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Formation Of The Xikun Style Poetry

Jin Qian

University of Massachusetts Amherst

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FORMATION OF THE XIKUN STYLE POETRY

A Thesis Presented

by

JIN QIAN

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
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By

JIN QIAN

Approved as to style and content by:

Donald E. Gjertson, Chair

Alvin P. Cohen

Zhongwei Shen

Julie Candler Hayes, Department Head
Department of Languages, Literatures, & Cultur

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES.....	iv
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Overview.....	4
1.2 Literature Review.....	10
1.2.1 Studies on the <i>Xikun ji</i>	13
1.2.2 Studies on <i>Xikun ji</i> Poets.....	14
1.2.3 <i>Xikun</i> Poetry in Context.....	18
2. THE <i>XIKUN JI</i> POETS:	
BACKGROUNDS AND SOCIAL CIRCLES UPTO 1009.....	26
2.1 Backgrounds of the Poets.....	26
2.1.1 Personal Sketches of the Poets.....	27
2.1.2 Summary of Their Backgrounds.....	44
2.2 The Poets' Social Circles before the <i>Xikun ji</i>	51
2.2.1 Relationships of the <i>Xikun ji</i> Poets.....	51
2.2.2 Relevant Social Circles.....	56
3. CULTURAL ANXIETY IN THE EARLY SONG.....	68
3.1 Cultural Crisis in the Early Song.....	68
3.2 Imbalance between Northland and Southland.....	72
3.3 Solutions to Pacify the Cultural Anxiety.....	77
4. FORMATION OF <i>XIKUN</i> POETRY.....	84
4.1 Discovery of Li Shangyin's Poetry in the Early Song.....	84
4.2 Circumstance of the <i>Xikun</i> Poetry Exchange.....	97
4.2.1 Political Circumstance.....	97
4.2.2 Literary Context for the <i>Xikun</i> Poetry.....	101
4.3 Intentions vs. Reactions.....	107
5. CONCLUSION.....	114
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	123

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
1. Geographic Backgrounds of the <i>Xikun ji</i> Poets.....	44
2. <i>Guangge</i> Positions Attained by the Poets upto 1009.....	47
3. The Xikun Poets' Participation in the Four Compilation Projects.....	80

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Deriving its name from the anthology *Xikun chouchang ji* 西崑酬唱集 [Collection of verses on the same themes from the Western Kunlun Mountain] (abbrev. *Xikun ji*), Xikun Style poetry was one of the most influential poetry styles during the early Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127). The collection was compiled by Yang Yi 楊億 (974-1020) in the autumn of the first year of the Dazhong xianfu 大中祥符 reign period (1008). It included around two hundred and fifty poems by seventeen/eighteen poets.¹ The poets took Li Shangyin's 李商隱 (813-858) poetry as their chief model and also learned from Tang Yanqian 唐彥謙 (fl.875) so that they composed poetry in an embellished and erudite style with many allusions.

The term *Xikun* 西崑, which means the Western Kunlun Mountain where the library of legendary emperors was located, was used to title the anthology to allude to the imperial library of Song. This is where several chief poets were engaged in compiling *Lidai junchen shiji* 歷代君臣事跡 [Deeds of Emperors and Officials in the Past Dynasties] (afterwards renamed *Cefu yuangui* 冊府元龜) while they composed and exchanged the poems in *Xikun ji*. The usages and references of the term “Xikun Style” vary depending on the individual critic or literary historian. Originally, Xikun Style refers to the poetic style of poems in *Xikun ji*. But some of the later critics and scholars also employed it to refer to Li Shangyin's poems since the contributors to the

¹ According to the extant editions of *Xikun ji*, there were seventeen poets. But some scholars argue that eighteen poets participated in the poetry exchange. See Zhu (2001).

Xikun ji, especially the three leading poets, took Li as their model. The later usage and reference were more popular from the Song to Qing Dynasty, such as in *Lengzhai yehua* 冷齋夜話 of Huihong 惠洪 (1071-1128) and *Canglang shihua* 滄浪詩話 of Yan Yu 嚴羽(12th cent.) as well as in Yuan Haowen's 元好問(1190-1257) poem "Lun shi sanshi shou" 論詩三十首[Thirty Poetic Critics on Poetry], and *Xikun fawei* 西崑發微 of Wu Qiao 吳喬 (fl. 1681-1686). On the other hand, parallel prose in the same style, namely flowery and teeming with allusions, was also called Xikun Style soon after Xikun Poetry became popular. Therefore Xikun Style could refer to either poetic or prose style at that time. There are some undeniable connections and similarities between them. Nevertheless, they could not be mixed up because different literary genres meet distinctive aesthetic and moral needs. This paper will only deal with issues regarding poetry, the Xikun Style prose thus is not to be taken into consideration. And since most modern scholars assign the term "Xikun Style" exclusively to the poetry in the *Xikun ji* and the later poems of the same type, this paper uses the same denotation.

Seventeen/eighteen poets participated in the poetry exchange activities from 1005 to 1008.² They are Yang Yi 楊億 (974-1020), Liu Yun 劉筠 (970-1030), Qian Weiyan 錢惟演 (977-1034), Diao Kan 刁衍 (945?-1013?), Chen Yue 陳越 (973-

² As for the compilation of *Xikun ji*, there are two points of view. In Wang's (1980) view it was during the fall and winter of the first year of Dazhongxianfu 大中祥符 reign period (1008) that Yang Yi collected their poems of the previous four years and compiled the book, while according to Zheng (1986), it was not compiled until the sixth year the Dazhongxianfu 大中祥符 reign period (1013) when *Cefu yuangui* was finished, and therefore *Xikun ji* includes poems covering a span of nine years. Wang's point of view is widely accepted and adopted.

1012), Li Wei 李維 (961-1031), Li Zong'e 李宗諤 (965-1013), Liu Zhi 劉鷺 (ca. 955-?), Ding Wei 丁謂 (966-1037), Zhang Yong 張詠 (946-1015), Qian Weiji 錢惟濟 (978-1032), Ren Sui 任隨 (*Jinshi* 992), Shu Ya 舒雅 (ca. 939-?), Chao Jiong 晁迥 (951-1034), Cui Zundu 崔遵度(953-1020), Xue Ying 薛映(951-1024), Zhang Bing 張秉³ (961-1016), and Wang Zeng 王曾⁴ (978-1038). The first six poets took part in the compilation of *Cefu yuangui*, which was compiled from 1005 to 1013. But the other poets did not.

After *Xikun ji* came out, this style became a fad throughout the court for around forty years. It fell out of favor when Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修(1007-1072) and Mei Yaochen 梅堯臣(1002-1060) initiated the “Shiwen gexin” 詩文革新 [Renaissance in Poetry and Prose] Movement, which climaxed circa 1057.

This paper avoids the controversy over either the aesthetic or moral value of the Xikun Style poetry, but focuses on the circumstances under which the Xikun Style was brought on. Instead of evaluating the poetic achievements of the Xikun poets, the poets' personal educational and career backgrounds, their social circles, and the political and cultural contexts for the creation of the Xikun Style poetry are examined

³ Wang Zhongluo retained the name “Liu Bing” but included a note that Liu Bing should be Zhang Bing. See Chen Zhi'e (Chen. 1983). Zhang Bing (961-1016) was mistaken as Liu Bing in some versions from Zhu Junsheng's 朱俊升 master copy version. Chen argues that the surname of this poet was missing but it was assumed to be “Liu Bing”. He pointed out that Chao Shuozi 晁說之(1059-1129) cited some lines from the Xikun poems in “Qingfeng xuan ji” 清風軒記, one of which was ascribed to Zhang Bing.

⁴ According to Liu Kezhuang (1187-1269), there was one poem written by Wang Zeng in *Xikun chouchang ji* at his time. But it is missing from the extant version of *Xikun chouchang ji*.

in order to illustrate the motivation for the chief poets to initiate the new style as well as the motivation for the other Xikun ji poets to participate in the poetry exchange.

1.1 Overview

With a detailed investigation on the circumstances and process of the formation of the Xikun Style, this thesis attempts to present the readers with a snapshot of the Chinese literati society around 1000 as vivid as possible. The snapshot, in turn, shows some clues that indicate certain cultural anxiety, which account for the popularity of the Xikun Style to a large degree.

In general, the bulk of previous research on Xikun Style poetry concentrated on two opposite points of view. Being embellished and erudite, Xikun Style poetry is commonly regarded as merely a leisure activity of the imperial officials, lacking any deep meanings; or even worse, their flattery of the emperor. But some scholars argue that there are implied and insinuated political meanings in the Xikun poems, and that the poets were trying to criticize the emperor and his court. This paper, in contrast, is not aimed at evaluating either the aesthetic or moral significance of the poems in the *Xikun ji*. Instead, it delineates the formation process of Xikun Style poetry and examines the motivation of the Xikun poets for bringing forth this erudite style.

In other words, a case study on the formation process of the Xikun Style poetry is conducted without any judgment on the status of this poetic style in the history of Chinese literature.

In the past, the Xikun poetry was considered as merely a by-product of the compilation of the *Cefu yuangui*. Therefore, the formation of the Xikun Style poetry was widely treated as a random literary event. However investigation of the formation process of Xikun poetry reveals that Yang Yi had already been intrigued by Li Shangyin's poetry and collected Li's poems many years prior to the compilation project. The preparation phase for the formation of the Xikun poetry, from the early Song literati's rediscovery of the value of Li Shangyin's poetry, through their efforts to collect Li's poems, to their discussion about the poems, undoubtedly indicates that Xikun Style poetry was the outcome of a literary trend that had already existed long before 1005, when the *Cefu yuangui* compilation project eventually provided an opportunity for the poets to put their theory into intensive practice.

Before the creation of the Xikun poetry, the prevalent poetic style among the early Song literati was the simple and facile Bai Style, namely Bai Juyi's style. This style was popular throughout the Five Dynasties and the first forty years of the early Song Dynasty. In comparison to the Bai style, the emerging Xikun literary trend inclined toward poetry that is pregnant with meaning and teeming with delicate diction and allusions. So what provoked the Xikun poets to toil with stuffing those erudite allusions into their poems? Did they want to salute their Tang predecessors, namely Li Shangyin and Tang Yanqian, as Yang Yi stated in the preface to *Xikun ji*, or did they desire to show off their knowledge as some critics of the Xikun Style claimed? Both factors could be involved in the motivation. Then why did they prefer Li Shangyin's poetry to that of Bai Juyi's, and why did they emphasize the role of

knowledge in composing poetry much more vigorously than the early generation of Song literati? The ultimate reason cannot be discovered without framing the Xikun poetry in its historical and cultural context.

During the entire tenth century, China was entrapped in long-drawn-out warfare among various warlords and in battles with the northern and western nomadic tribes. After the Tang throne was usurped by Zhu Wen 朱溫(852-912) in 907, five successive dynasties were established in the north and ten kingdoms were set up in the south. Agriculture and commerce, needless to say, were severely impacted and the development of culture and education were hindered both in the south and in the north, which resulted in a culture crisis. The crisis manifested itself in many respects, including insufficient book collections in the imperial libraries and the generally low education level of the civil service examination candidates. The perception of cultural loss thus gave rise to an anxiety, which was pervasive in the early Song court and among the literati.

Both the court and the literati endeavored to cope with the cultural anxiety. Sometimes they worked cooperatively. For example, the court appointed groups of literati-officials to various compilation and proofreading projects. But sometimes they made efforts separately. For example, the court constructed imperial libraries, while some literati collected and studied the scattered ancient volumes by themselves. Although the compilation project of *Cefu yuangui* required the cooperation between the court and the literati, the formation of Xikun Style poetry was solely an attempt by certain literati to recapture the lost cultural heritage and thereby relieve their cultural

anxiety. As we can see from historical records, the emperor disapproved of the new style. And despite its popularity, some literati were still not influenced by, or even resisted, the Xikun Style at that time. Close investigation of the background and experience of the Xikun poets shows that many of them shared some common features, such as coming from privileged families, with literary or music talents, and with experience of engaging in literary or musical affairs. A striking feature is that most of the poets shared a southland background, which reveals the diversified scenes of the culture crisis. In the early tenth century, regimes in the south maintained relative stability and peace, while all the regimes in the north were of short duration. This situation was worsened by the fact that in the north frontier was threatened by the northern nomadic peoples, and consequently cultural development was damaged in the north much more severely than in the south. When the Northern Song succeeded the northern regimes, and conquered all the southern kingdoms by 979, this only signaled the military and political victory of the north over the southland. In terms of literature and culture, nevertheless, the southland was still ahead of the north. The culture tradition and cultural enterprise were better maintained in the south. The scattered collections of Li Shangyin's poetry, for instance, were found in the *Zheyou* 浙右 area, which previously belonged to the Wuyue Kingdom 吴越 (907-978).

By further examining and probing the circumstance under which the poets initiated and participated in the Xikun poetry exchange, it can be seen that the Xukun style poetry did not come about randomly. On the contrary, the new style made its debut at a meaningful point in time. The newly founded Song regime was under the

military threat of the Khitan-Liao(916-1125) in the north and the Tangut tribes in the west, and did not get a breathing spell from warfare until the Northern Song signed the *Chanyuan zhi meng* 澶淵之盟 [Treaty of Chanyuan] with the Khitan-Liao in the first lunar month of the second year of the Jingde reign period(1005).⁵ Accordingly, the smoldering culture anxiety was ignited as soon as the country obtained relief from military pressure. Thus the year 1005 also saw the beginning of the Xikun poetry exchange. All of the three chief Xikun poets Yang Yi, Liu Yun, and Qian Weiyan were among the first generation of literati who was born and brought up under the Song regime. They were in their thirties when they initiated the Xikun poetry exchange, while most of the other participants were of older generations. In short, the Xikun poetry exchange was initiated by some members of the young generation of literati. A group of literati-officials who had literary or musical talents, superb educational backgrounds, and a southland background were invited to participate in the exchange. It then spread to other literati-officials as a new poetic style.

The Xikun Style quickly became a fad in the court, even before the *Xikun chouchang ji* came out, because of the Xikun poets' eminence in literati circles as well as at the court. However, Emperor Zhenzong disliked the new style, and some literati still insisted on composing poetry in the Bai Style, even though the Xikun Style was overwhelmingly pervasive in the court. A ban on the new style was issued by the emperor soon after the *Xikun ji* was published. The emperor declared in his edict that the new style strayed away from the orthodox morality. But some later scholars

⁵ *Song shi. juan 7. p.127.*

believed that it was because some of the poems insinuated faults of the emperor. Thus, it is necessary and intriguing to put some people's reaction to and criticism of the Xikun style alongside the Xikun poets' self-statements and other people's defense of the Xikun style in order to dispel the mist of prejudices surrounding the Xikun style.

Around forty years after the publication of the *Xikun ji*, almost all of the poets who participated in the Xikun poetry exchange had passed away. Meanwhile the country became engrossed in political reform, namely Fan Zhongyan's 范仲淹 (989-1052) "Qingli xinzheng" 慶歷新政 [New Policies of the Qingli Reign Period(1041-1048)] in 1043. In parallel with the political reform, Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修(1007-1072) and Mei Yaochen 梅堯臣(1002-1060) initiated the "Shiwen gexin" 詩文革新 [Renaissance in Poetry and Prose] Movement. Ouyang Xiu and Mei Yaochen, who were formerly subordinates to Qian Weiyan, advocated a plain and mild poetic style, which was called "Qingli shifeng" 慶歷詩風 [Poetic Style of the Qingli reign period]. At that point, the fashion for Xikun Style poetry came to an end.

In summary, this paper is divided roughly into three parts in five chapters, namely the introduction, main body, and conclusion. An introduction is provided in Chapter I, including an overview of the thesis and literature review.

As for the main body of the thesis, first Chapter II is made up of personal sketches of the eighteen poets and their social circles before the *Xikun ji* came out. The historical and cultural contexts for the formation of the Xikun poetry are illuminated in Chapter III, so that the perception of cultural loss and the arousal of cultural anxiety can be accounted for. The imbalance between the north and the south

is also demonstrated in this section. The next section of Chapter III shows the various solutions employed by the court and the literati to cope with the anxiety. Chapter IV delineates the contours of the formation process of the Xikun Style poetry, covering the phase of preparation, circumstances of the poetry exchange, and the poetry exchange per se. The phase of preparation refers to the early Song literati's discovery of Li Shangyin's poetry. The phase of the poetry exchange focuses on the poets' participation in the exchange. People's reactions and criticisms to the new style, along with the Xikun poets' self-statements, are included as well.

Based on the first two parts, several conclusions are drawn in Chapter V. The motivation of the poets to create the Xikun style is explored in this chapter, which demonstrates the Xikun poets' awareness of the cultural crisis and their anxiety as expressed in the creation of the Xikun style poetry.

1.2 Literature Review

Since the 1980s, there have been annotations and commentaries to *Xikun ji*. Chronicles of the *Xikun ji* poets as well as many studies on Xikun Style poetry also came out. The publications range from comprehensive study of its features and significance, the causes for its rise and fall in light of the cultural, political and psychological backgrounds, its connection to the previous and later poetry styles, to researches on individual poets. Despite the scholars' thorough researches and insightful views, the picture of the Xikun poets as a group is still vague and incomplete. There are articles concerning Yang Yi's personality, political activities,

and private relations with friends in addition to his literary thought and practice. However, the other two chief poets, Liu Yun and Qian Weiyan, have barely been discussed, let alone the other poets.

Xikun style poetry has been a controversial topic ever since it took shape. Yang Yi recalled in the preface to *Xikun ji* that people had laughed at the new style. The emperor issued an edict to ban the new style immediately after the collection came out. Some people of later generations were also dissatisfied with this style of poetry. For example, Shi Jie 石介(1005-1045) excoriated the Xikun Style in his “Guai shuo” 怪說. On the other hand, it was a fashion for around forty years in the early Song Dynasty to learn and compose this style of poetry. According to *Yuhu yeshi* 玉壺野史 of Wen Yin 文瑩 (11th cent.), Xikun Style was so popular throughout the court that almost all officials engaged in this style.⁶

The significance of Xikun Style poetry in the history of literature has also been in dispute. In general, there are roughly two attitudes towards Xikun Style. In the view of some scholars, the appearance of the Xikun Style is regarded as a negative factor for the development of poetry in spite of its contribution to changing the previous poetry styles. Liu Ban 劉攽 (1023-1089) in his *Zhongshan shihua* 中山詩話 quoted an anecdote about people of that time mocking the Xikun Style poets for plagiarizing from Li Shangyin.⁷ In modern times, there was not a single article on the Xikun Style poetry published from 1950 to 1980 (Zeng. 1993b: p.403). Moreover,

⁶ *Yuhu yeshi*. *juan* 1. p.2a. SKQS.

⁷ *Zhongshan shihua*. In *Lidai shihua*. p.171.

Xikun Style was unanimously criticized in several influential books on literary history since 1949 (Yang. 1982) as a flowery form, devoid of any profound meaning. Some scholars do not deny the value of the Xikun Style, but they insist that this style had yet to shake off the fetters of Middle and Later Tang poetry, and the real Song poetry did not take shape until the generation of Ouyang Xiu (Bai. 1986)

Some other scholars, such as Fang Hui 方回(1227-1305), regard Xikun Style as the first real change of poetic style in the early Song Dynasty. Song poetry escaped from the shadow of the Tang with the Xikun Style, and launched the transformation of poetry in the Song Dynasty (Yang Xuhui. 1995). Zeng Zaozhuang (Zeng. 1993b.) suggested that Fang Hui actually recognized the importance of the Xikun Style in that he included thirteen poems by Yang Yi, thirteen by Qian Weiyan, and nine by Liu Yun in *Yingkui liusui* 瀛奎律髓. In addition, he often mentioned Xikun Style poetry when discussing other poems. In the Ming Dynasty, the main tendency was to value Tang Poetry while belittling and disparaging Song poetry. However, Zhang Yan 張縉 (16th cent.) wrote a preface to a reprint of *Xikun chouchang ji* in which he states that Xikun Style is of high value despite its shortcomings. The Qing scholar Ji Yun 紀昀 (1724-1805) suggested that the poems on historic events were distinct from others, which merely mimicked Li Shangyin's poetry. And Wang Zhenyuan (Wang, 1984) argues that the real change of poetic style, from the Tang style to the Song style, starts from the emergence of the Xikun Style instead of with the poetry of Ouyang Xiu and Mei Yaochen. Some of the Xikun poetry even heralded the emergence of Ouyang Xiu's and Su Shi's poetry.

1.2.1 Studies on the *Xikun ji*

The anthology *Xiku ji* is divided into two *juan*. According to Yang Yi's preface, there were two hundred and forty seven poems in the collection. The Siku edition, however, includes one hundred and twenty three poems in the first *juan* and one hundred and twenty five in the second, adding up to two hundred and forty eight, one more than the number given by Yang Yi.

In 1978, Wang Zhongluo 王仲羣 finished his book *Xikun chouchang ji zhu* 西崑酬唱集注 [Annotated *Xikun chouchang ji*], which was published two years later. This annotated *Xikun ji*, along with another version, *Xikun chouchang ji jianzhu* 西崑酬唱集箋注 [Commentary on *Xikun chouchang ji*] by Zheng Zaishi 鄭再時, provided a basis for researches on *Xikun ji* and Xikun Style poetry. Zheng's book was published in 1986, with a "Xikun chouchang shiren nianpu" 西崑酬唱詩人年譜 [Chronicles of the Lives of Xikun Exchange Poets] appended. Both Wang and Zheng explained the allusions contained in the poems of the *Xikun ji* and related the life experiences of the poets and the political events of that time to their poems in order to draw out the implied meanings. Xikun Style poetry is famous for its elusive allusions, so Wang and Zheng's annotations and commentaries largely facilitate relevant researches.

In the view of Jin Qihua, there are three main categories of poetry in *Xikun ji*: expressing feelings, about historic events or persons, and describing objects. Besides the three major types, they also wrote a few love poems (Jin. 1985). Zeng Zaozhuang classifies them into five categories: on historical events or figures, feeling expression,

on objects, on love, and to friends (Zeng. 1993b). More than one fifth of them describe objects (Ikezawa. 1998), such as lotus flowers, tears, and so on.

1.2.2 Studies on *Xikun ji* Poets

Chen Zhi'e's 陳植鏗 "Xikun chouchang shiren sheng zu nian kao" 西崑酬唱詩人生卒年考 [An Investigation On The Birth and Death Years of the Poets Participating In The Xikun Poetry Exchange] came out in 1983. The following birth and death years are according to Chen's investigation, Liu Yun (970-1030), Qian Weiyan (977-1034), Li Zong'e (965-1013), Chen Yu (973-1012), Li Wei (961-1031), Liu Zhi was around 50 years old in 1005, Ding Wei (966-1037), Diao Kan (945?-1013?), Zhang Yong (946-1015), Qian Weiji (978-1032), Ren Sui got his Jinshi degree in 992, Shu Ya died in his seventies after the second year of the Dazhong xiangfu reign period (1009), Chao Jiong (951-1034), Xue Ying (951-1024), and Zhang Bing (961-1016) who was previously mistaken as Liu Bing. Moreover, Chen clarified their ages when they participated in the activity of Xikun poetry exchange.

In 1993, "Xikun chouchang ji shiren nianpu jianbian" 《西崑酬唱集》詩人年譜簡編 [Brief Chronicles of The Lives of Poets In The *Xikun chouchang ji*] of Zeng Zaozhuang 曾棗莊 was published. Chen's article focused only on the birth and death years of each poet, while Zeng arranged their activities in chronological order. The chronicles were especially elaborated for the span of their poetry exchange, namely from 1005 to 1008.

Japanese scholar Ikezawa Shigeko 池澤滋子, in one of her articles in 1998, argues that Ding Wei should not be labeled as a Xikun Style poet (Ikezawa. 1998).

