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The Establishment and Transformation of the "Theory of Jituo" in the Changzhou School of Ci Poetry during the Qing Dynasty

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***Abstract*—** *This paper attempts to analyze the discourse on jituo (allegorical expression) by Zhang Huiyan, the founder of the Changzhou School of Ci poetry in the Qing dynasty, and by Zhou Ji, who inherited and further developed Zhang's ideas, in order to understand the developmental process of the school's central theory, the "theory of jituo." Zhang Huiyan's theory of jituo is primarily grounded in the concept of bixing jituo (allegory through comparison and evocative imagery). Zhang bypasses historical facts and, on an essential level, directly connects ci poetry with the tradition of the Shi Jing (Classic of Poetry) and the Li Sao, thereby establishing the ideal value of ci. This essence is precisely the "jituo" embedded in the works. Zhou Ji's theory of wu jituo (non-allegory) expands the implications of Zhang Huiyan's concept of jituo. By wu jituo, it is meant that when composing, the author must still embed allegorical meaning in the work; however, once the work is completed, this meaning should be concealed so that the reader cannot definitively identify what it refers to, and different readers may derive different allegorical meanings from the work. Moreover, the content of this jituo must reflect the rise and fall of the times and pertain to social morality, rather than being limited to personal sentiments of sorrow and nostalgia.*

I. INTRODUCTION

In the early Qing, ci composition largely followed the Ming dynasty guideline of "modeling on the Huajian style and prioritizing graceful beauty" [1]; it was not until the rise of the Yangxian School and the Western Zhejiang (Zhexi) School that the trend began to change. The Yangxian School took Chen Weisong as its representative figure. Chen Weisong esteemed Su Shi and Xin Qiji in his discourse on ci, advocating a bold and unrestrained style. The Zhexi School was headed by Zhu Yizun, who revered Jiang Kui and Zhang Yan, taking refined purity as the hallmark of ci style. The poets honored and the styles advocated by the two schools seem to be widely divergent. Yet, judging from the association between Chen Weisong and Zhu Yizun, the two were not only close friends but also co-authored the book Zhu Chen Cun Ci, indicating very close interaction. Therefore, we may interpret this situation from another perspective: the formation of these two schools and the emergence of their theories were primarily a response to dissatisfaction with the early Qing ci arena, which inherited Ming practices, and an attempt at reform. The Yangxian School proceeded in a diametrically opposite direction, using an entirely contrary, bold and unrestrained style to correct the overly delicate manner of the early Qing; the Zhexi School, standing on the ground of the restrained and graceful style, rectified its excesses and directed it toward refined purity. The two schools could, in theory, actually complement each other.

By the mid-Qing period, the defects of the Yangxian and Zhexi Schools gradually surfaced. The Yangxian School increasingly tended toward crudeness and roughness; the Zhexi School slipped into lavish

ornamentation and piling up of allusions. Jin Yinggui, a disciple of Zhang Huiyan, once wrote in his "Postface to the Ci Xuan":

近世為詞，厥有三蔽，義非宋玉而獨賦蓬發，諫謝淳於而唯陳履舄。揣摩床第，汙穢中冓，是為淫詞，其蔽一也。猛起奮末，分言析字，詼嘲則俳優之末流，叫嘯則市儈之盛氣，其蔽二也。規模物類，依拖歌舞，哀樂不衷其性，慮嘆無與乎情，連章累篇，義不出乎花鳥，感物指事，理不外乎酬應。雖既雅而不艷，斯有句而無章，是為游詞，其蔽三也[2]。(In recent times, ci writing has three defects. When the meaning does not match that of Song Yu yet one solely describes disheveled hair; when the admonishment is less than that of Chunyu Kun yet one merely displays shoes and stockings — this is fumbling with bedchamber affairs, foul and obscene. This is lascivious ci, the first defect. When one bursts forth fiercely and dissects words and phrases, jests and mockery becoming the dregs of the jester's trade, shouts and roars venting the bluster of the marketplace — this is the second defect. When one delineates objects and things, relies on singing and dancing, sorrow and joy do not stem from one's nature, sighs and reflections have no connection to genuine feeling, producing piece after piece whose meaning never goes beyond flowers and birds, whose inspiration and reference never transcend social niceties. Although such pieces may be elegant without being sensual, they possess phrases but lack coherent composition. This is frivolous ci, the third defect [2].)

