The Subject of Love in the T'ang Ch'uan-Ch'i

The Chinese fiction has a long history in the development of Chinese literature, but it was not until the T'ang (唐) Dynasty that Chinese fiction reached its maturity as a literary form. T'ang fiction known as Ch'uan-Ch'i (傳奇) or Tale of the Marvellous, inherited the themes and techniques of the Six Dynasties tales and anecdotes. It is also significant that the great development and widespread popularity of the Ch'uan-Ch'i arose out of some sociological factors.

Among the factors that contributed to the rise of this literary form are the neoclassical movement in prose, which provides a suitable medium for narration; the practice of wen-chüan (温卷) in state examination, in which the candidates were to demonstrate their ability at narration, exposition and versification; the influences of Buddhism, Taoism and the prosperous, brilliant metropolitan life with all its gaieties and tragedies, from which much of the T'ang fictional materials were drawn.

T'ang story writers aimed to create interesting and moving tales in simple and effective prose. While supernatural elements still abound in these stories, there is an obvious tendency to introduce realistic human material to reflect life in metropolitan society.
The T'ang fiction has been classified in four categories:

(1) The fictional biographies of historical persons or events,
(2) The religious and supernatural tales,
(3) The love stories,
(4) The chivalry tales.

Their boundaries, however, are not well defined. For instance, a love story may contain supernatural details; a chivalric swordsman may also be the main character in a love story.

In this thesis, I am discussing the subject of love that is manifested in T'ang Ch'uan-Ch'i and six stories have been chosen for this purpose.