

# FAQs about Chinese Yuri (Baihe) Manhua

(A collaborative document written and compiled by various Chinese-language Yuri (Baihe) scanlators)

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## About This Document

Numerous misconceptions and misunderstandings persist regarding Chinese manhua portraying LGBT relationships and characters, often perpetuated by individuals lacking knowledge about China or the Chinese language. This document aims to dispel such misconceptions and provide an easily understandable overview of creations featuring LGBT themes originating from China, with a specific emphasis on *yuri/baihe* works.

We address the following questions:

- Is it illegal to be gay/lesbian in China?
- How does yuri manhua exist given China's censorship laws? Isn't it illegal?
- Are creators of yuri manhua in legal danger in China?
- What about the cases of Mo Xiang Tong Xiu's works and *Tamen de Gushi*?

The authors of this document are deeply engaged in translating and producing English-language versions of Chinese yuri, commonly known as "scanlating." Each of us is a native Chinese speaker. It should be evident that none of us hold affiliations with governmental organizations or special interests, and our singular aim is to debunk the recurring misinformation that persists without proper correction or challenge.

Is it illegal to be gay/lesbian in China?



No, it is not illegal to be gay in China, though there is no overt governmental support for LGBT couples in the form of marriage/adoption rights, much like in [most of Asia](#). Some have described the government's stance on LGBT issues as the "Three No's": no approval; no disapproval; and no promotion (不支持, 不反对, 不提倡). The government promulgated a "legal guardianship" (意定监护) system for adults in 2017 which [allows same-sex couples](#) to make medical decisions for one another, inheritance rights, and property arrangements.

On the other hand, in fact, [there appears to be substantial support for same-sex marriage](#) among many Chinese, especially those living in urban centers, though pervasive [societal discrimination still exists](#) and LGBT societies' affiliation with the broader international movements [can be seen as suspicious](#). Nevertheless, there continue to be activists advocating and pushing for reforms to the legal code in support of same-sex marriage and LGBT rights more broadly.

How does yuri manhua exist given China's censorship laws? Isn't it illegal?



Of course, [censorship is everywhere in Chinese media and the internet in China](#) - both overt (governmental/institutional limitations) and subtle (self-censoring), and it has become tighter in recent years. But yuri (and queer) content is *not* illegal and *not* banned, and for the most part overt censorship only affects "mainstream" stuff like published books and TV series. Even then it just removes the explicit and steamy parts; gay content is still retained.

A common misconception of people unfamiliar with China is that there is a single governmental censorship bureau that checks everything - there isn't one for manhua by itself, and any censorship that an author encounters is far more likely to be encountered at the level of the publisher or editor, rather than at a governmental level. Governmental censors themselves (like those at the party's [Publicity Department](#)) tend to focus their censorship and control on [affairs relevant to the state](#) or that may pose challenges to its governance. For a more detailed view by someone who knows much about censorship in China, check out Ken Liu's (刘宇昆) - translator of Liu Cixin's (刘慈欣) *The Three-Body Problem* (三体) - Reddit [AMA here](#).

Yuri and queer manhua exist (and are popular!) both serialized and self-published on official/corporate platforms like [Bilibili/Kuaikan](#) as well as more informal platforms, like Weibo.

Published examples include:

- [Soulmate](#), with almost 1 million likes
  - <https://cubari.moe/read/imgur/5O7Rhx8/1/1/>
- [Lily](#), with over 250,000 readers
  - <https://i.imgur.com/vaufr1L.jpg>
- [Straight Girl Trap](#), with over 600,000 readers
  - <https://cubari.moe/read/imgur/PewlCQD/1/1/>

