



The content is published under a Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial 4.0 License.

Reviewed Article:

As Dear as Salt - Indications for an Ancient Plant Ash Tradition Preserved in Old World Folktale

Persistent Identifier: <https://exarc.net/ark:/88735/10793>

EXARC Journal Issue 2025/1 | Publication Date: 2025-03-25

Author(s): Lutz Zwiebel¹ ✉

¹ Independent researcher, Ortsstrasse 165, 02829 Markersdorf, Germany



Do folktale heroines tell of a prehistoric plant ash use?

The culinary use of plant ash is an ancient technology nearly extinct worldwide and completely absent from Eurasian cultural history. Despite the lack of this technology's historical documentation, folktales provide a rich yet underestimated corpus on salt and ash. The denotation of the physical substances as well as the related narrative structures are investigated throughout several tale types. Motifs and their typical transformations show a

wide distribution accompanied by a common collective understanding. Origin and loss of such plant ash tradition are linked to prehistory. The expression of gender specific education in fundamentally changed social contexts is hypothesized. Vladimir Propp's structural analysis is introduced as a tool elucidating unconscious human heritage.



Folklore of Europe and Asia displays a homogeneous view upon salt. As a cleaning and curing substance, inherent in tears and seawater, it expels evil and along with bread, it serves as a ritual gift in marriage, childbirth, housewarming and in welcoming guests. This is apparent in the Slavic, Hebrew and Persian tradition as well as in other European regions.

Introduction

Investigations into the vegetable plant Garden Orach (*Atriplex hortensis* L.) uncovered superstitious roots in its medicinal perception, that penetrated classical Greek and Roman literature (Zwiebel, 2024). These beliefs focus on female sexuality and its symbolism of menstrual blood and the colour red. In deficit of obvious reasons to connect the red vegetable to female sexuality further investigations were carried out, (Zwiebel, 2025a). Analytics as well as the combustion of dry plant matter combined with the utilisation of the black residue offered unexpected results that defined *A. hortensis* as a possible salt substitute (PAS). The increased concentrations especially of sodium were only found in this domesticated, neither in other *Atriplex* spec., nor in other garden plants. This connects the plant to early horticulture and domestic routine.

An ancient technology of culinary PAS has not been documented for European prehistory, but it can be traced throughout many tropical cultures worldwide. The indigenous understanding of PAS is typically found connected to female

sexuality. A remarkable cultural concept of Witoto (Huitoto) people of Colombia identifies PAS with sex and fecundity. The process of its making involves advanced ecological and spiritual knowledge. It is explained as sexual education by their shamans (Echeverri and Enokakuiedo, 2013). Most of the exploited plants are kept under horticultural maintenance, by the Witoto, as well as people from Africa and Papua New Guinea (Okoli, 2023). It is not clarified whether there is a true preference for cultivated plants or rather the advantage of abundant availability. Even though the ethnobotanical data from the tropics were found in line with the ancient technology proposal, they were not able to fully explain this phenomenon. Inspired by the documented oral transmission of indigenous knowledge I began to collect indications of PAS technology in Eurasian folktales.

Old World folktales show a great consensus in plots, characters involved and in the way variations are generated almost independently from language, religion, and region (Levin, 1989; Lüthi, 1960; Marzolph, 1984; Propp, 1987). Motifs, rites and themes are of great persistence and can be considered ancient and insufficiently understood. Modern interpretations mostly concentrate on a metaphoric sphere covering subjects such as ethics,

psychology and religion. But folktales follow a specific and structured kind of logic that does not allow isolated interpretation. Therefore Lüthi (1960) argued for interdisciplinary methods in folktale research. Still now, the difficulties in doing so hinder a common perception of the origin, meaning, and dispersal of folktales.

Recent works on linguistic phylogeny (Da Silva and Therani, 2016; d' Huy, 2020) and new finds and interpretations of Paleolithic cave paintings (Whitley, 2009; Lyubchov Kirilov, 2016; Aubert, *et.al.* 2019) have argued for an origin of several myths in remote prehistory and thus closing the gap between myth and folktale.

From this perspective, folktales might contain remains of traditions that are not part of our conscious memory any more.

Material and method

Folklore of Europe and Asia displays a homogeneous view upon salt. As a cleaning and curing substance, inherent in tears and seawater, it expels evil and along with bread, it serves as a ritual gift in marriage, childbirth, housewarming and in welcoming guests. This is apparent in the Slavic, Hebrew and Persian tradition as well as in other European regions.

Ash, on the other side, is dominantly associated with death and mourning, and mentions of consumption remain rare. The Bible says: "For I eat ashes (dust) as my food and mingle my drink with tears." (English Standard Version Bible. 2001: Psalm 102:9). As a prayer it has allegoric qualities, yet salt (of tears) and ash appear connected.

This becomes even more explicit in another habit from the same tradition. Before the ninth day of the Jewish month of Av, bread and hardboiled eggs are ritually eaten dipped in ash.

Attention is drawn to the fact that ash, salt and bread show some interdependence and manifest memory of mourning and transition.

In the present investigation, we follow the approach suggested by V. Propp (1895-1970) to uncover historical roots in wonder tales (Propp, 1987). This method was established investigating Russian tales. It begins with a supposed ritual (prerequisite) that is capable of reasoning on a specific and common motif in a fairy tale. This is called a basic theme. Comparing various tales of the same basic theme elucidates associated motifs and their typical evolution. In the way the basic theme and its associated motifs vary, proposals can be made on origins and relative timelines of derivations. According to Propp, most of the variations follow certain patterns that act independently from cultural and historical background.

The well-established folktale typology of the Aarne Thompson Uther Index (ATU) (Uther, 2004) is commonly used by scholars, but it is based on fixed sequences and characters and

therefore is not suitable to describe dynamic transformations of the themes. Despite this fact, ATU numbers are referenced as far as such types can be related to the structural analysis.

The prerequisite here is a hypothetical PAS use and ritual, represented by the basic themes of either ash or salt. Both substances represent the knowledge of indigenous people outside Eurasia. From the rich corpus of folktales related to the themes a representative selection is undertaken.

Forty-four tales from Europe and Asia represent typical aspects of the themes salt and ash. All tales are featured by title, region of appearance and bibliography in Table 1 and are referred to by their ID number in the text.

Additional folktales and myths are referenced in the standard method.

