Abstract

*The Water Margin or Shui-hu-chuan (水浒传)* is hailed as one of the "Four Masterworks of the Novels of the Ming Dynasty".

Although the story depicts the rise and fall of Liang Shan rebellion, there have been few attempts made by past and present scholars to examine the leadership styles in the Water Margin, especially those of Wang Lun and Chao Gai, the first and second bandit leaders respectively of Liang Shan rebellion. This is because firstly, both leaders were not featured in the scroll of "The Hundred and Eight Heroes", and secondly, both leaders appeared very little in the novel. The third and last leader, Song Jiang, featured prominently in the novel. However, though he had received many criticisms from scholars in the past, these criticisms were quite different.

Thus, the primary aim of this study is to investigate the leadership style of all the three leaders in this novel in great detail, in order to gain objective insightful views into the three leaders. Different aspects being examined include: the leadership qualities of each leader, the way in which the leaders utilized their subordinates' talents, the relationship with their subordinates and the direction in which the leaders had taken. This thorough examination is important because these leaders are instrumental in the success and the downfall of the rebellion through their vastly different styles of ruling. The secondary aim of this study is to examine the artistic merits of the three leaders as this area has been neglected in the past.

From the observations made, it is concluded that though the first and second leaders were somewhat more inferior in leading the organization, their contributions cannot be ignored. Similarly, the artistic merits of the three leaders cannot be neglected either. This is particularly true for Song Jiang, whose character typifies a classic example of fine literature description.