

The Influence of Miao Nationality's Culture in Yuan Xiang Region on the Later Poetry Creation of Qu Yuan*

GUO Xiaochun

Gannan Normal University, Ganzhou, China

Miao culture is one of the minority cultures in China. It also has a certain impact on the development of Chinese literature and poetry. Chu ci is a new poetic style created by Qu Yuan, an ancient poet in China. It is the first collection of romantic poetry in the history of Chinese literature. Qu Yuan's poetry creation is related to his life experience. Qu Yuan was exiled to Yuan Xiang region, and he had been in contact with the Miao ancestors in Yuan Xiang area during the exile. Therefore, the Miao land culture in Yuan Xiang area has a profound influence on Qu Yuan's later poetry creation. This paper, taking Qu Yuan's later poetry as an example, analyzes the influence of Miao culture on Chu ci in Yuan Xiang area, introduces Qu Yuan's life and how to contact Miao culture, and probes into the influence of Miao nationality's religious thought, customs, language and culture, oral folk song and pan song on the later poetry creation of Qu Yuan.

Keywords: Miao nationality's culture, the songs of Chu, influence, Qu Yuan's poetry, Yuan Xiang region

Introduction

Chu ci is a new style of poetry and the first collection of romantic poetry in the history of Chinese literature. Qu Yuan, an important poet and statesman of the State of Chu in the late Warring States Period and the originator and representative author of Chu ci, is honored as "the ancestor of Chinese poetry" and "the ancestor of Cifu". The emergence of Chu ci marks a new era from collective singing to individual composition. Qu Yuan's main works include *Li Sao* (On encountering Trouble), *Jiu Ge* (Nine Songs), *Jiu Zhang* (Nine Pieces), *Tian Wen* (Heavenly Questions), etc. Chu ci, which is mainly composed of Qu Yuan's works, is one of the sources of Chinese Romantic literature. Qu Yuan's poetry creation is closely related to his life experience. He was ostracized and slandered by Chu nobles and exiled to Yuan Xiang region (Miao nationality area). The local Miao culture has a great influence on his later poetry creation. Taking Qu Yuan's later poetry creation as an example, this paper analyzes the influence of Miao culture in Yuan Xiang and other areas on Qu Yuan's poetry creation, which aims to provide theoretical reference for the academic circles in the deep study of the influence of minority culture on the development of Chinese literature.

Qu Yuan's Exile Life

Qu Yuan, a famous statesman and poet in the history of China, was born in the State of Chu during the Warring States Period. He was the descendant of Qu Xia, the son of Xiong Tong, King Wu of Chu. In his

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GUO Xiaochun, Ph.D., Professor, Director of Master's Program of English Language and Literature, School of Foreign languages, Gannan Normal University, Huangjin Campus, Ganzhou, China.

young age, he was admired and trusted by King Huai of Chu. He was wise, ambitious, and well-read. He once served in the office of Zuo Tu and was the Lord of Three Wards, responsible for the management of the country's domestic and foreign affairs. In terms of governing the country, he advocated the appointment of wise people, strict criminal law, and the practice of "good politics". He also tried to persuade his lord to unite with other countries to resist the unification of Qin Dynasty. However, during his term of office, because of his integrity, the interests of powerful people were violated, and he was constantly excluded and oppressed. As a result, he was removed from his official position, kept far away from the "the Capital of Ying", and left the place where he had lived for many years. During his exile in Yuan Xiang area, Qu Yuan entered the life of Miao people and his thoughts was deeply influenced by it. Under the influence of Miao ancestors and Miao culture in Yuan Xiang area, Qu Yuan's poetry creation has also undergone obvious changes.

An Analysis of the Influence of Miao Culture in Yuan Xiang on Qu Yuan's Later Poetry Creation

From the previous introduction of Qu Yuan's life, we can get to know that Qu Yuan, who lived in the Miao area of Yuan Xiang, would inevitably come into contact with the Miao ancestors and their various cultures. These Miao ancestors' culture certainly had an impact on his later poetry creation, and thus added the charm and vitality of Chu ci.