Xie Zhangting, writing in a later period, offered an explanation of Jin Yinggui's remarks:

按一蔽是學周、柳之末派也。二蔽是學蘇、辛之末派也。三蔽是學姜、史之末派也。皋文《詞選》，誠足救此三蔽。其大旨在於有寄託，能蘊藉，是固倚聲家之金鍼也[3]。(According to this, the first defect refers to learning from the latter branches of Zhou Bangyan and Liu Yong. The second defect refers to learning from the latter branches of Su Shi and Xin Qiji. The third defect refers to learning from the latter branches of Jiang Kui and Shi Dazu. Gaowen's (Zhang Huiyan's) Ci Xuan is truly capable of remedying these three defects. Its main tenet lies in possessing jituo and being able to be implicit and reserved — this is indeed the golden needle for composers of ci [3].)

From this, we can see that the lascivious ci of "defect one" mentioned by Jin Yinggui should refer to the early Qing continuation of Ming ci styles; "defect two" refers to the epigones of the Yangxian School; and "defect three" to the epigones of the Zhexi School. The "defect one" lascivious ci of the first stage had already undergone reform by the Yangxian and Zhexi Schools. By the mid-Qing, however, "defect two" and "defect three" had reached a point where reform was urgently needed, and it was in response to this that the Changzhou School of ci poetry arose.

Nevertheless, Zhang Huiyan did not specifically direct his criticism solely at the epigones of the Yangxian and Zhexi Schools. In his "Preface to the Ci Xuan," he once said:

自宋之亡而正聲絕，元之末而規矩隳。以至於今四百餘年，作者十數，諒其所是，互有繁變，皆可謂安蔽乖方，迷不知門戶者也[4]。(After the fall of the Song dynasty, the orthodox tradition of ci was cut off; by the end of the Yuan, its standards were ruined. From then until the present, over four hundred years, among the tens of authors, although they affirmed their own ways, each had manifold changes — all can be said to have rested content with their defects and gone astray, lost and unaware of the proper gateway [4].)

This shows that Zhang Huiyan aimed to guide all those who had "lost their way" over the past four hundred years. This also implies that his original goal was the same as that of the Yangxian and Zhexi Schools, and thus many of his views were by no means entirely distinct from those two schools. When discussing the developmental course of the Changzhou School, Yan Dichang discovered that Xu Yanzong's preface to the Lianzi Ju Cihua reveals precisely this message:Zhang Huiyan's Ci Xuan circulated among friends and associates, primarily among tongnian (examination peers) and scholarly circles, but it was not regarded as the banner of an independent school, nor was it seen as diametrically opposed to the Zhexi School [5].

This points out that Zhang Huiyan's discourse was not entirely opposed to the Zhexi School. Likewise, Wu Hongyi discussed the relationship between the Yangxian School and the Changzhou School from two perspectives, regarding the Yangxian School as the forerunner of the Changzhou School: first, "Yangxian" refers to Yixing, which belongs to Changzhou Prefecture; second, after repeatedly reading the ci poems of Chen Weisong and others alongside those of Zhang Huiyan and his circle, Wu sensed similarities in their styles. By viewing the two schools as sharing a single line of inheritance and transformation, Wu highlights the affinities in some of their concepts [6].

To sum up, Zhang Huiyan's reform of the ci genre did not stop at remedying the excesses of the Yangxian and Zhexi Schools; rather, he proposed a new direction for the entire development of the genre, namely, the concept of bixing jituo. Therefore, this paper will analyze the

discourse on jituo by Zhang Huiyan, the founder of the Changzhou School, and by Zhou Ji, who inherited and developed the theory, in order to understand the establishment and expansion of the school's central theory, the "theory of jituo."

II. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE THEORY OF JITUO CENTERING ON ZHANG HUIYAN'S THEORY OF BIXING JITUO

Although Zhang Huiyan was the pioneer of the Changzhou School, he did not fully construct a comprehensive and rigorous theoretical system. His Ci Xuan represents the fruits of his practical criticism. The theoretical aspects are mainly concentrated in the "Preface to the Ci Xuan."

When analyzing Zhang Huiyan's "Preface to the Ci Xuan," many scholars tend to divide it into several distinct topics. For instance, Ye Jiaying summarizes it into four points: 1) the origin of ci; 2) the definition of ci; 3) the evaluative criteria for ci; and 4) the purpose of compiling the Ci Xuan [7]. Ding Fang divides it into three points: 1) elevating the status of the ci genre; 2) emphasizing bixing; and 3) discussing the history of ci [8]. Zhu Deci also divides his discussion into three parts: "the theory of elevating the genre," "the theory of bixing jituo," and "the theory of orthodoxy and variation" [9]. In fact, the key points distinguished by these scholars differ little in essential meaning. While a point-by-point exposition can indeed highlight specific perspectives, it can also fragment the meanings of the various key points, preventing the holistic presentation of the ci theorist's thought. Therefore, we must pay attention to the inner coherence among these concepts in order to gain a full and concrete understanding of the theorist's system.