ID	title	English name	region	source
1	Askeladden (various)	Askeladden, boots	Norway	Dasent 1859
2	A só	The Salty Witch	Hungary	Virág 2019
3		Basque legend	Basque	Cox 1893
4	Cap o'Rushes	Cap o`Rushes	England	Ashliman 2013
5		Cinder Boy	Hungary	Petzold 1995
6	Come `l bon sal	As good salt	Veneti/ Italy	Ashliman 2013
7	Das Märchen vom Aschenpeter	The tale of Ash Peter	Transylvania	N.N. 1967
8	Der Bärenhäuter	Bear Skinner	Germany	KHM 101 Grimm, Grimm 1957
9	Des Teufels rußiger Bruder	The Devil's sooty brother	Germany	KHM 100 Grimm, Grimm 1957
10	Die Entdeckung der Salzquellen	The discovery of the brine spring	Halle/Germany	Lemmer 1989
11	Die Gänsehirtin am Brunnen	The Goose Girl at the well	Germany	KHM 179 Grimm, Grimm 1957
12	Die grüne Feige	The green fig	Westphalia/ Germany	Kuhn 1859
13	'E tre Figlia d` ore	The three golden girls	Napoli Italy	Cox 1893
14	Juanon del Cortezon	Johnny of the bark	Asturia /Spain	Cox 1893
15	Kvernen som maler på havsens bunn	Why the sea is salt	Norway	Dasent 1859
16	La Pouilleuse	The Hen Girl	Bretagne / France	Cox 1893
17	L` Aqua e la sali	water and salt	Sicily	Ashliman 2013
18	La Sendrarœula	Cinderella	Sicily	Cox 1893

19		Loving like salt	Venice Italy	Cox 1893
20	Occhi Marci	Blear Eyes	Italy	Cox 1893
21	Notwendigkeit des Salzes	The necessity of salt	Tyrol	Zingerle and Zingerle 1911
22	Namaki	Love like salt	Persia	Marzolph 1984
23	Namaki	Namaki and the Div	Persia	Friedl 2014
24	Peau d' Ane	Donkey Skin	France	Perrault 2001
25	Peau d' Ane	Donkey Skin	Corse	Cox 1893
26	Petru Cenuşá	Ash Peter	Romania	Catana 1974
27	Prinzessin Mäusehaut	Princess Mouse Skin	Germany	KHM 71a Grimm, Grimm 1957
28		salt and water	Portugal	Cox 1893
29	sol	salt	Russia	Ransome 1916
30	Salt og Bröd	salt and bread	Sweden	Cox 1893
31	So lieb wie das Salz	As dear as salt	Germany	Cox 1893
32	So lieb wie Salz	As dear as salt	Germany	Hein 1984
33	Sůl nad Zlato	salt for gold	Slovakia	Nemcova 1983
34		Sweeter than salt	Pashtun / afghanistan	Guly 2009
35		The Devils brother in law	Bohemia	Jech 1984
36		The greatest Ash Peter in the world	Slovakia	Nemcova 1978
37		The king and his daughters	Pakistan	Ashliman 2013
38		The princess who loved her father like salt	India	Ashliman 2013
39		The reed flute	Hungary	Petzold 1995
40		The story of salt	China	Friedman 2015
41		The wonderful quern	Iceland	Björgulfsdottir 2024
42	Vuil Velleken	Dirty Skin	Flanders	Cox 1893
43	Vuiltji vaegt den Oven	Slut sweeps the oven	Flanders/ Belgium	Cox 1893
44		The dirty shepherdess	France	Lang 1892

TABLE 1. INDEX OF SELECTED FOLKTALES RELATED TO PAS.

Results

If ash is mentioned in folktale, it is easily identified as wooden ash commonly accumulated in households as waste and dirt. The heroines, namely of the Cinderella cycle (ATU 510) or

heroes (**1, 7, 26, 29**) rise from the dirt of the hearth where they spent their latency before their fateful ball, combat, or journey. This ash may be vaguely connected to a '*prima materia*' as in phoenix myths, but not to specific uses in human economy. At this stage, there seems to be no reason to relate these ashes to PAS and the basic theme.

Regarding salt, there are three dominant themes in folktale. One is about sowing salt instead of grain (ATU 1200), a farce-like episode connected to typical fool's tales (Schwibbe, 2004).

A second cycle tells about the origin of sea salt ('the mill at the bottom of the sea' ATU 565) as in **15, 41**, found on coasts of the North and Baltic Sea and in various adaptations in Japan (Seki, 1963). Legends about the discovery of inland salt marshes appear related to this (**10, 40**, Hall-Wattens Tourismus, 2024). The salt substance is easily identified as sea salt or salt from inland brine wells.

But within a third group the distinction between two salt types can be detected. In tale **30** 'good Russian salt' is opposed to sea salt. It is shipped to a king on a distant seacoast, to whom it is still unknown. He pays off the sailor with gold, silver, and gemstones.

The good salt is opposed to ordinary salt also in a Hungarian and an Italian tale (**2, 6**). Still more precisely is the differentiation of magical and common salt in the Slovakian tale (**33**), where a little bag of fairy salt from a magic garden enables the heroine's wedding and the restoration of the kingdom, whereas abundant salt supply for everyone is detected by her wand in an inexhaustible salt mine.

A native salt, more valuable than ordinary salt is familiar to many PAS-exploiting indigenous people where salt trade started in colonial times (Zwiebel, 2025a). The use of ash and salt as dowry, each one presented in a traditional banana leaf container ordinarily occurs in a tale from Tanzania (Müller, 1996), where a PAS tradition still persists.

Salt and ash heroines

There are several other motifs that manifest the coherence of the third group from Europe and Asia. They are introduced now, beginning with the appreciation of salt in social contexts.

The tales of type ATU 923 'love like salt' usually start with an old king challenging his three daughters to present equivalents of how much they love him. While the older ones stick to analogies of wealth, beauty or sweetness, the youngest offers him salt. For the insult of such common and cheap love, she is driven out of the court into the wild. At the end, her father regrets his fault by experiencing salt shortage, frequently at his daughter's wedding dinner. The way to reunion is accompanied by recovery of the daughter's and fathers' social status and wellbeing.

There is little doubt that the king's understanding of salt, meaning cheap, follows its true position in the historical economy. However, the symbolic phrase "white gold" is sometimes used to argue for a formerly extraordinarily expensive product. It is true that locations of early salt mines, such as in the Austrian and German Alps and Halle/Germany reached a prosperity beyond other cities of comparable importance. The reason is not the raw material's high value, but rather that 'everything counts in large amounts'. Also, Salarium (lat.), the word for Roman soldiers' salary was derived from the word for salt. This is no hint referring to special value either. Salt was used as a rather inexpensive money equivalent that was still under the control of the Empire, so the identification with "white gold" is at least partially misleading and more likely a romantic adaption originated in the salt tales.

Tale type ATU 923 'love like salt' is classified as a realistic or legendary tale, which separates it from true fairy or wonder tales. It is well known in many variations among diverse ethnic groups from Europe to Central and East Asia.

In fact, several shortcut variations of these tales do not contain magical or wondrous episodes, they are reduced to a social farce wherein the salt motif only appears as an instance of something that is underestimated due to its abundant availability. These stories describe the heroines' walk into the wild merely as a short field trip to some nearby Inn where she learns to cook and encounters her lover prince (21, 22, 30, 31, 32, 37).

But this is opposed by versions of true fairy tale, where the princess's despair is ended in a distant or otherworld place to which she devotes herself. It is typically a remote garden (2, 11, 20, 32, 33) otherwise a clearing in the woods, a hut in the mountains, a hidden castle (3, 6, 11, 34, 38) all only inhabited by the owner and host, a helper with supernatural qualities. This may be an old fairy woman (2, 3, 6, 11, 18, 19, 20, 33, 42), an old magician, a god, heavenly bird, or a tree where mystical serpents dwell (17, 34, 38, 40).

This place offers her nuts, flowers, fruit, and vegetables, sometimes provided by birds (2, 3, 38) as well as a useful daily routine. Despite her noble birth, she becomes highly skilled in ancient rural techniques such as gardening (11, 32, 33), spinning, keeping small herds of livestock (3, 11, 16, 20, 25), cooking, and gathering firewood (6, 21, 31, 34).

