

The Interaction of Chinese Classical Literature and Traditional Chinese Medicine

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Abstract: Chinese classical literature and traditional Chinese medicine belong to different disciplines, but they are rooted in Chinese traditional culture and grow together. This paper introduces it from three aspects, including the literary techniques of disease metaphor, the social phenomena of indiscriminate medicine and Confucianism, and the health preservation methods of literati and Confucians. It shows the rich cultural phenomena produced by the blending of medical literature and literature.

1. Introduction

Among the hundred gardens of traditional Chinese culture, there are two beautiful flowers. One is classical literature, which has the widest spread and far-reaching influence. Liking the fragrance of orchids, every Chinese has the genes of poetry and lyrics in his blood. Another is traditional Chinese medicine, which is outstanding in ancient natural science and technology. Traditional Chinese medicine has formed a unique theoretical system and treatment methods. Liking the daffodils, beautiful flowers, graceful flowers and clear water, they have made indelible contributions for Chinese development. There are many interesting cultural phenomena in the development of Chinese classical literature and traditional Chinese medicine.

2. Literary Techniques of Disease Metaphor

Chinese classical literature had an indissoluble bond with traditional Chinese medicine from its birth. The *Book of Songs* is the earliest collection of poems in China. There are many descriptions of medical contents, especially more than 60 kinds of flowers and plants which can be used as medicines. It has played a certain role in spreading knowledge for later generations.^[1] However, it is mentioned in the *Book of Songs* that medicinal plants are mainly metaphorical, and their medical value is not high. For example, in Tang Feng Jiao Liao, "Pepper bunches, fruits are numerous and full liter. This lady has many grandchildren and is very tall and unusual". Compared with the medicinal plant *Zanthoxylum bungeanum*, *Zanthoxylum bungeanum* has a unique symbolic significance in praising the multi-progeny, strong and healthy women.

Chu Ci inherits this literary technique. Qu Yuan, a great poet, was persecuted and exiled by adulterous villains. He poured out his depression in his works. With the help of metaphorical symbolism, he drew a lot of medicinal herbs into his poems. For example, "Drinking Mulan in the morning, eating autumn chrysanthemum in the evening", which is mainly about his eating vanilla.

"Yu Zilan's Ninth Mu and Shuhui's Hundred Mu", which is mainly about he planted a lot of vanilla. Qu Yuan used herbs to express his yearning for a better political system and his pursuit of noble character.

Many later generations inherited the writing style of the *Book of Songs* and *Chuci*. Many philosophers or writers have gradually formed the literary creation method of disease metaphor through the theme of disease and medicine. For example, Lu Xun's *Diary of Madman* concerns not only the physical persecution of delusional patients, but also the metaphorical portrayal of intellectuals who have a sense of speech and thought.

In the work *Medicine*, through the blood of Xia Yu, the revolutionary, the citizens took it as a good medicine to cure the disease, which pointed out the reasons and lessons of the 1911 Revolution failure.^[2] Many works have metaphorized social, political, historical and cultural issues through disease, such as, Ba Jin's *Fourth Ward*, Ding Ling's *In the Hospital*, Cao Yu's *Metamorphosis*, Bi Shumin's *Red Prescription* and Yan Lianke's *Sunshine Time*. Disease metaphor has become one of the important writing techniques in literary creation.

3. The Social Phenomenon on the Separation of Medicine and Confucianism

Ancient Chinese literati reflected on social problems through medical theory and treatment principles. However, ancient doctors often cherished the ambition of self-cultivation, family management and world peace. Therefore, it has formed a social phenomenon that doctors and Confucians are indiscriminate.

The theory of "medical state" in ancient times can be regarded as the origin of this phenomenon. Early medical conditions are limited. After people get sick, they are treated by witchcraft. There are many homologous records of witchcraft doctors in the literature, such as *Lu's Spring and Autumn Period*, *Don't bow* and *Shiben*. In the era of epidemic diseases, medicine is of great significance to the rule of the country. Those witch doctors with high magic power and great influence can intervene in government affairs by various means while treating people's diseases. Therefore, they are paid attention to holding official posts and taking governing the country as their ideal pursuit. According to the records in *Guoyu Jinyu*, Jinping is ill. Doctors predicted that he was greedy for women. So, he would not only lose his own salvation, but also his good minister's assistance. When the minister questioned the doctor's misjudgement on state affairs, the doctor answered that it was the doctor's duty to treat the country by a superior doctor. So there is the allusion of "Medical country". The *Huangdi Neijing*, the earliest medical classic in China, records the quotations of Huangdi and Qibo discussing medicine. Qibo is a typical representative of physicians participating in politics.

