

Cultures and Traditions China Module: "The Book of Songs" and Li Bo

I. Recommendations at the beginning of class

- 247: King Wen
- CC-10: Waking up Drunk on a Spring Day
- Theme: Wine
- 243: God on high
- CC-11: The Moon
- CC-3-242-249: Mandate of Heaven
- CC-5-194: Brothers
- CC9: Slip of the Tongue
- 241: Live good life
- CC7-276: Big rat
- CC8-9-271: Theme of biblical similarity to the book of songs, and also the theme of awakening
- CC-10: Mountain conversation
- 271: no topic description given
- CC11: Still night thoughts

II. Discussion Notes

- Li Bo seems to demonstrate a very laid back attitude (Taoism?)
- The poetry of China in general seems significantly more positive than Negritude Poetry
- Praise of nature and admiration of its beauty are very common things in Chinese poetry
- Wine and drunkenness are also very commonly occurring things
- "The Big Rat": What is it? A representation of an oppressor, a symbol taken from the Chinese Zodiac? Is it just a rat?
- Fighting South of the Ramparts: Similar to the sentiments about the Iraq War of 2004? (Soldiers have grayed, generals know less than before). Why would generals know less? Is it the increasing separation from the battle by acting as commanding officers rather than field generals?
- Brothers: Rings strongly of the Wabash attitude. Brothers are above friends, as they forge deeper bonds than friends regardless of the situation. What is the deeper meaning here? To expand upon the biological definition of brother? To display that persons who are closer than friends are brothers? It is difficult to say, as China seems to avoid black/white dichotomy.
- CC-9: Emphasizes respect and propriety. Contains a good amount of tidbits on culture.
- Religion in China: "God on High". God is oft interchangeable with the word "heaven" (recall the lecturer's description of the mandate of heaven). Ancestors appear to give blessings and receive praise from the living. Also, note that heaven's nature is displayed as unpredictable.

- Fair Girls: There is described a scene wherein a man is handed a red flute by a beautiful girl. What is the meaning of the flute? Is it just a flute? Is it the girl's blushing?
- Waking up Drunk on a Spring Day: The meaning of this poem seems to be "Don't worry about a thing." What is the man upset about? Is there even a reason to ask, considering the nature of the poem? This poem appears very Taoist in nature, after all.