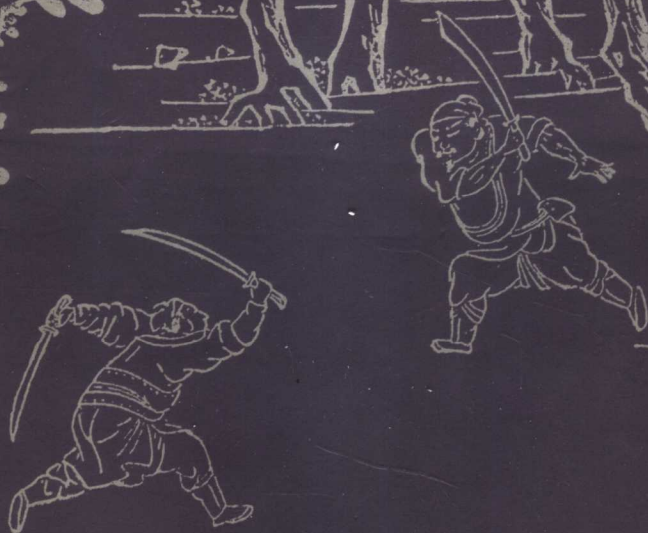


The Seven Heroes and Five Gallants



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Books

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Seven Heroes

and
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藏书章
by

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PREFACE

Late in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) a large number of novels about chivalrous heroes and complicated legal cases appeared in Chinese literature. Incorporating the deeds of heroes with legal cases, these novels describe both how upright, incorruptible officials settle legal cases and how gallant heroes get rid of despots and champion the good. Such stories cater to the tastes of ordinary people, particularly townsfolk, and this accounts for their popularity. *The Seven Heroes and Five Gallants* is a representative work of this kind, though at first it did not bear its current title. The following is an account of its development and the different titles it has borne.

Between the reign of Xianfeng and that of Tongzhi (1851-1874), a master performer of *danxianr* — story-telling accompanied by a stringed instrument — emerged among the story-tellers. Shi Yukun, styled Zhenzhi, was a native of Tianjin. He told many stories with excellence, but it was the *Cases of Lord Bao* that won him great fame. Once he told them in a juggling hall that had been abandoned for years and attracted a huge audience of thousands. As later generations praised him:

*It's with help of Lord Bao, a settler of legal cases
That Shi Yukun of our day has won great successes.*

The stories of how Lord Bao dealt with complicated legal cases have spread far and wide. They can be found in many of the *huaben* — books for prompting story-tellers of the Song Dynasty (960-1279), dramas of the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1386) and novels of legal cases of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). The *Cases of Longtu* narrated by Shi Yukun, had been set down intermittently by himself. To cater to the taste of his audience, he drew on material of previous times and adopted popular legends in his book. With the spread of his fame, the

Cases of Longtu became popular, too. Some bookstores had his prompt book copied and printed for sale. In this way the *Cases of Longtu* became *Hearsay Tales of Longtu*, a novel in chapters, each with a verse heading, by an "Anonymous Author". "Hearsay" in the title suggests that it is a record of Shi Yukun's oral narrative. But Shi Yukun's singsong verses and nonsense remarks in interludes were cut out in the book.

At the beginning of the reign of Guangxu (1875-1908), a scholar styled "Wenzhu Zhuren" re-edited the *Hearsay Tales of Longtu* and renamed it *The Romance of Loyal and Gallant Men*. He explained his intention in the preface:

The original title of this novel was *Cases of Longtu* or *Cases of Lord Bao*. The novel proper contains thirty-odd chapters and over sixty sequels have been added. Since it is a legendary book, it is not surprising that there are supernatural elements. I have renovated it by preserving the good parts and omitting the descriptions of evil spirits, and offer to readers a literary work about justice and honesty in praise of loyal, upright officials and gallant heroes, among whom are countless chaste ladies, loyal servants and maids, officials and runners, ordinary people and monks ready to champion the good. So I have used "loyal and gallant", attributes to these characters, in the title of the book, which has a hundred and twenty chapters altogether.

The prompt book of Shi Yukun indeed contained descriptions of "evil spirits", such as the monster that appeared when the prince of Xiangyang was suppressed, the black ape that kidnapped Zhi Hua who was later rescued by a deity, and the brass net trap of spider spirits that killed Bai Yutang. All these incidents had been deleted by Wenzhu Zhuren.

