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The Canonization of Du Fu in the Context of East Asian Literature

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Abstract

In such regions of the East Asian cultural sphere as China, Korea and Japan, the canonization of Du Fu was a relatively lengthy process. It was achieved mainly because of strong support from three different cohorts: the first cohort is the Chinese literary giants who expressed strong commendations of Du Fu, the second cohort is the Japanese scholars who conducted rigorous evaluation of Du Fu's poetry within academic frameworks, and the third cohort is the Korean royals who directly contributed to the rise of Du Fu's poetry. The first two cohorts are unofficial, while the latter one is official but not without amicable interactions with the masses. Korean literature was in tune with the character of Du Fu's poetry because it displayed a strong tendency towards politics; Japanese literature, on the other hand, was somewhat not, for it hardly included coverage on issues of social politics. Du Fu was given the highest literary recognition in both Korea and Japan for his poetic prowess, and his poetry was used by the state in both regions to serve different purposes; this goes to demonstrate that the two countries made their own culturally-driven decisions when accepting the influence of Chinese culture. It is a norm in East Asian literature for literary canons, whether old or new, to coexist, regardless of type or level, and such a norm is particular to the admission of literary works into literary canons within the East Asian cultural sphere.

Keywords

Du Fu's poetry – East Asian literature – literary canon

1 Introduction

In 1962, in commemoration of the 1250th anniversary of the birth of Du Fu 杜甫 [712–770], Kōjirō Yoshikawa 吉川幸次郎 [1904–1980] dedicated a speech on the relationship between Du Fu's poetry and Japanese literature.¹ In the same year, in the 17th issue of *Journal of Chinese Literature* 中國文學報, Kiichirō Kanda 神田喜一郎 [1897–1984] published an overview of the studies on Du Fu's poetry from the Heian Period to the Meiji Period in Japan.² In 1976, Lee Byong-ju 李丙疇 [1921–] published a monograph discussing Du Fu's poetry in the context of Korean literature.³ These events marked the beginning of modern academic studies of both the position of Du Fu's poetry and its significance within the realm of East Asian literature. Against the backdrop of the 21st century, when academic research characteristically places academic discourses about cultures within broader contexts regardless of nationality, race, and language, although the scope of discussion of the present paper includes the three main geographical entities of East Asian literature, namely China, the Korean Peninsula, and Japan, Chinese literature has been determined to be its focal point; and such a decision was made on the basis of the extraordinary richness of Chinese literary materials, but it was more so, in light of the perception – which was generally held in East Asia before the 20th century – that Chinese literature was the source of all other literatures. From this general belief, it should follow that Chinese literary works canonized in East Asia represent the classics of East Asian literature.

2 The Canonization of Du Fu in Chinese Literary History

Despite the modern-day universal acknowledgement of Du Fu's position as the canonical poet within Chinese literature, comments given on his poetry during his lifetime present a vastly different picture. Compilers of the most important form of literary criticism in ancient China, which was the anthology,

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- 1 Kōjirō Yoshikawa 吉川幸次郎, "Tōyō bungaku niokeru toho no igi 東洋文學における杜甫の意義 [The Significance of Du Fu in Oriental Literature]," in *Yoshikawa kōjirō zenshū* 吉川幸次郎全集 [Complete Collection of Kōjirō Yoshikawa's Works] (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1968), 12:586–592.
 - 2 Kiichirō Kanda 神田喜一郎, "Nihon niokeru Toho 日本に於ける杜甫 [Tu Fu's Works in Japan]," *Chūgoku bungakuhou* 中國文學報 17 (1962): 186–195.
 - 3 Lee Byong-ju 李丙疇, *Dusiui bigyo munhakjeok yeongu* 杜詩의 比較文學的研究 [Tu Fu's Poetry in Korean Literature] (Seoul: Asea munhwasa, 1976).

hardly took a liking to Du Fu's poetry during the Tang dynasty [618–907], and in other forms of literary criticism, his poetry suffered similar treatments too. Du Fu's poetry, it follows, can hardly be described as having a wide-spread impact,⁴ even though it did achieve patchy circulation and attract perceptive comments from a handful of men of insight.

The literary realm showered adulations upon Du Fu for the first time in the Yuanhe Period [806–820], and they were offered by Han Yu 韓愈 [768–824], Bai Juyi 白居易 [772–846], and Yuan Zhen 元稹 [779–831]. Yuan Zhen once made a comment on Du Fu's poetry with such a lasting impact that it is even familiar to modern-day academia; and his comment, which reads “since the first ever poet, there has been no poet as good as Du Fu”, represents the highest possible commendation among all positive comments about Du Fu.⁵ Yuan's friend, Bai Juyi, viewed Du Fu's poetry as “the bridge connecting the past and the present” [*guan chuan jin gu* 貫穿今古].⁶ However, according to Han Yu's 韓愈 [768–824] “Teasing Zhang Ji [*Tiao Zhang Ji* 調張籍],” we can find that these sentiments were not universally shared in the literary circle.⁷ The first anthology that commended Du Fu's poetry is *Tang Poetry Selected by Category* [*Tangshi leixuan* 唐詩類選], compiled by Gu Tao 顧陶 [fl. 830–860?] in 856. The book was lost but its preface survived, and according to it, the author not only held that his peers “could not match (Du Fu)” [*mo de er jian* 莫得而間]⁸ but also made the unequivocal move by putting Du Fu before Li Bai 李白 [701–762], a move intentionally made at a time when the accepted pairing of the two poets was Li Bai and then Du Fu. Similarly, Wei Zhuang 韋莊 [836–910] opened his *Collection of Mysteries upon Mysteries* [*Youxuan ji* 又玄集] with Du Fu's poetry and followed it with Li Bai's. Even though he did not include Du Fu's poems in his anthology entitled *Collection of the Gifted and Talented* [*Caidiao ji* 才調集], Wei Hu 韋穀 [fl. 947] made a special point by stating in the preface of the anthology that his

4 For the circulation and impact of Du Fu's poetry in its early stage, see Chen Shangjun 陳尚君, “Du shi zaoqi liuchuan kao 杜詩早期流傳考 [The Early Circulation of Du Fu's Poetry],” in *Tangdai wenxue congkao* 唐代文學叢考 [Collective Exploration of Tang Literature] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1997), 306–337.

