

A Brief Discussion of the Research on the Influence of the Romance of the Three Kingdoms in South Korea

Xiang Li^{1,2}

¹College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Yanbian University, Yanji, Jilin Province, China

²College of Literature and History, Mianyang Teachers' College, Mianyang, Sichuan Province, China

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Abstract: The Romance of the Three Kingdoms has always been the focus in Korean academic circle. In recent years, 1 monograph has been published, 5 dissertations (including 2 master thesis and 3 doctoral dissertations), and 20 journal papers, covering general research, communication and influence research, cultural research, edition research, comparative research and other fields. The research situation of The Romance of the Three Kingdoms in Korea during this period is summarized and analyzed in this paper in order to provide some reference for the research of The Romance of the Three Kingdoms in China.

1. Introduction

The Romance of the Three Kingdoms, as one of Chinese four major classics, is China's first voluminous novel with captions for each chapter of historical romance. It occupies a very important position in the history of Chinese literature. In Chosun Dynasty, with the frequent trade exchanges between China and South Korea, *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* was introduced to the Korean peninsula and was widely loved by the Korean people. It had a profound impact on the ancient culture of South Korea.

In recent years, the research on *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* in South Korea has not diminished the slightest. On the contrary, it has always been the focus of South Korea's attention. A large number of scholars who studied *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* have emerged one after another, and they have made remarkable achievements. According to the incomplete statistics, in recent years, 1 monograph has been published, 5 dissertations (including 2 master thesis and 3 doctoral dissertations), and 20 journal papers, covering general research, communication and influence research, cultural research, edition research, comparative research and other fields. The research situation of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* in Korea during this period is summarized and analyzed in this paper in order to provide some reference for the research of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* in China.

2. Research Overview

2.1 Research on the Romance of the Three Kingdoms as a Whole

In his essay *On The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* [1], Kim Shi Jun conducted a comprehensive investigation of the formation process of the book *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* from the spread of the three kingdoms' story to the monologue story-telling of the history of the three kingdoms to the Romance of the three kingdoms. The article listed 13 types of Ming Dynasty block-printed editions. Comparisons were made from five aspects: illustrations, changes of volumes and number of chapters, criticism, historical references, and addition of poems. The article pointed out that the 120 chapters of Luo Guanzhong's *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* that is popular in the market today is Mao Shengshan's *The First Talented Scholar*.

In the book *The World of The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* [2], Kim Moon Kyung discussed how the history became a romance, from *The History of the Three Kingdoms* to *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, and how many mysteries are hidden in it. The book revolved around the story

formation, character image, author's life experience, and publishing competition of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, and set unique questions and answers to solve the mysteries of the Three Kingdoms.

Professor Kim Sung Woon from the Department of Chinese Language and Literature of Soonchunhyang University in the article *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms: The Aspects of Prophecy and Its Significance* [3], investigated the prophecy and the intrinsic functions and meanings of *The Romance of Three Kingdoms*. He believes that in *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, there are astronomical changes and prophecies, auspiciousness and strangeness, dreams and warlock prophecies, and other forms of prophecy. Prophecy can promote the narrative, the beauty of the composition of the work, the visualization of the characters. It can also play a role in arousing the concern and interest of readers.

2.2 Research on the Spread and Influence of the Romance of the Three Kingdoms

In the article *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms: The spread and establishment* by Gyeong Sun Lee [4], he discussed three aspects: the spread and the background of the times, the reaction and establishment, and the translation. The author believes that “The Romance of the Three Kingdoms” had no big reaction before Xuanzu period. After the Imjin Japanese Rebellion, it was in line with the national wishes. It was widely read by scholar-officials and the common people. Not only were there many translations but also many derivative works. It was not only a literary work, but also a precious reading of life. In his article *The Influence of The Romance of the Three Kingdoms on Korean Literary Works* [5], he divided the Korean literary works influenced by *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* into five categories. 1. Some translations such as *Chibi War* and *Record of Bold Jiang Wei*; 2. Some translations and different theories are added such as *Huarongdao Record* and *Three Kingdoms War*. 3. Completely changed works such as *Sanyang War* and *Zhao Zilong Biography*; 4. Partially changed works such as *Guan Yun Chang Biography* and *Chibi Song*; 5. Works being influenced by it. Such as *Mrs. Huang Biography* and *Dream about Chu and Han, Five Brave Generals, Dream of Zhuge Liang*, etc.

