon, wind comes from the tiger

4. The tiger personality

5. The tiger zodiac and the wedding

6. The tiger lord

7. The ancient tiger totem

8. Parental education and pregnancy

9. Yunnan Province's Tibetans and the Na-hsi people

10. The cocoon tiger can ward off evil

(The year of tiger: 1914, 1926, 1938, 1950, 1962, 1974, 1986, 1998)

This is a book about a segment of ancient Chinese folk art. This book is about the folklore and symbols attached to the decorations found on ancient Children's hats. To learn about children's hats is to know facets of folk art and traditions in ancient China.

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A picture from the book



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