The Influence of Miao Religious Thoughts on Qu Yuan's Later Poetry Style

In his early poetry creation, the emotional themes expressed by Qu Yuan are mostly based on reality and true feelings. They are typical realism. However, his later poetry style has changed obviously, and romantic style has become the main style of his poetry. This change of poetry style is due to the dual influence of external and internal factors. The external factor is mainly the change of time and living surroundings. The internal factor derives from the change of his own thoughts. Qu Yuan was born in a noble family, well-educated, knowledgeable and held an important position. Later, he was exposed to different minority cultures, especially when he was exiled to Yuan Xiang area, a place full of romantic color. The local culture deeply influenced Qu Yuan's ideas, which made him realize the unique charm of minority culture for the first time, and brought him to the peak of romantic poetry creation.

During the Warring States Period, the Miao nationality in Yuan Xiang was backward in production, backward and conservative in ideology and culture. The primitive religious culture still had a great influence on the Miao ancestors. The Miao ancestors in Yuan Xiang area generally feared nature and believed in the religious concept of "everything has a spirit". In the minds of Miao people, all the things in the world have spirits, the gale, rainstorm, lightning, rolling thunder, all the creatures on the ground and in water, even the mountains, rivers, trees; and there are invisible ghosts and gods, too, for that reason, there are a large number of Miao myths with rich themes. In the process of his Yuan Xiang banishment, Qu Yuan was deeply affected by the Miao religious ideas and myths. Under this influence, Qu Yuan tended to use these ghost images and fairy tales as the material of his poetry creation. For example, in the Yuan Xiang River Basin, there are many Miao religious activities. Qu Yuan, who was exiled here, often went through these ritual activities. He learned about the ghosts and gods worshipped by Miao ancestors and their related myths and stories, and then created Chu ci works with a large number of gods, such as *Jiu ge* (Nine Songs).

The Influence of Local Customs and Favour in Miao Nationality Yuan Xiang Region on Qu Yuan's Later Poetry

Before Qu Yuan was exiled, he lived deep in the Imperial Palace, deliberated on state affairs every day and shared his worries for the king of Chu. It can be said that Qu Yuan was full of zeal and literary talent in his youth, just like an "orthodox litterateur". However, with the change of his life track, the attribute of his poetry creation has also changed. In his later years, there are many poems about love, such as *Xiang Fu Ren* (湘夫人) and *Xiang Jun* (湘君), also appeared famous lines in Chu ci, such as "the treacherous people are jealous of my talents, but they slander me as an immoral person". However, in the conservative feudal world at that time, the works describing the feelings between men and women were rarely favored by orthodox writers. However, as a patriotic poet, Qu Yuan created a large number of love poems in his later years. It is because Qu Yuan was exiled to the Yuan Xiang River Basin and the local Miao folk customs, especially Miao love songs, gave Qu Yuan a deep impression, such as: Miao's "love songs", "paean", and so on. Miao is a nation good at songs and dances, in addition to love songs, there are also folk songs, drum songs, etc., these songs are very noisy, unrestrained with warm and strong atmosphere. Therefore, even Qu Yuan, as a realistic poet, was naturally deeply influenced and infected in such an atmosphere and environment. He also took love and emotion as his creation theme and Miao folk love songs as a part of his works. In this regard, Lu You, a patriotic poet in Song Dynasty, was similar to Qu Yuan. During his travels, Lu You witnessed the love between men and women in minority areas and created a poem about the love songs of ethnic minorities in his work *Notes of Laoxuean* (老学庵笔记). Obviously, the local customs and customs of ethnic minorities have a great influence on this poet. Therefore, Qu Yuan is also affected by the customs and customs of Yuan Xiang region, and his later poems are influenced by these customs.

