

Exploration on the Completion Time of the “Preface of Selections of Refined Literature”

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Abstract—The opinions on the completion time of the "Preface of Selections of Refined Literature" have always been divergent and inconsistent. To examine its completion time, it is necessary to combine various internal and external factors such as the preface, the compilation style of "Selections of Refined Literature", the life story of the editor, and the process of writing the book. It helps to make clear the long-standing related disputes in the researches on "anthologizing principles".

Keywords: “Preface of Selections of Refined Literature”, Xiao Tong, completion time

I. INTRODUCTION

When was the "Preface of Selections of Refined Literature (文选序)" written, before or after completion of "Selections of Refined Literature (文选)"? As for this question, the academic circle always has different opinions. In order to examine its completion time, it is necessary to combine various internal and external factors such as the preface, the compilation style of "Selections of Refined Literature", the life story of the editor, and the process of writing the book.

II. THE COMPLETION TIME IMPLIED IN THE "PREFACE OF SELECTIONS OF REFINED LITERATURE"

Yu Shaochu believed that "Selections of Refined Literature" was completed in a hurry and the various styles listed in the contents of the book were not in line with those discussed in the "Preface of Selections of Refined Literature", "This is probably because the 'Preface' was written first and the book was compiled later; for reason that it is too hurry to revise the preface on the basis of the actually collected works or adjust the works as per the preface, the mismatching appears"[1]. According to the mismatched style classification and arrangement order in the "Preface of Selections of Refined Literature" and "Selections of Refined Literature", Mr. Yu concluded that "Selections of Refined Literature" was compiled in a hurry and further concluded that the "Preface of Selections of Refined Literature" was completed before the compilation of "Selections of Refined Literature". However, according to the final description in the end of the preface, this conclusion is not correct.

At the end of the "Preface of Selections of Refined Literature", it describes the beginning year and end year of the works collected in "Selections of Refined Literature" and the total number of volumes, and explains the basis of the style order arrangement. Especially, the poems are subdivided into subtypes and sequenced according to the times. Obviously, it is neither possible for the editor to presume the total number of volumes compiled before completion of "Selections of Refined Literature" nor possible to previously have an idea of subdividing poems into subtypes. If the "Preface of Selections of Refined Literature" was written in the compilation process but before completion of "Selections of Refined Literature", the editor would also not available to conclude that the total number of volumes is thirty.

III. THE COMPILATION STYLE OF "SELECTIONS OF REFINED LITERATURE"

The "Preface of Selections of Refined Literature" was written after the compilation of "Selections of Refined Literature", while the compilation time of "Selections of Refined Literature" became the focus of further investigation and is not clearly recorded in history books and the academic circles have different views on this time. Whether the works in the "Preface of Selections of Refined Literature" were sequenced by the birth and death year of the author or the completion time of the works? As for this question, Li Zhi made a dedicated investigation and concluded that the sequence is based on the author's times other than the works [2].

Excluding the writing time of the works, the next is to examine the factor of the author. Chao Gongwu's "Jun Zhai Du Shu Zhi (郡斋读书志)" quoted Dou Chang's principle of not collecting the works of those who are still alive [3]. Scholars in the research circle of anthologizing principles often infer the completion time of "Selections of Refined Literature" in the said principle proposed by Dou Chang. Among the writers included in "Selections of Refined Literature", there are three writers who passed away during Putong period of Emperor Liang Wu (520-527). They are Liu Xiaobiao, Xu Fei, and Lu Chui, of which Lu Chui died the latest, in the 7th year of Putong period (526), so some scholars believed that the compilation time should not be earlier than this time [4]. As for whether or not Dou Chang's

principle is credible, Li Zhi made an in-depth study. He maintained that the saying quoted by Chao Gongwu is originated from Dou Chang's "Preface of Nanxun Collection (南薰集序)" which has been missing; Dou Chang's Preface was also quoted in (Northern Song Dynasty) Yan Shu's "Lei Yao (类要)", but it referred to Zhong Rong's "Shi Pin (诗品)". So, Dou Chang's principle is not credible [5]. Here, Chao Gongwu's quotation from Dou Chang's works is taken out of context, and mistakenly regarded Zhong Rong's "Shi Pin" as the basis of Xiao Tong's judgment.

