

# Views on the Ballads and Proverbs from the Perspective of "Literature" Expressing Aspiration

## Research on the Folk Literature Criticism of Du Wenlan\*

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**Abstract**—Du Wenlan is a scholar who is devoted to the compilation and collation of folk literature in the Qing Dynasty. He is good at poetry, with a strong theoretical foundation and accomplishment of poetry. For folk works of ballads and proverbs, he formed the criticism concepts such as ballad expressing aspiration, stylistic concept judgment, colloquialism of ballad, and collective character judgment and so on in editing, which has made important contributions to enriching the theory of ballad, folk literature theory and folk literature criticism theory.

**Keywords**—Du Wenlan; folk literature criticism; concept; research

### I. INTRODUCTION

Du Wenlan (1815-1881), born in Zhejiang Xiushui (now Jiaying), with the style name Xiaofang, was an official in Jiangsu in charge of the salt transportation in Huaiyin and Huai'an. Du Wenzhao was quite talented and won the appreciation of Zeng Guofan. Chai Xiaofan's "Brahma Collection" contains a brief story of Zeng Guofan's appreciation of Du Wenzhao: 'at that time, the book enjoys equal popularity with Lianfang (Ying Baoshi) was Du Wenlan's observation history. Du Wenlan entered the official career as the child of Qiang general's office. After Zeng Guofan went to Jinling, he did not like him very much. It happened that Zeng Guofan passed the Du Wenlan's House, and he found the couplets on the inside and outside the door were very well written and very appreciated them. Then he appointed Du Wenlan as the observation scribe. After an in-depth conversation with Du Wenlan, Zeng Guofan appointed Du Wentao as an officer of salt affairs and foreign affairs. Du Wenlan's analysis of the problem is detailed, clear and practical, so Zeng Guofan appreciates him very much. Later, Zeng Guofan recommended Du Wenlan as the governor of Jiangning, so Du Wenzhao was familiar with the official duties of various departments in Jiangning, but did not have

the opportunity to enter the capital to be an official. After Shen Baozhen went to be in charge of Jinling, he did not cooperate with Du Wenlan harmoniously, so Du Wenlan resigned.

Du Wenlan was born in the Qiang general's office, which is the "master" of the Qing Dynasty. He is mainly responsible for taxation work. At the beginning, Zeng Guofan was quite biased against him because of his family background, but after seeing the couplet written by Du Wenlan, he began to have a good impression on him. Through exchanges, he greatly appreciated him and promoted him as an officer responsible for "salt and foreign affairs". Du Wenlan is quite talented. Every time the suggestions he made were very insightful, so he has won the appreciation of Zeng Guofan and was promoted as the administrative commissioner of Jiangning. Du Wenlan also wrote "brief record on pacifying Yue enemy" to record the deed of Zeng Guofan's pacifying Hong Xiuquan's uprising, and his brilliant literary talents also showed Du Wenlan's grateful feelings for Zeng Guofan. Yu Yue's "Epitaph of Jiangsu candidate officer Du Jun" made a detailed explanation of Du Wenlan's official experience. Yu Yue's evaluation of Du Wenzhao was: "In the early years of Tongzhi, Jiangnan was settled. The royal court commented on the merits of the ministers and believed that Du Wenlan was very talented, careful, succinct and accurate, and repeatedly occupied the enemy city. The court added the official post of political ambassador to him. After Zeng Guofan, everyone has appreciated Du Wenlan's talent."<sup>2</sup> "He was familiar with rhythm, good at poetry writing, with the masterpieces of "Qiyuan poetry", "poetry of picking perfume", "Mandala Huage Diary", "Record on Pacifying Yue Enemy", and "Record on proofreading the rhythm of poetry", etc. He compiled the book "The Ancient Ballads and Proverbs".

"The Ancient Ballads and Proverbs" has collected a large number of ancient folk ballads, which is an important work in the study of ancient folk songs. Du Wenlan is another scholar who paid more attention to folk literature and edited folk literature after Yang Shen and Feng Menglong in the

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<sup>1</sup> Chai Xiaofan. Brahma Collection [M]. Taiyuan: Shanxi Ancient Books Publishing House, 1999, 1: 248.

<sup>2</sup> Liu Yonggang. Study on Shuiyunlou Words [M]. Dalian: Liaoning Normal University Press, 2008, 5: 163-164.

Ming Dynasty. His collection of folk literature from ancient times to the Qing Dynasty was classified and collected comprehensively, which is of great significance to the study of ancient Chinese folk literature. His criticism concept of folk literature runs through the editing of folk literary works, which is an indispensable part of the development of folk literature and art, so studying his critical ideas is of great significance to clarifying the development context of the history of Chinese folk literature criticism.

