

The Influence of Chan on the Artistic Conception of Poetry in Tang Dynasty



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ABSTRACT: An important achievement of Tang Dynasty poetry was the birth of the theory of "Yijing". The theory of "Yijing" was an important category in Chinese classical aesthetics. During the Wei and Jin Dynasties, the theory of "imagery" had been put forward. However, aestheticians in the Tang Dynasty did not stop at "imagery". In terms of one category, it is possible to elevate "imagery" to a new category of "yijing" through the enlightenment of Chan thought, which further promoted the development of poetry after the Tang Dynasty.

INDEX TERMS: Tang poems, Yijing, Chan, Temples

Due to the prosperous Chan style and the prosperous poetry world in the Tang Dynasty, Chan scholars and poets often interacted with each other: the Tang people practiced Chan, the literati "use Chan as poetry" and the monks "use poetry to show Chan". The two purposes are different, but they also complement each other. According to Guo Shaolin's statistics: "The Complete Tang Poems" contains 48,900 poems of the Tang Dynasty. Among them, there are 2,700 poems related to Buddhism by scholar-bureaucrats and 2,500 poems written by monks. In total, they account for more than 10% of the book.¹ This article also uses statistical methods to see: "The Poems of the Tang Dynasty" contains 635 poems with the word "Monk" in the title, 835 poems with "Master", 46 poems with "Monk", and 1541 poems with "Temple" in the title. There are 61 poems with "Lan Ruo".² In total, there are 1470 works given to monks or visiting monks and monasteries. It can be seen that poems and monks passed frequently at that time.

Later generations used Chan as a metaphor for poetry, one is the combination of poetry and Chan, and the other is that Chan gives inspiration to poetry. People in the Tang Dynasty wrote about Chan in poems, and in many cases they expressed it concretely by writing about temples and monks. Temple-themed Tang poetry mostly expresses the impermanence and distress of real life, cool and quiet mood, unobstructed enlightenment and other religious experience in poetry, which adds a lot to Tang poetry. It can even be said that the poetry of the prosperous Tang Dynasty is interested in the formation and development of the poetry in the Mid-Tang Dynasty, the monasteries and monks gave poets a lot of help. Temple-themed Tang poems have to some extent acted as the carrier and medium for the transformation of Tang poetry and Chan.

1. Detached mood, contrasts the impermanence of official career

Poets in the Tang Dynasty went to social reality through official careers, hoping to show their high ambitions and realize their deep thoughts of saving the world. When they experienced ups and downs in their official careers and experienced the sinisters of the world, the officialdom was constantly dark and dirty. The earth impacted the poet's heart, so they began to turn to spiritual comfort and sustenance, hoping to avoid the mundane world, escape the fetters of the world, and yearn for a detached and uncontested life. Quiet landscapes, leisure in the world, Chan's creed that "life is more important than doctrine, aesthetics is higher than belief", as well as completing one's own transcendence of troubles, purifying the soul, and pursuing the realm of self-pleasure, are giving poets an escape from reality. The mental space of life; and the Buddha's way of life of "no mind to matter", the realization of the "empty phantom" of life and the "flow of life and death" (*Srangama Sutra*) has also given poets a sense of cynicism. They began to empathize with nature, dialogue with mountains and rivers, and listen to the sounds of nature.

However, although most poets regard mountains and forests as their paradise, they combine their ideal life with the beauty of mountains and rivers. But what it values is the fearlessness of the mind, rather than the real living in the mountains. The thoughts and feelings are in the contradiction between officialdom and seclusion. On the one hand, it expresses nostalgia for the life of officials, and on the other hand it reveals the reclusive life. Yearning. Under the reflection of such a contradictory mood, the spirit of poetry creation is transformed into inner quality. They "discovered nature outwards and their deep feelings inward".³ Buddhism's

¹ Guo Shaolin, *Tang Dynasty Scholars and Officials and Buddhism* (Xi'an: Santai Publishing House, 2006).

² According to the statistics of Yuanzhi University's "Quan Tang Poetry Retrieval System": <http://cls.admin.yzu.edu.tw/QTS/HOME.HTM>

³ Zong Baihua, *Aesthetic Walk*.