The heroine is ambitious but humble. She is not forced to work and the job involved cannot be classified as low or humiliating even though it is physically demanding. This atmosphere of goodwill, independence and responsibility can be found elsewhere in many true fairy tales. The garden plays a central role in most of them. A spring-watered place of fruit trees, wonderful flowers, and miraculous herbs not unlike Eden. There are no mentions of reaping, winnowing or grinding grain, which normally display the feminine share of labour division in agrarian hierarchies. Seemingly, the common rules and laws of civilised Eurasia have not reached this place. The heroine's visit may last several years (11, 33) but it always remains transitory. At the end she returns to the ordinary world all by herself. The set of motifs, i. e. a

magic helper, the remote but safe place, the skills, the return to the world in an altered state indicate a process of initiation, an important event in mythology and ethnology.

At this point, the disappearance or annihilation of the magical helper prior to the princess's return and wedding will be focused. The wise fairy woman disappears with all her homestead in an instant in **6, 11** and **33**. In the Indian version (**38**) the guarding fairies are diminished and disappear into the sun jewel box, whereas the Chinese beautiful magical bird Feng Huang suddenly flies off and disappears (**40**). In the Pashtun tale (**34**) the tree where two magical serpents dwell has to be burnt to ashes to find a treasure inevitable for matchmaking.

More dramatic is the old magician's end in the Italian tale (**17**). He must be dismembered and each piece of him put into one room of the house, where it turns into gold and gems right before the wedding guests arrive. The demanded dismemberment of a benevolent helper regularly occurs in fairy tales as "The golden bird" KHM 57 or the 'Hainuwele' tale from Indonesia, where a mother deity is such transformed into domesticated plants (Jensen, 1939). In many cosmogonies the dismemberment of ancient gods and goddesses signals a new fundamental epoch, as in Mesopotamia, where the primordial goddess Tiamat is treated likewise by Marduk, founder god of the State of Babylon (Hennings, 2013).

Thus, the return of the heroine to the ordinary world of court, family, and marriage contrasts starkly with this ancient other world. It seems impossible to merge them. All she can keep from her time-off is the received ingenuity and knowledge. With this, she manages the final part of the tale, which involves matchmaking and reconciliation with her father. This has to be done unnoticed and so she uses all sorts of disguise to hide her identity. It might be a beggars rag, a wooden or felted robe, a donkey's, mouse's or dead old woman's skin, a fairies wand that turns her into an old woman, a cap of rushes, a hollow tree or by simply using ash and dirt to cover hair and face (**3, 4, 11, 14, 16, 18, 20, 25, 27, 42, 43**). It always is a transformation into something ugly, poor, dirty, old, and menial. In tales where she does not use masquerade at all, she finds herself doing work of low esteem, serving the same narrative purpose. This work and her abode, which usually is near the hearth, in the shed, or under the stairways, manifests her social status as underclass. The same places and tasks that felt comfortable to her in the fairy world symbolise disrespect in the ordinary one.

From under this disguise, she spots and chooses the prince. At this point, the fairy tale versions of 'Love like Salt' ATU 923 are often mixed with other types. The most common deviation in ATU typology concerns elements of 'Cinderella', ATU 510. The salt heroines show typical Cinderella aspects such as ash names, an abode by the hearth, their ash-covered face, and a magic helper (**17, 18, 42, 43**). There is no clear distinction between the two tale cycles. They mix and might act as aspects of the same basic theme, which I hesitated to accept at the beginning of this chapter.

According to scholars, this mixed cycle is classified by highly diverse and widespread variations, which belong to different fragmented types of one or more traditions (Sakamoto-Martini *et al.*, 2023; Rooth, 1951; Cox 1893). Sometimes the variations are self-sufficient enough to not allow a structural analysis. This is the case when the heroine's initial conflict may be caused by her incestuous father, by a mean stepmother or her jealous sisters, none of which bears a sign of greater antiquity. This is different among the contrary descriptions of matchmaking. Romantic versions show a shy girl of low social status chosen by a handsome prince who catches her on her third flight or by a successful shoe or ring test. The shoe might be a Roman sandal as in the Rhodopis tale (ca. 7 BC - 24 AD), perhaps the earliest Cinderella in written form (Jones, 1917), or a golden high heel adapted to modern imagery. But most of the Cinderellas and salt princesses actively create the plot and choose the mate. The fact, that a majority of them does not know about a shoe, indicates an archaic self-responsible girl, who rather uses a ring or food to be recognised. Quite often both motifs that announce matchmaking are combined, a ring baked into a bread or slipped into a broth (**4, 14, 28, 44**).

The ring or shoe test itself, carried out by the prince, is another motif easily identified with non-archaic thinking. Shoe and ring are too small and delicate for all other girls to fit, may they cheat and cut their toes. Only the heroine succeeds, who has the tiniest fingers and feet indicating almost immature virginhood. This represents a desirable feature in an aristocratic tradition.

But how did she do all the spinning, gardening and walking about without roughing her limbs? This may be considered a narrative paradox but not the origin of the tale.

If it is true that the ruling prince came in late, one must ask where he had been before.

The versions of the basic theme, hypothesised to be more ancient, save only a small room towards the end of the plot for him. Usually, he is not even present until matchmaking. In the Indian version (**38**), she has to revive him prior to the wedding. In many cases, he is found ill or lovesick and only rescued by her gifts or attributes. She has chosen him. Her recognition food revives him, he rises from his bed (**4, 38, 44**).

However, the salt tales often double the recognition food theme. At first, the princess is recognised by a golden item she has deliberately put into bread, cake, or broth, and secondly her father recognizes her by salted food. In cases where the king did not suffer from salt shortage before, he recognises her through deliberately unsalted food. That shows, gold may substitute salt as bread substitutes broth. It is difficult to know what was first. But the similarity of gold and salt was already present in the beginning, when she answered the love question. Therefore gold might be a derived element suitable for a royal family. The items of economic value replace the ones of forgotten value. The Cinderella complex consists of themes that may be derived from the salt tales by replacing salt with gold.

The associated motifs mentioned, that are equally met in salt princess tales and Cinderella tales, will now be examined according to Propp's structure of transformation. He described ubiquitous patterns according to which a motif might change, when one underlying meaning got lost or is not longer found acceptable.

The first pattern he called reinterpretation, which is a slight or medium shift of the original motif. Salt and gold, for instance, fit in the same narrative structure as mentioned above, so do the incestuous father and the jealous sisters. It is likely to expect one motif to be original or both motifs to be derived from an unknown original source.

The second pattern turns the motif into its opposite, a thorough reframing. Thus the fairy salt of great value is turned into some waste, commonly reflected as the dirt and ash beneath the hearth. Ash and salt are found diametrically opposed even though they are derived from the same physical and cultural origin.

The heroine's character also changes in this antagonistic manner, when in one way the self-confident salt princess returns to the ordinary world, skilled and blessed by the fairies to select her prince and on the other side, she is reframed as Cinderella, as shy and submissive as we know her, being rescued in the arms of a prince.

Following the structural examination relative timelines of several motifs can be concluded:

- ash and salt existed prior to gold and shoe;
- the matchmaking was once in the heroine's hand;
- the fairy world is primordial, that means the wonder tale is the origin of the short cut farce
- the heroine's independence preceded her obedience.