She pointed out that Ding Wei's major poetry style was similar to that of Wang Yuchen 王禹偁 (954-1001), a famous Bai Style poet. There are only five poems in *Xikun ji* written by Ding Wei while he engaged in literary activities for more than fifty years, and most of his poems were plain and unadorned. His best and representative literary works, which are different from the Xikun Style poetry, are those he composed after his exile to Hainan. In addition, his political standpoint and personality differed drastically from Yang and Liu. Therefore she assumes that Ding was capable of composing Xikun Style poetry, but his poetry in Xikun Style was merely a means to establish social connections with other poets or officials, and he no longer joined in their activities after 1006, probably because he had changed his political standpoint. Furthermore, she drew the conclusion that most of the poets of the *Xikun ji* wrote Xikun Style poetry only occasionally.

Studies on Yang Yi

As a representative of the Xikun Style poets as well as the leading figure among the *Xikun ji* poets, Yang Yi has received more notice than any of the other poets of the *Xikun ji* or of the Xikun Style. To some degree, studies on Xikun Style poetry pivot around Yang Yi.

Most critics did not value the Xikun style poetry, yet they respected Yang Yi's talents and personality. For instance, Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101) in his "Yi xuexiao gongju zhuang" 議學校貢舉狀 [Petition on Discussing Schools and Imperial Examinations] commented that, "Among the literati of the recent generations, no one's literary composition is more flowery than Yang Yi's. However, if he were still

alive, he must be a loyal, honest, and straightforward man. How can we disdain him for his flowery composition?”⁸ Zhen Dexiu 真德秀(1178-1235) extolled Yang Yi’s personality in that he would not pursue wealth and rank immorally, and regarded him as a model for literati.⁹ Zhao Zhizhong 趙治中 examined Yang Yi’s political measures and corresponding poems when he was in the administrative office of Chouzhou 處州(present Lishui 麗水 of Zhejiang Province) since 999 (Zhao. 2001). He particularly pointed out Yang’s personal integrity and devotion to people.

Yang Yi is the pivotal figure in the formation and spread of Xikun Style. In 2001, Fu Rongrong conducted a study on Yang Yi’s relationship with Wang Yucheng, who is a representative poet of Bai Style poetry. Her article “Lun Yang Yi yu Wang Yucheng shixue sixiang zhi lihe ji xikun ti de dansheng” 論楊億與王禹偁詩學思想之離合及西昆體的誕生 [On The Separation And Union Of The Poetic Thoughts Of Yang Yi And Wang Yucheng As Well As The Birth of Xikun Style] points out the significance of the relationship between Yang and Wang. They are not only private friends. The similarity between the poems in Yang’s *Wuyi xinji* 武夷新集 and those in Wang’s *Xiaoxu ji* 小蓄集 offers a clue that Yang Yi was influenced by the Bai Style, and he could and did compose poems in this style. In addition, they shared some identical themes and techniques. But distinct from Wang, Yang valued knowledge in composing poems and he attached importance to ornate diction. During that period, the candidates for the civil examinations were more and more well

⁸ *Zouyi ji* 奏議集. *juan* 1. In *Su Dongpo ji*. p. 319.

⁹ “Yang Wengong shu Yuxisheng shu.” 楊文公書玉溪生書. *Xishan wenji* 西山文集. *juan* 34. p.27b. *SKQS*.

educated. The change in academic fashion could account for Yang's difference from Wang at this point. Fu concluded that Song style poetry was the result of the influences of both Xikun and Bai style poetry, and Wang's poetic theory and practice were absorbed and carried on by Yang.

In 2002, Zhang Minghua compared Yang's own poetry collection *Wuyi ji* to *Xikun ji* in his article "Cong *Wuyi ji* dao *Xikun ji*: Xikun ti xingcheng qi yu chengshu qi zuopin zhi bijiao" 從《武夷集》到《西昆集》—西昆體形成期與成熟期作品之比較 (From The Collection of *Wuyi* to The Collection of *Xikun*: A Comparative Study of the Poetical Works of the Xikun Style in Various Periods). From his point of view, *Wuyi ji* and *Xikun ji* represent, respectively, the formation and the maturity of the poetical works in the Xikun style. Both books largely collect poems from specific time periods. *Wuyi ji* collected his works during 998 to 1007, and poems collected into *Xikun ji* spanned 1005 to 1008. So there are more than two years overlap. *Wuyi ji* contained more varied poetry. Yang Yi's poetry in Chuzhou for example, concerned the life of people and their political policies as well as the frontier and warfare with the Khitan. Also, there are lucid and lively poems on landscapes. In contrast, *Xikun ji* was confined in terms of style and subjects. Second, the diction in *Wuyi ji* is not as luxuriant as that in *Xikun ji*. In comparison, poetry in *Xikun ji* contains many more allusions and is therefore more erudite than those in *Wuyi ji*. Third, *Xikun ji* is in a beautiful and sentimental uniform style, while there are diverse styles in *Wuyi ji*. Thus, from *Wuyi ji* to *Xikun ji*, the Xikun Style developed from laying equal stress on content and form to having a bias towards artistic form, and from a diversity of styles

to an intensified sentimental tone. Paradoxically, *Wuyi ji* is more similar to Li Shangyin's poetry, while Xikun poetry added its own unique characteristics.

1.2.3 Xikun Poetry in Context

Since Fang Hui 方回 (1227-1307), in his *Song Luo Shouke shixu* 送羅壽可詩序 [A Preface to the Poem for Seeing Off Luo Shouke], mentioned that there were three poetic styles in the early Northern Song Dynasty: Bai Style, the Later Tang Style, and the Xikun Style, all of which were remnants of the poetry of the Five Dynasties, the notion of three poetic styles of the early Song Dynasty had been widely accepted. Before the Xikun Style, Bai Style had been popular and widespread since the Later Tang Dynasty. It was popular not only in the court and among the high officials, but also among the common people, hermits, and monks. In contrast to the Bai Style, the Xikun Style is elusive and reserved. Fang Hui held the view that the motive for the creation of the Xikun Style was to foster a magnificent style in contrast to the previous vulgar and wretched ones, and is the first change in the history of Song poetry. Another style is the Later Tang Style, referring to the poetic style of Jia Dao 賈島(779-843) and Yao He 姚合(fl.831), which was also popular throughout the Later Tang and the Five Dynasties. But they were confined in regard to themes, images, and diction.

In 1986, Bai Dunren 白敦仁 investigated the poetry styles of the early Northern Song Dynasty in his article "Song chu shitan ji santi" 宋初詩壇及“三體” [Poetry Circles and the “Three Styles” in the Early Song]. People of the Five Dynasties and early Song were mostly fond of Bai Juyi's exchanging poems.

Meanwhile the simplicity and straightforwardness of the Bai Style made composing poems easier, in this way poetry became closer to daily life. But on the other hand, the poetry could be quite vulgar. Sometimes, it was more like doggerel. In general, the officials of high rank in the early 40 years of the Song Dynasty commonly followed the style of Bai Juyi.

Poetry exchange was a fashion during that time, as Li Junbiao 李俊標 has shown in his “Song chu wentan de changhe zhi feng” 宋初文壇的唱和之風 [The Exchange Of Poetry As A Custom In Early Song] in 2001. The previous tradition of poetry exchange, particularly the one between Bai Juyi and Yuan Zhen, had a huge affect on the early Song literary circles. Poetry is both a way of communication and an opportunity to compete with and learn from others. Since many of the literati had switched their loyalty from their former rulers to the emperors of Song, the emotions and feelings in poems should not be obscure or ambiguous, otherwise, the new regime might suspect them. Thus the plain and clear Bai Style for exchanging poetry was popular.

Xikun Style and Bai Style

In 1995, Zhang Ming in his paper “Cong Bai ti dao Xikun ti” 從“白體”到“西崑體” [From the Bai Style To The Xikun Style] examined the poetic sphere of the early Song Dynasty, the process by which Xikun Style succeeded Bai Style as the dominant poetic school, as well as the motivation for Yang Yi to learn from Li Shangyin and create the Xikun Style.

Zhang demonstrated that Xikun style poets were connected with “Bai Style” in various ways. He pointed out that many of the seventeen labeled Xikun poets had experience writing “Bai Style” poems. Chao Jiong 晁迥 (951-1034) and Li Wei 李維 (961-1031) provide good examples, as the bulk of their poems are “Bai Style” works. Yang Yi also wrote “Du shi xiao Bai ti” 讀史效白體 [Reading History and Imitating the Bai Style] which imitated Bai Juyi’s “Fang Yan” 放言 [Expressing Words].

The criticism and political opinion contained in Li Shangyin’s poetry appealed to Yang Yi. Qian Ruoshui 錢若水 was fascinated by Li Shangyin’s poetry as well. This type of poetry provided a stage for them to show off their artistic talents, erudition, and vigor. Unyielding and honest, Yang Yi’s personality is quite similar to that of Wang Yucheng. His was a political comrade of Kou Zhun 寇准, insisting on standing up to the Khitan. Wang Qingruo, who was in charge of the compilation of the *Cefu yuangui*, was his political opponent, and Chen Congyi 陳從易 was a supporter of Wang Qingruo. The enmity between them affected their points of view about poetry. Zhang believes that in *Xikun ji* there are poems ridiculing the emperor and his policy. These poems irritated the emperor, resulting in the ban issued in the first lunar month of the second year of the Dazhong xiangfu reign period (1009) of “gaudy and decadent” literature.

Zhang argues that Xikun Style is not merely a gaudy and ornamental poetic style, but was sung as hymns to the court. Such poems piled up allusions and redressed the humble and shabby poetry of the first forty years of the Song Dynasty.

The Development of the Xikun Style

In 1994, Tian Gengyu 田耕宇 wrote an article on the causes of the rise and fall of the Xikun Style. He offered several reasons. First, the refined, elegant, and exquisite diction, and the implicit and reserved meaning, fit into the cultural environment of the early Song Dynasty. Second, with the development of agriculture, handicraft industry, and commercial activities, hedonism spread rapidly through the court and on down to the common people. Their taste in the arts therefore tended to favor magnificent and sumptuous style. Third, although private life and feelings were often expressed in *ci* 詞 [lyrics], Xikun Style was in vogue in place of lyrics during the early Song Dynasty.

Yang Xuhui 楊旭暉 (1995) also provides an analysis of the formation of Xikun Style. He points out that the four encyclopedic books, *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記, *Taiping yulan* 太平禦覽, *Cefu yuangui* 冊府元龜 and *Wenyuan yinghua* 文苑英華, which were compiled prior to or during this period, facilitated the composition of poetry, particularly the Xikun Style. Otherwise, it would be impossible to compose such a type of poetry teeming with allusions without the literary knowledge accumulated from decades of reading. Moreover, aesthetic tastes had changed as the culture flourished with support of the rulers. Psychologically, people at that time were in pursuit of wealth and rank.

Tian analyzed the criticism of Xikun Style to figure out the cause of its fall. Ouyang Xiu and the “Shiwen gexin” movement aimed at prose, particularly memorials to the throne, instead of at the poetry. However, people failed to

distinguish among different literary genres after the movement and assumed that Ou Yangxiu despised the Xikun Style poetry as well as the current prose styles. Second, the rise of *ci* 詞 (lyrics) diverted the attention of both common people and literati to some degree, and the rapid growth of townspeople largely affected taste in arts. Due to their education level, it was impossible for them to appreciate such an elusive style. Instead, they preferred more entertaining and dramatic genres, such as dramas and story telling. Finally, the rationalism of Song gradually took form to replace the previous emotionalism and naturalism. As a result, Xikun Style, which is closely related to emotionalism, had to be retired from the poetic world. Moreover, the elite scholars and officials also engaged themselves in other activities such as calligraphy and epigraphy. Yang Xuhui (1995) proposed that the demise of Xikun Style was due to the mass of learners, who composed Xikun Style poetry after it became a widespread fashion. They focused only on the form of the elegant style and heaped up allusions instead of conveying any propound implications.

Zeng (1993b) proposed that Xikun Style was developed to change the vulgar and shallow poetry styles of the first 40 years of the Song Dynasty, while Ouyang Xiu and his peers proposed their innovation in poetry in order to rectify the elusive and gaudy poetry of the Xikun Style. Ouyang Xiu's attitude toward Xikun Style poetry is different from his attitude towards Xikun Style prose. Since he learned and composed Xikun Style poetry in his youth, he still appreciated the Xikun Style poetry even though he changed his poetic style later.

Xikun Style and the Jiangxi School

Although there is no consensus on the value and significance of Song poetry in Chinese literary history, most scholars admit that it is definitely a different poetic style from the Tang poetry. The problematic terms “Song poetry” and “Tang poetry” need a brief explanation. They could be used to refer to the poems of the Tang Dynasty (618-906) or those of the Song Dynasty (960-1279). But when poetic style is the topic at issue, the two terms are referring to the representative poetic styles of the two dynasties. However, neither the “Song Style” nor the “Tang Style” would be entirely applicable to all of the poems composed during either of the dynasties. The Jiangxi Poetry School is regarded as one of the most typical sources of Song poetry. Thus the relationship between the Xikun Style poetry and the poetry of the Jiangxi school is often mentioned in order to assess the importance of Xikun poetry for the development of Song poetry.

The conflict regarding the value between the Xikun Style and the Jiangxi Poetry School starts with Fang Hui 方回(1227-1307). Close examination of Fang Hui’s *Yingkui lüisui* 瀛奎律髓 shows that it actually admits the aesthetic achievement of the Xikun Style.¹⁰ However, in the Qing Dynasty the two styles were generally regarded as two distinct and even opposite styles from each other. The different evaluations between the Jiangxi school and the Xikun Style were enlarged by the conflicts between different poetic tendencies in the Ming and Qing Dynasties. Toward the end of the Ming Dynasty, some scholars were dissatisfied with the prevailing principle that only prose of the Qin and Han Dynasties is to be valued, and only

¹⁰ *Yingkui lüisui*. juan 3. p. 24a. *SKQS*.

poetry of the Tang Dynasty is to be valued. Qian Qianyi 錢謙益(1582-1664) proposed that they should learn also from the poetry of the Song Dynasty. He focused on the poetry of Su Shi and Lu You 陸遊(1125-1210), and he esteemed Li Shangyin and regretted that he did not have opportunity to read *Xikun chouchang ji*. Furthermore, two of Qian Qianyi's students, Feng Shu 馮舒(1593-1649) and Feng Ban 馮班(1614-1671), sparing no effort to advocate the Xikun style, founded the Yushan Shipai 虞山詩派 [Yushan Poetic School]. As their comrade Wu Qiao declared: they should learn from the poetry of the Later Tang Dynasty. In his eyes, most of the Song poetry was too straightforward. Both Feng Shu and Feng Ban disliked the Jiangxi Poetry School. They preferred the poetry of Li Shangyin and Wen Tingyun 溫庭筠 (812-ca.870). In contrast, Wu Zhizhen 吳之振 (1640-1717) and Lü Liuliang 呂留良 (1629-1683) were in favor of the Jiangxi School. Therefore, they did not include any of the Xikun poems in their *Song shi chao* 宋詩抄. As a result, Song poetry became unprecedentedly popular during the Kangxi 康熙 reign period (1662-1722). But later on, both the Jiangxi School and the Xikun Style were assailed.

In 1984, Wang Zhenyuan 王鎮遠 examined the relationship between the Xikun Style and the Jiangxi School, which was the most important and influential poetic school throughout the Song Dynasty. In contrast to the critics and scholars who view the Jiangxi School as entirely opposite to the Xikun Style in terms of both poetic theory and poetic practice, Wang pointed out that Huang Tingjian 黃庭堅(1045-1105), the chief poet of the Jiangxi School, had learned from Li Shangyin in some respects, as reflected in his own poetry, particularly his poems concerning objects. Moreover,

Wang compares the style of the Jiangxi School to the Xikun Style. Among their similarities, the broad usage of allusions is very obvious. Both of them put great attention on the form of poetry, such as rhyme and parallelism.

Bai Dunren also noticed Huang Tingjian's relationship to the Xikun Style (Bai. 1986). Poetry was generally only used to express feelings until Du Fu began to give objective comments and opinions with his poetry. And it was Li Shangyin who carried on this tradition and directly influenced people of the early Song Dynasty (Luo. 2001). Yang Xuhui (1995) gathered from the views of critics of Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing to point out the implicit relationship between the Jiangxi School and the Xikun School, and concluded that Huang continued the Xikun style but eliminated the flashy and gaudy features. The importance of the Xikun Style in establishing a tradition of excessive fondness for using literary quotations and making historical allusions is undeniable.

CHAPTER 2

THE *XIKUN JI* POETS:

BACKGROUNDS AND SOCIAL CIRCLES UPTO 1009

2.1 Backgrounds of the Poets

This section provides brief descriptions of the personalities and activities of the eighteen *Xikun ji* poets¹¹ previous to the compilation of *Xikun chouchang ji*, namely roughly until 1009. The biographies of most of the poets are provided in the *Song shi*, except for those of Liu Zhi and Ren Sui. Some of their biographies were attached to those of their family members, father or brother. For example, the biography of Li Zong'e was attached to his father Li Fang's, Li Wei's to his elder brother Li Hang's, and Qian Weiji's biography was included in the account of the Qian's Family of Wuyue.¹²

The following sketches are mainly based on their biographies in the *Song shi* and other historical records as well as contemporary scholars' research, such as the *Xikun chouchangji shiren nianpu jianbian* 《西崑酬唱集》詩人年譜簡編 [Brief Chronicles of the *Xikun chouchang ji* Poets] by Zeng Zaozhuang, and the *Yang Yi nianpu* 楊億年譜 [Chronicle of Yang Yi] by Li Yifei.

The poets are listed according to the order of their birth years. Their family backgrounds, personalities, literary careers and the events or activities of relevance to the association of the Xikun group are included.

¹¹ See Zhu Shangshu's "Er kao" 二考. *Wenxian Quaterly* 2 (Apr. 2001)

¹² *Song shi. juan* 480. p.13913-4.

2.1.1 Personal Sketches of the Poets

Shu Ya¹³舒雅 (ca.939-?) was the oldest one among the *Xikun ji* poets. He was registered in Shezhou 歙州 (present Shexian 歙縣 of Anhui Province).¹⁴ At about fourteen years old (955), Shu Ya went to Jinling 金陵 (present Nanjing 南京 of Jiangsu Province), the capital of the Southern Tang 南唐 Kingdom and submitted his literary works to Han Xizai 韓熙載 (902-970), who appreciated his writing and made friends with him. Around 964, he passed the civil service examination of the Southern Tang supervised by Han Xizai, but refused to attend the re-examination conducted by Xu Xuan. Shu Ya attained the first place in the civil service examination of the Southern Tang during the Baoda 保大 reign period (943-957).¹⁵ In 976, he followed the ruler of the Southern Tang Kingdom to surrender to the Song Dynasty and was appointed as *Jiangzuo jian cheng* 將作監丞 [Deputy of the Architecture Department]. In 990, he was recommended by Li Zhi 李至 (947-1001) to be a *Mige jiaoli* 秘閣校理 [Collator in the Secretarial Gallery]. In 1000, Shu Ya was one of the examiners when the Emperor personally conducted the examination for the *jinsshi* candidates. He implored the emperor for a position outside of the capital, and he was appointed as the administrator of Shuzhou 舒州 (present Taihu 太湖 and Anqing 安慶 of Anhui Province) in 1003. He readily took the charge of a Daoist temple, Lingxian guan 靈仙觀, there when he fulfilled his tenure as the administrator in 1005. In the first month

¹³ *Song shi. juan* 441. p.13041.

¹⁴ *Xin'an zhi* 新安志. *juan* 3. p. 3a. *SKQS*.

¹⁵ *Song shi jishi. juan* 6. p. 30b. *SKQS*.

of the second year of the Dazhong xiangfu reign period (1008), he was appointed to *Zhi zhaowenguan* 直昭文館 [on duty in the Hall of Illuminating Literature].

He participated in the compilation of the *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 from 977 through 983, the compilation of the *Wenyuan yinghua* 文苑英華 in 982, the collation of the *Shi ji* 史記 in 994, and the *Xu Tongdian* 續通典 in 1000.

Diao Kan 刁衍 (945?-1013?)¹⁶ was registered in Shengzhou 昇州 (present Nanjing 南京 of Jiangsu Province). His father Diao Yanneng 刁彥能 was a high ranking military official *Zhaowu jun jidu* 昭武郡節度 [Military governor of Zhaowu Prefecture] of the Southern Tang Dynasty. His family was prominent in the Southern Tang, and he lived in luxurious surroundings. After he surrendered to the Song, he was well-known for leading a tranquil life without worldly desires. He was good at brilliant conversation and was fond of playing *go*.

In 966, he acquired the position *Mishu lang* 秘書郎 [Secretary Esquire] and *Jixian jiaoli* 集賢校理 [Collator in the Academy of Assembled Worthies] in the court of the Southern Tang Kingdom by virtue of the *yin* 蔭 privilege.¹⁷ The king of the Southern Tang Kingdom Li Yu 李煜(937-978) favored him. In 976, he followed Li Yu to submit to the Song Dynasty and was appointed *Taichang si taizhu* 太常寺太祝 [Leader of the Prayers in the Court of Sacrificial Worship], but he offered illness as an excuse to avoid serving the Song Dynasty. In the early Taiping xingguo reign period (976), Li Fang 李昉 (925-996) and Hu Meng 扈蒙 persuaded him to serve the Song

¹⁶ *Song shi. juan* 441. p. 13051.

¹⁷ A traditional privilege by which people would get an office by virtue of their ancestors' contribution to the court.

Dynasty. So he submitted his “Shengde song” 聖德頌 [Encomium on Sacred Virtue] to the emperor and took office in Tonglu 桐廬 of Muzhou 睦州 (Present Tonglu of Zhejiang Province).¹⁸ In the fifth month of the second year of the Xianping reign period (1000), he submitted his literary work *Ben shuo* 本說 to the Emperor Zhenzong and obtained the position of *Mige jiaoli* 秘閣校理 [Collator in the Secretarial Gallery]. He was appointed as the administrator of Yingzhou 穎州 (present Fuyang 阜陽 of Anhui Province) starting in 1000. He was summoned back to the capital in 1004 and became *Zhi mige* 直秘閣 [on duty in Secretarial Gallery] and took an additional office in the Chongwen yuan 崇文院 as a Jiantao 檢討 [proofreader]. But in 1006, he implored the Emperor for a position outside of the capital and thus was sent to Huzhou 湖州 (present Huzhou of Zhejiang Province) as the administrator.

In 1004, he participated in the collation of the *Han Shu* 漢書 and *Hou Han Shu* 後漢書. In 1005, he finished proofreading *Han shu* and turned in “Fu jiao Han shu biao” 復校漢書表 [A Report on Re-proofreading *Han shu*].¹⁹ He participated in the compilation of the *Cefu yuangui* in 1005, but he left for Huzhou in 1006 and rejoined the compilation project when he finished his tenure in 1009.

Zhang Yong²⁰ 張詠 (946-1015) was registered in Yincheng 醴城 of Puzhou 濮州 (in present Shandong Province). He failed the civil service examination in 978 and wanted to learn Daoist practice from Chen Tuan 陳搏 (?-989), a renowned Daoist priest, but Chen Tuan encouraged him to serve in the court. He then got the *jinshi*

¹⁸ *Song shi. juan* 441. p.13051.

¹⁹ *Song huiyao jiben*. Chongru 4.1.

²⁰ *Song Shi. juan* 293. p. 9800.

degree in the fifth year of the Taiping xingguo reign period (980). When he was the administrator of Yizhou 益州 (in present Sichuan Province), from the fifth year of the Chunhua reign period (994), he quelled the rebellion of Li Shun 李順, which broke out in 993. In 998, he was summoned back to the capital and was appointed as *Jishizhong* 給事中 [Imperial Attendant]. In the spring of 999, he was in charge of the civil service examination, and in the summer, he was dispatched to Hangzhou to be the administrator until 1002. In the seventh month of 1006, he returned to the court, but in the sixth month of the fourth year of the Jingde reign period (1007), he contracted a head ulcer disease. So he pleaded to leave the capital and was appointed as the administrator of Shengzhou 昇州 (present Nanjing of Jiangsu Province) until the eighth month of the fifth year of the Dazhong xiangfu reign period (1012), when Xue Ying succeeded him in this position in Shengzhou.