Zhang Huiyan's "Preface to the Ci Xuan" first discusses the origin of ci and then proceeds to the principle of bixing:

詞者，蓋出於唐之詩人，採樂府之音，以制新律，因繫其詞，故曰詞。《傳》曰：意內而言外者，謂之詞。其緣情造端，興於微言，以相感動。極命風謠里巷男女哀樂，以道賢人君子幽約怨悱，不能自言之情，低徊要眇以喻其致。蓋詩之比興，變風之義，騷人之歌，則近之矣！然以其文小，其聲哀。放者為之，或跌蕩靡麗，雜以昌狂俳優。然要其至者，罔不惻隱盱愉，感物而發，觸類條鬯，各有所歸，非苟為雕琢曼辭而已[10]。(Ci originated when poets of the Tang dynasty adopted the melodies of yuefu (Music Bureau ballads) to set new musical rules and, accordingly, appended words to them; hence the name ci (literally "words"). The Zhuan commentary says: "That which intends meaning within and manifests words without is called ci." It traces emotions and initiates expression, arising from subtle words to move one another. It fully conveys the sorrows and joys of men and women in the folk songs of the lanes, thereby expressing the hidden, melancholy, and unutterable feelings of worthy men and noble gentlemen, with a lingering, delicate subtlety that intimates its meaning. This approaches the bixing of the Shi Jing, the meaning of the "changed airs" (bian feng), and the songs of the Li Sao poets! However, because its form is small and its sound is plaintive, when unrestrained people compose it, it sometimes becomes licentious and voluptuously beautiful, mixed with wild and jester-like elements. Yet in its most essential manifestations, there is none that does not arise from a heart of compassion and delight, stirred by things, touching upon kindred categories and expanding freely, each having its own place of return; it is not merely crafted with empty, ornate phrases [10].)

Zhang Huiyan traces historical facts to demonstrate the origin of ci. This approach explains the emergence of ci in terms of its genetic significance and also shows that he possessed a certain degree of understanding of its origins. However, Zhang immediately follows this by interpreting the meaning of ci using the statement from the classics: "Ci means 'intention within and words without'" [11]. This clearly does not match the historical facts he himself narrated (i.e., originating with Tang poets adopting yuefu melodies), and it consequently invited criticism from scholars [12]. In fact, judging from the passage that follows — "**緣情造端，興於微言，以相感動。極命風謠里巷男女哀樂，以道賢人君子幽約怨悱，不能自言之情，低徊要眇以**喻其致(It traces emotions and initiates expression, arising from subtle words to move one another. It fully conveys the sorrows and joys of men and women in the folk songs of the lanes, thereby expressing the hidden, melancholy, and unutterable feelings of worthy men and noble gentlemen, with a lingering, delicate subtlety that intimates its meaning)" — which defines the essence of ci, we can see that he had an ulterior motive. This is because, in the minds of literati at the time, ci was still regarded merely as a "lesser path" (xiaodao), unworthy of refined circles. Zhang Qi's "Preface to the Re-engraving of the Ci Xuan" mentions:

嘉慶二年，余與先兄皋文先生同館歙金氏，金氏諸生好填詞。先兄以為詞雖為小道，失其傳且數百年[13]。(In the second year of the Jiaqing reign, my late elder brother Gaowen (Zhang Huiyan) and I both stayed as tutors with the Jin family of She County. Several students

of the Jin family enjoyed writing ci. My late brother thought that although ci was a lesser path, its tradition had been lost for several hundred years [13].)

This shows that although contemporary literati composed ci, they still considered it not to be a "proper form" (zhengti) like shi poetry or fu rhapsodies. Yet, although Zhang Huiyan verbally referred to it as a "lesser path," he inwardly believed that ci could stand on a par with shi poetry. He therefore felt compelled to elevate the value of ci and extricate the genre from the status of "lesser path." There were roughly two ways to do this: one was through the method of "generic origin" (tiyuan), that is, tracing the development of ci back to the three hundred poems of the Shi Jing and asserting that ci is no different from shi poetry. The other method was through the approach of "essence" (benzhi), holding that shi and ci follow the same principle, whether in the manner of composition or in content [14]. Zhang Huiyan knew for certain that the origin of ci could no longer be altered. He therefore adopted this second method, the "essence" approach, directly equating the essence of ci with the essence of the Shi Jing and Li Sao, thereby elevating the status of ci. And this essence was the requirement that, in both composition and content, there must be the sense of bixing jituo. His statement, "蓋詩之比興，變風之義，騷人之歌，則近之矣(This approaches the bixing of the Shi Jing, the meaning of the 'changed airs' (bian feng), and the songs of the Li Sao poets)," is precisely the application of this method, through which he maintained that ci is indeed close to the tradition of the Shi Jing and Li Sao. Although the ci genre sometimes, because "其文小，其聲哀(its form is small and its sound is plaintive)," resulted in "放者為之，或跌蕩靡麗，雜以昌狂俳優(when unrestrained people compose it, it sometimes becomes licentious and voluptuously beautiful, mixed with wild and jester-like elements)" — a situation that fails to meet this essential requirement — the normative standard of ci composition must still demand "罔不惻隱盱愉，感物而發，觸類條鬯，各有所歸，非苟為雕琢曼辭而已(that there is none that does not arise from a heart of compassion and delight, stirred by things, touching upon kindred categories and expanding freely, each having its own place of return; it is not merely crafted with empty, ornate phrases)." Already visible here is his demand for an ideal ci genre. Through this method, Zhang Huiyan bypasses historical facts, reconstructs the creative spirit of ci, restores it to the entire Chinese tradition of the Shi Jing and Li Sao, and ensures that its function is no longer merely that of a "lesser path."

