

Cultures and Traditions: Notes on the Book of Songs and Li Po

Outline of discussion:

1. Portrayal of alcohol/ drinking vs. today's views – AA9 1st column, AA10
2. Pointless fighting (south of ramparts) - AA12
3. Work of conscience vs. work of ancestors – AA8, AA3-AA4
4. Conditions of common people – AA7 – 276
5. Portrayal of Chinese ancestors vs. Greek gods
6. Governments of ancient China and Ancient Greece vs. Modern government – AA8 - 271
7. Imagery of Li Po

Details:

1. Portrayal of alcohol/drinking vs. today's views

- AA9 – 1st column – Wild orgies, drinking, waking up drunk. Two conflicting views: that of governmental downfall and ...?
- Li Po left government work because it stifled him, so he thought it was worthwhile just drinking and, writing poems and not caring.
- Drinking reflected the conditions of people in China, that times were troubled and that they drowned it all in drink. (refer to point 4)
- AA6 – improper to get drunk – Li Po glorifies drunkenness.

2. Pointless fighting (south of ramparts)

- AA12 – Comparable to viewpoint of a soldier in Vietnam, not caring about the cause of the fight because they were fed up. “War is Hell”: there's no reason for it.
- Was Li Po a voice that went along with or contradicted the voice of the people? (Comparison was made to Greenday's song Holiday)

- Li Po dealt with government experience, therefore he was educated enough to have credibility for his words, and also had some swordsmanship, which backed up his views on war.
- Li Po knew how harsh life really was.

6. Governments of ancient China and Ancient Greece vs. Modern government – AA8 - 271

- A leader who ruled with a clear conscience ruled effectively. Was his mandate determined by his conscience?
- Probably influenced by Confucian ways
- Comparable to Plato's view on "the unjust person is unfavorable to the Gods"
- Is the mandate just passed on immediately or is it passed on once a new and capable ruler rises?
- Is there a mandate for the US government? "The people shall overthrow it is corrupt" – a constitution in the declaration of independence.
- The mandate of heaven is a way of describing those who had power and how they lost it. If the dynasty got overthrown, they lost the mandate, same case with other means of loss of power.
- The mandate had its intermediary period.
- The mandate was a literary tool, more like an excuse – powerful historical description of transitions of power.

4. Conditions of common people – AA7 – 276

- Big rat (government)
- Happy borders were comparable to death, or a change in government (by moving from one state to another, to the "happier" borders)
- Tired of present feudal lord
- Happy borders – adjacent state
- What are the duties that are not fulfilled by the lords, which could be causing such a reaction among the common people who worked for them?