Chao Jiong²¹ 晁迥 (951-1034)'s family was originally registered in Qingfeng 清豐 of Chanzhou 澶州 (in the southwest of present Qingfeng 清豐 County of Henan Province), but his father Chao Quan 晁侗 moved to Pengmen 彭門 (present Xuzhou 徐州 of Jiangsu Province). Chao Jiong attained the *jinshi* degree in the fifth year of the Taiping xingguo reign period (980), and was appointed to *Zhi shiguan* 直史館 [on duty in the Hall of Historical Documents] in 997. In 1001, he submitted his *Xianping xinshu* 咸平新書 [New Writings of the Xianping Reign Period] and *Li shu* 理書 [Book on Rationale] to the emperor and was promoted to be *Zhi zhigao* 知制誥 [Cognizer for Preparing Investitures]. In 1005, he was promoted to be *Hanlin xueshi*

²¹ *Song shi. juan* 305. p. 10085.

翰林學士 [Scholar in the Imperial Academy], but in the eighth month, was demoted to his previous position due to the death of Zhao Yuanfen 趙元份, the Prince of Yun 鄆王, who he was serving.²² In 1006, he was appointed to review the examination papers of the civil service examination, and in the spring of 1008, was in charge of the examination. Starting in the fourth month of 1008, he was engaged in preparations for the rites of *dongfeng* 東封 [sacrifice to the east].

In 1004, Chong Jiong was commanded to re-proofread the *Han shu* and *Hou Han shu*. In the eighth month of 1007, he was commanded to take part in the compilation of the *Guo shi* 國史 [State History].

Xue Ying²³ 薛映 (951-1024) was a descendant of Xue Yuanchao 薛元超 (621-683), who was once the prime minister of Tang. His father, Xue Yunzhong 薛允中, served the Shu 蜀 Kingdom as a *Jishizhong* 給事中 [Imperial Attendant]. Following his father, Xue Ying submitted to the Song Dynasty in 965, when he was 14 years old. He attained the *jinshi* degree in the third year of Taiping xingguo reign period (978). In 993, he was one of the assistants of Zhao Changyan 趙昌言 who was *Jianghuai Liangzhe zhizhi chayan shi* 江淮兩浙制置茶鹽使 [Manufactory and Depository Legate of Tea and Salt in Jianghuai and Liangzhe Areas]. In 1001, he was promoted to be *Zhi zhigao* 知制誥 [Cognizer for Preparing Investitures]. He was the administrator of Hangzhou from 1004 to 1007, and in 1008, was promoted to be *Jishizhong* 給事中 [Imperial Attendant], and was in charge of offering a gratitude

²² *Changbian. juan* 61. p. 3a-b. *SKQS*.

²³ *Song shi. juan* 305. p. 10089.

sacrifice to *Fenyin houtu* 汾陰后土, God of Earth in Fenyin (present Wanrong 萬榮 County of Shanxi 山西).

Cui Zhundu²⁴ 崔遵度 (954-1020) was originally registered in Jiangling 江陵 (in present Hubei Province), and then moved to Zichuan 淄川 of Zizhou 淄州 (present Zibo 淄博 of Shandong Province). Cui Zundu began to study the Classics with his uncle Cui Xian 崔憲 when he was seven *sui* (six years old). Cui Zhundu was a musician, and had taught Fan Zhongyan 范仲淹 to play the *qin*, a Chinese stringed musical instrument.²⁵

Cui Zundu was silent and not competitive, indifferent to power and wealth. He planted some bamboos around a loft building and often sat in it playing musical instruments, after retreating from the court. He liked reading the *Yi* 易 and seldom got along with other people.²⁶

He attained the *jinshi* degree in the eighth year of the Taiping xingguo reign period (983). He was recommended by Li Zhi in 992 for promotion, and was appointed as the administrator of Zhongzhou 忠州 (present Zhong County of Sichuan Province). But he was later demoted because he failed to hold Zhongzhou during the rebellion of Li Shun. He submitted his literary works at the request of the emperor and was appointed as *zhi shiguan* 直史館 [on duty in the Hall of Historical Documents] in

²⁴ *Song shi. juan* 441. p. 13062.

²⁵ Fan Zhongyan: “Yu Tang chushi shu” 與唐處士書. *Fan Wenzheng ji* 范文正集. *juan* 9. p. 8b-9a. SKQS.

²⁶ *Song Shi. juan* 441. p. 13066.

1004. In 1008, he was appointed to participate in compiling the *Qiju zhu* 起居注 [Diaries of Activity and Repose].

In the eighth month of 1007, he was appointed as one of the chief compilers of the *Liangchao guoshi* 兩朝國史 [State History during the Two Emperors' Reign].

Liu Zhi 劉鷲 (ca.955-?) was registered in Youxian 攸縣 (present Youxian of Hunan Province).²⁷ He attained the *jinshi* degree in 985. In the second year of the Xianping reign period (999), he submitted to the emperor his “Shen yue zhi zheng song” 審樂知政頌 as a *Mishu cheng* 秘書丞 [Deputy Secretary], and then was appointed to *zhi Jixian yuan* 直集賢院 [on duty in the Academy of Assembled Worthies]. And in the same year, together with Huang Yijian 黃夷簡 and Liu Mengsou 劉蒙叟, he supervised the *jueren* examination at Kaifeng. He became the administrator of Hengzhou 衡州 (present Hengyang 衡陽 of Hunan Province) in 1003. In 1005, Liu Zhi was appointed as the administrator of Tanzhou 潭州 (present Changsha of Hunan Province). His mother died in the first month of the second year of the Jingde reign period (1005).²⁸ In the fourth year of the Jingde reign period (1007), Liu Zhi and Ren Sui took charge of the *jueren* examination at Kaifeng, and in the first year of the Dazhong xiangfu reign period (1008), he supervised the examination again.

²⁷ *Huguang Tongzhi*. 湖廣通志. *juan* 32. p.2b. *SKQS*.

²⁸ Yang Yi: “Liu shi taifuren Tianshui xian taijun Zhao shi mujieming” 劉氏太夫人天水縣太君趙氏墓碣銘. *Wuyi xinji*. *juan* 8. p. 24b. *SKQS*. 集賢劉工部鷲知衡州 *Wuyi xinji*. *juan* 4. p. 5b-6a.

In the fourth year of the Xianping reign period (1001), he was appointed to the position of compiling the *Qiju zhu* 起居注 [Diaries of Activity and Repose].²⁹

Zhang Bing³⁰ 張秉 (952-1016) was registered in Xin'an 新安 of Shezhou 歙州 (in present Anhui Province). His father Zhang E 張諤 served the Southern Tang Dynasty as a *Mishu cheng* 秘書丞 [Deputy Secretary].

Zhang Bing got his *jinshi* degree in the fifth year of the Taiping xingguo reign period (980). He was favored by the Emperor Taizong and the prime minister Zhao Pu 趙普 (922-992), who married the daughter of his younger brother to Zhang Bing. In 993, he was one of the assistants of Zhao Changyan who was *Jianghuai Liangzhe zhizhi chayan shi* 江淮兩浙制置茶鹽使 [Manufactory and Depositary Legate of Tea and Salt in Jianghuai and Liangzhe Areas]. During the Zhidao reign period (995-997), he became *Zhi zhigao* 知制誥 [Cognizer for Preparing Investitures], and in 997 was temporarily assigned to take charge of the *Zhaowen guan* 昭文館 [Hall of Illuminating Literature], but soon he was demoted to be administrator of Yingzhou 潁州 (present Fuyang 阜陽 of Anhui Province) and Xiangzhou 襄州 (present Xiangfan 襄樊 of Hubei Province) due to inappropriate wordings in drafting an edict. In 1005, he was summoned back to the court, and in the eighth month was assigned to examine music instruments with Li Zong'e. In the fourth month of the first year of the Dazhong xiangfu reign period (1008), he assigned grades when Emperor Zhenzong conducted

²⁹ Yang Yi: "Liu shi taifuren Tianshui xian taijun Zhao shi mujieming". *Wuyi xinji. juan* 8. p. 23b. SKQS.

³⁰ *Song shi. juan* 301. p.9995.

the examination for the *jinshi* candidates. In 1008, he was also engaged in the arrangements for the *dongfeng* 東封 [sacrifice to the east].

Zhang Bing was fond of *boxi* 博戲 [gambling games] and was poor in his late years.

Li Wei³¹ 李維 (961-1031) was registered in Feixiang 肥鄉 of Mingzhou 洺州 (in present Hebei Province). He got his *jinshi* degree in 985.³² In 997, he submitted his “Shengde shi” 聖德詩 [Poetry on Sacred Virtue] to the emperor, and after passing an exam held by *Zhongshu sheng* 中書省 [Inspectorate of Central Documents], he was promoted to *Zhi Jixian yuan* 直集賢院 [on duty in the Academy of Assembled Worthies]. In 1001, Li Wei left the capital for Shezhou 歙州 (present She County 歙縣 of Anhui Province) to be administrator because his brother Li Hang became the prime minister. He returned to the court when his brother died in 1004 and was appointed as a diplomatic envoy to the Khitan, and was promoted to be *Zhi zhigao* 知制誥 [Cognizer for Preparing Investitures] when he returned in 1007.

In 1000, Li Wei participated in the compilation of the *Xu Tongdian*, and in 1005, he participated in the compilation of the the *Cefu yuangui*.

Li Wei was fond of drinking and poetry.³³

Li Zong'e³⁴ 李宗諤 (965-1013) could compose literary works at seven *sui* (six years old). His father Li Fang 李昉 (925-996) was the prime minister of Song, who

³¹ *Song shi. juan* 282. p. 9541.

³² *Junzhai dushu zhi houzhi. juan* 2. p. 75a. *SKQS*.

³³ *Junzhai dushu zhi houzhi. juan* 2. p. 75a. *SKQS*.

³⁴ *Song shi. juan* 265. p. 9140.

was registered in Raoyang 饒陽 of Shenzhou 深州 (present Raoyang County of Hebei Province). Li Zong'e was versed in music.

He got the *jinshi* degree in 989, and in 990, he submitted his literary works to the emperor for self-recommendation and was appointed as *Mishu lang* 秘書郎 [Secretary Esquire] and *Jixian jiaoli* 集賢校理 [Collator in the Academy of Assembled Worthies]. In 994, he was *Mishu cheng* 秘書丞 [Deputy Secretary] and *Zhi Zhaowenguan zhang qiju sheren shi* 直昭文館掌起居舍人事 [on Duty in the Hall of Literature and in Charge of Imperial Diarists]. In 1000, he was promoted to be *Zhi zhigao* 知制誥 [Cognizer for Preparing Investitures] and was assigned to temporarily take charge of the Academy of Assembled Worthies. He became a Hanlin xueshi 翰林學士 [Scholar in the Imperial Academy] in the second year of the Jingde reign period (1005), and in the autumn, he was in charge of the *dayue* 大樂 [Grand music] and *guchui* 鼓吹 [Drum and Wind Music] departments. In the eighth month, he was assigned to examine music instruments with Zhang Bing, and in the fourth month of 1008, he assigned grades when Emperor Zhenzong gave the examination to the *jinshi* candidates.

In 998, he participated in the compilation of the *Taizu shilu* 太祖實錄 [The Authentic Records of Emperor Taizu], and was commanded to take part in compiling the *Fengshan ji* 封禪記 [Accounts of the *feng* and *shan* Sacrifices] in 1008.

Ding Wei³⁵ 丁謂 (966-1037) was registered in Changzhou 長洲 of Suzhou 蘇州 (present Suzhou of Jiangsu Province). He visited Wang Yucheng and submitted his

³⁵ *Song shi. juan* 283. p. 9566.

literary works to him in 991.³⁶ He attained the *jinshi* degree in the third year of the Chunhua 淳化 reign period (992), and in 994, was appointed to *Zhi Shiguan* 直史館 [on duty in the Hall of Historical Documents] and became *Fujian lu caifangshi* 福建路採訪使 [Interview Legate of Fujian Province]. From 999 to 1004, he was *Xia lu zhuanyun shi* 峽路轉運使 [Transport Legate of Xia Province]. Then in the second month of the first year of the Jingde reign period (1004), he was summoned back to the court and was appointed as *Zhi zhigao* 知制誥 [Cognizer for Preparing Investitures]. In the eighth month of 1007, he submitted the six-volume *Jingde kuaiji lu* 景德會計錄 [The Financial Records of the Jingde Reign Period], and soon was promoted to be *Shumi zhixueshi* 樞密直學士 [Privy Councilor]. In the fourth month of 1008, the emperor consulted Ding Wei about the budget for the *feng* and *shan* sacrifices.

Ren Sui³⁷ 任隨 attained his *jinshi* degree in the third year of the Chunhua reign period (992). He was promoted to be *zhi jixianyuan* 直集賢院 [on duty in the Academy of Assembled Worthies] from his position as *Zhuzuo zuolang* 著作佐郎 [Attendant Esquire of Composition] in the third year of the Xianping reign period (1000). In the twelfth month of the fourth year of the Xianping reign period (1001/2), he was assigned to review the format of the examination papers, and in the third year of the Jingde reign period (1006), was appointed to *Zhi Jixian yuan* 直集賢 [on duty in the Academy of Assembled Worthies]. In 1007, he was appointed to supervise the

³⁶ Wang Yucheng: “Song Ding Wei xu” 送丁謂序. *Xiaoxu ji. juan.19*. p. 14. SKQS.

³⁷ *Xikun chouchang ji shiren nianpu jianbian*.

examination for *juren* in the *Guozijian* 國子監 [Directorate of Education], and in the twelfth month of the fourth year of the Jingde reign period (1007/1008), was assigned to review the format of the examination papers.

From 1001 to the first month of the first year of the Jingde reign period (1004), Ren Sui was in charge of re-proofreading the *Shiji*.

Liu Yun 劉筠 (970-1030) was registered in Daming 大名 (present Daming of Hebei Province). He attained his *jinshi* degree in the first year of the Xianping reign period (998). In the twelfth month of the fifth year of the Xianping reign period (1002/3), a selective examination was conducted by Yang Yi for the project of proofreading the imperial collections, and Liu Yun was promoted to be *Mige jiaoli* 秘閣校理 [Collator at Secretarial Gallery].

In 1005, he participated in the compilation of the *Cefu yuangui*.

Chen Yue³⁸ 陳越 (973-1012) was registered in Weishi County 尉氏 of Kaifeng 開封 (present Weishi County of Kaifeng, Henan Province). He indulged in drinking and did not care about the poverty of his family.

In 1001, Chen Yue passed the ad-hoc civil service examination and was appointed as an assistant prefectural magistrate of Shuzhou 舒州 (present Taihu 太湖 and Anqing 安慶 of Anhui Province). In 1004, he was promoted to be *Zhuzuo zuolang* 著作佐郎 [Attendant Esquire of Composition] and *Zhi Shi guan* 直史館 [on duty in the Hall of Historical Documents].

In 1005, he participated in the compilation of the *Cefu yuangui*.

³⁸ *Song shi. juan* 441. p. 13066.

Yang Yi³⁹ 楊億 (974-1020) was registered in Pucheng 浦城 of Jianzhou 建州 (present Pucheng County of Fujian Province). His grandfather Yang Wenyi 楊文逸 (914-978) served the Southern Tang Dynasty as an official. Both his paternal grandmother and his mother were daughters of Southern Tang officials. He could recite what his mother taught him when he was barely able to speak, began to learn to compose poems at six years old, and could write literary works as well as an adult when he was eight years old.

In the ninth year of the Taiping xingguo 太平興國 reign period (984), when Yang Yi was only ten years old, Emperor Taizong heard of his genius and summoned him to the court. Yang Yi attended a test as a child prodigy and was appointed as *Mishu sheng zhengzi* 秘書省正字 [Proofreader in the Secretarial Ministry]. Yang Huizhi encouraged him to continue his learning. His father died in the third year of the Yongxi 雍熙 reign period (986), when he was twelve years old, and he observed mourning for his father for three years. In the second year of the Duangong 端拱 reign period (989), he went to Xuzhou 許州 (present Xuchang 许昌 of Henan Province) to follow Yang Huizhi, who was his grandfather's brother. In the first year of Chunhua 淳化 reign period (990), he went back to the capital. In 992, he submitted his literary works to the emperor, and after passing an exam conducted by the Hanlin yuan 翰林院 [Imperial Academy], he was bestowed the *jinshi* degree. In 993, he was appointed *zhi Jixian yuan* 直集賢院 [on duty in the Academy of Assembled Worthies]. In the fifth of the Chunhua reign period (994), Yang Yi returned to his hometown Jian'an 建

³⁹ *Song shi. juan* 305. p. 10079.

安 to take his mother and younger brothers to the capital. In 994, the Monk Jin 覲 encouraged Yang Yi to study Buddhism, but Yang Yi declined. Around 994, Yang Yi became engaged to the daughter of Zhang Ji 張洎 and married to her in 997. In 996, he was appointed as Zhuzuo zuolang 著作佐郎 [Attendant Esquire of Composition]. High ranking officials often invited Yang Yi to write memorials and reports for them; documents of the crown prince were mostly written by him. Yang Yi implored the emperor for a position out of the capital in order to support his mother, and consequently was appointed as the administrator of Chuzhou 處州 (present Lishui 麗水 of Zhejiang Province) in 998. His son Yuntang 雲堂 was born in 999, and he became acquainted with Zhou Qiming. He returned to the court from Chuzhou in 1000 and participated in the compilation of the *Xu Tongdian* 續通典. Yang Yi was promoted to be *Zhi zhigao* 知制誥 in 1001, in the autumn of the same year, his son Yuntang died. Yang Yi composed exam questions for that year, and in the twelfth month 1002, he graded Liu Yun as the top one in the selective examination and brought in several other people with *jinshi* degree to proofread collections in Taiqing Building 太清樓.

In the eleventh month of 1004, Yang Yi followed Emperor Zhenzong to Chanzhou 澶州 (in the southwest of present Qingfeng 清豐 County of Henan Province) to defeat the Khitan army. In 1004, he wrote a preface for Monk Daoyuan 道原's *Fozu tong can ji* 佛祖同參集, which was later renamed *Jingde chuande lu* 景德傳燈錄 [Record of Transmission of the Lamp in the Jingde Reign Period]. In 1005,

he fell ill for over a month.⁴⁰ In the ninth month, Wang Qinruo and Yang Yi were assigned to take charge of the compilation project of the *Cefu yuangui*. His brother Yang Yi 楊倚 attained the *jinshi* degree in that year. In the eleventh month of the third year of the Jingde reign period (1006/7), Yang Yi was promoted to be a *Hanlin xueshi* 翰林學士 [Scholar in the Imperial Academy]. He again fell ill in the first month of 1008. Starting from the fourth month of 1008, he was also engaged in the arrangements for the *feng* sacrifice in the east.

In 997, Yang Yi participated in the compilation of the *Taizong shilu*. In the ninth month of 1005, Wang Qinruo and Yang Yi were commanded to compile the *Lidai junchen shiji* 歷代君臣事跡, for which Yang Yi set up the sequence and the format. Yang Yi took part in the compilation of the *Liangchao guoshi* 兩朝國史 [State History during the Two Emperors' Reigns] in 1007. In the tenth month of 1007, he compiled his own collection *Wuyi xinji* 武夷新集, and in the autumn of 1008, he compiled the *Xikun chouchang ji* 西崑酬唱集.

Yang Yi was a straightforward man with a vigorous social life. He esteemed honor and integrity.

Qian Weiyan⁴¹ 錢惟演 (977-1034) was the fourteenth son of Qian Chu 錢俶 (929-988) who was the last king of the Wuyue 吳越 Kingdom. An anecdote was recorded by Wang Cheng 王稱 (12th cent) in his *Dongdu shilue* 東都事略.⁴² It relates how Qian Weiyan was required to compose a poem on the theme of 'the mountain

⁴⁰ "Shuhuai ji liuwu" 書懷寄劉五. *Quan Song shi. juan* 119. p.1384.

⁴¹ *Song shi. juan* 317. p. 10340.

⁴² *Dongdu shilue. juan* 24. p. 193.

faraway' by his father, Qian Chu 钱俶 (929-988), when he was very young. His father deeply appreciated a couplet 高為天一柱，秀作海三峰 [“as high as a pillar propping up the sky [is the peak], as majestic as sea waves are the three ridges”].

In the fifth lunar month of the third year of the Taiping xingguo 太平興國 reign period (978), namely the next year after his birth, his father surrendered to the Song Dynasty. From then on, Qian Weiyan was granted several titles, such as *Tuanlianshi* 團練使 [Legate of the Regiment Drill] and *You shenwu jiangjun* 右神武將軍 [Divine Martial General of the Right]. In 988, his father died.

His real political career started from the third year of the Xianping 咸平 reign period (1000) of Emperor Zhenzong (968-1022; reigned 997-1022), when he was twenty three years old. In the fifth month, he submitted to the emperor his *Xianping shengzheng lu* 咸平聖政錄 [The Record of the Sage Sovereignty in the Xianping Reign Period], and was summoned to be tested and then was appointed as *Taipu shaoqing* 太僕少卿 [The Vice-president of the Taipu si]. In 1006, he was appointed to *zhi Mige* 直秘閣 [on duty in the Secretarial Gallery]. In 1007, he submitted “Shengde lun” 聖德論 [Discourse on Sacred Virtue] to the emperor. Before 1008, Qian Weiyan engaged a silversmith to make some jewelry for his daughter's trousseaux. He then married his younger sister to this silversmith, whose sister was the emperor's favorite concubine.⁴³ In the first month of the first year of the Dazhong xiangfu 大中祥符 reign period (1008), he submitted his *Xiangfu song* 祥符頌 [Ode of the Auspicious Omens] and was promoted to *Sifeng langzhong* 司封郎中 [Esquire at the Center in

⁴³ *Dongxuan bilu. juan 15. p. 3b. SKQS.*

Charge of the Rituals] and *Zhi zhigao* 知制誥 [Cognizer for Preparing Investitures]. In 1005, he participated in the compilation of the *Cefu yuangui*.

Qian Weiji 錢惟濟 (978-1032) was the fifteenth son of Qian Chu and the younger brother of Qian Weiyan. Qian Weiji liked entertaining guests and often hosted parties. He submitted his poetry to the emperor in the fifth month of the third year of the Dazhong xiangfu reign period (1009).⁴⁴

Wang Zeng⁴⁵ 王曾 (978-1038) was registered in Yidu 益都 of Qingzhou 青州 (present Weifang 濰坊 of Shandong Province). His parents died when he was eight *sui* (seven years old), so he was brought up by his uncle Wang Zongyun 王宗元. His ancestors lived in Jinjiang 晉江 of Quanzhou 泉州 (present Jinjiang of Fujian Province). His ancestor Wang Shengui 王审邽 (858-904) was the brother of 王审知 (862-925), the first king of the Min Kingdom (909-945).⁴⁶ Wang Zeng got his *jinshi* degree in the fifth year of the Xianping reign period (1002), when the examination was supervised by Chen Shu 陳恕 (?-1004).⁴⁷ Yang Yi appreciated Wang Zeng's parallel prose. In the sixth year (1003), Wang married Li Hang's (947-1004) daughter.⁴⁸ Li Hang was the older brother of Li Wei, who also took part in the *Xikun* poetry exchange. Wang Zeng was appointed *Zhi shiguan* [On Duty in the Hall of

⁴⁴ *Changbian. juan 73. p. 30. SKQS.*

⁴⁵ *Song shi. juan 310. p. 10182.*

⁴⁶ Song Qi: "Wang Wenzheng gong Zeng mozhiming." *Mingchen beizhuan wanyan zhiji. juan 5. p. 2a. SKQS.*

⁴⁷ *Song shi. juan 267. p. 9202.*

⁴⁸ Yang Yi: "Puyi Li xianggong zhai guan huazhu" 僕射李相公宅觀花燭. *Wuyi xinji. juan3. p. 19a. SKQS.*

Historical Documents] in the second year of the Jingde reign period (1005).⁴⁹ He was promoted to be *Zhi zhigao* 知制誥 [Cognizer for Preparing Investitures].⁵⁰

2.1.2 Summary of Their Backgrounds

Comparing their sketches in the section above, it is evident that several characteristics were shared by many of the poets.

