

# The Variation of *The Chinese Image* in The Community Consciousness about Tang Poetry

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**Key words:** Tang poetry, Chinese image, Community, Mirror

**Abstract:** As a medium Tang poetry construct the classical form of the pan-east Asia community dominated by the main body of the image of "China", which was successfully expressed and disseminated under the complicity of the literary group of tang dynasty. It is a universal ideographic mechanism of cultural communication in the process of communication between the Tang Dynasty and the world. This community is a two-dimensional "triple multilateral" model influenced by human and natural factors.

## 1. Introduction

Although Tang poetry is a literary work, its rich realistic elements are important literature materials that reflect the culture of Tang Dynasty and the image of the country at that time. Tang poetry is an important carrier of the "Chinese spirit, Chinese image, Chinese culture, and Chinese expression" in the Tang Dynasty. There are many writings for alien races, alien regions and alien countries in the Tang poetry. This group of numerous "others" constituted a "triple multilateral (plane)" mirror circle in two dimensions. Today, under the Belt and Road initiative, we reviewed the politics and cultures of the Tang Dynasty and found that the literati group of Tang Dynasty had consciously or unconsciously reflected in the poetry a high degree of attention to the image of the Tang Dynasty, and the related Tang poetry is a deep description of the significance of Chinese cultural values at that time. Moreover, in the political situation of the grand unification of the home country, in the Tang Dynasty, China led the construction of the classical form of community consciousness and the pattern of community relations, that was, the mode of "Co-existence between subjects" dominated by one subject and with multi-subject participation. In this model, when the poetry creation of the Tang Dynasty literati faced the differences between the three humanities in the alien races, alien regions and alien countries around the central empire, the self-shaping "Chinese image" had produced the imagological variation represented by letter symbols. At the same time, in the face of the differences in the natural spatial dimensions of the East, South, West and North, the variation of the "Chinese image" was generated. It can be assumed that the variability of "Chinese image" in Tang poetry is constructed in the "triple multilateral" community platform, exerting different validity of cultural, economic, political and military functions.

## 2. The regional community consciousness and community relations led by the Tang Dynasty

Although the concept of community is originated in the west in modern academia, the connotation of this concept and the cultural phenomenon referred to have already been applied in the eastern cultural system, or from the perspective of cultural anthropology, it is a human concept that emerges based on the interest relationship between the original people. This basic concept model has produced cultural adaptability with its own characteristics in different eras, different regions and different civilizations. In academia, western scholars first initiated relevant research, but China's community consciousness and the practice of community relations had already emerged at the beginning of Chinese civilization. The community consciousness and the practice of community relations in Tang Dynasty are the classical peaks of the community's thought and practice in the Chinese civilization system. The thoughts are derived from the ancient times and has left a helpful heritage of community thought for the modern society. In the early Western Zhou Dynasty, the system of enfeoffment and patriarchal

system were the institutional practice with the idea of community. The so-called “under the heavens, all this territory belongs to the king; within this land, all people are the ministers of the king” means that under the governance of “the king system”, all the patterns of property and interests are a kind of social relationship with the prototype of “community”. In the end of Western Zhou Dynasty, Shi Bo put forward the concept of “Harmony creating new substances”, and the concept of “harmony” is “synergy”. Although it is said “Sameness leading to recession”, the relationship between the communities does not require “sameness” but “synergy”, that is the inter-promoting relation between “synergy” to coexistence and “synergy” to development in a common interest category. Therefore, it became the ideological origin and foundation of “Harmony and sameness being the one”<sup>2</sup> in the Tang Dynasty society.