Later *The Romance of Loyal and Gallant Men* was published under a new title, *The Book of Three Heroes and Five Gallants*. The three heroes in the title are Zhan Zhao the Southern Hero, Ouyang Chun the Northern Hero, Ding Zhaolan and Ding Zhaohui the Twin Heroes, while the five gallants are Lu Fang, Han Zhang, Xu Qing, Jiang Ping and Bai Yutang. These are the characters of whom the reader has the deepest impressions.

The book was again revised by a man styled as "Ru Mi Daoren" and then handed down to a man styled as "Tui Si Zhuren". The latter had it printed with movable type by the Juzhentang printing house in Beijing in 1879. The book caused a sensation and was soon avidly read throughout the city.

By the fifteenth year (1889) of Guangxu's reign, the novel reached Suzhou, where Yu Yue, a scholar without employment, obtained a copy from his friend. Being a serious scholar, he at first thought he would find it commonplace, but after browsing through it, he was completely fascinated by it. His scholastic temperament, however, got the upper hand: he found absurd the substitution of a cat for the prince in the first chapter, "The Prince is Substituted by a Cat; the Imperial Concubine Is Rescued by a Loyal Courtier", so he rewrote it to conform to Song history. Furthermore, he contended that since the Southern Hero, Northern Hero and the twins made four heroes instead of three, the "three heroes" in the title was incorrect. He picked out Ai Hu the Young Hero, Zhi Hua the Black Fox, Shen Zhongyuan the Young Zhuge (Sage) and included them in the list of heroes, renaming the work accordingly, *The Seven Heroes and Five Gallants*.

Yu Yue was rather pedantic and in rewriting the novel, carried his scholarship too far. First, he rewrote the story of the cat substituted for the prince. According to the original story, two concubines Li and Liu of Emperor Renzong of the Song Dynasty became pregnant at the same time. The emperor declared that the concubine who first gave birth to a prince would be made empress. Li was the first, but Liu was cunning and crafty. In order to become the empress, she had somebody substitute a skinned cat for Li's baby boy and spread the rumour that Li had given birth to a monster. The emperor abandoned Li and made Liu the empress. Liu, however, made a further attempt to put Li to death. With the help of a loyal courtier Li escaped from the palace. The baby was rescued by palace maids and eunuchs and later became the crown prince. This story had appeared in the dramas of the Yuan Dynasty. Shi Yukun simply adopted it from earlier stories about Bao. The story is fictitious and does not follow history. Yu Yue rewrote the first chapter to conform to history but left untouched a later chapter which is relevant. As a result, the reader inevitably comes

across a discrepancy in the fifteenth chapter where Bao airs grievances on behalf of Imperial Concubine Li.

Moreover, Yu Yue was over-scrupulous in renaming the book. "three ... and five ..." is idiomatic usage in Chinese. In its original sense, it denotes the numerals three and five, like the "three sage kings and five emperors" of ancient China. Used connotatively, "three ... and five ..." mean "many" or "numerous", as in the phrase "in groups of three or five" (in threes and fours). In the title *The Book of Three Heroes and Five Gallants* "three ... and five ..." are used both in the original and in the connotative sense, that is, the three heroes and five gallants point both to the named characters and at the same time to all the heroes in the story. Even in its original sense, it is correct to count the Southern Hero, Northern Hero and Twin Heroes as three heroes instead of four. We have "three virtuous kings" in ancient Chinese history: King Yu of the Xia Dynasty, King Tang of the Shang Dynasty and Kings Wenwang and Wuwang of the Zhou Dynasty. They are four kings, not three. But Kings Wenwang and Wuwang both belong to the Zhou Dynasty, so they are counted as one and not two. In the story of the heroes, Ding Zhaolan and Ding Zhaohui are twins, so why should they not count as one? The usage of "three ... and five ..." reveals the richness of Chinese culture. "Seven Heroes and Five Gallants" is technically correct but less imaginative.

Despite his pedantry, Yu Yue made a notable contribution to the distribution of the novel. His revised edition of *The Seven Heroes and Five Gallants* was read widely in south China and soon throughout the country. Since then two versions of the same story existed concurrently: *The Book of Three Heroes and Five Gallants* and *The Seven Heroes and Five Gallants*.

