



The Reform Consciousness and Poetic Historical Significance

Jiao Ran's View on "Feng Sao"

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ABSTRACT

The concept of "Feng" and "Sao" as the foundation of Chinese literature is widely acknowledged, but their development in different historical periods has not always been synchronous. Particularly during the Middle Tang era, following the abrupt decline of prosperity, there emerged a prevailing consciousness among literary critics to embrace the spirit of refinement and undertake the mission of benefiting society after the Anshi Rebellion. Jiao Ran's focus lay in the exploration of the artistic principles of poetry. His theory of "Feng Sao" also underscores the connotation of artistic form, with an aesthetic emphasis on "innovation" and "beauty," which significantly diverges from traditional interpretations. Furthermore, his analyses of key Confucian concepts such as "Feng Ya," "Shi Jiao," and "Shi Dao" underscore the importance of artistic techniques, aligning with his perspective on "Feng Sao". Jiao Ran's formulation of the unconventional "Feng Sao" theory was underpinned by the vigorous resurgence of the "Feng Ya" tradition during the mid-Tang Dynasty. Committed to upholding literary principles and safeguarding the autonomy of literature, he meticulously classified both "Feng Sao" within the realm of artistic aesthetics. This influential theory on "Feng Sao" guided a significant trend in mid-Tang poetry that prioritized aesthetic allure over didacticism, effectively enhancing the prominence and influence of "Sao" during the Tang Dynasty. Jiao Ran made substantial contributions to shaping pivotal characteristics such as "exploring unconventional" in Yuanhe poetry circles and subsequent generations.

Keywords: Jiao Ran; "Feng Sao" theory; "Feng Ya" discourse; exceptional aesthetics; restoration of literary essence.

Jiao Ran was a monk who lived in the Prosperous and Mid-Tang Dynasties, and he played a significant role in the literary milieu of the Dali era in southern China. He considered "unrestrained and free from worldly concerns" as the highest state of spiritual practice, while maintaining close ties with officials and literati. This unique identity and life experience enabled Jiao Ran to contemplate more objectively and critically on the literary essence, literary evolution and the relationship of literature and politics. *The Shi Shi* and *The Shi Yi* represent the achievements of Jiao Ran's literary ideology. The scholars have conducted deeply research on the Jiao ran Poetic Theory System, and most scholars have only positioned *The Shi Shi* and *The Shi Yi* as theoretical works on the art form of poetry¹. In fact, *The Shi Shi* and *The Shi Yi* not only delved into the artistic techniques of poetry such as "ideorealm" and "formal distinctions", but also scrutinized traditional theoretical categories like "Feng Sao", "Feng Ya", "Shi Dao" and "Shi Jiao". So, what were Jiao Ran's explanations of these traditional theoretical categories, and what was the purpose and significance of his distinctive interpretations in the society of mid-Tang Dynasty following the Anshi Rebellion? These issues have not garnered significant attention or deeply research within the academic community. This article aims to explore the essence and substance of Jiao Ran's poetry theory, beginning with his "Feng Sao" theory, while also analyzing related concepts such as "Feng Ya", "Shi Jiao" and "Shi Dao". The objective is to furnish a more comprehensive comprehension of Jiao Ran's poetry theory and a more impartial portrayal of the intricate evolution process of poetry over the centuries.

¹ For example, Zhang Shaokang and Liu Sanfu pointed out in the Development History of Chinese Literary Theory Criticism that *The Shi Shi* and *The Shi Yi* by Jiao Ran are the most successful representatives of the Tang Dynasty in exploring the style, artistic skills and rhyme of poetry creation.

PART I, THE PURSUIT OF NOVELTY AND LUXURIOUS STYLE: AESTHETIC TELOS OF JIAO RAN'S "FENG SAO" THEORY

In the "Purpose of Writing" section of the *"The Shi Shi"* clearly mentions the concept of "Feng Sao": "(Xie Lingyun) was able to follow 'Feng Sao' in the past and surpass the Wei and Jin dynasties."² Jiao Ran admired Xie Lingyun's poetry and put it on a par with "Feng Sao". It can be seen that "Feng Sao" have a high status in Jiao Ran's poetry theory. The "Feng" in "Feng Sao" is the "Guo Feng" of *The Shi Jing*, which generally refers to *The Shi Jing*; "Sao" is "Li Sao" in *The Chu Ci*, which generally refers to *The Chu Ci*.

As a Confucian classic, *The Shi Jing* has always occupied an important position in traditional poetics. *The Chu Ci*, on the other hand, has been subjected to various criticisms soon after its creation. As stated in *The Wen Xin Diao Long Discussing Li Sao* by Liu Xie, Liu An, Wang Yi and Yang Xiong considered *The Li Sao* to be in conformity with Confucian classic, whereas Meng Jian pointed out that *The Li Sao* was not in line with the Confucian classics³. Although the above two evaluations are diametrically opposed, they all comment on *The Li Sao* based on the doctrine of Confucian classics, and *The Li Sao* exists as an appendage of *The Shi Jing*; this is a typical thinking pattern of Han Confucians who comment on "Li Sao" from the perspective of the Confucian classics. During the Wei, Jin, and North-South Dynasties, the literati paid more attention to the aesthetic characteristics of literature itself. Cao Pi's "luxurious style is the most crucial feature of poetry and fu"⁴ not only discussed poetry and fu as two independent literary styles, but also summarized the characteristics of poetry and fu with the word "luxurious style", and began to affirm the literary form of poetry and fu. Liu Xie, on the other hand, sorted out the four similarities and four differences between *The Shi Jing* and *The Li Sao*, and gave *The Li Sao* a lot of lofty praise. In Liu Xie's view, *The Chu Ci* has been a unique style of literature, which was quite different from *The Shi Jing*. Another example is Xiao Gang's *Yu Xiang Dong Wang Shu* accused the literary phenomenon of capital only to enthrone the elegant text, that was both deviated from *Feng (The Shi Jing)* and *Sao (The Li Sao)*⁵. All of the above examples mention "Feng" and "Sao" together, and the status of "Sao" is obviously raised; and all of them are mostly from the perspective of art forms such as unusual rhetoric, fancy, skillful thinking and so on. It can be seen that the literati of The Southern Dynasties paid more attention to the literary value of *Chu Ci* itself.

