

CHINESE WAR POETRY OF THE TANG DYNASTY: A DISCURSIVE STUDY

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Abstract

This research paper aims to analyze war poetry during the Tang Dynasty that was compiled in the *Complete Tang Poetry (Quan Tang Shi)*. The theory employed here is Discourse Studies, which postulates that language, literature and cultural society are inseparably related.

What can be concluded from this research is that war poetry during the Tang Dynasty consists of three discursive practices: discourses on ethnic nationalism, on social class and on gender, all of which characterize dominant and counter-dominant discourse. This clearly illustrates how poetry can be regarded as a discourse constructed with power relation in a complex way. There are several linguistic methods employed in the discourse construction, such as vocabulary selection, binary opposition of metaphors, imagery and intertextuality.

In addition, the interpretation of relationship between language and ideology reveals that ideologies on nation-building, on monarchy, and on patriarchy are invisible mainstream concepts in the society that the authorities wanted to preserve and nurture the continuation of the principle social system. The successive rituals of reproduction via the imperial examination system enable these main ideologies to remain ingrained in the structure of the Chinese people's feelings like a second nature.

Keywords: discourse/ ideology/ Tang poetry/ war/ Chinese literature

Chinese Poetry: Discourse, Power and Ideology

Poetry exists in Chinese society as the most outstanding mainstream literature for ages.¹ Poetry was the property of higher class. In Confucianism, a poet is responsible for criticizing and cultivating society, as well as for acting as “the voice of morality” of that era. It is evident that Chinese poets had been responding to the society from the very beginning. Confucius philosophy stabilized imperial institution. So, it had been honored as the main governance principle since the time of the Han dynasty (206 B.C. – 220 A.D.). As a result, Confucius ideas and values have become highly influential toward Chinese society, and also the creation process of Chinese literature.

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¹ Arthur F. Wright and Denis Twitchett, eds. *Perspective on the Tang* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), p. 38.

The Analects (*Lùnyǔ* 论语)* of the Confucius school states the importance of poetry in Chapter 9 of Volume 17 as following: 1) a tool for self-development 2) a tool for observing situations of the country 3) a warning for authorities 4) a tool for living collectively through interactions 5) closer to home, a guideline for behaving and taking care of one's father; and farther away, utilization of knowledge for serving the country for the sake of one's lord 6) an encyclopedia for names of birds, four-legged animals and plants as to expand one's knowledge. The important roles of Chinese poetry to be considered in this research are the first, a tool for self-development, and the third one, a warning for authorities.

Chinese Poetry as a Dominant Discourse: Construction of “Knowledge/ Power”

The role of Chinese poetry as a tool for self-development can be found in Chapter 8 of Volume 8 of the *Analects*, focusing on education and self-development. The chapter proposes that man should cultivate himself with poetry (*xìng yú shī* 兴于诗), because it can improve his literacy skills for effective communication of thoughts, keep him within tradition for self-perfection, as well as integrate himself with music for polishing the mind and emotion to their finest balance.

Self-development relates to progression in life. The Chinese goals for education are self-cultivation (*xiūshēn* 修身), family management (*qíjiā* 齐家), country administration (*zhìguó* 治国) and pacification in the world (*píng tiānxià* 平天下). A way to achieve these goals was to participate in the Imperial Examination, in which poetry contributed as a main subject. Consequently, Chinese poetry became a governance mechanism for producing officials obliged to help the imperial court manage the country. So, Chinese poetry in no way exists on the void but as a part of social and cultural practices. In addition, poetry can bring about a great number of social and economic values. Every Chinese intellectual then is required to know poetry. Poetry, therefore, stands as a discourse that constructs knowledge and power in Chinese society.

Chinese Poetry as a Counter-Dominant Discourse: Power Resistance

Chinese poetry also acts as a warning for authoritative power holders. Poetry, as a form of language, utilizes art to cross into the specific area of “the unthought” to make them thinkable. Literature works form a communication system for incommunicable things. Roland Barthes, a professor in literary semiology, has pointed out the importance of literature as the only tool remained for fighting against power². This power is not the same as generally understood like state power, capitalist power and interest group power, but it is the power that infiltrates every bit of the society in the form of language – the power of the language system which no social institution could intervene. Literature fights power in the form of language by three manners: 1) telling the truth in the guise of the untruth (mathesis) 2) questioning and representing the truth (mimesis), by which literature allows human to speak about truth through language, despite knowing that it will never substitute the truth 3) delivering significance by means of literature as a subject of flexible semiosis. These are the potentials

* The *Analects* 论语 is a record of Confucius teachings compiled by Confucius disciples. It is one of the *Four Books* (四书 *Sì shū*) of Confucius school consisting of: 1) the *Analects* 2) Mencius (*Mèng Zǐ* 孟子) 3) Great Learning (*Dà xué* 大学) and 4) Doctrine of the Mean (*Zhōngyōng* 中庸). See also Xia Zhengnong et al., eds., *Ci hai* 辞海, p. 437.