In his article *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms: Introduction into South Korea and the Reasons for the Preference of Koreans* [6], Jeong Dong Guk discussed the process of the introduction of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* into South Korea from three parts: the establishment and transmission, the author's life, and its introduction to South Korea. The article believes that “of all the foreign literary works that have had a major influence on Korean literature, I regard *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* as the best, which is beyond words.”

In the article *The Spread and Influence of Ancient Chinese Popular Novels in Ancient Korea* written by Jung Woo Gan from Dong-Eui University [7], the four major Chinese masterpieces *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, *Water Margin*, *Journey to the West*, and *A Dream of Red Mansions* were discussed, from their contribution to North Korea's novel creation, politics and society, and the historical. He used a large amount of historical data to explain and compare the differences in the popularity of the four works, highlighting the characteristics of the spread and influence of each work in ancient Korea. He also published the article *The Spread and Influence of The Romance of the Three Kingdoms in Ancient Korea* [8], the article investigated the widespread popularity and influence in ancient Korea from its spread, the influence on the creation of ancient Korean novels, the truth about the history and art, and the reasons for its widespread popularity in ancient Korea.

In the article *South Korea's Absorption and Transformation of “The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* [9], Gim Tae Beom discussed how South Korea absorbed and transformed *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* from five aspects: “*The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* in South Korea”, “Evaluation of the Korean Translation of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*”, and “characters in *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* and Korean verse”, “Guan Yu whom Koreans like”, and “*Chibi Song* influenced by *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*”.

In the article *The Impact of “Four Wonderful Books on Korea* [10], two professors Jin Hong Je and Jin Liufeng from South Korea Normal University examined the spread and influence of the four

great books (*The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, *A Dream in Red Mansions*, *Journey to the West*, *Jin Ping Mei*) from the perspectives of the dissemination era, domestic publishing status, and domestic research status. The article believes that the four great books are not only treasures of China, but also treasures of South Korea. The four great books have had a profound influence on the history of Korean classical novels, the history of Korean literature, and the language and life of Koreans. Studying Chinese classical novels has become an important content in Korean culture and spiritual life, and it is also a bright spot in the history of Korean literature.

In the article *The Acceptance Situation of The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* [11], Li In Peong carried out his research from two aspects: the transmission and influence, and the status of the domestic translation of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. The article also elaborated on the original text and the complete translation of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* series, modifications and abbreviations of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* series.

In the article *The Spread and Acceptance of Chinese Novels in North Korea* [12], Professor Choe Yong Cheol of Korea University and Professor Jin Ji Syen of Ewha Womans University examined the process of dissemination and acceptance of the four most influential Chinese novels in the history of Korean literature, which are *Tai Ping Guang Ji* and *Jian Deng Xin Yu*, *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, and *A Dream in Red Mansions* in North Korea. Readers can understand the inherent aesthetics and values of Korean culture through combing the acceptance process.

In the article *The Formation Process and Acceptance of the Romance of the Three Kingdoms in Korea* [13], Jang Gu Kjeong examined the formation process of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* in China, discussed the acceptance of the book in South Korea and analyzed the acceptance of it. The article believes that *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* relies on orthodoxy and social theory to act as a teaching book for women and children.

2.3 The Cultural Research on the Romance of the Three Kingdoms

In the article *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms and Korean Culture* [14], Jo Hyeon Sik from Shin Sung University believed that after the introduction of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* to Korea, it was not only deeply loved by the upper class, but also entered the homes of ordinary people, affecting all aspects of Korean cultural life and forming Korean culture. It became the important “cultural factor” of the country.