The literary creation in the early Tang Dynasty still followed the parallel and luxurious style of The Southern Dynasties, but the literary critics had already reversed their attitude towards *The Chu Ci*. To a certain extent, the formation of new literary thoughts during this period can be attributed to critiques of Qi and Liang literature, with some regarding *The Chu Ci* as the main source of its ornate style. As Wang Bo's *Shang Li Bu Pei Shi Lang Qi* points out that Qu Yuan and Song Yu's *chu ci*, Mei Cheng and Sima Xiangru's fu were flooded with expatiation of magnificent palace and enjoyment, which were direct consequence of national decline. Even *The Chu Ci* was deemed to be the underlying factor behind the nation's deterioration⁶. In the *Fu Ma Du Wei Qiao Jun Ji Xu*, written by Lu Zhaoling, it is also stated that Zhou Wenwang, Kong Zi, Xun Zi, Meng Zi passed the tradition of the Confucian Li and Yue⁷. It is believed that *The Chu Ci*, which excelled in luxurious style, was not conducive to the inheritance of the Confucian Li and Yue, and it was also criticized. During the prosperous Tang Dynasty, literati held Qu Yuan and *The Chu Ci* in higher esteem compared to those of the early Tang Dynasty. While acknowledging Qu Yuan's remarkable character and accomplishments, they maintained that the "Feng Sao" style was considered inferior to "Ya Song". Zhang Jiuling believed that there were poems of resentment and criticism in *The Shi Jing*, and *The Li Sao* contained melancholy writings. He sought the subtle meanings within them, rather than the grand elegance of the poems. In Zhang Jiuling's view, the poems of resentment and criticism in *The Shi Jing* were the "Feng" and in his opinion, both the "Feng" and "Sao" were inferior to the "Da Ya" of the poems⁸. Despite Li Bai's high esteem for *The Chu Ci* and his assertion that "the poetic compositions of Qu Yuan are as bright as the sun and moon"⁹, he still considered the "Da Ya" as the orthodoxy of poetry. This indicates that most literati admired the "Da Ya" and Song and opposed to the Southern Dynasties' "Feng Sao" theory in the early and the flourishing Tang Dynasties, with many regarding *The Chu Ci* as the source of luxurious literary style in Qi and Liang Dynasties.

Compared to the theories of the early and flourishing Tang Dynasties, Jiao Ran's evaluation of the mid-Tang period is more objective and impartial. He not only affirmed the paradigmatic significance of "luxurious language" in form, but also commented on the "Feng Sao" theory that favored the aesthetics of "luxurious language." In his *Shi Yi* he stated, "Some people say that today's poets are inferior to those of the past because of their fondness for luxurious language. I say, no. The Six Classics occasionally have luxurious language, and Yang Xiong, Sima Xiangru, Zhang Heng, and Cai Yong and their followers were the ones who popularized it."¹⁰ Jiao Ran traced the origins of luxurious language back to the Six Classics, thereby rationalizing the pursuit of the luxuriant style of the *Chu Ci* and the Qi Liang literature.

In the "Purpose of Writing" section of *The Shi Shi*, it was noted that Xie Lingyun's poems were able to follow "Feng Sao" in the past and surpass the Wei and Jin dynasties' poems, and Xie Lingyun's poetry is par with "Feng Sao". Regarding Xie's poetry, *The Shi Shi* states that its distinctive feature lies in being true to one's emotions, using literary skills skillfully, valuing effects over mere wording and style, thus achieving natural elegance through ultimate craftsmanship. Wang Shizhen also evaluated Xie

² Jiao Ran Zhu, Li Zhaungying Jiao Zhu. *Shi Shi Jiao Zhu*, People's Literature Publishing House, 2003, pp.118-119.

³ Liu Xie Zhu, Fan Wenlan Zhu. *Wen Xin Diao Long Zhu Juan Yi Bian Sa* (Upper Volume, People's Literature Publishing House, 1958, pp.45-46.

⁴ "Yan Ke Jun Ji. *Quan Shang Gu Sand Ai Qin Han San Guo Liu Chao Wen-Quan San Guo Wen*(Vol.8), zhonghua book company, 1958, pp.1098.

⁵ "Yan Ke Jun Ji. *Quan Shang Gu Sand Ai Qin Han San Guo Liu Chao Wen-Quan San Guo Wen*(Vol.11), zhonghua book company, 1958, pp.3011.

⁶ Wang Bo Zhu, Jiang Qingyi Zhu. *Wang Zi An Ji Zhu* (Vol.4), Shanghai Classics Publishing House, 1995, pp.130.

⁷ Lu Zhaolin Zhu, Li Yunyi Jiao Zhu. *Lu Zhaolin Ji Jiao Zhu* (Vol.6), zhonghua book company, 1998, pp.301.

⁸ Zhang Jiuling Zhu, Liu Sihuan Jiao Zhu. *Qu Jiang Ji*, Guangdong people's publishing house, 1986, pp.604.

⁹ Li Bai Zhu, Wang Qi Zhu. *Li Tai Bai Quan Ji* (Vol.7), zhonghua book company, 1977, pp.374.

¹⁰ Bian Zhao Jing Gang Zhuan, Lu Shengjiang Jiao Kao. *Wen Jing Mi Fu Lun Hui Jiao Hui Kao*, zhonghua book company, 2006, pp.1437.

Lingyun's poetry as "extremely luxurious, yet seemingly plain; meticulously crafted, yet more natural"¹¹, which is similar to Liu Xie's evaluation of poetry during the Liu Song period of The Northern Dynasty, affirming Xie Lingyun's innovative significance in terms of poetry language, intent and composition techniques¹². It can be seen that Xie Lingyun's poetry fully embodies the "Feng Sao" aesthetic view of The Northern Dynasties, while Jiao Ran also highly praised Xie Lingyun from the perspective of pursuing unique and innovative artistic forms.