Dou Chang's statement was unbelievable, but did Zhong Rong's concept of non-recorded alived writers in his "Preface to Shi Pin" represent the general recognition at that time? Except "Shi Pin", the "List of genres of the articles (文章流别集)" and "The Literature Mind and the Carving of Dragons (文心雕龙)", which were earlier than "Selections of Refined Literature", both didn't collect the works of those who were still alive. Is there an exception in "Selections of Refined Literature" that collected works of those who were alive? If the book was completed in Putong period, how should the six works of Liu Xiaobiao, Xu Fei, and Lu Chui included in it be understood? After exploring the completion times of the six works, Cao Daoheng believed that the works collected in "Selections of Refined Literature" ended at the works produced in the 12th year of Tianjian period (515) or the end of this period (519) [6]. Fu Gang also agreed with this statement, and further believed that the six works were added by Liu Xiaochuo later. The compilation of "Selections of Refined Literature" lasted for several years. If the three writers passed away successively in the course of the compilation, the editor's later addition of their works would not violate the principle of not collecting the works of those who were still alive. When investigating the sequence of "Selections of Refined Literature", it is found that although the sequence based on times is targeted to the subtypes of articles, other styles of articles are sequenced as per the order of author's year of death [7].

IV. EXPLORATION ON THE STORY OF XIAO TONG IN HIS LATER YEARS

The completion time of the "Preface of Selections of Refined Literature" needs to be further examined in combination with the story of Xiao Tong in his later years. In November of the 7th year of Putong period (526), Xiao Tong's mother Ding Guipin died. According to the etiquette at that time, Xiao Tong was in mourning for one year. "The Book of Liang Dynasty · Biography of Prince Zhaoming" records the grief and frustration status of Xiao Tong after death of his mother [8]. Okamura Shigeru therefore believed that Xiao Tong had been suffering from incurable disease [9], but this statement is nonsense. The death of Xiao Tong's mother caused a heavy blow to him, and he was mourned for one year. During this period, he had no time to compile "Selections of Refined Literature", and his mood was not as easy and pleasant as the preface expresses¹.

¹ Xiao Tong mentioned in the "Preface of Selections of Refined Literature" that he was in a relaxed and happy state of living leisurely and reading extensive books when writing the preface.

"History of the Southern Dynasties · Biography of Prince Zhaoming" records the wax goose event that happened after Ding Guipin's death. "History of the Southern Dynasties" is originated from "The Book of Liang Dynasty", but the latter has no such record. (Qing Dynasty) Zhao Yi believed that "The Book of Liang Dynasty" abides by the practice of "do not use the name of honored person" in the history of Liang Dynasty [10]. Mu Kehong and Li Zhi also agreed with this statement, while Cao Daoheng believed that there were many doubts in the record of the "History of the Southern Dynasties" [11] which should be discriminated carefully. As both "The Book of Liang Dynasty" and "History of the Southern Dynasties" were written after Liang Dynasty was conquered, the authors do not need to avoid say anything about the history of the previous dynasty. Since "The Book of Liang Dynasty" is based on the history of Liang Dynasty, and "History of the Southern Dynasties" is based on "The Book of Liang Dynasty", there is no reason that the authors do not follow the practice of "do not use the name of honored person".

