

Interpretations of the Phenomenon of the Honey-Trap Culture

Interpretation of Xi Shi and Diao Chan

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ABSTRACT

In the patriarchal society of ancient China, women were subordinate to men. Men sacrifice women to achieve their goals. Xi Shi in *Huansha Ji* and Diao Chan in *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* are the injured women in the Honey-trap. The reasons, process and results of the use of the Honey-trap will explain the cultural connotation.

Keywords: Honey-trap, woman, victim

I. INTRODUCTION

In the sixth set of Defeat Stratagem of *The Art of War of Sun Tzu and Thirty-six stratagems*, the thirty-first stratagem is Honey-trap, and it says: "If the opponents are strong, attack their general; if the opponents are wise, attack their feelings. When the weak soldiers decay, their strength will wither." [1]^{P407} This strategy appears in the Defeat Stratagem, which shows that it is not a positive combat strategy, but a method adopted by one side under helpless circumstances. The purpose of this strategy is to reverse the disadvantageous situation and achieve the purpose of turning defeat into victory.

The main target of the stratagem is the opponent's general. The word "beauty" here is used as a verb to make people feel beautiful. Because beauty is always used when using this stratagem, people often misinterpret it. When carrying out the stratagem, sometimes property is used to make the opponent feel beautiful, so as to obey the command. The ultimate goal is to weaken the enemy's mind through "beauty" or "property" for their own interests, in order to reverse the disadvantageous situation. Behind the implementation of this stratagem, there will be key men. "Honey-trap", or "Beauty" will be successfully implemented under the control of men, and finally becomes the weight to win. Huang Min said in *Comparison of the Story of Honey-trap Between Xi Shi and Diao Chan* that "Honey-trap is actually the subversion of a weak man by a woman to a strong man. This is a demand for women by

taking advantage of men's sexual desire. Women are materialized and used as tools." [2]^{P91}

The reasons, process and results of the use of Honey-trap are discussed, and the role of Honey-trap in ancient political struggle and war are analyzed, taking the "Xi Shi Stratagem" in the legend of the Ming Dynasty *Huansha Ji* and the "Diao Chan Stratagem" in the novel "Romance of the Three Kingdoms" as examples.

II. THE CONDITIONS OF USING THE HONEY-TRAP

There are special conditions for the use of the Honey-trap. In the story of *Huansha Ji*, the king of Wu, Fu Chai, led an army to defeat Yue, and the monarchs and ministers of Yue were trapped in Huiji Mountain. There were only 5000 soldiers in Yue. At this time, Kuaiji Mountain was surrounded by the 100000 soldiers of Wu. Just as Fan Li, one official of Yue, said, "The murderous atmosphere around is rising" [3]. In the face of such a defeat, Gou Jian wept bitterly and deeply felt that without land to stand alone in the world, how can he face the former king in the earth. Wen Zhong, another official of Yue said that there must be a fight to the death, even if they die, they could still live in the world. Fan Li judged the situation and advised to seek peace. Of course, this kind of seeking peace is only forced by the situation, and "peace" is not an end, it is only a tactic of delaying war. He advised to use spy to bewitch the king of Wu. When the kingdom of Wu turned against the monarchs and ministers, its ultimate purpose was to recover the

lost territory. In this crisis, Fan Li thought of using spy war to defeat Wu. This kind of spy war is the Honey-trap used later. The first step is the use of property to make Wu Minister Bo Pi "beautiful". Bo Pi's later behavior is obviously beneficial to Yue, which is also a kind of Honey-trap; the other is the use of beauty to make Wu King submit. Under the pressure of the situation, the monarch and ministers of Yue had to adopt this method. Xi Shi was the key figure in the Honey-trap, and eventually she made Yue win. The Honey-trap has played a vital role in the battle of national survival.