Du Wenlan's editing "The Ancient Ballads and Proverbs" reflects his emphasis on folk ballads and proverbs, as well as his positive views on folk literature. Most of the researches on Du Wenlan since Qing Dynasty focused on the study of his poetry, but his research on folk literature has rarely been discussed. However, the edition of "The Ancient Ballads and Proverbs" is, after all, a very remarkable thing, which has attracted the attention of many scholars to research it, and has obtained some research results. Du Wenlan's folk literature concept mainly focuses on the understanding of ballads and proverbs. On the whole, his concept of folklore criticism mainly involves the following aspects.

## II. THE THEORY OF BALLADS AND PROVERBS "EXPRESSING ASPIRATION"

The theory of ballads and proverbs "expressing aspiration" was rooted in the concept of literary criticism of "Poetry expressing aspiration". The theory of "Poetry expressing aspiration" was first seen in "Shang Shu", and Confucius made further developments of the thoughts of poetry expressing aspiration. The purpose of his compiling the Book of Songs is mainly for humanistic pragmatism, and educates people by using poetry. He believes that poetry is a reflection of the human heart. As an author, he can express his inner feelings and inner ambitions. As a reader, he can feel the poet's temperament and find the same feeling. Because poetry can express aspiration, it can be used to educate and influence people. Sun Xingyan's "Confucius's Collection" Volume 5 "Six Arts and Four teaching" quoted the eight hundred and four quote of "emperor's view": "Poetry with deity Fog":

Confucius said: "Poetry is the heart of heaven and earth, the earliest virtue, the first blessing and the gateway to expressing all things. Therefore, the poem was engraved on the jade plate and the gold plate."<sup>3</sup>

Confucius believes that poetry is the "heart of heaven and earth", and this "heart" is actually the meaning of "aspiration". Therefore, Confucius said:

The enlightenment obtained from "poetry" can be implemented with etiquette and perfected with music.

Three hundred poems can be read, but they cannot be used for politics or be used as reference materials for debate. Even if there are many articles, what can they be the used for? ("The Analects of Confucius, Zilu")

<sup>3</sup> Guo Yi. Notes on Confucius' collection (attached) [M]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2017, 4: 107.

Again, "Confucius's Collection" Volume 5 "Six Arts and Four teaching" quoted "Historical Records, Funny Biography", which clearly put forward the idea of poetry expressing aspiration: <sup>4</sup> Confucius said: The six skills are used in politics, and the truth is the same. We can use "Ritual" to control people, use "Music" to warm people, use "Book" to inspire people, use "Poetry" to express their ambitions, use "the Book of Changes" to clarify the natural mystery, and use "Spring and Autumn" to clarify the principle of being a man and doing things.

In the Qing Dynasty, Liu Yusong discussed the purpose of the book in the preface of Du Du Wenlan's "The Ancient Ballad and Proverbs". He believed that the main intention of Du Wenlan's compilation of "The Ancient Ballad and Proverbs" was to highlight the theory of "ballads and proverbs expressing aspiration", which is one aspect of the criticism concept of Du Wenzhao towards folk literature. In the volume 14 of Liu Yusong's book "Tongyitang Collection", two articles "Preface of Du observation's The Ancient Ballad and Proverbs" and "Guidance of The Ancient Ballad and Proverbs" proves that the "preface" and "guidance" of "The Ancient Ballad and Proverbs" are made by Liu Yusong. The article "Guidance of The Ancient Ballad and Proverbs" in "Tongyitang Collection", specifically stated that it is "written on behalf of Xiushui Du Xiaofang observation", which explains Liu Yusong's preface and guidance represent Du Wenzhao's own views. Liu Yusong compared Du Wenlan's "The Ancient Ballad and Proverbs" with Confucius's compilation of "The Book of Songs". The "Book of Songs" is folk song, which is the "aspiration" while ballads and proverbs are also derived from the folk, so it is also the "aspiration":

If you want to know the method of expressing ambition, you don't need to specially look for it. "Literature" is the most fundamental method. Ballads and proverbs are examples of applying this method. To explore the mystery of "literature", we can study ballads and proverbs first. Language is the revealing of the soul, and the ballads and proverbs are revealed from the heart, which straightly express the ambition, like the wind blowing the surface to make natural ripple. The language is limited but the charm is endless. Ballads and proverbs can reflect the people's feelings, and show the emperor's morality. Its deep meaning is similar to that of "literature" but the difference is "literature" needs to use words to express emotions while ballads and proverbs express emotions by using speech.<sup>5</sup>

Liu Yusong compares the "Book of Songs" and ballads and proverbs and believes that: First, both are works that express aspiration, and the "self-sounding" from the heart; second, both have the function of "limited words expressing endless meaning and conveying the sentiment and declaring the virtue". That is to say, for the ruler, it has the role of "viewing the customs"; third, the "Book of Songs" is folk

<sup>4</sup> Guo Yi. Notes on Confucius' collection (attached) [M]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2017, 4: 149.