Ye Jiaying believes that Zhang Huiyan compared ci to the Shi Jing because, when ci first arose, it was set to music and sung, just like the Shi Jing, and thus he placed them on a par. And because the folk songs in the Shi Jing embody the principle of bixing and the meaning of the "changed airs," ci must also possess bixing and the meaning of the "changed airs." To prove that Zhang Huiyan's argument was mistaken, Ye Jiaying used a lengthy discussion to demonstrate that the bixing and "changed airs" of the Shi Jing have, in reality, no connection whatsoever with ci [15,16]. However, while Zhang Huiyan's argument is problematic from the perspective of ci's historical development, we can see from the "Preface to the Ci Xuan" that he did not seek to prove that ci and the Shi Jing share the same origin based on external forms (structure, music); rather, he believed that the two should be identical in essence, and hence could be discussed side by side. Therefore, Ye Jiaying misunderstood Zhang Huiyan's intention. It was not because both ci and the Shi Jing were set to music that Zhang Huiyan regarded them as sharing a common origin; rather, it was because he believed that ci, in its essence, ought to carry the connotation of jituo, identical to the bixing essence of the Shi Jing and Li Sao, that he viewed them as equivalent. The status of ci was thus naturally elevated to the level of the Shi Jing and Li Sao.

As for the scope of Zhang Huiyan's so-called bixing jituo — are there any limits to its content? Zhang Huiyan did not provide a theoretical explanation. But if we consult his practical criticism of the works selected in the Ci Xuan, we can gain some understanding. For example, regarding Wen Tingyun's "Pusaman" ("On the hills the golden light flickers and fades"), Zhang Huiyan commented:

此感士不遇也。篇法仿佛《長門賦》，而用節節逆敘。此章從夢曉後，領起懶起二字，含後文情事，照花四句，《離騷》初服之意[17]。(This expresses the lament of a worthy man meeting with no recognition. The composition resembles the "Changmen Fu" (Rhapsody on the Tall Gate), but employs reverse narration section by section. This piece begins after waking from a dream at dawn; the words "too languid to rise" lead into the feelings and events described in the rest of the poem. The four lines from "adorn a flower" onward convey the meaning of the Li Sao's "former attire" [17].)

Zhang Huiyan believed that behind the boudoir sentiments, Wen Tingyun concealed a lament of "a worthy man meeting with no recognition." He even regarded the final four lines of the second stanza as corresponding to the "former attire" (chufu) imagery in the Li Sao. Furthermore, Zhang Huiyan's commentary on Su Dongpo's "Busuanzi" ("A fragment of moon hangs by the sparse wutong") proceeds in the same interpretive mode:

此東坡在黃州作。銅陽居士云：缺月，刺明微也。漏斷，暗時也。幽人，不得志也。獨往來，無助也。驚鴻，賢人不安也。回頭，愛君不忘也。無人省，君不察也。揀盡寒枝不肯棲，不偷安于高位也。寂寞沙洲冷，非所安也。此詞與考槃詩極相似[18]。(This was composed by Dongpo in Huangzhou. Tongyang Jushi said: "A fragment of moon" criticizes the dimness of the times. "The water clock has run dry" refers to dark times. "The recluse" means one who has not achieved his ambition. "Coming and going alone" indicates helplessness. "The startled swan" refers to a worthy person finding no peace. "Turning its head back" signifies longing for the sovereign and never forgetting him. "No one perceives it" means the sovereign does not discern. "Picks over all the cold branches, unwilling to roost" expresses refusal to settle comfortably in a high position. "The lonely sandbank is cold" indicates a place not of one's peace[18]. This ci closely resembles the poem "Kao Pan" .)