First, as Table 1 shows, many of them had a southland background.

Table 1

Geographic Backgrounds of the *Xikun ji* Poets

(continued on the next three pages)

Poets	Place of Registry		Family Background	
	Place Name	Belonging to Which Kingdom	Family Members	Affiliated with Which Kingdom
Shu Ya 舒雅 (ca.939-?)	Shezhou 歙州 (present Shexian 歙縣 of Anhui Province)	Southern Tang		
Diao Kan 刁衍 (945?-1013?)	Shengzhou 昇州 (present Nanjing 南京 of Jiangsu Province)	Southern Tang	father Diao Yanneng	Southern Tang
Zhang Yong 張詠 (946-1015)	Yincheng 溇城 of Puzhou 濮州 (in present Shandong Province)	North		
Chao Jiong 晁迥 (951-1034)	Qingfeng 清豐 of Chanzhou 澶州 (in the	North		

⁴⁹ *Changbian. juan* 59. p. 25. *SKQS*.

⁵⁰ *Changbian. juan* 65. p. 24a. *SKQS*.

	southwest of present Qingfeng 清豐 County of Henan Province)			
Xue Ying 薛映(951-1024)	His ancestor Xue Yuanchao was registered in Fenyang 汾陽 of Puzhou 蒲州(present Southwest of Wanrong 万榮 County of Shanxi Province)	North	Father Xue Yunzhong	Shu 蜀 Kingdom
Cui Zundu 崔遵度(954-1020)	registered in Jiangling 江陵 (in present Hubei Province), and then moved to Zichuan 淄川 of Zizhou 淄州 (present Zibo 淄博 of Shandong Province)	Jingnan Kingdom		
Liu Zhi 劉鷺(ca.955-?)	Youxian 攸县 (present Youxian of Hunan Province)	Chu Kingdom		
Zhang Bing 張秉(952-1016)	Xin'an 新安 of Shezhou 歙州 (in present Anhui Province)	Southern Tang	father Zhang E	Southern Tang
Li Wei 李維(961-1031)	Feixiang 肥鄉 of Mingzhou 洺州(in present Hebei Province)	North	brother Li Hang (prime minister of Song)	
Li Zong'e 李宗諤(965-	His father was registered in	North	father Li Fang (prime minister of Song)	

1013)	Raoyang 饒陽 of Shenzhou 深州(present Raoyang County of Hebei Province)			
Ding Wei 丁謂(966- 1037)	Changzhou 長 洲 of Suzhou 蘇州(present Suzhou of Jiangsu Province)	Southern Tang		
Ren Sui 任隨	unclear			
Liu Yun 劉筠(970- 1030)	Daming 大名 (present Daming of Hebei Province)	North		
Chen Yue 陳越(973- 1012)	Weishi County 尉氏 of Kaifeng 開封 (present Weishi County of Kaifeng, Henan Province)	North		
Yang Yi 楊億(974- 1020)	Pucheng 浦城 of Jianzhou 建 州(present Pucheng County of Fujian Province)	Min--Southern Tang	grandfather Yang Wenyi (914-978)	Southern Tang
Qian Weiyan 錢惟演(977- 1034)	His father was registered in Lin'an 臨安 of Hangzhou 杭 州 (present Hangzhou of Zhejiang Province)	Wuyue	father Qian Chu (king of the Wuyue)	Wuyue
Qian Weiwei 錢惟濟(978- 1032)	His father was registered in Lin'an 臨安 of Hangzhou 杭	Wuyue	father Qian Chu (king of Wuyue)	Wuyue

	州 (present Hangzhou of Zhejiang Province)			
Wang Zeng 王曾 (978-1038)	Yidu 益都 of Qingzhou 青州 (present Weifang 潍坊 of Shandong Province)	North	Ancestor Wang Shengui (brother of Wang Shenzhi, the first king of Min)	Min

Among the eighteen poets, eleven of them were either registered in the southland or had a southland family background, except that Ren Sui's place of registration is unclear. Shu Ya and Diao Kan had served the Southern Tang Dynasty. Zhang Bing's father and Yang Yi's grandfather were also officials of the Southern Tang. In fact, not only Yang Yi's grandfather served the Southern Tang Dynasty as an official, but also both his paternal grandmother and his mother were daughters of Southern Tang officials. Qian Weiyan and Qian Weiji were the sons of the king of the Wuyue Kingdom. Although Li Zong'e was registered in the north, his father Li Fang was once the prime minister of Song. When Jiangnan Area (South of the Changjiang River) was conquered, most of the surrendered southern literati followed or socialized with him.⁵¹

Second, most of the poets attained positions in *guangge* or even in Inner and Outer Preparing Investitures before or during the Xikun poetry exchange period as Table 2 displays.

Table 2

⁵¹ *Song shi. juan* 265. p. 9139.

Guangge Positions Attained by the Poets upto 1009

(continued on the next two pages)

Poets	Positions					
	<i>Guange</i> 館閣[Halls and Gallery]				內外兩制[inner and outer preparing Investitures]	
	三館 “Three Halls” Also called 崇文院(Academy of Esteeming Literature)				Outer	Inner
	昭文館 (Hall of Illuminating Literature)	史館 (Hall of Historical Documents)	集賢院 (Academy of Assembled Worthies)	秘閣 (Secretarial Gallery)		
Shu Ya 舒雅 (ca.939-?)	<i>Zhi zhaowen guan</i> 直昭文館 (1008)			<i>Mige jiaoli</i> 秘閣校理 (990)		
Diao Kan 刁衍 (945?-1013?)	<i>Chongwen yuan Jiantao</i> 崇文院檢討 (1004)			<i>Mige jiaoli</i> 秘閣校理 (1000) <i>Zhi mige</i> 直秘閣 (1004)		
Zhang Yong 張詠 (946-1015)						
Chao Jiong 晁迥 (951-1034)		<i>Zhi shiguan</i> 直史館 (997)			<i>Zhi zhigao</i> 知制誥 (1001)	<i>Hanlin xueshi</i> 翰林學士 (1005)
Xue Ying 薛映 (951-1024)					<i>Zhi zhigao</i> 知制誥 (1001)	
Cui Zhundu 崔遵度 (954-1020)		<i>Zhi shiguan</i> 直史館				

		(1004)				
Liu Zhi 劉鷺 (ca.955-?)			<i>Zhi jixian yuan</i> 直集賢院(999)			
Zhang Bing 張秉 (952-1016)	Taking charge of <i>Zhaowen guan</i> 昭文館 (997)				<i>Zhi zhigao</i> 知制誥 (995-997)	
Li Wei 李維 (961-1031)			<i>Zhi Jixian yuan</i> 直集賢院(997)		<i>Zhi zhigao</i> 知制誥 (1007)	
Li Zong'e 李宗諤 (965-1013)	<i>Zhi Zhaowen guan zhang qiju sheren shi</i> 直昭文館掌起居舍人事 (994)		<i>Jixian jiaoli</i> 集賢校理 (990) taking charge of <i>Jixian yuan</i> (1000)		<i>Zhi zhigao</i> 知制誥 (1000)	<i>Hanlin xueshi</i> 翰林學士 (1005)
Ding Wei 丁謂(966-1037)		<i>Zhi Shiguan</i> 直史館 (994)			<i>Zhi zhigao</i> 知制誥 (1004)	
Ren Sui 任隨			<i>Zhi jixian yuan</i> 直集賢院 (1000) <i>Zhi Jixian yuan</i> 直集賢 (1006)			

Liu Yun 劉筠(970-1030)	<i>Mige jiaoli</i> 秘閣校理 [Collator] (1002/3)					
Chen Yue 陳越(973-1012)		<i>Zhi Shi guan</i> 直史館 (1004)				
Yang Yi 楊億(974-1020)	<i>Mishu sheng zhengzi</i> 秘書省 正字 (984)		<i>Zhi Jixian yuan</i> 直集賢院(993)		<i>Zhi zhigao</i> 知制誥 (1001)	<i>Hanlin xueshi</i> 翰林學士 (1006/7)
Qian Weiyuan 錢惟演(977-1034)	<i>Zhi Mige</i> 直秘閣 (1006)				<i>Zhi zhigao</i> 知制誥 (1008)	
Qian Weiji 錢惟濟(978-1032)						
Wang Zeng 王曾 (978-1038)					<i>Zhi zhigao</i> 知制誥 (1007)	

Third, many of the poets had extraordinary literary talent. Cui Zundu (954-1020) began to study the Classics with his uncle Cui Xian, when he was seven *sui* (six years old). Li Zong'e (965-1013) was reputed to be able to compose literary works, when he was only seven years old. Yang Yi (974-1020) supposedly could recite what his mother taught him when he was barely able to speak. In 984, the latter was summoned to attend a test as a child prodigy. Qian Weiyuan was able to compose fairly good poems when he was very young. Shu Ya and Wang Zeng got the first places when they attended the civil service examinations.

In sum, most of the participants in the Xikun poetry exchange were either unusually intelligent when very young or had taken part in imperial compilation projects, or even both. Some of the ancestors of the poets had served the southern kingdoms, especially the Southern Tang Kingdom, which was regarded as the most culturally developed area since the later Tang Dynasty. Some poets, such as Li Zong'e, were from prominent families. Their educational backgrounds may account for their capability for composing in the Xikun Style, which heavily emphasizes the use of complex allusions.

2.2 The Poets' Social Circles before the *Xikun ji*

2.2.1 Relationships of the *Xikun ji* Poets

Relationships of the Three Chief Poets

In 1005, the beginning year of the Xikun poetry exchange, the three chief poets were around thirty. Yang Yi was thirty-one years old; Liu Yun was thirty-five and Qian Weiyan was twenty-eight. But they socialized with each other and exchanged poetry even earlier. They first knew each other no later than 998, seven years before the compilation project of the *Cefu yuangui* started.

In the ninth month of the first year of the Xianping reign period (998), Yang Yi was dispatched to Chuzhou 處州 (present Lishui 麗水 of Zhejiang Province). Thirty eight people including Qian Ruoshui, Wang Yucheng, Qian Weiyan, Liu Yun, and Sheng Du wrote poems to see off him. Yang Yi collected their poems and wrote a

preface for the collection.⁵² Liu Yun attained the *jinshi* degree in the same year. Probably this was when he got to know Yang Yi and Qian Weiyan. In the twelfth month of 1002, Yang Yi conducted a selective trial for choosing several people with *jinshi* degree to proofread collections in the Taiqing lou 太清樓. Liu Yun won the first place. In 1003, Liu Yun became *Mige jiaoli* 秘閣校理. Yang Yi sent him a congratulation note. Qian Weiyan's real political career started from the third year of the Xianping 咸平 reign period (1000), when he submitted to the emperor his *Xianping shengzhen lu* 咸平聖政錄 [The Record of the Sage Sovereignty in the Xianping Reign Period], was summoned to be tested, and then was appointed as *Taipu shaoqing* 太僕少卿 [The Vice-president of the Taipu si]. So even before Qian Weiyan entered the court, he was already associated with Yang Yi. They also carried on correspondence. In 1000, for instance, Qian Weiyan visited Yang Yi, and Yang Yi wrote a thank you note to Qian. In addition, Yang Yi often attended parties held by Shen Congji, who was Qian Weiyan's brother-in-law. Presumably, they often met at the parties, and in the first year of the Jingde 景德 reign period (1004), Yang Yi and Qian Weiyan exchanged poems during the summer.

Yang Yi's Relationships with Other Poets

A notable phenomenon is the contrast in the quantity of poetry written by the three chief poets with that by the other *Xikun ji* poets. Yang Yi, Liu Yun, and Qian Weiyan wrote, respectively, 75, 73 and 54 poems. Li Zong'e wrote seven; Xue Ying and Zhang Bing wrote six each; Liu Zhi and Ding Wei five each; Zhang Yong, Ren

⁵² Yang Yi. "Qungong zengxing jixu" 羣公贈行集序. *Wuyi xinji. juan 7*. p. 10. *SKQS*.

Sui, Li Wei, and Shu Ya three each; Diao Kan, Qian Weiji, and Chao Jiong two each; and Chen Yue and Cui Zundu wrote only one each. According to Liu Kezhuang 劉克莊 (1187-1269), there was also one poem written by Wang Zeng in the *Xikun chouchang ji* at his time,⁵³ but it is missing from the extant versions of the *Xikun chouchang ji*.

By the time of the Xikun poetry exchange, Liu Yun, Chen Yue, Yang Yi, Qian Weiyan, and Qian Weiji were in their thirties; Li Wei, Ding Wei, Zhang Bing, and Li Zong'e were in their forties, Ren Sui was probably of a similar age; Xue Ying, Chao Jiong, Cui Zundu, and Liu Zhi were in their fifties; Diao Kan and Zhang Yong were in their sixties; and Shu Ya was about seventy. Therefore, this activity involved different generations of the early Northern Song Dynasty. However, all three of the initiators and leaders of the poetry exchange were around thirty years old. Among the poems in the collection, 205 were composed by the poets in their thirties; 21 by the poets in their forties; 14, 5 and 3 by the poets in their fifties, sixties and seventies respectively.

It is true that the other poets only occasionally contributed to the poetry exchange. But it doesn't mean they participated in the poetry exchange by chance. On the contrary, the initiators drew poets of other generations into their poetry exchange in order to spread the new style and give prestige to it. For example, Shu Ya's three poems were composed in response to poems sent to him by Yang Yi, Liu Yun and Qian Weiyan.

⁵³ Liu Kezhuang. *Houcun shihuai* 後村詩話. *juan* 8. p. 12b-14a. *SKQS*.

If we do not just focus on the three chief poets, but also pay attention to the other poets, we can find that their social circles overlapped before the compilation of the *Cefu yuangui* started. Therefore, the personal relationships of the participants were an important factor that brought them together.

Both Shu Ya and Diao Kan served the Southern Tang Dynasty. Zhang Yong, Zhang Bing, and Chao Jiong were *tongnian*, namely they got the *jinshi* degree in the same year. Ding Wei and Ren Sui were also *tongnian*. Liu Yun and Chen Yue were elevated by Yang Yi. Similar to the relation of Liu Yun to Yang Yi, Chen Yue was also elevated by Yang Yi in some sense. Yang Yi composed exam questions for that examination in 1001, and Zha Dao and Chen Yue were among those who passed the exam. Qian Weiji was the younger brother of Qian Weiyan. Li Wei was Li Hang's brother, and Wang Zeng was Li Hang's son-in-law.

As the leading character in the Xikun poetry exchange, Yang Yi had not only socialized with Liu Yun and Qian Weiyan but also maintained social connections with many of the other *Xikun ji* poets before the Xikun poetry exchange. Most of the poets of the Xikun Group had personal connections with Yang Yi, including Zhang Yong, Shu Ya, Diao Kan, Chao Jiong, Li Wei, Li Zong'e, and Liu Zhi.

Zhang Yong knew Yang Huizhi. Diao Kan was appointed administrator of Yingzhou 潁州 (present Fuyang 阜陽 of Anhui Province), and Yang Yi lived there for a few days and wrote to him in 1000.⁵⁴ In the tenth month of 1000, Yang Yi took part

⁵⁴ “Tu ci Yingzhou zhi yu liuzhu shuri yin yi junshou Diao gong” 途次潁州值雨留住數日因貽郡守刁公. *Quan Song shi. juan* 116.

in compiling the *Xu Tongdian* 續通典 together with Song Bai, Li Zong'e, Shu Ya, Li Wei, and Shi Zhongli. This book was finished in the ninth month of the fourth year (1001). In 1002, Yang Yi's relative Zhang Yixian 張彝憲 arrived at the capital and showed a couple of Yang Yi's poems to the officials. Li Zong'e, Chao Jiong, Zhang Bing, Chen Yaozi 陳堯咨, and Pan Shenxiu 潘慎修(?-1005) wrote poems in response.⁵⁵ In 1003, Yang Yi composed a farewell poem for Shu Ya who set out for Shuzhou 舒州. Yang Yi had been engaged in several compilation projects with other scholars before the compilation of the *Cefu yuangui*, but he had little intercourse with others, and he only got along very well with Li Wei, Lu Zhen, Diao Kan, Chen Yue, and Liu Yun.

Li Wei was appointed administrator of Shezhou in 1001, and Yang Yi wrote a poem to see him off. In the autumn of 1002, Yang wrote “Kejiu daoren zhi Shezhou jian jian zhizhou Li xueshi” 可久道人之歙州兼簡知州李學士 [For Daoist Priest Kejiu going to Shezhou, also to the Administrator Scholar Li] to Li Wei in Shezhou. In the sixth year (1003), Yang Yi wrote a poem when Wang Zeng married Li Hang's daughter.⁵⁶

Li Zong'e and Yang Yi were good friends. In the second month of 1001 and later, Yang Yi exchanged poems with Li Wei, including “Ciyun he Jixian Li xueshi Hanshi jishi zhishi” 次韻和集賢李學士寒食即事之什 [Following the Same Rhyme Characters, Response to Accounts on the Hanshi Festival by Scholar Li of the

⁵⁵ Yang Yi. “Zhugong jiti Jianzhou Pucheng xian Qinghe Zhang jun suoju chiting shixu” 諸公寄題建州浦城縣清河張君所居池亭詩序. *Wuyi xinji. juan 7*. p. 27b-28. *SKQS*.

⁵⁶ “Puyi Li xianggong zhai guan huazhu” 僕射李相公宅觀花燭. *Quan Song shi. juan*

Academy of Assembled Worthies] and “He Jixian Li xueshi qianzishi” 和集賢李學士千字詩 [Response to the One-thousand-character Poetry by Scholar Li of the Academy of Assembled Worthies].⁵⁷ In the twelfth month of 1004, both Yang Yi and Li Zong’e were engaged in revising the *Zhengci lu* 正辭錄.

Yang Yi wrote a poem “Jixian Liu gongbu Zhi zhi hengzhou” 集賢劉工部驚知衡州 [Liu Zhi of Department of Public Work and the Academy of Assembled Worthies is Going to be the Administrator of Hengzhou] to see off Liu Zhi for Hengzhou 衡州 in 1003. When Liu Zhi’s mother died in 1005, Yang Yi wrote an epitaph for her.

In the sixth month of 1003, Yang Yi wrote “Jingyang jianyi fu Yuhang” 景陽諫議赴餘杭 [Seeing off the Counsellor Remonstrant Jingyang (Xue Ying’s courtesy name) for Yuhang] to Xue Ying.

2.2.2 Relevant Social Circles

In 993, both Zhang Bing and Xue Ying were appointed *Jianghuai Liangzhe chayan zhizhi fushi* 江淮兩浙茶鹽制置副使 [Manufactory and Depositary Legate of Tea and Salt in Jianghuai and Liangzhe Areas]. And in the eighth month of 1005, Zhang Bing was assigned to examine musical instruments with Li Zong’e.

Besides these apparent connections, some other long-standing friendships from previous generations, matrimonial ties, and political confederacy shaped their social circles. In addition, there were a few poets relevant to the Xikun poetry exchange, who either did not compose any Xikun poetry or their poems were not

⁵⁷ *Yang Yi nianpu*. p. 74.

included in the *Xikunji*. Most of the exchange poems in the *Xikun ji* were on particular themes, either certain objects or history, such as “Nanchao”南朝 (The Southern Dynasties) and “Hehua”荷花 (The Lotus), but there were some poems for correspondence or for certain occasions as well, such as “Shumi Wang zuocheng zhai xinju” 樞密王左丞宅新菊 [Young chrysanthemum in the Residence of Left Prime Minister Wang of Privy Council], “Yu ke Qiming” 與客啓明 [To the Guest Qiming], “Yijing Guangfan dashi” 譯經光梵大師 [Sutra Translator Master Guangfan], “Quan Shi jixian yin” 勸石集賢飲 [To Offer a Drink to Mr. Shi of the Academy of Assembled Worthies], “Xu Dong gui Wuzhong” 許洞歸吳中 [Xu Dong Returned to Central Wu], and “Shuyong ji Mei jixian” 暑詠寄梅集賢 [Chanting Poems in Mid-Summer To Mr. Mei of the Academy of Assembled Worthies]. Wang Qinruo 王欽若, Zhou Qiming 周啓明,⁵⁸ Monk Guangfan 光梵, Shi Zhongli 石中立, Xu Dong 許洞, and Mei Xun 梅詢 were connected with these poems respectively.

Wang Qinruo was in charge of the compilation project of the *Cefu yuangui*. Monk Guangfan was the son of Li Yu’s 李煜 younger brother Li Conglan 李從覽. Li Yu was the last King of the Southern Tang Kingdom. Xu Dong (970-1011)⁵⁹ was registered in Wuxian 吳縣 of Suzhou 蘇州, and was one of the top literati in the Zheyou area. Mei Xun was the younger brother of Mei Yaochen’s 梅堯臣 (1002-1060) father. In the winter of 1001, Yang Yi and his colleagues attended Mei Xun’s 梅詢 (964-1041) party. Shi Zhongli was Yang Yi’s good friend. Shi Zhongli (962-

⁵⁸ *Song shi. juan* 458. *Quan Song shi. juan* 143. p. 1585.

⁵⁹ *Song shi. juan* 441. p. 13044.

1038), whose father Shi Xizai (928-984) died when he was thirteen *sui* (twelve years old), liked speaking jokingly, was hospitable, and he always drank with his guest to the point of drunkenness.⁶⁰ Li Zong'e, Yang Yi, Chen Yue, Liu Yun and Shi Zhongli had deep friendships. Zhou Qiming was a resident of Chuzhou and when Yang Yi was the administrator of Chuzhou, and they became friends. From the first year of the Xianping reign period (998) to the third year (1000), Yang Yi was the administrator of Chuzhou 處州 Prefecture in the Zheyong area (present Lishui 麗水 of Zhejiang Province), where he became acquainted with Zhou Qiming.

Several figures played important roles in their connections, such as Yang Huizhi 楊徽之 (921-1000), and Li Fang 李昉 (925-996) of the older generation, mainly during the reign of Emperor Taizong (r. 976-997); Li Hang 李沆 (947-1004), Shen Congji 慎從吉 (951-1020), Wang Yucheng 王禹偁 (954-1001), and Kou Zhun 寇准 (961-1023) of the younger generation, during the reign of Emperor Zhenzong (r. 997-1022).

Yang Huizhi 楊徽之 (921-1000) was the brother of Yang Yi's grandfather. He was fond of composing poems and enjoyed talking with his guests about poetry. As mentioned in Yang Yi's sketch, after his father passed away in 986, Yang Yi followed Yang Huizhi starting in 989. Thus, Yang Yi was brought into Yang Huizhi's social circle at that time. Yang Huizhi maintained friendships with only a few people, among whom were Li Fang, Shi Xizai 石熙載 (928-984), Wang You 王祐, Li Mu 李穆, and

⁶⁰ *Song shi. juan* 263. p. 9104.

Jia Huangzhong 賈黃中.⁶¹ To a large extent, Yang Yi's social connections were built upon the social circle of Yang Huizhi. For example, Li Zong'e and Shi Zhongli were the sons of Li Fang and Shi Xizai respectively, who were Yang Huizhi's good friends.