<sup>5</sup> Liu Yusong. Preface of the Ancient Ballad and Proverbs [J]. Du Wenlan. The Ancient Ballad and Proverbs [M], Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1958, 1: 1.

songs recorded in words, while ballads and proverbs are in active state by word of mouth. By contrast, Liu Yusong believes that the purpose of Du Wenlan's editing "The Ancient Ballad and Proverbs" is obvious. It is to learn from the sage Confucius to record the voice of the people, in order to "express the ambition" and thus "observe the customs". Du Wenlan's view on ballads and proverbs is the criticism concept under the perspective of "literature" expressing aspiration which is from the same source of the concept of "poetry expressing aspiration".

### III. JUDGMENT OF THE STYLE CONCEPT OF BALLADS AND PROVERBS

The definition of the style concept of ballads and proverbs also belongs to the category of folk literary criticism. Because of such criticism, such classification criteria can be formed; and the classification of styles of folk literature will affect the collection, collation and appreciation of folk literature while the process of collecting, collation and appreciation is also the process of folk literary criticism. According to Mr. Luo Genze's understanding of literary criticism, the judgment of style is a narrow literary criticism:

According to the British Saintsbury, most of the recent literary critics are divided into thirteen kinds: subjective, objective, inductive, deductive, scientific, judgmental, historical, textual, comparative, moral, impressional, appreciative, and aesthetic. It is not enough in my opinion. "文学批评" is the translation of Literary Criticism in English. The original meaning of Criticism was the judgment. Later, literary was used as the literary judgment, and the literary judgment was extended to the theory of literary judgment and literary theory. The theory of literary judgment is the principle of criticism, or criticism theory. Therefore, the narrow literary criticism is literary judgment; the general literary criticism also includes criticism theory and literary theory in addition to literary judgment.<sup>6</sup>

According to Mr. Luo Genze's understanding, the concept of style belongs to the category of literary criticism, and he believes that the interpretation of words, the extraction of textual meaning, the study of writers, and the dialectic of works are the premise of criticism and belong to the category of narrow literary criticism. According to the interpretation of Mr. Tong Qingbing, the judgment of the style concept belongs to the judgment of literary works based on the acceptance of literary works:

The evaluation centering on literary works also means that literary criticism is an activity carried out on the basis of accepting literary works, and it is a form or part of accepting activities. Therefore, literary criticism has an intrinsic deep relationship with literary acceptance.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Luo Genze. *History of Chinese Literary Criticism (I)* [M]. Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2015, 12: 9.

<sup>7</sup> Tong Qingbing. *Literary theory course (revised second edition)* [M]. Beijing: Higher Education Press, 2006, 4: 355.

The judgment of the style concept is the judgment made firstly based on the acceptance of literary works, which of course belongs to the category of criticism.

The Ancient Ballad and Proverbs edited by Du Wenlan embodied the critical concept of the definition of style concept. Du Wenlan first distinguished the concept of ballads and proverbs, and then made a distinction between songs and ballads. The significance of this distinction is to limit the scope of ballads and proverbs, and the further explanation of the subtle differences between ballads and songs facilitates classification. The first article of the "The Ancient Ballad and Proverbs, Guidance" (hereinafter referred to as "the guidance") distinguishes the concepts of ballads and proverbs:

The basic meanings of the words "ballads" and "proverbs" are related to respective content. Ballad mainly refers to singing without accompaniment. Singing is the language of songs, the language of songs is the long-term language, and the long-term language is the language with more words. Proverb mainly refers to the widespread idioms, of which the language is easy to understand, i.e. the more straightforward and concise language. The language with more words is suitable for singing, which is melodious; the straightforward language is bright and concise, which is the difference between the two. Although both are rhymes, the difference in genre is not obvious. So they are different in the text, but similar in rhythm. The two can explain and interpret each other.<sup>8</sup>

Du Wenlan believes that ballads are "pure songs", namely the songs that isn't accompanied with music. When singing, there is no need for music accompaniment. Because the song is "long speech," ballad as "pure songs" is also "long speech". The ballad is long, while the proverb is relatively short. And he further pointed out the difference between the two: ballads have twists and turns while the proverb is mild and straight. Nevertheless, the two have the same place that both of them are rhymes. "When talking about the two similar words, we should distinguish the differences. When one of the words is used separately, the two words can be used alternatively, so that the two can interpret each other". According to this critical concept, Du Wenlan has determined the standard of editing. Article 4 of the "the guidance" further distinguishes between ballads and songs:

Compared with songs, ballads can be divided into two types: with the accompaniment and without the accompaniment. However, from the perspective of ballads, song without the accomplishment is also a kind of singing, so it can be said to be "rhyme song" as well as "song", which can be included in the category of "song". "Ou" can interpret unaccompanied singing, so it can interpret ballad; "chant" is similar to "ou" from the interpretation function; "singing" can interpret songs, and "reciting" can also interpret songs; "zao" can be interpreted as happy singing, which is similar to the function of "ou", and "ballad". Therefore, ballad can also

<sup>8</sup> Du Wenlan. *The Ancient Ballad and Proverbs* [M]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1958, 1: 3.

be called "ou", or "chant", "reciting", "singing", and "zao", and it can be classified into the category of "ou" and "chant".