Whether the wax goose event really exists is related to the investigation of the situation of Xiao Tong in the late period, and has a crucial influence on the investigation of the completion time of "Selections of Refined Literature". Yu Shaochu discovered important clues to the mutual verification of the wax goose event: as recorded in "The Book of Liang Dynasty · Emperor Wu", in November of the first year of Zhongdatong period in the Liang Dynasty (529), Linchuan governor Xiao Hong served as teacher of the prince; since then Xiao Tong knew about the rule between king and officials. Additionally according to "History of the Southern Dynasties · Emperor Jianwen", Xiao Tong had fallen out of favor with Emperor Wu in his later years and often dreamed for worrying about the future [12]. The first clue he provided is strong evidence. Although there are many doubts in the record of the wax goose event in "History of the Southern Dynasties", there is no solid evidence to deny its authenticity. Therefore, Xiao Tong indeed worried about the wax goose event in his later years.

V. EXPLORATION ON RELEVANT STORIES OF OTHER COMPILERS OF "SELECTIONS OF REFINED LITERATURE"

What happened to Xiao Tong after the 7th year of Putong period (526) made him have no time to compile "Selections of Refined Literature" and the scholars in Eastern Palace began to decline thereafter. In the 7th year of Putong period (526), Lu Chui and Zhou She died. It was in the same year that Liu Xiaochuo was impeached and dismissed from office. It had been up to the end of the 2nd year of Datong period and the first year of Zhongdatong period (528-529) that he returned to Eastern Palace and served as servant of the prince. Less than 2 years thereafter, Xiao Tong died from illness because of mourning for his mother's death [13]. In the first year of Datong period (527), Ming Shanbin, Zhang Shuai and Dao Qia died and Xiao Tong wrote the "Yu Jin An Wang Ling (与晋安王令)" and "Yu Yin Yun Ling (与殷芸令)" to mourn the death of the East Palace scholars. After the 7th year of Putong period (526), Xiao Tong only had short time (from the end of the 2nd year of Datong period to the first

half year of the 3rd year of Datong period, namely between 528-529) to further compile "Selections of Refined Literature" before his death due to the impact of a series of events happened in this period. As aforementioned, the "Preface of Selections of Refined Literature" should be written after the completion of "Selections of Refined Literature", because after the 7th year of Putong period (526), Xiao Tong surely couldn't have a relaxed mood as described in the preface.

The beginning time of the compilation of "Selections of Refined Literature" is usually thought as after completion of the "Collected Works of Zhaoming Prince" and "The Best Poems (诗苑英华)". Liu Xiaochuo's "Preface to the Collected Works of Zhaoming Prince" was written in the 3rd year of Putong period of Emperor Wu in Liang Dynasty (522) [14]. In that year, Xiao Tong wrote the "Reply to Xiangdongwang's asking for selected works and 'The Best Poems'" [15], expressed his dissatisfaction with his book "The Best Poems" which has been published to the public. But the article didn't mention the compilation of "Selections of Refined Literature". This indicates that "Selections of Refined Literature" was compiled after this Reply. "Selections of Refined Literature" was initially completed within the 3rd~7th years of Putong period (522-526). The subsequent addition of the three writers of Liang Dynasty should be written within about half year after Liu Xiaochuo returned to the East Palace in the 3rd year of Datong period [16].

As early as in Xiao Tong's coming-of-age ceremony in the 14th year of Tianjian period (515), the East Palace had collected many figures that were highly regarded in the literary circles at that time such as Liu Xiaochuo and Wang Yun [17]. According to "The Book of Liang Dynasty · Biography of Zhang Shuai", in the 4th year of Putong period (523), Ming Shanbin served as a scholar in the East Palace and thereafter Wang Gui, Yin Yun, Wang Xi and Zhang Mian jointly assisted Xiao Tong [18]. In the 5th year of Putong period (524), Dao Qia also returned back to Xiao Tong [19]. In the 6th year of Putong period (525), Yin Yun [20] and Wang Yun [21] also lived in Xiao Tong's palace. It was very conditioned to initially complete "Selections of Refined Literature" within the 3rd~7th years of Putong period (522-526). During this period, Xiao Tong had not suffered from his mother's death and the impact of the wax goose event and Liu Xiaochuo also had not been dismissed due to impeaching of Dao Qia.