- [\*My Food Looks Very Cute\*](#), with over 750,000 readers
  - <https://cubari.moe/read/imgur/B9Q22ja/1/1/>
- [\*Couple of Mirrors\*](#), with over 1 million likes
  - <https://cubari.moe/read/imgur/1AzwsFK/1/1/>
- [\*Sunshine & Bright Stars\*](#), with over 15 million likes and nearly 2 million followers
  - <https://cubari.moe/read/imgur/xJ9jSGi/1/1/>
- [\*Nightingale and the Rose\*](#), with over 250,000 readers
  - <https://cubari.moe/read/imgur/y2uJWtl/1/1/>
- [\*Baili Jin among Mortals\*](#), with over 400,000 readers
  - <https://cubari.moe/read/imgur/JGpxjx0/1/1/>

Chinese-language translations of popular Japanese yuri manga, like *Bloom Into You*, *Adachi and Shimamura*, and *Citrus*, are also readily available on both official and unofficial comics sites in China. The Chinese-language scanlation scene for Japanese yuri manga is also extremely active, and perhaps even more prodigious than the English-language scene in their output.

## Are creators of yuri manhua in legal danger in China?

The chances are almost nil, since creating queer content is not illegal (see above). Creators are never at risk for creating gay content by itself, though writing/depicting *explicitly* depicted content is more risky when it comes to obscenity laws. For the vast majority, the worst that could happen is that you'll have to scroll down 20 pictures of memes before reaching the good parts. If you've ever read about BL authors being allegedly jailed for simply writing BL, it's generally not true.

There's an *ocean* of BL material written in Chinese and perhaps thousands of authors creating it, but very few official charges brought under the [illegal publishing and obscenity laws](#) (Article 362, Section 9), including in 2017 (the "Shanghai Case") and 2018 (the "Tianyi Case"). The writers of this FAQ are not aware of any criminal case in China having involved a yuri/GL author. The legal situation results in queer manhua generally remaining pretty "tame" in romantic depictions.

## What about the cases of Mo Xiang Tong Xiu's works and *Tamen de Gushi*?



The works of [Mo Xiang Tong Xiu](#) (墨香铜臭, also known as “MXTX”) and Tan Jiu’s (坛九) [Tamen de Gushi](#) (她们的故事, “Their Story”) are two of the best well-known queer Chinese-language works, focusing on BL and GL romances, respectively. Both have encountered difficulties in their adaptations that illustrate the complexities of publishing in China.

Circumstantial evidence does point to MXTX [potentially having encountered serious legal trouble](#) (once again, under illegal publishing and obscenity laws) and in any case, her situation is very murky and she has not been heard from in some while. That rumored individual appears to have been released in late 2021, whether or not that person was actually her, certainly MXTX was interviewed in Japan about her work by Japanese author [Wataya Risa](#) for [Subaru](#) in June 2023 ([Ask Sythe](#) has translated it into English).

The case of Tan Jiu and *Tamen de Gushi* is also a bit murky due to limited information.

To start, *Tamen de Gushi* originated as an [online webcomic](#) with sporadic updates, and to date has **never been officially serialized**<sup>1</sup>. Chapters up to 141 were collected in a volume in late 2015, published by the Zhejiang People's Fine Arts Publishing House (浙江人民美术出版社/浙人美), alongside Guangzhou Tianwen Kadokawa (广州天闻角川/天角), a subsidiary of Kadokawa Japan. The publisher Zhejiang People's Fine Arts Publishing House is [state-owned](#) and is also responsible for publishing manga series like *One Piece* and *Demon Slayer* in China.

In January 2018, Tan Jiu posted to her Weibo saying that the second print volume of the series had been indefinitely postponed due to her publisher<sup>2</sup> requesting the removal and censorship of several romantic scenes between the two female leads. No specific explanation was given as to

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<sup>1</sup> The closest it got to being serialized was being uploaded as an exclusive [here](#), to ACQQ/Tencent, in January 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Presumably *Zhejiang People's Fine Arts Publishing House*, as Kadokawa Japan released a [Japanese tankobon](#) of the series earlier this year.

why. This was after the initial publication was delayed in 2017 due to sensitivities surrounding the [19<sup>th</sup> National Congress](#). (Translations of the Weibo post were found [here](#) and [here](#).)

