**上海外国语大学 2020 –2021学年第一学期**

**期末考试试卷**

课程名称 中国文化概要

课程编号 TRL3140.1402

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**Please write an essay about 500-800 words in English, explaining a cultural phenomenon in China. A comparative perspective is encouraged.**

**Wuyi Lane**

Located on the south bank of the Qinhuai River in Nanjing, Jiangsu Province, Wuyi Lane, from emergence and prosperity to decay, witnesses the vicissitude of times and is engraved with cultural marks during the changes of dynasties. Scholars from the perspectives of history, politics, literature and philosophy consider Wuyi Lane a unique cultural image to interpret and reflect.

1. **Wuyi Lane: the epitome of the aristocracy under the politics of clan**

Wuyi means black clothes. There are two theories about the origin of the name Wuyi Lane. One theory is that during the Three Kingdoms Period, the troops of the Kingdom of Wu once stationed here and set up Wuyi Battalion. In ancient times, soldiers wore black clothes. The other theory is that Wuyi Lane is the residence zone of the nobles in the Eastern Jin Dynasty. The nobles wore black clothes to highlight their elegance. Although Wuyi Lane has been in existence since the Three Kingdoms Period, it is after the prosperity of the Eastern Jin Dynasty that Wuyi Lane really becomes the landmark for the literati of later generations to feel the past.

The clan, namely, the families that share the ancestry or the blood, traces back to the Qin Dynasty when the literati out of bureaucracy lobbied some officers to followed them into the official circle. During the Jin Dynasties, this group entered its heyday. They occupied a large amount of land and labor, and only got married within the same class, which means that they did not marry with ordinary people, namely, poor families and unprivileged people. By virtue of the official selection system based on the system of dominant family, they occupied important positions in the imperial court for a long time. The prosperity of Wuyi Lane is attributed to the two powerful clans who lived there ------ the Wang clan of Langya and the Xie clan of Chen County, which makes Wuyi Lane, located in Jinling, the capital city of the Eastern Jin Dynasty, the epitome of the aristocracy in the city.

The decay of Wuyi Lane on the one hand lies in the shift of geographical center caused by the change of dynasties. In the Sui and Tang dynasties after the Jin Dynasties, the development center in the south gradually moved from Jinling to Yangzhou in the farther north, along with which came the decline of urban status and economic progress. On the other hand, it springs from the alteration of official selection system. Since Sui Dynasty, the imperial examination system replaced the previous nine-rank system of recommendation, and the selection of officials changed from the selection based on families to the unified selection of the court. Ordinary people from poor families could engage in official career, which greatly weakened the power of the literati out of bureaucracy, and speeded up their process from prosperity to decay.

1. **Wuyi Lane: a sentimental place for the adherents of the old dynasty**

The change of times created a special group of people. This group lingered on the scenery of the old dynasty, but could not prevent the tide of times and the arrival of the new, thus becoming the adherents or remnants of the old dynasty. Wuyi Lane evolved into the spiritual home for this group to mourn for their motherland. This kind of emotion is especially strong in the transition of Song-Yuan Dynasties and Ming-Qing Dynasties, which share a similarity, that is, the ruling of ethnic minorities and the retreat of the Han nationality. At the end of the Southern Song Dynasty, the Mongolian army moved southward; at the end of the Ming Dynasty, the Manchu army marched south. The change of nationalities strengthened the sense of personal identification of the adherents, and the expression of prosperity and change through Wuyi Lane has also become a common technique for these adherents.

In the writings of the adherents, the image of Wuyi Lane usually has a strong turn.

燕京定鼎匹宗周，贡舶相望无时休。机抒织愁将作巧，日营月办总悠悠。乌衣朱雀在何处，绿柳青蒲霭烟雾。莽苍一望外罗环，聆蔚参差杂衙路。……君不见辽阳一战三将沮，百万生灵化血湖。髑髅已入春闺梦，烽火井泉尚剥肤。——石文器《金陵行》**[[1]](#footnote-1)**

Shi Wenqi the poet is an adherent of the Ming Dynasty. In this long poem, the poet first made a detailed description of the prosperous scenery of Wuyi Lane. In the past, the scenery was beautiful, the life was leisurely and the business was prosperous. Then the poet sharply twisted to describe the tragedy of the war, the poignant death of soldiers, homeless and destitute people and so on. The author employed such strong contrast in order to heighten his grief towards the Ming Dynasty. The writing of such adherents often possesses such a style, and Wuyi Lane has also become a common image of such adherents.

1. **Wuyi Lane literature: the classic literature of singing the ups and downs**

Surrounding the cultural image of Wuyi lane with rich connotation, Wuyi Lane literature also comes into being. A poem named Wuyi Lane and composed by Liu Yuxi in the Tang Dynasty is regarded as the starting point of Wuyi Lane literature.

朱雀桥边野草花，乌衣巷口夕阳斜。旧时王谢堂前燕，飞入寻常百姓家。——刘禹锡《乌衣巷》

The poem describes the scenery around Wuyi Lane. Weeds grew and wild flowers bloomed by the Roadfinch Bridge. The afterglow shadowed the entrance of Wuyi Lane. The swallows that used to nest under the eaves of the lobbies of Wang and Xie families had flown into the homes of ordinary people. The poet uses simple language to describe the lonely and desolate scene around Wuyi Lane, which contrasts with the bustling crowd in the past. As the world changed, the two famous and prosperous families withered and no longer existed.

In the later Chinese classical literature, more and more literati chose the cultural image of Wuyi Lane to chant historical facts, recall the ancients, satirize the present with the past, express the frustration of unfulfilled ambitions, and sigh about the unpredictable ups and downs and uncontrollable changes.

In conclusion, Wuyi Lane is an image with rich connotation in Chinese culture. The prosperity and desolation of Wuyi Lane manifests the fame and depression of the literati class, the reform and progress of the social system, and the expression of the national and personal feelings. From the image of Wuyi Lane, we can understand the social identity change and identification of the ancient literati, and explore where this group came from and where they went to in the historical development.

1. 瞿子栋.乌衣巷文学史研究初探.2016.华东师范大学,MA thesis. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)