² Roland Barthes, “Inaugural lecture, College de France” in *A Barthes reader*, ed. Susan Sontag (New York: Hill and Wang, 1980), pp.457-478. Cited in Chairath Charoensinoran, 2008, p. 185.

of literature in power resistance³. Poetry's privilege of resisting power via its status of hypothetical discourse harmonically correlates with Chinese literary tradition of criticizing and cultivating society. People generally think of poetry as hypothetical, thus making poetry more truthful as "truth" in this form will not be "dealt with" by authoritative power holders in the society. For this reason, poetry differentiates itself from historical records.

Chinese Poetry and "Lǐ" Ideology

Lǐ 礼 or "tradition" is an ethical principle defining political and social relationships during the Zhou dynasty (1123 – 256 B.C.). *Lǐ* is not situated as law but as ethical commitment each member of the society has to conform with to promote unity (*hé* 和) in the society.

Confucius realized the importance of *Lǐ* and included it in one of the ethical principles of Confucius philosophy. *Lǐ* means traditions and rites, such as to worship the deities of Heaven and Earth and to have an audience with the emperor. Moreover, *Lǐ* poses an appropriate behavioral model according to the Five Relations: Emperor-Bureaucrat, Father-Son, Husband-Wife, Brother-Sister, and Friend-Friend.⁴ *Lǐ* then has become a social standard expected in everyone in order to carry down the cultural continuity and maintain the relationship among people in the society. A community must be able to preserve *Lǐ* to remain a human community.

Lǐ is a process that refines humanity. Fineness signifies moderation; neither too much nor too less, in facilitating human relationships. *Lǐ* does not only refine humanity, it also leads human away from misconception and helps them "stand firm"⁵ Therefore, *Lǐ* functions as an ideology which equips individuals to a system. Moreover, *Lǐ* prevents conflicts in the society, because it already includes prescribed roles and responsibilities for each status. If people behave accordingly, the whole society will experience unity.

In other words, the ideology of *Lǐ* operates in the unconscious mind. Therefore, people feel that *Lǐ* naturally exists and unconsciously follow it. *Lǐ* makes the nobility (*guìzú* 贵族) noble. But actually, it is birth, political and economic status that defines a person as a nobleman. Still, they cannot affirm one's status mentally. As a consequence, *Lǐ* reaffirms and reproduces the status of the nobility. *Lǐ* does not work at a political system level similar to law but rather in an ideological level.⁶ While law functions as a repressive state apparatus, *Lǐ*, in turn, performs as an ideological state apparatus. *Lǐ* even practices categorization or differentiation (*lǐ bié yì* 礼别异) such as the emperor and bureaucrat (*jūn chén* 君臣), and father and son (*fù zǐ* 父子). Besides, Chinese culture is the culture of music and tradition (*lǐyuè wénhuà* 礼乐文化). Tradition keeps the society in good order; music elevates the mind. Confucius used tradition and music as a tool for separating civilized people from barbarians.⁷ *Lǐ* justifies differences, turning racial, class, and gender differences in society into natural matters. Rites make people forget to question for reasons.

³ Ibid., p.189-193.

⁴ Tang Yijie, Zhang Yaonan and Fang Ming, eds., *Zhōngguó rúxué wénhuà dàguān* 中国儒学文化大观 (Beijing: Beijing Daxue Chubanshe, 2001), p.9.

⁵ Suwanna Satha-Anand, *Lun yu : Kongzi sontana (The analects of Confucious)* (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press, 2008), p.55-57.

⁶ Li Chunqing, *Shī yǔ yìshí xíngtài* 诗与意识形态 (Beijing: Beijing Daxue Chubanshe, 2005), p. 40.

⁷ Li Zonggui, Hui Jixing and Lai Meiqin, *Rújiā wénhuà yǔ Zhōnghuá mínzú níngjùlì* 儒家文化与中华民族凝聚力 (Guangzhou: Guangdong Renmin Chubanshe, 1998), p. 33.

