The New Theory of Heroism in Water Margin

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Abstract. The Water Margin and the Romance of the Three Kingdoms were once engraved together into Yingxiongpu in the Ming dynasty. Compared with the orthodox heroism of "salvation of the world" expressed in Romance of the Three Kingdoms, the heroism in Water Margin embodies the distinct characteristics of the times, more affected by townsfolk's ideas, tending to take self-value as its core and pursuing maximized spiritual and material interest, which presents the new characteristics that go against the traditional concept of hero.

The Water Margin [1] and the Romance of the Three Kingdoms have been engraved together as Yingxiongpu in Ming dynasty. "Water Margin and the Romance of the Three Kingdoms" tell a lot of stories about wisdom and loyalty, buyers regret that two books are not issued together [2] It is thus clear that what this two books have in common is that they create numerous portraits of heroes bearing the characteristics of wisdom and loyalty. The difference is the heroes created in the Romance of the Three Kingdoms are all generals and ministers, while the heroes created in Water Margin are mostly from the underworld, including farmers, fishermen, butchers, the executioners, junior officers and so on. Therefore, the concept of civilian class has a deeper influence on the heroism in Water Margin, reflecting the distinct characteristics of the times.

Wang Wangru in the Qing dynasty had a profound analysis about Song Jiang, he said: "Songjiang, a cunning folk hero in the prosperous times, would not be resigned to being outdone. If he had had higher position and enjoyed higher salary, he would not revolt. The most surprising was that people bribed to get official position while Songjiang utilized money to win bandits over. People who bought posts were punished as robbers, while people who used money to recruit bandits were given titles. What brilliant and timely plot Songjiang had come up with" [3] Song Jiang was the epitome of most of the Liangshan heroes, unrealistic ambition and aspiration prompted them to choose unconventional ways, which is the new feature of heroism in Water Margin. The contemporary scholars also believe that "Scholars praise Water Margin mainly because of its heroic characterization."[4] In this paper, the author analyzes the new heroism from several aspects.

Cherish Life is the Firm Foundation of the Heroism

While Liangshan heroes take the bull by the horns and go forward when they fight with others, they always choose to cherish their lives unconditionally in life-and-death moment. All of them play it by ear and preserve their lives, not always being stupid and reckless, not affected by the traditional concept of honor such as "the men of letter should have died of remonstrance with Kings and the man of prowess should have died in the war." The recurring plot model of confession in the novel is the powerful evidence. The case of confession under torture had appeared in many captured heroes. When they narrate this kind of plots, the expressions they use are nearly identical and form a pattern. For example, after capturing the birthday gifts by ruse, Bai Sheng was arrested by the feudal officials and suffered the torture, "Bai Sheng tried to endure, but soon he couldn't stand and confessed The leader is Ward Chief Chao, he came with six men and inveigled me into carrying the wine! But I really don't know who the other six are!"(Chapter 17); Chai Jin was tortured to admit that Li Kui killed Yin Tianxi. "They pounded Chai Jin till his flesh was a pulp and his blood streamed in rivulets. He was forced to confess: 'I ordered my vassal Li Kui to kill Yin Tianxi.'" (Chapter 51); Li Kui was
are dead than alive. The heroes of China, Qin ming, Guan, leaving the Chinese to be those to become the partial arts superintendent "own place", which is the "own" situation, Zhen and Xie Bao were privileged and could not solve. Through detailed statistics, there were a total of 21 people who chose to surrender instead of die in accord with this kind of situation. The people who committed murder and captured were defeated and captured by Liangshan heroes.

Although the heroes are upright, they are not pedantic, inclined to cherish life between life and reputation. Even Lu Junyi who was highly skilled in martial arts and Li Kui, man of violent temper, without exception, chose the humiliating "confession" as a stopgap. In addition, those distinguished court officers of outstanding background in high positions, such as Hu Yanzhuo, Qin ming, Guan Sheng, chose to surrender instead of die when they were defeated and captured by Liangshan heroes.

Meanwhile, when the heroes were stricken and driven desperate, out of love for life, they chose to live in disgrace swallowing humiliation rather than sorrow for acting impulsively. After Yang Zhi lost the birthday gifts, "How could Yang Zhi return and face Governor Liang after losing the birthday gifts on Yellow Earth Ridge? He wanted to leap from the ridge and kill himself. But he came to his senses and halted just in time. 'My parents who bore me gave me this fine appearance and handsome physique,' he thought. 'From childhood I have learned skill of wielding 18 kinds of weapons. This is no way to die. I can at least wait until I am captured, then decide.'"(Chapter 16) After major Lu pummeled the Lord of the West to death, "Lu Da returned to his quarters and hastily packed. He only brought some travelling clothes and a bit of silver, leaving behind old garments and heavier things. Carrying a staff as a weapon, he sped out of the South Gate like a wisp of smoke." (Chapter 2) Heroes who were charged with murder chose to run away. Liangshan heroes cherish their life more than their reputation, which is the refreshing new trait that public awareness conferred to heroes in Water Margin.