Li Fang 李昉 (925-996) was Li Zong'e's father. He adored Bai Juyi's style and was a representative of the Bai Style poetry, thus his poetry was easy to understand. When the southern kingdoms were conquered, many of the southern literati who moved to the capital socialized with him. He often entertained his relatives and friends in the gorgeous gardens and pavilions. Li Fang was the prime minister from the eleventh month of the eighth year of the Taiping xingguo reign period (983) to the second month of the Duangong reign period (988).⁶² In 994, after retirement, he wanted to hold a party for nine elders, but it was cancelled due to a rebellion in Sichuan. Yang Huizhi was to be one of the eight guests.⁶³

On the basis of Yang Huizhi and Li Fang's friendship, the two families maintained intimacy. Yang Yi was also a friend of Li Zongne 李宗訥 (949-1003), who was Li Zong'e's elder brother. Li Zongne had showed three of Sun He's 孙何 poems to Yang Yi in 1000, and Yang Yi wrote poetry in response. In light of the friendship of Li Fang and Yang Huizhi, they were likely to have known each other even earlier.

⁶¹ *Song shi. juan* 296. p. 9869.

⁶² *Song zaifu biannian jiaobu.* p. 49.

⁶³ *Song Shi. juan* 265. p. 9139.

Later on, they kept up a close relationship. Yang Yi and his cousin Zhang Dexiang 章得象 (978-1048, *jinshi* 1002) had gambled at Li Zong'e's.⁶⁴ Once, Yang Yi visited the Li family when Li Zhaogou 李昭遘, who was Li Zong'e's nephew was young, and asked Li Zhaogou to compose a piece of parallel prose, and he praised Li Zhaogou for his work.

Diao Kan was persuaded by Li Fang and Hu Meng to serve the Song court around the second year of the Taiping xingguo reign period (977).

Another friend of Yang Huizhi was Shi Xizai 石熙載 (928-984), who was Shi Zhongli's father. Shi Zhongli and Yang Yi were good friends as well. One of the poems in *Xikun ji* "Quan Shi jixian yin" 勸石集賢飲 was dedicated to him. Shi Xizai was the brother of Zhao Changyan's mother,⁶⁵ and Zhao Changyan's son-in-law was Wang Dan 王旦 (957-1017), who was the prime minister from the second month of 1006 to the first year of the Tianxi reign period (1017).

Li Jianzhong 李建中 (945-1013), who had been a private tutor in Shi Xizai's family⁶⁶ and was also a famous calligrapher, socialized with the *Xikun ji* poets and also wrote poetry in a similar style. Li Jianzhong's grandfather served the Shu Kingdom. His father died when he was fourteen *sui*, and when Later Shu 後蜀 (934-965) was conquered, he accompanied his mother to live in Luoyang. Li Jianzhong (*jinshi* 983) socialized with Qian Weiyan, Liu Zhi, and Yang Yi. When Li Jianzhong took the position *Xijing liushou yushitai* 西京留守御史臺 [Inspection Office in the

⁶⁴ *Song Shi. juan* 311. p. 10204.

⁶⁵ Taiping xingguo san nian jinshi. p. 102.

⁶⁶ *Song shi. juan* 441. p. 13056.

Western Capital] during the Jingde reign period, he wrote the poem “Huai Xiangnan” 懷湘南⁶⁷ and sent it to Liu Zhi.⁶⁸ Yang Yi had sent Li Jianzhong his own collections of literary works, and Li Jianzhong wrote a poem to Yang Yi in return.⁶⁹ Su Shi 蘇軾 saw the four exchange poems⁷⁰ of Qian Weiyan, Qian Yi 錢易 (968-1026), and Li Jianzhong, when he visited Jinmen Temple 金門寺 in Luoyang. He composed poems with the same rhythm as they used for merrymaking, in which he mentioned that their poems were of Xu Ling 徐陵 and Yu Xin’s 庾信 style.

Besides moving in social circles of the older generation, political confederacy was also a significant factor connecting the poets.

Li Wei’s elder brother Li Hang 李沆 (947-1004) was one of the main political backers for several *Xikun ji* poets before the Xikun poetry exchange. Li Hang was the prime minister from the first year of the Xianping reign period (998) to his death in the seventh month of the first year of the Jingde reign period (1004).⁷¹ Li Hang got the *jinsshi* degree in the fifth year of the Taiping xingguo reign period (980), the same year when Chao Jiong, Zhang Yong and Zhang Bing got their *jinsshi* degrees. Chao Jiong and Yang Yi had been recommended by him. In the third year of the Zhidao 至道 reign period (997), Chao Jiong was recommended by Li Hang for a position in the

⁶⁷ “Huai Xiangnan Jiuyou ji Qiju Liu xueshi” 懷湘南舊游寄起居劉學士. *Quan Song shi. juan* 47. p. 511.

⁶⁸ Li Jianzhong. 同年帖

⁶⁹ “Fengchou Yang shaojian jianji Tuiju Qianxing zhishi” 奉酬楊少監見寄退居遣興之什. *Quan Song shi. juan* 47. p. 513.

⁷⁰ “Jinmen si zhong jian Li Xitai yu er Qian (Weiyan, Yi) changhe sijue, xi yong qiyun ba zhi” 金門寺中見李西臺與二錢（惟演、易）唱和四絕，戲用其韻跋之. *Sushi shiji* 蘇軾詩集. p. 28.

⁷¹ *Song zaifu biannian jiaobu*. p. 96.

Hall of Historical Documents, and in the third month of 1001, Yang Yi was recommended by Li Hang for the position of *Zhi zhigao* 知制誥. Li Hang appreciated Li Zong'e and Zhao Anren for their views on the policy dealing with Liao to the north and Li Jiqian in the west.⁷² Li Hang disliked Mei Xun.

Another political backer for the *Xikun ji* poets was Kou Zhun 寇准 (961-1023). Kou Zhun was the prime minister from the eighth month of 1004 to the second month of the third year of the Jingde reign period (1006). Kou Zhun was a good friend of Yang Yi and they shared the same view over the policy on warfare with Liao in 1005. Ding Wei was promoted by Kou Zhun before the *Xikun* poetry exchange, although during the Tianxi 天禧 reign period (1017-1021), Ding Wei and Kou Zhun became deadly enemies against each other. Ding Wei, Ren Sui and Wang Qinruo got the *jinshi* degree in the same year (992).

In addition, members of the royal family of the former Wuyue Kingdom were very active in the social circles of the *Xikun ji* poets.

Shen Congji 慎從吉 (951-1020)⁷³ was Qian Weiyan and Qian Weiji's brother-in-law. He held honorary titles and positions for decades after he surrendered to the Song Dynasty. He entertained himself with literature and drink, and many literati socialized with him. He held many parties during which some of the *Xikun ji* poets met, or heard of, each other. For example, in the fourth year of the Xianping reign period (1001), Yang Yi attended the Shangyuan party (the fifteenth day of the first

⁷² *Song zaifu biannian jiaobu*. p. 84.

⁷³ *Song shi. juan 277*. p. 9445.

lunar month) at Shen Congji's house. During the party, Zhu Taifu 朱台符 (965-1006) mentioned Zhang Bing 張秉.⁷⁴ On the mid-autumn day of 1001, he wrote a poem at one of Shen's parties to Li Zong'e, and Liang Hao. Shen's son-in-law Xue Ying also attended the party.⁷⁵

Another brother-in-law of Qian Weiyan was Yuan Xiangzong 元象宗, whose father Yuan Dezhao 元德昭 (890-967) was formerly the prime minister of the Wuyue Kingdom.⁷⁶ In 1000, Li Zong'e wrote poems to console Yuan Daozong 元道宗 and Yuan Fengzong 元奉宗 (961-1038) when they failed the civil service examination. Their brother was the brother-in-law of Qian Weiyan. Yang Yi also wrote poems in response.

Qian Yi 錢易 (968-1026) was Qian Weiyan's cousin, and he played an active role in their social circles as well. For example, Pan Lang 潘閬 (?-1009) and Xu Dong were his friends. Pan Lang was famous for his poetry during the Xianping reign period. There was one poem in *Xikun ji*, "Xu Dong gui Wuzhong" 許洞歸吳中, for Xu Dong; Xu Dong's father Xu Zhongrong 許仲容 was an official in the Wuyue Kingdom. Qian Yi got his *jinshi* degree in the third year of the Xianping reign period. In 1004, Yang Yi composed a farewell poem for Qian Yi who was leaving for Jizhou 蘄州.

⁷⁴ *Yang Yi nianpu*. p. 71.

⁷⁵ "Ciyun he Shen dazhan zhongqiu daiyue ji xiye san sheren zhishi" 次韻和慎大詹中秋待月寄西掖三舍人之什. *Wuyi xinji. juan 2*. p. 19b. *SKQS*.

⁷⁶ Fan Zhongyan. "Duguan yuanwailang Yuan gong muzhiming." 都官员外郎元公墓志铭. *Fan Wenzheng ji. juan 12*. p. 5. *SKQS*.

Finally, Wang Yucheng 王禹偁 (954-1001), who was regarded as one of the best poets in the early Song Dynasty and was the first one who consciously attempted to improve the poetry current in the early Northern Song Dynasty, was also connected with other *Xikun ji* poets in various ways. He inherited and developed Bai Juyi's political criticism. Ding Wei's political talent was appreciated by Kou Zhun while his literary talent was praised by Wang Yucheng. Wang Yucheng claimed that Ding Wei's prose was similar to Han Yu and Liu Zongyuan's and his poetry was like Du Fu's poetry.⁷⁷ Wang Yucheng, Cui Zhundu, and Li Jianzhong were *tongnian*, getting their *jinshi* degrees in the eighth year of the Taiping xingguo reign period (983). Wang Yuchen carried on correspondence with Zhang Yong, Ding Wei, Li Zong'e, Zhang Bing, and Chao Jiong. In 997, he wrote a letter to Chao Jiong.⁷⁸ He got to know Chao Jiong before he was twenty years old. Chao Jiong mailed him his two collections of prose and parallel prose. Zhang Yong knew Wang Yucheng in his twenties.⁷⁹ In 991, Zhang Bing was the administrator of Zhengzhou 鄭州 and he and Wang Yucheng composed a poem together.⁸⁰ In the fifth month of the Chunhua reign period (994), Yang Yi went back to his hometown Jian'an 建安 to take his mother and younger brothers to the capital. Wang Yucheng wrote a poem to see him off.⁸¹ In the first year of the Xianping reign period (998), he participated in the compilation of the

⁷⁷ Wang Yucheng. 推薦丁謂與薛太保書. *Quan Song wen*. Vol. 7. *juan* 150. p. 385-6.

⁷⁸ Wang Yucheng. "Da Chao licheng shu." 答晁禮丞書. *Quan Song wen*. Vol. 7. *juan* 150. p. 398.

⁷⁹ *Chunzhu jiwen* 春渚紀聞. *juan* 3. p. 1. *SKQS*.

⁸⁰ Wang Yucheng. "Zhengzhou yu Zhang Bing jiancheng lianju." 鄭州與張秉監丞聯句. *Xiaoxu ji*. *juan* 8. p. 6a. *SKQS*.

⁸¹ Wang Yucheng. "Song Shiguan xueshi Yang Yi Minzhong Yingshi" 送史館學士楊億閩中迎侍. *Xiaoxu ji*. *juan* 10. p. 7a-b. *SKQS*.

Taizu shilu. Zhang Yong and Wang Yucheng had marital ties no later than 999.⁸²

When Wang Yucheng died in 1001, Yang Yi wrote an elegy for him.

In general, among the *Xikun ji* poets and the persons relevant to the *Xikun ji* poetry, there were some literati who did not participate in the compilation project of the *Cefu yuangui*. They were involved in the poetry exchange because of their social circles. On the other hand, some compilers of the *Cefu yuangui* did not take part in the *Xikun* poetry exchange, or even resented it.

Since Yang Yi liked making comments on people and their literary works, he was quite influential at that time. Literati's fame depended on his comments. But Yang Yi was tough and honest. Thus, some people might be annoyed with his criticism.

Yang Yi did not get along well with Wang Qingruo and Chen Pengnian. Yang Yi despised Wang Qinruo, and therefore Wang Qinruo harbored grudges against him. Yang Yi and Wang Qingruo were political opponents, and Chen Congyi 陳從易 was a supporter of Wang Qingruo. It was Wang Qingruo who recommended Chen Congyi for promotion.⁸³ The enmity between them affected their points of view about poetry, according to Zhang Ming.⁸⁴ However, In the fourth month of 1005, Yang Yi wrote a poem to celebrate Wang Qinruo's 王欽若 promotion, and there is a poem in *Xikun ji*, "Shumi Wang zuocheng zhai xinju" 樞密王左丞宅新菊, which indicates that Wang

⁸² *Mianshui yantan lu. juan 2.* p. 16b. *SKQS*.

⁸³ *Song shi. juan 300.* p. 9978.

⁸⁴ Zhang (1995). "Cong Bai ti dao Xikun ti" 從“白體”到“西崑體”.

Qinruo had invited him to his house. Their relations probably did not worsen until later, although Wang Qinruo disputed with Kou Zhun earlier over the Khitan issue.

Yang Yi knew Chen Pengnian no later than the twelfth month of 1004 when Yang Yi, Li Zong'e, and Chen Pengnian 陳彭年 were engaged in revising the *Zhengci lu* 正辭錄. Both Yang Yi and Chen Pengnian were famous for their literary talents, but Chen Pengnian was jealous of Yang Yi. What's more, Chen did not get along well with Kou Zhun. These were probably the reasons he did not take part in the poetry exchange, even though he was fond of studying and had a good memory.

There were also some compilers of the *Cefu yuangui* who maintained friendly contacts with the Xikun poets, but did not take part in the poetry exchange. Qi Lun was recommended by Yang Huizhi 楊徽之 (921-1000), Yang Yi's grandfather's brother, and he maintained a good relationship with Yang Yi. He was good at classical studies, and his works were appreciated by Qian Ruoshui and Wang Yuchen.⁸⁵ Wang Yucheng recommended Qi Lun to Qian Ruoshui.⁸⁶ Qi Lun and Wang Yucheng were *tongnian*.

Zha Dao 查道 was registered in Shezhou 歙州 (present She County 歙縣 of Anhui Province). His grandfather and father had served the Southern Tang 南唐 Dynasty (937-975), and he was a follower of Buddhism. He was recommended by Kou Zhun,⁸⁷ and he, in turn, recommended Li Zong'e. But he did not participate in the

⁸⁵ *Song shi. juan* 306. p. 10104.

⁸⁶ Wang Yucheng. "Jian Qi Lun shang Hanlin xueshi Qian Ruoshui qi." 薦戚綸上翰林學士錢若水啓. *Quan Song wen*. Vol. 7. *juan* 151. p. 411.

⁸⁷ *Song shi. juan* 296. p. 9878.

poetry exchange, partly because he joined the *Cefu yuangui* compilation group very late, in 1008.

CHAPTER 3

CULTURE ANXIETY IN THE EARLY SONG

3.1 Cultural Crisis in the Early Song

Tumult of War since the Late Tang

As an ostensibly unified state, the Tang Dynasty was formally ended in 907 when Zhu Wen 朱濫(852-912) usurped the throne and founded the Liang 梁 Dynasty (907-923), historically known as the Later Liang Dynasty. From then on, there were five successive dynasties in the north. Thus, the span from 907 to the establishment of the Northern Song Dynasty in 960 is customarily referred to as the Five Dynasties. The Tang Dynasty, however, was disintegrating long before 907. Military governors had set up separatist regimes by force of arms in late Tang (755-907). Following the demise of the Tang, five dynasties were set up in succession in the north, and ten kingdoms, either successive or simultaneous, divided up the south. Therefore, this period is also called the era of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms. The five dynasties were: Later Liang 後梁(907-923), Later Tang 後唐(923-936), Later Jin 後晉(936-946), Later Han 後漢(947-950), and Later Zhou 後周(951-960). The capitals of these five dynasties in the north were either at Luoyang or Kaifeng. The ten kingdoms were (a) Wu 吳(902-937) and the Southern Tang 南唐(937-975) in the Jiangnan area, (b) The Earlier Shu 前蜀 (907-925) and the Later Shu 後蜀 (934-965) in the Shu region, (c) Wuyue 吳越 (907-978), (d) Chu 楚(907-951), (e) Min 閩(909-945), (f) the Southern Han 南漢(917-971), (g) Nanping/Jingnan 南平/荆南(924-963), and (h) the Northern Han 北漢(951-979). All the kingdoms were situated south of the

Qinling Mountains-Huai River line except the Northern Han, which occupied the area of present Shanxi 山西 Province. Min and Chu were conquered by the Southern Tang. And eventually the Later Shu, the Southern Han, the Southern Tang, Wuyue and the Northern Han were conquered by the Northern Song.

Although the Northern Song (960-1127) was formally established in 960, the reunification of the northland and the southland was not completed until 979. In addition, the Khitan-Liao (916-1125) rivaled the Song Dynasty (960-1279) on the northern frontier. And on the western frontier the Tangut Empire of Western Xia, founded by Li Jiqian 李繼遷 (963-1004), often launched cross-border raids into Northern Song territory.

Cultural Damage Endured by the Country

The country's cultural enterprise had been tremendously damaged through centuries of turmoil and war. According to *Song shi*, "Library collections during the Sui and Tang Dynasties were larger than in any other dynasties. There were 370,000 *juan* of books in the Jiaze Palace 嘉則殿 of the Sui. The period of full literary grandeur in the Tang was the Kaiyuan 開元 reign period (713-741), when there were more than 80,000 *juan* of books, of which nearly 30,000 *juan* were written by Tang people. Thus only a few old books had survived until that time. When it came to the Five Dynasties, warlords fought each other, and the country was in tumult. People could no longer see the culture of the *Shi* (Book of Odes), *Shu* (Book of History), *Li* (Book of Rites), and *Yue* (Book of Music). The classic books were first printed, rather than hand copied, in the Xiande 顯德 reign period (954-959) of the Later Zhou

Dynasty (951-960) so that scholars could read the ancient books without the pain of copying by hand. However, because of the involuntary geographical separations during troubled times, many books were scattered and lost, so that no more than two or three percent of the books survived. At the beginning of the Song Dynasty, there were a little more than 10,000 *juan* of books in the palace library. Later, Song conquered the various southern kingdoms and gathered their books. The books in the ‘Three Halls’ further increased when an edict was issued to dispatch emissaries to seek and purchase scattered and lost books.”⁸⁸ Song took more than 100,000 *juan* of books from the Southern Tang.⁸⁹

The cultural loss was also apparent in the ignorance of the candidates for the civil service examination. For instance, in the third year of the Chunhua reign period (992), Emperor Taizong had the *jinshi* candidates compose a *fu* 赋 (prose-poem) on the topic “*zhiyan richu*” 卮言日出 [words are like the water that daily pours from the cup] when he superintended the top-level civil service examination.⁹⁰ None of the examinees knew about the origin of the phrase, which was a quotation from *Zhuang zi* 庄子.⁹¹ So they inquired about the meaning to the emperor. Similarly, in the second year of the Jingde reign period (1005), most examinees did not know the origin of the examination topic “*tiandao you zhanggong*” 天道犹张弓 [the way of Heaven is like a

⁸⁸ *Song shi. juan* 202. p. 5032.

⁸⁹ *Shishi leiyuan. juan* 30. p.15a-b. *SKQS*.

⁹⁰ *Rongzhai suibi. juan* 3. p.1b.

⁹¹ *Zhuang zi. 杂篇.寓言第 27*

stretched bow], which was a quotation from *Lao zi* 老子.⁹² One more case was in the first year of the Dazhong xiangfu reign period (1008). The test topic “qingming xiangtian” 清明象天 [(music) is clear and bright like Heaven] was presented to the examinees at the *jinshi* examination conducted by the Ritual Ministry. The phrase is from *Li ji* 礼记.⁹³ Even among the *jinshi* candidates who passed the previous examinations and made it to the final imperial examination, many were not educated enough to identify the origins and understand the test topics, which reflected the general education level of literati at that time.

Cultural Anxiety in the Early Song

Under the shadow of the cultural loss, the emperors and literati of the new dynasty had good reason to worry about the situation of their inheritance of the traditional culture and literature. In fact, anxiety over inheriting the traditional culture and literature started as early as the beginning of the Northern Song. For example, Emperor Taizu (927-976) said to his attendants that, “During the warfare of the Five Dynasties, there were still poets. Now the country has been peaceful for a while. Why are there no poets anymore?” Consequently a eunuch named Song Yongtu submitted to the emperor a hundred poems collected from Buddhist temples, gardens, and pavilions.⁹⁴ As historical accounts state, when Emperor Taizong and Emperor

⁹² *Lao zi*. Chapter 77.

⁹³ *Rongzhai suibi*. juan 3. p.2a.

⁹⁴ *Gujin shihua*. In *Song shihua quanbian*. Vol. 2. p. 1297.

Zhenzong were princes, they were already famous for their eagerness to learn. And when they ascended the throne, they became more cultivated day by day.⁹⁵

The fact that the first three emperors of the Northern Song were either concerned about literature or were eager to study betrayed their anxiety about the cultural loss and unsatisfactory situation, which stimulated them to take several measures to solve the problem.

The early Song literati esteemed learning as much as the emperor did. When Zhang Yong heard that Kou Zhun was appointed as the prime minister in 1004, he commented to his subordinates that Kou Zhun had extraordinary talents, however, he was not learned enough. Later, Zhang Yong told Kou Zhun to read the “Huo Guang Zhuan” 霍光传[Biography of Huo Guang (?-68 BC.)]. Kou Zhun did not understand Zhang Yong’s meaning until he read the line “*buxue wushu*” 不學无术 [learn not and know not].⁹⁶ Meanwhile, the literati of early Song also complained about the scarcity of poets. Yang Yi said he had heard of quite a few literati since the Yongxi reign period (984-987), but only a few of them were good at poetry. Among the officials of the older generation, he mentioned only Yang Huizhi 杨徽之, Xu Xuan, Liang Zhouhan 梁周翰(929-1009), Huang Yijian 黄夷简, and Fan Gao 范杲(fl. 976-987).⁹⁷

3.2 Imbalance between Northland and Southland

⁹⁵ *Song shi. juan* 439. p. 12997.

⁹⁶ *Song shi. juan* 281. p. 9533.

⁹⁷ *Yang wengong tanyuan* 杨文公谈苑. In *Song chao shishi leiyuan* 宋朝事实类苑. *juan* 37. p.475-8.

The paranomas of the southland and the northland were strikingly different, even though communication continued between the two regions. Politically, the north still held sway over the south, even though the first emperors of the Later Tang, Later Jin, and Later Han were Shatuo 沙陀 Turks. The northern regimes were regarded as orthodox regimes because they claimed to succeed to the Tang Dynasty, and the Song Dynasty was established on the basis of the northern regimes. Some of the kingdoms in the south, therefore, accepted the titular sovereignty of the northern dynasties. For instance, Chu adopted the reign titles of the Later Tang and Later Jin. Some kingdoms swung between two courts, for example, Nanping transferred loyalty from the Later Tang Dynasty to Wu, and then transferred back.⁹⁸

All the regimes in the north were of short duration. The longest one was the Later Liang which lasted for only sixteen years, and the Later Han was the shortest, sustained for only three years. The north had frontiers under the threat of the northern nomadic peoples. For example, the Khitan-Liao invaded the Later Jin in 946. Agriculture and commerce, needless to say, were severely impacted by the constant warfare and the upheavals, and the development of culture and education were also hindered. In contrast to the north, the kingdoms in the south maintained relative peace and the associated literary cultures to a large extent. The southern rulers also undertook certain policies to develop the economy, culture, and education in their

⁹⁸ Wu and Ren (1994). "Wudai fenhe yu Nan Tang de lishi diwei" 五代分合与南唐的历史地位.

own regions, especially the Southern Tang 南唐(937-975) in the Jiangnan area and Wuyue 吳越 (907-978) in the Zheyong area.

