

Analysis of the transmutation of the emotional overtones of the actor's appellation and the causes

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Abstract: With the change and progress of society, the fluctuation of social and occupational stratum began to appear “butterfly effect”, which caused people to re-examine the occupational appellation. It is based on the relationship between people’s social labor form. The study will analyze the occupational appellation of the actors who are at the low-level occupations of society, taking time as the longitude and appellation as the latitude, to trace the origin of the actor’s appellation. This thesis divides the actor’s appellation into three categories, expounds the origin and evolution of these three types, and further analyzes the factors that cause the evolution. It is believed that the main reasons are the differences between ancient and modern social production methods, social situations and social ideas.

1. Introduction

“Appellation, refers to the name that everyone establishes according to kinship or other relationships”[1],and occupational appellation is based on the relationship of people’s social labor forms. In the real world, people’s designation of occupation basically comes from explicit social phenomena and implicit social ideas. For example, the attendant of a highway toll station is named according to explicit workplaces, and the actor is named as “the entertainer” according to implicit discriminatory concepts. In contemporary times, the common social division criteria are class, occupation, interest group, prestige and consumption ability, etc. Only from the occupation division criteria, it has its own class division, one layer of which is the low-level occupations of society. Low-level occupations of the society refer to those who have relatively few organizational, economic and cultural resources within the scope of their trades and skills to engage in work that serves the community, and the occupations at the bottom of the society are often referred to in a pejorative or neutral manner.

At present, people seldom pay attention to this part of the occupational appellation in the society, let alone the appellation at the low level of the society. Moreover, in the process of reviewing relevant information, the author found that most of the social and occupational appellation studied by scholars are based on a certain type of suffix as the object of study, such as “shang” and “xia” as the end of the word to study the occupational appellation of a certain number of eras, and seldom traced the origin and studied the historical changes in all the ages [2]. Based on the above

phenomenon, and the following inference - the change of the appellation is the result of a two-way drive. According to “the status of chef should be higher. But in reality, cooks were slaves and maidservants in ancient China, living a miserable life”[3], chefs are classified as a profession at the low level of the society. Then, it can be inferred from this the actors should also belong to the low-level occupation. Taking “actor” as an example, this paper traces the origin and rheological research of the occupations at the low level in the society, and analyzes several reasons for the change of the appellation.

2. The origin and evolution of the actor’s appellation

“An actor, defined as a person who imitates a certain role, or a professional who participates in public performances such as opera, drama, film, TV series, and dance, is collectively referred to as an entertainer in modern times, referred to as an actor for short.” [4]By the time of the pre-Qin period, singers and dancers began to appear. When China transitioned from the primitive period to the agricultural period, the performances that sprouted in the primitive period also slowly matured and took shape with the passage of time, and the profession of actor was born. The actor in the pre-Qin period was called “You Ling”- it was a group of people who used singing and dancing to entertain the gods when they worshiped their ancestors and worshiped the gods in the pre-Qin period, and they were also called the entertainer. In the pre-Qin period, the appellation “You Ling” had not yet been combined, and according to the definition of “You” and “Ling” in the modern Chinese dictionary, the actors can be divided into three categories for rheological elaboration. “You” generally refers to “Chang You” and “Pai You”, those in charge of singing and dancing are called “Chang You”, those in charge of antics are called “Pai You”. “Ling” refers to actors who play music, so those in charge of wind and percussion instruments are called “Ling You”.

Jia Jiaoyan (2008) collected statistics on social appellations and studied identity appellations in the *Marriage Destines to Awaken the World*, revealing the overall status of the stratum in Ming and Qing Dynasties from the side. Xu Qiuhua (2013) systematically analyzed and studied the appellations in nine highly colloquial works of the Song Dynasty, which were divided into kinship appellations and social appellations, reflecting the historical and cultural characteristics of the Song Dynasty society and even the whole Chinese society. This paper mainly extracts the appellation of the actors recorded by these two articles, supplemented by the appellation of the data collected by the author. With the above three kinds of actor classification methods, respectively, from the appellation view of the status of ancient and modern actors, from the status of the class reflects the impact of the times on the actor’s appellation.

