

Study of Imperfect Sheet of Tangut "Persuasive Poetry" (No. G21 002[13202]) Collected in Gansu Museum*

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Abstract—Two pieces of imperfect sheets of Tangut "Persuasive Poetry" were unearthed from Xiuxing Cave in Zhangyi Town of Wuwei City. They are now collected in Gansu Museum and published in the volume 16 of the "Tangut Literatures Collected in China". This paper intends to reinterpret and compile this literature and correct the interpretation errors that have occurred in the past on the basis of previous interpretations. On the basis of Tangut "Palace-style Poetry" unearthed in Khara-Khoto in the same period and studies on Dunhuang poetry literatures, this paper tries to further discuss type or form of this literature, rhyming and other conditions of this literature.

Keywords—Tangut; Persuasive Poetry; Tangut literatures collected in China

I. INTRODUCTION

The existing Tangut literatures mainly include the literatures unearthed from Khara-Khoto; and the studies on Tangut are mostly based on those literatures. Wherein, Tangut poetry works are rare among Tangut literatures unearthed from Khara-Khoto which are mainly composed of Buddhist and the like religious literatures. With the continuous publication of the "Literatures Unearthed from Khara-Khoto as Collected in Russia", Nie Hongyin and Liang Songtao carried out a series of researches on Tangutwen poetry literatures, showed the value and background of Tangut poetry literature to the academic circles, combed and discussed the basic situation of Tangut poetry.

In volume 16 of the "Tangut Literatures Collected in China", the imperfect sheets of the Tangut "Persuasive Poetry" (Document No. G21 002 [13202]) were unearthed from the Xiuxing Cave on Xiaoxigouxian Mountain in Zhangyi Town of Wuwei City in 1972 and now were collected in Gansu Museum. According to the narrative information of "Tangut Literatures Collected in China", this literature is engraved on folded hemp paper sized 18 cm (H)*10.5 cm (W), with single column top and down and column height at 15.3 cm; 3 sheets are preserved, each sheet

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has 6 lines and every line has 14 characters. From the currently discovered and published Tangut literatures in the world, this literature should be called the only Tangut folk poetry work beyond the literatures unearthed from Khara-Khoto.

Shi Jinbo once mentioned and introduced this literature in the process of introducing and interpreting Tangut literatures collected in China¹. Since then, Teacher Liang Jihong has explained the full text of the literature and expounded the basic characteristics of the "Persuasive Poetry"². The research results of the predecessors have made a great contribution to sorting out the content, characteristics and significance of this literature; but the slightly imperfect thing is that the previous interpretation on this literature has some content interpretation error and some interpretation to be determined and the information explanation on the literature itself is not comprehensive enough.

On the basis of the researches of the predecessors, this paper intends to further examine and discuss the literature.

II. CHINESE TRANSLATION OF THE IMPERFECT SHEETS OF "PERSUASIVE POETRY"

The following shows the Chinese Translation of the imperfect sheets of "Persuasive Poetry":

G21 002[13202]-1P

- | | |
|-----------|---------|
| 1 此刻已分他已坐 | 往昔技艺事真空 |
| 2 富贵争威修楼阁 | 摩崖青绿□□□ |
| 3 岁月苦晒已成灰 | 往昔劳苦事真空 |
| 4 俄顷伎击做庆乐 | 哭泣如死哀病人 |
| 5 吉凶二种不长时 | 悲喜已思事真空 |

¹ Nie Hongyin. On the Rhyming Practice of Tangut Poems [J]. Tangut Research. 2013 (1):17-26; Nie Hongyin. Formation of the Tangut Poetry and its Origin [J]. Tangut Research. 2016 (4): 3-9; Liang Songtao. Study of Tangut Collection of Court Poems [J]. Lanzhou University. Ph.D. Thesis. May 2008; Liang Songtao. Analysis on the Application of Rhetoric in Tangut Collection of Court Poems [J]. Tangut Studies. 2016-01: 333-342.

² Shi Jinbo. New exploration of Tangut literature collected in China. [J]. Tangut Studies. 2007, No. 02: 3-16.

6. 姻亲陪伴游林苑 醉赋花苑享安乐

(Meaning:

1. At this time, he sits there, reminding his glorious times, but it is all in void.

2. People often pursue fame and construct elegant buildings.

3. But everything will be gone with the years passed like ash, so the hardship and bitterness is.

4. In prosperous times, people play music and instruments to celebrate; when people gets sick, his relatives may cry sadly to pray for him.

5. Happiness and inauspiciousness will not stay long, no matter it is good or bad, it's senseless.

6. You may play, grow plants, write and read poems and share leisure time with your family to enjoy the happy moments.)

G21 002[13202]-2P

- | | |
|-------------|---------|
| 7. 一时死至如浮云 | 万种威仪事真空 |
| 8. 少姿细眉如柳叶 | 面白唇红胜如花 |
| 9. 衰老揉拂皮浮塞 | 年少矜高事真空 |
| 10. 前祖贤人争留名 | 分邦建国久不忍 |
| 11. 空名且留尚无一 | 已成灰土事真空 |
| 12. 明功皆熄不与乐 | 自行矜高□□□ |
| 13. 趣名争利已忘死 | 尚独能受事 空 |
| 14. 此刻男童骑苇马 | 不觉已老过六十 |
| 15. 荣衰两种如闪电 | 往来奔驰事真空 |
| 16. 岁岁买卖游山水 | 年年寻利倦日月 |
| 17. 安为新餐弃佛道 | 物稀复随事真空 |
| 18. 今闻 | |

(Meaning:

7. When you have to face the death, your power and the dignity will disappear.

8. No matter how beautiful and handsome you are,

9. When you are old, your pleasant look and pride will be gone.

10. Previous sages and men of virtue often pursue for fame and build countries in different region.

11. But when they died, what the fame means to them? Nothing.

12. It is known that fame is nonsense but people are still supercilious and self-conceited.

13. To you pursue fame and wealth at the cost of the whole life, and you may enjoy it, but you may not realize death will come to you sooner or later, when it comes, your fame and wealth will be void.