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An important critical principle for distinguishing the style concept of songs and ballad is that songs are sung with background music, while ballad is not chanted with music. But in general, Du Wenlan thinks that songs and ballads belong to the same big category, and song is the general name. Therefore, the two can be collectively called "ballads"; then when finely distinguished, "ou", "chant", "singing", "zao", "shout" all belong to the scope of ballads. Ci and Fu are also used to sing, but Du Wenlan believes that these do not belong to the category of songs and cannot be included.

When Mr. Zhu Ziqing discussed the difference between songs and ballad and the condition of music song, he repeatedly quoted the viewpoint of *The Ancient Ballad and Proverbs* in the chapters of "ballads and music", "meanings of ballads", "variant name of ballads", "general and narrow senses of ballads" and criticized the criticism concept of *The Ancient Ballad and Proverbs*.<sup>10</sup> He said the meaning of so-called ballads in China has always been extremely uncertain: first, the songs with music and pure song can't be differentiated; second, folk ballads can't be differentiated from individual poems; last, it seems to us that the relationship is greater now. Those recorded in the *Book of Songs* are all music songs. Therefore, there is only the second kind of confusion. In "Yutai New Poetry" and "Yuefu Collection", two kinds of confusions can be found. In Du Wenlan's "The Ancient Ballad and Proverbs", the first kind of confusion is exempted, but in the guidance, especially for the discussion of music songs and pure songs, the second confusion still exists.

Mr. Zhu Ziqing first affirmed the critical concept of the style concept of *The Ancient Ballad and Proverbs*, and believed that the definition of songs, ballads and proverbs in *The Ancient Ballad and Proverbs* is basically clear, but there are also vague places. Mr. Zhu Ziqing also believes that the provisions of *The Ancient Ballad and Proverbs* for ballads are of guiding significance for the modern collection of songs:

<sup>9</sup> Du Wenlan. *The Ancient Ballad and Proverbs* [M]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1958, 1: 4-5.

<sup>10</sup> Zhu Ziqing. *Chinese Ballads* [M]. Beijing: Gold Wall Press, February 2005: 6.

"The Ancient Ballad and Proverbs, guidance" said: "The ballads and proverbs are circulated at the verbal level without written records. The standard for judging ballads and proverbs is also based on whether it is in written form. "This also means this. Since the seventh year of Republic of China, the songs collected by people have generally met these standards."<sup>11</sup>

Mr. Zhu Ziqing said that the songs collected since the seventh year of Republic of China are generally consistent with the style concepts defined in *The Ancient Ballad and Proverbs*, thus indicating the guiding significance of the definition of the style concept of *The Ancient Ballad and Proverbs*. Mr. Guo Shaoyu used the example of *The Ancient Ballad and Proverbs* as an example to make an analogy to the nature of proverbs:

Du Wenlan's "The Ancient Ballad and Proverbs" doesn't record equivoque, argot, allegorical saying, tactful joke, frightening words, fanqie language, double-voiced discourse, thousand character classic, drinking game, vakrokti, actor's line in drama, bird language, dog language, and bell language, because these are different from the nature of the proverb.<sup>12</sup>

The views of academic circles on Du Wenhua's criticism concept on style concept are not consistent.<sup>13</sup> In the article "A Brief Discussion on Chinese Proverbs", Wang Yi believes that the concepts of ballad and proverb are difficult to distinguish clearly. "In order to save trouble, Du Wenlan simply combined them into ballads and proverbs without making a strict distinction." This method is only taking words literally of the disciplinary school. Therefore, when it comes to actual investigation, he have to change the statement by saying that "when talking about the two similar words, we should distinguish the differences, while when one of the words is used separately, the two words can be used alternatively, so that the two can interpret each other". This is actually to unplug all the original boundary pillars that have been established, so that they will become the same to avoid a lot of trouble! The reason for this confusion is that he only focused on the form, and only saw that some of the ballads and proverbs are all rhymes and the forms are not very different, but did not pay attention to the difference in content nor to the obvious lesson meaning and the feature of the experience summary of proverbs. Zhao Xiaolan's "Study of Ballads" gave a high evaluation of the value of "The Ancient Ballad and Proverbs": "The literati who paid attention to the ballads in the Qing Dynasty did a lot of valuable work. For example, Du Wenxuan from Zhejiang edited the one hundred volumes of "The Ancient Ballad and Proverbs" though hard work, which include more than three thousand and three hundred ballads and proverbs from the

<sup>11</sup> Zhu Ziqing. *Chinese Ballads* [M]. Beijing: Gold Wall Press, February 2005: 8.

