The ideology as manifested in the T'ang fiction

Fiction has a long history in the development of Chinese Literature, but the early scholars and Confucianists did not accure much importance to this field of literary work. It was not until the T'ang (唐) dynasty that fiction literature flourished and developed as a unique style of its own.

Fiction, in T'ang dynasty, was known as "Romance" (Ch'uan Chi 傳奇). Although the authors had different treatment in subject matters, certain common characteristics in the ideology can be discerned. T'ang Romances reflect the thinking of Buddhism, Taoism and Mythology, criticize the scholars' ambition for materialistic gains, depict the grievous destiny of women, praise the noble quality of women, expose the chaotic situation of the society and commend the chivalrous spirit of swordsmen.

"Literature is the reflection of age." The ideology of T'ang Romances also cannot escape this influences. Though its evolution and development have great significance in Chinese literary History, yet certain defects were in existence. T'ang Romances emphasize too much on religious implications and thoughts which are too pessimistic. The authors tended to present a very gloomy picture of an intellectual who failed in his quest for fame, position and monetary gain. Sometimes the authors sympathized with them on their feudal ethical principles. They also presented a picture of the tragic fate of women, without providing remedies and solutions. They even suggested that only high office and noble status were the solution to this problem. Hence their views towards the female sex were still very feudalistic. To them, women
have no courage to make positive resistance against the feudal system. The authors' thought and opinion on the political aspects of their works were of no consequence, though some were valuable. The idea of "death for close friends" and "individual struggle for self or master" might not apply to the practical realistic world.

But we should bear in mind that the defects in T'ang Romances are the result of the authors' environmental background where traditional feudal norms and value were strongly held. However, T'ang Romances make invaluable contributions towards the development of Chinese fiction literature, as their beautiful style, characters and vivid stories remain as heritages for the future writers of the Sung (宋), Yuan (元), Ming (明), and Ch'ing (清) dynasties.