

Chen-weng Liu's Comment on A New Account of the Tales of the World from the Perspective of Emotions

Ming Zhang¹, Xin Liu²

¹School of Chinese Language and Literature, Northeast Normal University, Changchun, Jilin Province, China. 130024

²Jilin University of Arts, Changchun, Jilin Province, China. 130024

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Abstract: Since the publication of A New Account of the Tales of the World, successors have been studying this book. They made annotations and comments, wrote sequels and created imitative works. Chen-weng Liu in the Southern Song Dynasty made unique comments on A New Account of the Tales of the World. Through investigation, it is found that some of these comments were spontaneous and full of true feelings. Liu was moved by feelings and emotions in the book and had to write down his thoughts. This paper inspects Chen-weng Liu's commentary on A New Account of the Tales of the World from seven aspects: the compassion, the melancholy for the country, family and life, the shortness of life, friendship, family affection, the sorrow of parting, as well as the praising for moral integrity.

1. Introduction

Chen-weng Liu was born at the turning point of Song and Yuan Dynasties. During his lifetime, Liu wrote abundant works, including poems, Ci poems, essays and commentaries. In the General Catalogue of Complete Library in the Four Branches of Literature, the author pointed out that Chen-weng Liu's comments were delicate and not coherent, which were not helpful for later study. Is that the truth?

Zi-chang Xu of Ming Dynasty thought Chen-weng Liu was the first person who criticized A New Account of the Tales of the World. In fact, Ying-deng Liu had already carried out the criticism before Chen-weng Liu. Of course, this is not the issue to be discussed in this article.

Chen-weng Liu once commented on He Li's poems and pointed out, before writing down comments, the critic should carefully read the article and understand the author's intention. Chen-weng Liu also commented on Fu Du's poems in the Tang Dynasty that poetry should be read at will. Therefore, Chen-weng Liu's comments on A New Account of the Tales of the World should also be intertwined with his unique experience. Before commenting, he must read the book for several times. His comment closely combined his personal emotions and reasons with emotions and reasons in the book. When Chen-weng Liu commented on A New Account of the Tales of the World, he took the book as a novel to read carefully. His commentary was a natural display of emotions and reasons. Among them, emotions accounted for a considerable proportion. Some of Chen-weng Liu's comments on A New Account of the Tales of the World were indeed started from the perspective of emotions.

The premise of sentimental comment is based on the understanding of the nature of A New Account of the Tales of the World. In Chen-weng Liu's comments on the book, the term "novel" has been used for five times. It is obvious that Chen-weng Liu comments on A New Account of the Tales of the World as a novel.

In Chen-weng Liu's commentary on A New Account of the Tales of the World, there are 19 places where the word "emotion" is explicitly used, and more other places where Chen-weng Liu does not use the word "emotion" are actually about "emotion" involving various human feelings and desires. What is "emotion"? People have emotions when they face themselves, others, the society and the country. It can be said that these "emotions" are more related to people's sociality.

In addition, human beings also have natural attribute, which refers to the interaction between human and the biological nature. Biological nature provides people with primitive appetite and carnal desire. In addition, in the face of natural things and phenomena such as mountains and rivers, wind, rain, thunder and lightning, sun, moon and stars, people in nature can produce various complex and delicate emotions. These “feelings” are related to human nature. Therefore, “emotion” actually refers to all kinds of complex and diverse emotions related to human’s sociality and naturalness. Therefore, “emotion” actually refers to all kinds of complex and diverse feelings related to human’s sociality and naturalness. It is with these feelings that Chen-weng Liu commented on *A New Account of the Tales of the World*.

2. Comment with Compassion

Mencius in ancient China said that “the heart of compassion and concealment” and “the heart of sympathy” were common to all. Chen-weng Liu was no exception. When some people’s experience in *A New Account of the Tales of the World* touched his heart, Chen-weng Liu often gave comments. For instance, Chen-weng Liu lamented Zhi Zhao, who admired Kang Ji since young age and lived a short life. Liu also expressed his sentiment in his comments on Xiu Yang, who was murdered by Cao Cao out of suspicion. Another example is Jian Xi, who held rice in his mouth and spit out the rice to feed the two children, Mai Xi and Yi Zhou. Chen-weng Liu expressed his feelings, saying that the man could only prevent his children from starving to death; nurture is impossible in that circumstances. In expressing his sympathy, Chen-weng Liu used words such as “pity” and “sorrow”, which show his sympathy.