<sup>12</sup> Guo Shaoyu. *Study on Proverbs* [J]. Quoted from Yuan Li. *Classics of Chinese Folklore in the 20th Century, History of Ballads* [M]. Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2002, 3: 16

<sup>13</sup> Wang Yi. *A Brief Discussion on Chinese Proverbs* [J]. Quoted from Yuan Li. *Classics of Chinese Folklore in the 20th Century, History of Ballads* [M]. Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2002, 3: 128-129

Qin Dynasty to the Ming Dynasty, and quoted eight hundred and sixty books. Du Wenlan first quoted the matter, indicated the source, and also made research when there is the problem. This book is still the best in the same kind of writing, as well as the most complete book in the collection of ancient ballads and proverbs."<sup>14</sup> Objectively speaking, Du Wenlan's definition of the style concept of ballads and proverbs is basically correct, but because the limit was too broad, there were contradictions in the specific collection. If the proverb is short, it is impossible to reflect the characteristics of the rhyme. The proverb quoted by Gong Zhiqi in the second volume of *The Ancient Ballad and Proverbs* ancient "The cheekbones and the jaws are mutually dependent" can't reflect the characteristics of the rhyme. In addition, some proverbs are not short, which can be compared with the ballads. In the second volume of *The Ancient Ballad and Proverbs*, the proverb quoted by Bozong "We should be more tolerant. The rivers and lakes contain various dirty things, troubles hide in mountains, jade has flaw on it and emperor also needs to bear some shame. This is the natural law" includes five sentences, which is longer than some ballads, and the meaning is not straightforward. Some have profound philosophies and are more implicit. However, from the perspective of folk literary criticism, the critical concept of the definition of style concept in "The Ancient Ballad and Proverbs" laid a foundation for the correct classification of folk literary works and the limitation and precise definition of various folk literary works.

#### IV. THE CLASSIFICATION OF THE SAME STYLE

The multi-angle classification judgment of the same style reflects the geographical, spatial and multi-dimensional characteristics of literature.<sup>15</sup> The classification judgment of "feng", "Ya" and "song" of *The Book of Songs* reflects not only the regional characteristics but also the musical characteristics, which is a kind of spatial and geographical classification judgment. After the "May 4th Movement", with the introduction of the Classification methods of Western ballads, the academic community has proposed a variety of classification method. Mr. Zhu Ziqing's "Chinese ballads" is divided into fifteen categories: music, substance, form, style, practice, motif, language, rhyme, singer, region, era, occupation, nationality, number, and utility; Zhu Ziqing then introduced Kidson's 16 classification methods: narrative songs, love songs, mysterious songs, pastoral songs, drinking songs, burlesque songs, thief songs, robbers songs, sergeant songs, maritime songs, strong naval songs, hunting songs, sports songs, labor songs, popular ode and children's game songs; he also introduced Witham's 10 kinds of narrative song classifications methods: riddles, family tragedies, elegy, superstitious songs, sacred legend songs, legendary songs, burlesque songs, news songs, chronological songs, and green forest song. The current classification of songs is divided into six categories: labor songs, ritual songs, political songs,

life songs, love songs, and children's song.<sup>16</sup> When making classification judgment of "The Ancient Ballad and Proverbs", it also reflects the multi-dimensional judgment, which can be referred to as the "three major categories of frameworks" structural classification.

##### A. Classification Judgment of Ballads

For the classification of ballads, "the guidance" puts forward three criteria: first is to classify according to the characteristics of the times; second is to classify according to regional characteristics; third is to classify according to group characteristics.

1) *Classifying by characteristics of the times*: Judging from the characteristics of the times, ballads can be divided into "ballad in Yao dynasty", "ballad in Zhou dynasty", "ballad in Qin dynasty", and "ballad in Han dynasty" and so on. The compilation of the ballads and proverbs in *The Ancient Ballad and Proverbs* is basically compiled in chronological order, reflecting the characteristics of time classification.

2) *Classifying by geographical characteristics*: Judging from the geographical characteristics, ballads can be divided into "Chang'an ballad", "Beijing ballad", "Wangfu ballad", "Neighboring County ballad", "Second County ballad", and "national ballad" and so on. When Du Wenlan made a classification judgment based on the characteristics of the region, he considered both the diachronic features and the synchronic features. For example, "ballad in Qin Dynasty" is a large class from the time characteristics, which reflects the diachronic characteristics, and there are various types of geographical ballad in this class, which reflects the characteristics of synchronicity.

3) *Classifying by group characteristics*: The classification judgment according to the group characteristics is another three-dimensional cross judgment on the basis of chronology and synchronicity. For example, "ballad in Qin Dynasty" covers all regional ballads, and each regional ballad also covers various group ballads ("troop ballads", "army ballads", "folk ballads", "masses ballads", "children ballads", "boy ballads", "girls' ballads", "kids' ballads", and "baby ballads", etc.). Judging from the book of *The Ancient Ballad and Proverbs*, these three categories reflect three three-dimensional hierarchical relationships, which can be reflected in "Fig. 1":

<sup>14</sup> Zhao Xiaolan. Summary of Ballads [M]. Chengdu: University of Electronic Science and Technology Press, 1993, 7: 297.

<sup>15</sup> Zhu Ziqing. Chinese Ballads [M]. Beijing: Gold Wall Press, 2005, 2.

<sup>16</sup> Zhao Xiaolan. Summary of Ballads [M]. Chengdu: University of Electronic Science and Technology Press, 1993, 7: 44-46.