5 Yuan Zhen 元稹, *Yuan Zhen ji* 元稹集 [Collected Works of Yuan Zhen] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982), 56.600–601.

6 Bai Juyi 白居易, *Bai Juyi ji* 白居易集 [Collected Works of Bai Juyi] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979), 45.961.

7 Qian Zhonglian 錢仲聯, *Han Changli shi xinian jishi* 韓昌黎詩繫年集釋 [Collective Annotations of Han Yu's Poetry in Chronological Order] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1984), 9.989.

8 Li Fang 李昉 et al., *Wenyuan yinghua* 文苑英華 [The Fine Blossoms of the Literary Garden] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1966), 714.3686.

motivation to compile the book came from “reading the collected poems of Li Bai, Du Fu, Yuan Zhen, and Bai Juyi in spare time.”⁹

Because the poetry styles popular at the beginning of the Song dynasty [960–1279] were the Bai style [*bai ti* 白體], Late Tang style [*wantang ti* 晚唐體], and Xikun style [*xikun ti* 西昆體], Du Fu’s poetry was belittled and shunned rather than regarded as the height of poetry. Besides showing his dislike towards Du Fu’s poetry, Yang Yi 楊億 [974–1020], a representative practitioner of the Xikun style, went further by labelling Du Fu as “country scholar” [*cun fuzi* 村夫子].¹⁰ Ou Yangxiu 歐陽修 [1007–1072] later reformed the Xikun style by imbuing it with Li Bai’s and Han Yu’s poetry style preferences. Notwithstanding his strong recommendations of Du Fu’s poetry in the *New Book of Tang* [*Xin tangshu* 新唐書], which he compiled together with Song Qi 宋祁 [998–1061], who was a supporter of the Xikun style, Ouyang Xiu did not base his commendations entirely on his personal aesthetic preferences.¹¹ In fact, he did not appreciate Du Fu’s poetry; according to Liu Ban 劉攽 [1022–1088], Ouyang Xiu did not show much appreciation towards Du Fu’s poetry, and the reason remained elusive why he thought highly of Han Yu but little of Du Fu.¹² Similarly, according to Chen Shidao 陳師道 [1053–1101], author of *Houshan’s Remarks on Poetry* [*Houshan shihua* 後山詩話], “... to think that Ouyang Xiu is not fond of Du Fu’s poetry ... every time when we come to talk about it, Huang Tingjian 黃庭堅 [1045–1105] and I are simply in disbelief, thinking how strange it is.”¹³ In addition, in his “On the Merits and Demerits of Both Li Bai’s Poetry and Du Fu’s [*Li Bai Du Fu shi youlie shuo* 李白杜甫詩優劣說],” Ou Yangxiu asserted that Li Bai’s poetry was superior to Du Fu’s.¹⁴ Two things about Du Fu pointed out in the *New Book of Tang*, however, did contribute to his canonization. These two points are in relation to his character, and they are “allegiance to the emperor” [*zhongjun* 忠君] and “poet-historian” [*shishi* 詩史].¹⁵

9 Fu Xuancong 傅璇琮, *Tangren xuan tangshi xinbian* 唐人選唐詩新編 [*A New Edition of Tang Poems Selected by Tang People*] (Xi’an: Shannxi renmin jiaoyu chubanshe, 1996), 691.

10 Liu Ban 劉攽, *Zhongshan shihua* 中山詩話 [*Zhongshan’s Remarks on Poetry*], in vol. 1 of *Lidai shihua* 歷代詩話 [*Poetry Remarks Through the Ages*], ed. He Wenhuan 何文煥 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), 288.

11 Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修, *Xin Tangshu* 新唐書 [*New Book of Tang*] (Beijing: Zhongguo shudian, 1975), 201.5738–5739.

12 Liu Ban, *Zhongshan shihua*, 288.

13 Chen Shidao 陳師道, *Houshan shihua* 後山詩話 [*Houshan’s Remarks on Poetry*], in vol. 1 of *Lidai shihua*, 303.

14 Ouyang Xiu, *Ouyang Xiu quanji* 歐陽修全集 [*Complete Works of Ouyang Xiu*] (Beijing: Zhongguo shudian, 1986), 1044.

15 Ouyang Xiu, *Xin Tangshu*, 5738.

It was during the Northern Song [960–1127] that Du Fu's poetry came to be recognized as the acme of poetry in Chinese literature. Wang Anshi 王安石 [1021–1085] was the first to highly compliment Du Fu's poetry, and not only did he compile the book entitled *Sequel to the Collected Works of Du Fu* [*Du Gongbu houji* 杜工部後集] as a tribute to Du Fu, but he also put the name of Du Fu before that of Ouyang Xiu, of Han Yu, and of Li Bai, in the anthology titled *Poems of Four Masters* [*Sijia shi* 四家詩] which he compiled. Ever since Han Yu made the poetic pairing of Li Bai and Du Fu, they had been known as the two poet giants and heated discussions about whose poetry was superior had been part of public discourses; during these debates, however, the prevailing tendency was to elevate Li Bai over Du Fu. It was therefore quite a counterintuitive move by Wang Anshi to give priority to Du Fu by putting his poetry in the first section of the *Poems of Four Masters* and Li Bai's in the very last. Following in the footsteps of Wang Anshi was Su Shi 蘇軾 [1037–1101], who continued from where the *New Book of Tang* left off and went further by validating Du Fu's poetry from an ideological perspective. His "Preface to Collected Poems of Wang Dingguo [*Wang Dingguo shiji xu* 王定國詩集序]" endorsed Du Fu by stating that he should be lauded as the best ever poet in history for the reason that he had never once forgotten his sworn mission to serve the emperor, not even during mealtimes, even though he had never been put into a position of importance by the monarch during his life that was full of miseries.¹⁶ Since that statement, the expression of "never let one meal go by without thinking of the lord" [*yi fan bu wang jun* 一飯不忘君] became widely used during the Song dynasty, and thus it was familiar to everyone. Though such a statement helped tremendously with the recognition of Du Fu's poetry as the zenith of poetry in Chinese literature and beyond, it painted an incomplete picture of his poetry, failing to reveal its true features. As a result, poets who imitated Du Fu's poetry fell into the pitfall of only scratching its surface.¹⁷ Offering further interpretations of Du Fu's poetry from an artistic perspective were Huang Tingjian and the Jiangxi School of Poetry [*jiangxi shipai* 江西詩派] led by him. His endorsement of Du Fu's poetry was due to a combination of factors, such as the accumulated generational learnings passed down in his family, influences from his mentors and friends, and most importantly his inheritance of Wang Anshi's practice of centering the studies of Du Fu's poetry around the

