

Chinese Folklore: Qin Hui and the Stinking Lake

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(Clearwisdom.net) *Note: General Yue Fei is a much-celebrated hero of the Southern Song Dynasty (1127 - 1279 A.D.) He was known for his courage and patriotism, and credited with defending China against northern invaders. He died a tragic death at the hands of a court official named Qin Hui.*

There is a shrine to Yue Fei on the bank of West Lake in Hangzhou City. In front of the shrine there are four cast iron kneeling statues. Two statues are Qin Hui and his wife, Madam Wang, responsible for betraying the country and murdering Yue Fei.

It was said that in the Ming Dynasty, a new Futai (*provincial governor-general*) assumed office in Hangzhou City. This person was also named Qin, and was Qin Hui's descendant. Not long after taking up the post, one day the Futai led one of his subordinates on a tour of the West Lake. When he came to the Yue Fei Shrine and saw his ancestor keening down before Yue Fei, he hurriedly covered his face with cloth and backed up.

After returning to the yamen (*a government office in feudal China*), the Futai was very nervous. He called his subordinate in to discuss how to remove the cast iron statues.

The subordinate stroked his beard, thought for a little while, and said, "If we remove the statues openly, the people certainly won't allow it, and they might even stir things up. In my opinion, it's better to have this

pair of statues thrown into the West Lake. Sunken in such a huge lake, they won't possibly be found even if the lake water is all siphoned out."

The Futai said, "Excellent! Excellent!" So he had the statues removed that very night and the statues were then thrown into the lake.

Unexpectedly, at dawn the very next morning, a strange thing happened: West Lake began to smell. It smelled so bad that people became lethargic and wanted to throw up when they went near the water.

Someone discovered the missing statues in front of the Yue Fei Shrine and yelled, "Come and see! Two statues are missing! Somebody must have thrown them into West Lake. Otherwise, why would the water stink so badly?"

After finding that the statues were missing, many of the people came to the Futai yamen to report it and request that the criminals responsible for removing the statues be arrested.

The Futai was still sleeping. Hearing a lot of noise, he got up and asked what was going on. His subordinate explained to him what was happening. Having a guilty conscience, the Futai told his subordinate to spread the word that he was ill.

Would the people leave? Hardly. More and more people came and the crowd almost pushed down the stone lions in front of the government compound. The Futai was afraid something big would happen if things kept on going like that, so he forced himself to come out and face the crowd. He said, "This - is all rumor. Please don't be so ready to believe it."

The common people said, "You'll know when you see whether it's rumor or not."

The crowd surrounded the Futai and was determined to drag him to go

and have a look. The Futai had no other choice but to sit on the large sedan chair carried by eight people and they went to West Lake. A few li (a unit of distance, 1 li = 500 meters, or 0.3 mile) away from the lakefront, he smelled a strong odor blowing straight toward the sedan chair. Luckily he hadn't had a chance to eat breakfast. Even then he barely managed to hold back the vomit.

Upon arriving at the lakefront, the Futai peeked through the curtain seam, and saw nothing but a dense crowd in front of him. With his heart beating fast, he walked out of the sedan chair slowly. He dry-coughed several times and said, "It's normal for the lake water to stink once in a while, and you don't have to make a big fuss about it. In my opinion, this has nothing to do with the cast iron statues."

By now, some people roared in the crowd, "What's your relationship with Qin Hui? Why would you protect him?"

For a while, the Futai didn't know what to answer. He calmed himself down and thought to himself, "Don't panic! The statues have sunk to the bottom of the lake, who can possibly find them?" That thought comforted him greatly and he said arrogantly, "Stop creating trouble! If anybody can actually pull the statues out of the lake, I am willing to resign and ask for punishment!"

As soon as his words came out, the dark lake water suddenly became limpid and clear. The pair of statues floated up from the bottom of the lake, as if lifted by somebody, and drifted straight toward the Futai.

The Futai was frightened and his face turned yellow. He rushed into the sedan chair headfirst and yelled, "Run! Run!"

The crowd started to throw stones toward his chair as he ran away. When the sedan chair arrived at the yamen, many holes had already been punched into the canopy by stones. The back of the Futai's head

had three large bumps each as big as a walnut. That very night, not daring to wear the official headgear, the descendant of Qin Hui fled from Hangzhou City.

After the statues drifted to shore, the common people scooped them out of the water and put them back to kneel at the Yue Fei Shrine.

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