Among the suggested ancient motifs, a set of primarily female subjects attracts attention. The heroine leaves her social context to be initiated by some wise or magical being. After this period, she returns to the ordinary world and creates her own social context. Happy end.

The heroine's active role is particularly present in her encounter with the prince and the conditions of marriage. She arranges the marriage without letting her father know. Before the groom, it is the mother-in-law who agrees to the marriage (**2, 4, 6, 11, 16, 33**). Additionally, the weak position of the prince is manifested in his feeble health. There are several other such conditions typical for wonder tales that tend to have no historical equivalent in Old World civilization. Scholars as V. Propp (1987), I. Eiichiro (1950) and W. E. Peuckert (1955) detected the antetype of such asynchronous behavior in ancient non-hierarchic social structures such as matrilinearity. The latter being a social structure ethnologically documented in several indigenous instances. Often the groom moves to the house of his wife's family.

As Europe fashions ash names for the heroine (*Cinderella, Aschenbrödel*) Persia calls her *Namaki* (22, 23). It is a diminutive form of *Namak*, the Persian word for salt. *Namaki* also has sisters, often six, and her story is twofold. The first one fits ATU 923 "love like salt", but the second one brings in a new perspective. E. Friedl collected such *Namaki* versions in the Zagros mountains of rural Iran. It is the story of an evil male character charming a playful young girl. It is one of the most common themes in oral tradition worldwide but not typically associated with salt in the European context. *Namaki* forgets to close a door at the end of the day, so that a *ghoul* or *div* is able to enter the family's house. He stretches the rules of hospitality to the point where he kidnaps *Namaki* and makes her his wife in some remote cave. The ghouls are one-legged creatures riding a horse. This, as much as the Dionysian Centaur, is phallic, according to E. Friedl. I will return to this soon.

At the moment, I would like to focus on the heroine. The word *Namak* is considered an important multi-functional cultural concept in Persian language, involving meanings such as vigour, smartness, taste, spice and others (Arab, 2022). The story makes sense with a little smart girl starring, but also with the real substance of salt that some less than intelligent semi-human male craves. Salt is inevitable in Persian hospitality, and when her mother cries from afar "Dear child, *Namaki*, ashes on your face, braid cut off!" it reminds us of the European fairies advising the salt princesses to wear their disguise of dirt and ugliness. Ash makes one invisible, but by salt one is recognised. And in a still more ambivalent symbolism: the most salt is hidden in the blackest ash as in Garden Orach (Zwiebel, 2025a). Salt is a powerful thing. It ensures well-being, it cures, it pleases guests, and it attracts males. And it was brought from a mystical garden. To teach girls how to manage this power must have been an ongoing challenge for the elders.

The heroine's naive mistake of welcoming the unwanted guest, her kidnapping and her escape or extorted marriage or her killing is repeated in multiple European tales of type ATU 311 'rescue by the sister' and ATU 312 'maiden killer'. The mean wizard, *div*, or whatever supernatural being it may be, is always male and intrusive, despite the attempts to act charming. These tale types are considered to be warnings not to be naive or impatient in matchmaking. A warning to young girls, consistently explained as sexual education not only by E. Friedl. This view recalls the words of the Witoto shaman from Colombia when he described PAS tradition: 'salt is sex, and the ritual making of vegetal salt is sexual education' (Echeverri and Enokakuiodo, 2013). It is also present in African cosmology, where the origin of human sexual intercourse is explained by salt use (Gougoud, 2024, p. 23, p. 43).

To argue for a basic causality of salt and sexuality, passed down from the beginning of the world in Africa and in the Neotropics and also connecting European and Persian prehistory, calls for indications, if not taken for sheer chance.

Biological and social equivalents

Venable *et al.* (2020) investigated the diet of wild chimpanzees in Uganda and quantified their sources of sodium, a nutrient of generally deficient availability for herbivores in tropical regions. They found that female animals consumed primarily decaying wood of typical salt rich species, whereas male chimpanzees managed their sodium intake by meat consumption. This indicates some phylogenetic preference of vegetal salt in female primates. What if they would make use of fire and of a narrative tradition? Rothman *et al.* (2006) observed gorillas too eating rotten wood of selected plant species to secure their salt intake. Visiting the rotten trunks was a regular routine in both primates' course of life.

The spatial, temporal and phylogenetic distance between the primates and the heroines of folktale is progressively reduced by current research on Paleolithic hunter and gatherer diet. Mariotti-Lippe *et al.* (2023), Kabukcu *et al.* (2022) and Henry *et al.* (2014) found a higher percentage and diversity of plant foods in diets of Neanderthal man and early *Homo sapiens* of Europe and Western Asia than previously estimated. Furthermore, the archaeobotany of caves in Greece and Iran revealed a continuity in basic plant food processing including pounding, separating, roasting, and soaking from the Palaeolithic up to Neolithic settlements.

Mikić (2012) investigated pre-Neolithic linguistic roots in words for plants that later became domesticates, such as bitter vetch (*Vicia ervilia*) and peas (*Pisum spec.*). It seems not unlikely to expect such continuity also in the ways of managing salt intake.

Salt concentration in plant matter increases after combustion, so does the salty taste and its temptation. The knowledge of this technology in the hands of females opens a gender gap, suspiciously watched from the other side. The maintenance of fire widens this gap because it traditionally is in the hands of women, as Haberlandt (1913) with regard to many indigenous groups has stated. Additionally, Ida Hahn (1935) had argued for an early female supremacy in detoxifying herbal foodstuffs and keeping the secrets of storing food in fermentation pits. As men returned from hunting, they feasted on savoury and cooked food, with little idea of its preparation. Even the meat they brought home tasted much better, after the women went over it with all their sorcery. When asked, how she loved her father, Cap o' rushes (4) answers "As meat loves salt".

Cinder boys

The vague possibility of a prehuman origin of gender-specific salt use provides a new perspective on the heroines' custom to hide identity, particularly sexual identity. When PAS once was in the hands of women, it seems reasonable to ask when and how male heroes took their role.

In *Juanon del Cortezon* (14) the girl is mistaken for a scullion, in other versions for a shepherd. But this is only a superficial transformation, and it is corrected in the marriage with a prince.

However, sometimes the heroine turns out to be a real guy.

This will reframe the plot, for it cannot be on female initiation any more. But if the main character and the plot change, how can I assume to be still in the same story, in the same tradition?

The heroes names refer to ash, just as the heroine's do. The males are called *askeladden* in Norway (**1**), *Aschenpeter* in Germany (**7, 9**) and by similar names in Slovakia, Romania, Hungary, Turkey (**5, 26, 36, 46**). To sum them up the term 'cinder boys' is used in folktale research. But such heroes are present also in salt tales, where even the female characters usually do not carry a salt or ash name. *Ivan the Ninny* from Russia (**29**), was already mentioned. His supernatural companion is male and dreadful. A helping giant that must not be mentioned by Ivan to his family and bride, but the hero fails and faces the giant's revenge. The happy ending is ensured only via a detour involving proper amounts of wine, beer, and mead. Within a static and consistent plot male attributes prevail.

In current typology, such tales may be classified as ATU 314, 360, 361, 530 and others. Ivan and the other cinder boys are the youngest of three brothers, few exceptions are found. The hero dwells near the oven and likes to poke in ash all day. The elder brother's emotions, like the ones of Cinderella's sisters mutate from disregard to destructive hate during the course of the tale (**5, 26, 29, 36**). Furthermore, the hero has a close yet ambivalent relation to his father. A mother is not actively present. A magical helper shows up. At the end he wins a mate by presenting a special gift, followed by marriage and reconciliation with the father.

