

A Study on the Citation of Poems in Zuo Zhuan from the Perspective of Political Ethics

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Abstract: The research on Zuo Zhuan has always started from the perspective of major historical events and characters, and the research on the phenomenon of citing the poem, especially the phenomenon of citing the poem from the perspective of political ethics, is obviously insufficient. In the pre-Qin period, when the traditional Chinese ethical thought was established, poetry, ceremony and music were closely combined. The aristocratic literati often used “Poetry” to express their meaning tactfully when offering sacrifices, ceremonies, diplomacy, discussing politics, and people’s sympathy judgment. “Poetry” is quoted as a “axiom” with the effect of ethical or legal norms, or more precisely, it is used as “etiquette”. Combined with the text of Zuo Zhuan, it is expected to present more comprehensively and objectively how the monarch uses virtue to deal with the relationship between the monarch and the nature, the subjects and the people, and then explore the category, internal requirements and external norms of the national political ethics in the pre-Qin period.

Keywords: Quoting Poems from Zuo Zhuan; Political ethics; Monarch

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1. Introduction

As the first detailed chronicle in China, Zuo Zhuan not only preserves a large number of ancient historical materials, such as important historical facts about politics, economy, military, diplomacy and culture among the countries in the Spring and Autumn Period, but also records the activities of important political figures and their elegant remarks at that time, providing valuable ideological information for future generations. Among these numerous and valuable speeches, there is a very prominent phenomenon. In the speech, the sages, wise men and important political figures at that time quoted a large number of poems in the Book of Songs to support their views and propositions, or to make their speech more literary. According to the statistics of Mr. Zeng Qinliang, there are 256 poems in total, of which more than 70 poems are composed and more than 180 poems are quoted.

2. The category of political ethics - loyalty

In the Spring and Autumn Period, the phenomenon of quoting poems became popular. It was recorded in the Zuo Zhuan and contained rich political and ethical thoughts, which involved a wide range of people. In terms of inner cultivation, it expanded on the basis of filial piety and fraternal love in the Western Zhou Dynasty, and proposed moral connotations such as “faithfulness, righteousness, loyalty, filial piety and benevolence”. Among them, Zuo Zhuan cited the Book of Songs refer to “loyalty” and “faith”, and combine the two in some occasions. As for the meaning of faithfulness, it can be directly understood that people should not deviate from their own nature and original intention, that is, they should act in accordance with their own conscience and ability impartially. In Zuo Zhuan, loyalty is embodied in the mutual loyalty and trust between man and nature, between countries, between sovereigns and subjects.

First, the relationship between the vassal states - the alliance. In the Spring and Autumn Period, the “rites and music crusade came out of the vassal states”. It is recorded in the “Shangshu Lvxing” that “the people prosper gradually, and the people lose their minds, so as to curse the alliance.” In Zuo Zhuan, 227 alliances were recorded. In the process of alliance, great attention was paid to

honesty and morality. You can even see the sincere feelings of both sides of the alliance from the alliance. In the “Zuo Zhuan” and “The Book of Songs”, there are records of the alliance of the vassal states: Wen Zi said: “Zimu has the heart of evil, and Wu has the heart of benevolence, so it is Chu that drives Jin...The Book of Songs says: ‘Don’t arrogate or steal, rarely do it, believe it. If you can do it, don’t do it.’” Here is a quote from Da Ya. In order to maintain the position of the leader of the Jin State and make the ministers of the vassal states obey, Zhao Wu replied that it was necessary to keep the original intention of benevolence and justice and do things according to the credit, just like farmers have to work hard all the time. This is to use the disloyal behavior of the State of Chu in the alliance to advise the State of Jin to maintain integrity and morality, because the people who stick to the faith will always be the model for everyone.

Second, the relationship between the monarch and the vassals - restrain the ruling class. During the Spring and Autumn Period, the great powers competed for hegemony, and the vassal states urgently needed talents who were good at governing the country and fighting military battles. However, the old nobles were corrupt and incompetent. Although they were in high positions, they could not govern the country by literature and could not defend the enemy by force. Therefore, only when the monarch is full of honesty and credit to the sages can he attract the real talents to his country. There is a record of the selection of talents by the monarch in “Zuo Zhuan” and “The Book of Songs”: “Qin Bo attacked Jin, set fire to the river, and took the royal officials and the suburbs...The Book of Songs says: ‘Fan was collected on the sandbar beside the marsh for the sacrifice of the duke’s family.’” The original theme of “Zheng Min” was: “Let the wise and powerful, and the Zhou family prosper.” The quotation here is obviously to express praise for two people, one is Meng Ming, who is not slack because of failure, but actively reflect on the defeat. For ministers, we should safeguard the collective interests. Obviously, in the Spring and Autumn Period, individuals had to surrender to their collective, family and country to a large extent. When personal interests collided with collective interests, they had to sacrifice their own interests.

