Research on the influence of Maritime Silk Road on Chinese Literature

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Abstract

Maritime Silk Road is an important way for Chinese literature to go to the ocean and the world, and its historical value is even more than the Silk Road on land. To some extent, the literary inheritance of Maritime Silk Road reflects the mutual propagation of Chinese and foreign cultures, as well as the collision, integration and innovation of history. Therefore, this paper starts from the development, flourishing, and declining stages and literary characteristics of Maritime Silk Road, and then explores its influence on Chinese literature from four aspects of religion, nationality, culture and style. Finally, in view of the tracks of influence of key western countries, the paper puts forward several development tactics in order to inherit and spread Chinese culture through the integration with foreign cultures and the development of local culture.

Keywords: Maritime Silk Road, Chinese Literature, Inheritance, Influence.

1. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

1.1 Literature review

Experiencing vicissitudes in history, at present, Maritime Silk Road has become an important way for literary and cultural inheritance in China. General Secretary Xi Jinping put forward the Strategy of Maritime Silk Road in 2013 to comply with new situations of Chinese literature and economy. The construction of Maritime Silk Road has brought new changes to Chinese national cultural psychology. There has also been a turning point in the process of literary shaping and inheritance, with the thought “dare to be the first of the world” as the key content of some literature (Chen, 2015). Maritime Silk Road also has strong influence on cultural exchanges and literary publishing and so on. With features of diversity and mutual blending, Maritime Silk Road draws religious and cultural inheritance into literary shaping, not only bringing perfect inspiration to language and literary creation, but also being important for literary exchanges and spread (Zhao and Liu, 2013). Meanwhile, in recent 30 years, research findings of Maritime Silk Road are significant. Some traditional Chinese cultures have important influence in western countries. For example, silk, porcelain and other cultures lay foundation for literary shaping in their inheritance (Liu, 2013). Despite the great amount of researches on Maritime Silk Road, there is a lack of discussion about its influence on present Chinese literature and it is necessary to make further research (Gong and Luo, 2015).

1.2 Research purpose

In the Tang Dynasty, the status of Maritime Silk Road gradually increased. Starting from silk trade, the construction of Maritime Silk Road closely linked Chinese civilization with that of the world. Quanzhou, one of the port cities at that time, became an important gathering place for world cultures (Song, 2014). The long-term collision and coexistence of different cultures was of great significance to the creation and inheritance of Chinese literature. Through documentary research and analytical comparison, regarding literature and culture as phenomenon in historical development, the purpose of this research is to make a deep analysis of Maritime Silk Road’s influence on Chinese literature from perspectives of religion, nationality, culture and literature. This paper expands research from theoretical perspectives of silk, economy and trade to practical perspectives of literature and spread of culture, explores cultures and arts and adds more contents to the research of Maritime Silk Road (Wang, 2015). At the same time, the construction of Maritime Silk Road is an important background for the global exchanges of Chinese literature with the world. Only through studying the specific influences and development strategies of Chinese literature can we provide a historical reference for the development of Maritime Silk Road.
1.3 Research methods

Methods adopted in this paper are documentary research, analytical comparison and word frequency analysis, which comprehensively show the complexity and diversity of the development and influence of Maritime Silk Road. At the same time, through statistical methods, this paper analyzes and exhibits the traces of change of Maritime Silk Road’s influence on Chinese literature in some western countries. In addition, using methods of cultural theory, religious theory, national theory, semantic and sentimental analysis (Wu and Lin, 2015), this paper also explores influence of Maritime Silk Road on Chinese literature from perspectives of culture, style and nationality. Finally, with methods from dialectical materialism, the paper studies the development of Maritime Silk Road and Chinese literature and makes an objective and scientific summary of the research outcomes.

2. SUMMARY OF MARITIME SILK ROAD

2.1 The developing stage of Maritime Silk Road

The developing stage of Maritime Silk Road was mainly in the Tang Dynasty, when Guangzhou, Ningbo, Quanzhou and Yangzhou were the four largest international trade ports of China. With Guangzhou as the center, routes of Maritime Silk Road were distributed in various countries. Maritime Silk Road not only promoted cultural exchanges between China and other countries, but also enhance the spread of foreign religious cultures to Guangzhou with a great amount of believers coming there. Such a multi religious culture spread rapidly through continuous development and integration with cultures of other regions, greatly promoting the development and innovation of Chinese literature (Li and Ma, 2012).

2.2 The flourishing stage of Maritime Silk Road

The flourishing stage of Maritime Silk Road was mainly in the Song and Yuan Dynasty, when Quanzhou, Guangzhou and Ningbo became three major trade hubs. The gradual increase of Quanzhou’s importance provided conditions and guarantees for the entry and spread of foreign cultures. In the Southern Song Dynasty, with the continuous expansion of Quanzhou’s foreign trade, various kinds of new cultural and economic institutions were gradually introduced into it and held in esteem. In addition, during the Song and Yuan Dynasty, Quanzhou's transnational traffic routes became prosperous, leading to close exchanges between Chinese and foreign countries. Despite the domination of religious dissemination in those cultural exchanges, they laid a good foundation for the development and inheritance of Chinese literature (Lu and Wang, 2013).