Additionally, among the 150 poems in the "Bu Yong Shi Di Yi Ge" and the "Zuo Yong Shi Di Er Ge" (the two highest-ranked of the five positions) of *The Shi Shi*, more than 130 poems from the Han, Wei, and Jin dynasties were included, accounting for about 87% of the total, which shows that Jiao Ran indeed had a high regard for poetry from these periods, especially *The Nineteen Ancient Poems* and poetry from the Southern Dynasties. The Southern Dynasties poetry valued the aesthetic characteristics of poetry, reflecting the "Feng Sao" view of that period. In Jiao Ran's view, *The Nineteen Ancient Poems* also deviated from the "Ya Song" literary view of the early and flourishing Tang Dynasties, while having some affinity with the "Feng Sao" view of the Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties, a criticism that is thought-provoking.

In the "Li Shaoqing and *The Nineteen Ancient Poems*" section of *the Shi Shi*, it says: "The Five-character Poetry appeared during the Zhou Dynasty, but complete poems did not appear until Li Ling and Su Wu came along. These two men were born with a natural talent for poetry, their words were naturally lofty and no signal of "Zuo Yong"¹³. *The Nineteen Ancient Poems* are characterized by their refined language, profound meaning, and ingenious structure, showcasing the power of "Zuo Yong" for the first time, which is considered a literary style of the Han Dynasty. Jiao Ran evaluated *The Nineteen Ancient* and the Wuyan poems of Li Ling and Su Wu based on the presence or absence of "Zuo Yong." Therefore, "Zuo Yong" differs from natural innocence and requires refined language with profound meaning and bold expression with unfamiliar final lines, all closely related to artistic refinement in form and daring yet ingenious artistic conception.

The formation of Jiao Ran's "novelty" and "luxurious" aesthetic view was closely related to his own personality and living environment. Xin Wenfang, in his biography of Jiao Ran in *Tang Cai Zi Zhuan*, described him as "a person with a free and unrestrained personality who was not bound by conventional rules."¹⁴ His free-spirited personality freed him from the constraints of conventional rules, so he would have the idea of rejecting tradition. Jiao Ran was keenly aware of his own unconventional personality, as he expressed in *Xi Ti Er Shou Poem*: "The worldling are always living in the clamor of right and wrong, while I am at ease all day long. What am I doing, singing wild song, desiring to forcefully relate to human affairs and so on."¹⁵ It is evident that Jiao Ran's mad singing was not accepted by secular society, hence the exclamation of "forced relevance". *The Zhang Boying Cao Shu Ge* also states: "I am always in a state of change."¹⁶ The poet's unconventional personality is expressed through the use of peculiar terms such as "wild song," and "a state of change". Additionally, apart from a brief period of sojourning in northern regions, Jiao Ran spent most of his life in the Wu and Chu areas. In the context of Wu-Chu culture, the Chu Ci and the "Chu madman" have already become symbols of Wu-Chu culture. For example, Jue Ran's poem *Feng Chou Yuan Shi Jun Xi Lou Jian Qin Shan Ren Yu Fulli Shi Yu Zhao San Yun* reads, "I would share the path of the Chu madman."¹⁷ This shows that Jiao Ran's theory of "Feng Sao" should have been influenced by the wild and unconventional spirit of Wu-Chu culture. The wild and unconventional spirit was manifested in specific poetry and folk songs through imaginative flights of fancy and "strange and wonderful" image that deviated from the orthodox, such as the imaginative lines in the *Li Sao*: "Drive me in a flying dragon" "In the morning I set out from the Milky Way, and by evening I had reached the farthest west"¹⁸. These internal and external factors gave birth to Jiao Ran's natural affinity for the "Li Sao" and the formation of his unique literary view of the "Feng Sao".

In conclusion, Jiao Ran's "Feng Sao" theory contains ornate language, strange and daring ideas, and a soaring momentum, etc., which are related to the aesthetics of art. If the "Feng Sao" theory of Wei, Jin and The Southern Dynasties raised the status of "Li Sao" and emphasized the value of literature itself, Jiao Ran's "Feng Sao" theory is consciously categorizing both "Feng Sao" into the realm of artistic aesthetics, and the status of *The Li Sao* has the tendency to surpass that of *The Shi Jing*, with the value of literature itself receiving full attention.

PART II, JIAO RAN'S NON-TRADITIONAL "FENG YA" AND "SHI JIAO" DISCOURSE: DIVERGENT PATHS LEADING TO THE SAME DESTINATION AS HIS "FENG SAO" THEORY.

The following two passages in Jiao Ran's *Shi Lun* explicitly mention the concept of "Feng Ya":

No.1: Since the Western Han Dynasty, literary styles have undergone four transformations, and I fear that "Feng Ya" style will gradually disappear. Therefore, I would like to compare and evaluate them to clarify their origins.¹⁹

No.2: The poets who followed the trend wrote poetry according to the "Ba Bing" and "Shuang Nian", which resulted in the flaws of poetry and led to the extinction of the literary style of "Feng Ya", while leading to the distinction between ancient and

¹¹ Guo Yinxing Bian Xuan. *Tang Song Ming Qing Wen Ji Ming Ren Wen Ji*(Vol.2), Tianjin Ancient Books Publishing House, 2000, pp.1083.

¹² Liu Xie Zhu, Fan Wenlan Zhu. *Wen Xin Diao Long Zhu Juan Er Ming Shi*(Upper Volume), People's Literature Publishing House, 1958, pp.67.

¹³ Jiao Ran Zhu, Li Zhaungying Jiao Zhu. *Shi Shi Jiao Zhu*, People's Literature Publishing House, 2003, pp.103-104.