Han U Sang of Yeungnam University discussed the popular cultural elements and contemporary value of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* from the narrative methods of historical stories and the character images full of personality in the article *A Preliminary Exploration of Cultural Products of The Romance of the Three Kingdoms in China, South Korea and Japan* [15]. It introduced and compared the cultural products of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* in China, South Korea and Japan. The author believes that *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* must have universal and eternal values in order to break the boundaries of time and space and be accepted by the East Asian public.

2.4 The Version Research of the Romance of the Three Kingdoms

Professor Min Gwan Dong from the Chinese Department of Kyung Hee University, in his article *The Transmission and Recreation of The Romance of the Three Kingdoms in South Korea* [16], investigated many issues such as the influx of the Romance of the Three Kingdoms in Korea, the publishing situation, the status of translation, and the re-creation. The article believes that *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* is the most published Chinese novel in South Korea. In his article *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms: Domestic Inflow and Publication* [17], he pointed out that *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* had been published several times in Korean and Chinese during the Joseon Dynasty. Now, most of the editions of the Romance of the Three Kingdoms in South Korea are the version of *Four Wonderful Books- The First Type* by Mao Zonggang (Guanhuatang the Most Talented Scholars Book).

2.5 The Influence of the Romance of the Three Kingdoms on Panseri and Ancient Tune

Professor Jeong Dong Guk from the Chinese Department of Daegu University wrote the book

Relationship Between The Romance of the Three Kingdoms and Ancient Korean Tune [18]. In the article, thirteen characters such as Zhuge Liang, Cao Cao, Guan Yu, Zhang Fei, and Zhao Yun were selected. It studied the influence of these characters on the Korean ancient tune. The author believes that Korea's ancient tune was most significantly influenced by *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. It is almost regarded as the literature that took place in Korea.

Professor Gim Jong Cheol of Seoul National University, in the book *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms and The Chibi Song* [19], he studied both books from four aspects: the background of the formation of *Chibi Song*, the genealogy of *Chibi Song*, the evolution from *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* to *Chibi Song*, and *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* and *Chibi Song*. The author believes that the only "Chibi Song" in Panseri was taken from Chinese novels and is still passed on to this day. It is evaluated as the most advanced art in Panseri. It can be said that from *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* to *Chibi Song* is the joint of the Korean and Chinese people.

Professor Jeong Byeong Heon from the Humanities Department of Sookmyung Women's University in South Korea, wrote *The Acceptance Situation of The Romance of the Three Kingdoms in Chibi Song of Panseri* [20]. The author believes that the emergence of *Chibi Song* played such a role, and has been excluded from the appreciation of Panseri. The groups outside of Panseri are drawn into the audience who appreciate Panseri, which is also considered the true meaning of the creation of *Chibi Song*. Panseri still exists until now, and the driving force of existence is Panseri's open character. In his article *The Form of Korean Acappella Chibi Song Accepting The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* [21], he discussed how the Korean acappella *Chibi Song* accepted *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* from four aspects: the Combination of the two, theory of selection and exclusion, logic of insertion and exaggeration, Korean acappella and the expansion of the world of works.

In Jang Heung Ri's article, who is from Kunsan National University, *Comparison Between Chibi Song in Panseri and The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* [22], he firstly compared *The War of the Three Kingdoms*, *The Romance of Three Kingdoms* and *Chibi Song in Panseri*. He believes that *Chibi Song in Panseri* added content and characters that are not available in *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, especially the lower-class citizens. The appearance of the lower-class citizens with individuality in *Chibi Song* is a thorough confession of the people's pain. This is worthy of recognition as the new value of *Chibi Song*.

2.6 The Romance of the Three Kingdoms and Ancient Korean Literary Works

Professor Gwon Sun Ken of Semyung University in his article *The Influence and Direction of The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* [23] first combed the influence of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, and then used the ancient novels *Dream about Chu and Han* and *Zhu Mawu Biography* as the center to analyze the character and orientation of the short works of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. He believes that these derivative works lack historical authenticity and are an evasive reflection of the reality of the colonial era.

