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Li De-yu 李德裕 and The Villa Ping-quan 平泉莊

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Li De-yu, a famous politician in mid-Tang, is also the owner of the private garden Villa Ping-quan, which is one of the most popular and unique gardens of that time. A lot of works about Villa Ping-quan have been written by him, and they could be called a kind of "Garden literature". By considering his garden literature, his cultural background and moral structure must be explored.

The Villa Ping-quan has important meanings for Li De-yu. First, Villa Ping-quan is a mental as well as an actual hometown for him. Li family's grave has been moved to Luo-yang 洛陽 when his grandfather Li Qi-yun 李棲筠 started serving for the central government. De-yu said in his *Ping-quan shan-ju jie zi-sun ji* 平泉山居戒子孫記 ("The Note advising descendants about Villa Ping-quan") that his father always had a longing for the Yi-Luo 伊·洛 area. De-yu seems to have inherited the Villa from his father. After De-yu retires he also wishes to live in Villa Ping-quan, but this does not become true. Because of political problems, he always has to be distantly separated from the villa, and can compose his poems therefore only with imagination. While his works describe how peaceful, warm, and beautiful Villa Ping-quan is, he often expresses sadness and the unfulfilled wish to live there.

Secondly, Villa Ping-quan is, so to speak, his “private museum”. De-yu is an eager collector of rare stones and plants, which he displays in Ping-quan’s garden. His eagerness makes him write *Ping-quan shan-ju cao-mu ji* 平泉山居草木記 (“The record of plants collected in Villa Ping-quan”) and a lot of poems about collections. These poems have two remarkable points. First, though he writes many poems about stones, these poems never deviate from traditionally used expressions. He feels great interest in writing about many kind of stones rather than being deeply associated with special one to endow unique value. Secondly, his plant poems do not express pleasure or pity for the plant’s transformations, which is often expressed in plant poems. What has to be noticed is that he not only writes like a poet who admires the beauty of nature, but also observes like a scholar who carefully describes his collections.

Li De-yu’s *Ping-quan shan-ju jie zi-sun ji* strictly advises his descendants not to sell or give the villa and his collection away. But such a strong fixation only invites criticisms of the future generations. In other words it could be said that *Ping-quan shan-ju jie zi-sun ji* also shows intensive sorrow of a man who must leave his collections behind for which he devoted so much.

In this way, by considering Ping-quan poems, we can see the reality and ideal of the man who lived in the mid-Tang period.

The sorrow of literacy

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“When one learns reading and writing, the sorrow of life begins”this is the first line of *Su Shi* (蘇軾) ’s poem titled “The *Suimu Tang* of *Shi Cangshu*” (「石蒼舒醉墨堂」). This poem teases his friend *Shi Cangshu* who is an expert calligrapher of the grassy style (*caoshu*) by seeming to assert that *caoshu* is useless while in fact subtly praising *Shi*’s art.

Though *Su Shi* does not continue the argument that literacy begets sorrow, his opening line leads us to the problem of the sorrow of being literate.

A *Shidafu* is a member of the privileged class who could in turn become a government official by being literate. During the Six Dynasties and the first half of the *Tang* period, men were born to be *Shidafu*, therefore they were not overly conscious of belonging to this class. In the mid-*Tang*, a man became a *Shidafu* through his own effort and ability. In these years *Han Yu*

(韓愈) and *Bai Ju-yi* (白居易) both raised themselves up to join this elite and found contentment and happiness by being literate.

In the *Song* period we can find some people who expressed sorrow over being literate. *Lu You* (陸游) in his verse often laments being literate and envies the lives of illiterate people. He believed they lived like the ancient people *Laozi* depicted. This suggests that as the Chinese bureaucracy matured scholar-officials began to notice their unhappiness. They came to believe that the ideal life for a human being was realized by illiterate people who lived in nature without any artifices.

Thus we can see the soundness of spirit of the Chinese literati who question their own status in the social system and also ponder the meaning of a literature which can allow them to express thoughts not restrained by that same system.

On 98 songs of *Hu-chou Ko* by Wang Yuan-liang

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98 songs of Hu-chou Ko 湖州歌九十八首 by Wang Yüan-liang 汪元量, a poet at the end of Southern Sung, is a series of songs describing the journey to the north the royal family of the Sung underwent. In general, a series of poems in classical Chinese literature is just an assembly of several songs on the same subject, and there is no relationship of each to the other apart from the subject. *Hu-chou Ko*, in contrast, is arranged such that each of the songs constitutes a narrative context. This paper divides *Hu-chou Ko* into 8 paragraphs by the geographical location where the party stopped on their way northward, and points out several features of each paragraph and analyses each paragraph's story line.

Since Wang had lived in the era of dynastic change and experienced personally the journey to north accompanying the royal family of Sung, most of the studies have estimated him to be an loyalist of a ruined court, and assumed his poems to be a kind of documentary, or in other words, to be a *Shi-shi* 詩史. *Hu-chou Ko*, in the same way, has been regarded as the personal experience of his journey made into song and later compiled after his arrival at Ta-tu 大都, the capital of Yüan dynasty. However, this view is unsound for following 3 reasons: First, not all historical events written in this series is based on his

experience; some of them are based on hearsay or imagination. Second, *Hu-chou Ko* is not a simple assembly of songs, as it is arranged consciously to make its narrative line more dramatic. Third, characters in this series, especially women such as the empress or her abigail, are likewise dramatized by the poet.

Hu-chou Ko is a documentary rather than a fiction, so how should we re-define *Hu-chou Ko*? Viewed in the light of its title and its oral narrative, these songs appear to be modelled on *10 Chüeh-chü of K'uei-chou Ko* 夔州歌十絕句 by Du Fu 杜甫. *K'uei-chou Ko* is closely related to ballad and therefore *Hu-chou Ko* inherits characteristics of the ballad, too. The number of songs was 98, which is an odd number, and from this perspective it seems quite probable that this series originally was comprised of 100 songs and lost 2 were later lost for some reason. In that case, Wang could be seen as attempting to follow *The 100 Court poems* 宮詞一百首 by Hua-jui Fu-jen 花藥夫人 at some unconscious level, as Hua-jui is an empress of the Hou-shu 後蜀 dynasty which was destroyed by Sung. The theme of *Hu-chou Ko* is 'a tragedy of ruined empresses'. The tragic biography of Hua-jui would overlap with the theme of Wang's songs and make its theme more impressive. In addition, we should note that it was the *modern* historic event at that time that the northward journey told in *Hu-chou Ko* is. There are few cases in classical Chinese poetry that describe historic events contemporary with the poet himself. For the above three reasons, *Hu-chou Ko* could be redefined as an adaptation of modern history into an *epic* that could actually be sung.

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—Luo Yu-ming, Fudan University

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