16 Su Shi 蘇軾, *Su Shi wenji* 蘇軾文集 [*Collected Works of Su Shi*], coll. Kong Fanli 孔凡禮 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986), 1:10, 318.

17 Xia Jingguan 夏敬觀 commented that people from the Ming dynasty [1368–1644] who aspired to imitate Du Fu suffered the same fate. See Xia Jingguan 夏敬觀, *Tangshi shuo* 唐詩說 [*Commentary on the Tang Poetry*] (Taipei: Heluo tushu chubanshe, 1975), 48.

concept of *jufa* 句法. As far as *jufa* as a literary term was understood in ancient times, its main areas of concern were content and form, and its application entailed an investigation into the hidden depths of a writer as well as that writer's character and refinement. When Huang Tingjian and his likes were studying Du Fu's poetry primarily by way of *jufa*, they were invariably taking into consideration such traits of Du Fu as loyalty and righteousness as well as his considerable accomplishment in the art of poetry.¹⁸ As far as the mastery of the art of poetry was concerned, according to them, it all boiled down to one's amount of knowledge and level of education. In short, the canonization of Du Fu was made possible because of the continued reassertions made by representative members of the literati from the Northern Song about the unparalleled greatness of his poetry.

3 The Canonization of Du Fu in Japanese Literary History

In his "Written after Reading the Collection of Li Bai and Du Fu's Poetry [*Du Li Du shiji yinti juanhou* 讀李杜詩集因題卷後]," Bai Juyi wrote, "The singing (of Li Bai and Du Fu's poetry) will linger for thousands of years, / Their reputation stirs the four barbarians."¹⁹ If that were not a baseless statement, then between the end of the 8th century and the beginning of the 9th century, it should have been the case that Du Fu's poetry were already widely known among the "four barbarians" [*síyì* 四夷], or if that was not the case, then to say the very least, Du Fu's poetry should have been introduced to the eastern barbarians [*dongyi* 東夷]. It is beyond doubt that by the mid-ninth century at the latest, Japanese had been able to access collections of Du Fu's poetry.²⁰ As pointed out by a number of scholars, however, Japan's favorite Tang poet during the Heian period [794–1192] was not Du Fu but Bai Juyi.²¹ Bai Juyi was considered as a

18 Huang Tingjian 黃庭堅, *Yuzhang Huang xiansheng wenji* 豫章黃先生文集 [Collected Works of Master Huang of Yuzhang], in *Sibu congkan* 四部叢刊.

19 Bai Juyi, *Bai Juyi ji*, 15, 319–320.

20 Such a conclusion should have already been accepted by the academia in both Japan and China. See Chen Shangjun, "Du shi zaoqi liuchuan kao"; and Takeshi Shizunaga 靜永健, "kinsei nihon de yomareta tohoshishū nistuite 近世日本で讀まれた《杜甫詩集》について [The Reading of *Du Fu's Poetry Collections* in Early Modern Japan]," *Bungakukenkū* 文學研究 109 (2012): 1–19. Among the texts listed by Wang Zhu 王洙, two volumes of the ancient text are in parallel to the six volumes of *Little Collection* [*Xiaoji* 小集] prefaced by Fan Huang 樊晃, so it seems that the former is not a transcription based on the latter.

21 See Kōjirō Yoshikawa, "Toho zai nihon 杜詩在日本 [Du Fu's Poetry in Japan]," in *Yoshikawa kōjirō zenshū*, 12:717–719; Yōichi Kurokawa 黒川洋一, "Nihon niokeru toshi 日本における杜詩 [*Tu Fu's Works in Japan*]," in *Toho no kenkyū* 杜甫の研究 [Studies

model poet during the Heian period, and he had such a profound influence that it was reflected not only in Sinitic literature but also in such forms of *kana* literature as *monogatari* and *waka*.²²

Du Fu's poetry began to attract attention in Japan in the 13th century during the Kamakura period [1185–1333] and the Muromachi period [1336–1573], to be precise. Literature of the Five Mountains produced by poet-monks represented the height of literature during the two periods. According to Hokkai Emura 江村北海 [1713–1788], these poet-monks were venerated by anyone who could be engaged in a conversation about poetry, hence their wide-spread renown.²³ As Japan was importing works of both literature and literary criticism from the Song dynasty, Bai Juyi's position atop of Japan's literary world was threatened by the rise in Du Fu's position. As more people read Du Fu's poems more often, it soon became a staple for Buddhist monasteries to host workshops on his poetry, and the most well-known monks who led such activities were Gidō Shūshin 義堂周信 [1325–1388], Zuikei Shūhō 瑞溪周鳳 [1392–1473], Taikyoku Zōsu 太極藏主 [b. 1421], Keijo Shūrin 景徐周麟 [1440–1518], and Ten'in Ryūtaku 天隱龍澤 [1422–1500].²⁴ Because of the staunch support from Gidō Shūshin, Du Fu's poetry continued to attract attention from poet-monks during the Muromachi period. As a result, it soon became a staple activity in the life of the people to read his poems, raising his popularity to an unprecedented level. Nonetheless, Du Fu cannot be said to have attained his position as the canonical poet by that point in Japan. According to previous studies, poet-monks of the Five Mountains endorsed Du Fu's poetry largely because they were following the examples of Su Shi and Huang Tingjian, and in addition, they based their understandings of his poetry on judgements given

on Du Fu] (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1977); and Takeshi Shizunaga, "Kinsei nihon de yomareta tohoshishū nistuite."