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thoughts of emptiness and inaction make the poet temporarily forget the pursuit of fame and gain, forget the worldly disputes, and the heart of the world has been cleansed and floated, the heart is opened, the ears and eyes are clear, the scenery in the pen is fresh and natural, but The sorrows, joys, and sorrows of life are written, and all the feelings of life are expressed, and the impermanence of officials and officials is reflected with a detached state of mind.

The tranquil scenery and Buddhist atmosphere of the temples in the Tang Dynasty played an irreplaceable role in mediating the impermanent and depressing official reclusiveness and hesitation of the poet in his official career. Visiting the temples and visiting Chan masters are the realistic ways for poets to understand Chan and seek psychological refuge. Therefore, there are many works that use Chan language to surpass the impermanence of official officials in the poetry of temples in the Tang Dynasty. Judging from the poetry with the theme of the Tang monastery in Shengzhong, Wang Wei and Liu Zongyuan are the most typical ones who use Chan to relieve the worries of official career.

Although Wang Wei was an official in his later years as an official, but with the ups and downs of official officials and the rich life experience, he has long seen the difficulties and dangers of his official career. I hope I can get rid of the annoying world. After he was forty years old, he began to live a life of being both official and hidden, and his enterprising mentality of working hard also dimmed. However, he has always been very depressive. He said that "Ji guǎ suì xìng huān, kǒng qiǎn fù shí lèi" (既寡遂性欢, 恐贻负时累), "Gua huan" is the burden of heavy pressure in life. It is the soul that is tired. "Yīshēng jǐxǔ shāngxīn shì, bù xiàng kōngmén hé chù xiāo" (一生几许伤心事, 不向空门何处销). Wang Wei visits monks in temples to relieve the pain in his heart. The poems he created blend Zen's illusory thoughts with the temple landscape, revealing the poet's indifferent after seeing the fame and fortune. His "Tou Dao Yi Shi Lan Ruo Temple" says:

Yī gōng qī tàibái, gāo dǐng chū fēng yān. Fàn zhū hè biàn, huā yǔ yī fēng piān. Jī wéi wúxīn yǐn, míng yīn lìjiào chuán. Niǎo lái yuǎn yǔ fǎ, kè qù gèng ān chán. Zhòu shè sōng lù jǐn, mù tóu lánrě biān. Dòngfāng yīn shēn zhú, qīngyè wén yáo quán. Xiàng shì yúnxiá lǐ, jīn chéng zhēnxí qián. Qǐ wéi zàn liúsù, fú shì jiāng qióng nián.⁴

(一公栖太白, 高顶出风烟。梵诸壑遍, 花雨一峰偏。迹为无心隐, 名因立教传。鸟来远语法, 客去更安禅。昼涉松路尽, 暮投兰若边。洞房隐深竹, 清夜闻遥泉。向是云霞里, 今成枕席前。岂唯暂留宿, 服事将穷年。)

The beginning of the poem writes that the Yi shi is in the Taibai Mountain, Lan Ruo is high in the clouds, and the end of the poem writes this pure Zen state, as brilliant and distant as Yunxia, nowadays it's the scene before the pillow, expressing his admiration for the Chan state. It is worth noting that the admiration and closeness to the cloud in the poem is the expression of Wang Wei's use of Zen to resolve the suffering of impermanence. Perhaps "cloud" can best symbolize the illusion of fame, wealth and honor.

Under the influence of Confucianism, Wang Wei's pursuit of merit was strong and urgent in his early years. In his later years, under the influence of Beizong Chan, his pursuit of purity was also persistent. At the level of outlook on life, Wang Weishi did not fully accept the view of emptiness. He only wrote poetry full of illusion and Cha while visiting the monastery, seeking relief from the emotional pressure he could not bear, and this pressure is mainly due to the sense of impermanence brought about by the ups and downs of the Huanhai Sea, which is treated with the view of emptiness. The sense of impermanence brought about by the ups and downs is treated with the view of emptiness. Since it is emptiness, there is no need to stick to it.

Compared with Wang Wei's clarity, profoundness and innocence, Liu Zongyuan's poems are more indifferent after accustomed to the secular, detached and calm, and have the advantages of simplicity, clarity, gentleness and subtlety. In the natural and simple language, there are far-reaching sentimental thoughts.

