Understanding and analysis of cultural schema of ancient poetry under the consciousness of cultural association - taking poetry works in popular encyclopedias of the Ming Dynasty as an example

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Abstract. Poetry Word is a precious heritage of China's classical literature. Developed over more than a thousand years, it features diverse types, complex forms, and vivid imagery. Modern audiences often struggle to intuitively understand and connect with the emotions expressed in these poems due to different cultural contexts and ideas. This study, based on works in popular Ming dynasty encyclopedias, explores how adaptations to the cultural schema of ancient poetry—including traditional, wordplay, and mocking schemas—can facilitate a better understanding of these poems. This cultural shaping is crucial for appreciating the poetry found in Ming dynasty encyclopedias.

Keywords: Ancient poetry; Cultural schema; Popular encyclopedias of the Ming Dynasty

1   Introduction

The end of the Ming Dynasty saw significant advances in printing technology and a growing public demand for reading material, which reduced publishing costs and facilitated the spread of novels as popular literature[1]. Concurrently, many reference books were published to aid daily living. To cater to consumer needs, printers merged these practical guides with literary novels, creating a unique form known as the commonplace thesaurus. This format featured a dual-column layout on each page: literary fiction on top and miscellaneous reference information below. Such works are generally termed popular encyclopedias, which often include several middle-length novels.

A distinctive feature of these novels is that the embedded poems frequently comprise about half of the content, providing a rich sample for the study of poetic works in ancient China. The incorporation of extensive poetry poses challenges for modern readers who might struggle with the cultural imagery and contexts, making the poems difficult to grasp[2]. This difficulty often arises from the inability to form a coherent cultural schema of poetic elements in the mind, leading to fragmented understanding of elements, scenes, and imagery[3]. Only a comprehensive mental structure allows for deeper

engagement with the cultural nuances of the poetry, enhancing understanding and appreciation.

2   Cultural Schema of Ancient Poetry Under the Consciousness of Cultural Relevance Organizational Pattern Analysis

In ancient poetry, the association between object and emotion can form the knowledge of object and image metaphor. However, the conceptual metaphors in ancient poems are not immutable[4]. For different poems, poets and external human environments, the metaphors between the ancient language and the present language are different, such as the original meaning of "Chan Juan" is beautiful in form, and according to different cultural backgrounds, some poems will metaphorize it as "woman", and other poems will metaphorize it as "flower" or "moon"; further, the image metaphor between object and emotion will also change, such as "flower" can metaphor for "beautiful" or "sad" and other emotions[5]. This kind of ancient poetry metaphor based on the knowledge of poetry culture background is called the ancient poetry metaphor culture schema. The overall mechanism is shown in Figure 1:
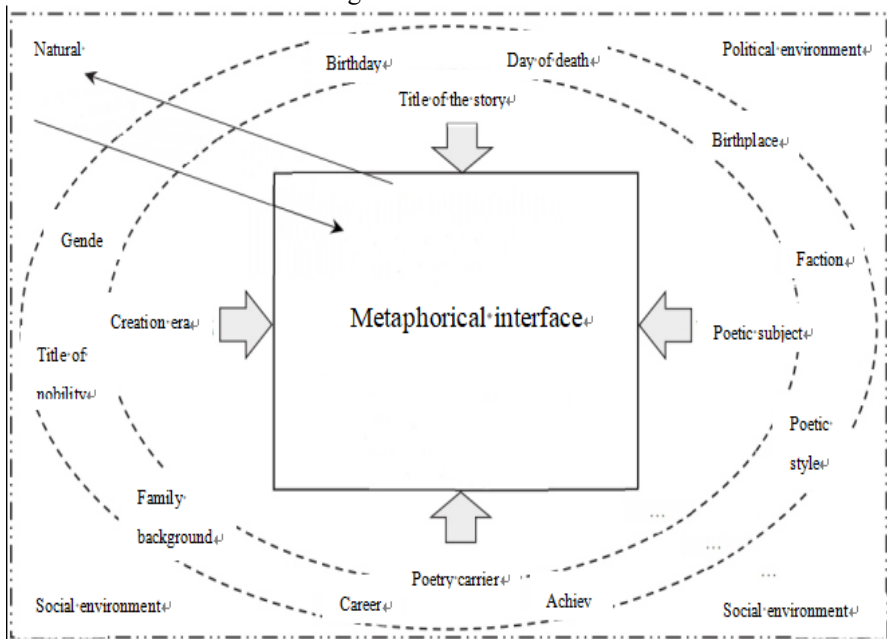