- 22 Hikojiro Kaneko 金子彦次郎, *Heianjidaibungaku to hakushimonjū* 平安時代文學と白氏文集 [*The Collections of Bai Juyi's Works in the Heian Period*] (Tokyo: Geirinsha, 1977); Kiyoko Maruyama 丸山キヨ子, *Genjimonogatari to hakushimonjū* 源氏物語と白氏文集 [*The Tale of Genji and the Collection of Bai Juyi's Works*], vol. 3 of *Tokyōjoshidaigakugak kaikenkyūsousho* 東京女子大学学会研究叢書 [*Tokyo Women's University Association Research Series*] (Tokyo: tokyōjoshidaigakugakkai, 1964); Susumu Nakanishi 中西進, *Genjimonogatari to hakurakuten* 源氏物語と白樂天 [*The Tale of Genji and Bai Juyi*] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1997).
- 23 Hokkai Emura 江村北海, *Nihonshishi* 日本詩史 [*A History of Japanese Poetry*], in vol. 2 of *Nihonshiwassousho* 日本詩話叢書 [*Collection of Japanese Poetry Remarks*], ed. Cho Cheong-gye 趙鍾業 (Seoul: Taehaksa, 1992), 569–570.
- 24 See the second chapter in the second section in Kōshirō Haga 芳賀幸四郎, *Chūseizenrin no gakumon oyobi bungaku nikansuru kenkyū* 中世禪林の學問および文學に關する研究 [*A Study of Medieval Zen Buddhism and Literature*] (Tokyo: Nihongakujutsushinkokai, 1956), 269–274.

during the Song dynasty on Du Fu's poems.²⁵ An unquestionably keen insight as that is, there is, however, one important but generally ignored factor, which is a specific view held by the poet-monks about what counts as the best literature. According to them, the only form of literature that merited advocacy was "poetry by revered monks" [*gaoseng shi* 高僧詩]. As Gidō Shūshin pointed out, poems created by contemporary monks had become so derivative and poetry by revered monks was the best source for people learning how to write poetry.²⁶ The reason that "poetry by revered monks" was held in such high regard back then goes beyond itself as a form of literature per se; it is more about the Way [*dao* 道] as manifested in it. Coming from a religious background, poet-monks would find themselves reluctant to endorse Du Fu's poetry as the best form of literature, even though they did promote his poems.

Multiple prior studies have pointed out that during the Edo period [1603–1867], there was a huge surge in the circulation of Du Fu's poetry, causing his readership to grow further; the immediate cause of such wide-spread popularization, however, was the *Collective Commentary on Du Fu's Regulated Verse* [*Dulü jijie* 杜律集解], a general knowledge book authored by Shao Fu 邵傅 [n.d.] in the Ming dynasty [1368–1644].²⁷ Compared to its highly limited circulation in China, the *Collective Commentary on Du Fu's Regulated Verse* was once the best seller during the Edo period in Japan; it was reproduced on wood-blocks a number of times, and sold far more than other collections of Du Fu's poetry.²⁸ An important reason for the book's wide-spread popularity consisted in its brevity; it was so straightforward that everyone was able to understand it, in the words of Hayashi Gahō 林春齋 [1618–1680].²⁹ Not only was the original version of the book reproduced, but also its annotated versions done by Japanese writers, such as the *Detailed Interpretation of Du Fu's Regulated Verse* [*Dulü xiangjie* 杜律詳解] by Tsusaka Takahiro 津阪孝綽 [1758–1825]. Disciples of Tsusaka Takahiro later wrote an epilogue to his version, and the follow-up

25 See Masaru Aoki 青木正児, "Kokubungaku to shinabungaku 國文学と支那文学 [Domestic Literature and Chinese Literature]," in *Shinabungaku geijyutokou* 支那文學藝術考 [A Study of Chinese Literature] (Tokyo: Koubundou, 1942); and Takeshi Shizunaga, "Kinsei nihon de yomareta tohoshishū nistuite."

26 Gidō Shūshin 義堂周信, *Kūgenistiyōkuhūryakushū* くうげにちようくふうりやくしゅう [Short Collection of Kōhwa's Daily Thoughts] (Tokyo: Taiyosha, 1942), 42.

27 See Kōjirō Yoshikawa, "toho zai nihon"; Yōichi Kurokawa, "nihon niokeru toshi"; and Takeshi Shizunaga, "Kinsei nihon de yomareta tohoshishū nistuite."

28 Takeshi Shizunaga, "Kinsei nihon de yomareta tohoshishū nistuite."

29 Tōru Sagara 相良亨 et al., *Kinseijukabunshūshūsei* 近世儒家文集集成 [Collection of Modern Confucian Writings] (Tokyo: Perikansha Publishing, 1997), 12:390.

too sang high praises of Du Fu's poetry, although its content mainly mirrored judgements from the Song dynasty of Du Fu's poetry.

Does it follow from the above discussions that Du Fu had already attained his position as the canonical poet during the Edo period? My argument is that it does not. At the very best, I reason that, among the giants in the hall of fame of literature, Du Fu managed to earn himself a place for his poems, and for several decades of a period as long as three centuries, his poetry succeeded in maintaining its superiority. Firstly, even though Du Fu's poetry gained an almost unprecedented number of readers during the Edo period compared to the prior period, there was more than one contributing factor; besides, despite the wide circulation of Du Fu's poetry, it only lasted for a few decades. Secondly, it was due to the active endorsement by Ogyū Sorai 荻生徂徠 [1666–1728] that the *Anthology of Tang Poems* [*Tangshi xuan* 唐詩選] achieved its wide-spread popularity. In addition, plaudits given towards Du Fu's poetry during the Edo period were mainly found in prefaces and postscripts of woodblock reprints of his poetry, and understandably, these expressions of admiration were somewhat exaggerated. Lastly, the world of poetry was a dynamic one during the Edo period, meaning people never just studied and imitated one poet; hence it is incorrect to assume that one individual occupied the position as the canonical poet during that period.