Now, what has changed and how? The father's initial love-question is missing as well as an insulting answer from the cinder boy. The hero, unlike Cinderella, lies in the ashes by free will. He ignores odd looks and invitations to work. He is the nestling (**5, 7, 12, 26, 29, 36, 46**). Such a hero does not learn cooking, gardening, or spinning. He just benefits from it as in **46**, where the gardening is transformed into straight consumption of apples and wine, and the making of bread likewise into its engulfment. He is not born to work or to take responsibility for others. Petru from Romania (**26**) sleeps beneath the oven while his brothers cultivate and maintain the garden for three years. If ever a cinder boy goes to the father's garden or vineyard (**5, 12**) it is only to embarrass his brothers. Then, he fulfills one task they were not capable of. Mostly it is warding the harvest against invaders. Again, he slides in a resting position, not knowing what enemy to expect. It is a strange mixture of mental simplicity, laziness, and sudden courage that classifies him. A soldier's qualities.

His helper predominantly is a magic horse (**1, 5, 12, 26, 36**). Such a horse already helped the ghoul to kidnap *Namaki*. It does not graze a peaceful otherworld but is usually found at the father's homestead. As the hero himself, it is in poor shape, lying on the dung heap or some distant corner, hiding his true qualities. It guards the hero's journey to a land of evil, where witches, dragons, and invincible trolls must be killed. His craftsmanship is battle, his tools are

sword and club, magic of course. The combat's trophy is a princess, usually gold in addition. No bag of fairy salt and no wonderful garden.

Furthermore, the recognition food of the female-type tales is considerably transformed in the cinder boy tales. In a German tale the boy slips half a ring, of which the princess already holds the second half, into a glass of wine (8). But the wine is nothing the boy had made, it is just some wine on the princess's desk. How different from the carefully cooked broth or baked bread the salt princess offers to her sweetheart.

Furthermore the object used in matchmaking may not be food, and is used by him to mark betrothal or more precisely -possession. It is nothing personal, he just passes on an item he had obtained from his father or his horse. Nice little things, gemstones, a rose in wintertime, a green fig, a ring, but neither wonderful nor hand-picked. Even the interpretation as a promise gift is strangely reversed in tales where the hero becomes her husband by stealing three apples placed on her lap outrunning his rivals (5, 7). Still more radical is Petru's way to court (26) in knocking off her crown in a triple tournament while she sits silently. This repeats the inappropriate masculinity of the Namaki tale. It will take further investigation to argue for an ancient sexual inequality or rather a later narrative justification of a thoroughly reframed women's world.

Beside the cinder boys, there is still another group of male heroes connected to ash, being ambivalent and inconsistent in character and morals. They represent classical heroes and are present in types ATU 330, 361, 475 and 476 of European origin. Again I will follow the origin and variations of associated motifs.

Commonly, the main character is a released soldier. He might be the youngest of three brothers (8) but not necessarily so. He is in desperate condition and takes every job offered. The supernatural world he enters is no peaceful garden, neither a monstrous battleground but hell, covered by an employment contract signed by the devil. There are some collateral clauses, as not shaving and washing for several years or hiding in a bear skin (8, 9, 35). Ash and coal are a constant make up as well as the other furry disguises we are already familiar with. Only the hairstyle changes according to gender. The heroines hid their hair or cut it off like Namaki, while the soldiers let it grow lousy. The salary at the end of their employment is a bag similar to that of the fairy. But instead of salt it contains pure gold, anytime the owner opens it. Or slightly different, the soldier is allowed to shovel hell's ash and dirt into his bag. Entering the real world this turns into gold (9). Type ATU 476 is defined explicitly as 'coal turns into gold', but we already know, that gold, salt and black ash are easily convertible. The presence of a devil and the released soldier try to restrict the story to younger Christian Europe, but the ubiquitous elements are still detectable.

The Greek name for Orach even in the time of Pythagoras (ca. 500 BC) was *atraxys*, which probably meant 'coal plant' (see Zwiebel, 2025a). But in Roman times (Dioscorides, 2000, p.

267) the adapted greek name 'chrysolachanon' (Golden Vegetable) took its place without obvious botanical analogy. A herbal 'coal into gold' transformation.

The violation of the enchanted garden¹

Tales of the salt and ash complex are to be found by complex reading, beyond single word search. After I started the structural analysis, I had to reread most of them. This helped the insight into the associated motifs and their patterns of transformation. It also made me aware of non -ash and salt- episodes that occur on a regular basis in the tales considered.

Vivid extension or reduction of tale plots undoubtedly is a common expression of narrative traditions almost everywhere. Therefore the inclusion or lack of certain episodes is not surprising. But again, the logic of folktale prefers distinct episodes as condiments in precise contexts. Here I would like to investigate one of the extra episodes which is present in cinder boy tales as well as in ATU 302, 314, 467, 530, 590, 650, 707 from Russia, the Caucasus, Persia but is not restricted to these regions. The plot of this episode itself is not encoded in an ATU number, so I will name it 'The violation of the enchanted garden':

A young lad is sent out for heroic adventures by his mean mother or her jealous lover. They want to get rid of him avoiding direct offence. In a line of other tasks the stealing of a magic item from a remote enchanted garden is predominant. It may be a healing herb, a golden fruit, a golden fleece, a special water from the spring, a bird, or quite often the beautiful owner herself. Well known Greek examples of this episode include the theft of three golden apples from the garden of the Hesperid nymphs by Herakles and the theft of the golden fleece from Hecate's garden by Jason (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2024; Voss, 1817, p. 192). In these heroic myths from the classical period, the garden is placed beyond the ocean and the hero uses a ship for transportation. In folktales, however, he is carried to the garden mostly by a magic horse.

He, whether a cinder boy or not, acts by order and not for his own benefit. This gives him some moral excuse, even more as the deed is ordered by a mean character. So the source of conflict, a domestic disturbance, is obscured by the hero's inevitable adventure and success. Unlike the killing of dragons and other monsters, the violation of the garden cannot be accomplished by sheer courage and physical power. The keepers of the garden and its owner are overcome by mean tricks. The hero disguises himself as a guest or relative by outfit, voice, or habit, or uses the hours of sleep. Often, this act of robbery or kidnapping has to be repeated twice due to the hero ignoring his horse's advice. Even in the finally successful attempt, he is nearly caught before he reaches the limits of the garden. Without the help of his magic horse, he would never have managed the journey, the deed or the return. Thus, the horse is of special importance.

After carrying him over deserts, mountains, oceans and heavens, it may be surprising that the horse is not able to enter the enclosure of the garden. It waits at the gate, at the hedge or fence for the hero's return. The mighty horse magic bows at the garden porch.

The mutually exclusive character of horse and garden was already introduced in 'Cinder boys', here this antagonism seems even more explicit. Eiichiro (1950) investigated the role of horses in Eurasian mythology and found it to be a key motif associated with the reframing of earlier female fecundity rituals. With this mythological support, the violation of the enchanted garden can be read as a fundamental conflict in prehistory.

