



## The Butterfly Lovers: The Legend of Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai: Four Versions with Related Texts

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The late-imperial legend of Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai, the Butterfly Lovers--a story as central to Chinese culture as Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* is to Western culture--also relates a tale of two lovers help apart by social strictures. To audiences of the many Chinese ballads, plays, and films based on the story, the tragic ending offers proof that equality and happiness can only be achieved in a China freed from the traditional family system.

This volume offers translations of the earliest versions of the popular ballad along with later literary reinventions of the tale; a variety of related documents reveal the historical and cultural origins of the legend. In his Introduction, Wilt L. Idema provides essential contextual information and discusses how the story of the Butterfly Lovers fits into modern Chinese concepts of gender roles and sexual freedom.

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## **Editorial Review**

### Review

Idema's scholarship . . . [and his] ability to translate popular texts into comparably idiomatic English are outstanding achievements. --Hugh R. Clark, Ursinus College

A judiciously chosen selection of the highlights of the famous Liang-Zhu story cycle with a particular focus on earlier and little-known redactions in a multiplicity of genres. Expertly translated with glosses on cultural items, this volume will prove a boon to the English reader with an interest in the riches of Chinese oral and vernacular culture. Scholars and students of Chinese literature and culture will value this volume for the insight it gives into the emergence and development of the story at key points in the tradition. Teachers of Chinese literature, history, and gender studies too will find much to draw inspiration from in the introduction, the translated stories and the background material presented in this book. --*CHINOPERL Papers*

A significant contribution to our understanding of pre-modern vernacular Chinese literature and the society which it reflects. An informative and insightful study that both specialists and general readers interested in Chinese culture, thanks to accurate and felicitous translations and concise and edifying commentaries, will find a delight to read. --Richard John Lynn, University of Toronto, in *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*

### About the Author

Wilt L. Idema is Professor of Chinese Literature, Harvard University.

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