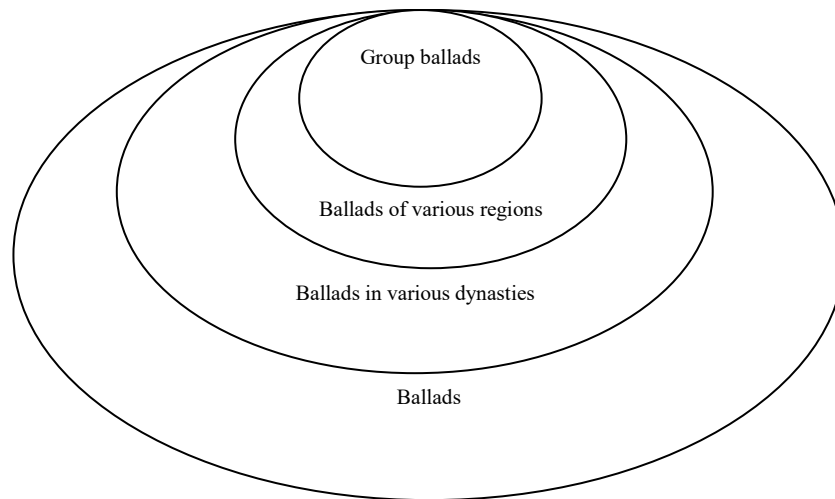


Fig. 1. The three-dimensional hierarchical relationships between ballads.

### B. Classification Judgment of Proverbs

For the classification of proverbs, "The Ancient Ballad and Proverbs" also refers to the three categories characters of ballads, but it is slightly different.

1) *Classifying by time characteristics*: According to the characteristics of time, the proverbs is divided into "proverbs in Xia Dynasty", "proverbs in Zhou Dynasty", and "proverbs in Hao Dynasty" and so on. Different from the classification judgment of ballads, Du Wenlan takes into account the characteristics of the country based on the judgment of time characteristics, such as "Qin proverbs", "Chu proverbs", "Zoulu proverbs" and "Yue proverbs". This kind of combination is actually a combination of time characteristics and regional characteristics, because the country can be understood as a regional feature in a certain sense when making synchronic judgment.

2) *Classifying by geographical characteristics*: In making classification judgment according to the regional characteristics, proverbs are subdivided compared with the ballads. For example, the "Beijing proverbs" and "Sanfu proverbs" can be subdivided into "neighborhood proverbs", "township proverbs", and "village proverbs", etc.

3) *Classifying by group characteristics*: In making classification judgment according to the group characteristics, the name of classification of proverbs is different from that of the ballads. For example, it is divided into "folk proverbs", "elders' proverbs", "boatman proverbs", "wild proverbs", "vulgar proverbs", and "common proverbs". Compared with the classification of ballads, the classification of proverbs is divided into a subsystem at the regional level. In the big category, there are still three levels, but in the subdivision, there are four levels. From the whole book, the relationship between the three hierarchical classifications of proverbs can be represented by "Fig. 2":