Although Zhang Huiyan stated at the beginning that this was a comment by Tongyang Jushi of the early Southern Song, since he cited it, it can be taken as reflecting Zhang's own view. He similarly considered this ci poem a work of jituo, hiding a sentiment of unwavering loyalty to the sovereign and love for the country, even when framed by petty men. Finally, he compared this ci poem to "Kao Pan" in the "Wei Airs" of the Shi Jing to highlight its emotional and allegorical dimensions. According to the Mao commentary, the poem "Kao Pan" is interpreted as: "A satire on Lord Zhuang. Unable to carry on the enterprise of his forebears, he causes worthy men to withdraw and dwell in obscurity" [19]. This shows that Zhang Huiyan believed this ci poem indeed contained a remonstrance that those in high places fail to employ worthy men. Another example is his commentary on Feng Yansi's three "Butterflies Love Flowers" lyrics (also known as "Magpies Tread the Branch": "六曲闌干偎碧樹(Six curving balustrades nestle against the green trees)," "誰道閑情拋擲久(Who says idle feelings can be cast away for long)," and "幾日行雲何處去(For days the traveling clouds — where have they gone)"), which he also discussed precisely in terms of "鍾愛纏綿，宛然變騷之義(a concentration of tender affection, as if embodying the meaning of the Li Sao in altered form)" [20]. From this, it is evident that the scope of Zhang Huiyan's jituo primarily lies within the traditional connotation of the Shi Jing and Li Sao: loyalty to the sovereign, love for the country, sorrow at leaving one's homeland, and melancholy sentiments.

With this premise, Zhang Huiyan's view of the historical development of ci also emerged in conformity with the concept of jituo. Thus, the "Preface to the Ci Xuan" continues:

自唐之詞人，李白為首，其後韋應物、王建、韓翃、白居易、劉禹錫、皇甫湜、司空圖、韓渥，並有述造，而溫庭筠最高，其言深美閎約。五代之際，孟氏、李氏，君臣為謔，競作新調，詞之雜流，由此起矣。至其工者，往往絕倫，亦如齊梁五言，依託魏晉，近古然也。宋之詞家，號為極盛，然張先蘇軾、秦觀、周邦彥、辛棄疾、姜夔、王沂孫、張炎、淵淵乎文有其質焉。其盪而不反，傲而不理，枝而不物，柳永、黃庭堅、劉過、吳文英之倫，亦各引一端，以取重於當世。而前數子者，又不免有一時通脫放浪之言出於其間，後進彌以馳逐，不務原其指意，破析乖刺，壞亂而不可紀[21]。(Among the ci poets of the Tang, Li Bai was the foremost; after him, Wei Yingwu, Wang Jian, Han Hong, Bai Juyi, Liu Yuxi, Huangfu Song, Sikong Tu, and Han Wo all had compositions to their name. Yet Wen Tingyun was the most exalted; his language is profound, beautiful, grand, and restrained. During the Five Dynasties period, the Meng and Li houses, sovereign and subject alike, engaged in jesting and competed in creating new tunes. The heterodox stream of ci arose from this. As for their finest works, they were often matchless — just as the five-character poetry of the Qi and Liang dynasties, by relying on the Wei and Jin, approached antiquity. The Song dynasty's ci writers are said to have reached the height of splendor. Yet among them, Zhang Xian, Su Shi, Qin Guan, Zhou Bangyan, Xin Qiji, Jiang Kui, Wang Yisun, Zhang Yan — deep and profound, their form possessed substance. Those who indulged without restraint, were arrogant without principle, and branched out without substance, such as Liu Yong, Huang Tingjian, Liu Guo, and Wu Wenying, each seized upon one aspect to gain esteem in their own time. Even the aforementioned poets could not entirely avoid occasional unrestrained words appearing in their works. Later generations rushed in pursuit of these, failing to seek the original intent, breaking and sundering, ruining and disordered beyond record [21].)

Zhang Huiyan regarded Wen Tingyun of the late Tang as the supreme model among Tang ci poets. This was because, in Wen Tingyun's ci, he perceived not only surface splendor of language but also the deep-hidden jituo. Zhang Huiyan arrived at this judgment precisely because he had already predetermined that the essence of ci was jituo, and then examined Wen's works

through this lens; the sentiments of a resentful woman perfectly matched the allegorical tradition of "fragrant flora and fair maidens" in the Shi Jing and Li Sao. The ci of the Five Dynasties consisted mainly of playful exchanges between sovereigns and ministers. Although such ci "approached antiquity" and could be "matchless," they were still merely the "heterodox stream of ci." In the Song dynasty, the development of ci reached its zenith. The highest standard of ci exhibited "deep and profound, their form possessed substance." This was no longer mere splendor of language; the content, too, had to contain genuine emotion hidden within. It was simply that these ci poets occasionally uttered "unrestrained words," but later generations took these as models to emulate, overlooking the deeper meanings hidden in the ci, thereby causing the decline of the entire ci development.