14. You're getting old with time flying unwittingly, from a child to an elderly.

15. Honor and disgrace is like lighting, it will come and go rapidly, but it is void, too.

16. You may go after money inexhaustibly,

17. And abandon yourself to delicious food and comfortable life, putting Buddhism aside, but food and comfort are immaterial to your entire life.

18. Now, you may realize it.)

III. SOME INFORMATION OF THE TANGUT "PERSUASIVE POETRY" (No. G21 002[13202])

A. Content

From the Tangut literatures unearthed from Khara-Khoto, Tangut-style poetry proverbs were formed on the basis of the existing Dunhuang literature style, the cultural characteristics of the ethnic group, and absorption of the culture of Central Plains. The poems with the theme of "advising" and "moralizing" frequently appear in Dunhuang literatures. Most of them combine Buddhist factors, expound the philosophy of life and persuade people to be good.

From the perspective of this Tangut "Persuasive Poetry", the thoughts and contents reflected by the literature also represent the development status of Tangut culture and poetry in Hexi region at that time to some extent: the same as reflected in Dunhuang literatures, the literary form of the work embodies the combination of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism; at the same time, its form draws on the culture of Central Plains and is based on its own ethnic characteristics. This style can also be verified by comparing the Mongolian textbooks such as "San Cai Za Zi (三才杂字)" as unearthed from Dunhuang North Grotto and Haimu Cave in Wuwei City.

B. Rhyming

From the rhyming of the Tangut "Persuasive Poetry", it can also be found that Tangut poetry sometimes does not like poems of Central Plains that deliberately avoid using the same words. In the odd sentences in the poem, the three words of "事真空 (be void)" are used repeatedly to rhyme, with dǎzǐ as the rhyme. For this situation, the same style has not been found in other Tangut poems.

Although some special expressions and meanings in Tangut language and literary works cannot be fully understood, the interpretation of this Tangut poetry can at least provide a certain basic reference for understanding Tangut poetry and literature, and concentrate a relatively neat rhyming style of works to the collection of Tangut poems.

Its characteristics can be compared with that of the "Literatures Unearthed from Khara-Khoto as Collected in Russia", "Literatures Unearthed from Khara-Khoto as Collected in British", "Tangut Literatures Collected in China" and other Tangut poetry and literatures published or studied and interpreted in the academic circles. According to

the combing statistics, 18 kinds of Tangut poetry literatures with 26 serial numbers have been found. However, there was neither such poem as appearing neat rhyming nor any discoveries having the same layout as this imperfect sheet of the poetry. Hence, it can be seen that this collection of poems that preserves imperfect sheets of poetry should be different from the other versions of any of the said collection of poems and is an orphan work.

C. Style

Nie Hongyin once pointed out³ that Tangut poems have two independent style systems, namely the Han system and Tangut system. The latter system is originated from the folk songs of Tangut, characterized by miscellaneous words, no rhyme but match. The poetry used in a certain ritual or the poem dedicated to the king may adopt the Tangut style. The poetry cited in the daily life of people and religious poetry may adopt the Han style. Hence, it can be seen that the Tangut poetry represented by the Tangut "Court Poems" which was unearthed from Khara-Khoto and has been studied belongs to Tangut style. It can be inferred that the Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism combined content, style and rhyming of "Persuasive Poetry" discussed in this paper belongs to the Han style as popular in the daily life of people.

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According to other Tangut books discovered in Xiuxing Cave where the Tangut "Persuasive Poetry" was unearthed, five reign titles are involved in them, such as Tangut Renqing, Tiansheng, Qianyou, Tianqing and Guangding which are both in the middle and late of Tangut Dynasty; the creation and circulation times of the poem "Persuasive Poetry" should also be roughly the same. Therefore, it can be roughly inferred that this Tangut poem was probably circulated in the late Tangut period.

IV. CONCLUSION

Persuasive poetry, a common philosophical poem in ancient times, is an instructive poem that persuades people how to deal with others. The "Persuasive Poetry" discussed in this paper is in the form of seven words, with rhyme and matching at an interval of one or two sentences; the style is similar to Monk Zhikong's "万空歌 (all is void)" in Wudi period of Liang Dynasty; it tells people that in people's life, fame and wealth, hardship and enjoyment are as transient as a fleeting cloud. As said in the poem, the "争食贪安弃佛道,物稀复随事真空 (meaning: abandon yourself to delicious food and comfortable life, putting Buddhism aside, but food and comfort are immaterial to your entire life.)" points out that

the main purpose of the poem is to promote the thoughts of Buddhism and Taoism that one can make somewhat different if only he does not have desire and the world can be governed by doing nothing that goes against nature and persuade people to do not persist in seeking for satisfying material desire in order to get away from suffering and realizing long-term happiness.

Among Tangut poetries, this poetry is the only work of the type in addition to the literatures unearthed from Khara-Khoto. Hence, it can be seen that Liangzhou as the city nearby the capital of Tangut was not only a crucial political and military position, but also should have relatively prosperous writing style. Just like the local unearthed Tangut education literatures for children, this poem both contains Dunhuang style and Tangut characteristics, and also has the cultural characteristics of the Central Plains, reflecting the development status of Tangut culture in the Hexi region.

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