The Influence of the Early Language and Culture of Miao Nationality in Yuan Xiang Region on the Use of Words in Qu Yuan's Later Poems

In Qu Yuan's early poetry creation, the style of the words used in Qu Yuan's poetry is the same as those in *The Book of Songs*. However, in his later years, a large number of new words began to appear in his poems, many of which had never appeared before, such as "su mang" (宿莽), "zhai" (寨), "cha liao" (谿僚), "fan niang" (范酿), and so on. These words in Qu Yuan's works were not invented by him. They were created under the influence of the early language and culture in Yuan Xiang area. During his exile to this area, Qu Yuan heard and saw the Miao people's language and characters, and began to use them in his poetry creation. Although these words were not created by Qu Yuan, they were only circulated in people's mouth and never used in writing. In the study of Qu Yuan's later poems, the later generations found that these words were very fresh and strange, and it was difficult to understand their meaning. There are a large number of such new words in Qu Yuan's new poetry style of Chu ci. Even Wang Yi, an expert who has conducted in intensive study of Chu ci, thinks that these words are obscure and difficult to understand. When annotated, they can only be generally marked as "Chu language" and "Chu people's language". At present, there is a widely accepted view in the academic circles that "Chu ci" refers to the early language of Miao nationality in Yuan Xiang, which has also been recognized by many Miao scholars. One of the most typical features is the use of modal particles, such as "xi" (兮), "qiang" (羌), and "rui" (睿) in Chu ci, which are some of the modal particles unique to the Miao area of Yuan Xiang; the "man teng teng" (慢腾腾) in Miao language can be replaced by words, such as "ren ran" (荏苒) and "ai nuan" (霭暖), which have the same meaning. For example, in the interpretation of Qu Yuan's

work *Huai Sha*, the meaning of “huai sha” is not to “miss Changsha”, nor is it proposed by some researchers to hold sand and stone to make Qu Yuan himself sink. In fact, “huai sha” means “chanting and singing” in the early language of Yuan Xiang Miao area. In the early Miao language of Yuan Xiang, the meaning of “sand” is the meaning of song. In addition, Qu Yuan’s *Li Sao* has always been controversial in academic circles, because from the perspective of Chinese, *Li Sao* is very vague, and it is very difficult to explain and reach a unified opinion. However, from the perspective of the early Miao language in Yuan Xiang area, it is very simple; its meaning is the denouncement and curse between relatives. In Yuan Xiang Miao nationality area, if there is someone who has been treated unfairly among relatives, he will cry and scold to relieve his resentment and melancholy. Therefore, in the local Miao people, “li” and “sao” are generally used in the broken kinship. It can be inferred that Qu Yuan’s *Li Sao* means breaking with the king of Chu, declaring his unfair treatment and expressing his dissatisfaction and anger at the king of Chu. Years of exile and escape changed Qu Yuan’s life track and life experience, and deepened Qu Yuan’s impression and understanding of Miao culture in Yuan Xiang area. Under the influence of local Miao language vocabulary, Qu Yuan’s later poetry words also changed a lot, using a large number of local Miao language vocabulary, forming the characteristics of words in his later poetry.

The Influence of the Oral Folk Songs of Miao Nationality in Yuan Xiang Region on the Length of Qu Yuan’s Poems

The Book of Songs should be the representative of the culture of the Yellow River Valley in early China, but most of its poems are relatively short, and the longest one is only eight chapters, 88 sentences, and 373 words. In Qu Yuan’s early poetry creation, most of his poems are very short. Even his early creation of *Ju Song* (Ode to Orange) is only 36 sentences and 144 words. However, after he was sent to the Miao land of Yuan Xiang, the length of Qu Yuan’s poems in his later years became very long. For example, Qu Yuan’s famous work *Tian Wen* in his later years has reached 188 lines and 1,549 words. For example, the representative work of Chu ci, *Li Sao*, has 373 sentences and 2,490 Chinese characters. Qu Yuan’s poems in his later years are more and more long because of the influence of Miao culture. In Yuan Xiang area, Qu Yuan found that the Miao people who lived in the area had developed “oral folk songs” though they did not have the national characters and all kinds of ancient books. He found that the local Miao ancestors were not only good at singing and dancing, but also good at improvising songs according to the things around them. Then, these improvisational folk songs were taught orally by the Miao people and passed on from generation to generation. In addition, he found that these improvised oral folk songs are generally longer. For example, there are more than 1,000 lines of the local Miao people’s *Song of Crossing Mountain and Water* (跋山涉水歌) except for the repeated verses and “Hua er” (花儿, flowers). If not, there will be more than 3,000 lines. For example, the local Miao song *Niang Asha* (娘阿莎) is 1,200 lines long, *Song of Brother and Sister* (兄妹歌) is more than 1,500 lines, and *Grog-san* (格罗格桑) is more than 3,000 lines. Under the influence of local oral folk songs, the length of Qu Yuan’s poems has gradually become longer, and the length of his later works, such as *Li Sao* and *Tian Wen* is far larger than that of his early works.