Zhang Huiyan believed that ci had undergone such a development. For this reason, in his Ci Xuan, he exclusively selected works whose "meaning harbors hidden depths," hoping thereby to "塞其下流，導其淵源，無使風雅之士，懲乎鄙俗之音，不敢與詩賦之流，同類而風誦之(block its downward course, trace its origins, and prevent gentlemen of refined taste from being repelled by vulgar sounds, so that they dare not join ci with shi and fu in recitation alongside them)" [4]. Wu Hongyi once criticized this argument:This entire passage by Zhang Huiyan can be summed up in a single phrase: "venerating the ancient and disparaging the modern. "Because this psychology of venerating antiquity was at work, he believed that the earlier the period of the ci poems, the better they were, and that later works invariably had some flaws [22].

Wu Hongyi's assertion that Zhang Huiyan displayed a notion of "venerating the ancient and disparaging the modern" actually arises from a failure to clarify the overall argumentative context of Zhang's discourse.

Looking at the "Preface to the Ci Xuan" as a whole, it is in fact entirely centered on one principal concept: bixing jituo. And the emphasis on bixing jituo was precisely for the purpose of elevating the status of the ci genre, freeing it from its position as a "lesser path" and ranking it alongside the Shi Jing and Li Sao. This is just as Wu Hongyi stated when discussing the theories of the entire Changzhou School:The theory of elevating the genre and the theory of jituo are mutually causal. The theory of elevating the genre is the goal of the theory of jituo, and the theory of jituo is the means by which the theory of elevating the genre is realized [23].

However, Wu Hongyi believed that the ideas set forth in Zhang Huiyan's "Preface to the Ci Xuan" were too vague, and thus this view stemmed mainly from Zhou Ji's discourse. But from the exposition above, we can see that although Zhang Huiyan lacked a complete theoretical framework, he already possessed such a concept. It is precisely because of this that, when engaging in practical criticism, Zhang Huiyan consistently sought the jituo within the ci works themselves for his interpretations.

III. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE THEORY OF JITUO THROUGH ZHOU JI'S "YOU JITUO" (POSSESSING ALLEGORY) AND "WU JITUO" (NON-ALLEGORY)

Zhang Huiyan's discourse was not mainstream at the time. It was not until the Daoguang reign that the Changzhou School of ci poetry became a prominent school [24]. At that time, the person most important for expanding the theoretical scope of the Changzhou School was undoubtedly Zhou Ji.

Zhou Ji's views on ci, by his own account, can be roughly divided into three periods [25]. In the first period, he earnestly followed Jiang Kui:

吾十年來服膺白石，而以稼軒為外道，由今思之，可謂瞽人捫籥也[26]。(For ten years I earnestly followed Baishi (Jiang Kui) and regarded Jiaxuan (Xin Qiji) as heterodox. When I reflect on it now, I can be called a blind man tapping a pipe to guess its shape! [26])

The stance of "revering Jiang Kui and rejecting Xin Qiji" was perhaps influenced by the Zhexi School. However, after he met Dong Jinqing at the age of twenty-three, his entire outlook on ci underwent a complete change. Zhou Ji's "Preface to the Ci Bian" states:

余年十六學為詞，甲子始識武進董晉卿。……其詞纏綿往復，窮高極深，異乎平時所仿效，心向慕不能已。晉卿為詞，師其舅氏張皋文、翰風兄弟。……晉卿雖師二張，所作實出其上。予遂受法晉卿，已而造詣日以異，論說亦互相短長[27]。(I began learning ci at sixteen. In the jiazi year I first became acquainted with Dong Jinqing of Wujin.... His ci was intricately winding and reciprocating, reaching the highest and deepest levels, utterly different from what I had previously imitated. In my heart I admired him and could not stop. Jinqing's ci learning was modeled on his maternal uncles, the brothers Zhang Gaowen (Huiyan) and Hanfeng (Zhang Qi).... Although Jinqing took the two Zhangs as his teachers, his compositions actually surpassed theirs. I thereupon received instruction from Jinqing, and as time went on, my achievements changed daily and our discussions also had their mutual strengths and weaknesses [27].)