Over the years, two common claims have been frequently made about *Tamen de Gushi*. The first claim is that the series has experienced less story progression and gay content, with either the Chinese government directly censoring Tan Jiu's work, or Tan Jiu herself purposefully self-censoring to have better chances for publishing her future work.

The belief that the Chinese *government* was directly and specifically interfering with *Tamen de Gushi* is utter nonsense, with there being no evidence of direct interference—be it through online censorship or legal consequences. As well, the idea that Tan Jiu is intentionally censoring herself seems like baseless speculation. In the initial post announcing the volume cancellation, Tan Jiu expressed strong opposition to censoring her hard work, and her Weibo and [Twitter](#) still continue to feature intimate artwork of the two leads. Furthermore, it has been **four years** since volume 2 was canceled (as of 2022), and Tan Jiu appears not to have attempted to have *Tamen de Gushi* published in Chinese print since. It appears highly unlikely that the artist would go against prior belief to “censor” herself for something that she has not outwardly expressed interest in.

The second common claim is that *Tamen de Gushi* has slowed in terms of update schedule, again often blaming “Chinese censorship” in general. The update schedule has indeed slowed since 2018, which may well be a result of losing the print revenue stream, and making Tan Jiu lose motivation. This writer proposes that this may have made Tan Jiu re-evaluate how she saw her work, and change it from something more dedicated to a side-project with slower updates, and from having a consistent plot to being more random fluff.

**TL;DR: When it came to selling print volumes of *Tamen de Gushi*, Tanjiu was given the ultimatum, by her publisher, of censoring certain romantic scenes in that print version or having the comic not be published entirely. She chose the latter. The original webcomic should not have been directly impacted by this, nor is there any evidence she ever encountered other forms of censorship when creating *Tamen de Gushi*.**

Over the years, this case has been blown wildly out of proportion, and baseless speculation has abounded. Anything along the lines of “the CCP was literally sending her death threats and told her she couldn't make any more gay chapters and is threatening to send her to prison gaiz!!!” is not rooted in any fact whatsoever. Though Tan Jiu was indeed blocked from publishing her works in print uncensored, and suffered from being unable to profit off of her series, she appears not to have faced direct repercussions, and continues directly posting sapphic content on her [Weibo](#) and [Twitter](#) to this day.

What are some yuri-related Chinese terms?

- 百合 (*bǎihé*, “lily”): A direct reading in Mandarin Chinese of the Japanese kanji for *yuri*, with the same literal and extended meanings (lily/depictions of romance between women).
- 橘味/橘氣 (*jú wèilǚ qì*, “tangerine/orange taste/atmosphere/vibes”): Synonym of 百合’s extended meaning - its origin is from the Japanese manga series [Citrus](#), which was subtitled ~柑橘味香氣~ in Chinese (“~the sweet fragrance of tangerines/oranges~”).
- 橘外人 (*jú wàirén*, “tangerine outsider”): A third-wheel or someone not part of the main relationship depicted in a yuri work.
- 大橘已定 (*dà jú yǐ dìng*, “the whole tangerine is settled”): A pun on 大局已定 “the whole situation is settled/the outcome is a forgone conclusion”, referring to a situation where a yuri relationship in a work is clearly going to happen.
- 橘勢不妙/橘勢大好/橘勢动荡 (*jú shì bù miào/jú shì dàhǎo/jú shì dòngdàng*, “the tangerine situation is not great/excellent/uncertain”): All puns on the word 局勢 “the situation/state of affairs”, referring to the chances of yuri developing in a work.
- 姐姐 (*jiějie*, “older sister/girl slightly older than you in the same generation”): An intimate way to refer to another girl, and it can be flirtatious. It is not necessarily used to mean “biological sister”.
- gg: Short for “girl/girl”.
- GL: Short for “girls’ love”.