3. The Inner Cultivation of Political Ethics --Moral Cultivation

Nan Huaijin once said, “Virtue is the same as gain. Only by making people have their own gains, can they make the best of everything. It is for each to have his own needs and positions. This is a great merit and also a great use of strategy.” “Virtue “ is an important category of political ethics in Zuo Zhuan, which contains a wide range of contents such as faith, morality, administration, etc. Zuo Zhuan, as a history of the Spring and Autumn Period from the perspective of the State of Lu, focuses more on political measures. It contains rich Confucian benevolent policies. Therefore, the book records positive and beneficial moral policies, and its quotation of “Poems” advocates moral cultivation.

First, be clear about morality and prudent in punishment. In terms of reward and punishment, Zuo Zhuan pays more attention to reward. In the process of governing the country, appropriate reward is superior to severe punishment, and even inappropriate reward is better than severe punishment. At that time, the wise reward behavior attracted many monarchs to follow suit, and all the politicians attached great importance to it. There is a reference to Wen Wang in “Zuo Zhuan” and “The Book of Songs “.”Wen Wang” is a eulogy to Ji Chang, the founder of the Zhou Dynasty, and exhorts kings to comply with the destiny of heaven and implement virtuous policies. Every sentence is sincere. The original meaning of “Chen Zai Xi Zhou” means that King Wen rewarded the world with benefits and had a harmonious relationship with the surrounding nationalities, which made the Zhou Dynasty stronger, and later generations also followed this law. Now the State of Jin is awarding a thousand families of the ministers and people of the State of Di to the father of Xun Lin. It is also following the example of King Wen of Zhou and helping Jin get out of trouble. The introduction of “Poetry” here is to warn future generations.

Second, to educate the government. Education is a two-way process of teaching and learning. Regardless of the content of teaching, individuals should pay enough attention to education. Secondly, the role of Jun is to set an example. The path of enlightenment is from top to bottom. “Liji Ziyi” contains: “Confucius said: ‘Qi uses etiquette, the people have a sense of character, Qi uses punishment, and the people have a sense of escape.’” In Zuo Zhuan, it quoted a poem: “We should teach, and the people should be imitate.” The people of the State of Chu did not welcome Han Xuanzi, Shu Xiang felt that the people of Chu did not make sense, so he quoted the “poem”, which meant that only the correct behavior of his own can make others imitate him. Everyone takes good as the principle, and the people should learn, especially the monarch. Thirdly, accepting enlightenment also requires the initiative of the people to be good. Through indoctrination, individuals will suppress or reduce the dark side and negative factors in human nature, so that they will have more scruples and dare not follow their wishes, and bad behavior will be controlled naturally, and finally achieve the goal of peace in the world and great governance of the country. This thought of attaching importance to inner restraint, restraining desire and controlling emotion has always been a strategy advocated by ancient thinkers and politicians. Later, the so-called “gentle and honest”

poetry teaching of Confucianism is the concentrated embodiment of this thought.

4. The External Norm of Political Ethics - Ceremony System

As for the meaning of ceremony, the current academic circles believe that ceremony originated from the ritual activities of worshiping gods and praying for blessings or sacrificing ancestors. Later, its content gradually evolved and expanded, ranging from national events and diplomatic exchanges to customized decoration of ancestral temples, and so on, all belong to the scope of ceremony. Rites not only refer to laws and regulations, social norms, but also moral norms. The content of ceremony is also fully reflected in the “Zuo Zhuan” and “The Book of Songs “.

First, there are distinct levels. “Xunzi Li Lun” said: “There are differences between the high and the low, between the old and the young, and between the rich and the poor.” The idea of hierarchy is an important feature of the etiquette system, and its purpose is to require individuals to be content with their own standards, in order to maintain social stability, and to achieve the order and standardization of the ruling order. The requirement of propriety on identity is more reflected in the monarch. As a representative of a country, the behavior of the monarch is directly related to the image and even the fate of the country. Therefore, special attention and caution should be paid to it, otherwise it will affect the fate of the country. “Zuo Zhuan” quoted “Daya Jiayue “ as a very taboo record of the king’s behavior regardless of his identity. The original meaning of the poem “Daya jiayue” is that if people in high positions do not slack off, the people can have a rest. People in high positions must be cautious in their words and actions. As the poem goes, “It is the responsibility of the people to be cautious and dignified “. Like identity, prestige is also an important aspect of clear hierarchy. Specifically, it refers to the form of behavior, tolerance and handling. As a rule, prestige needs to be observed and treated with caution.

Second, the emphasis on abstention. In fact, the abstinence connotation of etiquette is very broad, far from emotional desire, but also the small things in daily life and sacrificial rituals, such as the allocation and consumption of resources, restraining self to achieve the collective interests. In the “Zuo Zhuan” and “Poetry”, there is a record of the emperor’s abstinence in mentality, The gentleman believes that the failure of the country is due to the desire to follow one’s own inclinations, so there is no good result. Therefore, moderation and scruples are important factors to avoid sacrifice and achieve victory. Frugality has been a traditional virtue of the Chinese nation since ancient times. In Zuo Zhuan, the quotation of Daya Yi also has a record of emphasizing etiquette. This is to warn the people to abide by the law and speak carefully. Put it into the history of the Spring and Autumn Period, it is said that only frugality and non-luxury can lead to wealth and honor for a long time. The purpose of making a living in society is not only to seek wealth, but also to control yourself with respect and discipline. Life should be simple, and you should be respectful and loyal to the monarch.

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