It was Kōjirō Yoshikawa from the 20th century who moved Du Fu to the foreground in the landscape of Chinese literature, sang him the highest praises possible, and ultimately had the general public share his views about the poet. Under the influence of Torao Suzuki 鈴木虎雄 [1878–1963], Kōjirō Yoshikawa dedicated himself entirely to translating, annotating, and studying Du Fu's poems, and his research articles were printed and broadcast in such languages as Japanese, Chinese, English, Korean, and Vietnamese. Some of his comments on Du Fu are as follows:

As far as I am concerned, the greatest Chinese literary works have to be Du Fu's poems.³⁰

Du Fu is the greatest Chinese poet, and he is known in China as the “poet-sage,” in other words, the sage of poetry.³¹

30 Kōjirō Yoshikawa, *Yoshikawa kōjirō zenshū*, 12:3.

31 *Ibid.*, 12:560.

Du Fu's poetry paved the way for the literary efforts of Matsuo Bashō 松尾芭蕉 [1644–1694], increasing the significance of Du Fu in Japanese literature.³²

From the Northern Song in the 11th century to the present day, such a view has been maintained that Du Fu alone represents the Tang dynasty poets, counts as the greatest Chinese poet ever, and sits atop the world of Chinese poetry.³³

It was his opinions, which were reinforced by textbooks and literary history studies, that firmly established in the collective mind of the Japanese people Du Fu's position as the canonical poet.

4 The Canonization of Du Fu as Preeminent Poet atop the World of Korean Literature

Shin Wi 申緯 [1769–1845], who was hailed by Kim Taek-young 金澤榮 [1850–1927] as the greatest writer produced in the last five centuries,³⁴ commented in his poem, “How many people around the world are studying Du Fu? Where every household worships him, it is the easternmost area.”³⁵ The easternmost area refers to the Korean Peninsula. Shin Wi was not at all exaggerating by this comment, when we compare Du Fu's positions in the world of Chinese literature, of Korean literature, and of Japanese literature. Du Fu was revered in the world of Korean literature as the canonical poet, and it was in the world of Korean literature that his unique position as the canonical poet survived the longest duration and exerted the most extensive and profound impact.

Scholars from Korea, China, and Japan all had discussions about the time when Du Fu's poems were introduced into the Korean Peninsula, and they

32 Ibid., 12:592.

33 Ibid., 1:115.

34 Kim Taeg-yeong 金澤榮, *Sohodangjip* 韶濩堂集 [Collected Works of Sohodang], in vol. 2 of *Kimtaegyong jeonjip* 金澤榮全集 [Complete Collection of Kim Taeg-yeong's Works], ed. Hangukhak munheon yeonguso 韓國學文獻研究所 (Seoul: Asea munhwasa, 1978), 8.128.

35 Shin Wi 申緯, *Gyeongsudang jeongo* 警修堂全稿 [Complete Manuscripts of Gyeongsudang], in vol. 291 of *Hanguk munjip chonggan* 韓國文集叢刊 [Korean Literature Series], ed. Hanguk minjok munhwa chujinhoe 韓國民族文化推進會 (Seoul: Kyung-in Publishing, 2002), 11:375.

agreed that it was the 1080s at the latest.³⁶ Extant literature from the Goryeo dynasty [918–1392] is mainly literature produced in the Myeongjong's reign [1170–1197] and onwards, and it was Su Shi who held the position as the canonical poet during the Myeongjong's reign. According to Seo Geo-jeong's 徐居正 [1420–1492] *Remarks on Poetry by Easterners* [*Dongren shihua* 東人詩話], Su Shi was idolized by the Goryeo literati to the point where his art name Dongpo 東坡 was used to refer to the result of a pass for the imperial examinations, and when all the results of a pass were publicized, someone would shout "We have 33 Dongpos."³⁷ Some members of the Goryeo literati highly appreciated Du Fu's poetry, but their understandings of it were largely shaped by Su Shi's judgements of it; their interpretations of it were thus centered around Du Fu's grave concerns and great compassion for the people and the country, and his loyalty of "never letting one meal go by without thinking of the lord." For example, in the second volume of his *Sequel to the Collected Writings Interrupting My Leisure* [*Bu Xianji* 補閒集] (1254), Choi Ja 崔滋 [1188–1260] remarked that though living a miserable life of hunger and poverty, Du Fu never failed to include in every line of his poems his sworn loyalty and duty to the ruler.³⁸ The effect of such a remark reached as far as the Joseon dynasty [1392–1897]. In addition, according to the first volume of the *Remarks on Poetry by Easterners*, people in the past held Du Fu in high regard more because his poetry manifested his compassion for the people and loyalty to the ruler, than because he was a highly accomplished poet.³⁹ During the Joseon dynasty, the general assumption in relation to the learning of Du Fu's poetry techniques was that only some of the techniques were to be learned. According to the third volume of the *Collected Writings Interrupting My Leisure*, as desirable as it was to craft and refine a poem in the way Du Fu would, when those untrained

36 See Lee Byong-ju, *Dusiui bigyo munhakjeok yeongu*; Lee Chang-ryong 李昌龍, *Hanjungsiui bigyo munhakjeok yeongu: Leebaek Duboe daehan suyong yangsang* 韓中詩의比較文學的研究—李白、杜甫에 대한受容樣相 [A Comparative Study of Chinese and Korean Poetry: On the Influence of Li Bai and Du Fu] (Seoul: Ilji Publishing, 1984); Jeon Yeong-ran 全英蘭, *Hanguo shihua zhong youguan Du Fu jiqi zuopin zhi yanjiu* 韓國詩話中有關杜甫及其作品之研究 [A Study of Du Fu and His Works in Korean Poetry Remarks] (Taipei: Wenshizhe chubanshe, 1990); Li Lixin 李立信, *Dushi liuchuan Hanguo kao* 杜詩流傳韓國考 [A Study of Du Fu's Poetry in Korea] (Taipei: Wenshizhe chubanshe, 1991); Zuo Jiang 左江, *Li Zhi Dushi pijie yanjiu* 李植杜詩批解研究 [A Study of Lee Shik's Annotations of Du Fu's Poetry] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007).