Another look at Administrator Wang Yun's use of Honey-trap in *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. At the end of the Eastern Han Dynasty, the world was in chaos, the Yellow Scarf Army uprising one after another, the heroes were in chaos too, the flames of war spread everywhere, the eunuchs in the court controlled the platform, and the fate of the emperor was at stake. For the sake of clearing away the eunuchs around the emperor, the court made a wrong decision to let Dong Zhuo, who was in charge of military power, enter the capital. After Dong Zhuo entered the capital, he controlled the government, forced the emperor to abdicate, replaced his favorite Chenliu Wang as emperor, and abolished the original emperor as Hongnong Wang. After Dong changed the emperor, he took the opportunity to kill the ministers, and the ministers' lives were at stake. "Dong Zhuo deceives the emperor, and the country is in danger all the time"[4], Cao Cao volunteered to assassinate Dong Zhuo. Unexpectedly, he was not wanted. Dong Zhuo ordered to draw pictures, and catch Cao Cao. Administrator Wang Yun returned to the mansion, deeply worried about the failure of Cao Cao, fearing that the failure would affect him. When it's late at night and the moon was bright, Wang Yun stepped into the backyard, at the moment of helplessness, he looked up to the sky and wept, he met Diao Chan, a Kabuki in the mansion, who sighed by the Peony Pavilion, Wang Yun suddenly reminded that Honey-trap could be used. The reason why Dong Zhuo was difficult to get rid of is that there is an extraordinary bravery Lv Bu at his side. To get rid of Dong Zhuo, it was necessary to alienate their relationship and make them fight each other., because Wang Yun knew both of them are womanizers. In this way, the conditions for using the Honey-trap were matured.

In a word, the use of Honey-trap is a kind of strategy that the inferior party has to adopt in order to turn defeat into victory when one party is threatened by life and death.

III. THE IMPLEMENTATION OF HONEY-TRAP

Although the conditions for the implementation of the Honey-trap are matured, it does not mean that the Honey-trap can be implemented smoothly. It still needs some steps. First, let's see how Fan Li used this stratagem in *Huansha Ji*. After returning from the kingdom of Wu, Gou Jian wanted to choose a beautiful woman in Yue for the king of Wu in order to please him. But there was nobody to be gained from all over the country. Fan Li offered his own lover Xi Shi. Next, Fan Li went to do ideological work for Xi Shi. Let's see how he carried out the strategy of persuading Xi Shi: Fan Li first said that the affairs of the country are very big, and the affairs of marriage are very small. He first made a positioning for marriage in general, that is to say, everything should be for the sake of the country. If the kingdom does not exist, what time is there for a hundred years of happiness. And then both of them must die. The person Xi Shi loved was Fan Li. As Fan said, it would be utopian for them to live together, so she was very sad. Without country, how could there be a small family? For the sake of the country, but also for the sake of love, Xi Shi's thought was very contradictory, so she had no alternative. Fan Li said that If Xi Shi was willing to go, the rise and fall of the two countries are still unknown. It stood a good chance that they would meet again.

That is to say, if Xi Shi followed Fan Li's plan, they would have a chance to continue their love; if she did not follow, they would must die together. Fan Li tried his best to persuade Xi Shi, from both positive and negative aspects, and pointed out the consequences of going or not. His purpose was obviously to make Xi Shi agree to his request. In fact, Xi Shi had no choice, so she had to reluctantly accept. Xi Shi's helplessness can not be expressed in words. The word "cry" in the article shows her inner pain. Luo Jiao said in her article *looking at the patriarchal perspective of ancient opera from HuanSha Ji*"... Xishi is a political tool that Fan Li dedicated to the king of Wu for his success."[5]

But only to find a good beauty, the Honey-trap can not be easily implemented, the beauty used in the scheme must have the conditions to make the enemy addicted to wine and sex. In the 25th Chapter in *HuanSha Ji*, the first lady ,the wife of Gou Jian said that the standard of ancient beauty must have three conditions: first, the first appearance; Second, singing and dancing. The third is posture. "Appearance" of Xi Shi has already been possessed, but she was born in the countryside, "singing and dancing" and "posture" were not naturally possessed, so the first lady taught her skills in person. Fortunately, Xi Shi was so intelligent that she soon learned how to do it. Until

this time, the beauty in a Honey-trap can be out, Honey-trap can smoothly start to implement.