The Tang imperial court led the construction of the community relation model and operational mechanism with specific cultural adaptability at that time. The Guanyu aristocratic group that the Tang Dynasty relied on was itself a new aristocratic group with the minority lineage of the North, such as the Xianbei. They had a very open mind in the national psychology, and the Northern aristocratic group itself was also a synergetic and cooperative relationship. This internal synergy was carried forward to the unified national system and naturally adapted to such a more extensive “community” relation. Therefore, emperor Taizong of Tang said that since ancient times, it was considered that China was dignified (referred to the Central Plains), while the barbarians were ignoble, but he treated them equally<sup>3</sup>. It formed the prototype of the pan-East Asian interest community and even the community of destiny built by many participants who are led by “Tian Khan”. The historical effect of this common destiny relationship was particularly evident in the process of Islamization in Central Asia, East Asia, and Southeast Asia. Taking the Tang imperial court as the leading factor, this nascent regional “destiny community” played an important role in cultural and military balances in this process. In the Pan-East Asia region, the Tang people, on behalf of “China”, had organized a number of ethnic groups, regions, and states to construct a relationship of community mode in accordance with the kinship. This community operation was of the “Co-existence between subjects” mode dominated by one subject and with multi-subject participation, and its operation mechanism was: First, the “one subject” as the leader was dynamically rheologic, able to change the dynasty and unify the whole country. The participant could be transformed into a dominant subject under certain conditions; Second, the so-called “one subject” must be “one” instead of “multiple” subject, that was, the so-called “Zhengshuo” could only be one, which was exactly the expression of China’s “grand unification” thought in the community consciousness. There was a soulful expression of this in Tang poetry, and Du Fu’s poetry that “The Arctic Court will not change” (“Denglou”) was the representative.

Under the self-conscious and unselfconscious effects of the community consciousness, most of the poets in the Tang Dynasty were members of the central imperial court officials or the enthusiastic members of the literati group. They naturally formed a strategic cultural “collusion” in the travelling and singing, that is, In the poems, the “Chinese image” had a directional homology variation, with the purpose to maintain and operate this huge pan-East Asian social community. As for the directional homology variation, when the Tang people faced the different multilateral relations caused by the multi-dimensional and multilateral nature and humanity conditions, as a differential synergy generated by the dominant subject and multiple participating subjects, it produced a variation in the image of “China” in poetry. Therefore, these varied Chinese images could reflect these differences, and these differences were precisely the performance of the Tang literati group’s strategy for developing and dealing with different multilateral relations in literature.

### **3. The variability in the construction of “Chinese image” in Tang poetry**

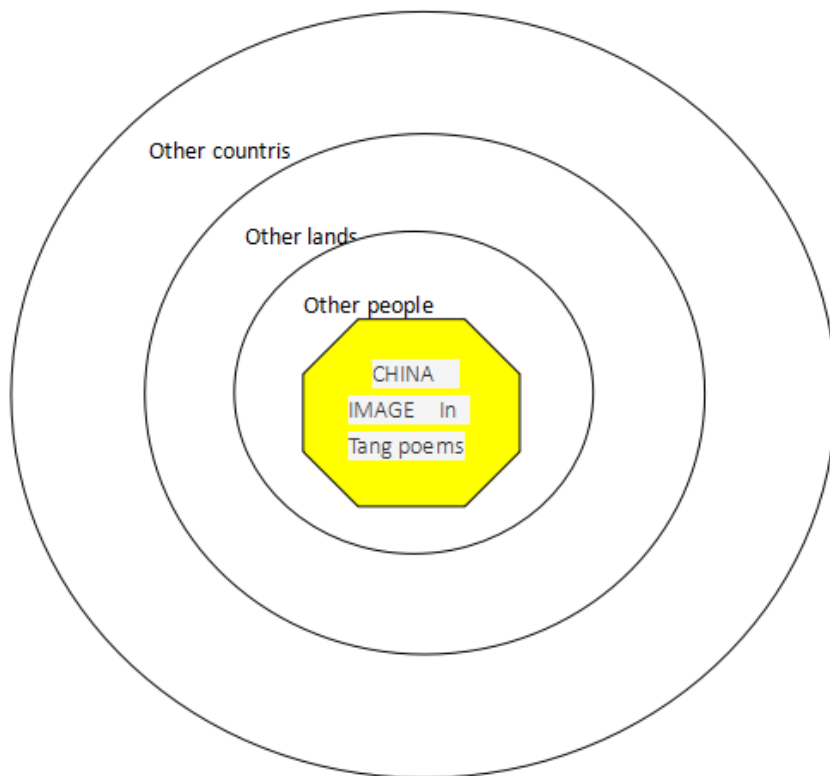
The “China” in the Tang Dynasty inherited the Confucian orthodoxy originated from the classical “China”. The Tang Dynasty represented the orthodoxy and legitimacy of the succession of rights in the cultural identity of the central state. We said that no later than the beginning of the Western Zhou Dynasty, the community consciousness of the “world” fate of the “China” (Inscription on the bronze ware “He Zun” of the Western Zhou Dynasty: “Zhaici China”, stored in Shaanxi Baoji Bronze