Buddhism's transcendental method comforts the poet's lonely soul and dilutes his self-consciousness from time to time, making him step into a path of indifferent tranquility and incompetence with the world, making him temporarily forget the grievances and losses of life, obliterating right and wrong. Feelings of honor and shame. The poet epitomizes that everything in the world is "empty" and "fake". Therefore, the actual gains and losses of officials and officials do not have to worry about them, and the depressed mood unknowingly can be detached and reconciled in the combination of the temple environment and the Buddhist philosophy. Although he is able to empty everything, his mind is not obstructed, and is temporarily insulated from worldly affairs, he is in a super-utilitarian and surreal state of mind, experiencing Chan from nature, and experiencing life with Chan. The interweaving of leisure and melancholy in temple-themed poems makes Liu Zongyuan's poems appear sober qualities that Tao Yuanming, Wang Wei, and Wei Yingwu do not have. The distinctive mark of "integration of Confucianism and Buddhism" in his poems also gave a new level of expression to the Zen state of poetry in the mid-Tang Dynasty.

2. Silent Chan enlightenment, expressing the depression of life

Since ancient times, Buddhism and Chan thought has had a kind of silence doctrine. The basic trend of "Chan" in Chan is to seek to get rid of the worries of the world, and to seek spiritual tranquility and comfort. Regardless of whether its external performance is indifferent or hot, it is full of introspective depth and light depression, filled with sadness and detachment, giving people an unspeakable and intriguing image. It refers directly to the heart, sees nature to become a Buddha, controls life with a static mentality,

⁴ *Quan Tang Poems*, Volume 127, page 1291.

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pays more attention to people's mood, and is introverted by nature. Such as the three realms of Nanchan: First, "Falling leaves are full of empty mountains, where to find a trail"; Second, "There is no one in the empty mountains, and the water flows and flowers bloom." The care for life and the mirror image of life have become a state of life. The purpose of Zen enlightenment, a unique religious experience in China, is to understand the mind. The poets of the Tang Dynasty in the prosperous middle of the Tang Dynasty wandered in the temples in the beautiful waters of the Lingshan Mountains, often in order to obtain a kind of "harmony with the sky, which is called the heavenly happiness." The supreme and harmonious experience of harmony between man and nature. When the poet keenly felt the depression and loneliness of life, and realized the life philosophy of "Life is not a golden stone, how can one live a long test",⁵ his depressed feelings are especially deep. They hope to be able to get rid of their troubles and pains in the joy of silence, and the various Chan machines in the Chan temple can make the poet's inner distress find relief through this, and they can eliminate their life's troubles and pains in the spiritual kingdom of Buddhism.

It is most obvious in the poems of the Middle Tang Dynasty to send out the sorrows of life with quiet Chan enlightenment. During the Dali years, the youngsters of the prosperous age entered the society, but they encountered social turmoil and were in shock. Eight years of displacement and psychological torture have brutally destroyed the spirit of this generation. Their mentality has changed from the optimism of the youth to the old age. His melancholy and introverted, his outlook on life and the world became gloomy and indifferent. The lingering vicissitudes of vicissitudes and the sense of disillusionment in life weigh heavily on their hearts, forcing them to enter their inner world, adjust their mentality, think about life, and pay attention to themselves. "They hope to forget the lingering nightmare years, regain the lost youth, compensate for the lost family happiness, and change their attitude towards life from the idealism and heroism of the prosperous Tang Dynasty to the ordinary and secular human emotions and the joy of family life." "Reflected in the poems, the poetry of the Mid-Tang Dynasty tends to be introverted. The construction of the rich Zen in the poems and the author's deep sadness have been shown to be more mature, detached and calm in both perceptual and rational meanings. The poems show the confusion and distress felt by the young people entering the youth and after a sudden catastrophe.

The poems of the Mid-Tang Dynasty have deeper and more general Chan traces, and the quiet interest of Chan is completely permeated in the description of the landscape. This is not only the inheritance of the landscape and pastoral poetry of the prosperous Tang Dynasty, but the deeper side is this kind of quiet Chan enlightenment. The expression of poetry has almost become the common mentality of poets in this period. They used temples as their performance objects to blend the taste of Buddhism and Chan, rendering the tranquility of the landscape and away from the noise of the world, but not to describe the landscape and appearance of the temple, but to express their feelings and express their sorrow in the image of the temple. In the depiction of landscapes, the lonely figure of the poet seems to be omnipresent.