Lǐ ideology socially operates through rites with poetry and music as their major elements. In other words, Chinese poetry constitutes a discourse embedding with principle ideology of the society – the *Lǐ* ideology, and shares discursive practices with ritual music. Rites are a tool for reproduction of relationship among people in the society, and therefore the basis of discrimination and separation. Poetry then becomes a space for seizing cultural meaning.

War Poetry during the Tang Dynasty

In Chinese history, wars with foreigners originated from conflicts between the Han ethnic group and other peripheral frontier tribes over spaces for survival and growth. There were continuous wars during the Tang dynasty. Social value encouraging intellectuals to the frontline emerged as well. These intellectuals composed countless number of poetry about the frontiers, giving birth to the School of Frontier Poetry (*biānsài shīpài* 边塞诗派). The themes of frontier poetry (*biānsài shī* 边塞诗) cover three major aspects 1) frontier wars, life in the army, conflicts between generals and officers, grief from separation, and death 2) scenery and frontier nature 3) life of the residents of frontier areas, love, sympathy and friendship, etc. As a result, poetry about war during the Tang dynasty is considered a part of frontier poetry.

I found that war poetry is the “space of meaning” which clearly shows the power relation in the society. The aspects of race, class, and gender are all examined through the study of the discourses, including state power discourses and counter discourses, constructed by Chinese poets via war poetry, as well as the ideologies behind the language. Although Chinese social contexts, characteristics of war and national enemies have been completely changed, these ideologies still remain active in the society since 7 A.D. up until today. Moreover, the imperial court had been continually passing imperial commands for revision of poetry, resulting in the preservation, reproduction and inheritance of these war poems.

Discourse and Ideology in War Poetry of the Tang Dynasty

War poetry of the Tang dynasty contains two dimensions of power: 1) being a part of the Imperial Examination for over 1,000 years*, and 2) the selection of texts for studying coming from the *Complete Tang Poetry* (*Quán Táng Shī* 全唐诗), compiled under the imperial command from the Kangxi emperor of the Qing dynasty (1644-1911 A.D.). This means that poetry examined in this study has been through two levels of tradition of selection: as an Imperial Examination for choosing officials who would further participate in the state mechanism, and as a compilation done by the imperial court -- the power center of the society. Usually, tradition of selection is implemented by the power center of the society, which monopolizes the tradition of selecting and combining ideologies into dominant ideology of the society, possibly with some hidden interests. In this study, I will discuss mainly on the relationship between discourse and ideology.

From analyzing the texts, I found that Tang war poetry possesses three sets of discursive practices: ethnic nationalism, social class, and gender. I employed the Critical Discourse Analysis theory, which emphasizes on analyzing texts as social and cultural

* The Imperial Examination System (*kējǔ zhìdù* 科举制度) began during the 6th century of the Sui dynasty and continued until the 19th century of the Qing dynasty, lasting for 1,300 years. This system enabled China to obtain government officials from every social class. This diversity has shaped Chinese empire to be one of the nations with the longest history.

products by interpreting power and ideology hidden behind them, in order to decode each set of discourses as following:

Discourse on Ethnic Nationalism

During the Tang dynasty, the most problematic ethnic tribe toward the Han was the Tibetans (*Tǔbō* 吐蕃).⁸ Conflicts between them were almost unavoidable as the Chinese always had to engage in wars with the Tibetans for the influence over the Silk Road.

War poetry has constructed two sets of discourse on ethnic nationalism, namely, the Han patriotism discourse and anti-war discourse. The Han patriotism discourse contains sets of vocabulary utilized by Chinese poets to construct the meaning of the thing called “war.” Identifying threats to the secure existence of the Han ethnic group justifies wars and also calls for sacrifices from people in the nation. Patriotism discourse consists of 1) eradication of national security threats: Loulan 2) elimination of barbarians: Xiongnu and 3) heroism legends: generals and imperial envoys. These discourses arouse the spirits of people for nationalism, dedication, bravery and readiness to sacrifice one’s life for the motherland.

Nevertheless, power has dual qualities: dominating and resistant.⁹ Poetry then produces another two sets of anti-war discourse: 1) discourse on sympathy toward barbarians: extending beyond the border of “they”/ “we”, and 2) discourse on wars as separation and death, such as *Away and No Return*, *Blood in the Yangtze River*, and *White Bone Far Away from Home*.