2.1 The actor’s appellation in charge of singing and dancing

In the Xia Dynasty, the performers in charge of antics were called “Nv Yue” and were slaves who sings and dances. “According to records, there were ‘ 30,000 Nv Yue’ for the emperor Xia Jie, filling the imperial palace, and the rulers wandering in the extravagant orgy to enjoy the depraved life.” [5] These singing and dancing slaves played an irreplaceable role in promoting the perfection of the art of dance. But they are at the bottom of society, they do not have the right to personal freedom, and it is not uncommon for them to be bought, sold, gifted, and even killed. What’s even worse is that their skulls have also been made into musical instruments, and the tragic fact that “Nv Yue” is bloody, which is really chilling. In the Xia Dynasty, “Nv Yue” could also be referred to as “Yue Ren”[6], defined as actors who performed songs and dances. For example, in *The Rites-Yan Li*, the butcher on the east side of the road prepared the food for the ministers. Yue Ren hung up the new bell (for the banquet). From the sentences, we can see their professional appellations and main work. Also, we can also see that the “Yue Ren” is equivalent to a domestic servant, which shows

that the status of him is very low, so he is despised by people.

Before and after the Qin Dynasty and the Eastern Han Dynasty, actors engaged in singing, dancing and opera were collectively referred to as “Chang”. It does not distinguish between men and women, while “Ji” refers exclusively to women. “Chang Ji” is different from what is called “Prostitution” in modern times. The term “Chang Ji” here refers specifically to performers, and contains very little erotic elements. They serve all walks of life. Therefore, “according to the class of the service recipients, they can be divided into ‘Gong Ji’, ‘Guan Ji’, ‘Ying Ji’, ‘Jia Ji’, and ‘Min Ji’.” [7] “Gong Ji” refers to actors who only perform for the royal family, “Ying Ji” is a kind of singer and dancer who serves military officers and soldiers, “Guan Ji” is a song and dance actor who serves all kinds of feudal princes, “Jia Ji” is a performer who is around high-ranking officials and nobles, and “Min Ji” may be more inclined to the prostitutes as people understand them now, they are a kind of people who wander among the people and serve the society. People despised actors very much in the old days, so they were often juxtaposed with prostitutes. According to the above classification, the actors in charge of singing and dancing are also called “Chang You”. “Chang” refers to musicians, and “You” refers to performers. Their singing and dancing acrobatic performances are called “Chang Yue”, and also refers to the singing and dancing performances of female actors. In the *Chronicles of the Eastern Zhou Kingdoms*, “After the agricultural work was completed, people watched song and dance performances together for three days to relieve their fatigue”. They got rid of the obligations of farmers to pay taxes and join the army, and they had no worries about food and clothing. However, the official did not admit it, believing that they were not good people and could not enjoy the treatment of folks, and also laid the groundwork for the “prostitutes” of later generations.

During the Tang Dynasty, it was called “Yue Ji”, referring to singing and dancing actresses. In the *Anecdotes of the Kaiyuan and Tianbao Periods: Singing Behind the Classical Screen*, “In the Mansion of Li Xian, there was a favored actress named Chong Jie who was beautiful and good at singing.” The Song Dynasty also used the appellation of “Ji”, such as “Sheng Ji and “Jia Ji”. In addition to this, there are various appellations such as “An entertainer in a folk troupe”. The first few appellations are slightly insulting, so you can see people’s contempt for actors.

In modern times, they are called singers and dancers, both men and women. Under the influence of the values of equality and freedom in the new era, people have more appreciation and admiration for such actors.

2.2 The actor’s appellation in charge of instruments

During the Yellow Emperor period, the actors who played instruments were called “Lin Guan”, and their main duty was to play music for the emperor and ministers. The common point was that they come from humble beginnings. The lucky ones might get the chance to meet the emperor, while the bad ones might spend their lives performing in the streets. Since ancient times, the status of the actress has been very low, even in the Tang Dynasty had brilliant moments, but it was only a flash in the pan.