Museum) had already begun. Although the Central Plains regime had changed several times, the regimes of the Central Plains had completed their own identity recognition of "China" with the strong persuasion of geospatial location. Whether it was the regime of Han or the minority, they all hoped to realize the construction of one "world" community.

Therefore, since the Western Zhou Dynasty, the "China" model was a "home world" with multi-subject collaborative participation dominated by "Tianzi" and "Emperor" of the central government. This "home" needs to face many neighbors and relatives in the triple humanistic spaces of alien races, alien region and alien countries around the "home", and also require to face numerous neighbors and relatives distributed in the east, south, west and north multilateral natural spaces. Therefore, an interactive relationship was formed in the two dimensions of humanity and nature. It also led to the two-dimensional difference relations and the variability of the image of "China" brought about by it. The two-dimensional difference between humanity and nature drove the "Chinese image" in Tang Dynasty and the surrounding to form a triple polyhedron "mirror" circle structure. From Lacan's point of view, the community relation was the symbiosis, interaction and communication between self-subject and object subject. The community consciousness in classical China was the co-existence consciousness between subjects, which was dominated by one subject, participated in by multi subjects, mutually recognized, complementary and mutually reflected.

Tang poetry can be described as an important carrier of the "Chinese spirit, Chinese image, Chinese culture, and Chinese expression" in Tang Dynasty. There are many writings for alien races, alien regions and alien countries in the Tang poetry. This group of numerous "others" constituted a "triple multilateral (plane)" mirror circle in two dimensions.

The "triple multilateral (plane)" mirror circle structure model established in the two dimensions of human space and natural space is shown as follows:



Note: The circle indicates the triple humanistic space; The Octagon indicates the natural space in eight directions(the natural space in the traditional concept is LiuHe composed of heaven,earth, South,East,North and West).

As can be seen from the figure, the "Chinese image" is in the "triple multilateral (plane)" mirror circle, and thus the image variation occurred in the complex "others". In other words, with different other people as multiple and multi-faceted "mirror", you can see the variation of "China" self-image.

According to the figure, from the difference in the dimension of the humanity space, the triple-

degree relationship between the origin and the edge of the "China" can be distinguished. The closest one was "alien races", a nation that was integrated into or would be integrated into the main body of the Chinese nation, taking Xianbei, Yi, Miao, etc. as representatives, or those were controlled and managed by the Tang government. The second one was "alien regions", represented by the Western Region, the area beyond the Great Wall, Tibetan, Nanzhao, etc.; The following one was "alien countries", represented by Japan, Silla, South China Sea, Persia, Byzantine, etc. The three relationships were actually intricate, and because of political and social factors, the relationships between them were changed. The "Chinese image" reflected by Tang poetry would be different due to the relationships, just like because of the different distance between the mirror and the person's position, the difference of self image could be seen.

According to the figure, with the analysis of the difference in the dimensions of natural space, from "China" (usually near the capital Chang'an and Luoyang) as the origin to the surrounding southeast and northwest, it could be divided into many different natural space regions, and the differences in geography, climate and other natural resources led to the changes in geographical relationships. The surrounding territory in the geographical relationship have a mirroring variation on the image of the central state. When the "Chinese image" faced surrounding different territories, variation phenomenon on relation would occur due to geographical effect.

Of course, the two-dimensional synchronicity between the human space and the natural space affects the change of the "Chinese image" in the mirror circle. Each different "other" mirror image would fall into a certain point in this two-dimensional coordinate system. According to historical data and Tang poetry literature, the correlation between the "mirror" and the two dimensions could be observed, and this point could also become an observation point of Tang poetry corresponding to a factor that caused variation in the "Chinese image."