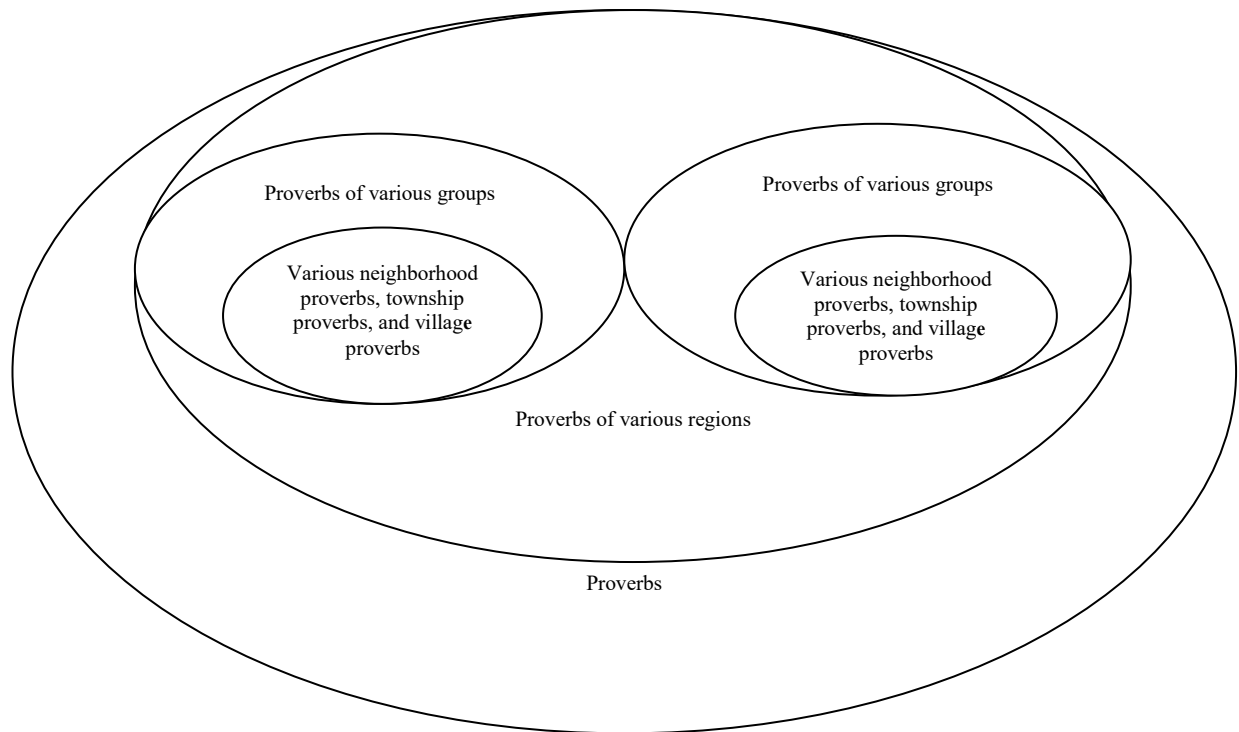


Fig. 2. The three hierarchical classifications of proverbs.

#### V. THE JUDGMENT OF THE ORALITY CHARACTERISTICS OF FOLK LITERATURE

The important feature of the difference between folk literature and written literature is the orality of folk literature, which is the most important feature of it, as well as an important connotation for the definition of folk literature. When the Encyclopedia Britannica interprets the characteristics of folk literature, it says:

The most obvious feature of folk literature is the fact that it is "verbal." Regardless of the ambiguous situation, it is usually directly compared with written literature. The latter exists in manuscripts and books, and may be fully preserved in written form left by the author or authors, even if it happened centuries or even thousands of years ago. Through these manuscripts and books, the nuances of thoughts, ideas, arguments, and styles can be reflected regardless of time and geographical distance. However, from the perspective of oral literature, this is impossible. Folk literature is only related to speaking, singing, and listening, which relies on living people to pass on the legend.<sup>17</sup>

Here, when interpreting the orality characteristics of folk literature, it expounds the characteristics of folk literature that it is spread through oral communication. "The Ancient Ballad and Proverbs" accurately captures the orality character of folk literature, and uses this feature judgment to regulate how to collect ballads and proverbs, which also

<sup>17</sup> Teaching and Research Section of Folk Literature, Chinese Department, Beijing Normal University. Folk Literature and Art Reference Materials (Vol. 2) [M]. 1982. 6: 95.

stipulates the inclusion criteria of the book "The Ancient Ballad and Proverbs". Article 6 of "the Guidance" states:

Ballads and proverbs are circulated at the oral language level instead of being circulated by written records. The standard for judging ballads and proverbs is also based on whether it is in written form or not. Any rhythmic language that has been recorded in words is not just a verbal language. Works that are not circulated orally weren't included considering the genre.<sup>18</sup>

These words define the important differences between ballads and proverbs (folk literature) and written literature, and establish the specific standard for the selection of ballads and proverbs in the book "The Ancient Ballad and Proverbs". This standard is to see if the ballads and proverbs to be compiled are oral at the beginning of the creation. If so, it will be compiled, or it won't be compiled. Liu Yusong also commented on the orality character of ballads and proverbs (folk literature) in the "preface" of "The Ancient Ballad and Proverbs":

Probably "literature" expresses emotions by writing down while ballads and proverbs express emotions by using spoken language. Spoken language is earlier than the text. Therefore, spoken language emerged before written language and when there is a spoken language, there is a book.<sup>19</sup>

Liu Yusong believes that spoken language is anterior to written words. The biggest difference between written

<sup>18</sup> Du Wenlan. The Ancient Ballad and Proverbs [M]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1958, 1: 6.

<sup>19</sup> Liu Yusong. Preface of the Ancient Ballad and Proverbs [J]. Du Wenlan, the Ancient Ballad and Proverbs [M], Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1958, 1: 1.

literature and folk literature is whether it is spread in written form. This is consistent with the general meaning of "the emergence of ballads and proverbs is derived from language" in Du Wenlan's "Guidance".

After establishing the oral character map of folk literature, Du Wenlan made some supplement to include the folk literature that was originally circulated orally but was later recorded by the text. Du Wenlan did not further interpret this issue, but in the Article 6 of the "Guidance", he discussed 44 kinds of "not to record" cases, and limited the non-folk literature on the reverse side. After careful interpretation of his 44 "not to record" cases, it can be found that it is actually related to another feature of folk literature — collectivity.

#### VI. JUDGING THE COLLECTIVITY CHARACTERISTICS OF FOLK LITERATURE

Collectivity is the basic feature of folk literature works in creation and the essential attribute of folk literature. The "Guidance" does not directly explain the collectivity characteristics of folk literature, but it interprets the collectivity characteristics of folk literature through 44 kinds of "not to record".