The garden as the preeminent location in the heroine's initiation and education was introduced above. It is usually maintained and inhabited by female characters. Pagan goddesses such as *Hekate*, *Holle*, *Madame Gothel* (KHM 12) and the *Hesperid nymphs* as well as the Christian saints Maria and Gertrud being the more prominent ones. As soon as male characters dominate the plot, gardens vanish or are violated.

In European fairy tales gardens are among the most frequently mentioned locations. Agricultural fields, cultivated by horses remain much under-represented. Open field mentions increase a little in European legends, which are considered tales of younger history (Peuckert, 1938). From a folktale perspective horticulture represents the land use of greater importance and antiquity, whereas the farm horse comes in late.

The garden in economy and practice belongs to the domain of women. There is not one cultural exception I know of. Male gardeners as cooks are employees of later times and tend to be associated with aristocracy in most of Europe and Asia. The dominant workspace of men in sedentism is the open field, the plough, the cereals and the pasture.

This is also evident in early law where the vegetable gardens managed by women were treated within the realms of privacy. The harvest of the vegetable garden was free of the tithe from Moses' time to the Middle Ages. The domestic and subsistent character of the farmhouse gardens providing the daily peasant food continued into the 19th century throughout most of Europe.

Female rituals, gardens, ash, and salt can be connected to early sedentism as much as they built the narrative foundation from which the mentioned folktales evolved.

According to current archaeological understanding, Neolithic women and men must have managed plant cultivation and processing without the help of animal draft for more than 2,000 years. The role of labour division and specific female routine in this period are highly controversial discussed by scholars (Rountree, 2001; Kuhn and Stiner, 2006). A similar inconsistency exists in early cultivation methods. There is some dominance of an extensive land use argumentation, which is rooted in the major archaeobotanical finds, cereals and

pulses. But the assumption of such slash-and-burn methods is more and more questioned for the early Neolithic. Deforestation indicators increase simultaneously with the invention of animal-drawn ards in the early bronze age. An impact on the land, that is still detectable in palynology. The cultivation of modern open fields as well as the invention of agro-machinery are closely related to male activity.

Indigenous people with persistent PAS practice are not documented using animal power. They grow most of their food and technological plants in gardens. Some of these may look like a patch of fertile forest in the eyes of European agriculturists. Additionally these gardeners might still favour a semi-sessile lifestyle. But still they visit the gardens regularly and know at least one more use for the many PAS plants, that is as vegetables.

In recognition of this economy E. Hahn (1919) claimed a horticultural model predating agriculture (Hackbau). A. Bogaard (2004) contributed to the idea of early intensive horticulture from an archaeobotanical perspective. The folktale interpretation of the violated garden also seems to support the Hackbau model.

Conclusion

The use of salt from specific plant ashes (PAS) and its linking to sexuality and fecundity is found in indigenous folklore and narrative tradition over several continents. The large conformity points to a prehuman origin. The presence of salt and ash in narrative traditions continues, even when the underlying technology and knowledge got lost. These tales typically occur in all of Eurasia and focus on an adolescent heroine with typical attributes as garden and domestic routine.

In the evolution of this tale the aspects of ancient technology, ash and salt, are separated and act independently. Ash mostly marks a darker aspect of the menial, the invisible and passive, whereas salt as a light aspect can be detected in purification, creation of personal and social contexts and visibility. The separation of aspects reduces the heroine to one or the other, causing her to adopt new characteristics and plot structures.

A remarkable and prominent transformation of the tale, that unites narrative traditions of Eurasia can be classified as the replacement of the heroine by her male counterpart. In this gender specific derivation female qualities vanish or remain as part of non-ordinary reality, the fairy kingdom.

With a still greater distance to the original motivation, the separated aspects are further transformed. The darker aspect is associated with uncleanness, ugly hairstyle, sartorial disguise and a residence by the hearth. The lighter aspect turns into gold, ring or treasure.

The great persistence of ash and salt even in absence of the original PAS tradition is necessarily entangled in a matrilinear, horticultural environment. This supports the proposal

of an ancient tradition handed down unconsciously from prehistoric times.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank, Ch. Goldberg (Los Angeles) and U. Marzolph (Göttingen) for feedback on folktale research and A. Hagemann-Doumbia (Wangen) and E. Nissan (London) for inspiring correspondence.


Abbreviations

PAS = salt derived from plant ash

ATU = folktale typology according to Aarne Thompson Uther Index

KHM = Kinder- und Hausmärchen der Brüder Grimm, Numbered index of German folktales according to the Grimm brothers' classic

- 1 This chapter is my first attempt to draw attention to a narrative phenomenon that is disregarded in research and common understanding. It is not a completed investigation and does not offer a full bibliography and argumentation.

 **Keywords** salt
food
story telling

Bibliography

Arab, R., 2022. Cultural semantics of the 'salt' word in Persian, *International Journal for Language and Culture* 1- 34, pp. 119-150 Available at: <
<https://benjamins.com/catalog/ijolc.21038.ara> > [Accessed 21 March 2025]

Ashliman, D. L., 2013. Love like salt folktales of type 923 and 510. Available at:
<<https://sites.pitt.edu/~dash/salt.html> > [Accessed 22 February 2024].

Aubert, M., Lebe R., Oktaviana A.A. and Tang M., 2019. Earliest hunting scene in prehistoric art, *Nature* 576(7787), pp. 1-4. DOI:[10.1038/s41586-019-1806-y](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-019-1806-y).

Björgulfsdottir, H. D., 2024. The wonderful quern. Available at: <
<https://yourfriendinreykjavik.com/the-wonderful-quern-folktale/> > [Accessed 20 February 2024].

Bogaard, A., 2004. *Neolithic Farming in Central Europe: An archaeological study of crop husbandry practices*. London: Routledge.

Catana, G., 1974. *Der Aschenpeter*. Bucharest: Ion Creanga.

Cox, M. R., 1893. *Cinderella -345 variants*. Publications of the Folk-lore society vol. 80. London: D. Nutt.

Dasent, G. W., ed. and transl., 1859. *Popular Tales from the Norse*, (vol.1). Appleton: New York.

Da Silva, S. G. and Tehrani, J. J., 2016. Comparative phylogenetic analyses uncover the ancient roots of Indo-European folktales, *Royal Society Open Science* 315064
<https://doi.org/10.1098/rsos.150645>.

d´ Huy, J., 2020. Mythologie matrimoniale: ce que la mythologie peut nous apprendre du comportement de nos ancêtres, *Nouvelle Mythologie Comparée / New Comparative Mythology*, 5, pp. 5-26. < <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/...> > [Accessed 21 March 2025]

Dioscorides, 2000. *De Materia Medica - Being an Herbal with many other medicinal materials*. Edited by T.A. Osbaldeston and R.P.A, Wood. Johannesburg : IBIDIS.

Echeverri, J. A. and Enokakuiedo, R. J., 2013. Ash salts and bodily affects: Witoto environmental knowledge as sexual education, *Environmental Research Letters* 8(1): p.13. Available at: < https://www.researchgate.net/publication/... > [Accessed 21 March 2025]

Eiichiro, I., 1950. The Kappa Legend, *Folklore Studies* 9, pp. 1-11.

Encyclopedia Britannica, 2024. Heracles - Classical mythology. Available at: <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Heracles>> [Accessed 02 September 2024].

English Standard Version Bible. 2001. ESV Online. < <https://esv.literalword.com/> > [Accessed 20 March 2025].