In order to strengthen Xi Shi's determination to go to Wu, the king of Yue worshiped Xi Shi as his "aunt". When he left, he first genuflected to Xi Shi alone, then ordered his wife to genuflect alone, and finally asked the officials to genuflect. Such "three genuflections" are enough to show that the group of people represented by the king of Yue attach importance to the beauty in the Honey-trap. Later, the king of Yue sent Fan Li, who Xi Shi loved, to protect Xi Shi to Wu. The arrangement of the plot is intriguing.

Different from the "Honey-trap" in *Huansha Ji*, the use of this stratagem in *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* is much simpler. Administrator Wang Yun went into the back garden late at night, looked up to the sky and wept. He met Diao Chan by the Peony Pavilion, who cried long and sighed short. Diao Chan was adopted since she was a child, and she was taught singing and dancing. She was 16 years old, beautiful, sexy. She treated Wang Yun as a parent. The wife of Gou Jian in *Huansha Ji* said the three conditions for ancient beauty that Diao Chan had already. What is lacking is to make Diao Chan comply with Wang Yun's plan. After Wang heard Diao Chan said that but there was an order, she would die forever, Wang said his plan to her. First ask Diao Chan to marry Lv Bu, and then to Dong Zhuo. During the period, Diao Chan did her best to turn against this father and son each other, and made Lv Bu kill Dong Zhuo, so as to eliminate the great opponent. After Wang Yun said his purpose, he was afraid that Diao Chan would repent. Diao Chan immediately showed his determination and said that if she didn't repay his righteousness, she would die under knives and swords. Here Diao Chan's so-called "great righteousness" means that Wang Yun was raised from a young age and "treated by his daughter". Wang Yun took advantage of Diao Chan's eagerness to repay his kindness and introduced her into his Honey-trap.

IV. THE PURPOSE OF HONEY-TRAP

The purpose of using Honey-trap is to make the enemy indulge in wine and sex, and to alienate the enemy's interpersonal relationship. In *Huan Sha Ji*, the king of Wu liked Xi Shi very much after she came to Wu. He said that Xi Shi was incomparable in beauty in the palace. After entering Wu, Xi Shi really fascinated the king of Wu with her beauty. The king of Wu completely addicted to wine and sex. Even he himself sighed that the old bones of his must be broken in her hands. The king of Wu had been fascinated by Xi Shi for a long time, felt that his soul did not know where to fly. It can be said that the purpose of the Honey-trap has been

achieved, and the king of Wu is really deeply trapped in it, so that when the kingdom of Yue attacked Wu, the general Administrator of Wu was gone, and the army of Yue invaded the capital of Wu, the king of Wu still believed in Xi Shi. He said that the day before yesterday, empress Xi Shi asked him to escape here, why didn't she come to pick him up at this time. After Wang Sunluo, a close minister, pointed out that it was a Honey-trap carried out by the kingdom of Yue, the king still couldn't believe it. Finally, the king of Wu became the victim of the Honey-trap. Fortunately, before he died, he realized that he had been intrigued by the enemy.

In *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, Administrator Wang Yun put a few pearls in his home, and made a golden crown to send to Lv Bu, Lv Bu was very thankful, and came to Wang Yun's to express his thanks. Wang Yun left Lv Bu for a banquet, Lv Bu laughed and drank freely, after half drunk, Wang Yun let Diao Chan, the key figure of Honey-trap, to carry the wine glass to Lv Bu. Lv Bu was originally a debauchee, Diao Chan gives wine to him, and they felt love each other then. Wang Yun felt that the time was ripe, so he said that he would send Diao Chan to Lv Bu as his concubine. Lv Bu went wild with joy, and said that if so, Lv Bu would serve him faithfully. As a result, Wang Yun began to play with Lv Bu between the hands of the stock, but Wang Yun's real goal was not achieved. So, After a few days, he met Dong Zhuo in the palace, and asked Dong Zhuo to his home for dinner. Zhuo arrived and drunk at night, later entered the back hall. Diao Chan appeared, Dong Zhuo praised Diao Chan's appearance after listening to Diao Chan's song, and said that the true God is also a fairy! Wang Yun knew that Dong Zhuo was also lecherous, so he sent Diao Chan to the prime minister's residence at once, when Wang Yun returned to the residence after sending Diao Chan, he met Lv Bu on horseback. Lv Bu was very angry when he learned that Wang Yun had sent Diao Chan to Dong Zhuo. But Wang Yun deceived Lv Bu, saying that Dong Zhuo wanted to take this woman back, and then marry her to him. Lv Bu thought he had wronged Wang Yun and Dong Zhuo, but when he went to Dong's house the next day, he saw that Dong Zhuo and Diao Chan were sleeping together, Diao Chan takes advantage of this chance, sad and unhappy deliberately, and then used a handkerchief to wipe tears. At this time, Lv Bu was already perturbed in spirit. At this time, because of Diao Chan, the contradiction between Dong and Bu began to brew. Wang Yun's strategy of using Diao Chan began to play a role. Since Dong Zhuo married Diao Chan, he has been fascinated by her and has not gone to court for more than a month. Diao Chan's attentive service when Dong Zhuo had a minor illness. when Lv Bu came to visit Dong Zhuo, who was sleeping, Diao