37 Cho Cheong-gye 趙鍾業, ed, *Sujeong jeungbo Hanguk sihwa chongpyeon* 修正增補韓國詩話叢編 [Revised and Supplemented Collection of Korean Poetry Remarks] (Seoul: Taehaksa, 1996), 1:444.

38 *Ibid.*, 1:94.

39 *Ibid.*, 1:424.

in the art of poetry attempted to write and fine-tune a poem on the basis of a deliberate imitation of Du Fu, they would only end up with something grotesque.⁴⁰ As a result, despite staunch support for Du Fu within the circle of poets, the general tendency was to commend Su Shi's poetry, which was of a bold and forthright style, and refrain from Du Fu's poetry for its forbidding grimness, density of thoughts, and profundity.

When the Joseon dynasty was founded, Buddhism, which was the official fundamental state ideology of the Goryeo dynasty, was replaced by Confucianism. Upon an introspection of his own literary works, Du Fu once remarked "Confucianism gave rise to ideas of rules and etiquettes"; according to annotations by Zhao Cigong 趙次公 [n.d.], the rules of writing were established by, and hence inherent in, the school of Confucianism.⁴¹ Du Fu's poetry was thus highly prized by the monarchs of the Joseon dynasty, paving the way for his ascent to his position as the canonical poet. Despite the many changes in the trends of literature, Du Fu's unparalleled position remained unchanged for five centuries during the Joseon dynasty. Indicators of this are as follows.

The first indicator is the mass woodblock-based reproduction of the collections of Du Fu's poetry. Using as evidence the *Series of Old Books Lost* [*Guyi congshu* 古逸叢書] by Li Shuchang 黎庶昌 [1837–1898], most previous researchers agreed that the first woodblocks of Du Fu's poetry could be traced back to the Goryeo dynasty. Du Fu's poetry was reproduced on woodblocks a total of 58 times, according to Sim Gyeong-ho's 沈慶昊 list, which records chronologically such reproductions carried out during the Joseon dynasty.⁴² According to woodblock-based reproduction catalogs from the Joseon dynasty, many different regions in addition to the capital witnessed such reproductions of Du Fu's poetry.⁴³ In the 16th century, when courtiers were discussing whether all books procured from China should be reproduced on woodblocks, they unanimously agreed that the only literary work that should not was the *Collection of Du Fu's Poetry with Annotations* [*Dushi zhujie* 杜詩註解], citing the abundance of its woodblocks as the reason.⁴⁴ Large-scale reproductions

40 Ibid., 1:111.

41 Guo Zhida 郭知達, ed., *Jiujia jizhu dushi* 九家集註杜詩 [*Du Fu's Poems Collected with Nine Commentators*], in *Wenyuange siku congshu* 文淵閣四庫全書, vol. 30.

42 Sim Gyeong-ho 沈慶昊, "Rishichōsen niokeru tohoshishū no kankou nistuite 李氏朝鮮における杜甫詩集の刊行について [On the Publication of Du Fu's Poetry in the Joseon Dynasty]," *Chūgoku bungakuhou* 37 (1986): 51–93.

43 For details about these catalogs, see Zhang Bawei 張伯偉, ed., *Chaoxian shidai shumu congan* 朝鮮時代書目叢刊 [*Collections of Bibliographies in the Joseon Dynasty*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2004).

44 Kim An-guk 金安國, *Mojaejip* 慕齋集 [*Collected Works of Mojae*], in vol. 20 of *Hanguk munjip chonggan* 韓國文集叢刊 [*Korean Literature Series*], ed. Hanguk minjok munhwa chujinhoe 韓國民族文化推進會, 175.

of Du Fu's poetry necessarily heralded its greatest ever popularization, laying a solid foundation for his ascent to the peak of world of literature as the canonical poet.

The second indicator lies in the fact that behind nearly every effort to reproduce woodblocks of the extant collections of Du Fu's poetry or create new collections of his poetry, the initiators tended to be the monarchs, whose views were reflected in these efforts. There are three most representative outcomes born out of such efforts. The first outcome is the *Classified Collection of Du Fu's Poetry with Annotations* [*Zuanzhu fenlei dushi* 纂註分類杜詩], compiled in the 26th year of King Sejong's reign [1444], and it was later reproduced for nine times. As the first annotated collection of Du Fu's poetry to be ever compiled by Koreans, the *Classified Collection of Du Fu's Poetry with Annotations* exerted an enormous influence.⁴⁵ The second outcome is the book entitled *Bilingual Vernacular Edition of Du Fu's Classified Poetry* [*Fenlei Du Gongbu shi yanjie* 分類杜工部詩諺解], which was compiled by courtiers in the 12th year of Seongjong's reign [1481] at the king's behest; when giving the order, the king stressed the necessity of interpreting Du Fu's poetry in the vernacular, among his praises for it. The third came when both Du Fu's poetry and Lu You's 陸遊 [1125–1210] were ordered by the king Jeongjo of Joseon [r. 1752–1800] to be put in one combined anthology for woodblock reproduction purposes; in addition, the king even wrote the preface, "I compare the present time to the primordial time, and nothing can better serve the need of enlightening and moralizing my people than Du Fu's and Lu You's poems."⁴⁶ Du Fu was thus crowned in his position as the canonical poet, so to speak. The monarch's views about Du Fu and his poetry were self-explanatory in the preface, and his views should be able to speak for the mainstream society. As a result, one member after another of the literati started to refer to Du Fu as "master" [*dajia* 大家] and "orthodox" [*zhengzong* 正宗]. Amid the monarch-initiated advocacy for Du Fu's poetry, the private practice of compiling annotated collections began to take hold in the society. In addition to Lee Shik's 李植 [1584–1647] *Commentary on the Annotated Collection of Du Fu's Poetry* [*Zuanzhu dushi zefengtang pijie* 纂註杜詩澤風堂批解], which is rather familiar to scholars, there are at least six other similar works that can be verified by reliable sources. These private efforts also helped Du Fu's poetry circulate among the grassroots.