2.3 The declining stage of Maritime Silk Road

The declining stage of Maritime Silk Road was mainly in the Ming and Qing Dynasty. Due to the restrictive policies of government, China's exchanges with foreign countries declined gradually, and the phenomenon of religious and cultural coexistence and literature blending weakened by degrees. In spite of the ocean-going voyage led by Zheng Hein the Ming Dynasty, the decay of Maritime Silk Road continued, which was closely related to the implementation of government policies. It can be said that construction of Maritime Silk Road in this period was mainly in Quanzhou area, and multiple religious and cultural coexistence was one of the results of the construction. Though in a period of decline, Maritime Silk Road at that time still had profound influence on the creation of Chinese literature.

2.4 Literary characteristics of Maritime Silk Road

The literary characteristics of Maritime Silk Road are mainly embodied in three aspects of openness, diversity and compatibility. Openness mainly refers to the openness of literature and culture, taking economy as the lead of openness and life experiences as the basis of creation (Luo and Luo, 2015). Diversity mainly refers to impacts from foreign cultures in literary creation. The diversity of local cultural systems makes literary works conflicting and contradictory, and the most obvious is religious conflicts. Compatibility is mainly reflected in the integration of cultures, which provides an important driving force of complementation and coexistence for the development and evolution of literature. Although compatibility sometimes changes the original nature of literature, it provides essential conditions for the innovation of literature (Hu et al, 2014).
3. INFLUENCE OF MARITIME SILK ROAD ON CHINESE LITERATURE

3.1 Chinese literature from the perspective of religion

At present, Chinese literature mainly covers four types of cultural systems, namely, Chinese, Arabic Islamic, European and Indian, which are mainly embodied in different religions and cultures. The construction of Maritime Silk Road promoted the spread and integration of religions cultures. That is to say, the construction of Maritime Silk Road provided more ideas for Chinese literature creation. From the perspective of religion and culture, Chinese literature can be divided into primitive religious literature, India Buddhist literature, Taoist literature and so on. For example, the Taoist poetry incisively and vividly described China's traditional religious beliefs and history in its process of development. At the same time, religions also had profound influence on authors of Chinese literature. Chinese intellectuals, in view of their religious beliefs, would form a unified concept of creation and directly implant religious subject matters into literary works. For example, the Zen Buddhism thoughts unified literary creation to the light and distant school of art. At the same time, in creation, adopting Buddhist characteristics from India Buddhism, authors could use rhetorical devices like imagination and exaggeration to show Buddhist thoughts to make readers perceive different cultural essence in Chinese literature (Chen and Tang, 2014). Meanwhile, the integration of religions and cultures can also lead to the gradual loss of traditional religious overtones of Chinese literature in its development, which is unfavorable for the inheritance of Chinese literature.

3.2 Chinese literature under national vision

According to influence on Chinese literature from national vision, such literature can be classified into main nationality and non-main nationality. Construction of Maritime Silk Road makes the Hui nationality, the Tu nationality and transnational nationalities in Central Asia form main nationality, while non-main nationality mainly means moving nationality. Different arts, folkways and history and customs from different nationalities form unique literary group. And meanwhile, above construction makes politics and cultural forces of regions continuously intervene, resulting in that Chinese literature develops after continuous change and re-organization. In other words, the construction makes Chinese culture, characters, literature, etc. permeated into literary creation periodically and also provides different materials for literature creation, making continuous development of Chinese literature identity and art. And at the same time, Chinese literature is also gradually transmitted with such construction and obtains wide attention at abroad. For example, Mo Yan’s literary output greatly introduces honest folkways of the Han nationality to foreign countries. However, fusion and development of nationalities influence contents and connotation of partial Chinese literature, generating unprecedented difficulty in understanding the literature.

3.3 Chinese literature under cultural vision

From perspective of culture, Chinese literature has been gradually fused into culture of countries along Maritime Silk Road, according to which concept of Chinese literature also changed and creation of literature and art such as poetry, drama and prose essay is also diversified (Zhou, 2012). And at the same time, under the trend of globalized development of culture, Maritime Silk Road provides a wider place for culture, bringing new charm and influence to Chinese culture. During above construction, Chinese literature presents characteristics of dialogism, diversity and intertextuality. By taking Chinese poetry as an example, cultural integration makes Chinese literature inevitably featured by revel quality, dialogism and so on. Creation subject and thought of Chinese literature is of mobility during such construction, namely, western elements and European culture. In addition, the construction makes Chinese intellectuals form author creation consciousness. Considering that most of Chinese intellectuals are aware of advantages and disadvantages by cultural integration, they will, by taking cultural origin as creation basis, make close cultural connection between Chinese literature and China during literary output creation. All this indicates creative ability that comprehensive literature quality of human group and individuals converts essential power of subject and object to Chinese literature and such ability provides guarantee for its continuous development.