In the Zhou Dynasty, it was called “Da Si Yue”, “Yue Shi”, “Da Xu”, “Dian Tong” and “Si Gan”, which all referred to the official positions in charge of music. [8] First of all, the position of “Yue Shi”, he is a chief conductor of song and dance chief conductor. In the *Lu’s Commentaries of History: Records of Early Summer*, “‘Yue Shi’ was ordered to conform to rites and music.” Because in ancient times, music was elegant and it was a tool to change customs and maintain social order. However, the word “Shi” is different from the meaning of modern “teacher”, “mentor”, “master”, etc. It only refers to a class of people proficient in a certain skill, not the current representative title, so their status was not high. Secondly, “Da Si Yue” and “Yue Shi” were collectively referred to as

“Yue Zheng”, which was also an official position, and is the head of the music officer. In fact, it is the person who teaches music. “In the past, someone gave birth to a daughter, and “Yue Zheng” Houkui married her as his wife” .During the Spring and Autumn Period, it was called “Yue Ren”, and it was also an official position in charge of playing music. In the *Spring and Autumn Annals of Master Yan: The Inner Chapters*, “Yue Ren was commanded to plays songs”. Similar to household slaves, who were sent at will by the family master and had a very low status. At the same time, it could also be called “You Ling”, that is, “Ling You”, now known as “Ling Ren”, which was a performer with a clear price, and everyone could make fun of the object. Jin Dynasty set up a position “Yue Gong”, at the end of the official position. It was not important and the rulers looked down on it. In modern times, they are called performers and musicians. They have a variety of titles, such as the national first-class performer, national second-class performer, free player and so on. Secondly, modern people live a rich life, most of them will let their children learn a musical instrument, which shows that people’s view of musical instrument actors has greatly changed.

2.3 The actor’s appellation in charge of the antics

Historical books do not record in detail the actor “You Ling” in charge of the antics and how to engage in the performance industry. “You” was first recorded in the ancient book: “Chen’s and Bao’s horse breeders who performed were “You”. Justice: “ ‘You’ was the person who performed the show”. *Shaoshi Shanfang Bicong* (academic notes written by Ming Dynasty scholar Hu Yinglin): “The appearance of the actor has began since You Meng acted as Sun Shu’ao. [9] After the death of Sun Shu’ao, his descendants were very poor, so You Meng wore Sun’s clothes to see King Zhuang of Chu. Because You Meng’s actions and behaviors were very similar to Sun Shu’ao, it was difficult for King Zhuang of Chu to distinguish clearly. King Zhuang of Chu wanted to reward You Meng, and You Meng gave up the opportunity to the descendants of Sun Shu’ao. This story is very similar to the role of modern actors, which can be said to be the prototype of modern performers.

In the pre-Qin Dynasty, it was called “Pai You, which first appeared in *Han Fei zi*: “Talking, laughing, acting, dwarfs, etc. are meant for the amusement of the monarch”. It can witness their low-level status. Their performances were divided into three main features: first, the satire, the purpose is to use satire to advise the audience’s behavior. Secondly, they use entertainment as a cloak, using their own “laughter” to make the monarch smile. Thirdly, the performance is enriched by linguistic means, and various rhetorical devices are used to make the overall performance full and vivid. As the rites and music of the pre-Qin Dynasty were in tatters, many “Paiyou” could gain a high-level status and a lot of wealth by appreciation. So their status was not very concentrated, the status of some “Paiyou” was very high, some status was very low.

During the Han Dynasty, the appellation “Paiyou” remained basically unchanged, and they inherited the absurd and funny performance form of “Paiyou” from the Qin Dynasty. However, the status of them was affected by “Dethrone all schools of thought and honor Confucianism alone”, and this profession was also classified as people from the lower walks of life, coupled with the fact that the performers were either slaves or poor peasants and the lowly among the common people. Therefore, their overall status was very low, and they were even discriminated and hostile.

In the Jin Dynasty, they began to be called “XiZi, which was the old term for professional opera performers (implying contempt)”. It’s a word from the “BaiXi ” performance, which is the phonetic translation of Indian Sanskrit “BaXi” , meaning “interesting stuff, that is, the pit and cheat”. From the origin of the “BaiXi”, it was produced under a bad background, so “XiZi” was also discriminated against by the people at that time.

In the Tang Dynasty, China was flourishing and strong. Whether it was the nobility or the folks, there were actors everywhere, at this time the performers were called “Disciples of Li Yuan”.