Fig. 1. Cultural schema of ancient poetry under the consciousness of cultural relevance model

The overall mechanism of this cultural schema is illustrated in Figure 1:

(1)Humanistic Interface: This reflects the external cultural environment surrounding the poem, influencing the poet's mindset. For example, admiration of nature or criticism of political injustice may shape the metaphors used, altering the imagery based on the poet's environment[6].

(2)Poet's Interface: The poet's personal background—such as family heritage, social standing, and literary style—affects how metaphors are constructed. A poet's career, achievements, and social standing may influence the symbolic use of metaphors in their work.

(3)Poetic Interface: Each poem carries a unique blend of language and emotion. The characteristics of different poetic genres and themes (e.g., military, homesickness) lead to shifts in the metaphorical representation of pride, sorrow, or beauty[7].

(4)Metaphorical Interface: This reflects how the cultural background of the poet and the poem interacts with the imagery and metaphors. These elements allow the reader to form a cultural schema, which in turn enables a more complete understanding of ancient poetry.

This cultural schema not only facilitates the interpretation of ancient poetry but also deepens the appreciation of the cultural and emotional elements embedded in the text.

3   Cultural Schema of Popular Poetry Works in the Popular Encyclopedias of Ming Dynasty

Many poems, lyrics, songs and songs were collected in popular encyclopedias of the Ming Dynasty. Except for a small part of them, most of the works are different from poems in the pure literary sense, from the characteristics of the selected materials to the aesthetic meaning. Popular encyclopedias of Ming Dynasty Poetry contains rich cultural schema, typical of which are traditional cultural schema, word game cultural schema and mocking cultural schema[8].

3.1   Traditional Meaning Cultural Schema

In the popular encyclopedias of the Ming Dynasty, popular encyclopedias often include a variety of literati poems and songs, and the poems in the popular encyclopedias *Yanju biji*, such as five-character and four-sentence ancient poems, five-character and eight-sentences of ancient poems, seven-character and four-sentence poems, etc., which are also poems in the pure literary sense. For the beautiful conception of these poems, it can better highlight the characteristics of the poetry of the Ming Dynasty and build a cultural stylistic charter in the traditional sense. For example, the lines appearing in *Yanju biji*, the legendary middle-grade stories *Zhong Qing Li Ji* written by Qu Jun of the Ming Dynasty, showcases these qualities:

The moon goddess stays overnight in the frost, the night is long.
Her disheveled hair and crooked hairpin add to her charm.
An appointment was made, but no one came past midnight.
The moon moves, and the flower shadows climb the railing.

The poem mainly describes the young woman in the room's nostalgia for yesterday's romantic love and the endless sorrow of guarding the cold window alone today. In the ancient feudal period, when love between men and women was considered difficult to talk about and vulgar, this poem uses the form of vernacular poetry to express the lonely and sad feelings of women through flat and straightforward narration. With bold and

realistic material description and unique language techniques, this poem pioneered the popular poetry of love between men and women in the Ming Dynasty, marking a change in social atmosphere and a breakthrough in traditional Confucian abstinence thinking.

3.2   Word Game Culture Schema

For popular encyclopedias in the Ming Dynasty, there are many comprehensive daily books such as Hidden Poems, Huiwen Poems, Dismantling Poems, Huiyi Poems, etc., which are mostly written by romantic talents of the contemporary and previous generations. Huiwen poetry belongs to a type of text game poetry, in which the use of colloquial language and the form of poetic loops can add interest to the form of the poem and make it rich in meaning. This Huiwen Poems here is from Huaichun Yaji, a novella that has been the subject of several Popular encyclopedias.