3. Comment with Melancholy for the Country, Family and Life

The affection toward the society, or the concern about family and country is the emotion possessed by traditional Chinese scholars, which is often combined with the feeling of life and experience of scholars. Living in the turning point of Song and Yuan Dynasties, Chen-weng Liu, as an adherent of the Song Dynasty, was unwilling to be ruled by Yuan Dynasty, especially in the situation that the rulers oppressed the Han and other nationalities. He was helpless. His family and the country underwent tremendous changes. The rule of the new Dynasty tortured Chen-weng Liu, and also urged him to turn on literature and history and engage in poetry, prose and novel criticism. Most of the scholars in *A New Account of the Tales of the World* experienced the changing of dynasties, so this novel contains many records of the concern about homeland and country and the feeling of life and experience, which Chen-weng Liu sympathizes with and finds emotional resonance. Yi Zhou and other scholars who moved from the north of Yangtze river often gathered together to sign for the changing dynasties. Liu commented that “these emotions occur in a flash”. Like these scholars, Liu also felt sorry for the destiny of the country and his family. Another example is Jie Wei. Faced by the vastness of the Yangtze River’s flowing water, Wei had a mixed feeling and thought of the fate of the country, the family and his own experience. Chen-weng Liu’s comments can accurately perceive the inner world of Wei and other people; Liu considered these people as his fellows with shared experience. From these comments, we can find that the emotional worlds of Chen-weng Liu and scholars like Wei are interlinked. Chen-weng Liu even liked to use allusions in *A New Account of the Tales of the World* in his poems.

4. Comment on the Shortness of Life

Life is short and the years roll by. This kind of life consciousness is often expressed in ancient Chinese literary works. For example, the Nineteen Ancient Poems of the Han Dynasty and the poems of Yuan-ming Tao, a great poet of the Eastern Jin Dynasty, all expressed the shortness of life. There’s a pessimistic argument: life is only temporary sustenance. Chen-weng Liu also has this kind of thought. For example, he wrote the phrase, “all lives are visitors to the universe”. All things in the world are passers-by in the long river of history. This kind of content is also recorded in *A New*

Account of the Tales of the World; Chen-weng Liu's comments are accurately observed. For example, the book described the behaviors and speeches of Wen Huan when he went on the north expedition. Chen-weng Liu's commented that the story was deep and profound, and expressed his feelings of lamentation. The word "lamentation" is an accurate observation and response to this common sense of the short life of mankind.

5. Comment on Friendship

The Chapter of Virtue in A New Account of the Tales of the World records a story. Ju-bo Xun visited a sick friend from afar. The city where his friends lived was attacked by culprits. The citizens had run away. Xun's friends could not escape because of the illness. He told Xun to run away quickly. But Xun believed that to escape was unjust, so he chose to stay with his friend. After the culprits entered the city, they found Xun who stayed at the risk of being killed. They were moved and thought that it was a city of benevolence and righteousness, so they released all the people in the city and voluntarily withdrew. From Chen-weng Liu's comments, we can see that Liu agreed with Ju-bo Xun's attitude towards friendship, and appreciated these culprits since they did not kill people or destroy the city. In the Chapter of Speech, Kang Ji was murdered. Xiu Xiang went to the capital city of Luoyang, and told the King of Wen Jin that they did not need to envy loyal people like Fu Cao and You Xu. Chen-weng Liu commented that Xian's behavior and speech betrayed his friend Kang Ji. Among his friends, Chen-weng Liu and Yuan-xun Peng often wrote poems to respond each other. In Liu's poems, it is mentioned that they once drifted together. It can be seen that Chen-weng Liu was able to share hardships with his friends. So it is not difficult to understand that Chen-weng Liu praised Xun and criticized Xiang.

6. Comment on Family Affection

According to historical records, Chen-weng Liu's teachers were Shou-dao Ou-yang and Wan-li Jiang successively. Both of them believed in the ideological system of Confucianism. Chen-weng Liu received Confucianism education from his masters. Confucianism attaches great importance to human relations. Liu's prefaces, poems and other works also reflect his attachment to kinship. In fact, Liu himself is indeed a filial son. The Biography of Chen-weng Liu wrote by Yang Sheng'an of Ming Dynasty says that Chen-weng Liu can serve his mother with filial piety. Although A New Account of the Tales of the World reflects the unique way of behavior of scholars in Wei and Jin Dynasties, it does not shy away from the writing of kinship. For example, in the Chapter of Speech, after Rong Kong was arrested, he expressed that he hoped his two sons would not be implicated. Chen-weng Liu's comments express his sentiment on such matters, and showed that Chen-weng Liu had the experience of being a son and a father. He unconsciously used the experience in life to comment the story in the book.