All this shows that the book underwent a slow process of formation before it was turned from a prompt book for story-tellers into a novel in chapters. The features of story-telling fade while it gains quality as a literary work.

Although there have been many stories or dramas about gallant heroes and upright, incorruptible officials since the Song Dynasty, *The Seven Heroes and Five Gallants* is probably the first novel to combine both elements. Later, more novels of this type appeared, like *Cases of*

Lord Peng, Cases of Lord Shi. Lu Xun sums up the characteristics of these stories in this way: "There were many stories of this type about brave and gallant men in towns or villages who championed the good, killed tyrants and achieved great deeds for the state. These gallants invariably worked for some outstanding official. In this case it was Bao Zheng..."*

Artistically, *The Seven Heroes and Five Gallants* has marvellous descriptions of characters and complex plots.

As the reader is aware, *The Seven Heroes and Five Gallants* evolved from a prompt book for story-tellers. Shi Yukun was a native story-teller of great artistic attainments. Though the singsong lines have been cut out and the text polished by scholars, the novel still retains some of the artistic features of the folk art of story-telling. Lu Xun says it mimics voices of people and describes objects much in the way of prompt books for story-tellers. In his preface to the novel Yu Yue admires it for the "remarkable plot and the romantic imagination revealed. The characters are drawn with a wealth of detail while the descriptions are apt and vivid". Wenzhu Zhuren also praises it for "offering vivid details in flawlessly knit episodes" (Preface to *The Book of Three Heroes and Five Gallants*). Apart from vivid details, the novel is full of suspense. In Chapter 87, Jiang Ping and Ai Hu are in the same boat when the former plunges into the river to save a drowning man. Not knowing where Jiang Ping is, Ai Hu is worried. Here the readers too, worry about Jiang Ping. But the author simply follows the thread of Ai Hu and thus keeps the readers waiting in suspense until Chapter 97 for the outcome of Jiang Ping, where the author resumes Jiang Ping's story. This device usually adopted in story-telling is successfully used in *The Seven Heroes and Five Gallants* and adds brilliant touches to it.

Secondly, *The Seven Heroes and Five Gallants* arranges the plots in its own peculiar way. It consists of three parts: Chapters 1 through 27 are largely about the legal cases settled by Lord Bao; Chapters 28 through 78 are about the trouble caused by the five "rats" in the eastern capital and adventures of the heroes and gallant men; while

* Lu Xun, *A Brief History of Chinese Fiction*, 3rd ed., Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1976, pp. 340-341.

chapter 79 till the end narrate Yan Shenmin's expedition to Xiangyang and the surrender of Zhong Xiong. In this way, the principal and subordinate parts are arranged in a coherent whole with the main parts shown in relief, thus ensuring that the reader's attention is captured and that he will read on eagerly till the end. Had episodes about cases handled by Lord Bao been inserted in the narration of the trouble caused by the five "rats" in the eastern capital, the reader's attention would have been diverted.

At the same time, the author displays his skill in arranging plot within the main frame of the novel. Lesser events cluster around major events while still lesser ones are arranged within the lesser; thus a multi-level, multi-plot structure is formed. As the main plot reaches a climax all relevant characters and subplots are clearly displayed. For example, from the main plot of "five rats making trouble in the eastern capital" emerges Bai Yutang's sworn brother Yan Shenmin who comes to the home of Liu Hong for his wedding, and from this event occurs a murder caused by the breach of the marriage contract by the Liu family. The complex plot reveals the author's well-conceived plan: Bai Yutang brings Yan Shenmin into the story and the murder trial involves the appearance of Lord Bao at court — thus Yan Shenmin is woven into the main plot of the novel and the ground for the next major event is laid.

Thirdly, the novel presents a panoply of characters of various types. It is remarkable in that there is not only a lively depiction of the main characters like upright and selfless Lord Bao, the courageous, arrogant master of martial arts, Bai Yutang, the wise Jiang Ping and the young but clever and ambitious Ai Hu, there are also detailed and impressive descriptions of ordinary people. Zhao Hu is an example. The author displays Zhao's warm-heartedness and concern. In Chapter 22 when Zhan Zhao displays his skills in the Prowess-Display Building, others only cheer him on and encourage him, it is left to the thoughtful fourth brother, Zhao Hu, to offer the hero a cup of warm wine. "It will pep you up," he says. Thus his thoughtfulness is outlined in a few sentences. In the episode where Zhi Hua steals the crown from the palace, the author deliberately adds a poor foreman, Wang Da. Feeling sympathy for Zhi Hua, who is disguised as a clumsy and foolish poor man, he takes every care of him. In this way the