The most prominent is Liu Changqing's works on the theme of temples. The expression of the cold and quiet landscape of Buddhism and Zen in the poem is the externalization of the literati soul after experiencing the horror of the Anshi Rebellion. His poems bring a kind of sparse, cold, sad sentiment, and often appear in secluded figures. Although sometimes it is not about the poet himself, but about the image of others, if you read it carefully, you will find that it is just a projection of the poet's mind. For example, the poem "Send Lingche Master":

Cāngcāng zhúlín sì, yǎo yǎo zhōng shēng wǎn. Hé lì dài xīyáng, qīngshān dú guī yuǎn.⁷苍苍竹林寺，杳杳钟声晚。荷笠带夕阳，青山独归远。

The poet uses the scenery of the mountains and rivers to express his heart music. On the surface, he writes the praise of the poetic monk's quiet and clear demeanor, but in fact it is the reflection of the poet's unique feelings. The rhetoric is not polished, but they are good at it. The first sentence has "Cang Cang" and the last sentence is opposite to "Green Mountain"; the second sentence is "late" and the third sentence is reflected by "setting sun". In the first two sentences, there is a pair of temple bells. In the description of the sound, the last sentence also has the word "gui" in conjunction. The language is shallow, the meaning is deep, the scene is sentimental, and the words are exquisite, which has reached a high artistic level. The poet has created a vast, ethereal, quiet and quiet atmosphere. In this situation, it is poetry, painting, lyricism, and expression of aspirations to bid farewell to friends with lofty aspirations.

Listening to the song to clear the Brahma, ring the chime to the moon, holding the staff, and asking about the direction of Zen, the sorrow of life is melted in the mind of the precepted Buddha and introspection. The expression of this unique Zen state that integrates Buddhist things into the mood of life is not unique to Liu Changqing's poems. For every poet in the Mid-Tang Dynasty, they will never be able to get rid of the sharp contradictions between personality ideals and real politics in their hearts. Pain cannot completely escape the depression of life. They are all exhausted at the center of the political struggle at the time. It is difficult to find a real world of their own in the troubled times, so they can only "hidden in the dust", nothing is necessary, living a life of "like a comeback, neither busy nor free". Therefore, Mr. Sun Changwu pointed out that, unlike the Six Dynasties, the religious beliefs of

⁵ *Nineteen Ancient Poems*, "Hui Che Jia Yan Mai".

⁶ Jiang Yin: *Study on Poets in the Dali Period*, Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1995, Volume 127, page 11.

⁷ *Quan Tang Poems*, Volume 147, page 1484.

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poets in the Mid-Tang Dynasty "have been mainly manifested in daily behaviors such as personal pursuits in life, spiritual sustenance, and moral cultivation... Religion has become the content of ordinary life and has been integrated into actual life. It has become a kind of spiritual "enjoyment", a comfort and sustenance to settle down."⁸

3. Idle outside the world, adding to the joy of life

The poet came to the temple to pursue Chan, not only to escape the cruel social reality, but also to admire the joy of life of Buddha and Chan. It is also the inevitable pursuit of the poet's aversion to the hustle and bustle of the worldly vulgarity. An overview of the poetic works created by poets who visited monasteries and transferred to monks during the heyday of the Tang Dynasty can appreciate the pure and simple life of poets.

Among the poems on the theme of the Tang monastery in Shengzhong, the poetry expresses the leisure and seclusion and leisurely life of the poet with the interest of Buddhism and Chan. One is the expression of the landscape and Chan in the poem. At that time, the poets took the initiative to visit the monks in the temple, indulge in the mountains and rivers, explore the wonders, and find the joy of the mountains and rivers in the deep forest ancient temples and the sky high and cloudy scenery. They are always wandering between nature, friends with mountains and rivers, and trees and plants as their partners. The sunset in the sky, the sunset in the evening, and the bright moon in the water, in their eyes, are otherworldly, enjoying the breeze, listening to the pine and waves, and befriending me. It also makes the poets feel the joy of the soul and indifferent. This state of mind is exactly what Benefiting from the mutual promotion and integration of the temple's landscape and Buddhist thoughts, and also the influence of this state of mind, the poems have a unique expression of the Chan state that pursues indifferent tranquility and leisure outside the world.

Second, it reflects the display of life Chan in poetry. After the mid-Tang Dynasty, under the influence of Buddhism, the life of poets was also full of Chan opportunities. Originally taking the image of landscape as the main body, it has become a description of daily life, while meditation is contained in the ordinary and quiet daily life of the poet. The temple is one of the important places in the life of the poet, and the poetry that uses it as the object of expression is full of Chan interest.