The third indicator is the ubiquitous phenomenon of people reading, imitating, and collecting Du Fu's poems. Collections and anthologies compiled during the Joseon period that bear titles which reflect this trend exist in abundance. Du Fu's readership was so wide that it included people from all aspects

45 Zuo Jiang, *Li Zhi Dushi pijie yanjiu*, 321–358.

46 Zhang Bowei, *Chaoxian shidai shumu congan*, 1111.

of society, such as monarchs, courtiers, scholars, literati, Buddhist monks, women, and children. Also abundant are records about people who read Du Fu's poems up to one thousand times, such as Sung Kan 成侃 [1427–1456].⁴⁷ I shall use the two groups of monks and females for explanation purposes. During King Sejong's reign [1397–1450], a monk by the name of Manu 卍雨 [n.d.] acquainted himself with Lee Sung-in 李崇仁 [1347–1392] and Lee Saek 李穡 [1328–1396], with whom he would discuss poetry, and as a result, his grasp of poetry, especially the theoretical side of it, was further improved. When Manu was assigned to compile the *Classified Collection of Du Fu's Poetry with Annotations*, he used what he had learned in his work and was able to resolve longstanding questions about the poetry.⁴⁸ It was precisely because Manu was so educated on Du Fu's poetry that he was asked to be an advisor on such a project. The same can also be said about the people that were assigned to produce woodblocks of annotated collections of the poetry. For example, on the back of the ten-volume *A Thousand Commentaries on Du Fu's Poetry Collected and Annotated by Huang He* [*Huangshi ji qianjia zhu Du Gongbu shishi buyi* 黃氏集千家註杜工部詩史補遺] included in the *Series of Old Books Lost*, are the names of those who produced woodblocks of the content, and all these names are names of Zen masters, including Yixin 義信, Haishan 海山, Xindun 信頓, Xindan 信淡, Juelliao 覺了, Baoyi 寶義, Siyi 思一, Hfaifeng 海峰, Shangguan 善觀, Xuehe 雪和, Honghui 洪惠, Jingdun 敬頓, Xinhai 信海, Xingmin 性敏, and Dengxue 登雲. During the Joseon dynasty, despite the fact that females were not encouraged to engage in writing poems, female writers turned to Du Fu's poetry as the prime model for their literary efforts just as their male counterparts did, and this can be evidenced by extant collections and anthologies. In his poem "Written at the End of the *Collection of Du Fu's Regulated Verse* to Send to My Sister Nanseolheon [*Ti Dulü juanhou fengcheng meishi Lanxuexian* 題杜律卷後奉呈妹氏蘭雪軒]," Heo Bong 許筠 [1551–1588] said, "I have kept the invaluable *Selection of Du Fu's Regulated Verse* in my book container for years; I am giving it to you today for you to study it, and I hope you can live up to my high expectations."⁴⁹ Heo Nanseolheon 許蘭雪軒 [1563–1589] was a representative female poet of the Joseon dynasty, and her brother gifted to her his treasured *Selection of Du Fu's Regulated Verse* [*Dulü chao* 杜律鈔], which was

47 *Sejong sillok* 世宗實錄 [*Veritable Record of Sejong*], Photocopies, 1955–1958.

48 Kwon Byeol 權鰲, *Haedong Jammok* 海東雜錄 [*Miscellaneous Records of Eastern Sea*] (Seoul: Joseon goseo ganhaenghoe, 1909).

49 Zhang Bowei 張伯偉 et al., *Chaoxian shidai nüxing shiwen ji quanbian* 朝鮮時代女性詩文集全編 [*Complete Collection of Poems by Women of the Joseon Dynasty*] (Nanjing: Fenghuang chubanshe, 2011), 1163.

compiled by Shao Bao 邵寶 [1460–1527] from the Ming dynasty, in the hope she could live up to his expectation by both carrying on and adding to the merits of Du Fu's poetry. Since then, it had been all too common to see female poets either model their verses on Du Fu's poems, or follow, in their own poems, the rhymes used by his poems. For example, in the *Records of Linked Pearls* [*Lianzhu lu* 聯珠錄] and *Collection of the Flood-like Study* [*Haoran zhai ji* 浩然齋集], both created by the Andong Kim clan 安東金氏家族, ten poems authored by the sisters and brothers of the clan followed the rhymes used by Du Fu's poetry. It should not be difficult to surmise what the case would be for the other groups of Du Fu's readers, considering that both monastic readers, who lived outside the secular world, and female readers, who were marginalized in the circle of literati, demonstrated such intimate familiarity with the poems of Du Fu.

It follows from the above discussions of the three indicators that Du Fu was revered as the canonical poet atop the world of literature during the Joseon dynasty; and such a position as his can put him at the forefront of East Asian literature as the foremost poet.

5 Conclusion: The Canonization of Du Fu in the Context of East Asian Literature

The canonization of Du Fu in the three countries was the result of great support from three different cohorts of people, and this led to different outcomes. Du Fu's position as the canonical poet of Chinese literature was secured because of staunch endorsement from literary giants. In other words, his position was achieved due to the giants' own literary preferences, because as a general rule, literary preferences of the most revered literati were able to shape the literary preferences of the general public. However, as time changed, literary preferences shifted. In the history of Japanese literature, poets and writers chose Chinese literature as the source of prime models for their own literary studies and creations, and the most important selection criterion for such decisions was their own literary preferences, whether they made these decisions out of their own volition or not. It was only after the advent of modern scholarship that a correct understanding of the value and meaning of Du Fu's poetry to Japanese literature was obtained by scholars on the basis of academic evaluation. Du Fu's position as the canonical poet of Japanese literature was thus established in the end. Though the evaluation process might be rather long, Japan's acceptance of Du Fu as the preeminent poet was rather swift.