With the development of medicine, witchcraft and medicine are separated. But the idea of healing the country has been handed down. When their official career was not smooth, many scholars took medical treatment as a way to spread Confucian ethics and morality. Fan Zhongyan had great ambitions since childhood, taking the world as his duty, and promised to be a doctor if he could not be prime minister. He believed that saving the people could also repay the country. In this way, the literati who pursued life formed a group of Confucian doctors. On the one hand, these scholars promoted the wide dissemination of knowledge of traditional Chinese medicine through sorting out prescriptions, recording medicine, creating name of medicine and so on. On the other hand, by incorporating Confucianism's benevolence, righteousness, courtesy, wisdom and faith into medical ethics, these scholars carried forward the idea that medicine is benevolence. Wang Bo compiled "The Essentials of Medical Language" after years of studying with famous doctors. Tao Yuanming, Bai Juyi, Liu Yuxi, Liu Zongyuan, Du Fu and Yan Shu also have famous medical prescriptions. During the Northern and Southern Dynasties, famous poems of medicine and famous

poems of acupoints appeared, which played a very good role in propaganda. Xiao Gang, Pi Rixiu, Xin Qiji and Chen Gao are all masters of such works. Su Shi not only compiled medical books, but also set up "An Le Fang" to treat patients in Hangzhou when he was in Zhizhou. It has become a major event in the development of medicine to specialize in doctor's appointment. In addition, there are many typical representatives of semi-Confucianism and semi-medicine, such as Bai Juyi, Lu You, Yuan Haowen, Pu Songling, Liu Er. They have made indelible contributions to the development of Chinese medicine.^[4]

4. A health-conscious lifestyle

Taoism advocates nature, self-preservation and health preservation. These thoughts also promote the establishment of close relationship between ancient Chinese scholars and traditional Chinese medicine. In troubled times or when fame fails, the scholar-bureaucrat class generally chooses the following lifestyles, such as escaping from vulgarity, seeking health preservation and so on. The Tao Te Jing puts forward the concept of purity, simplicity, purity and lack of desire. In the Wei and Jin dynasties, health preservation was the most popular way. Mr. Lu Xun once talked about that the habit of literati's health preservation in this period was to eat Wushisan. Wushisan is a powder of five minerals. Scholars have formed the habit that they must walk "distribute" after taking medicine, which has formed the fashion of scholar and Confucian scholars. Ji Kang and Ruan Ji are typical representatives, but they are regarded as elegant and free.^[5] There is no scientific basis for this way of health preservation, but it has a great impact on future generations. In Cao Xueqin's *A Dream of Red Mansions*, Jia Jing was influenced by this way. He practiced alchemy all day, swallowed gold and took sand, and finally died.

Smoking Wushisan is a mistake. Scholars are still diligently searching for ways to keep fit, such as Yan Zhitui, Su Shi, Lu You, Cao Tingdong, etc. They all talked about their unique views on keeping fit in poetry and prose. Bai Juyi's *Consciousness* explains that optimism can prolong life. Su Shi mentioned his original Qigong Health Care in his letter to his friends.^[6] In Cao Tingdong's *Lao Heng Yan*, he repeatedly emphasized that "on weekdays, we should pay attention to good upbringing and avoid anger most", which explained the reason that all diseases are caused by anger. Scholars use their own practice to give valuable health-preserving enlightenment to future generations.

5. Conclusion

Although Chinese classical literature and traditional Chinese medicine belong to different disciplines, they are intermingled and nourished each other. This phenomenon not only expands the literati's creative vision and value pursuit, but also disseminates the essence of traditional Chinese medicine knowledge and culture. Together, they have created a rich and splendid phenomenon of medical culture.

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