Of course, these two expressions of Chan in the temple-themed poems are not completely separate, but often merge into one another and live on each other, both revealing the joy and freedom of the poet after escaping from the shackles of society. In the following, some representative poets are used as examples to try and analyze.

Meng Haoran was born in the prosperous Tang Dynasty. In his early years, he had aspirations for the world, but he was frustrated politically and live as a hermit. Compared with Wang Wei, although the subject matter of his poetry creation is very narrow and the realm is far less expansive than Wang Wei's poetry, there is another way of conveying the joy of meditation. After Wang Wei went up and down in the Huanhai, and suffered from officialdom intrigues and cronyism, The secular feelings of leisure and the pursuit of the pleasure of life expressed in the poems produce a yearning for a fresh, leisurely, leisurely and secluded life. It is the frustration and loss in the official career that cause the poet's attention to shift to his own situation. Unlike Wang Wei who was also an official and a hermit, Meng Haoran was physically and mentally concealed. In his poems, he was truly indifferent to express his aspirations, and quiet to reach far. Meng Haoran is both physically and mentally hidden. In his poems, he can truly be indifferent to express his aspirations, and be quiet and far-reaching.

Meng Haoran's reclusive mountains and forests, free and easy mountains and rivers, and yearning for quietness and willingness to be indifferent, all permeate the influence of Zen thought on him. And the implication is deep and endless, the pursuit of the ease and leisure in life, the admiration for the beauty of the peaceful sound of the mountains and rivers, such as "Looking for the Fragrant Mountain Master Zhan": "Fánnǎo yè dùn shě, shānlín qíng zhuǎn yīn"(烦恼业顿舍, 山林情转股), expresses this pursuit. His poem "You Fenglin Temple West Ridge" achieves the perfect fusion of Buddhist and Zen thoughts and the realm of mountains and rivers. Poetry says:

Gòng xǐ niánhuá hǎo, lái yóushuǐ shí jiān. Yān róng kāi yuǎn shù, chūnsè mǎn yōu shān. Hú jiǔ péng qíng qià, qín gē yě xìng xián. Mò chóu guī lù míng, zhāo yuè bàn rén huán.⁹

共喜年華好，來游水石間。煙容開遠樹，春色滿幽山。壺酒朋情洽，琴歌野興閒。莫愁歸路暝，招月伴人還。

In the quiet and idle landscapes outside the world, comprehending nature and concentrating on meditation, the poet lifted all secular fetters and resolved many secular disturbances. In his poems, he discovered and portrayed a kind of natural interest between landscapes, In the poet's wayward and natural leisure mentality, it presents a scene of clarity and harmony.

The Chan interest in Tang poetry is so empty that it is difficult to understand. On the contrary, Chan in the poetry of temple theme has a more specific expression. The monasteries in the Tang Dynasty intervened in the life of the poets with their various secular functions. Poets visiting monks and monks have the purpose of relaxing mood and dispelling dust and worries. Some of the Chan poems created in this situation were relieved by Chan. The official retreat in the ups and downs of the ocean; some use meditation to relieve all kinds of sorrows in life; some use body meditation to increase the joy of life. These emotions are integrated into the artistic expression of Chan, which extends and expands the expression of Chan interest in Tang poetry. Chan is no longer an elusive and inexplicable space, but can actually be contemplated in a microscopic and concrete way.

⁸ Sun Changwu: *Taoism and Literature of the Tang Dynasty*, Beijing: People's Literature Publishing House, 2001, p. 516.

⁹ *Quan Tang Poems*, Volume 160, page 1650.

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The beauty of the realm pursued by "Chan" and "Poetry" has many similarities, such as the emphasis on "intuition", "insight", and "self-evident". The principles of "Chan" are profound and far-reaching. By writing "Chan poems" in the form of poems, the principles of Chan can be fully expressed; "Poems" pursue clear images. Many poems have greatly enhanced the state of imagery due to the addition of "Chan" thoughts. Almost all of the famous poets of the Tang Dynasty had negotiated with Chan Buddhism, and both in poetry creation and poetry theory, they all showed an emphasis on "Yi Jing"(意境). The formation of the theory of "Yi Jing" in poetry was inspired by Chan thought.

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