Reasons the Tournament Weighed Heavily in Chivalric Culture
Yi-wei WANG
School of Humanity, University of Glasgow, Glasgow, Scotland, UK, G12 8QQ

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Abstract. In the study of chivalric culture, tournament is one of the important links that should not be neglected. As a paramount part in chivalric culture, the tournament owns a crucial position and it triggers many scholars to conduct more researches that can assist them to know more about the chivalric culture. This essay is aiming at examining the reason why tournament can be so important in chivalric culture and finding sources to prove them. The methods of examination are basically through reading the material and comparing the same tournament in different sources. Through this way, the problem of why tournament can weigh heavily is wished to be explained clearly. The reasons could be divided as political reason, economy reason, reason for the nobles and the romantic emotions. Especially the last reason could not be neglected.

Letting of the Competitive Mind
The tournament as mentioned before probably aroused in 11 century and in 1150 the mature form of tournaments formed (Crouch, 2005). One of the reasons why the tournament is important is that taking participating in tournament or joust would be given a proper chance to let of the competitive mind. This is also in according with the spirit of chivalric culture. In medieval time when warfare happened commonly and usually, the competitive mind gradually fostered in soldiers’ mind. The bunches of warfare in that time let the knights and soldiers bear in mind that being a soldier needs prowess it is honorable to fight in the battlefield or even get hurt. Finally the aggressive mind existed and unlike the mind for peace, if the aggressive spirit cannot be expressed rightly, unstable and precarious emotions would grow and would do harm the stability of the arm. Sometimes happened in peace time, the tournament could help the soldiers to show others that they are ready to fight at anytime, which is advocated in chivalric culture that a soldier should be ready for devoting in every second (Keen, 1973).

Learning Fighting Skills
If tournaments happened not in war time, then the other function of them is that they can learn the skills and can regard the tournament as a mock fight. For example, in 1497 when Sheen Palace wanted to hold a tournament to against Henry VII, and wanted the English king to treat the tournament as a fight. However, the king had already commanded that that holding tournaments is for testing the military skills. It is obvious to know from the passage that no matter the king or other organizers, one crucial aim in their opinions is that tournament could be an opportunity to provide the knights with exercising military skills and testing the level of the techniques they already mastered. Tournament is also an idea of transferring the chivalric spirit in to the realistic world. In addition, in early twelve century, what was imbued to the knights was that parading the skills is necessary during the time between two fights or two wars. During the tournament, not only the skills would be improved but also the confidence, the honor and the proud. A soldier with excellent skills and strong confidence would no doubt bring the arm more morale and the proud. In chivalric culture, the confidence and prowess could obtain increase in tournaments which made the tournaments an important method of expressing the chivalric culture.

Preparation for the Wars
Another factor is that the tournament is also treated as a stage of preparation for the battle. Even
until the fifteen century, the tournaments were still believed as ‘school of prowess’ and they were used as groundwork in terms of various preparations for the real battle. Sometimes there would be twice or even three times a year for conducting tournament, moreover, the expenditure of the tournament came from the levy of royal revenue. That is to say, the organization of any tournament was an elaboration rather than a casual perfunctoriness that the noble ranking were paying close attention to the tournaments and even the levy was used to cover the cost of the campaign. However it is not good to hold tournaments and jousts too often because the rate of getting hurt was still high. Not every noble seemed to enjoy the tournaments but what is certain is the concern that the injury of the senior soldiers might affect the standard and the situation of the whole army. In order to improve the probability of the triumph and the performance in the battlefield, the medieval knights chose this way to prepare for the real war. The attitude of taking war seriously is a merit of the chivalric spirit and it was tournament that supplied a platform for reflecting it.

It is well-known that tournament was a kind of imitating the war that during the tournament the knights can really use weapons to defend and attack, and sometimes really cause death. However, the tournament was still a kind of sports in medieval time (Aevum, 1986). In later middle ages, there was a knight who engaged a tournament but he killed his opponent during the tournament. In this situation, he was sent to interrogate for the rival’s death while his response was that he did not kill him deliberately and that was only an accident. Given that this knight had no forms and had being jealous by the opponent, the killer was actually forgave and finally released without any punishment. In this case, sometimes death is not avoidable and according to one’s normal performance it is possible to pardon a killer who caused a death not in a real war but in a military game. When people finally realized the tournament can be used skillfully, it can virtually cover their real aims in the fight. Even the king would like to claim their innocent for maintaining the justice and protecting the knights. The king must know the severe consequence of the tournament being a method of dealing with the personal duel so that the royal authority like King Edward I had once banned his baron to hold a tournament only for solving the private war (Barker, 1986). It is obvious that to some degree, the aim of the tournament had changed and that the new purpose of holding the tournament is not only for the exercise of the war but also for seeking a right way to working out the conflict within the knights.

**Sometimes would Affect the Peace**

As the consequence of the changing aim of the tournament, the disorder in the tournament could bring meaningless deaths and conflicts that would disturb the peace. During the peace time, killing people in the tournament sometimes caused more resentment and led to endless killing. The Kings often understand this and the actions they took for decreasing the danger indicated that the tournament is quite popular in the Knights and the noble class and that restriction to the tournament could retaining the peace of his reign. On the other hand, as the sites of the tournament were settled before the beginning, the common practice was that King only set the site in the south because that the north of England is uncertain. No matter how the tournament is close to the real war, it was a mocking game and that it could never be a real war. However for the participants, the sport of tournament was always a nice chance for them because that what they can obtain in the tournament is not only their enemies’ lives but also the reputation of bravery and the property. If the site covered a large space that several lands were involved, then it was quite possible that the properties could be the prize given to the winner. The reputation is also an important aspect of the chivalric spirit that the knights in the medieval time were keen to obtain higher reputation so that it could be helpful when they were promoting the rank.