¹⁴ Xin wenfang Zhuan, Fu Xuanzong Jiao Jian. *Tang Cai Zi Zhuan Jiao Jian*(Vol.4), zhonghua book company, 1989, pp.204.

¹⁵ Jiao Ran. *Zhu Shan Ji*(Vol.6), Shanghai Classics Publishing House, 1992, pp.54.

¹⁶ Jiao Ran. *Zhu Shan Ji*(Vol.7), Shanghai Classics Publishing House, 1992, pp.58.

¹⁷ Jiao Ran. *Zhu Shan Ji*(Vol.4), Shanghai Classics Publishing House, 1992, pp.36.

¹⁸ Liu Xiang Ji, Wang Yi Zhu, Hongxingzu Bu Zhu, Sun Xuexiao Jiao Dian. *Chu Ci*, Shanghai Classics Publishing House, 2015, pp.49.

¹⁹ Jiao Ran Zhu, Li Zhaungying Jiao Zhu. *Shi Shi Jiao Zhu*, People's Literature Publishing House, 2003, pp.1.

modern poetry.²⁰

The first quotation is the "Four Changes in Literary Style" discussion, Jiao Ran pointed out that the four changes in literary style were the cause of the decline of the "Feng Ya" styles, and that these four changes were: "The poetry of Su Wu and Li Ling are naturalness a natural beauty that was perfect in itself and does not seem to have been Zuo Yong. *The Nineteen Ancient Poems* were the first to show 'Zuo Yong', which was the first change. Xie Lingyun still showed 'Zuo Yong' in his poetry, which was the second change. The poetry of the Southern and Northern Dynasties was decorative and symmetrical, which was the third change. Shen Quanqi and Song Zhiwen created the metrical poetry, which was the fourth change"²¹, the presence or absence of "Zuo Yong" became the standard for the inheritance of literary style and the spirit of the "Feng Ya" tradition, which was very different from the political, eulogistic and satiric themes of the "Feng Ya" tradition.

Among the four transformations mentioned above, Jiao Ran's comments on *The Nineteen Ancient Poems*, Xie Lingyun's poetry, and the poetry of the Southern Qi and Liang dynasties reflect his pursuit of novelty and luxurious style of "Feng Sao" theory, which has been discussed above. So, are the metrical poetry of Shen Quanqi and Song Zhiwen which represents an important aspect of the "disappearance of the 'Feng' and 'Ya'," also related to his "Feng Sao" theory?

In the *Shi Shi*, Jiao Ran praised the Tang Dynasty's Shen and Song's metrical poetry as a "tortoise mirror" and "archer's hand" to be emulated, affirming their artistic achievements and poetic historical status. Therefore, Li Zhuangying interprets Jiao Ran's "since the Western Han Dynasty, literary styles have undergone four changes" as the fourth change being the creation of Shen and Song's rhymed poetry. Yuan Zhen, who came after Jiao Ran, also believes that "Shen and Song and their followers, have refined and polished their skills, making their poetry stable and rhythmic. This is called a rhymed poem. After this, the style of poetry reached its peak." ²²Yan Yu also says, "the 'Feng Ya Song' style has disappeared, and was replaced by 'Li Sao'. Then it changed again to the five-character poetry of the Western Han Dynasty, then to the 'Ge' poetry, then to the 'Shen and Song' rhymed poetry."²³ Both of them follow Jiao Ran's idea and more clearly indicate that Shen and Song's rhymed poetry is the inevitable result of the evolution of the 'Feng Ya Song' style, and is an important link in the development of poetry.

Specifically, Shen Quanqi and Song Zhiwen 's metrical poetry can be divided into two periods. The early period was characterized by themes of court poetry, while the later period incorporated a sense of personal experience, making the content more substantial. However, Jiao Ran appreciated Shen and Song's early poetry more. The metrical poem in Song Zhiwen's *Feng He Hui Ri Xin Kun Ming Chi Ying Zhi* and the metrical poem in Shen Quanqi's *Sui Ye Le An Jun Zhu Man Yue Shi Yan Ying Zhi* have already indicated that these two poems were written for specific occasions and were praised by Jiao Ran for their outstanding craftsmanship. The first and second grade works highly praised by the *Shi Shi* were collected, totaling 9 poems by Shen and Song. Among them, *Hui Ri Xing Kun Ming Chi Ying Zhi*, *Da Jian Fu Si Ying Zhi*, *Le An Jun Zhu Man Yue Shi Yan Ying Zhi* and *Cong Xing Gu Qing Men Ying Zhi* were directly titled "Ying Zhi", while the other five works such as *Ru Ya Kou Ji Li Shi*, *Da Ning Chu Zhou Shu*, *Huan Zhou Zuo* and *Zao Fa Shao Zhou* were not "Ying Zhi" themes, but focused on landscape descriptions. These descriptive verses are considered masterpieces of exquisite craftsmanship, and more emphasis is placed on the artistic form of poetry. Therefore, paying more attention to the artistic form and internal metrical poetry in Shen and Song's metrical poetry is an important aspect of the evolution of the literary tradition. "Feelings are abundant, inspiration is profound, and language is beautiful" is Jiao Ran's praise for the specific aspects of Shen and Song's ci poetry. Xu Xueyi's *Shi Yuan Bian Ti* clarifies that Shen Quanyi and Song Zhiwen's poetry is considered a model or orthodoxy for the metrical poetry²⁴. Their works represent the high standard and classic style of regulated poetry. In *Shi Zhou Shi Hua*, Wen Fanggang pointed out that the "exquisite and elegant words" and "flowing and unrestrained spirit" of Shen and Song's metrical poetry were actually derived from the transformation of The Northern Dynasties' style and manner²⁵. This grand and magnificent language and the extensive praise are similar to Jiao Ran's statement of "rich emotions, far-reaching inspiration, and ornate language." Therefore, Jiao Ran appreciated the poetry of Shen Quanqi and Song Zhiwen in the early years of the Tang Dynasty because it was more accurate in reflecting the creative laws and new trends of the metrical poetry. The rhymed poem of Shen and Song, which was regarded as an important part of the "Feng Ya" tradition by Jiao Ran, had little to do with the traditional political and moral themes of the "Feng Ya" tradition, but was still consistent with his theory of "Feng Sao".

