

Ming Gong An Fictions

Chen, Li-Chun

Abstract

Ever since Xiang-Dou Yu included “Xiao Cao Yi Bi” into “Lian Ming Gong An”, compilation of many Gong An fictions afterward had been influenced by the legal documents in recipe books for law practitioners. The editing style of Xiang-Dou Yu is unprecedented: in an effort to cut the distance of Gong An stories and legal documents in recipe books for law practitioners, virtual legal documents, i.e., petition, plea and verdict are added into legendary Gong An stories. “Lian Ming Gong An” consists of two distinct components and it is viewed as being quasi-fictional by past scholars. When focusing on the rewriting and editing methods adopted by Xiang-Dou Yu, a trace of formation of fictions is revealed, but it is not fully developed because of commercial considerations of publication of Yu’s bookstore. In his collection of Gong An fictions, Yu opened the door but not finished in his own hand the job that completely transformed law materials into novels as found in later Gong An fictions in the Ming Dynasty. Since many places in comments and prefaces in “Lian Ming Gong An” and “Zhu Si Gong An” are limited by judicial short stories in “Yi Yu Ji” and “Zhe Yu Gui Jian” and showed vestiges of law, it is hard to state that Xiang-Dou Yu intended to create fictions, not to mention a new genre.

Keywords: Gong An fictions in the Ming Dynasty, judgment, law in the Ming Dynasty, Xiang-Dou Yu, recipe books for law practitioners