Dong Jinqing was Zhang Huiyan's nephew and studied ci under the brothers Zhang Huiyan and Zhang Qi. Through his association with Dong, Zhou Ji's concept of ci also began to lean toward the Changzhou School. As for the third period, it should correspond to the completion of Zhou Ji's Song Si Jia Ci Xuan (An Anthology of Ci by Four Masters of the Song) in 1832 — the stage when, as he said, "passing fifty, I first recognized the broad avenue" [25]. Thus, the scope of our discussion of Zhou Ji's ci theory encompasses his second and third stages.

Zhang Huiyan's theory of jituo, after undergoing revision and expansion by Zhou Ji, finally became a complete theoretical framework. This process moved from you jituo (possessing allegory) to wu jituo (non-allegory). Zhou Ji wrote in his Jiecunzhai Lun Ci Za Zhu (Miscellaneous Notes on Ci from the Jiecun Studio):

初學詞求有寄託，有寄託則表裡相宣，斐然成章。既成格調，求無寄託，無寄託則指事類情，仁者見仁，知者見知[28]。(When first learning ci, seek to have jituo (possess allegory). If there is jituo, the surface and interior will illuminate each other, and the composition will be elegantly accomplished. Once a stylistic level has been achieved, seek to have wu jituo (non-allegory). With wu jituo, the description of events and the expression of feelings will allow the benevolent to perceive benevolence and the wise to perceive wisdom [28].)

So-called you jituo likewise means that the content of the ci must harbor jituo; only in this way can it fulfill the essence and requirements of what ci should be. However, Zhou Ji considered this merely the initial stage of learning to compose ci. Once a work has attained a certain degree of achievement and standard, one must strive toward the level of wu jituo. Wu jituo means that at the time of composition, the author must still embed jituo in the work, but after the work is completed, this jituo must be concealed and not revealed, so that the reader cannot definitively identify what it refers to, and different readers may obtain different allegorical meanings from the work. Only such a work represents the highest model of ci. Zhou Ji articulated this even more fully and clearly in the Song Si Jia Ci Xuan:

夫詞非寄託不入，專寄託不出。一物一事，引而伸之，觸類多通。驅心若游絲之罥飛英，含毫如郢斤之斲蠅翼，以無厚入有間。既習之，意感偶生，假類畢達，閱載千百，聲欬弗違，斯入矣。賦情獨深，逐境必寤，醞釀日久，冥發妄中。雖鋪敘平淡，摹繢淺近，而萬感橫集，五中無主。讀其篇者，臨淵窺魚，意為魴鯉，中宵驚電，罔識東西。赤子隨母笑啼，鄉人緣劇喜怒，抑可為能出矣[29]。(As for ci, without jituo one cannot enter it, but clinging solely to jituo one cannot emerge from it. Taking a single object or event, extending and stretching it, one connects and penetrates multiple categories. Driving the mind like a gossamer thread netting a falling blossom; holding the brush like the master's axe paring a fly's wing — using the blade that has no thickness to enter that which has crevices. Once one has practiced this, whenever a perception suddenly arises, it can fully convey its kindred categories; even after reading thousands of pieces, their tone and resonance never stray: this is entering. When one's endowed feeling is uniquely profound, every situation one encounters will stir awakening; after long fermentation, in the dark it issues forth and hits the mark seemingly by chance. Though the narrative is plain and the depiction simple and shallow, a myriad of sensations surge together, and the inner self loses its composure. Those who read such a piece are like peering into an abyss to glimpse fish, taking them to be either bream or carp; like being startled by lightning at midnight, losing all sense of east and west. Like an infant laughing or crying along with its mother, or villagers feeling joy or anger in response to a play — it may be said that one can emerge! [29])

Zhou Ji held that entering ci by means of jituo was the sole choice for writing ci. However, how does one cultivate the technique by which everything can become the vehicle of jituo? This then becomes a question of learning. Zhou Ji believed that in daily life, every single object or event must be capable of being extended and comprehended by analogy; only in this way can one gradually nurture the sensibility that everything can serve as jituo. The Jiecunzhai Lun Ci Za Zhu states:

學詞先以用心為主，遇一事，見一物，即能沈思獨往，冥然終日，出手自然不平[28]。(In learning ci, first take applying the mind as fundamental. When encountering an event or seeing an object, be able to sink into deep thought and solitary reflection, absorbed all day long, and what emerges from your hand will naturally be out of the ordinary [28].)

This describes precisely such a state. Once one possesses this ability, then even if the narrative is plain and the depiction simple, the ci work itself will still produce a feeling that "a myriad of sensations surge together, and the inner self loses its composure." Moreover, depending on the reader's identity, the allegorical meaning perceived will differ. Such a ci work is what is called one that can "emerge."