7. Comment on the Sadness of Parting

Saying goodbye is always sad. People may have to leave for various reasons. In the face of parting, the ancients sent each other with wine, poems or broken willows. Though in different forms, they all expressed the sadness and reluctance of parting. The poems expressing the sentiments of parting can be found in earliest literary works such as Book of Songs and Chu Ci; examples include Xiaoya, Caiwei in the Book of Songs and Yuan Qu's Shaoshiming in Nine Songs. Many poets in Tang Dynasty also expressed such feelings, such as Bai Li, Bo Wang, Wei Wang and Shi Gao. Chen-weng Liu also wrote about the sadness of parting in his own poems. A New Account of the Tales of the World also expressed the sadness of parting. For example, the Chapter of Speech records the farewell between Hong Yuan and the people in the capital city. The article laments the vastness of the rivers and mountains, which indeed has the potential of huge momentum. Chen-weng Liu commented that Hong Yuan's words were full of emotion, which was the sentiment of parting.

8. Comment with the Praising of Moral Integrity

Integrity is the practice of upholding justice and refusing to do unjust things. Typical examples are “the true men” praised by Mencius in the Warring States Period. There are numerous ancient Chinese literary works praising the adherence to integrity, and criticizing the shamelessly betraying behaviors. The attitude toward death expressed in YuanQu’s *Li Sao* is undoubtedly the adherence to integrity. When Chen-weng Liu was born at the end of the Southern Song Dynasty, the most powerful minister was Si-dao Jia, who was domineering and playing politics. Chen-weng Liu was dissatisfied with Jia, and deliberately violated Jia in the court examination, and then became famous for upright. Chen-weng Liu lived in the Yuan Dynasty for 20 years after the Southern Song Dynasty was overthrown. During these 20 years, he regarded himself as an adherent of the Southern Song Dynasty. Tian-xiang Wen’s poem *Crossing the Sea of Lingding* has been recited for thousands of years. Chen-weng Liu and Wen were distant relatives; they went out together as fellow countrymen. After Wen’s death, Chen-weng Liu wrote a prose to praise his loyalty and integrity. In *A New Account of the Tales of the World*, Kang Ji is a typical person who sticks to integrity. In the turning point of Wei and Jin Dynasties, Ji took an uncooperative attitude toward Si-ma’s regime and wrote *The Letter to Break Off with Ju-yuan Shan*. Ji Kang remained calm when he faced the death penalty in *Dongshi Fair*. After Kang Ji’s death, his former friend Xiu Xiang forfeited his honor and went to Luoyang City. Chen-weng Liu directly showed the negative attitude towards Xiang’s behavior. Another example in the Chapter of Speech is the recording that Bo-cheng Mao would rather be a destroyed orchid than an *Artemisia argyi* with blooming flowers. The people with low ability and bad conduct like Si-dao Jia are in high position. When reading this chapter, Liu said he “extremely hate.” Chen-weng Liu and Bo-cheng Mao must have emotional resonance that beyond time and space.

9. Conclusion

Chen-weng Liu commented on some contents of *A New Account of the Tales of the World* and Xiao-biao Liu’s annotation out of his own feelings. In fact, above passages only discussed seven aspects of Chen-weng Liu’s emotions. He must have other feelings when he commented on the book. However, when comment with different feelings and emotions, Liu had one fundamental claim. That is the true emotions. In his commentary on *A New Account of the Tales of the World*, the term of “true feelings” is used. In addition, Chen-weng Liu’s idea of “true feelings” is more clearly expressed in his other works. For example, in the Preface of *Jan Zhai Poetry Collection*, the reason for appreciating Jin people’s speech is “truth”. Chen-weng Liu commented on *A New Account of the Tales of the World* with his true feelings.

When commenting on *A New Account of the Tales of the World*, the identity of Chen-weng Liu should be an adherent of the Southern Song Dynasty. The mentality is indeed reflected in his commentary. The adherents of the Southern Song Dynasty lived in the Yuan Dynasty; their emotional experience was complex and profound. Most of the characters in *A New Account of the Tales of the World* lived in the end of Han Dynasty to the Eastern Jin Dynasty. There is no need to say much about the situation in that historical period. When Chen-weng Liu commented on the book, he could accurately observe the emotions of characters, since he found his emotional sustenance in the book. It can be said that *A New Account of the Tales of the World* provided spiritual comfort to Chen-weng Liu as an adherent. In the spirit world the two are interlinked; in the emotional world the two can produce resonance. Chen-weng Liu can communicate with characters in *A New Account of the Tales of the World* and share with their emotions. Contradictory emotions such as love, hate, love and anger are conveyed through long or short comments.

We can say that Chen-weng Liu, an adherent of the Southern Song Dynasty, made a spontaneous comment on *A New Account of the Tales of the World*. He was triggered by emotion and had to comment the stories he read. Therefore, exciting and moving sentences can be found easily.

With these comments, we can not only better appreciate *A New Account of the Tales of the World*, but also better understand Chen-weng Liu as a critic. In a word, Liu commented *A New*

Account of the Tales of the World as a novel. His commentary combines his personal feelings with emotions described in the book; he puts his own feelings into the commentary. The commentary of A New Account of the Tales of the World also helps the book to produce far-reaching impacts.

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