Three linguistic methods are employed to construct the discourse on ethnic nationalism: naming of other ethnic groups, binary opposition of metaphors and legends of heroism. As for naming of other ethnic groups, China proposed a definition of its own clan by calling them “civilized people,” while derogatively referring to others as “barbarians.” Name calling as a linguistic method expresses viewpoints and ideas toward people being called. Therefore, it is not a representation but rather categorization of things based on a set of standard and value. Words used in name calling exemplify the language of power. Their power depends on definitions used to create certain stereotypes for those being called.

As for usage of binary opposition of metaphors, the Chinese metaphor the “fox” (*láng* 狼) is used to refer to opponents from different ethnic groups to denote their danger. Biologically, the “fox” is only a kind of animals. However, its meaning has evolved in agricultural Chinese society and the “fox” thus become a national enemy. In Chinese culture, the so-called “fox”, fond of stealing agricultural products, symbolizes greed and slyness which is hazardous to human beings, particularly those dwelling in agricultural society. On the contrary, the “dragon” (*lóng* 龙) metaphor has been employed when referring to Han Chinese. The dragon is an imaginary animal with a tiger-like head, snake-like body, eagle-like claws, and deer-like horns. These images were originated from assembling totems of different tribes in Chinese history. They conglomerated, formed alliances and eventually established the so-called “state.” The “dragon”, therefore, symbolizes conglomeration. The Han ethnic group takes the dragon as their ethnic symbol to imply their status of the conglomeration leader.

⁸ Ge Zhaoguang, *Zhōngguó sīxiǎng shǐ* 中国思想史, Vol. 2 (Shanghai: Fudan Daxue Chubanshe, 2001), p. 112.

⁹ Andrew Edger and Peter Sedgwick, *Cultural theory: The key thinkers* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 74.

During the process of discourse construction and production, war poetry reveals the building of “nationalist” identity of the Han ethnic group. The strategy exercised is the belief that the Han identity represents standard, and others deviant. This ethnic nationalism discourse embraces the ideology on nation-building by the Han tribe on the Chinese soil, with the process of national-identity creation consisting of a fundamental mythology focusing on the genesis of the nation, an emphasis on the shared excruciating pain of the people in the nation, as well as ways of thinking that one’s culture was more civilized than others.

Discourse on Social Class

Caste system does not exist in Chinese social structure. Instead, there are different social classes classified by occupation. Each class embodies unequal values; some are superior, and some inferior. Initially, China had no “professional soldier.” During the Zhou dynasty, all adult men from the noble class were required to serve as soldiers.¹⁰ Being a soldier was regarded as an honorable occupation for high class men. In the traditional society, military (*wǔ* 武) and literary (*wén* 文) capabilities could not be separated, especially for high class noblemen who should possess both.

Later in the eras of the Spring and Autumn and the Warring States (771-221 B.C.), China suffered numbers of wars. The high class began to disperse, and the new power holder employed army gathered from all classes. High class people only became literary men (*wénrén* 文人). During the Qin dynasty (221-207 B.C.) the mission of unifying states into the Chinese Empire brought several wars as people still remained loyal to their home states. After the First Emperor of the Qin dynasty (*Qín Shǐhuáng* 秦始皇) (259-210 B.C.) had succeeded in the unification of the country, delinquents who had developed no bond with their former states were sent to guard the frontiers for the safety of the Qin state. Thus began the tradition of soldiers coming from lower class people, whom Chinese people in general looked down with an insulting eye.

The Han dynasty (206 B.C. – 220 A.D.) had been breaking out series of wars with the Xiongnu tribe (Mongolian) for a long period. Conscription of soldiers being successively sent to and returned from the frontiers caused Chinese soldiers to be inadequately skilled, leading to the initiation of the first “professional soldiers” in China. By that time, the duty of soldiers and civilians became separated. Numerous wars breed the discourse on despising being soldier. “Good iron becomes no nail; good men become no soldier” (*hǎo tiě bù dǎ dìng, hǎo hàn bù dāng bīng* 好铁不打钉, 好汉不当兵). In peaceful time, good men do not want to be soldiers; in war time, poor men and prisoners become soldiers.¹¹

By studying Tang war poetry, I found that all classes, including the emperor, military generals, soldiers, foreign warriors, farmers, merchants and even scholars, are mentioned in the poems. These poems construct three sets of discourses on social class: 1) the Son of Heaven discourse: loyalty 2) frontier accomplishment discourse: *fēnghóu* 封侯 or “honorific title” and 3) counter discourse, consisting of critical discourses on the emperor and generals, and on the suffering of soldiers and civilians. For instance, “Sea of blood flows through the frontiers; the emperor insatiably expands the land,” “Death is for soldiers who sacrifice their lives; laurel is for the generals,” and “One general wins; thousands of lives turn into dry bones.” These discourses demonstrate the inequity of social class in power relations in the Chinese society.