Friedl, E., 2014. *Folktales and Storytellers of Iran: Culture, Ethos and Identity*. International Library of Iranian Studies, 48. London: Tauris & Co.

Friedman, A., ed. 2015. Tell me a story: The story of salt. Available at: < https://archive.gosanangelo.com/news/... > [Accessed 05 March 2024].

Gougoud, H., 2024. *Das Buch der Liebenden. Die schönsten erotischen Volksmärchen aus aller Welt*. München: Anaconda.

Grimm, J. and Grimm, W., 1957. *Die Märchen der Brüder Grimm. Vollständige Ausgabe*. Edited by K. Waselowsky. München: Goldmann.

Guly, 2009. Sweeter than salt. Pashtun folktale from Loy Afghanistan, *Afghan literature blog*. Available at: < <https://afghanliterature.blogspot.com/2009/...> > [Accessed 05 January 2024].

Haberlandt, M., 1913. *Die Kochkunst der Primitivvölker*. Jahresschrift des Vereins zur Verbreitung naturwissenschaftlicher Kenntnisse. Wien: Verlag der Zoologisch-Botanischen Gesellschaft in Österreich.

Hahn, E., 1919. *Von der Hacke zum Pflug* (2.ed.). Leipzig: Quelle und Meyer.

Hahn, I., 1935. Die Auswahl der zur Dauernahrung genutzten Pflanzen. *Sitzungsberichte d. Gesellschaft d. Naturforschenden Freunde zu Berlin 1934(1935)*, pp. 258 - 281.

Hall - Wattens Tourismus, 2024. *Die Entdeckung des Salzberges im Halltal bei Absam. Hall Wattens Austria. Der Salzbergbau*. Available at: < <https://www.hall-wattens.at/de/salzbergbau-zu-hall.html> > [Accessed 22 January 2024].

Hein, S., ed., 1984. So lieb wie Salz. In: *Lesezeichen: Lesebuch Ausgabe A/B für Gymnasien und Realschulen in Baden-Württemberg und Bayern*. Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag.

Hennings, L., 2013. *Von der Höhlenmalerei zur Hochkultur am Göbekli Tepe- Zur Soziologie früher Gemeinschaften, der Kognition und der Geschlechter im Jung-Paläolithikum*. Berlin: Logos.

Henry, A. G., Brooks A. S. and Piperno, D. R., 2014. Plant foods and the dietary ecology of Neanderthals and early modern humans, *Journal of Human Evolution* 69, pp. 44-54.

Jech, J., ed., 1984. *Tschechische Volksmärchen*. Berlin: Akademie.

Jensen, A. E., 1939. Hainuwele. Volkserzählungen von der Molukken-Insel Ceram. Frankfurt: Klostermann.

Jones, H. L. , ed., 1917. *The Geography of Strabo*. vol.1, 17/33. Loeb Classical Library. New York.

Kabukcu, C., Hunt, C., Hill, E., Pomeroy, E., Reynolds, T., Barker, G. and Asouti, F., 2022. Cooking in caves: Palaeolithic carbonised plant food remains from Franchthi and Shanidar, *Antiquity* 97, p. 391. Available at < <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/...> > [Accessed 21 March 2025]

Kuhn, A., 1859, *Gebräuche und Märchen aus Westfalen und einigen andern, besonders den angrenzenden Gegenden Norddeutschlands, (vol. 2)* Leipzig: F. U. Brodhaus.

Kuhn, S. L. and Stiner, M. C., 2006. What's a Mother to Do? The Division of Labor among Neandertals and Modern Humans in Eurasia, *Current Anthropology* 47(6), pp. 953-981. Available at: < <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/...> >

- Kúnos, I., 1905. *Türkische Volksmärchen aus Stambul*. Brill. Leiden. 4 edition, 2019. Berlin: Hofenberg.
- Lang, A., 1892. *The Green Fairy Book*. London: Longmans Green & Co.
- Lemmer, M., 1989. *Der Saalaffe- Sagen aus Halle und Umgebung*. Halle: Postreiter.
- Levin, I., ed., 1989. *Märchen aus dem Kaukasus*. München: Diederichs.
- Löw, I., 1926, *Die Flora der Juden*. Vol.1,5. A. Kohut Foundation. Wien: Löwitt.
- Lüthi, M., 1960. *Das europäische Volksmärchen* (2. ed.) Bern und München: Francke Verlag.
- Lyubchov Kirilov, K., 2016. The complete catalog of all Magura cave paintings - creation, use and perspecti. Available at: < <https://magnaaura.wordpress.com/2016/...> > [Accessed 18 January 2024].
- Mariotti Lippi, M., Aranguren, B., Arrighi, S., Attolini, D., Benazzi, S., Boschin, F., Florindi, S., Moroni, A., Negrino, F., Pallecchi, P., Pisaneschi, L., Riel-Salvatore, J., Ronchitelli and A., Revedin, A., 2023. New evidence of plant food processing in Italy before 40ka, *Quaternary Science Reviews* 312, 108161.
- Marzolph, U., 1984. *Typologie des persischen Volksmärchens*. Beirut Texts and Writings, Vol. 2. Orient-Institut der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft. Wiesbaden: Steiner.
- Mikić, A., 2012. Origin of the Words Denoting Some of the Most Ancient Old World Pulse Crops and Their Diversity in Modern European Languages.
<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0044512>.
- Müller, I., 1987. *Die Mkuyu Trommel- Märchen und Fabeln aus Tanzania*. Erlangen: Verlag der Ev. Lutherischen Mission.
- Němcová, B., 1983. *Das goldene Spinnrad*. Leipzig und Weimar: Kiepenheuer.
- Němcová, B. 1978. *Der König der Zeit*. Prague: Mlade Leta.
- N.N., 1967. Aschenpeter, *audiofile*. Available at: <<https://www.siebenbuerger.de/medien/...>> [Accessed 20 January 2024].
- Okoli, I.C., 2023. Traditional vegetal salts as substitutes for common salt. Tropical research reference platform. Available at < <https://researchtropica.com/.../> > [Accessed 02 March 2024].
- Petzoldt, L., ed., 1995. *Märchen aus Ungarn*. Frankfurt/M.: Fischer.

Peuckert, W. E., 1955. *Ehe, Weiberzeit, Männerzeit, Saeterehe, Hofehe, Freie Ehe*. Hamburg: Claassen.

Peuckert, W. E., 1938. *Deutsches Volkstum in Märchen und Sage, Schwank und Rätsel*. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Powo, 2024. *Atriplex hortensis*. Available at: < <https://powo.science.kew.org/taxon/...> > [Accessed 21 March 2025]

Propp, V., 1987. *Die historischen Wurzeln des Zaubermärchens*. München, Wien: Hanser.

Ransome, A., 1916. *Old Peters Russian tales*. London: T. Nelson and sons.

Rooth, A. B., 1951. *The Cinderella Cycle*. Lund: University Press.

Rothman, J. M., Van Soest, P. J. and Pell, A. N., 2006. Decaying wood is a sodium source for mountain gorillas, *Biological Letters* 2(3). doi: 10.1098/rsbl.2006.0480.

Rountree, K., 2001. The Past is a Foreigners' Country: Goddess Feminists, Archaeologists, and the Appropriation of Prehistory, *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 16(1), pp. 5-27.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13537900123321>.

