

Ci-Poetry Tune Creation Way of “Qu Before Ci” in Tang and Song Dynasties

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Abstract: “Qu before Ci” is quite common in ancient China and history of folk song creation. This paper will analyze and sort out the creation mode, main characteristics and main body of the way of “Qu before Ci” in Tang and Song Dynasties.

1. Introduction

The way of song creation is influenced by many subjective and objective factors, such as the song creators’ aesthetic consciousness and music cognition, the audience’s aesthetic concept, the development state of other music forms, and the way of music dissemination. There are different ways of song creation in different stages of social development. Modern songs can be created in a more free way, such as “tunes before lyrics”, “lyrics before tunes”, or “simultaneous lyrics and tunes”. “Tunes before lyrics” was quite common in ancient China and history of folk song creation. This paper will analyze the creation mode, characteristics and main body of “Qu before Ci” (fill in Ci according to Qu) in Tang and Song Dynasties.

Ci-poetry tune is also called Qu Zi Ci. Qu Zi is the tune, and Ci is the lyrics. It can be said that it is folk songs from all over the country. Liu Yuxi of Tang Dynasty said in the preface of *Zhu Zhi Ci*: “I come to Jianping, where people sing *Zhu Zhi* together. They play the piccolo and drums for the festival. The singers are good at singing and dancing. The more songs, the better”; “In Tang Dynasty, *Yu Ge Zi* by Zhang Zhihe and *Ai Nai Qu* by Yuan Jie both come from the singing of labor in real life.[1]

2. Creative Characteristics of Tone Music

The most important creative feature of Ci-poetry music is the combination between lyrics and tunes. The lyrics should be in harmony with the metre (prosody, the accent in a metrical foot of verse), rhythm and structural arrangement of the tune, and finally show that “the lyrics are the center”. At the same time of the combination between lyrics and tunes, more attention should be paid to the meaning of the lyrics, giving people more space for imagination and artistic conception. “What Chinese literati music tries to embody is a kind of far-reaching meaning beyond the music itself and the music image that can be perceived directly.”[2]

They attach more importance to the creativity of lyrics than tunes; “the non-singleness” of the creative subject is another creative feature. Wu Mei said in the preface of Cai Songyun's *The Origin and History of Ci* that “On the white stone are 17 songs, only Chinese characters like Gong and Che (Gongche notation was one of the traditional musical notations in China. It got the name because people use characters such as Gong and Che to record tune), no beat, so still can't sing.” It shows that the notation at that time could not present the concept of beat and rhythm in modern music theory. At that time, the so-called “beat” was fixed beat, which was defined by the sentence or rhyme of poetry. In the era of no separation of Ci and music, it was difficult to separate the beat, rhythm and structure of music. Therefore, the performers were the disseminators of music at that time. The indeterminacy of notation also makes the performers participate in song creation more or less in the dissemination. It is a long process of oral communication and oral creation among different performing groups. Even Jiang Kui's *Zi Duo Qu* will be recreated in the process of spreading because of the different understanding of singers. Today, different experts also have different understandings and views on the translation of Jiang Kui's *Zi Duo Qu*.

3. The Main Body of Tone Music

Apart from Jiang Kui's *Zi Duo Qu*, most of the authors of Ci-poetry music were difficult to be done textual research. However, from other retained materials, the abundant research results of experts and scholars, the rich creative sources, and the non-designation of singing places, it can be concluded that most of the creators of Ci-poetry music are not specialized music creators.

(1) Ordinary workers: They are the creators of folk tunes. The creation of folk tunes is a collective work, which has been gradually completed through continuous enrichment and improvement by passing from mouth to mouth among countless people. The discovery of *Dun Huang Qu Zi Ci* is enough to prove that the earliest Qu Zi Ci was created by the wisdom of broad working masses. "What people are familiar with, such as *Zhu Zhi*, was originally a folk song of Sichuan and Hunan. In Volume I of Huang Tingjian's *Collection of Valley Poetry* in Song Dynasty, it said: '*Zhu Zhi* song originally came from Sanba (areas to the east of Jialing River and Qijiang River in Sichuan), but it flowed to Sichuan and Hunan.' " *Mai Xiu Liang Qi* is also a folk tune. The creation of folk music in Song Dynasty is very prosperous. According to the *History of Song Dynasty and Records of Music*, in the Northern Song Dynasty, "there were a lot of new folk voices"[3]

(2) Musicians and ancient singing girls: The number of musicians and ancient singing girls is large. These people's literary levels are mostly not high but they can skillfully play one or several musical instruments, and have the ability and conditions to create and disseminate music. *Zheng Lang Zi* in *Dun Huang Qu Zi Ci* said: "The Guqin is decorated with thin strings and white jade. Gong Shang Jiao Zheng Yu (notes of the ancient pentatonic scale), the five tones foots are all prepared. When can I play songs to the emperor? At that time, I will play all songs by the instrument." Ren Zhongmin thought, "This song is the vocation language of musicians. It should be temporarily composed by musicians and ancient singing girls with low education level." [4] Yin Falu said in the preface of *Collection of Dun Huang Qu Zi Ci* edited by Wang Chongmin: "The real original Ci should be lively works by musicians and geisha." [5]