The Pursuit of Freedom of Personality is the Core of Heroism

Lin Chong opened the prelude of uprising of Liangshan Heroes, and Lin's experience is the typical case of "oppressive government drives people to rebellion". The point of view that "the heroes were driven to revolt" has occupied an important position in academic community. However, this is not always the case for Liangshan Heroes. One swallow does not make a summer. Through detailed statistics, the writer concludes the main motivation of Liangshan Heroes turning to banditry.

First, the Liangshan Heroes were driven to revolt by local authorities or the powerful ones. This situation is in line with the concept "driven to revolt". These figures obeyed laws, constrained by social rules and moral fetter. But, unfortunately, they encountered unreasonable persecution of the privileged and could not solve if only relying on right or individual efforts. Thus, when their lives were not guaranteed, they had to revolt in opposition to the authorities publicly. Only Lin Chong, Xie Zhen and Xie Bao in 108 Stars of Destiny were really up to the standard of "driven to revolt".

Second, some Liangshan Heroes broke laws, in order to avoid lawsuits, they chose to become outlaws. There were a total of 21 people who were in accord with this kind of situation. The people were Chao Gai and other sevens who robbed the Extorted; Lu Da, Yang Zhi, Wu Song, Lei Heng, Kong Ming, Kong Liang, Yang Xiong, Shi Xiu, Wang Ying, Shi Yong, Deng Fei, Meng Kang and Pei Xuan who committed murder and went to avoid the disasters.

In the first and second situation, the heroes sought refuge. The difference is that in second situation, heroes' subjective motive of violating the testimonies is stronger and the essence is to
challenge the social order. For example, Chao Gai, who had property and real estate, actively robbed vast wealth, then was hunted down by government and had to become an outlaw to avoid disaster. Yang Xiong and Shi Xiu never trusted the government and didn't sue official when they were confronted with some problems, they chose to resort to force, kill their enemies for the ease of mind. This kind of person was dissatisfied with the social rules essentially and went to challenge the society.

Third, Liangshan Heroes were implicated to become outlaws by rescuing, harboring or making acquaintances with criminals and bandits. There were a total of 26 people who were in compliance with such cases, they were Shi Jin, Song Jiang, Chai Jin, Cao Zheng, Shi En, Hua Rong, Li Jun, Tong Wei, Tong Meng, Xue Yong, Zhang Shun, Hong Mu, Mu Chun, Dai Zong, Li Kui, Zhu Fu, Li Yun, Du Xing, Song Qing, Le He, sister Gu, Sun Xin, Sun Li, Yan Qing, Cai Fu and Cai Qing. Many researchers also noted this phenomenon, "why was Chai Jin, as a prominent eunuch in feudal society, so interested in hanging out with people who committed the mortal sin?" [5]They clearly know what kind of risk they would take if they communicated with the bandits, but they still proceeded without hesitation. Actually, this behavior contains the determination to challenge the social rules on their own initiative.

Fourth, some heroes were driven to revolt by Liangshan Heroes. Once Liangshan Heroes found a person who they admired or who had special significance in the development of their cottage, they would do their best to lure the person to join them, even used the so-called "juehu" plan. They cut off their way of escape, leaving them no room of survival and forced them to become outlaws. 11 people were consistent with this situation, they were hu Tong, Lu Junyi, Li Ying, Xu Nin, Qing Ming, Hou Jian, Jin Dajian, Xiao Rang, An Daoquan, Huang Fuduan and Hu Sanniang. In addition to the most typical Liangshan hero Lu Junyi who suffered "juehu" plan, Qin Ming is one of them. Song Jiang said to Qing Ming "We hope you won't blame us, General. Yesterday, we tried in vain to convince you to remain with us, but you were determined to leave, so I thought of a plan. I had one private similar in your appearance put on your armor and helmet, take your wolf-toothed mace, ride to Qingzhou Town and order peasant insurgents to kill people. Meanwhile, Yan Shun and Stumpy Tiger Wang went with a reinforcement of another fifty, making it appear that you were trying to bring out your family. We committed all this murder and arson to compel you to give up any hope of ever going back! Today, we present ourselves before you for punishment!'"(Chapter 33) In order to implement this plan, many innocent people were killed by Liangshan heroes, Qin Ming's family were also slain by Qingzhou magistrate. Song Jiang's remark was the best annotation of "juehu" plan. The unscrupulous acts of Liangshan Heroes in order to reach their goals are not inferior to the persecutions to the people from the ruling class.