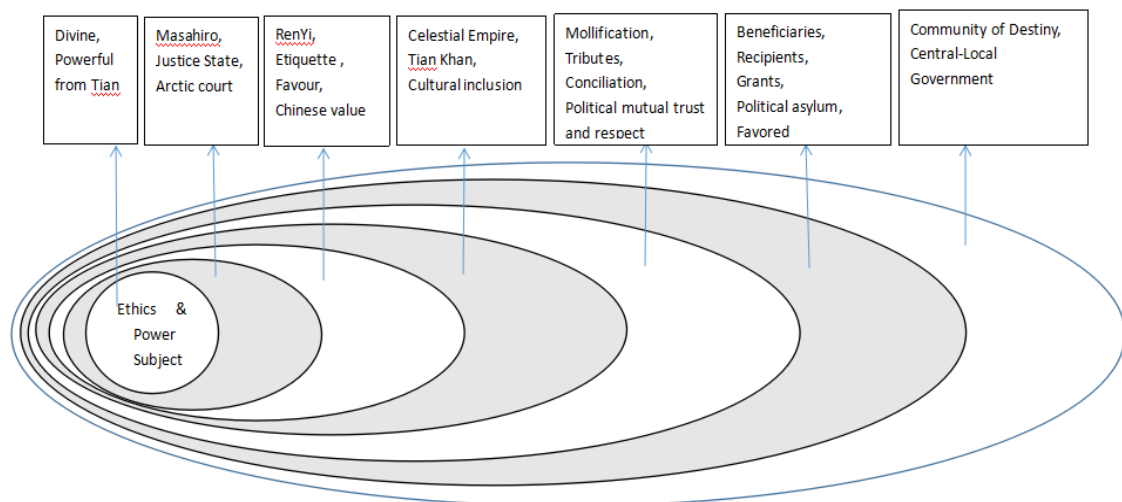
#### **4.The function and influence of the "Chinese image" variation of Tang poetry in the community relations**

The "China" image in Tang poetry is the poetic expression of the national image of the Tang Dynasty, and it has the functions to construct and communicate the value of the country's main body. From the existing texts of Tang poetry, it can be seen the materiality, etiquette, diplomatic parlance, the relationship of international (and inter-ethnic) friends, the description of geography, and the political situation and etc. in Tang Dynasty. The description and imagination of the poet in the Tang Dynasty as a kind of meaning "coding", its core value was transcoded or decoded by many other "mirrors", and successfully producing a huge effect of China's dominant culture, politics, and diplomacy in a tripartite multilateral community of mutual demonstration and mutual reflection. The relations of "Co-existence between subjects" dominated by one subject and with multi-subject participation make the variation of the "Chinese image" in the Pan-East Asia region community play an organic functional validity of difference. Because of the Co-existence relations of the central state and the surrounding nationalities, regions, and countries are the common relations between the subjects, under the premise of the identity of the community, there was generally no the question who had to be replaced. Relying on the trust and respect of harmony to symbiosis, "people should appreciate the beauty they create and appreciate the beauty created by others, so that the beauty of each one can be combined to achieve the possibility of moving toward "the world of great harmony". The co-existed benign marginal relationship between the subjects is different from the marginal relationship of the rest of the world. Here, a community-based relationship atmosphere was formed among the various subjects. Through the cooperative practice of language and various exchanges, the practice relationship of the framework became the process of "participation and sharing", that was a process with common interests, related to others and jointly determined by the interactivity of the activities. This can be seen in the tributary system of Tang Dynasty. The prosperity of the Tang court brought to the surrounding nationalities, regions and countries not a threat but a welfare. The prosperity described in that "The ambassadors and ministers from all over the country worshipped the emperor" (Wang Wei's "The Work with Mr. Jia in the Morning Court in Daming palace") ushered a peaceful era and also created a stable and secure platform for the civilization exchange. Therefore, the civilized

forms such as human resources, materials and spiritual wealth can reach the destination of transactions and exchanges frequently, deeply, safely and effectively, and then the prosperity of the Sea and Land Silk Road appeared. According to historical records, the property of Tang Dynasty returned to the tributary people was far more than the tribute items, which reflected the demeanor and responsibility of the country of richness.