¹⁰ Lei Haizhong, *Zhōngguó de bīng* 中国的兵 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2005), p. 4.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 51.

Six linguistic methods are employed in discourse construction: vocabulary choice, word replacement, rhetorical question, allusion, hyperbole and intertextuality. As for vocabulary choice, poets brought up the words “Son of Heaven” (*tiān zǐ* 天子) to justify imperial policies. For word replacement, the words “Han” 汉 and “Qin” 秦 replace “Tang” 唐 to reassert poetry’s discursive status as completely hypothetical. Additionally, these three dynasties enjoyed equal grandeur as well as suffered no different numbers of wars. Allusion to heroism legends operates as a presentation of heroic fights and distinguished qualities of the military generals. The image of heroes plays a vital role in “empowering” warfare, because celebrating people who participate in wars as praiseworthy reflects acceptance in their actions as righteous.

Discourse on social class in poetry has the ideology of absolute monarchy embedded in its language. Poets underline the belief about the Son of Heaven and five human relationships as well as virtues bonding them together. Significant concepts on the Chinese ideology of absolute monarchy are patriarchal clan system (*zōngfǎ zhìdù* 宗法制度) and tradition (*lǐ* 礼). Under patriarchal clan system, Chinese people exceptionally stress the relationships between the emperor-bureaucrats and father-son. The emperor must govern bureaucrats with morality, and the bureaucrats must serve the emperor with loyalty in return. Similarly, a father must parent his son with virtues, and the son must behave gratefully toward his father. In discourse on social class, Chinese poets integrate loyalty to the emperor (*zhōng jūn* 忠君) with the love for the nation (*ài guó* 爱国). As poetry reproduces nationalism, loyalty for the emperor is simultaneously reproduced. The counter discourse also resides within traditional framework. At that time, soldiers and civilians had to face a conflict of being unable to fulfill traditional expectation. In fact, during wartime, showing one’s loyalty for the nation and the emperor by going to wars would make it almost impossible to stay and look after one’s old parents with gratefulness.

All in all, discourse on social class in Chinese war poetry reproduces and reaffirms the ideology of absolute monarchy predominating Chinese society to justify governance power.

Discourse on Gender

Sex can be divided into two types: sex and gender. Sex means natural sexual status by birth. Gender means social or cultural sexual status socially constructed. Therefore, femininity and masculinity are also socially constructed concepts. Generally, gender gains more power than sex in controlling the movement of society and culture. For example, biologically women are prescribed the role of mother and wife, but in the next stage, society and culture step in as to assign how women should act as a mother and a wife.

Chinese social structure has changed from matriarchy to patriarchy since the Xia dynasty (2140-1711 B.C.) The determination of women’s social roles then goes into the hands of men. In *the Book of Rites* (*Lǐ Jì* 礼记) * women behavior guidelines are mentioned as Three Obedience and Four Virtues (*sān cóng sì dé* 三从四德). “Three Obedience” portrays the life of a woman to be obedient to her father (*cóng fù* 从父) in childhood, her husband (*cóng fū* 从夫) in marriage, and her son (*cóng zǐ* 从子) after her husband passed away. “Four

* *The Book of Rites* 礼记 is one of the most important Confucius educational books, focusing on governance practices and traditions of the Zhou dynasty. Confucius utilizes this book as his morality teaching guidelines. See also Xia Zhengnong et al., eds., *Ci hai* 辞海, p. 1779.

