Abstract

The objective of this thesis is to look for the existence of the wandering knights in Chinese records so as to understand the reason for the survival of the culture of gallantry in the hearts of the Chinese from the Spring and Autumn period (770-481BC) till now.

This special culture was nurtured since the Spring and Autumn period when the Chinese society was undergoing drastic changes, which eventually caused the emergence of a special group of people, the Wandering Knights. According to Shi Ji (史记) 124, although wandering knights’ action may not conform to perfect righteousness, yet they are always true to their words. Without thinking of themselves, they hasten to the side of those who are in trouble, whether it means survival or destruction, life or death, and they never boast of their accomplishments but rather consider it a disgrace to brag of what they have done for others. These are the special characteristics of a wandering knight and the culture of gallantry is the result of those people trying to fulfill the characteristics of the wandering knights.

With the clear concept of the culture, the search for these wandering knights began from the Official History to Chinese fiction. The development and changes in the culture were traced as the wandering knights’ characteristics changed gradually. The main reason for the change is that people’s expectation changed as the living environment and conditions changed.

The main finding of this thesis is that the Chinese still yearn for the culture of gallantry although it is no longer practised in the real life. This is the reason for the existence of wandering knights in the Chinese Fiction from the Han dynasty till today, because the virtual characters in the Chinese Fiction could realise their dreams which people might not be able to fulfill in their everyday lives.

For those who might be interested to further explore the culture of gallantry, they could look into other areas, such as Chinese opera, drama, films, other types of
pop culture and websites in the internet. The culture of gallantry is in the blood of Chinese; thus it will be passed on from generation to generation as years go by.