In the second example, Jiao Ran did not regard the traditional significance of "Feng Ya" as the main focus of his discussion. Instead, he concentrated on compensating for the shortcomings of the "Ba Bing" and "Shuang Nian" in both ancient and metrical poetry. Furthermore, both ancient and rhymed poetry were primarily classified from an artistic perspective, with less connection to traditional content. Wu Xiangzhou pointed out that Jiao Ran had lowered the meaning of "Feng Ya" from aesthetic pursuit to technical operation, effectively abandoning the exploration of the "Feng Ya" view²⁶. Therefore, "Feng Ya" seems to be closer to the Qi Liang aesthetics that pursues artistic form.

In addition, Jiao Ran gave new interpretations to traditional Confucian concepts such as "Liu Yi" and "Shi Jiao." In the *Da Su Zhou Wei Ying Wu Lang Zhong*, Jiao Ran pointed out that contemporary literature was at odds with the traditional poetics of "Shi Jiao" while only the works of the "Feng" and "Sao" could conform to the "Shi Jiao"²⁷ advocated by Confucian scholars. The term "Shi Jiao" is a concept in Confucian literary criticism, referring to the gentle and sincere education through the praise and

²⁰ Bian Zhao Jing Gang Zhuan, Lu Shengjiang Jiao Kao. *Wen Jing Mi Fu Lun Hui Jiao Hui Kao*, zhonghua book company, 2006, pp. 1405.

²¹ Jiao Ran Zhu, Li Zhaungying Jiao Zhu. *Shi Shi Jiao Zhu*, People's Literature Publishing House, 2003, pp.6.

²² Yuan Zhen Zhu, Zhou Xianglu Jiao Zhu. *Yuan Zhen Ji Jiao Zhu*(Vol.56), Shanghai Classics Publishing House, 2011, pp.1361.

²³ Yan Yu Zhu, Guo Shaoyu Jiao Shi. *Cang Lang Shi Hua Jiao Shi*, People's Literature Publishing House, 1961, pp.48.

²⁴ Xu Xueyi Zhu, Du Weimo Jiao Dian. *Shi Yuan Bian Ti* (Vol.13), People's Literature Publishing House, 1987, pp.146.

²⁵ Wen Fanggang). *Shi Zhou Shi Hua* (Vol.1), zhonghua book company, 1985, pp.2,6.

²⁶ Wu Xiangzhou. *Zhong Tang Shi Wen Xin Bian*, Xueyuan Publishing House, 2007, pp.127.

²⁷ Jiao Ran. *Zhu Shan Ji*(Vol.1), Shanghai Classics Publishing House, 1992, pp.5.

criticism of poetry. However, the "Shi Jiao" and the "Liu Yi" mentioned in Shi Shi and Shi Yi differ from the traditional meaning.

Jiao Ran provided a distinct interpretation of the "Liu Yi" in the Shi Jing, including Fu, Bi, and Xing. He defined Fu as "skillfully crafting words to express emotions," Bi as "using external images in their entirety for comparison," and Xing as "Starting by describing the imagery, and then using it to lead into the events and emotions. like the case of Guan Ju".²⁸ Jiao Ran's viewpoint freed Fu, bi, and Xing from political and moral judgments and emphasized their artistic and aesthetic scope.

In "Three Different Aspects: Language, Meaning, and Momentum" of *Shi Shi*, Jiao Ran evaluated "stealing language" as a dull thief. He cited examples to show the similarity between Chen Houzhu's *Ru Sui Shi Yan Ying Zhao* and Fu Changyu's *Zeng He Shao Wang Ji* poems, naming it "language similarity." This indicates that "stealing language" refers to direct plagiarism of ancient language without any creative input, which is why Jiao Ran severely criticized it. Additionally, Jiao Ran believed that "stealing meaning" did not align with "Shi Jiao." In "stealing meaning" of *Shi Shi*, where the imagery and intent of the poems *Chou Su Yuan Wai Wei Dao Xia Wan Yu Zhi Sheng Zhong Jian Zeng* by Shen Quanqi and *Cong Wu Di Deng Jing Yang Lou* by Liu Yun are exactly the same, although the words used are different. Shen's poem uses the images of "pond water" and "tall trees" to express the meaning of "early coolness returning," and borrows from Liu Yun's work. Therefore, "stealing meaning" actually refers to the borrowing of the intent of ancient works, which has little to do with traditional "Shi Jiao" content and is more focused on artistic techniques. Jiao Ran appreciated the author's superior creative ability and delicate expression, which embodied Jiao Ran's "theory of 'Zuo Yong'". He suggests that the poems of "stealing momentum" should be based on the natural momentum of the predecessor's work, achieving an unobtrusive and seamless integration. In *Shi Shi*, two poems by Wang Changling's *Du You*," and Jie Kang's *Zeng Xiu Cai Ru Jun* are cited, despite the fact that the two poems differ in language and content, they share the same artistic conception of expressing emotions and ideas through the images of swans, carp, and strings of a zither, which demonstrates Wang Changling's inheritance and development of Jie Kang's "momentum" of "Zuo Yong". In *Zeng Xiu Cai Ru Jun*, the words of "send" and "wave" brings the poet closer to nature, allowing him to feel at ease in the midst of the natural world, thus forming a natural harmony with the creation. In contrast, Wang Changling's poem presents a contrasting relationship, where the poet using two different scenarios of crap and swan goose to understand the lesson of not being burdened by fame and wealth. Both poems conform to the development of their respective emotions, thus forming corresponding literary styles, which is an inheritance of Wang Changling's natural "momentum" of Jie Kang. Obviously, whether it is the "stealing language" and "stealing meaning" that do not conform to the norms of "Shi Jiao", or the "stealing momentum" that was praised by Jiao Ran, they are more inclined towards the interpretation of artistic techniques.