**Enriching the Lives**

Moreover, in late middle ages, the tournament was shown up in many literatures with fully details and descriptions, as the sports were quite prevalent and that it was closely associated with the people in the authority. The functions of the tournament had added that tournament for
entertainment became more and more crucial in the noble’s life that they treat this sport as a feast. During the preparation work of the tournament, for those nobles, the tournament can bring them not only the entertain, but also the international political possibilities, as the site of the tournament covered a large land so that the bond of the land were bridged and the soldiers who participate the tournament came from different places, therefore holding a tournament needed to negotiate with other lords. In this situation, the nobles would like to hold a sports activity like this so that a lot of money was put into the preparation work. Even if it was costly and accidental deaths happened without good reason, the nobles were keen and enthusiastic to tournament for not only the benefit but also the political benefits it could bring to them. On the other hand, it can help the nobles strengthen the relationship with masters from other lands and can obtain benefits from the tournament (Cline, 1945). The men from the noble family were advocating the military experience, so that they were willing to treat the tournament as an opportunity that can let them grow up into a splendid and powerful knight with prestige.

Sometimes the young noble man in their very early age would like to exercise themselves in the tournament. For example Baldwin V, count of Hainault and Namur and count of Flanders, he was nominated as the knight when he was only sixteen years old. According to the record, he was positive in taking part in the tournament that there were many lists of tournaments that involved his name. The other case was Young Henry, who was the son of King Henry II who was also very keen to participate in the tournament that he spent most of his time on the tournament field with his mentor and friend William. He hired a permanent retinue with twelve equipped knights and their wages. According to Crouch, this was quite a moderate size of the retinue. Then he even took the international tournament circuit. These two cases indicate that the nobles were considerably interested in this sport. They were even devoting themselves in the competition rather than just spending money for preparation. In addition, in France it is not fanciful to find that the successor of the thrown sometimes was the famous prince known for sponsoring the tournament (Vale, 1981). For instance Yong Henry was willing to spend time and money on tournament while his father was object to his attitude and he viewed his son’s behavior as wasting time and money.

Chivalric Spirit and Women

In the spirit of the chivalric, there was another paramount element which is the love for the female. The most classic example should be the Arthurian Tradition. Except the Arthurian Tradition, there were also other literatures that contained the information, the knights were to protect the noble female and that they respected them. Before young boys were appointed as knights, they were raised by the noble females to learn the manner and rite. In addition, they were told that it is a merit to respect and protect the females. Therefore when they really became the knights; one of the rules for them is not to compel the females. In tournament where the knights can fight for abundant reasons, the competitor was involved with women from two aspects. One of them is that when he was addicted to a noble woman and wanted to let her know or wanted to please her, he could take part in and win honorably using the performance to touch the lady. On the other hand, sometimes women were used as prize for the winners (Anglo, 1969).

The position of women in the tournament was complex depending on the identity of them. Some of them were the patronage that they spent large amount money in the tournament. Some of them were to become the audience and when the tournament started they did not need to keep quite but to make comment on the competitors’ performance which could either be applausive or mean. After the tournament in the party that celebrated the winner side, they were allowed to dance, sing and chat with the men. Even their fate in later medieval ages was not satisfying that they cannot heir the wealth from their father and that there were many brutal rules for them, in the tournament they could spend a quite wonderful time. The proof of this is that in many paintings about the tournament, there were female audiences drawn on the picture too. If the knight can perform well in the tournament, he would be possible to win his lady’s favor, although sometimes the lady had married so she would become his mistress. A knight Waltman said that he could hand over anything he owned, including hawk, lady and his horse, if cannot beat his enemy in the tournament. However
the lady refused to be his mistress and she used a golden ring to save herself as free (Sandoz, 1944). The two main ways of women engaging in the tournament on the one hand indicated the position women had in the later medieval time but also illustrated knights’ attitude to women. They respected women and were looking for the favor of them which was the spiritual treasure in the chivalric culture.

In the later middle ages, tournament played an important role in the expression and development of chivalric culture. For politics, tournament was sometimes linked to the policy that it can be used to maintain the peace and to the barons tournaments could be used to against the king for expressing different political opinions. For military, as one of the sports that were aiming at mocking the war, the skills and spirits could be trained in the progress and the battle some pressure could also be expressed in a proper way. Fighting honorably was to be praised in the chivalric culture so that the tournament was popular among the knights. Keeping holding tournaments for training the soldiers was helpful for improving the military power so that when the real was coming, the preparation would be useful to obtain the triumph. For the nobles, they were the sponsors of the tournament and they even took part in the tournament in order to increase the ability of themselves. The time and money spent on the tournament were considered to be worthy for that the sponsors and participants could both be fruitful. Last but not least, the knights’ emotion for the female was involved in the tournament that they would like to perform in front of the ladies and they can win them as prize. It was not difficult to find out the crucial role that tournament played in the middle ages and the culture of the chivalry. However, because the limited time and the restricted sources that could be found, there are some questions which cannot be explained clearly and distinctly. They are not written in a logical way so that it might confuse the readers. The tournament in middle ages is an interesting question that needs to be studied deeply.

References