



Undergraduate assignment feedback form
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<i>Student Name:</i> Chunyuan Xue(薛淳元)	
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Explain the Xiaoxing 小星 in *the Book of Songs* 詩經

character count:1610

Respected provost and Miss Deng, my name is Xue Chunyuan. What I want to report today is a brief explanation of the poem Xiao Xing 小星 in *the Book of Songs* 詩經. In my report I explained the poem from two main aspects. On the one hand, I will briefly explain the meaning of the poem from the perspective of the text and experience the background of the poem and the emotion that the poet wants to express. On the other hand, I will introduce the main rhymes of this poem and analyze its rhymes.

This is my outline.

1. Introduction
2. The texts analysis
3. Rhyme analysis
4. Self-reflection
5. Conclusion

Introduction

This poem Xiaoxing comes from the chapter called Shaonan 召南 in *the Book of Songs*. Most of the poems in this chapter are folk songs from the people. So this poem is a folk poem. There have been many interpretations of this poem since ancient times, and the theories we rely on today are mainly from Mr. Zhu Shouliang. The preface to this poem in the earliest han dynasty notes by Zhengxuan 鄭玄 is as follows,

諸妾夜行，抱衾與休帳，待進御之。¹

Several concubines who serve the king walk around at night, carrying quilts and clothes, waiting to enter the palace to serve the king. However, later generations are not satisfied with this explanation, including the main explanation relied on today. Mr. Zhu Shouliang 朱守亮 summed up this poem as 此小臣遠役自歎命苦之詩². A poem about a petty official going out to work and lamenting his hard fate. So what exactly is this poem about? Let's see.

The texts analysis

The poem is not long, only two short paragraphs, let's look at the original text first.

Here I will first read the original poem.

嘒彼小星，三五在東，肅肅宵征，夙夜在公，實命不同。

嘒彼小星，維參與昴，肅肅宵征，抱衾與裯，實命不猶。³

It can be seen that there are still many sentences in these two simple verses that are very similar, so let's first briefly explain the meaning of the Chinese characters and words in the poem. First let's look at the text in the first paragraph. The Chinese character Hui 嘒 here means the slight light. So the meaning of the first sentence is the shimmering star. Here also uses shimmering to express the author's description of his own small and humble. The Chinese word Sanwu 三五 in the second sentence refers to the sparse appearance of stars, with only a few scattered in the sky. The fact that there are only a few stars in the east indicates that the sun is about to rise in the

¹ Zhu Shouliang 朱守亮, *The PingShi of the Book of Songs* 詩經評釋(Taibei: Taiwanxuesheng 台灣學生, 1984), p.88.

² Zhu Shouliang 朱守亮, *The PingShi of the Book of Songs* 詩經評釋, p.87.

³ Zhu Shouliang 朱守亮, *The PingShi of the Book of Songs* 詩經評釋, p.87.

morning. Therefore, the means of this paragraph is the stars are scattered in the eastern sky. The next word, , in this case, is onomatopoeia, the sound produced in the process of walking. SuSu 肅肅 The word Xiaozheng 宵征 here refers to the work of walking in the night. Together, it means to dart about at night, busy with business. The next word "all night" here means from morning till night, so this sentence means to be busy with business from morning till night. The last sentence of the first paragraph laments that people's fates are not the same.

Let's look at the second paragraph. The first sentence of paragraph 2 is the same as that of paragraph 1, so I won't repeat the explanation here. The two characters shen 參 and Mao 昴 mentioned in the second sentence are pronounced Shen and Mou respectively, not their original pronunciation. The meaning expressed here is the name of two traditional Chinese constellation. The next sentence is the same as in the first chapter. The Chinese character Qin 衾 in the next sentence means quilt and the character Chou 稠 Interpreted as a sheet or a jacket or it can be called a tent of rest. Therefore, the meaning of this sentence is mainly to bring luggage and clothes with you for business. The last word, Buyou 不猶 here means inferior. This last sentence is still an exclamation that his destiny is not as good as others.