Therefore, Jiao Ran's "Feng Ya" and "Shi Jiao" views no longer focused on the traditional political and moral themes of poetry, but rather emphasized the intrinsic laws and techniques of literature, converging with his "Feng Sao" view.

PART III: RETURNING TO THE LITERARY ESSENCE: THE POETIC HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF JIAO RAN'S ANTI-TRADITIONAL DISCUSSION ON "FENG SAO"

During the mid-Tang Dynasty from the years of ZhiDe to the early years of Zhenyuan, most literati had experienced the Anshi Rebellion, witnessing the horrifying scene of poverty is widespread. Consequently, their literary theories reflected a stronger trend towards reviving the "Feng Ya" style, compared to the initial Tang Dynasty. For instance, Yuan Jie's "Feng Ya" theory, Gao Zhongwu's "Feng Ya" concept, and other similar ones, were all aimed at reforming the then-decadent social and literary trends by applying the "Feng Ya" and "Ya Song" theories of revival.

In the year 760 AD, Yuan Jie compiled a collection of 24 five-character ancient poems by seven contemporary poets, titled *Qie Zhong Ji*. The collection consists of three layers of connotation: Firstly, Yuan Jie believed that the tradition of "Feng Ya" has been absent for nearly a thousand years, and he used "Feng Ya" from the *Shi Jing* as the sole criterion for selecting poems, almost negating all poetry except for that in the *Shi Jing*. Secondly, Yuan Jie was particularly critical of the recent poets' near-verse poetry, as he believed that near-verse poetry was overly concerned with rhythm and form, had lost its elegance, and had violated the "elegant and upright" tradition of poetry. Thirdly, the five-character ancient poems written by Shen Qianyun and the others were different from the popular style, and inherited the "Feng Ya" spirit of *Shi Jing*. As can be seen, Yuan Jie's concept of "Feng Ya" was actually a pursuit of revivalism, aiming for "pure ancient sounds". Yuan Jie advocated the Confucian tradition of "Feng Ya" and opposed the popular "sickly sentimental" works at the time. Living at the transition between the prosperous Tang Dynasty and the Middle Tang Dynasty, Yuan Jie witnessed the political corruption of the end of Emperor Xuanzong's reign and the Anshan Rebellion. Under such circumstances, he urgently hoped that literature could "save the times and encourage good customs", and therefore highly praised the unique features of the five-character ancient poetry of Shen Qianyun and others. For this reason, he rejected most poetry outside of *Shi Jing*, and rejected the artistic aesthetic features of rhyme, diction, etc., showing a clear tendency to value content over form. Weng Fanggang expressed doubt about Yuan Jie's concept of "Feng Ya". in *Shi Zhou Shi Hua*. Wang Yunxi also pointed out that Yuan Jie disregarded the innovative developments in poetry language and techniques after the Wei and Jin dynasties, and in art, he represented a regression.

Around the end of the Dali era and the beginning of the Jianyuan era, Gao Zhongwu compiled a collection of 134 poems by 26 poets of the Su Zong and Dai Zong periods, entitled *Zhong Xing Jian Qi Ji*²⁹. In the collection, Gao praised the poetry of Qian Qi, Lang Shiyuan, etc. as "Qing Ya", "Qing Yuan", reflecting his aesthetic preference for "Qing" style of poetry. However, in the "Preface", he specifically stated his true purpose for selecting these poems.

²⁸ Jiao Ran Zhu, Li Zhaungying Jiao Zhu. *Shi Shi Jiao Zhu*, People's Literature Publishing House, 2003, pp.381-382.

²⁹ Zha Pingqiu points out that "Zhong xing Jian Qi Ji" was written at the end of the Da Li and the beginning of Jianyuan in *The Change of Poetic Style from the comments of Jiao Ran and Gao Zhongwu on poets in South China*.

Gao Zhongwu made it clear that the fundamental purpose of his selection of poems was to revive the "Feng Ya" tradition³⁰ that had become obsolete, and to eliminate the current vulgar and decadent poetic style. Therefore, he seems to have deliberately chosen over ten poems by Meng Yuning, Su Huan, and Dou Can, among others, that embody the "Feng Ya" traditional spirit. The selection and evaluation of poems in the *Zhong Xing Jian Qi Ji* and the inconsistency between the *Preface* reflect the compromise of literary independent value to political and educational ideology.

The essay theory and poetry theory of this period pursued the "Da Ya" and the Six Classics of antiquity together. Liu Mian's essay *Yu Hua Zhou Lu Da Fu Lun Wen Shu* and Li Hua's *Yang Zhou Gong Cao Xiao Ying Shi Ji Xu* both emphasize the promotion of "Da Ya" of Confucianism and the Six Classics, while holding a negative view of the poetry of Qu Yuan and Song Yu from the *Chu Ci*. Liu Mian in his *Xie Du Xiang Gong Lun Fang Du Er Xiang Shu* argued that reverence for Confucianism was a necessary condition for cultivating beauty, promoting literary excellence, and fostering the flourishing of the kingly way; Cui Yuanhan in his *You Bu Que Han Lin Xue Shi Liang Jun Mu Zhi* praised Liang Su for using classics such as the *Chun Qiu*, *Shang Shu*, *Shi Jing* as sources of inspiration; Jia Zhi in his *Gong Bu Shi Lang Li Gong Ji Xu* praised Li Shi's writings for containing the profound principles of the Six Classics. They all regarded the Confucian classics as the highest standard for the revival of classical prose.

