Abstract

The Yang Jiajiang Yanyi 《杨家将演义》 is a novel recounts the bravery and loyalty of a patriotic family, the Yang family (杨家), who fought against the enemy Liao (辽国) in the defence of the Song Dynasty (宋朝). The story, which appeared a thousand years ago, originated from the oral tradition of storytelling and drama. As such, the Yang Jiajiang Yanyi came about through a slow process of evolution. And the story continued to attract enthusiastic response after it was being written as a novel in the Ming Dynasty (明朝).

This thesis attempts to analyse the themes of the novel and special attention is devoted to the concept of 'loyalty', which is a central theme in this novel. The analysis will be based on the examination of the original and the distorted meaning of the word 'loyalty' (Zhong忠). Finally comparison of the concepts of 'loyalty and patriotism' as reflected in the novel will also be studied.

The thesis starts by introducing the background of the story and emergence of the novel. Chapter Three narrates the main events of the story in brief. Chapter Four, the main body of the thesis, highlights the theme of 'loyalty' in this novel and examines the general background of the
idea of 'loyalty'. Chapter Five focuses on the main events of the story and attempts to illustrate the central theme of 'loyalty' by highlighting specific incidents and events in the novel. Chapter Six is a study of the personalities and characters of the story in order to show how difference individuals adhered to the concept of loyalty. The final chapter, Chapter Seven, serves as a conclusion in which an overall observation of the themes of the novel will be present.

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