Chan leaned half of his body behind the bed to look at Lv Bu, with his finger pointed at her heart, and then pointed at Dong Zhuo, she couldn't stop crying. Seeing this, Lu Bu felt his heart is broken., we can see that Lv Bu has become a prisoner of the Honey-trap. When Dong Zhuo wake and saw the two people's action, got angry suddenly. Lv Bu has lost confidence in Dong Zhuo, the "father and son" was at a very dangerous stage.

Later, Dong Zhuo's illness was cured, and he entered the court to handle state affairs. Lv Bu went to the prime minister's residence to meet Diao Chan. Dong Zhuo realized that Lv Bu was not at his side, doubted, and hurried back to his residence, saw Lv Bu's horse tied in front of the residence, Dong Zhuo went to the back garden quickly and saw Diao Chan and Lv Bu in "communion". Dong burst into anger, he throwing halberd to Lv Bu. Lv Bu dodged it and ran away. By this time, the relationship between Dong Zhuo and Lv Bu had developed to the point of life and death. Honey-trap began to play a huge role at this time. Under the control of Wang Yun, Lv Bu finally stabbed Dong Zhuo's throat. Honey-trap won, and Wang Yun, the manipulator behind the scenes, also achieved his expected results.

Qu Jing and Wang Wei said in *The ancient and modern talks on the characters of the Three kingdoms* that "Eighteen princes can't kill Dong Zhuo, but Diao Chan is enough to kill him. Liu Bei, Guan Yu and Zhang Fei can't beat Lv Bu, while Diao Chan is enough to kill him." [6] We can see that the Honey-trap has played a powerful role in this political struggle concerning life and death.

V. THE FINAL FATE OF THE BEAUTIES IN THE HONEY-TRAP

The final fate of the beauties in the Honey-trap is different. In the story of *Huansha Ji*, Fan Li, the key director of Xi Shi's entry into Wu, was tired of the world, and sighed for life, Wealth is like floating clouds, and the world is like children's play. He only wished that all the couples in the world would live together. It seems that he was not satisfied with the Honey-trap directed by himself. At last, he waked up and went boating with his sweetheart. It seems that the ending of Xi Shi is not too bad. She can devote herself to love and end up with love. She is indeed the greatest saint of love in ancient and modern times. However, it is an indisputable fact that she is indeed a winning chess piece on the war chessboard and a victim under Fan Li's control.

The fate of Diao Chan in *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* is different from Xi Shi. After Lv Bu killed Dong Zhuo, he first took Diao Chan in Meiwu. Later, because the remaining members of

Dong Zhuo came to avenge, Lv Bu had to abandon his family and went to Yuan Shu. There must be Diao Chan in the family. Yuan Shu was indecisive and refused to accept him. Later, he threw himself at Yuan Shao, because he was arrogant and wanted to kill Yuan Shao's soldiers, and he went to throw himself at Zhang Yang, and Yang accepted him. Pang Shu hid Lv Bu's wives and children in Chang'an City, and gave them back to Lv Bu. At this time, Lu Bu and Diao Chan had a chance to meet again. Later, for some reason, Lv Bu threw himself into Zhang Miao. Later, he was killed by Cao Cao in Baimenlou. Later, Cao Cao got Lv Bu's wives and daughters and ordered to bring back Xu Du. There must be Diao Chan among them. Cao Cao is also a lecherous person. It is not mentioned in *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* whether Diao Chan married with Cao Cao. Therefore, the whereabouts of Diao Chan has become an eternal mystery. However, we can be sure that Diao Chan, as a weak woman, in order to repay Wang Yun's nurturing kindness, and under Wang Yun's control, her life will not be happy, and her body and mind will certainly be destroyed. Born in the troubled times, and in the society of wanton male chauvinism, as a woman, she will eventually become a man's vassal and the final victim.