Chinese ancient literature is closely related to Confucian classics, which are centered around benevolent governance, Confucian rituals, people-oriented thought, and the spirit of "Feng Ya". These classics are the guiding principles for feudal unified governance, hence the term "Political Culture" ³¹is also used to refer to ancient literature. Whether it is the Eulogistic Han Fu, ambitious Jian'an poetry, or the ancient Chinese literature creation of the Middle Tang Dynasty that emphasizes the political function of literature, they all convey strong political aspirations. It can be said that almost all literary figures who pursued official positions had political ambitions, and their poetry and prose to some extent expressed their desire for political power. Jiao Ran had an experience of seeking an official position in the early years and was full of aspiration for fame and wealth; however, after failing the examination, he turned to Buddhism and abandoned fame and wealth. Nevertheless, although he was happy with a Zen heart that seems to be unrestrained after becoming a monk, he could never completely rid himself of worldly disturbances." According to the research in the *Jiao Ran Nian Pu*, during the period from Zhi De III to Zhen Yuan VII, Jiao Ran frequently interacted with Yang Hui, Cui Lun, Fang Deyu, Liu Changqing, Yan Bojun, Yan Zhenqing, Quan Deyu, and other high-ranking literati. During the process of poetry creation, Jiao Ran often exerted great effort to advocate the aspiration of not being burdened by empty fame. For example, in his poem *Da Meng Xiu Cai*, he wrote: "With my frail body confined to a small courtyard, my leisurely pursuits are deep and profound. I feel affectionate towards the quiet hues of moss, and I sweep fallen leaves to wait for a friend. A pleasant breeze from beyond the material world arrives, and a delightful guest seeks me out in my thoughts. Who would want an empty fame to burden me? I have no interest in worldly affairs. I present you with my fragrant herb, whose scent fills my quiet heart." ³²The moss and fallen leaves adorn the secluded courtyard, making it seem like a dream, and the poet, who is immersed in it, has transcended the noisy world and the shackles of empty fame, enjoying leisure and tranquility beyond the material world. Therefore, the monk poet's detached mindset of desirelessness and his extensive experience in the bureaucratic circles have enabled Jiao Ran to both objectively and rationally reflect on the independence of literature in traditional historian culture and delve deeply into the artistic creation laws of literature. His preference for artistic aesthetics in the "Feng-Sao" theory is a strong declaration of adherence to the literary orientation, which is particularly difficult and valuable in the literary development field of mid-Tang dynasty.

Specifically, Jiao Ran strongly advocated for "novelty and luxurious style" in his poetry theory, even categorizing "Feng Sao" and "Feng Ya" as part of the aesthetic realm of art. This statement may seem quite radical, but it reflects Jiao Ran's humanistic concern for the development of literature itself. Jiao Ran strongly opposed literature becoming a mere appendage of politics.

Jiao Ran divided the poetry creation of Jiangnan poets into two periods before and after the end of Dali era, based on his own judgment. He believed that the early poets of the period sneakily appropriated the mountains, clouds, spring breeze, and fragrant grass as their own, causing the decline of poetry, and his criticism was quite severe. However, the later poets knew their mistakes and changed their ways, which made them comparable to the famous poets of the Southern Dynasty, and he expressed a positive attitude towards them. Many scholars pointed out that the basic style and content of the poetry created by the Jiangnan poets before and after the Dali era had no significant changes, and they still focused on describing "mountains, clouds, spring breeze, and fragrant grass," thus rejecting Yu Ran's evaluation of the Jiangnan poets of the Dali era. For example, Chen Xinzhang's view in *A Brief Comment on Jiao Ran's View of Tang Poetry*, regarding the poetry of Huangfuran and Liu Changqing at the end of Dali era, their style generally still belongs to the type of poetry that Jiao Ran criticized in the Dali era³³.

According to the works of Dali Southern Poets, it can be found that landscape poetry occupies a considerable proportion in their early and late works. The poetry affirmed in the "Qi Liang Poetry" section of the "Dali Period" also mostly features natural scenery as the theme. For example, natural landscape images such as "blue clouds", "white dew", "stream bottom spring", and "strong wind" appear frequently in the works of Liu Changqing, Zhu Fang and other poets. Jiao Ran's poetry creation also focuses on landscape themes. This suggests that Jiao Ran do not object to the poetry content of natural scenery, but rather criticize the phenomenon of "stealing and claiming as one's own" without seeking innovation.

During the Da Li Period, there were two major groups of poets: the poets of the capital city and the poets of the south. The

³⁰ Gao Zhongwu's "Feng Ya" theory refers to traditional political and religious content.

³¹ Ancient Chinese literati take political authority as the supreme authority, make culture subordinate to political authority, and absolutely must not involve the universe and other issues beyond the political authority. Therefore, historian culture is political culture.

³² Jiao Ran. *Zhu Shan Ji*(Vol.1), Shanghai Classics Publishing House, 1992, pp.12.

³³ Chen Xinzhang. *Jian Ping Jiao Ran De Tang Shi Guan*. Journal of South China Normal University (Social Science Edition). 2003, No.2.

poets of the capital city were represented by the Da Li Shi Cai Zi, among whom Wang Wei was honored as the "Right Minister of Literature". Besides Da Li Shi Cai Zi, Liu Changqing, Huang Furan, Li Jiayou, and other poets, although they lived mostly in the south after the war, were active in the capital city before the exile. Therefore, during the early years of the Dali Period, although living in the south, the aesthetic consciousness of these southern poets was still deeply influenced by the style of Tang Dynasty, and they continued the poetic mode of Wang Wei and Meng Haoran in their creations. In particular, we see the influence of the past and repetition of self in the use of words and landscape imagery. For example, Yan Wei depicted the moon in 13 of his poems, accounting for one-fifth of his total 74 poems; Liu Changqing's poetry features frequent appearances of "green mountains," "white clouds," and "sunset," which seem to have formed a formulaic expression. This is related to Jiao Ran's evaluation of Liu's "poetic decline" and has nothing to do with political and religious ideologies.