author depicts the good nature of Wang Da and at the same time reveals the wit and resourcefulness of Zhi Hua. This shows the author's close observation of everyday life and his faculty to manipulate the language. Therefore though there are many characters in the novel, none of them are identical. Finishing the novel the reader has a clear picture of the numerous characters in his mind. As Lu Xun says, "The outlaws are described vividly, and the descriptions of the ways of the world and humorous remarks all add bright colour to the heroes."

Last but not least, the fact that the novel evolves from a prompt book for story-tellers and is therefore full of colloquialisms is a salient feature. Story-telling is a verbal art. The story-teller has to command linguistic skills, he has to know the colloquial expressions of the people on the one hand, and on the other he has to be able to imitate different regional dialects. The novel fully displays the author's faculty in both fields. In Chapters 111 and 112, Zhi Hua dresses himself as a fisherman and cracks jokes with the guards at the gate of the Junshan Fortress. At first glance the author seems to be parading his glib tongue, but then the reader realises that the witty remarks of Zhi Hua relax the vigilance of the guard of the heavily-guarded fortress. This displays the quick wit of Zhi Hua. In the novel regional dialects like those of Shanxi and southern China are used in many places. Each dialect helps to express the personality of the characters of a special region. The straightforwardness of Shanxi people, the shrewdness of the southerners are stressed in a few words in vernacular. The author is indeed well versed with regard to language.

Although *The Seven Heroes and Five Gallants* has not achieved the status in Chinese literature of famous novels like *Shui Hu Zhuan* (translated variously as *Outlaws of the Marsh* and *The Water Margin*) and the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, it has its merits and exerts an influence on other works.

Originating in the Northern Song Dynasty, tales about Lord Bao had become wide-spread among the people in the Southern Song Dynasty, and they first flourished in the dramas of the Yuan Dynasty and matured fully in the novels of the Ming and Qing Dynasties. In the prompt books of the Song and Yuan Dynasties and the dramas of the Yuan Dynasty the tales were separate episodes, even the *Cases of Lord Bao* of the Ming Dynasty was but a collection of a dozen separate

episodes. In those tales the image of Lord Bao is one-dimensional. In *The Seven Heroes and Five Gallants*, however, the tales of Lord Bao are knit into an evolving and changing string of episodes and the characters are depicted in multiple dimensions. Thus the full round character of the upright and incorruptible Lord Bao has been added to the legacy of literary images in Chinese literature.

After *The Seven Heroes and Five Gallants*, there appeared a great number of stories about chivalrous heroes and complicated legal cases. Despite their inferior quality, these stories comprised a new school which has exerted a direct influence on modern novels of chivalrous heroes.

The Seven Heroes and Five Gallants has undergone many reprintings and enjoys a large readership in China. The English translation will enable more readers to know the charm of Chinese novels and share with Chinese readers gems from the Chinese literary legacy.

Written by *Deng Shaoji* and *Wang Jun*

Translated by *Wen Jingen*

April 10, 1996, Beijing

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Bao Zheng: Lord Bao who from humble beginnings, rises to high office at the imperial court and gathers around him a group of brave men to fight corruption among those in power.

THE SEVEN HEROES

Ouyang Chun: known as Northern Hero.

Ai Hu: adopted son of Northern Hero.

Zhan Zhao: known as Southern Hero.

Ding Twins: Ding Zhaolan and Ding Zhaohui, whose sister marries Southern Hero.

Shen Zhongyuan: former cohort of Ma Qiang, who later joins the heroes.

Zhi Hua: known as Black Fox.

THE FIVE GALLANTS

Bai Yutang: known as Sleek Rat, Gallant Number Five.

Han Zhang: known as Earth Rat, Gallant Number Two.

Jiang Ping: known as River Rat, Gallant Number Four.

Lu Fang: known as Sky Rat, Gallant Number One.

Xu Qing: known as Mountain Rat, Gallant Number Three.

宋仁宗



Emperor Ren Zong

玉宸宮李太后



Empress Dowager Li

陳
林



Chen Lin

寇珠



Kou Zhu

郭
槐



Guo Huai