In the community relations of the "triple multilateral" mirror circle, the national image of Tang Dynasty was varied due to the close or distant relationship between the surrounding various nations, countries and regions. The works of Tang poetry as a product of the times, the response of different poets to different peripheral relations made these poetic "dialogues", "original understanding", "mutual intermediary communicated in the collective conversations" and other ways to support a survival balance with difference between subjects. There was also a classical form similar to Husserl's "mutual subjectivity", and contemporary hermeneutics believes that "understanding" could only be done in language. In a sense, mastering and using a language and participating in a conversation were essentially to accept the values of people in this way of life. The wide spread of Tang poetry to the audience of alien races, alien regions and alien countries was such a typical example. The Tang Dynasty poets interacted with foreign literati such as of Silla and Japan, and the foreigners who entered the Tang took up the post of the "imperial court officials" of Tang Dynasty (those who influenced the most on Chinese history were An Lushan and Shi Siming who were the descendants of Anguo and Shi State). The practice of non-nationals who were elected as senior officials in the country was rare in the history of the world and was actually a fruitful multi-agent dialogue between foreign cultures, so that people could form universal scales and common visions.

The core value of the "Chinese image" was not a single value input or output in the construction of the community relations Tang Dynasty but a multi-level identity with rich logic features, producing the effect with gradient features.



Notes:

White: The image of the Country("China") dominated by the leader of Community

Gray: The image("China") selectively endorsed by participants in the "Community"

In the above figure, the value logic process of the leader and the participant is presented in turn in the community relation dominated by one subject and with multi-subject participation. The white circle is the value dominated by the leader, and the gray circle is the participant's selective value translation for self-acceptance. They are the three symbol decoding methods of participants in semiotics, namely compliant decoding, compromising decoding, and adversarial decoding. That is to say, in the inter-subjective community relations, the participants can effectively exerted their subjectivity in three ways of different and selective identification of the "China" image.

It can be seen that the basic value transmission logic in the community relation dominated by Tang Dynasty with the name of "China" took the perfect self-image of the leader as the logical starting point, carried on the self-interpretation of value for many others, and thus established its dominant

“interpretation community” (Stanley Fish) in complex interpretation conflicts, to achieve a “cultural community” that could operate under a political ethics system and then to enter a "responsible community" that can be substantially collided. Thereby, a true multilateral "community of interests" was reached effectively, and on this basis, an ideal "destiny community" could be constructed. The logical relationship is as follows: image subject → value community → interpretation community → cultural community → responsibility community → interest community → destiny community. Tang poetry is just a cultural existence with the meaning of "interpreting community" in complex interpretation conflicts. This is the orientation of Tang poetry as the value media of the Tang culture in the process of this value logic transmission.

## 5. Conclusions

The two-dimensional difference in the typical "triple multilateral" space of Tang Dynasty had caused the "mirror" circle of many surrounding other people to be characterized by "triple polyhedral". Therefore, the poets of the "Central State" had differently projected the image of the "Central State" into different "others" using poetry as a medium.

In the mirror image of the others, there was an inevitable secondary difference, that was the variation of "image" caused by the difference of "mirror image". The latter, as the dynamic description of the former, was a vivid portrayal of the inter-subjectivity in the inter-recognition symbiosis of interactive interpretation, which also became the fundamental reason for the variation of the self-image of the dominant subject. That was a cyclical variation process of "...mirror difference → self-image difference → mirror variation → self-image variation → mirror difference...". The core values and variability of the "Chinese image" in Tang poetry have extremely important strategic inspiration and reference value for the shaping and dissemination of the image of contemporary China. The "three multilateral" community relation constructed in Tang Dynasty reflected in the Tang poetry serves as a strong historical reference for the current Chinese government to vigorously launch an international strategy to build a multilateral interest community relationship.

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