In terms of culture and literature, there were only a few poets who played active roles in the north before the Later Zhou Dynasty. In the Later Zhou Dynasty, however, the situation changed substantially. Therefore, the number of poets was larger than in the previous four dynasties, and included such writers as Li Fang 李昉 (925-996), Meng Guan 孟貫, Chen Tuan 陳搏 (?-989), Yang Huizhi 楊徽之 (921-1000), and Tan Yongzhi 譚用之. In contrast, literature flourished in the south, especially in the Jiangnan 江南 area (the eastern end of the southern bank of the Yangtze River), which was dominated by Wu (902-937) and then by Southern Tang (937-975). We hear of one hundred and seventy people in Southern Tang who could compose poetry, from the rulers such as Li Jing 李璟 (916-961) and Li Yu 李煜 (937-978), through high ranking officials such as Xu Xuan 徐鉉(916-991), Feng Yansi 馮延巳 (903-960), and Han Xizai 韓熙載 (902-970), to low ranking officials such as Meng Binyu 孟賓于(fl. 944-973). Bai Juyi's style prevailed in this area, and Zheng Gu's 鄭穀 (849-911) delightful and simple style was also popular and influenced poets more directly. The folksongs in this area were also influential. The "Academy of Mount Lu" 廬山國學, set up by the Southern Tang in 940, is worthy of mention. Many poets studied in this academy, such as Wu Qiao 伍乔, Meng Guan 孟貫 and Yang Huizhi 楊徽之 (921-1000). In the region of Shu, which was dominated by the Earlier Shu (907-925) and the Later Shu (934-965), literature was also well developed.

Many anthologies of old literature were published.⁹⁹ Moreover, in the southern kingdoms, poets could attain high ranks. Wei Zhuang 韋莊 (836-910), Luo Yin 羅隱 (833-909), Tang Yue 湯悅 were the prime ministers of Shu, Wuyue and the Southern Tang respectively.

From the end of the Tang to the Later Han Dynasty (947-950), many northerners moved to the south to escape from the wars. For example, Han Xizai 韓熙載(902-970) escaped from the Later Tang to Wu in 926 after his father was killed by the ruler. The most popular destination of the poets from the north was Shu at the beginning, and later the Southern Tang. From the Later Zhou Dynasty (951-960) on, the trend of immigration changed. Many poets moved to the north from the south. With the establishment of the Northern Song Dynasty, many poets of the conquered Later Shu, Southern Tang, and Wuyue, following their kings, were sent to the capital at Bianliang (present Kaifeng). They were moved to the north along with their families, such as Xue Ying 薛映 (951-1024) from the Later Shu with his father Xue Yunzhong 薛允中; Xu Xuan, Zheng Wenbao 鄭文寶, Zhang Ji 張洎, Shu Ya 舒雅, Diao Kan 刁衍 (945?-1013?), and Zhang Bing 張秉 (961-1016) from the Southern Tang; Qian Weizhi 錢惟治 (949-1014) and 錢易 (968-1026) from the Wuyue Kingdom. Not only were the poets moved to the north, but also thousands of volumes of books were delivered to the Northern Song.

In short, the tumultuous political situation created an imbalance between the northland and the southland, in that the north was superior to the south in terms of

⁹⁹ *Shiguo chunqiu*. juan 52. p. 3b. *SKQS*.

political and military power, while the southland surpassed the northland in regard to literature and culture, which resulted in a suspicion among the northerners about the literature and the literati of the southland.

For example, during the Yongxi reign period (984-987) when Emperor Taizong commanded scholar-officials to proofread the Confucian Classics, Kong Wei 孔維 told the Emperor Taizong that books from the Southern Dynasties (420-589) were not credible. Du Gao argued by quoting an edict from the fourth year of the Zhenguan 貞觀 reign period (630) of the Tang Dynasty, which claimed that “the errors and mistakes in transmitting the Confucian Classics were due to the ‘wuhu luanhua’ 五胡亂華 (five barbarian tribes’ invasion of China) from 304 to 439. At that time most scholars moved to the south, and the Confucian classical study declined in the Central Plain. From now on, only the versions from the six southern dynasties should be regarded as orthodox.”¹⁰⁰ It is notable that the first topic for the Xikun poetry exchange was none other than “Nanchao” 南朝 (The Southern Dynasties). In the second year of the Zhidao reign period (996), Huang Yijian 黃夷簡 (935-1011) submitted a memorial to Emperor Taizong (939-997; reigned 976-997), stating that none of the officials from the Zheyong area 浙右, which previously belonged to the Wuyue Kingdom 吳越 (907-978), had been able to obtain a position in the *guange* and that he had persuaded Qian Chu, the last king of the Wuyue Kingdom,

¹⁰⁰ *Shishi leiyuan. juan 30. p.15a-b. SKQS.*

to submit to the Northern Song. Thus Emperor Taizong appointed him to *zhi mige* 直秘閣 [be on duty in the Secretarial Gallery].¹⁰¹

The Zheyou area, also called *Zhexi* 浙西 [West of the Zhe River], is intimately related to the formation of the Xikun poetry. First, Li Shangyin's family lived there for about six years until his father died in 820, after which Li Shangyin went back to his hometown in Huaizhou 怀州 (present Qinyang 沁陽 in Henan Province).¹⁰² The Zheyou area is exactly where different versions of Li Shangyin's poetry collections were found, and it was during the Zhidao reign period (995-997) that Yang Yi obtained a collection of Li Shangyin's poetry. Coincidentally, from the first year of the Xianping reign period (998) to the third year (1000), Yang Yi was the administrator of Chuzhou 處州 (present Lishui 麗水 of Zhejiang Province), which was a prefecture in the Zheyou region.

3.3 Solutions to Pacify the Culture Anxiety

Both the court and the literati of the early Song made efforts to compensate for the cultural loss and to cope with their anxiety. Imperial libraries were constructed and the civil service examination system was expanded by the court to effectively generate an atmosphere for preserving and learning traditional literature. Quite a few compilation projects were organized and sponsored by the court and executed by the early Song literati. In addition, the literati personally collected scattered old books.

¹⁰¹ *Song shi. juan* 441. p. 13042.

¹⁰² “Yuxisheng nianpu” 玉谿生年譜. In *Li Yishan shiwen quanji*. p. 4-5.

Imperial Libraries and Scholars

The early Song court constructed imperial libraries, which were called *guange* 館閣 [halls and galleries], which played a significant and special role in the early Song Dynasty. *Guange* denotes the “Three Halls” and the *Mige* 秘閣 [Secretarial Gallery]. “Three Halls” refer to the *Zhaowen guan* 昭文館 [Hall of Literature], *Shi guan* 史館 [Hall of Historical Documents], and *Jixian yuan* 集賢院 [Academy of Assembled Worthies]. Emperor Taizong built *Chongwen yuan* 崇文院 [Hall of Esteeming Literature] and moved the books from the “Three Halls” into it. From this library more than 10,000 *juan* of books were taken for a new library called “Mige” [Secretarial Gallery]. When the latter library was completed, the emperor went there in person to read books, and commanded his attendant officials to read through the books. Subsequently Emperor Zhenzong requested the “Three Halls” to make two copies of all the books in the four categories, which were placed respectively in the Longtu Gallery 龍圖閣 and the Taiqing Building 太清樓 (built in 979).¹⁰³ There were more than 10,000 *juan* of books in each of the Yuchen Palace 玉宸殿 and Simen Palace 四門殿 as well. The Secretarial Gallery was expanded.¹⁰⁴

The scholars serving in the imperial libraries were highly esteemed. “In the Song Dynasty, the officials selected for positions in the *guange* are all eminently talented. They have to pass an examination before they can be appointed. Once one gets a position in the *guange*, he becomes a celebrity. The highest ranks include *Jixian*

¹⁰³ *Changbian*. *juan* 20. p. 24a. *SKQS*.

¹⁰⁴ *Song shi*. *juan* 202. p. 5032.

dian xiuzhuan 集賢殿修撰 [Compiler in the Palace of Assembled Worthies], *Shiguan xiuzhuan* 史館修撰 [Compiler in the Hall of Historical Documents], *Zhi Longtu ge* 直龍圖閣 [On Duty in the Longtu Gallery], *Zhi Zhaowenguan* 直昭文館 [On Duty in the Hall of Illuminating Literature], *Zhi Shiguan* 直史館 [On Duty in the Hall of Historical Documents], *Zhi Jixian yuan* 直集賢院 [On Duty in the Academy of Assembled Worthies], and *Zhi Mige* 直秘閣 [On Duty in the Secretarial Gallery]; the lower level includes *Jiaoli* 校理 [Collater] in the Academy of Assembled Worthies and Secretarial Gallery. The lowest level includes *Guange jiaokan* 館閣校勘 [Proofreader in the Halls and Galleries] and *Shiguan jiantao* 史館檢討 [Proofreader in the Hall of Historical Documents]. All of the positions above are called *guan zhi* 館職 [Hall Positions]. All the officials for composing the *Qiju zhu* 起居注 (Diaries of activity and repose) are selected from those with Hall Positions. No one would be directly promoted to be *Zhi zhigao* 知制誥 [Cognizer for Preparing Investitures] without first getting a Hall Position.”¹⁰⁵ During the reign of Emperor Renzong (1010-1063, reigned 1023-1063), some high officials let their sons and nephews study in the *guange*. Lu Zongdao 魯宗道(966-1029) reprimanded them that, “*Guange* are the places to educate people with great talents in the state. How could rich men’s sons be granted the privilege to attend there by imperial favor?”¹⁰⁶

Compilation Projects

¹⁰⁵ *Rongzhai suibi. juan* 16. p. 4b-5a. SKQS.

¹⁰⁶ *Song shi. juan* 286. p. 9628.

One of the most noticeable solutions intended to relieve the cultural anxiety was the compilation projects known as the "Four Great Books of Song" 宋四大書, which were compiled to collect all knowledge for the benefit of the new court. They are the *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 (Imperial Perusal for the Taiping Reign Period) from 977 through 983, the *Wenyuan yinghua* 文苑英華 from 982 to 986 (Finest Blossoms of the Garden of Literature), *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (Extensive Records during the Taiping Reign Period), and *Lidai junchen shiji* 歷代君臣事跡 [Deeds of Emperors and Officials of the Past Dynasties] (afterwards renamed *Cefu yuangui* 冊府元龜). These four books cover different topics and aspects of culture: *Taiping yulan* is a general “encyclopedia”, *Taiping guangji* is a collection of ghost and magic stories, *Wenyuan yinghua* 文苑英華 is an anthology of literature, and *Cefu yuangui* is a collection of statecraft materials. It was possible to complete these compilation projects due to the resources of books and compilers from the south, especially from the Southern Tang, such as Xu Xuan, Tang Yue, Zhang Ji and Wu Shu 吳淑.

The asterisk * in the following table displays the Xikun poets’ participation in the four compilation projects, *Taiping yulan* (TPYL), *Taiping guangji* (TPGJ), *Wenyuan yinghua* (WYYH), and *Cefu yuangui* (CFYG).

Table 3

The Xikun Poets’ Participation in the Four Compilation Projects

(continued on the next page)

Xikun poets	TPYL (977-983)	TPGJ (977-978)	WYYH (982-986)	CFYG (1005-1014)
Shu Ya (ca.939-?)	*		*	

Chen Yue (973-1012)				*
Diao Kan (945?-1013?)				*
Li Zong'e (965-1013)	Li Fang (Father)	Li Fang(Father)	Li Fang(Father)	
Zhang Yong (946-1015)				
Zhang Bing (961-1016)				
Cui Zundu (953-1020)				
Yang Yi (974-1020)	Zhang Ji (Father –in-law)		Yang Huizhi (Grandfather's cousin)	*
Xue Ying (951-1024)				
Liu Yun (970-1030)				*
Li Wei (961-1031)				*
Liu Zhi (ca.955-?)				
Ren Sui (<i>jinshi</i> 992)				
Qian Weiji (978-1032)				
Chong Jiong (951-1034)				
Qian Weiyan (977-1034)				*
Ding Wei (966-1037)				
Wang Zeng (978-1038)				

From Table 3, it may be seen that many Xikun poets, especially the three chief poets, were too young to participate in the first three compilation projects. However, Li Fang, who was in charge of the three compilation projects, was Li Zong'e's father. Yang Huizhi, who was Yang Yi's grandfather's cousin and brought Yang Yi up upon his father's death, and Zhang Ji who became Yang Yi's father-in-law in 997 had participated in compiling the *Wenyuan yinghua* and the *Taiping yulan* respectively.

In addition to the four major imperial compilation projects, there were many other minor projects. For instance, under the command of the Emperor Zhenzong, Song Bai 宋白(936-1012), Li Zong'e, Yang Yi, Wang Zeng 王曾(977-1038), Li Wei, Shu Ya 舒雅, Ren Sui, Shi Zhongli 石中立, and Sheng Du 盛度(970-1040) took part in the compilation of the *Xu tongdian* 續通典 in the third year of the Xianping 咸平 reign period (1000), which was completed in the ninth month of the fourth year (1001).

There were some other private collecting and compiling activities, such as Zhang Ji's 張籍(767-830) poetry collection compiled by Zhang Ji 張洎(933-996), Xue Neng's 薛能 (817-880) poetry collected and compiled by Zhang Yong, and Li Shangyin's poetry collected and compiled by Yang Yi. In the area of religion, the monk Dao yuan 道原 wrote a Buddhist history *Jingde chuande lu* 景德傳燈錄 [Records of Passing on the Light in the Jingde Reign Period], which was edited by Yang Yi, Li Wei, and Wang Shu 王曙 (963-1034), and submitted to the Emperor Zhenzong in 1004. Zhang Junfang was commanded by Emperor Zhenzong to compile the *Da Song tiangong baozang* 大宋天宮寶藏 [Precious Canon of the Heavenly Palace of Great Song] from 1012 to 1019, which was a collection of Taoist materials.

Expansion of the Civil Service Examination System

In order to encourage people in learning and to promote the overall educational level, the early Song court began to expand the civil service examination system. "In 977 only some 5,000 men had attended the departmental examination, in 982 over 10,000 appeared, and in 992 over 17,000. The expansion of the examination

system that began in 977 and continued into the following reigns was unprecedented in Chinese history.”¹⁰⁷

In comparison with the Tang Dynasty when only around thirty candidates could get the *jinshi* degree per civil service examination, the Song Dynasty increased the number tremendously, which meant a greater chance to succeed in the examination. For example, in the second year of the Chunhua reign period (992), more than three hundred candidates got the *jinshi* degree, and four hundred and ninety two candidates got the *jinshi* degree in the second year of the Jingde reign period (1005).¹⁰⁸

The examination was expanded so that more people were motivated to engage in learning and take part in the examination. Consequently, the supervisors of the examinations would exert influence on more candidates in regard to their taste and preference in literary styles.

¹⁰⁷ Bol: *This Culture of Ours*. p. 55.

¹⁰⁸ Zhang (2004): “Bei Song jinshi ke kaoshi yu Xikun ti de xingshuai.” p. 69.

CHAPTER 4

FORMATION OF XIKUN POETRY

This chapter delineates the contours of the formation process of the Xikun Style poetry, including the early Song literati's discovery of Li Shangyin's poetry, circumstances of the poetry exchange, and the poets' participation in the exchange. The reactions and criticisms of that time as to why the new style was harmful are put alongside the Xikun poets' self-statements about the reasons why they were in need of a new style.

4.1 Discovery of Li Shangyin's Poetry in the Early Song

Li Shangyin as a Prose Writer

In the later Tang Dynasty, Li Shangyin 李商隱 (813-858) was more famous for his prose rather than his poetry. Pei Tingyu 裴廷裕 (fl.894-896), in his *Dongguan zouji* 東觀奏記, mentioned that Li Shangyin's literary composition is grand and broad, especially his correspondence and reports.¹⁰⁹ When *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書 was compiled during 941-945, under the reign of the Later Jin 後晉 Dynasty (936-946), only his prose collection *Biao zhuang ji* 表狀集 was mentioned.¹¹⁰

Although Li Shangyin's prose style catered to his contemporaries, it also incurred severe criticism. Li Fu 李涪 (9th cent.) in his *Kan wu* 刊誤 commented, "In

¹⁰⁹ Pei Tingyu. *Dongguan zouji*. juan 3. p.10b. *SKQS*.

¹¹⁰ *Jiu Tang shu*. juan 190 b. p. 40a. *SKQS*.

present era, the ornate style is esteemed. To examine and study ancient ways and manners is despised. Li Shangyin's unique and flowery ornamentation in the use of words is the extreme for the moment. In his letters, correspondence, and literary compositions, which young people compete with each other to mimic, there is no single word about governing the country and there is not even a slight attempt to exhort others to follow moral principles. He was merely displaying paragraphs and sentences.”¹¹¹

As Li Shangyin recalled in his “Fannan jia ji xu” 樊南甲集序, he wrote prose in *guwen* 古文 (the Old Style) since he was sixteen *sui* (fifteen years old), and it was not until he served in the offices of Linghu Chu 令狐楚 (766-837) and Cui Rong 崔戎 (fl.833) that he began to learn *jinti* 今體 (the Modern Style, denoting parallel prose). Then he twice obtained a position in the Secretarial Hall and read many writings by Ren Fang 任昉 (460-508), Fan Yun 范云 (451-503), Xu Ling 徐陵 (507-583), and Yu Xin 庾信 (513-581).¹¹² It is a common practice to heap up quotations and allusions from a large number of books when composing paralleled prose. An anecdote relates that Li Shangyin often referred to books and historical accounts when he was writing articles. He piled books on his left and right whenever he was composing prose or poetry, analogous to “an otter arranging fish on a riverside”.¹¹³

As quoted by Hu Zi 胡仔 (1110-1170) in *Yuyin conghua houji* 漁隱叢話後集, Yang Yi mentioned that Xu Kai 徐鉉 (920-974), who was Xu Xuan's brother, had

¹¹¹ *Kan wu. juan 2. p. 6b-7a. SKQS.*

¹¹² “Fannan jiaji xu” 樊南甲集序. *Li Yishan shiwen quanji*. 李義山詩文全集. p. 401.

¹¹³ *Tang caizi zhuan. juan 5. p. 9b-10a. SKQS.*

planned to make explanatory notes to Li Shangyin's *Fannan ji* 樊南集, collection of paralleled prose. Xu Kai knew all the allusions except the allusion *huiding* 灰釘 in Li Shangyin's "Dai Wang Maoyuan xi Liu Zhen shu" 代王茂元檄劉稹書 [Declaration of Campaign for Wang Maoyuan to Liu Zhen]. Yang Yi assumed that the allusion "huiding" came from Du Du's 杜篤 (?-78) "Lun du fu" 論都賦 [Rhyme Prose on the Metropolis].¹¹⁴

Li Shangyin Viewed as an Average Poet

A number of scholars have observed the close connection between Li Shangyin's prose and his poetry.¹¹⁵ They pointed out that he applied many techniques of writing prose to poetry composition. He was versed in the tonal and antithesis rules and regulations for the regulated verse, which was also called the Modern Style. He intentionally made his poetry hard to understand or open to explanation. For instance, he included numerous allusions in his poems and even invented the title "Wuti" 無題 [without a title]. His poetry appeared opulent and ornate. Therefore, he was often mentioned together with Wen Tingyun 溫庭筠(812-870?), whose poetry was also ornate. According to Huang Tao 黃滔 (*jinshi* 895), during the Xiantong 咸通 (860-873) and Qianfu 乾符 (874-879) reign periods, "the Way was as feeble as the light through a crack. The decadent music [the music of the states of Zheng and Wei] was just racket, and was called the poetry of talent and tones in the Modern Style 今體才

¹¹⁴ *Yuyin conghua houji* 漁隱叢話後集. *juan* 14. p. 4b.

¹¹⁵ See Yu Shucheng: "Fannan wen yu yuxi shi—lun Li Shangyin siliuwen dui qi shige de yingxiang" 樊南文与玉溪诗——论李商隐四六文对其诗歌的影响. Such as He Zhuo 何焯 (1661-1722) in his *Yimen dushu ji* 义门读书记, and Zhou Zhenfu 周振甫 in his "Li Shangyin xuanji qianyan" 李商隐选集前言.

調歌詩。”¹¹⁶ In other words, right after the death of Li Shangyin, the ornate poetry in Modern Style was very popular.

Throughout the Five Dynasties (907-960) and the first four decades of the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127), however, the prevalent poetry style was Bai Juyi's easy and simple poetry. Most poets carried on either Bai Juyi's easy style or Jia Dao(779-843) and Yao He's bitter style. Monk Guanxiu 貫休 (832-912), Luo Yin 羅隱 (833-909), Monk Qiji 齊己 (863-937), Feng Dao 馮道 (882-954), Li Fang 李昉 (925-996), and Xu Xuan 徐鉉 (916-991) were some of the representatives.

The area of Min was somehow unique in terms of popular poetry styles. Fuzhou 福州 and Quanzhou 泉州 were the two centers for poets. In addition to the hermit poetry, the poetry about objects in Quanzhou was distinct from the popular styles in other kingdoms. These poems on objects were seven character regulated verse, and were under the influence of Han Wo 韓偓 (844-923), the nephew of Li Shangyin.

Meanwhile, Li Shangyin's poetry was still in circulation. In the third year of the Guanghua 光化 reign period (900), Wei Zhuang 韋莊(836-910) compiled the *Youxuan ji* 又玄集. It contains three hundred poems by one hundred and fifty poets, including four of Li Shangyin's poems. Wei Hu 韋穀, an official of the Later Shu (934-965), compiled *Caidiao ji* 才調集, which contains one thousand

¹¹⁶ Huang Tao. "Da Chen Boyin lun shishu" 答陳礪隱論詩書, quoted in *Li Shangyin shige jieshoushi*. 李商隱詩歌接收史. p. 14.

poems by over one hundred and eighty poets, including forty poems by Li Shangyin.

117

According to Yang Yi, as quoted by Jiang Shaoyu 江少虞 (fl.1131) in *Song chao shishi leiyuan* 宋朝事實類苑, Tang Yanqian (fl.860-880), another model cited by Yang Yi, was fond of Li Shangyin's poetry and learned clear and vigorous tunes with deep feeling and sorrow from Li Shangyin. In *Jiu Tang shu*, compiled during 941 to 945, Tang Yanqian's biography was included. He got his *jinshi* degree at the end of the Xiantong reign period (860-873). He was learned and good at poetry. Originally, he learned from Wen Tingyun, whose poetry overflowed with delicate words; later his poetry turned sincere and graceful. Tang Yanqian revered Du Fu, and was the only poet who took Du Fu as a model.¹¹⁸ Compared to the account in *Jiu Tang shu* of Tang Yanqian, Yang Yi had a different view on Tang Yanqian's literary career. He noticed Tang's resemblance to Li Shangyin instead of to Wen Tingyun. Furthermore, he valued Tang's clear and sorrowful style instead of the graceful aspect. As mentioned in both *Jiu Tangshu* and by Yang Yi, Xue Tinggui 薛廷珪¹¹⁹ (?-925) wrote a preface for Tang Yanqian's poetry collection. And Xue Tinggui's father Xue Feng 薛逢 (806-876?) was one of Li Shangyin's friends, who had written "Chong song Xuzhou Li congshi Shangyin" 重送徐州李從事商隱 [Second Poem to See off Gentleman in Attendance Li Shangyin of Xuzhou]¹²⁰ to Li Shangyin.

¹¹⁷ *Li Shangyin shige jieshoushi*. 李商隱詩歌接收史. p. 13-14.

¹¹⁸ *Jiu Tang shu*. juan 190b. p. 5063.

¹¹⁹ *Jiu wudai shi*. juan 68. p. 899.

¹²⁰ *Quan Tang shi*. juan 548. p. 6329.

Reevaluation of Li Shangyin's Poetry in the Early Song

In general, from the later Tang Dynasty to the early Song, Li Shangyin was treated as a commonplace poet, although Li Shangyin acquired relatively higher status in Wei Hu's *Caidiao ji* as reflected by the amount of his poetry selected. In contrast, nowadays, he is regarded as one of the top poets in the history of Chinese classical poetry. This significant change took place around the fourth decade of the Northern Song Dynasty, and about twenty years after the Southern Tang 南唐(937-975) in the Jiangnan area and Wuyue 吳越 (907-978) in the Zheyou 浙右 area surrendered to the Northern Song.