It should be said that the fate of the beauties in the Honey-trap will not be very good. Even after the fall of the state of Wu, Fan Li took Xi Shi to go boating in the Five Lakes. In Fan Li's heart, it will never be full of victory and joy. Diao Chan is even more so. After she helped Wang Yun to destroy Dong Zhuo, her life experience was hard and her pain was needless to say.

VI. SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO HONEY-TRAPS

In the two works, there are many differences in the use of Honey-trap. In *Huansha Ji*, the purpose of using the Honey-trap is more simple and clear, that is to make the king of Wu obsessed with lust, neglect the government, weaken the power of the kingdom of Wu, and then destroy the kingdom of Wu. In *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, the purpose of the Honey-trap is to alienate the relationship between Dong Zhuo and Lv Bu. This Honey-trap is a strategy adopted by the weak side in the internal political struggle of the country to protect themselves. The purpose is to make them fight against each other. Indeed, it should be called "serial stratagem". More precisely, it should be called "beauty serial stratagem".

Although the two methods of using are not the same, they both use "beauty", which is the same. The two women accepted assignment both in crisis time. Although they are in charge of their own affairs and have different destinies, their physical

and mental suffering should be the same. In other words, it was not the king of Wu that Xi Shi was interested in, nor was Dong Zhuo the one Diao Chan was interested in. When they lie down in the arms of the men they hate, there is no need to say the sadness in their hearts.

Article 236 of *China's criminal law* stipulates that the act of forcing a woman to have sex with her by violence, coercion or other means against her will is regarded as rape. So it seems (of course, we can't convict the ancients), King Wu and Dong Zhuo are rapists. But the truth is not what we assumed. When Xi Shi was intimate with King Wu, Diao Chan with Dong Zhuo, they must pretend to be very happy, and they will actively throw themselves in their arms. They will use all kinds of skills to cater to and seduce men they don't like or even hate, because their purpose is to subdue their opponents and eliminate them. At this time, sex has already become a lethal weapon on the battlefield. Although there is no smoke of gunpowder, its lethality is worth 100000 troops. In this war without gunpowder smoke, woman's sex is no longer their own, but completely subordinate to the men who control them. For the sake of war, their sex can be given to any man designated by the operator. Women have completely belonged to these manipulators, in addition to sex, even their souls.

Although these two schemes are so different, the purpose of using them is almost the same. From ancient times to the present, the Honey-trap has become a kind of struggle culture. No matter in the battlefield of the two armies, or in the vortex of the complicated and sharp political and economic struggle, the use of the Honey-trap is a strategy that the disadvantaged party has to adopt in order to reverse the unfavorable situation. This kind of cultural phenomenon of Honey-trap is not only widely used in the political struggle in ancient China, but also appears from time to time in today's society. It is still playing a role in the political disputes and the interests of the business community. Then why is the use of the Honey-trap always trying? The key lies in the weakness of human nature, men like beautiful women, beautiful women are easy to approach men. Men can be invincible in the battlefield, but they will be defeated automatically in front of beautiful women, and they are willing to bend their knees under woman's skirts. Honey-trap is the use of man's weaknesses, so it will be repeated, often successful.

VII. CONCLUSION

In a word, there are special reasons, process and purpose in the use of the Honey-trap. However, no matter what the situation is, the ultimate purpose of using the Honey-trap is the strategy adopted by the passive or the weak party in order to reverse the

unfavorable situation. The Honey-trap has become a cultural phenomenon. No matter in the battlefield, in the highly competitive political circles, or in the business circles, the Honey-trap is deadly weapon. They all play an irreplaceable role.

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