However, the “Disciples of Li Yuan” initially meant the musicians, and later with the development of the times, gradually evolved into opera actors. In the late Yuan and early Ming Dynasty, *Pi-pa Chi* written by Gao Ming, “Today’s disciples of Li Yuan sing *Pi-pa Chi*. Here, the term “Disciples of Li Yuan” is used to refer to the actors in the opera.

In the Song Dynasty, the folk entertainment culture flourished, and the rulers placed more emphasis on literature than on martial arts. “Wasi” began to appear, providing performers with places to perform. It produced a large number of actors with complex acting skills and “Jiyiren”, and their performances are known as the “Jingwa Jiyi” or “Washe Zhongji”. The performers themselves were called “Jiyiren”. [10] This was also the period of their glory, they were no longer anonymous, and they were associated with the “Jiyi”, forming a special social group.

Actors in the Qing Dynasty, also known as “Xi Zi”, were the pastime of the dignitaries, with a low status, while the rulers also constantly suppressed and degraded the status of actors, so that they could not be treated by ordinary people, and could not enjoy the normal marriage. Their marriage could only be decided by their own masters, as an old saying goes that “Bitches are heartless, actors are ruthless. It’s not because they are heartless, but because they were oppressed by the society.

During the Republic of China period, the status of actors gradually improved, and they were honored as “Mr.” Some opera performers, through their own efforts, also became influential actors, such as the four famous actors “Mei Lanfang, Cheng Yanqiu, Xun Huisheng and Shang Xiaoyun”. In modern times, the status of the actors has been improved again, and the actors who are responsible for banter are called opera actors, sketch actors, crosstalk actors, acrobats and so on. They have performance venues, higher income, and people are no longer ashamed of being actors and rushing to get into the business.

3. Reasons for the change of occupational appellations

Society is the sum of people and various environmental factors, and each component of society will be affected by society to varying degrees. On the one hand, the prosperity and progress of the society affect the perfection of the concrete elements of the society; On the other hand, various elements will also truthfully present the reality of society. For example, the Tang Dynasty can become a rare prosperous dynasty in history, and the Qing Dynasty can become a rare dynasty in history that ruined the nation, which is inseparable from the mutual integration and development of politics, economy and culture. Therefore, the existence and development of various professions are closely related to society.

3.1 Production Mode

3.1.1 Ancient mode of social production

The economic base can determine the superstructure, so this is the most important and fundamental reason. China’s ancient feudal society mainly employed the mode of self-sufficient natural economy. People’s income basically came from their own farming, and no labor meant no harvest. The laborers were busy with their own farm work, so they had little interest in the actors and had no time to pay attention to them. Secondly, the landlord class rulers divided the industry into grades - scholar, farmer, artisan and merchant. Therefore, people subconsciously thought that the best career is politics, followed by farming, and finally learning crafts and business. And this did not include acting, because it’s believed that acting in addition to entertainment, would not bring additional income, which directly caused the actor to become the bottom of the social profession, and then is despised by people.

3.1.2 Modern social production mode

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, China has been adhering to the path of "socialism with Chinese characteristics" proposed by Deng Xiaoping at the Twelfth National Congress, and has been building an economic system rich in Chinese characteristics, with the public sector economy as the mainstay and a variety of ownership developing together. While maintaining the mainstay of the State-owned economy, it also recognizes the non-publicly owned economy as an important component of the socialist market economy. As a result, the contemporary society no longer has a single agrarian economy and allow a variety of modes of production to compete. The non-agricultural mode of production, which has always been marginalized, was slowly becoming a means of earning a living and was slowly being valued. The accompanying social appellations, such as "Xi Zi" to "actor", "cook" to "chef", and "charlatan" to "doctor", are gradually changing from contemptuous appellations to neutral appellations.