Then, are there any limits to the scope of Zhou Ji's jituo theory? The Jiecunzhai Lun Ci Za Zhu says:

感慨所寄，不過盛衰，或綢繆未雨，或太息厝薪，或己溺己飢，或獨清獨醒，隨其人之性情學問境地，莫不有由衷之言。見事多，識理透，可為後人論世之資。詩有史，詞亦有史，庶乎自樹一幟矣。若乃離別懷思，感士不遇，陳陳相因，唾瀋互拾，便思高揖溫、韋，不亦恥乎[28]。(That in which sentiments and reflections lodge never goes beyond [the themes of] prosperity and decline. Perhaps it is preparing for rain before the storm, perhaps sighing over firewood piled on top of a stove, perhaps feeling as though oneself drowning and starving while others are unconcerned, perhaps remaining uniquely pure and uniquely clear-headed. Depending on the person's temperament, learning, and state of life, none lacks heartfelt words. Seeing many events and understanding principles thoroughly, they can serve as material for later generations to assess the age. Just as poetry has its history, ci also has its history; thus may one set up one's own banner. If it is merely parting, longing, and lamenting unrecognized worth — following well-worn paths and picking up others' spittle — then to fancy oneself greeting Wen Tingyun and Wei Zhuang as equals — is that not shameful? [28])

From this, it is clear that the content of Zhou Ji's jituo must reflect the rise and fall of the times and concern dimensions of social morality, rather than being limited to personal sorrow and nostalgia. In terms of content, works must all be capable of serving as "material for later generations to assess the age," which is to say, they must possess the significance of "history." If the content is simply matters of "parting, longing, and lamenting unrecognized worth" — such clichéd works — their value absolutely cannot be mentioned in the same breath as works that harbor profound allegories of nation and state. Zhou Ji's discourse can be said to build upon Zhang Huiyan's foundation, transforming it and developing it in a deeper, more comprehensive, and more detailed manner.

Equipped with such a theory, Zhou Ji's approach when conducting practical criticism naturally shifted toward a mode of not explicitly identifying the jituo. For example, he commented on Zhou Bangyan's "Su Muzhe" ("Burning aloeswood"): "若有意若無意，使人神眩(As if with intent, as if without intent — it makes one dizzy)" [30]. He did not concretely point out what allegorical meaning this ci expressed but assessed it with a vague, abstract concept. Another example is his commentary on Jiang Kui's "An Xiang" (Secret Fragrance) and "Shu Ying" (Dappled Shadows). As noted earlier, after Zhou Ji entered the second phase of his career, he abandoned his reverence for Jiang Kui and esteemed Xin Qiji instead. Yet he still regarded these two ci poems by Jiang Kui as "lodging meaning beyond the topic, containing inexhaustible richness, and worthy of being ranked with Jiaxuan (Xin Qiji)" [26]. However, although Zhou Ji rated these two ci poems very highly, in his commentary on "An Xiang" he only said: "盛時如此，衰時如此。想其盛時，感其哀時(In flourishing times it was so; in declining times it is so. Thinking of its flourishing age, grieving for its declining age) ." Commenting on "Shu Ying," he only said: "This ci uses '相逢(meeting),' '化作(transforming into),' and '莫似(not like)' as its bones. Unable to retain it, letting it flourish and decline on its own. (Commenting on the second stanza)." These brief comments do not concretely identify what allegorical meaning Jiang Kui embedded in the ci. This mode of criticism, which refrains from pinning down the allegory, exhibits a quite substantial difference from Zhang Huiyan's approach of interpreting allegory word by word and line by line.

IV. CONCLUSION

The theory of jituo of the Changzhou School, though established by Zhang Huiyan, was in fact fully structured and completed by Zhou Ji. Zhang Huiyan's jituo can be described as a method of "meeting the intention by the reader's own understanding" (yi ni yi zhi). He attempted to find, within ci works, the original intention of the author. Zhou Ji's jituo, on the other hand, disregards the author's original intent and shifts the focus of interpretation to the reader's perception and response. Zhou Ji's theory of wu jituo can be said to have expanded the implications of Zhang Huiyan's theory of jituo. This critical approach definitively established the theoretical framework of the Changzhou School's jituo theory thereafter. Later, Tan Xian's statement in his "Preface to the Futang Ci Lu" — "作者之用心未必然，而讀者之用心何必不然(What the author intended need not be so, but what the reader intends — why need it not be so)?" [31] — was very likely influenced by Zhou Ji's theory of wu jituo.

Although the theory of jituo has repeatedly been criticized by later scholars as being overly forced and far-fetched, its developmental lineage was in fact shaped by the factors of its historical context. Moreover, seen in the context of its entire developmental trajectory, its influence throughout the Qing dynasty was so extensive that no other school could possibly replace it.

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