At first, Li Shangyin's poetry attracted a few literati's attention, among whom Yang Yi was probably the most enthusiastic one. He revealed the process of his collecting and appreciating Li's poetry in his *Tanyuan* 談苑, of which quite a few entries were preserved in a number of *shihua* 詩話 (notes on poetry) by later generations. Both the original text and translation are provided below.

The first text is from *Song chao shishi leiyuan* 宋朝事實類苑 compiled by Jiang Shaoyu 江少虞 (fl.1131).

Text I:

至道中，偶得玉谿生詩百餘篇，意甚愛之，而未得其深趣。咸平、景德間，因演綸之暇，遍尋前代名公詩集，觀富于才調，兼極雅麗，包蘊密致，演繹平暢，味無窮而炙愈出，鑽彌堅而酌不竭，曲盡萬態之變，精索難言之要，使學者少窺其一斑，略得其餘光，若滌腸而換骨矣。由是孜孜求訪，凡得五、七言長短韻歌行雜言共五百八十二首。唐末，浙右多得其本。故錢鄧帥若水嘗留意捃拾，才得四百餘首。

錢君舉《賈誼》兩句云：“可憐夜半虛前席，不問蒼生問鬼神。”錢云：“其措意如此，後人何以企及。”余聞其所云，遂愛其詩彌篤，乃專緝綴。鹿門先生唐彥謙慕玉谿，得其清峭感愴，蓋聖人之一體也。然警覺之句亦多。予數年類集。后求得薛廷珪所作序，凡得百八十二首。世俗見予愛慕二君詩什，誇傳于書林文苑，淺拙之徒，相非者甚眾。噫！大聲不入於里耳，豈足論哉。

Translation:

In the Zhidao reign period, I got Li Shangyin's poems by chance.

There were above a hundred poems. I liked it very much, yet I hadn't attained its profound meanings. In the Xianping and Jingde reign periods, in my leisure time from composing edicts, I searched for poetry collections of previous renowned people to read. The poetry is rich with talents and tunes. Concurrently, it is extremely refined and beautiful. It is wrapped and contained dense and tight and it is performed smoothly. The more the inexhaustible taste oozes out, the longer you toast it. The more you drill it, the firmer it becomes. It won't run out as you pour it. It exhausts all the changes of thousands of situations subtly. It selectively seeks gist beyond description. If learners can have even a limited view or obtain his lingering light, they are like having their intestines cleansed and bones transplanted. Hence, I looked for his poetry diligently and got five hundred and eighty two poems in five or seven character-per line, long or short, and in *gexing* as well as in *zayan*. At the end of Tang Dynasty, there were many copies in

the Zheyong area. Qian Ruoshui had paid attention to collecting them. But he only collected a little more than four hundred.

Mr. Qian cited two lines of “Jia Yi” that read: “It is deplorable that [the emperor inquired Jia Yi so earnestly that his knees moved] in front of the mat in mid night, [but he] did not ask about people, [instead he] asked about deities and ghosts.” he said, ‘He managed to arrange the thoughts like this. How can people of later generations match him? When I heard what he said, I loved Li Shangyin’s poetry better. Therefore, I concentrated on compiling and editing. Tang Yanqian whose pen name is Mr. Lumen admired Li Shangyin’s poetry. And he attained Li’s clear and vigorous tune with deep feeling and sorrow. He had been a part of being a sage.¹²¹ However, he also made many beautiful lines. Later, I sought and got the preface written by Xue Tinggui. And the total number of his poems is one hundred and eighty two. Ordinary persons saw that I admire the poetry of these two poets, and commend and pass it on for reading in the treasury of books and writers’ gathering place. Numerous shallow and stupid people refuted it. Alas! Grand sound cannot be accepted by the ears of lowbrows. Is it worth arguing?’¹²²

121 “Once I heard that Zixia, Ziyong, and Zizhang all had one part of being a sage, and that as for Ran Niu, Minzi, and Yan Yuan, they had all the parts, but in a small way. I dare ask which you prefer?” *Meng zi jishu*. 孟子集疏. *juan* 3. p. 17b. *SKQS*.

¹²²*Song chao shishi leiyuan*. *juan* 34. p. 435.

Qian Ruoshui 錢若水 (960-1003) was one of Yang Yi's best friends and also one of the crucial figures in the development of the Xikun style poetry. He was in charge of the compilation of *Taizong shilu* 太宗實錄 [The Authentic Records of Emperor Taizong], and in the third year of the Zhidao reign period (997), he recommended Yang Yi to participate in the compilation project. Yang Yi became acquainted with Qian Ruoshui at latest from this period of time. And it was around 997 or earlier that Yang Yi obtained a collection of Li Shangyin's poetry by chance.

Yang Yi and Qian Ruoshui carried on correspondence and exchanged poetry with each other. When Yang Yi was dispatched to Chuzhou 處州 in the ninth month of the first year of the Xianping 咸平 reign period (998), Qian Ruoshui wrote a farewell poem for him. In 1000, when Qian Ruoshui was dispatched to be administrator of Daming 大名, thirty people, including Song Bai 宋白 (936-1012), wrote poems to see him off. Yang Yi wrote a preface for their poems after he arrived at the capital. In 1002, Yang Yi wrote a poem for seeing off Qian Ruoshui to Bingzhou 并州, and in the winter, Qian Ruoshui sent poems to Yang Yi, and Yang Yi wrote poems back to him. They were in touch until the tenth month of the sixth year of the Dazhong xiangfu reign period (1003) when Qian Ruoshui died.

According to Text I, Yang Yi obtained by chance more than one hundred of Li Shangyin's poems during the Zhidao 至道 reign period (995-997), namely right before he took part in compiling the *Taizong shilu*. Since Qian Ruoshui died in 1003, he thus had collected four hundred poems of Li Shangyin no later than 1003. He also appreciated Li Shangyin's poetry. As mentioned in Text I, Yang Yi read Li

Shangyin's poetry intensively and acquired a much better understanding of it in his spare time from composing edicts during the Xianping 咸平 (998-1003) and the Jingde 景德 reign periods (1004-1007). In light of the fact that from the first year of the Xianping reign period (998) to the third year (1000), Yang Yi was the administrator of Chuzhou 處州 (present Lishui 麗水 of Zhejiang Province), which was a prefecture in the Zheyong area and in 1001 he was appointed as *Zhi zhigao* to compose edicts for the emperor, it was, thus, from the fourth year of the Xianping reign period (1001) that he really began to understand Li Shangyin's poetry. As a result, Yang Yi was so intrigued with these poems that he tried his best to collect Li Shangyin's poems, and eventually gathered five hundred and eighty two of Li's poems, which was likely to have taken place from or after the Jingde reign period.

Text II is quoted by Hu Zi 胡仔 (1110?-1170) in his *Tiaoxi yuyin conghua* 茗溪漁隱叢話.¹²³

Text II:

知制誥曰，與余恕同考試，恕曰：“夙昔師範徐騎省為文，騎省有《徐孺子亭記》，其警句云：平湖千畝，凝碧乎其下；西山萬疊，倒影乎其中。他皆常語。近得舍人所作《涵虛閣記》，終篇皆奇語，自渡江來，未嘗見此，信一代之雄文也。”其相推如此，因出義山詩共讀，酷愛一絕云：“珠箔輕明拂玉墀，披香新殿斗腰肢，不須看盡魚龍戲，終遣君王怒偃師。”擊節稱嘆曰：“古人措辭寓意，如此之深妙，令人感慨不已。”

¹²³ *Tiaoxi yuyin conghua houji*. 茗溪漁隱叢話後集. *juan* 14. p. 3b-4b. SKQS.

Translation:

When I was a *Zhi zhigao* [Cognizer for Preparing Investitures], once Yu Shu and I supervised a civil examination together. Shu said, “In the past, the master Xu Xuan wrote prose. He had an ‘Essay on Xu Ruzi’s Pavilion’, in which there are beautiful lines, ‘the smooth lake of a thousand *mu*,¹²⁴ congeals blue water beneath it; the western mountains with ten thousand rows of peaks reflect images inside it.’ The other sentences are common. I got your ‘Hanxu Boudoir’ lately. All are remarkable words. I haven’t seen such an article since I crossed the river. It is truly a marvelous article.” He held me in high esteem like this. So I showed him Li Shangyin’s poetry and read together with him. [We] were very fond of a *jueju*, ‘The pearl curtain was light and bright, brushing the jade steps of the palace. The court ladies contended their waistlines in the new palace hall of Pixiang. [It was not] necessary to watch the whole show of fish and dragon that the emperor was already driven angry at Yanshi.’ [We] acclaimed that the ancient person arranged words to be pregnant with meaning, ingenious and profound like this. It really makes people exclaim.

Xu Ruzi refers to Xu Zhi 徐稚 (97-168). The poem quoted was Li Shangyin’s “Gong ji” 宫妓 [Women Attendants at Court].¹²⁵

珠 箔 輕 明 拂 玉 墀，

¹²⁴ A Chinese land measure (equal to 733 ½ square yards)

¹²⁵ *Quan Tang shi. juan 539. p. 6181.*

pearl	curtain	light	bright	to brush	jade	palace steps
披	香	新	殿	斗	腰	支。
to throw on	fragrance	new	palace	to contend	the waistline	
不	須	看	盡	魚	龍	戲，
not	to need to	to watch	entirely	fish	dragon	show
終	遣	君	王	怒	偃	師。
finally	to send	a sovereign	a king	to rage at	Yanshi	

This entry was quoted in several *shihua*. There are two versions of the name of the person who was in charge of the examination with Yang Yi. One is Yu Shu and the other Chen Shu. No information about Yu Shu can be found in extant historical records. The person was likely to be Chen Shu 陳恕 (?-1004). Chen Shu was registered in Hongzhou 洪州 (present Nanchang 南昌 of Jiangxi Province), which is south of the Yangtze River and previously belonged to Southern Tang. It fits in with what he said in Text II that he had crossed the Yangtze River and he referred to Xu Xuan, who was a high rank official of Southern Tang, as a master.

Yang Yi was appointed as *Zhi zhigao* 知制誥 in the fourth year of the Xianping reign period (1001). And Chen Shu died in 1004, so the examination referred in this entry must be an examination in that span. Chen Shu was in charge of the civil service examination in 1002, and in that year he did not pass any of the *jinshi* candidates from the Jiangnan area in order to avoid suspicion. It was from this examination that Wang Zeng and Zhang Dexiang got their *jinshi* degree. In 1002, an

examination for selecting several compilers for the Taiqing lou 太清樓 was also supervised by Yang Yi. It was from this examination that Yang Yi elevated Liu Yun.

According to Text II, in 1002, Yang Yi showed Li Shangyin's poetry to his colleague, and both of them appreciated it.

From the texts above, it can be summarized that since the end of the Tang Dynasty, collections of Li Shangyin's poems were chiefly found in the area of Zheyong 浙右, which previously was part of the Wuyue Kingdom. Yang Yi got about one hundred of Li Shangyin's poems some time during 995 to 997. In 997, he participated in the compilation of the *Taizong shilu* with Qian Ruoshui, who had collected more than four hundred of Li Shangyin's poems before 1003. From 998 to 1000, Yang Yi was in Chuzhou, a prefecture in the Zheyong area.

In 1001, Yang Yi was appointed as *Zhi zhigao* and engaged in composing edicts for the emperor. In his leisure time, he read Li Shangyin's poetry. In 1002, he showed Li Shangyin's poetry to Chen Shu when they supervised an examination together. From Text I, we know that Yang Yi not only passed on Li Shangyin's poetry to Chen Shu, but spread Li Shangyin and Tang Yanqian's poetry throughout the "treasury of books and writers gathering place", namely all the imperial libraries, including the Academy of Assembled Worthies 集賢院, Hall of Illuminating Literature 昭文館, Hall of Historical Documents 史館 as well as Secretarial Gallery 秘閣.

When Yang Yi participated in the compilation of the *Cefu yuangui* from the ninth month of 1005, he met his comrades Liu Yun and Qian Weiyan. Liu Yun

attained his *jinshi* degree in 1000 and became *Mige jiaoli* [Collator in the Secretarial Gallery] in 1002. Qian Weiyan submitted his literary works to the emperor and was then appointed as *Taipu shaoqing* 太僕少卿 [The Vice-president of the Horse Administration] in 1000. Then in 1006, he was appointed to *Zhi Mige* 直秘閣 [on duty in the Secretarial Gallery]. The three poets discussed poetry and shared the same taste in poetry. Thus it is likely that Yang Yi recommended Li Shangyin's poetry to them as well. Consequently, in admiration of Li Shangyin, they began to exchange poetry in a style quite similar to Li Shangyin's.

In sum, Qian Ruoshui and Yang Yi had been attracted to Li Shangyin's poetry several years before the compilation of the *Cefu yuangui*. Both of them collected Li Shangyin's poems, and both of them appreciated his style, which was quite different from the current poetic styles. But Qian Ruoshui died in 1003. Therefore, Yang Yi alone recommended Li Shangyin's poetry to his colleagues in the imperial libraries. And he took the opportunity of participating in compiling the *Cefu yuangui* to conduct poetry exchanges in the new style.

4.2 Circumstances of the Xikun Poetry Exchange

4.2.1 Political Circumstance

The *Xikun* poetry exchange took place from 1005 to 1008.

Although the Northern Song (960-1127) was formally established in 960, the general reunification of the country was not completed until 979 when the Northern Han Kingdom was finally conquered by Song. However, the country was still

constantly engaged in warfare because the Khitan-Liao (916-1125) rivaled the Northern Song in the north, and in the west the Tangut Empire of Western Xia (Xi Xia), founded by Li Jiqian 李繼遷 (963-1004), often launched cross-border raids into Northern Song territory.

The immediate military threat to the Northern Song was suspended only after Li Jiqian's son, Li Deming 李德明 (981-1031), became ruler and maintained peaceful relationships with the Northern Song starting from 1004.¹²⁶ Warfare between the Khitan-Liao (916-1125) and Song ceased when the *Chanyuan zhi meng* 澶淵之盟 [Treaty of Chanyuan] was signed in 1005. During the warfare before the treaty was signed, Wang Qinruo suggested that the emperor should escape and move the capital to the south, while Kou Zhun insisted that the emperor should lead the army in person to fight the Khitan-Liao. Yang Yi was on Kou Zhun's side. Emperor Zhenzong 真宗 (968-1022; reigned 997-1022) followed Kou Zhun's advice and finally won the war at the end of the first year of the Jingde reign period (1004).¹²⁷

Undoubtedly the compilation of the *Cefu yuangui* was one of the most relevant events in the formation of the Xikun poetry exchange. In the ninth month of the second year of the Jingde 景德 reign period (1005), an imperial edict was issued by Emperor Zhenzong commanding Wang Qinruo and Yang Yi to be in charge of the compilation project. The project was completed in the sixth year of the Dazhong

¹²⁶ *Jiuchao biannian beiyao* 九朝编年备要. juan 7. p. 1a. SKQS.

¹²⁷ *Changbian*. juan 57. p.21b-22a. SKQS.

xiangfu reign period (1013). Thus both the compilation project and the poetry exchange were conducted after the country became relatively peaceful.

The first couplet of the first poem “Shouzhao xiushu shuhuai ganshi sanshi yun” 受詔修書述懷感事三十韻 [Thirty Rhymed Lines for Expressing Feelings and Thoughts on Compiling the Book upon Receiving the Edicts of the Emperor] in the *Xikun ji* clarifies the political background for the compilation project as well as for the poetry exchange:

太 極 垂 裳 日， 中 原 偃 革 初。
Taiji [hall] to droop lower day central plain to cease war the early
garments chariots stage

Now is the day when [the emperor rules in the Taoist way of governing-by-doing-nothing] by drooping the lower garments¹²⁸ [as the sage rulers Emperor Huang 黃帝, Yao 堯, and Shun 舜 did] in the Taiji hall¹²⁹ of the palace. The Central Plain has just ceased warfare.

Throughout the turmoil and warfare from the late Tang Dynasty through the Five Dynasties and into the early Song Dynasty, the development of the culture and education was hindered, especially in the northern frontier under the threat of the northern nomadic ethnic groups. Many volumes of ancient books were also dispersed

¹²⁸ Chuishang 垂裳 is originally from the line 黃帝堯舜垂衣裳而天下治[“The Emperor Huang, Yao, and Shun drooped their lower garments and the country was in order”] in *Yi: xici* 易 繫辭.

¹²⁹ Originally, the Emperor Ming of the Wei Dynasty 魏明帝 (205-239; reign 226-239) built the Taiji Hall 太極殿 in Luoyang. During the later dynasties, the front hall or the main hall were also named Taiji Hall. See *Shuijing zhu* 水經注. *juan* 16. p. 18b-19a. *SKQS*.

or destroyed due to the war. Therefore, a cultural anxiety was incubating from the beginning of the new dynasty. It was after the military concerns were reduced that the cultural anxiety was aroused. It was then that Xikun poetry exchange made its debut.

From 1005 to the early period of Emperor Renzong's (1010-1063; reigned 1023-1063) reign, the Northern Song was relatively peaceful. In the ninth month of the third year of the Jingde reign period (1006), the emperor even issued an edict, which increased the holiday entitlement for the officials.¹³⁰

However, from the fourth year of the Jingde reign period (1007), Emperor Zhenzong dedicated himself to various Taoist religious activities including faking books from heaven and celebrating auspicious omens. In the fourth month of the first year of the *Dazhong xiangfu* 大中祥符 reign period (1008), he issued an edict that in the tenth month he would conduct the *feng* and *shan* sacrifices, which were sacrifices offered respectively on Mt. Tai to heaven and on Mt. Liangfu to the earth. The last poems in *Xikun ji* were written in the autumn of 1008. In other words, the poetry exchange stopped before the entire country entered the craze for auspicious omens and Taoist activities.

The Western Xia, which was officially established by Li Yuanhao 李元昊 (1003-1048) in 1038, which occasioned a series of cross-border attacks between the Northern Song and Western Xia. Western Xia achieved victories in the Sanchuankou Battle 三川口之戰 in 1040,¹³¹ Haoshuichuan Battle 好水川之戰 in 1041,¹³² and the

¹³⁰ “Ling zhongwai yankan zhao” 令中外宴衍詔. *Song dazhaoling ji. juan* 145. p. 529.

¹³¹ *Song shi. juan* 250. p. 8814.

Dingchuanzhai Battle 定川砦之戰 in 1042.¹³³ Under these circumstances, “Qingli xinzheng” 慶歷新政 [New Policies in the Qingli Reign Period (1041-1048)] were proposed by Fan Zhongyan 范仲淹 (989-1052) in 1043. A change in poetic style also took place during the Qingli reign period, which was referred to as “Qingli shifeng” 慶歷詩風 [Poetic Style in the Qingli reign period], brought about by Mei Yaochen 梅堯臣 (1002-1060) and Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007-1072) in support of Fan Zhongyan’s political reform.

4.2.2 Literary Context for the Xikun Poetry

Throughout the Five Dynasties (907-960), the poets composed poetry either in Bai Juyi’s easy style, such as Feng Dao 馮道 (882-954), Li Fang 李昉 (925-996), and Xu Xuan 徐鉉 (916-991); or in the bitter style of Jia Dao 賈島 (779-843) and Yao He 姚合, such as Monk Guanxiu 貫休 (832-912), Luo Yin 羅隱 (833-909), Monk Qiji 齊己 (863-937).

At the outset of the Song Dynasty, the Bai Style was the most popular poetic style, following the situation in the Five Dynasties. There were three main poetic schools during the first 70 years of the early Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127)-- Bai Style 白體, Late Tang Style 晚唐體, and Xikun Style 西崑體. Bai Style followed Bai Juyi’s poetry, especially his exchange poetry and Buddhist poetry, and both styles were easy to write and understand.

¹³² *Song shi. juan* 11, p. 211.

¹³³ *Song shi. juan* 11, p. 214.

Bai Juyi's poetry was popular and widespread from the Late Tang Dynasty through the Five Dynasties to the Early Song Dynasty. Generally, there were three different types of Bai's poetry, namely his exchange poetry, political poetry, and Buddhist poetry. People then were fonder of his exchange poems and Buddhist poems. During the Zhenyuan 貞元 (785-804) and the Yuanhe reign periods (806-820), the Movement of New Yuefu Folksongs was launched by Bai Juyi 白居易 (772-846). The main point was that literature should be closely related to the current society and be helpful for moralizing people, therefore, the poems were easy to understand. Bai Juyi exchanged poetry with many of his contemporary poets. The most well-known exchanges were with Yuan Zhen 元稹 (799-831) and Liu Yuxi 劉禹錫 (772-842) fostering a fashion of following the rhythm of the initiator's poem in poetry exchange, which was called Yuanhe Style 元和體 named after the Yuanhe reign period (806-820). Xu Xuan and Li Fang were representatives of exchanging poetry in the Bai Style.

The poets of the Late Tang Style were generally either hermits like Lin Bu 林逋(967-1028) or monks like the "Nine Monk Poets", such as Huichong 惠崇 and Xizhou 希晝. Their poetry were called the Late Tang Style because it was similar to the poetry of the Xiantong (860-874) reign period of the Late Tang, which could be traced back to Jia Dao and Yao He of the Middle Tang, which featured limited themes and great effort in choosing words.

Immediately before the Xikun poetry exchange, there were mainly three groups of poets, namely officials, monks, and hermits. In addition to the Nine Monk

Poets, there were some other influential monk poets. For example, Monk Xingchang 省常 (959-1020) established a Buddhist poetic association *Bailian she* [White Lotus Association] in Hangzhou (present Hangzhou of Zhejiang Province) during the Chunhua reign period (990-994). Many officials took part in the association besides monks. For instance, Wang Yucheng 王禹偁 (954-1001) participated in the association in 996. It lasted for around thirty years. During the reign of Emperor Zhenzong (r. 997-1022) Ding Wei, who also participated in the Xikun poetry exchange, collected their poems. Wei Ye 魏野 (960-1020) and Lin Bu 林逋 (967-1028) were representative of the hermit poets.

The three groups of poets often socialized with each other. For example, Wei Ye, who was a very famous hermit poet at that time, was a good friend of Kou Zhun (961-1023) and Chen Yue.¹³⁴ He often sent them poems and also wrote poems to Huichong, one of the Nine Monk Poets. Moreover, Wei Ye's old friend Tang Yi¹³⁵ was appreciated by Cui Zhundu for his skills in playing string instruments. Wei Ye also socialized with Qian Ruoshui and Zhou Qiming, both of whom were Yang Yi's good friends. Previously Xue Ying often visited Lin Bu when he was the administrator of Hangzhou before he went back to the capital and took part in the Xikun poetry exchange.

Dissatisfaction with the Current Poetry

¹³⁴ “Jizeng Chen Yue jian jian Zang Kui” 寄贈陳越兼簡臧奎. *Quan Song shi. juan* 78. p. 900.

¹³⁵ “Ji Tang Yi shanren” 寄唐異山人. *Quan Song shi. juan* 83. p. 937.