VI. EXPLORATION ON THE COMPLETION TIME OF "SELECTIONS OF REFINED LITERATURE"

"Selections of Refined Literature" was compiled after the 3rd year of Putong period (522) and initially completed in the 7th year of Putong period (526). How to complete it within less than 5 years and its compilation process are to be further researched. As for the compilation process of the book, the academic circle often thought that it is an initially selected version, but some scholars may think that it is reselected version or the combination of initially selected version and reselected version. (Song Dynasty) Wu Yu,

(Yuan Dynasty) Lai Liang and (Qing Dynasty) Zhu Yizun all thought that the book is a reselected version and its initially selected version had thousands of volumes.

Wang Liqun maintained that Zhu Yizun's saying was originated from Wu Yu, but Wu Yu's saying was not creditable [22]. Li Zhi held that Zhu Yizun's saying was originated from Lai Liang and Lai Liang's saying was originated from Wu Yu, but Wu Yu and Lai Liang's sayings were both not creditable [23]. Okamura Shigeru also thought that "most poems and articles in 'Selections of Refined Literature' is a collection works selected from some previous selected works such as Shen Yue's 'Copy of selected works (集抄)' (10 volumes), Qiu Chi's 'Copy of selected works (集抄)' (40 volumes) and Zhaoming Prince and Liu Xiaochuo's 'The Best Poems (诗苑英华)' (20 volumes)" [24]. By the research on Li Shan's notes for and the disordered arrangement of subtypes of writers in "Selections of Refined Literature", Wang Liqun concluded that the book was a reselected version on the basis of the precedent collection of works which maybe Zhi Yu's "List of genres of the articles (文章流别集)", Li Chong's "Theory of the academician (翰林论)" and Liu Yiqing's "Collected works (集林)" for the most [25]. Slightly different from this opinion, Li Zhi thought that "Selections of Refined Literature" was a combination of the initially selected version and the reselected version [26].

Before compiling "Selections of Refined Literature", Xiao Tong had completed the articles collection "Preface (正序)" and the poems collection "The Best Poems (诗苑英华)" and Xiao Yan had also completed the compilation of the "Fus in the past dynasties (历代赋)" (10 volumes) [27]. In addition to Xiao Yan's collection of Fu, Xiao Tong had already had the foundation of compiling articles collection and poems collection. So, the compilation of "Selections of Refined Literature" cannot be started on the basis of nothing not be completed in unified and one-shot way previously. On the basis of previous collection of works and the assistance of Liu Xiaochuo and other scholars in the East Palace, it was a common thing that Xiao Tong can initially complete "Selections of Refined Literature" in Putong period; it is not possible to fully exclude the participation of Liu Xiaochuo and et al for reason that Xiao Tong can independently do the compilation work.

VII. CONCLUSION

Regardless of the year of death of the three writers died in Putong period as recorded in "Selections of Refined Literature", it is regarded that the three writers were added in the book after Liu Xiaochuo returned to the East Palace and served as servant of the prince in the first half year of the 3rd year of Datong Period (529) and "Selections of Refined Literature" had been initially completed before Xiao Tong's

² Yu Shaochu maintained that the data collection of "Selections of Refined Literature" was completed together with that of the "Preface" and "The Best Poems" and further thought that the "Preface" and "The Best Poems" are the middle part of the compilation of "The Selection of Literary Works". However, this saying is lack of literature basis (see "Yu Shaochu. "Study on the Compilation Process" of 'Selections of Refined Literature', "Literary Heritage", No. 1, 1998").

mother's death in the 7th year of Putong period (526). Within less than 5 years from the 3rd to 7th years of Putong period (522-526), the East Palace gathered plenty of scholars. During this period, it is fully possible to complete "Selections of Refined Literature" and the "Preface of Selections of Refined Literature" was written after initial completion of "Selections of Refined Literature" but before Xiao Tong's mother's death in November of the 7th year of Putong period (526).

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