Virtues” denote four favorable qualities of women, namely, feminine virtue (*fū dé* 妇德), feminine words (*fū yán* 妇言), feminine appearance (*fū róng* 妇容) and feminine work (*fū gōng* 妇功). When a girl reaches the age of 10, her mother would begin to teach her about feminine works, such as housekeeping, cooking, weaving and embroidery, to cultivate diligence, tolerability and carefulness in the daughter’s characteristics. Three months prior to marriage, the mother has to teach her daughter another three qualities to become a “good wife”: 1) virtue: women must be faithful 2) words: women must talk agreeably and not aggressively, as well as be able to persuade people 3) appearance: women must take care of her body to stay clean and beautiful. All should be achieved in order to nurture Chinese women to be a grateful daughter (*xiào nǚ* 孝女), a virtuous wife (*xián qī* 贤妻) and an excellent mother (*liáng mǔ* 良母).

It can be said that Chinese society holds certain socialization processes which instill in women a commitment or inclination to act within social limitation, and shape their space and activity as the society desires. These processes begin with the prescription of roles for behaving in accordance to status, such as the roles of a daughter, a wife and a mother. The roles become like a fundamental model in socialization. Women who play along with the roles will be appreciated as a “good civilian.”

By studying war poetry of the Tang dynasty concerning on women, I found that the poems portray two groups of women: noblewomen and common women. Noblewomen signify princesses or consorts, including daughters of bureaucrats. Common women can be divided into those who belong to the landlord class and the farmer class. Tang war poetry has constructed three sets of gender discourse. The first one is *hé qīn* 和亲 discourse in noblewomen. The word *hé qīn* means bonding through marriage. Human beings in the past held several logical conflicts. Nevertheless, these conflicts were essential to the existence of society. The foremost necessity lied on political bonds among groups of people. However, these bonds were fragile; the most significant way of maintaining them appeared to be utilization of women as bonders. The *hé qīn* discourse in poetry can be found in both pro and con sides, as in “*hé qīn* policy: our land in peace, our economy in prosperity” and “*hé qīn* policy: political hostages.” The second set is the discourse on encouraging husbands to seek achievement at the frontiers in common women from the landlord class, such as “Becoming Lord within one battle”, and its counter discourse, such as “False to encourage my husband to fame.” And the final set is the discourse on broken family in common women from the poor farmer class. As their husbands were economically poor, they became hardly ambitious enough to seek for accomplishment at the frontiers like those landlord sons. Consequently, discourses on encouraging husbands for the fame at the frontiers cannot be found in women of this class. The discourse on a broken family of the poor family class contains four sets of sub-discourses: 1) separation: an inch-small heart bearing a hundred arrows 2) sewing clothes and delivering them to the frontiers 3) widowed daughter-in-law in the husband’s family and 4) widow of wars

Linguistic methods employed to construct gender discourses include 1) stereotype image 2) intertextuality 3) imagery and 4) symbol

Using stereotype images allows economy of effort for both the discourse constructor and receiver. The constructor can present his discourse in the most compact and quickest way, while the receivers also need as less time and effort to understand it. Poets of the Tang dynasty constructed gender discourses by giving stereotype images for both noblewomen and common women. The former is represented by Consort Wang Zhaojun (*Wáng Zhāojūn* 王昭君) of Emperor Han Yuandi (*Hàn Yuándì* 汉元帝) (48-33 B.C.) of the Han dynasty in the aspect of *hé qīn* policy practice in the imperial court, while the latter is stereotyped by an ideal lady according to Confucius teaching respectively.

The ideology lying under gender discourses is patriotism, which has reproduced and carried on its ethics, rooted back to the basis of regarding women as a sub-system of a bigger one, with prescribed duties based on sex. Normally, Chinese women of all classes had to remain in “private space,” but warfare brought noblewomen into “public space.” These women then became a tool for binding different social units together through marriage, such as between nations and tribes, as a mean for preventing or reconciling their conflicts. Common women of both classes might appear fairly different in their economic background, but the gap in the aspect of social background was not as wide. These common women spent most of their lives in “private space” and strictly followed ethical guidance and limitation from the Confucius school. Apparently, poetry during the Tang dynasty functions as a space for socialization of the preferred roles of noblewomen and common women in order to be “a good member” of the society.

In war poetry, the concept of virtuous lady most frequently practiced by poets is the model of a Confucius ideal wife. To determine women’s roles as an obedient and faithful wife to her husband helps fortify patriotic social structure as “the rulers” wish. Gender discourses in Tang war poetry, therefore, reassert and reproduce the idea of Confucius virtuous lady with its primary aim to promote successful continuity of Chinese family institution.

Conclusion

I hereby present the conclusion reached from researching war poetry during the Tang dynasty in linguistic and social dimensions, which can be divided into two aspects: 1) war and cultural violence in Chinese society during the Tang dynasty and 2) war poetry and the reproduction of principle ideologies of Chinese society.