In Xiao Weishan's *Inspection of the Derivative Works of The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* [24], the author started from the perspective of cultural transmission and variation, and used the original empirical methodology to investigate *The Record of Zhang Fei and Ma Chao*, *The Record of Guan Yun Chang*, and *Shanyang War*, *The Record of Bold Jiang Wei*, *The Story of the Five Gates*, *Mrs. Huang's Biography* and other derivative works, in order to further deepen the understanding of the "Romance of the Three Kingdoms" derivative works through detailed comparison between the texts.

Professor Jo Yong Ho of National Literature of Mokpo University, in his article *Comparative Literary Studies of Korean Novel Record of Nan Ke -Centering on the Influence of Chinese Novels The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* [25], compared the two novels from the three aspects of the character and comparison basis of the novels, the influence relationship on the composition of the macro vision, and the influence relationship on the detail side. He also discussed the influence of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* on *Record of Nan Ke*.

In *The Acceptance Situation and Significance of The Romance of the Three Kingdoms in*

Qingbaiyu written by Jang Heun of the Academia Sinica of Korean Studies [26], the author divided the discussion into two parts. The first part is the Acceptance situation of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. The marriage process in *Qingbaiyun* is like the Chibi War and the tactics. The composition of the contradictions between the wives and concubines is like the situation of the three kingdoms during the Chibi War. The development of the conflicts between the wives and concubines is like the experience of suffering and serial tactics during the Chibi War. The second part is the significance of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*.

3. Brief Comment

During this period, from the study of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* in South Korea, there are two characteristics in the results:

First, the research method follows the research method of ancient Chinese literature, that is, many scholars will investigate and think from the perspective of micro-vision. When narrating, the whole is often viewed from the part, and the appearance of the whole is investigated through the analysis and explanation of specific issues. In terms of content, they focus on the influence of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* on Korean literature. From an artistic point of view, they pay more attention to the spatial characteristics, image characteristics, or the drama of the plot of the novel *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. Although the perspective of research papers in this period was narrow when considered from the overall perspective, there were also many papers with more unique perspectives. These essays not only comprehensively and correctly narrated the “Romance of the Three Kingdoms”, but also used new concepts such as comparative theory and artistic theory to explain the “Romance of the Three Kingdoms”. Second, the comparative research between Chinese and Korean literature, between Chinese and Korean scholars, and between Chinese and Korean works has attracted more attention. When Korean scholars conduct research on ancient Chinese literature, they will encounter the problem of how to connect with their own country's literature. The same is true for the study of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. In this regard, Korean scholars have planned to focus on related issues such as the inheritance and development of Korean traditional literature to Chinese literature. In recent years, the research on *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* in South Korea has inherited this academic research tradition. For example, studying the similarities and differences between *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* and Korean literary works, and using the comparative theories of China and the west to begin a specific analysis and interpretation of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* is very innovative.

Although Korean scholars in this period have made considerable research results in *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, there are still some shortcomings in the study of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* in Korea during this period. First of all, in terms of quantity and quality, South Korea's research on *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* is far inferior to South Korea's research on Confucian classics. Analysis of the reasons shows that South Korea is greatly influenced by traditional Confucianism. Secondly, the future study of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* in South Korea should conduct a comprehensive, in-depth and meticulous combing of the literature related to *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* in Korean classics, so as to understand the spread and influence of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* in various periods. A clear direction thus forms a systematic context. Thirdly, in the research perspective, it is necessary to form a diversified perspective, that is, having a microscopic point of view to narrate, but also a macro perspective to investigate. Only in this way can people have a more comprehensive understanding of *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*.

4. Conclusion

With the continuous expansion of the scope of research and the richness and variety of research methods, many new research results that have not yet been discovered will be discovered, which have important academic value. It will have far-reaching significance and wide-ranging influence. While achieving international influence, it will surely further promote the new development of the

research on *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* in South Korea and prosper academic research. Finally, attention should be paid to the academic research on traditional theories in *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*.

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