People admire spring for its beauty, but I admire spring when it brings me sorrow.

The dawn wind bids farewell to Taihao, sweeping away the myriad of colors.

I am young this year, not yet white-haired, but once I turn white-haired.

one must chase the joys of spring, do not wait until spring returns to mourn the grass. Spring will eventually return, but a white head and black hat are hard to recreate.

When will there be a pavilion to keep spring, so that those who admire spring will not grow old?

This kind of poetry, also known as palindrome, mainly uses various true methods to create wonderful fun, and the superb means are amazing. Although these strange words can have a strong audio-visual impact, they do not care about the inherent aesthetic elements of poetry such as emotion, connotation and artistic conception. This kind of poetry shows the exploration and innovation of poetry and the form of poetry by literati, enriching the category and style of poetry.

3.3   Mocking Cultural Schema

Another significant aspect of the popular encyclopedias is their inclusion of mock poems, which use wit and humor to critique and satirize traditional themes. These poems often play with conventional motifs but do so in a way that adds a layer of enjoyment without undermining the emotional depth. This section examines the mock poems also in *Zhongqing* Liji as an example.

Heaven created me with great care, placing me in a world of flowers and moonlight. Joy and entertainment are at their peak in youth,

especially for two people of exceptional beauty and talent.

I am the unparalleled treasure hidden in sky,

and you are the finest branch in Ziyang. Who in ancient times can compare?

With unmatched talent like the elegant Cao Zhi,

and captivating beauty like the graceful Lady Yang.

The poem begins with the imagery of heaven creating the speaker with great care, emphasizing the uniqueness and preciousness of their existence. The world of flowers and moonlight often symbolizes the affair between a man and a woman in the traditional context of ancient Chinese poetry, and in this way the author ridicules himself for his

own flirtatiousness in his youth. At the end of the poem, the famous poet Cao Zhi and the famous beauty Yang Guifei are mentioned, comparing them to these legendary figures, thus elevating the status of the speaker and his companions. These images uses the format of self-mockery and exaggerated praise to both celebrate and poke fun at the vanity and self-importance often found in romantic and poetic expressions, drawing a parallel with historical figures known for their exemplary talents and beauty.

These sections demonstrate how the popular encyclopedias of the Ming Dynasty served as a platform for poets to experiment with and evolve the traditional, wordplay, and mocking schemas, enriching the cultural and poetic landscape of the era. Through these explorations, they provided nuanced insights into the complexities of human emotions and societal norms, making them invaluable resources for understanding the cultural underpinnings of Ming Dynasty poetry.

4   Conclusion

The exploration of cultural schemas in Ming Dynasty poetry reveals a rich tapestry of literary forms that serve as a window into the historical and cultural dynamics of the era. This research has demonstrated that understanding these schemas—traditional, wordplay, and mocking—provides key insights into the poetry's form, function, and content. These schemas not only influenced the artistic expressions of the time but also posed significant challenges for modern interpretation and translation, revealing the intricate relationship between language and cultural context.

The study of cultural schemas in Ming Dynasty poetry is not just an academic exercise; it is a crucial endeavor for preserving and appreciating a significant aspect of China's rich literary heritage. As we move forward, the integration of new methodologies, interdisciplinary frameworks, and educational innovations will be essential in bringing the vibrant world of ancient Chinese poetry into contemporary discourse, making it accessible and relevant to a global audience.

While this study has examined the role of cultural schemas in understanding ancient poetry from the Ming Dynasty's popular encyclopedias, there remains substantial room for further exploration. Future research can deepen the investigation into several aspects. This study focused primarily on the Ming Dynasty; however, cultural schemas evolved across different dynasties. A comparative analysis of how poetry and cultural schemas shifted from earlier dynasties like the Tang and Song to the Ming could provide further insight into the continuous development of Chinese literary traditions. By continuing to investigate these avenues, future research will not only enhance the understanding of ancient Chinese poetry but also contribute to broader discussions on how literature, culture, and cognition interact across time and space.

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