Sakamoto Martini, G., Kendal, J. and Tehrani, J. J., 2023. Cinderella's Family Tree. A Phylomemetic Case Study of ATU 510/511, *Fabula: Journal of Folktale Studies*, 64(1-2), pp. 7-30. Available at: < <https://durham-repository.worktribe.com/output/...> >. [Accessed 21 March 2025]

Schwibbe, G., 2004. Salzsäure AaTh 1200. In: R.W. Brednich, H. Bausinger, W. Brückner, H. Gerndt, L. Röhrich and K. Roth eds. *Enzyklopädie des Märchens, Vol. 11*: Berlin: De Gruyter, p. 1731.

Seki, K., 1963. *Folktales of Japan*. Translated by R.J. Adams. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Shurpin, Y., 2024. Why the Bread & Egg in Ash Before 9 Av?. *Chabad library article*. Available at: < <https://www.chabad.org/library/...> > [Accessed 12 March 2024].

Sibbesson, E., 2019. Reclaiming the Rotten: Understanding Food Fermentation in the Neolithic and Beyond, *Environmental Archaeology, Journal of Human Palaeoecology* 27, pp. 111-122. DOI: 10.1080/14614103.2018.1563374.

Uther, H. J., 2004. *The types of international folktales: a classification and bibliography based on the system of Atti Aarne and Stith Thompson*. Suomalainen Tiedekatemia. Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica.

Venable, E. M., Machanda, Z., Hagberg, L., Lucore, J., Otali, E., Rothman, J. M., Uwimbabazi, M. and Wrangham, R., 2020. Wood and meat as complementary sources of sodium for Kanyawara chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes*), *American Journal of Physiological Anthropology*. 172(1). doi: 10.1002/ajpa.24029.

Virág, S. C., 2019. The salty witch. *the multicolored diary*. Available at: < <https://multicolorediary.blogspot.com/2019/...> > [Accessed 05 February 2024].

Voss, J. H., ed., 1817. *Hesiods Werke und Orpheus der Argonaut*. Wien:Haas.

Whitley, S., 2009. *Cave paintings and the human spirit: the origin of creativity and belief*. New York: Prometheus books.

Zingerle, I. V. and Zingerle, J., eds., 1911. *Kinder- und Hausmärchen aus Tirol*. Innsbruck: Schwick.

Zwiebel, L. , 2024 Die geringgeschätzte Gartenmelde - Geschichte, Farben, Bedeutung, Berichte der NfGOL. Vol. 32, pp. 115-142

Zwiebel, L., 2025. Black ash - a forgotten domestication trait in Garden Orach (*Atriplex hortensis* L.). *EXARC Journal* 2025/1. Available at: < <https://exarc.net/ark:/88735/10792> > [Accessed 25 March 2025].

Sources for images

Jershov, X. and Jershov , I.(illustr.)1973. *Der Feuervogel – Russische Volksmärchen*. (transl. Angarova, H., Labas, L.,) Progress. Moskau.

Share This Page

| Corresponding Author

Lutz Zwiebel

Ortsstrasse 165

02829 Markersdorf

Germany

[E-mail Contact](#)

| Gallery Image



FIG 1. A SALT PRINCESS IN DISGUISE, ORIGINAL DRAWING BY MILA ZWIEBEL (2025)

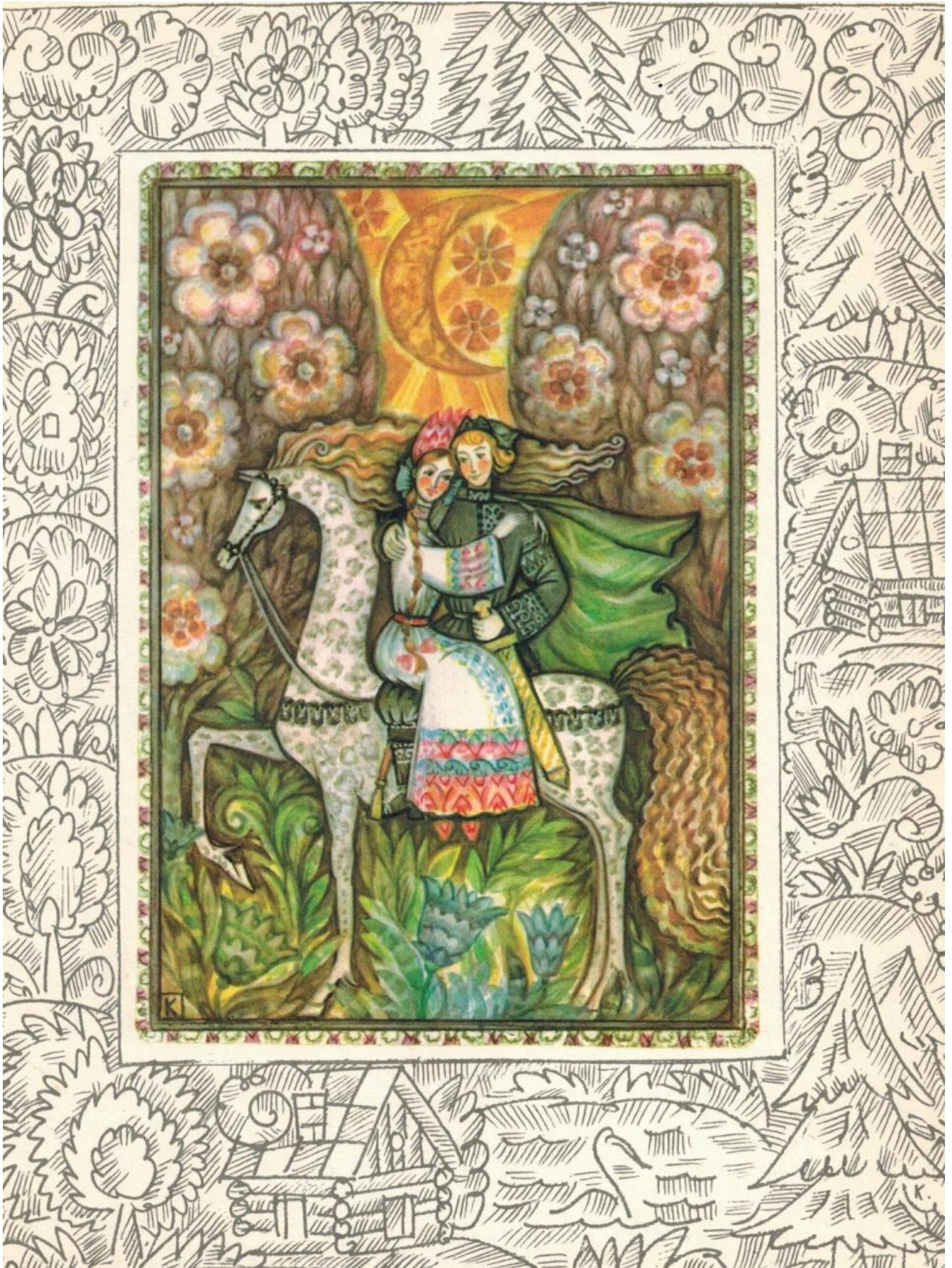


FIG 2. ASH PETER WITH HIS CINDERELLA BRIDE (JERSHOV AND JERSHOV 1973, P. 45)