Undoubtedly, among the three countries in question, it was in Korea that Du Fu was given his highest honor for his poetry during the Joseon dynasty, and the outright endorsement from monarchs of the Joseon dynasty played a crucial role in this achievement. Since the Goryeo dynasty, contributors to literature had been mainly scholar-officials, and literature had been mainly serving its political function. Since the Joseon dynasty, Cheng-Zhu Confucianism had been the only ideology espoused by the state, and its literary views found their way into contemporary literary works. Meanwhile, since Yeonsangun's reign [1494–1505], Korean literati purges and political rivalries had been frequent due to flaws inherent in bureaucratic politics. As a result, contemporary literary works became more pronounced in their political tones, and this change was well matched by the defining character of Du Fu's poetry. His canonization in the world of Korean literature thus became unstoppable.

The three cohorts of premodern Chinese literati, modern-day scholars in Japan, and monarchs who once ruled on the Korean Peninsula, each played a dominant role in establishing the position of Du Fu as the canonical poet in the three regions of the Sinosphere. Even though the first two cohorts were composed of members of the ruled and the last cohort of the ruling, there were still amicable interactions between the last cohort and the masses. The topic of the literary canon has been widely debated by both European and American literary theorists since the 1970s. On the matter of canon transformation, feminists as well as literary critics of African heritage made fiery statements and wrote challenging treatises with a certain level of success in some areas.⁵⁰ This sent Harold Bloom [1930–2019], a defender of the Western canon, into classifying them as the “school of resentment,”⁵¹ on the ground that they emphasized power, opposition, subversion, and revolution over other elements; he also believed that they sounded harsh and even neurotic in their opinions. After the 1990s, China also witnessed intense academic discussions pertaining to both the literary canon (or classics) and its related issues. In these

50 For example, the *Columbia Literary History of the United States* included a number of literary works by female writers as well as writers in the racial minorities, changing the landscape of American literary history. Other examples are the *Norton Anthology of Literature by Women* and the *Norton Anthology of African American Literature*.

51 The publication of revised authoritative anthologies has created a brand-new landscape of literary canon. Studies of women writers and writers of African-American heritage have made its way into university curricula, expanding the literary canon. See Jin Li 金莉, “Jingdian xiuzheng 經典修正 [Revision of the Classics],” in *Xifang wenlun guanjianci 西方文論關鍵詞 [Key Words in the Western Literary Criticism]*, ed. Zhao Yifan 趙一凡 (Beijing: Waiyu jiaoxue yu yanjiu chubanshe, 2006), 294–305; and Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1994), 15–43.

academic discourses, such terms as power and subversion were highly frequent occurrences, because foreign thinking, or rather Western thinking, had an impact on Chinese academia in their research methods, theoretical frameworks, and ways in which they put forward questions. In discourses on the history of literature, Chinese scholars discussed what ideologies were reflected in a wide range of works from commentaries, to anthologies and collections, to even manuscripts, for the purpose of identifying the covert and overt exercise of “power” by their compilers and copyists.

In the history of East Asian literature, scenarios are plenty where classics old and new coexisted peacefully, hence the statement is untrue that tensions necessarily arose in the admission of different literary works into literary canon. For a piece of literature to become accepted into the literary canon, to start with, it is imperative the work itself possesses both an aesthetic appeal and an appeal to morality; then, even if the work has any form of endorsement from only a few literary giants or should such work even have support from monarchs, such endorsement or support should not be in contradiction with or opposition to the general views of the readership of such work, to say the least, because these literary giants or monarchs tend to base their endorsement or support on such general views. As a result, among the literary giants, monarchs, and readers, there exists an interactive relationship of an amicable nature rather than a relationship where power is asserted or even violence is appealed to, which is a norm particular to the Sinitic world in the admission of literary works into the literary canon. Before the 20th century, East Asia was a Sinitic sphere, and extant Sinitic materials are numerous, with copious literary works among them. Nowadays, it holds particular importance to carry out research on Chinese poetry in the Sinosphere framework and to relegate the Western literary paradigms to a referential role. In so doing, we will be enabled to break away from the many models and norms which were developed as a result of the acceptance of the Western influence. In addition, it can be quite beneficial to reinstate a geographical context in our research on Chinese literature. This can provide not only a more native understanding of the poems themselves but also an accurate picture of their transmission and growing influence throughout time.⁵² Hopefully, the process can be set in motion for Chinese scholars in humanities to chart a new course by breaking away from the Western-centered orientation.

52 Zhang Bowei 張伯偉, “Jinri dongya yanjiu zhi wenti cailiao he fangfa 今日東亞研究之問題、材料和方法 [Issues, Materials and Methods in Today’s East Asian Studies],” *Zhongguo dianji yu wenhua* 中國典籍與文化, no. 1 (2012): 23–26.

In terms of literary classics, there once existed quite many classics of different categories in East Asian literature. Some were accepted universally throughout the entire Sinitic world, while others existed only in some areas or for some periods of time; motifs of some classics remained the same across East Asia, while those of other classics were modified. Both commonality and particularity have been identified in the ascension of some literary works into classics as well as in their transmission, and examples of such classics include classics that were universally accepted, classics that were written by female writers, and classics intended for children. To explain all this, a dichotomous approach to the revision of literary canon, whether explicit or not, is simply not adequate, and more detailed explorations are warranted. It might be of benefit to make a review into how East Asian literary canons came into being, against the backdrop of the 21st century, when tensions and conflicts were rife between different genders, races, and cultures.

Translated by Yue Wang

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