Fifth, the government officials were captured and surrendered in fight with Liangshan Heroes, this kind of people were 15, they were Huang Xin, Hu Yanzhuo, Han Tao, Peng Qi, Ling Zhen, Guan Sheng, Hao Siwen, Suo Chao, shan Tinggui, Wei Dingguo, Zhang Qing, Gong Wang, Ding Deson, Xuan Zan and Dong Ping.

Sixth, some people left their home and wanted to occupy a hill to act as a lord, they were looking for the opportunities to become an outlaw actively. This kind of people were totally 12, they were Wang Dingliu, Jiao Ting, Shi Qian, Tang Long, Duan Jingzhu, Yang Ling, Zhang Qing, Sun Erniang, Yan Shun, Lu Fang, Guo Sheng and Ou Peng. For example, Shi Qian said to Yang Xiong and Shi Xiu:"Then I heard you say you were going to join the band in Liangshan Marsh. Around here all I can do is stealing chickens and swiping dogs. I'll never amount to anything. How fine it would be if I could go with you two brothers up the mountain. Will you take me?" (Chapter 45) Although Shi Qian was underappreciated in Liangshan, "he ranked last but one in Liangshan one hundred and eight heroes." [6]There were another two particular cases, Li Zong and Zheng Tianshou, they were travelling minstrels at first, then they became outlaw in peach blossom, finally they got together and upraised to liangshan.

Seventh, People revolted for reasons which were not mentioned in the production. Some
characters in the works already took refuge in the mountains or robbed beside the waters. This kind of people are totally 19, they were Zhu Wu, Chen Da, Yang Chun, Zhou Tong, Du Qian, Song Wan, Zhu Gui, Li Li, Zhang Heng, Jiang Jing, Ma Lin, Tao Zongwang, Zou Yuan, Zou Yun, Fan Rui, Xiang Chong, Li Gun, Bao Xu and Yu Baosi.

In addition, the Liangshan heroes' social identities were different before they took refuge in the mountains. Tao Zongwang was the only farmer in the strict sense, 37 people were officials, 13 people belonged to local rich families, 14 people were in business (start up stores or do a small business), 3 people were fishermen, 2 people were hunters, 1 person was Taoist, 3 people were scholars, 5 people have skills and another 29 people idled around or mugged for a living for reasons unexplained. As Tian Du minister put it, "Liangshan heroes cover all kinds of people, including the nobility, officials and farmers, mechanics and businessmen, clerks and servants, stablemen, beauties and monks, prisoners and people of alien races and so on." [7]

Through careful analysis, we can see that it is more like heroes rebelled against society actively rather than they were driven to revolt. Jin Shengtan had already given his commentary in this regard, "When they were young, they were like wild beasts; when they were strong, they committed murders and robbery."[8] Although some researchers think they sought the shortcut to achieve their goals through rebellion, "there were a lot of stories that expressed Liangshan heroes' political aspiration of seeking success and wealth, such as 'Yang Zhi sells his sword', 'Wu Yong captures the birthday gifts by a ruse' and the happy ending of Song Jiang being appointed as military commissioner."[9] When they suffered oppression, they would not chose to swallow the humiliation or be submissive, they would use their own way to solve the problem and win their freedom, such as killing their enemies regardless of laws or breaking into jails and execution ground, etc. What's more, some Liangshan Heroes were not satisfied with the status quo, they challenged society on their own initiatives, pursuing the idealized freedom. They were filled with high-spirited heroic passion, often not abided by the convention when they fought for the rights of individuals and hoped to rebuild social order with their own force. Therefore, "driven to revolt" is endowed with new meaning. In addition, 35% court officials and 12% the well-off accounts for more than half of the Liangshan heroes. These heroes who belong to the privileged participated in rebellion not for living. This can better explain heroes' strong prospects of pursuing absolute freedom and achieving self-worth.

**Summary**

In conclusion, "The Water Margin has distinctive ideological theme that it praises the heroes who dare to combat with power, crafty sycophant and evil forces."[10] The heroism in Water Margin presents a unique style under the influence of public consciousness in the unique times background, enriches the connotation of heroism.

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**References**

[1] The version of the water margin selected in this paper is published by people's literature publishing house,1997.