Therefore, are the later works of the Jiangnan poets, who were considered to have changed, indicative of political and religious thought? In the entry on "Qi Liang poetry," we can see Liu Changqing's *Song of the Mountain Magpie* as a typical example. Liu's poetry still revolves around nature and landscapes, but he skillfully employs the vernacular poetry form of Wu Zhong region, weaving together three-character and seven-character lines in a flexible manner, with varied sentence structures and a language rich in the characteristics of the southern region, giving people a fresh and smooth aesthetic experience. All these elements display a novel feature. In addition, more "strange and novelty" imagery appeared in the later poetry of Jiangnan poets, creating a completely different eerie atmosphere that was the opposite of the elegant and fresh style of Wang and Meng's landscape poetry. This new feature was even more prominent, especially in Gu Kuang's poetry such as *Moss Mountain Song*. Therefore, the later Jiangnan poets' borrowing of the rustic style of Wu and their exploration of strange and dangerous landscapes all show differences from their earlier poetry, and are consistent with the literary theory of Jiao Ran, who advocated for "novelty" and "luxurious". It is precisely in this regard that Jiao Ran affirmed the poetry of the late Daxidi Jiangnan poets.

Against the backdrop of the revival of literary tradition, Jiao Ran unwaveringly adhered to the literary-centric stance. The tendency towards "novelty and luxurious style" is inherent in the development of literature itself, as Du Fu's *Ou Ti* poem points out the "novelty" and "luxurious" feature of the literary style in the Southern and Northern Dynasties, which is a natural trend in the evolution of literature. To alert the world to the primacy of literature, Jiao Ran proposed this counter-traditional "Feng Sao" theory.

PART IV: CONCLUSION

Yuan Zhen pointed out in his *Tang Du Gong Bu Yuan Wai Lang Du Jun Mu Zhi Ming* that there was a tendency in poetry at the time to "reject art form in favor of antiquity, and abandon substance in favor of ornament"³⁴. In terms of poetry, if Yuan Jie's "Feng Ya" theory is considered as "rejecting art form in favor of antiquity," then Jiao Ran's emphasis on artistic aesthetics in his "Feng Sao" theory can be seen as "abandoning substance in favor of ornament." As one of the outstanding representatives of the Dali Southern Poetry Circle in the Tang Dynasty, Jiao Ran's poetic theories played a significant role in guiding or influencing the trends of poetry creation at that time and in subsequent generations. Whether it is "reject art form in favor of antiquity" or "abandon substance in favor of ornament", these seemingly extreme theories or practices in poetry creation are inevitable propositions or cries in the historical context. Jiao Ran's unconventional theory of "Feng Sao" was proposed in the mid-Tang Dynasty, during the strong revival of the "Feng Ya" literary tradition, with the aim of safeguarding the independence of literature itself. In the war-torn mid-Tang society, Jiao Ran, like other literati, was concerned about the fate of the nation and the people. In his poem *Zao Chun Shu Huai Ji Li Shao Fu Zhong Xuan*, he denounced the deep suffering caused by war, including the loss of homes, the separation of loved ones forever, and the mass deaths of civilians³⁵. Furthermore, there are many other poems that also show Jiao Ran's patriotic and people-oriented sentiments. It can be inferred that Jiao Ran did not oppose expressing political emotions in poetry and prose, but rather opposed making political and religious ideologies the fundamental purpose and standard of poetry and prose. This is crucial in our interpretation of Jiao Ran's anti-traditional view of "Feng Sao."

Furthermore, Jiao Ran's emphasis on the "Feng Sao" style actually elevated the status of the *Chu Ci* in Tang Dynasty. For instance, in the profoundly influential Han-Meng poetry school, they not only revered the traditional "Guo Feng", "Da Ya" and "Feng Ya" spirit, but also expressed a strong admiration for *Chu Ci* writers such as Qu Yuan and Song Yu. Lu Tong in *Gan Gu Si Shou* praised Qu Yuan's noble character. Meng Jiao compared Song Yu's literary talent to Li Bai in *Zeng Zheng Fu Zi Fang*. In *Gan Chun Si Shou*, Han Yu praised the *Li Sao* and expressed a desire not to conform to the mundane world. Li He, on the other hand, more devoutly sang about "learning *Chu Ci*," and was called the heir to "Li Sao" after Qu Yuan.

The aesthetic concept of "Feng Sao" advocated by Jiao Ran, with its novelty and luxurious style, pointed the way for the creation of Yuan He literature. At the same time, the "strange and novelty" creative theory of Han-Meng Poetry School and the Wu Zhong popular art form adopted by Bai Juyi's New Yue Fu poetry are closely related to Jiao Ran's theory of "Feng Sao". In the preface of *Bai Jia Tang Shi*, Ye Xie pointed out: "During the Zhen Yuan and Yuan He periods, poets such as Han Yu, Liu Zongyuan, Liu Changqing, Qian Qi, Bai Juyi, and Yuan Zhen all emerged. Talents flourished, and the Tang Dynasty reached its peak in literary achievement. From then on, the style, rhythm, and expression of poetry became more adventurous and innovative, playing a crucial role in the development of literature. 'Middle' is not a title exclusive to the Tang Dynasty, but one that holds significant importance throughout Chinese literary history."³⁶ The formation of the key feature of "exploring the unconventional" in the Middle Tang Dynasty could not have been possible without the vigorous promotion of Jiao Ran, a poet monk with a wide circle of friends and whose collected works were deposited in the imperial library. His "Feng Sao" theory, which emphasized

³⁴ Yuan Zhen Zhu, Zhou Xianglu Jiao Zhu. *Yuan Zhen Ji Jiao Zhu* (Vol.56), Shanghai Classics Publishing House, 2011, pp.1361.

³⁵ Jiao Ran. *Zhu Shan Ji* (Vol.2), Shanghai Classics Publishing House, 1992, pp.21.

³⁶ Qing Dai Shi Wen Ji Hui Bian Bian Zuan Wei Yuan Hui Bian. *Qing Dai Shi Wen Ji Hui Bian*, Shanghai Classics Publishing House, 2010, pp.397.

novelty and luxurious style, firmly defended the literary realm and made significant contributions to the development of literature throughout the entire literary history.

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