War and Cultural Violence in Chinese Society during the Tang Dynasty

Cultural violence denotes ideas and beliefs in a society which convert forms of violence in the society into acceptable or, eventually, righteous things. Cultural violence justifies violence, both direct and structural ones. I argue that cultural violence in Chinese society arises from the fundamental concept of categorization and classification in power relation, as illustrated in these three sets of ideas:

Illusion of Identity

Chinese people believed that the Han ethnic group possesses exceptional identity. Its people are highly civilized, and responsible for the honorable civilizing mission toward others. The Chinese believed that the cosmological system consists of the Han Chinese tribe as the “center” of the cosmos as they named themselves the “Middle Kingdom.” They categorized other ethnic groups and socially classified the Han as “civilized people” while other tribes were regarded as “barbarians.” Self-identification simplifies the process of separating themselves from others. The set of ideas on illusion of identity or pseudospeciation generated from “derogating” other tribes beside the Han down from being human alike resulted in less difficulty in committing violence on other tribes.

Rectification of Names

Rectification of names (*zhèng míng* 正名) is the correspondence between social status and behavior. Confucius teaching categorizes human relationship into five pairs and stringently determines the roles for each pair. They believe that a society will enjoy peace if its members act in accordance to the meaning of their “noun.” For example, a ruler must behave appropriately for being a ruler; a bureaucrat must behave as a bureaucrat. These ideas subconsciously organize human beings. Behaving and following the meaning of “noun” in a sense brings peace to the society. However, in another sense it binds humans to their own “noun.” In a society where this kind of ideas exists, if the power holder does not stay in term with morality, less resistant forces would be possible. This is because the society has already prescribed duty and a behavior model for each person. Therefore, the concept poses another type of cultural violence directly affecting the class structure of Chinese society.

Tradition of Chinese Virtuous Lady

Categorization by sex is generally practiced in all society. Still, in Chinese society, other than categorization by sex, there is also classification of power relations between male and female into several sets. In term of status, men are higher; women are lower. In term of behavior, men lead; women follow. In term of quality, men are strong; women are soft. Moreover, the roles of women are restricted in women teachings, covering all status a woman can ever be in her life.

These three aforementioned sets of ideas of Chinese people are all embedded with power function, categorization, classification of high and low as well as center and marginal. In sum, these ideas manifest cultural violence that justifies both direct and structural violence in Chinese society.

War Poetry and the Reproduction of Principle Ideologies in Chinese Society

War poetry of the Tang dynasty reflects inequity among races, classes and gender in Chinese society. These poems underline several sets of codes in Chinese society by constructing three sets of principle discourses: discourses on ethnic nationalism, on social class and on gender. Each set includes both discourses: affirming traditional beliefs and countering centralized power. Some poems were given more complicate characteristics by reasserting mainstream discourses while also questioning or giving an opposite point of view for the very same poems. The complexity and paradoxical nature of poetry as a discourse is its important qualities to affirm or counter power. Accordingly, war poetry of the Tang dynasty is filled with semantic symbolism, symbols and events. These symbols, moreover, are proved not to be static and fixed but flexible and expandable, enabling them to survive through the test of time. Chinese poets are not only the creators of highly valuable humanist works, but also the representatives or mediums of the mainstream thinking system of their time.

I also found the answer why war poetry of the Tang dynasty, constructed by the culture of the Han, who derogated others as barbarians, is still preserved and highly valued during the time of Mongolian rulers in the Yuan dynasty (1279-1368 A.D.) and Manchurian rulers of the Qing dynasty (1644-1911 A.D.) for a total of 356 years. The reason behind this lies on the Han way of utilizing “culture” as a criteria in separating “civilized people” from “barbarians.” When these tribes became the ruler of the Chinese empire and underwent through sinicization (*Hàn huà* 汉化), they then had proceeded further than the status of

“barbarians,” and were fully legitimated to be crowned as the Son of Heaven, or the emperor. More importantly, all the three sets of discourses presented in Tang war poetry have already reasserted, reproduced and inherited the ideologies of nation-building, absolute monarchy and patriotism. These ideologies contribute to the main ideologies maintaining the existence of Chinese society in all aspects, including unity of the nation, justification of governance power as well as social order and conformity. As a consequence, poetry of the Tang dynasty continues to be admired by people with authoritative power in the society up to the present time

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