3.4 Chinese literature under literary form vision

Chinese literature under literary form vision can be classified into tales of legenda, heroic epic, tablet inscription, folk literature, fable, etc. With above construction, the two great Indian epics, Sanskrit literature, Buddhist literature or others entered into China and are integrated with China’s traditional literature, which also
means that culture value of transnational nationalities is integrated into Chinese literature to activate academic exchange between Chinese literature and foreign mainstream literature and strengthen construction of relation between Chinese literature and culture of countries along Silk Road, not only determining academic value of Chinese literature, but also making the literature occupy important position in world culture. Secondly, according to contents of literary form of Chinese literature, Maritime Silk Road, also considered as road for poetry of Tang Dynasty, is main basis for most frontier fortress poems. Thirdly, construction of such road reminds people that they should treat history, development and future of Chinese literature from international perspective, re-understand Chinese history and culture and carefully mark relation between Chinese and foreign culture so as to re-construct Chinese literature and construct Chinese culture from different perspectives and finally form Chinese literature system under world’s vision. Although Maritime Silk Road provides new vision and possibility for Chinese literature development, creation of Chinese literature also faces new challenges, making it necessary to present Chinese history and reality themes under wider vision.

4. CHANGE TRAJECTORY OF INFLUENCE ON CHINESE LITERATURE BY MARITIME SILK ROAD

According to history research on globalized vision, construction promotes continuous output of Chinese literature at abroad and makes creation conducted by continuously referring to foreign culture. Considering national uniqueness of Chinese literature and with cultural integration and development, Chinese literary system models such as culture, religion, literary form and nationality have formed unique change trajectory in China (Feng and Li, 2012), and specific details of change of influence are as shown in the Figure 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Before the Qing dynasty</th>
<th>1950-2000</th>
<th>2000-2010</th>
<th>2010-/</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>religion</td>
<td>75.30%</td>
<td>78.20%</td>
<td>43.60%</td>
<td>31.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nation</td>
<td>46.10%</td>
<td>43.60%</td>
<td>67.10%</td>
<td>53.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>culture</td>
<td>34.70%</td>
<td>32.40%</td>
<td>47.90%</td>
<td>66.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>literary form</td>
<td>32.10%</td>
<td>34.50%</td>
<td>33.50%</td>
<td>32.70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. Trajectory of Influence

5. DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY OF MARITIME SILK ROAD AND CHINESE LITERATURE

5.1 Vigorously promote excellent Chinese literature

Firstly, we need to vigorously promote excellent Chinese culture and transmit spirit and subject of literary creation to realize that Maritime Silk Road is not only an approach for trade contacts. And we should also provide a huge literary wealth for countries along the road to make huge achievements of Chinese literature obtained during economic society. Secondly, we should advocate Confucianism and Taoism in Chinese traditional culture to prevent disappearance of cultural thought deep-rooted in Chinese literature due to erosion of foreign culture and make its development and creation full of scientific and rational spirit. Besides, we also need to greatly advocate author consciousness to make people migrant at abroad still love the motherland after construction of the road so as to guarantee that subject of Chinese literature is Chinese nation, which is very significant for effectively inheriting Chinese literature and realizing peaceful reunification of China.
5.2 Be open to and compatible with foreign culture to guarantee advancement and contemporaneity.

Cultural exchanges mean openness and compatibility of culture (Wang, 2014). The construction promotes bilateral interaction between Chinese culture and world’s cultural circles. Therefore, Chinese culture also needs to have certain degree of openness and compatibility to involve excellent and advanced culture into national culture so as to realize continuous development of Chinese literature and keep advancement and contemporaneity of literature. And meanwhile, since that development and transmission of literature certainly generate cultural ferment and conflict, Chinese literature fails to survive under the large environment in case of not having openness and compatibility. In aspect of its contents, we need continuous creation in Chinese literature and to boldly learn from excellent countries to create idea and belief so as to enrich humanistic knowledge and spirit and fully indicate guiding function of Chinese literature.

5.3 Guarantee safety of Chinese literature based on high-potential literature

During creation and development of Chinese literature, there will be part of weak literature facing survival challenge. We need to inherit Chinese literature and culture of the nationality in trouble and also offset pressure from foreign culture and establish carrier for defensing harmful culture during cultural exchange, which is a problem related to safety of literature and culture. For this purpose, during continuous development of Chinese literature, we can, according to high-potential literature, take advanced literature orientation indicating modern society development and tide of times as basis of literary movement so as to effectively guarantee safety of Chinese literature and generate unique form of Chinese literature in Chinese cultural circle during Chinese literature transmission at abroad and realization of cultural free exchange.

6. CONCLUSION

Maritime Silk Road, an extension of Land Silk Road, transmits China, its culture and literature to foreign countries, at the sage of which great influence is caused to Chinese literature. It fuses religion with Chinese culture and promotes organic exchange in transnational nationalities, during which cultural fusion generated enriches contents of Chinese literature and makes literary form changed. But meanwhile, construction of the road also brings challenges to development of Chinese literature suffering from erosion by foreign harmful culture during transmission, which should be solved by strategies of promoting Chinese literature and transmitting high-potential literature so as to realize inheritance and creation of Chinese literature and develop its unique artistic value.

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