The Influence of Pan Ge (盘歌) (the Folk Song) of Miao Nationality in Yuan Xiang Region on Qu Yuan’s Poetry Form

In addition to the change of poetry style, attribute, words, length, and so on, the form of Qu Yuan’s later poetry has also changed significantly. In his early works, before the creation of the classic work of Chu ci—*Tian Wen* (天问), Qu Yuan never used the form of “问” (asking) in his work-naming, which is generally

similar to the prose works in *The Book of Songs*, with a shorter length. But in his later years, Qu Yuan created *Tian Wen*, a new form of poetry with the name of “wen”. Although Qu Yuan did not create poetry prose with questions, for example, there are also questions, such as “who says the river wide” and “who says the tea bitter” in *The Book of Songs*, but these questions are generally scattered lines, which are obviously different from the long questions in *Tian Wen*. The reason why Qu Yuan was able to create *Tian Wen*, a new form of poetry with the name of “wen”, was also influenced by the folk poetry culture of Miao nationality in Yuan Xiang. During the nine years of living in Yuan Xiang region, Qu Yuan became familiar with a local folk song called “pan ge”. The “pan ge” of Miao nationality is a kind of poetic form of “samsara question and answer”, which is the folk poetry of Miao ancestors asking about the origin of human beings and the changes of the world. The purpose of Miao people’s singing “pan ge” is to better inherit and carry forward the inheritance of ancestral culture and educate future generations. For example, the Miao people have a saying that “the predecessors do not put the ancients in order, and the later generations forget the spectrum”, which is actually the inheritance of “pan ge”. This “pan ge” culture had an impact on Qu Yuan’s later poetry form. He created *Tian Wen* according to the form of Miao’s “pan ge”. He described the formation of celestial bodies, the movement of the sun and the moon, and the origin and development of human beings in the form of question and answer. Of course, Qu Yuan also made some changes in the creation of *Tian Wen* in the form of “pan ge”. For example, in the “pan ge” of Miao nationality, the ancestor of mankind was “Jiang Yang”, while Qu Yuan was a Han nationality, in *Tian Wen*, he changed to “Nu Wa” (a goddess in Chinese mythology). Although some changes have been made to some contents, both of them are in the form of “wen” to explain various problems. Similar to the “pan ge” of Miao nationality, *Tian Wen* not only raises general questions, but also deep and thorough questions. There are 188 verses in *Tian Wen*, which contain various questions about the universe, the movement of celestial bodies and the origin of human beings. This has long been out of the limits of the times. It was rare at that time. Even some questions are difficult to find perfect answers. Obviously, without the influence and inspiration of “pan ge” of Miao nationality, it is difficult for Qu Yuan to create the classic work, *Tian Wen*.

Conclusion

To sum up, Qu Yuan, as the founder of Chu ci in China, his later poetry creation is closely related to his exile to Yuan Xiang region. The Miao culture in Yuan Xiang had a far-reaching influence on Qu Yuan’s later poetry creation, which changed the style, content, genre, language, and length of Qu Yuan’s later poetry. Therefore, it can be said that Miao nationality’s culture in Yuan Xiang region provides rich sources of inspiration for Qu Yuan’s later poetry creation. Without the nourishment of the local Miao culture, Qu Yuan would not have been able to create *Li Sao*, *Tian Wen*, and other great works of Chu ci, nor could he be the founder of Chu ci. From the above examples of Qu Yuan’s poetry creation, we can see that minority culture has made great contributions to the development of Chinese literature.

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