(3) Literati: The literature changed from poetry to Ci, and the music creation way correspondingly changes from "selecting poems to music" and appropriate adaptations, sentence cutting to "filling in Ci according to Qu", so as to adapt to the development of long and short sentences. Liu Yuxi, who mentioned this creative method earlier in documents, said in the preface of two poems of *Yi Jiangnan*, "The author wrote this Ci following Bai Juyi but made sentences according to rhythm of *Yi Jiangnan*." After entering the creation stage of filling in Ci according to Qu, the Ci-poetry tune music has been highly developed, and a large number of literati and scholars in Tang and Song Dynasties joined the team of filling in lyrics and creating tunes. In the heyday of Ci music in the two Song Dynasty, it is certain that great poets and great literati created rich Ci. At the beginning of the development of Ci music, the works created by literati have appeared in *Dun Huang Qu Zi Ci* of Tang Dynasty. They have a high level of art and elegant semantics. Zheng Zhenduo said that *Yun Yao Songs*: "This is what the literati have edited, so most of them are quite coherent and smooth with obedient sentences and elegant artistic conception." He also said, "Maybe in the late Tang Dynasty, Ci had been held in the hands of the literati, not just folk popular songs." [6]

In addition, emperors, generals, ministers, frontier soldiers, monks and so on all like to create intonation to express their feelings and wishes for life.

4. How to Write Lyrics

The creation way of filling in Ci by tunes is not achieved overnight, but constantly improved in the development of the form of poetry and the harmony of the relationship between Ci and tunes. At first, "most of Ci were made by tunes" in the tune music, and most turned old songs to new sounds. Bai Juyi said in his Ci to Liu Yuxi, "Don't listen to the old songs. Listen to the new *Yang Liu Zhi*." The new songs are adapted from the old ones and create new Ci. "*Yang Liuzhi*" in *Bi Ji Man Zhi* by Wang Zhuo said: "New voice came later, and the so-called *Yang Liuzhi* was sang in other words."

This is the original form of “named by the old tune but singing in new tune” in the Ci creation after Tang Dynasty. “According to Meng Qi's *Ben Shi Shi*, Shen Quanqi's song *Hui Bo Yue* and the song in the banquet in the period of Emperor Zhongzong of Tang were the earliest examples to prove that the literati fill in Ci according to tunes in Tang Dynasty.”[7] Since the middle and late Tang Dynasty, this way of creation has gradually become the mainstream. For example, Liu Yuxi's *Yi Jiangnan* notes “The author wrote Ci following Bai Juyi but made sentences according to rhythm of *Yi Jiangnan*.” This is the earliest confession of “filling in Ci according to Qu”. Later, this way gradually became a common form of Ci creation. Shen Kuo's *Dream Brook Sketchbook* said in volume V, “the Tang people fill in tunes with Ci.” Zhang Yan's *Ci History* and Yang Zan's *Five Essentials of Ci Composition* said, “fill in the words according to the score.” This shows that “fill in Ci according to Qu” is not only the way of creating the Ci-poetry tune, but also the rule that must be followed in new Ci creation.

Filling in the Ci according to Qu is to create new Ci according to the inherent structure, rhyme rules and emotional tone of Qu Pai Ci. On one hand, it gives rules and restrictions to the new Ci creation; on the other hand, it gives direction and tone, ensuring the musicality and rhythm of the Ci music. The phenomenon of “one tune used in different Ci” has been passed down in the creation of Chinese traditional folk music. In modern China, a large number of school songs have been created by the way of writing new Ci in old tune. For example, the song *Farewell* is taken from the song *Dreaming of Home and Mother* by John P. Ordway, the American popular songwriter.

On one hand, the way of filling in Ci according to tunes has contributed to the prosperity and development of Tang poetry and Song Ci. On the other hand, through the popularity and dissemination of Tang poetry and Song Ci, the passed down Qingshang music, wind-and-percussion music, Singing and Dancing Daqu (big show), music from western regions, ethnic minorities and folk has been spread and developed, and the tune has become a music dissemination carrier that people like to hear and see. For example, the tune *Shui Diao Ge Tou* is taken from the segment of the Singing and Dancing Daqu *Shui Diao*, and tunes such as *Po Luo Men Yin* and *Mu Lan Hua Man* are also taken from segment of Daqu.

5. Conclusion

Because of the indeterminacy of the written notation, the limitation of the way of dissemination, the multitudinous participation of the creation, and the harmony of writing the Ci according to the tune, the traditional Chinese music has more charm and meaning, which are difficult to record with the notes.

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