The "Guidance" made an interpretation of some works that may be songs or may be written orally, but belongs to individual creations rather than collective creations:

Therefore, the following types of ballads and proverbs are not recorded: engraved on the metal, engraved on the jade, engraved on the stone tablet, copied, written by the literati, written on the wall, printed, eulogistic, providing advice, slanderous, grandiloquent, written in letters, mixed in the middle of the article, chanting at the worship, sung by monks...<sup>20</sup>

Du Wenlan only formed a preliminary concept of criticism at that time, and did not form a complete theory. Therefore, he did not find a highly generalized word such as "collectivity" to summarize its characteristics, so he can only list them from the opposite side.

Hu Shi was an earlier scholar who defined folk literature. He defined the folk literature:

The works of folk literature have two qualities: First, the creators are the whole nation instead of individuals. Ordinary literary works are created by individuals, and each type of work has a writer. Folk literature is not the same; the creator is by no means A nor B, but the whole nation. ... Second, folk literature is oral literary rather than literary book.<sup>21</sup>

Hu Shi's definition of folk literature is consistent with the definition of ballads and proverbs in "The Ancient Ballad and Proverbs": orality and collectivity. Later, scholars gradually studied and discussed the concept of folk literature, and finally formed a perfect definition. It can be seen that the

concept of "orality" and "collectiveness" in folk literature is advanced, and this concept is of great significance to the development of folk literature criticism.

#### VII. THE STATUS OF DU WENLAN'S FOLK LITERATURE CRITICISM CONCEPT

Du Wenlan's concept of folk literature criticism is an indispensable part of the history of folk literature criticism. He is the first Chinese to systematically and comprehensively organize the ballads, and he has compiled precious ballads materials of ancient China from the perspective of the development history of ballads. His concept of folk literature criticism has enriched and developed the theory of Chinese ballads and has important value for the formation of folk literature criticism theory.

In the Ming Dynasty, Yang Shen and Feng Menglong have developed a strong interest in folk literature and formed a preliminary concept of folk literature criticism. They interpreted the attitude of collecting folk literature and the aesthetics of folk literature. Du Wenlan's folk literature criticism concept is a further development of the previous theory of folklore criticism. He first affirmed the important position of folk literature works (ballads and proverbs), followed by the interpretation of the nature of folk literature, and tried to classify the folk literature works and made important practice in collecting the folk literature works, which is of great significance to the development and improvement of Chinese folk literature criticism theory.

Du Wenlan's concept of folk literature criticism has enriched the theory of Chinese ballads. Mr. Zhang Zichen has made a thorough evaluation of this:

In the "guidance" of "The Ancient Ballad and Proverbs", there is the interpretation of ballads and proverbs, items of ballads and proverbs, explanation of ballads, relationship between ballads and songs, the emergence of ballads and proverbs, support and analogy of ballads and proverbs and discussion of author of ballads and proverbs, which greatly promote the development of ballad and proverb theory. The preface of Liu Yusong also has obvious theoretical significance. ... Although this kind of view on ballads and proverbs didn't jump out of the frame of "poetry expressing aspiration", it applied the major performance of "poetry expressing aspiration" and the study of the literature to the folk ballads and proverbs, which not only shows the author's insights but also gives a powerful argument to the important position of ballads, and develops and enriches the ballads theory in China.<sup>22</sup>

Zhang Zichen fully affirmed the significance of the folk literary criticism of "The Ancient Ballad and Proverbs" for the development of the ballads theory and the important value of the folk literary criticism in "The Ancient Ballad and Proverbs", and believed that its critical concept affirmed the important position of ballads and developed and enriched the ballad theory of China.

<sup>20</sup> Du Wenlan. *The Ancient Ballad and Proverbs* [M]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1958, 1: 6-7.

<sup>21</sup> [United States] Hong Changtai, Dong Xiaoping tr. *Go to the folk — Chinese intellectuals and folk literature 1918 - 1937* (new translation) [M]. Beijing: China Renmin University Press, 2015, 8: 5.

<sup>22</sup> Zhang Zichen. *Principles of Folk Literature and Art* [M]. Shijiazhuang: Huashan art and literature publishing house, 1991, 6: 128.



Although the concept of folk literature criticism in *The Ancient Ballad and Proverbs* is simple and imperfect, it is of great significance to the development and improvement of folk literary criticism theory. It also has a status that cannot be ignored in the history of Chinese folk literature criticism.

#### VIII. CONCLUSION

In summary, Du Wenlan is a scholar who devoted himself to the collection and arrangement of folk literature in the Qing Dynasty. He is good at poetry and has a strong theoretical foundation and accomplishment of poetry. He attaches great importance to the literati creation and also pays attention to folk ballads and proverbs. He uses the "Book of Songs" as a reference to form the folk literature concept under the vision of "literature" expressing aspiration, which forms the criticism concepts such as the "ballads expressing aspiration", judgment of the style concept, orality of ballads, collective characteristics. He has made important contributions to enriching the ballads theory, the theory of folk literature, and the theory of folk literature criticism.

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