3.2 Social Conditions

First of all, the ancient Chinese dynasties had undergone many changes, and the changes of dynasties were inevitably accompanied by wars. Therefore, the war means low productivity, insufficient food and clothing of the people, and low desire for entertainment. Therefore, people were facing unstable days, and their life are difficult. They did not have the leisure to entertain, and the defenceless actors were not valued by them. Secondly, singing and dancing are an ornament of national stability and prosperity. In the decline of the society, these talent performers would be regarded as the scourge of the country and affect the rulers to concentrate on the government. Indulging in singing and dancing talent will be considered to be unprofessional, so the ancients are slightly dabbling in talent. If a scholar is good at a certain talent, but his own study, conduct, and accomplishment at a high level will be respected and praised. It can be seen that talent is only a little ornament of successful people. Those who specialize in talent shows have a low status. Although they are highly skilled, their status will be relatively improved if they are valued by senior officials or the royal family, but their origins have been criticized by the world. It can be seen from this that the social environment and the restrictions of traditional culture determine that actors can only be at the bottom of the society and cannot get a better title.

Peace and development is the theme of the times. Large-scale wars have stopped, and people will no longer migrate on a large scale because of the war. With a stable external environment, after satisfying the appetite, people began to appear other needs from many aspects, such as food and life. Secondly, with the reform and opening up of China, the economy has rebounded. In recent years, China has become the second largest economy in the world, so the poor days have become a thing of the past. It focuses on the development of all walks of life and supports innovation and entrepreneurship, so that all walks of life have a brighter future, and their status is slowly rising, such as actors, doctors, chefs and other lower-class occupations. People's views on these occupations have also increased. As a result, people's perception of these professions is also slowly changing, as the name given to them has slowly changed from derogatory to neutral. In short, the world environment is peaceful and quiet, and the national environment is wealthy and prosperous. Both of them improve the people's well-being, which makes the appellations of low-level occupations in the society gradually neutral.

3.3 Social Concepts

First of all, under the feudal system in ancient China, the mainstream social concept is Confucianism, with a very clear division of social hierarchy and strict requirements on personal

moral norms. Moreover, in the traditional concept, showing one's face in public was not in line with the Confucian standard. Secondly, due to the need of the rulers to strengthen their rule, the ancient occupations were divided into hierarchical classes. Actors could not bring much help to the ruler, so the performance industry was suppressed. Such as doctors were called a variety of appellations, and most of them were related to the official position. But in the ancient times of the scholarly class, although the doctor had the official position of the backing, they could not avoid the fate of the low status. Another example, from the Qin Dynasty to the Qing Dynasty, the social status of the chef from the beginning of the upper class gradually moved down to the lowest status in the Ming and Qing Dynasties. The appellation was mainly from the respectful titles "ShanFu" and "PaoRen" to the contemptuous titles "ChuXiaer" and "ChuZi". In the middle of a period of time, although there were also official titles "YuChu", "ChuZhe" and other titles, these were not the mainstream of society and were not valued by the people. Based on the above theories and examples, it can be concluded that, due to the influence of social concepts, the actor is given a contemptuous name.

The improvement of the level of social civilization, the development of literacy action and the popularization of education have improved the ideological quality of a large part of the people and the overall level of social civilization. People began to regulate the art of speech, and in terms of appellation, they did not deliberately disparage certain professions, and therefore did not deliberately call them derogatory names. Secondly, the awareness of occupational inequality has weakened. China's long-term rigid hierarchical system has led to the existence of hierarchical phenomena from individuals to families and social groups. For example, officials are more senior than farmers, and farmers are more senior than businessmen. As far as appellations are concerned, people often use derogatory terms to refer to lower-class professionals, such as "Xi Zi", cooks, and charlatans. However, as the concept of hierarchy broke down, this was reflected in the abandonment of derogatory titles and the adoption of neutral titles, such as "Xi Zi" becoming actors.

4. Conclusion

Based on the above analysis of the origin of the actor's appellations and the study of the changes, we can see that at different times, due to different modes of production, social conditions, and social concepts, people's views on the profession will be different, and the professional title will be different as well. This is a general trend in society. Contemporary views on actors in general are neutral, but fervor and contempt cannot be ruled out. However, this article seeks to advocate a rational view of the actor's appellations as well as the actor's profession, to adhere to the principle of moderation, and to persuade those who are bigoted and despise actors and irrational fanatics. We should rationally face the actor, and admit the actor's shortcomings and advantages. Take the good and discard the bad. Treat every occupation equally, respect every professional person, call each occupation friendly, and build a harmonious society.

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