So that's an explanation of the words and expressions in the text. As a whole, there is no mention of concubines serving Kings. Therefore, what Zheng Xuan explained may be difficult to judge from the article. Maybe his time was closer to the time when the Book of Songs was written. Because of the difference between the time and the

present, there were different interpretations. Therefore, we will not make too much repetitions here for the time being, but we will appreciate the meaning expressed in this poem from the perspective of words.

According to the description of the poem, we can see a small official working hard, whether morning or night, busy with official business. This point is consistent with what Mr. Zhu Shouliang said. However, the two exclamations at the end of the article are really meaningful. Mr. Zhu Shouliang's comment on these last two sentences is 循禮安分⁴ follow the etiquette and behave yourself. From this, we can see that the man described in this poem, although he is busy every day morning and night, but he does not have any complaints. He just laments that his life is different from others, and since it is different, he will continue to stay on his feet and try his best to finish what he should do. From this point of view it really gives the reader a new sense.

Rhyme analysis

That's a simple explanation of the meaning of the whole poem, and I'm going to report to you a situation of the rhyme of the poem. The poetry in the Book of Songs is different from the regular poems we usually read. Almost every line in *the book of Songs* rhymes in Archaic Chinese.

⁴ Zhu Shouliang 朱守亮, *The PingShi of the Book of Songs* 詩經評釋, p.88.

國風・召南・小星

第一章：

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1. 嘒彼小星 段 11 青
 2. 三五在東 段 9 東 次旁轉
 3. 肅肅宵征 段 11 青
 4. 夙夜在公 段 9 東 次旁轉
 5. 實命不同 段 11 東

第二章：

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6. 嘒彼小星 段 11 青
 7. 維參與昴 段 3 尤
 8. 肅肅宵征 段 11 青
 9. 抱衾與裯 段 3 尤
 10. 實命不猶 段 3 尤

The above picture is the rhyme of these characters I got by looking up the *Shuo Wen Jie Zi Zhu* 說文解字註. This poem has two chapters. Let's look at the rhyme in the first chapter. We can see that the first paragraph in the figure has only two categories of rhyme: radical 9 and radical 11. There are two categories but if you put them in zhang taiyan's rhyme table the relationship between radical 9 and radical 11 is actually Jin Pang Zhuan 近旁轉. So all the rhymes in the first chapter they can rhyme. In the second chapter, it was found to be radical three and radical eleven respectively. Among them, the third radical accounts for more than the eleventh radical, so the main rhyme of the second chapter is based on the third part. However, these two radicals are not related in the rhyming diagram, so the first and second sentences of chapter 2 are not rhymed and if you look at it in the whole poem it means that the sixth verse and the eighth verse don't rhyme but all the other sentences do rhyme. That is my introduction to the rhyming situation of this poem. Then the following is a simple experience after I finished learning this poem.

Self-reflection

After learning this poem, my biggest experience is that the man described in the article can be satisfied with his fate without complaining, which really makes me admire. Reflect on ourself in daily life and study, if the task gradually increased, sometimes there will be complaints, feel why they do more than others, but some people can do nothing. Often such a time when their heart will be a little bit unpleasant, mouth is easy to complain. But their own things if compared with the poem described the people are too far away. I just add some task to my daily study, but I don't have to stay up all night and have to travel, but the people described in the text are on the run, day and night. Such a contrast also realized that they have what to complain about? The other thing that I admire is that the man in the article is willing to accept his fate. He knew it was the right thing to do, so he didn't complain and just kept doing it, but occasionally sighed. This also made me realize that I should have a resigned attitude towards everything in life. Since things have come to me, I just need to accept them. Instead of being hard to accept and complaining, how about taking a different attitude and having fun doing it and seeing where we can improve. We're doing the same thing but we're doing something completely different. The above is what I realized after learning this poem, and I hope I can also practice it in my later life.

Conclusion

In general, the poem describes a petty official working very hard every day. However, although he was busy working morning and night, he did not complain. He still accepts his destiny and does what he should do. Such a spirit is worth learning. So in terms of rhyme the poem is also quite neat, the first paragraph is completely rhymed and the second paragraph is roughly rhymed. Therefore, the poem also gives a very smooth feeling when read.

That is my report today, any deficiencies welcome your criticism and correction.

Bibliography

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