As for the reasons for initiating the Xikun poetry exchange, Yang Yi declared in the preface of *Xikun ji* that they initiated the poetry exchange with great admiration for previous poets in order to help each other improve in poetry composition. Here, interestingly, Yang Yi did not specify which poet(s) he was referring to, which makes his statement sound like talking about previous poets in general. Despite this declared motivation, an anecdote reveals some other clues.¹³⁶ Once Xu Dong (970-1011) asked the “Nine Monk Poets”, who were the representatives of the current form of Late Tang Style Poetry, to compose poetry in which they should avoid using any of the characters 山水風雲竹石花草雪霜星日禽鳥 (mountain, water, wind, cloud, bamboo, stone, flower, grass, snow, frost, star, the sun, game bird, and bird). The nine monks are Xizhou 希晝, Baoxian 保暹, Wenzhao 文兆, Xingzhao 行肇, Jianchang 簡長, Weifeng 惟鳳, Huichong 惠崇 (?-1017), Yuzhao 宇昭, Huaigu 懷古. None of the monks could compose one. In contrast, the two poems by Li Shangyin “Jia sheng” 賈生 [Mr. Jia (Jia Yi 賈誼 (200BC-168 BC)] and “Gong ji” 宮妓 [Women Attendants at Court], the former of which was highly appreciated by Qian Ruoshui and recommended to Yang Yi, while the latter was admired by Yang Yi and recommended to Chen Shu 陳恕 (?-1004), contained none of the characters.

It seems Xu Dong was deliberately making things difficult for the monk poets rather than really thinking those characters should not appear in poetry. In fact, quite a few of the characters appear in the poems collected in *Xikun ji*, such as “Xu Dong gui Wuzhong” 許洞歸吳中 [(To See off) Xu Dong Back to Central Wu] composed by his

¹³⁶ *Liuyi shihua* 六一诗话. In *Song shihua quanbian* 宋诗话全编. Vol. 1, p. 213.

friends Yang Yi, Liu Yun, and Qian Weiyan to see him off. However, some poems in *Xukun ji* do not contain any of those characters, such as “Chengdu” 成都 by Qian Weiyan and “Ji Lingxian guan Shu zhifang xueshi” 寄靈仙觀舒職方學士 [To Scholar Shu of the Geography Bureau in the Lingxian Shrine]. Compared to the Nine Monk Poets, the Xikun poets were able to compose poetry that was not limited to the theme of natural landscape, and they mastered abundant vocabulary to substitute for the most common landscape terms. Xu Dong might just have been teasing the monk poets, but the anecdote also suggests that some poets at that time had become tired of poetry teeming with “mountain, water, wind, cloud”, etc.

Although Yang Yi acknowledged the poetic achievement of the monk poets,¹³⁷ his enthusiasm for bringing about the new poetic style shows that he was not content with that situation either. In fact, Yang Yi said he had heard of quite a few literati since the Yongxi reign period (984-987), but only a few of them were good at poetry. As for the older generation, Yang Yi mentioned Yang Huizhi 杨徽之, Xu Xuan, Liang Zhouhan 梁周翰 (929-1009), Huang Yijian, and Fan Gao 范杲 (fl. 976-987).

¹³⁸ Among the Xikun poets, he named Li Zong'e, Ding Wei, Chen Yue, Xue Ying, Li Wei, Wang Zeng, and Qian Weiji, but did not mention Shu Ya, Chao Jiong, Zhang Yong, Liu Zhi, Cui Zhundu, Zhang Bin, Diao Kan, and Ren Sui. In addition to the officials, the commoners Lin Bu and Zhou Qiming were also mentioned.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ *Yang wengong tanyuan* 杨文公谈苑. In *Song chao shishi leiyuan* 宋朝事实类苑. juan 37. p. 481.

¹³⁸ *Yang wengong tanyuan* 杨文公谈苑. In *Song chao shishi leiyuan* 宋朝事实类苑. juan 37. p. 475-8.

¹³⁹ *Yang wengong tanyuan* 杨文公谈苑. In *Song chao shishi leiyuan* 宋朝事实类苑. juan 37. p. 475-8.

It is clear that the Xiku poets could appreciate poetry in both the Bai Style and Later Tang Style, however, they were not satisfied with the current poetic styles and were eager to create a new style, which included many allusions. It is not because they were against the use of natural scenes as poetic imagery; rather they attempted to enrich the current and natural scenes with cultural implications. Just as Zhang Yong said in his “Xuchang shiji xu” 许昌诗集序, “(Poetry) is the heart of nature, the flower of the Classics. Since poets diverted from the orthodox and folk poetry collectors were no longer appointed, wanton lyrics spread, most of which were merely wisecracks. Even though some later writers desired to achieve glory by writing and preserving moral ideology, few of them focused on composing poetry because poetry became useless. As for monks and hermits, they indulged themselves in composing poetry all their lives, searching for hard and peculiar words. They might obtain good lines from time to time. Thus the pure music sound turned out to be one of the hermits’ techniques.”¹⁴⁰ The cultural concerns were shared by the Xikun poets. For another instance, Qian Weiyan twice, respectively in 1010 and 1019, proposed that lyrics performed at diplomatic banquets for foreign ambassadors should be composed only by literary officials because current lyrics were too vulgar and shallow.¹⁴¹

Other Motivations

The Xikun style prevailed throughout the court by the sixth month of 1007 when Liu Zong 劉綜 was dispatched to Bingzhou 并州 (present Taiyuan 太原 of

¹⁴⁰ *Guaiya ji*. juan 8. In *Song shihua quanbian*. Vol.1. p.53.

¹⁴¹ *Song huiyao jigao* 宋會要輯稿 Li 45: 10.

Shanxi 山西 Province).¹⁴² Chao Jiong, Xue Ying, and Cui Zhundu took part in the Xikun poetry exchange from the summer of 1008, when the Xikun style had already become the fashion.

Thus it seems the poetic styles did not bother certain Xikun poets at all, such as Chao Jiong, Xue Ying, and Cui Zhundu. For example, Chao Jiong appreciated and followed Bai Juyi's Buddhist poems. Neither were they viewed as excellent poets by their contemporaries. However, Yang Yi had the ability and reputation for making comments on literati poetry, and his opinions were highly esteemed. As Cui Zhundu mentioned in "Zhu ji" 属疾,¹⁴³ Yang Yi's *Biyuan* 笔苑, in which Yang Yi discussed some current literary works and made comments, had just come out. By taking part in poetry exchanges with Yang Yi as well as the other chief poets, they would not only improve their poetic skills but might also obtain a preferential bias from Yang Yi. Because Yang Yi had compiled *Biyuan*, which contained the poems of current famous officials, a monk sent his poems to Yang Yi as a present and Yang Yi selected some good ones from them and collected them into *Biyuan*.¹⁴⁴

4.3 Intentions vs. Reactions

In 1008, Yang Yi talked about how he began to write in such a style in the preface to *Xikun chouchang ji*.

Text III:

¹⁴² *Yuhu shihua*. 玉壶诗话. In *Song shihua quanbian*. Vol. 1. p. 159-60.

¹⁴³ *Xikun chouchang ji*. p. 271.

¹⁴⁴ *Yang wengong tanyuan*. In *Song chao shishi leiyuan*. juan 37. p. 482.

余景德中，忝修書之任。得接群公之遊。時今紫薇錢君希聖，祕閣劉君子儀。竝負懿文，尤精雅道。雕章麗句，膾炙人口。余得以遊其牆藩，而咨其模楷。二君成人之美，不我遐棄，博約誘掖，寘之同聲。因以歷覽遺編，研味前作，挹其芳潤，發於希慕，更迭唱和，互相切劘。而余以固陋之姿，參酬繼之末，入蘭游霧。雖獲益以居多，觀海學山，歎知量而中止。既恨其不至，又犯乎不韙。雖榮於託驥，亦媿乎續貂。聞然於茲，顏厚何已。

Translation:

In the Jingde reign period, I had the honor for the duty of compiling the book. And I was able to have friendly contact with the group of gentlemen. At that time, both of Mr. Qian Xisheng (Qian Weiyuan) currently from the Crepe Myrtle Department (referring to the *Zhongshu sheng* 中書省 [Inspectorate of Central Documents]), and Mr. Liu Ziyi (Liu Yun) from the Secretarial Gallery sustained exemplary phraseology, especially versed in refined ways. Their ingeniously wrought articles and beautiful lines were on everybody's lips. I was able to get close to their walls and fences to consult them as the model of imitation. They helped fulfill my cherished hope. They did not cast me away. Guiding and encouraging me, they put me in unison. Thereupon, I viewed all the previous volumes of the deceased and explored the previous writings. I scooped up the fragrant and glossy essence with hands. Impelled by admiration, we alternated to write and reply in poems and learned from each other by exchanging views. And I with my ill-informed quality participated in the exchange as the least prominent one.

Though I benefited tremendously from entering the room of orchards and touring above the fog; I sighed that I had to estimate my strength and stop halfway in beholding the sea and imitating the mountain. I did not only regret I could not reach there, but also took the chances of condemnation.

Although I was honored to be entrusted to a very fast horse [on the coattails of a great man], I'm also ashamed of continuing the exchange with poor skill. Feeling comfortable to stay here, how brazen-faced I am.

In Text III, Yang Yi revealed that after he engaged in the compilation of the *Cefu yuangui* in 1005, he discussed poetry with Qian Weiyan and Liu Yun. And obviously, they had similar tastes in poetry. Thereupon he reviewed all the previous volumes of the deceased and explored the previous writings, probably referring to Li Shangyin and Tang Yanqian's poetry. Then the three of them began to conduct poetry exchanges in admiration of Li Shangyin and Tang Yanqian. According to Yang Yi, both Qian Weiyan's and Liu Yun's poetry had been popular before the compilation of the *Cefu yuangui*. He described their poetry as "ingeniously wrought composition and beautiful lines".¹⁴⁵ The refined and ornate style of Liu Yun and Qian Weiyan was similar to Li Shangyin's in some respects. Therefore Yang Yi viewed them as his new comrades and exchanged poems with them. Thus Yang Yi had already exchanged poems with Qian Weiyan and Liu Yun before the compilation project began. It is likely that Yang Yi hoped to create a new style which was similar to Li Shangyin's, as well as quite different from the current poetic styles.

¹⁴⁵ Yang Yi: "Xikun chouchang ji xu" [A Preface to *Xikun chouchangji*]

However, just as Yang Yi already noticed in Text I that many people disliked the new style, “Ordinary persons saw that I admire the poetry of these two poets, and commend and pass it on for reading in the treasury of books and writers’ gathering place. Numerous shallow and stupid people refuted it. Alas! Grand sound cannot be accepted by the ears of lowbrows. Is it worth arguing?”¹⁴⁶

What’s worse, the emperor did not appreciate the new style either. In the sixth month of 1007, when Liu Zong 劉綜 was dispatched to Bingzhou (present Taiyuan 太原 of Shanxi 山西 Province), Emperor Zhenzong commanded the officials of the imperial libraries, as well as *Hanlin xueshi* [Scholar of Imperial Academy] and *Zhongshu sheren* 中書舍人 [Drafter in the Imperial Secretariat] in charge of preparing interior investitures and exterior investitures, to write farewell poems for him. At that time, the Xikun style was popular among the officials and almost all of them were engaged in the new style. Emperor Zhenzong, however, was not in favor of the new style. He went through all their poems and could only chose eight lines, which were relatively plain ones, respectively by Chao Jiong, Yang Yi, Zhu Xun 朱巽, Li Wei, Sun Jin 孫僅 (969-1017), Qian Weiyan, Wang Yiyong 王貽永, and Liu Yun.¹⁴⁷

Xikun ji came out no earlier than an edict, “Jieyue zhuci fuyan ling yu diaoyin wenji zhuanyunshi xuan wenshi kanxiang zhao” 誠約屬辭浮艷令欲雕印文集轉運使選文士看詳詔 [Commandment to Admonish and Restrain Pompous and Unsubstantial Literary Compositions and Ordering Literary Collections that Are to Be

¹⁴⁶ *Song chao shishi leiyuan. juan 34. p. 435.*

¹⁴⁷ *Song chao shishi leiyuan. juan 37. p. 474.*

Printed with Blocks of Wood Be Examined by Men of Letters Chosen by an Official of Transportation], which was issued by the emperor to ban the new style in the first month of the second year of the Dazhong xiangfu reign period (1009), which reads as follow:

“For the country, the Dao is present under the heaven, cultivates (people) within the national borders, strengthening a hundred conducts in regard to moral ties between humans, expounding the Six Classics in regard to the basis of cultivation, in the hope of restoring antiquity, and to returning the vulgar to a simple and sincere state. However, since recent times, literary composition has become corrupt. Extravagance grows exceedingly, esteeming the pompous and unsubstantial. They forgot the grand way handed down from our ancestors, yet competed in petty crafts of engraving insects (referring to literary crafts). Therefore, to follow the public criticism and in order to rectify the roots and the branches, you are consulted of Confucian literature and you should demonstrate your way of conducting learning. With wide learning and a powerful memory, how can one read books which are not the teachings of the sages? Using proper words and setting good faith, how can one contradict writers’ norms? One must bear in mind that to cultivate through teaching is the principle, and to learn from books authored by sages and good emperors of ancient times. One should not esteem empty words, but should respect the gist. However, it is heard that there have already been many engraved plates of separate collections

and collective anthologies. If one is allowed to apply oneself to heretical doctrines, students of the younger generation will also be misled. The model is to aid instructing and guiding (students). It should be screened and clarified. From now on, if any man of letters who composes a piece of writing writes words which come under suspicion of being frivolous and embellished and disgrace the body of teachings on morality and ethics, they must be punished according to laws of imperial court. Hopefully the unadorned style will be recovered.”¹⁴⁸

A conflict is revealed by the edict just as Peter Bol declared, “Intellectual life was beset by a creative tension between a commitment to formal cultural continuity, to maintaining the *wen* of the past, and a search for the ideas that had guided the sages, to discovering the tao of the ancients. But for the Tao-hsueh thinkers of the Sung the task of the individual was to learn to behave according to the norms innately endowed in all things by heaven-and-earth.”¹⁴⁹ Compared to the “grand way”, which was only handed down by the ancient sages rather than the accumulative culture, literature skills and allusions appear “pompous and unsubstantial”.

Song Qi 宋祁 (996-1061) attended the civil service examination and received his *jinshi* degree in 1024. This examination happened to be superintended by Liu Yun, a chief Xikun Style poet of the first generation. Song clarified his view of literature in

¹⁴⁸ *Song da zhaoling ji. juan* 191. p. 70.

¹⁴⁹ Peter K. Bol. “This Culture of Ours: Intellectual Transitions in T’ang and Sung China.” p. 3.

one of his letters¹⁵⁰ to Liu Yun. In his opinion, the Later Tang Style was too restricted due to the monotonous range of themes and limited diction, while the Bai Style was apt to turn rash and sloppy. Xikun Style would change the situation, in spite of its flaws and defects, and poetry should develop through changes. Ironically, Ouyang Xiu (1007-1072) mentioned in his *Liuyi shihua* that ever since Yang Yi and Liu Yun exchanged poems and the *Xikun ji* circulated, the rising generation was eager to learn it. The poetic style had changed, and collections of various Tang poets were barely in circulation.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ Song Qi. “Zuozhu shilang shu” 座主侍郎書 *Song Jingwen* 宋景文集. *juan* 50. p. 2-4. *SKQS*.

¹⁵¹ *Liuyi shihua* 六一诗话. In *Song shihua quanbian* 宋诗话全编. Vol. 1, p. 213.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This thesis has conducted a case study on the formation of Xikun Style poetry group in order to clarify the background, circumstances, and formation process of the Xikun poetry exchange, and hopefully to shed new light on the motivation of the poets to create the Xikun Style.

When it came to the reign of the third emperor of the Northern Song Dynasty, a new ornate and erudite poetic style became popular throughout the court. Although the emperor did not appreciate this new style, most literati were in favor of it. This was the Xikun Style, a densely ornate style heavy with allusions, as the following sample by Qian Weiyan in *Xikun ji* shows the Xikun Style took form from the model of Li Shangyin's poetry.

南朝

結綺臨春映夕霏，景陽鐘動曙星稀。潘妃寶釧光如畫，江令花牋落似飛。
舴艋凌波朱火度，觚稜拂漢紫煙微。自從飲馬秦淮水，蜀柳無因對殿幃。

The Southern Dynasties

[The Chambers of] Knotting Silk and Overlooking Spring¹⁵² reflected
rays of the sunset,

The chime on the Jing-yang Tower rang,¹⁵³ the morning star was alone.

¹⁵² In the second year of the Zhide reign period of the Chen Dynasty (584), the last emperor of the Chen Dynasty 陳後主 (r.582-589) built three storied chambers connected with corridors for his concubines and he himself to live in. The chambers of Knotting Silk (Jieqi) and Overlooking Spring (Linchun) were two of the three chambers.

¹⁵³ During the reign of Emperor Wu of the Southern Qi Dynasty 齊武帝 (483-493), a chime was set on the Jiang-yang Tower to wake up imperial concubines and palace maids.

Concubine Pan's¹⁵⁴ jewelry armlet glittered like sunshine.

Prime Minister Jiang's¹⁵⁵ fancy note papers fluttered to the ground.

A small boat floated over the ripples, the vermilion fire ferried across.

The upturned eaves brushed the Milky Way, the purple smoke turned thin.

Since war-horses were watered by the Qin-huai River,¹⁵⁶

Willows from Sichuan faced the curtains of the palace hall for no reason
any more.¹⁵⁷

Therefore, a number of questions are relevant to the formation of Xikun Style poetry.

Why did the initiators of the Xikun poetry exchange regard it necessary to learn from

Li Shangyin's poetry? In other words, what was the allure of allusions to the literati at

that time? In order to answer these questions, both the *Xikun ji* poets and the context

of their poetry exchange are examined in the preceding chapters.

Investigation of the political and cultural contexts suggests that a cultural anxiety pervaded the early Song due to the cultural crisis caused by warfare and the uneven development between the southland and the northland. The country's cultural

¹⁵⁴ Concubine Pan was the concubine of the last emperor of the Southern Qi Dynasty Xiao Baojuan 蕭寶卷 (483-501; r. 499-501).

¹⁵⁵ Jiang Zong (519-594) was a poet and the prime minister for the last emperor of the Chen Dynasty. He spent most of his time composing poems to entertain the emperor at banquets rather than dealing with official business.

¹⁵⁶ There were four successive short-lived dynasties south of the Yangtze River, Song (420-479), Qi (479-502), Liang (502-557), and Chen (557-589). Eventually, the Chen Dynasty was conquered by the northern army.

¹⁵⁷ Emperor Wu of Qi (r. 483-493) appreciated the willows in front of a palace hall, which were transplanted from Sichuan, and he commented that they looked as elegant as one of his officials, Zhang Xu 張緒, in the prime of life.

enterprise had been tremendously damaged through centuries of turmoil and war. The cultural loss was apparent in the ignorance of the candidates for the civil service examinations. The fact that the first three emperors of the Northern Song were either concerned about literature, or were eager to study, betrayed their anxiety about the cultural loss and unsatisfactory situation, which stimulated them to take several measures to pacify their worries about the current situation. Library books were transported from the southern kingdoms; scattered books were purchased and gathered by the court; *Guangge*, namely the imperial libraries, including the Academy of Assembled Worthies 集賢院, Hall of Illuminating Literature 昭文館, Hall of Historical Documents 史館, as well as the Secretarial Gallery 秘閣 were built; and the civil service examination system was expanded. A number of grand compilation projects were carried on as well, such as "Four Great books of Song" 宋四大書: the *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽, the *Wenyuan yinghua* 文苑英華, *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記, and *Cefu yuangui* 冊府元龜.

The formation of the Xikun poetry exchange is intimately related to these solutions for solving the cultural anxiety. Investigation of the careers of the Xikun poets shows that all of them had acquired positions in the imperial libraries, except Zhang Yong and Qian Weiji. Before the Xikun poetry exchange, Yang Yi had spread Li Shangyin's and Tang Yanqian's poetry throughout the "treasury of books and writers gathering place", referring to the imperial libraries. And it was exactly during the compilation project of the *Cefu yuangui* that the Xikun poetry exchange was conducted.

Not just was the court under the pressure of the cultural crisis, but the literati were also aware of the anxiety. The early Song literati esteemed learning as much as the emperor did. There were exuberant private book collecting and compiling activities, such as Zhang Ji's 張籍 (767-830) poetry collection compiled by Zhang Ji 張洎 (933-996), who was Yang Yi's father-in-law; Xue Neng's 薛能 (817-880) poetry was collected and compiled by Zhang Yong, who was one of the Xikun poets; and Li Shangyin's poetry collected and compiled by Yang Yi.

The Xikun poetry exchange was not confined to a single occasion, such as seeing somebody off or attending a party. Instead, it lasted for a span of about three year. Moreover, investigation on its formation process reveals that it was nearly ten years before the Xikun poetry exchange that Qian Ruoshui and Yang Yi had noticed Li Shangyin's poetry. It took a long time for Yang Yi to finally initiate the Xikun poetry exchange.

The particular timing of the Xikun poetry exchange deserves attention. It began in 1005 and ended in 1008. The Tang Dynasty was formally ended in 907, but the century before 1005 saw war and tumult. Although the Northern Song (960-1127) was formally established in 960, the reunification of the northland and the southland was not completed until 979. In addition, the Khitan-Liao (916-1125) rivaled the Song Dynasty on the northern frontier. And on the western frontier the Tangut Empire of Western Xia, founded by Li Jiqian 李繼遷 (963-1004), often launched cross-border raids into Northern Song territory.

The year 1005 was significant in Northern Song history, because early in this year, Northern Song signed the *Chanyuan zhi meng* 澶淵之盟 [Treaty of Chanyuan] with the Khitan-Liao (916-1125). In addition, after Li Jiqian's death in 1004, his son Li Deming surrendered to the Song. Thus, the new empire eventually attained peace during the reign of the third emperor, who ascended to the throne in 997. The peaceful atmosphere relieved the country from military pressure and enabled the literati to focus on their culture heritage. In the ninth month of the third year of the Jingde reign period (1006), the emperor even issued an edict, which increased the holiday entitlement for the officials.

In order to find out the motivations of the chief poets for creating the Xikun style poetry, investigation on their family and career backgrounds is conducted. Among the three chief poets, Yang Yi had a firm Southern Tang 南唐 background. Not only was his family registered in the Southern Tang, but his grandfather and his father-in-law had served the Southern Tang. In addition, both his paternal grandmothers and his mother were daughters of Southern Tang officials. Another chief poet, Qian Weiyan, was the the fourteenth son of Qian Chu 錢俶 (929-988), who was the last king of the Wuyue 吳越 Kingdom.

The tumultuous political situation created an imbalance between the northland and the southland, in that the north was superior to the south in terms of political and military power while the southland surpassed the northland in regard to literature and culture. This resulted in a suspicion among the northerners about the literature and the

literati of the southland, even though the culture and literature from the south influenced the north to a large extent.

The Southern Tang 南唐 (937-975) in the Jiangnan area (Southeast of the Changjiang River) and Wuyue 吳越 (907-978) in the *Zheyou* 浙右 area played important roles in the formation of Xikun Style poetry.

First, about two thirds of the eighteen poets were either registered in the southland or had a southland family background. Second, members of the royal family of the former Wuyue Kingdom were very active in the social circles of the *Xikun ji* poets, such as Qian Weiyan and Shen Congji 慎從吉 (951-1020). Third, there were a few people involved in the Xikun poetry exchange, who either did not compose any Xikun poetry, or their poems were not included in the *Xikunji*, such as Wang Qinruo, Monk Guangfan, Xu Dong, all of whom had either Southern Tang or Wuyue backgrounds. Fourth, the formation of Xikun Style poetry also resulted from the rise of southern literati in the Song court. In the second year of the Zhidao reign period (996), nearly ten years before the Xikun exchange, Huang Yijian 黃夷簡 (935-1011) submitted a memorial to Emperor Taizong (939-997; reigned 976-997), stating that none of the officials from the *Zheyou* area 浙右, which used to belong to the Wuyue Kingdom, had been able to obtain a position in the *guange*, and that he had persuaded Qian Chu, the King of the Wuyue Kingdom, to submit to the Northern Song. Thus Emperor Taizong appointed him to *Zhi mige* 直秘閣 [on duty in the

Secretarial Gallery].¹⁵⁸ Finally, the Zheyong area is exactly where different versions of collections of Li Shangyin's poetry could be found, and it was during the Zhidao reign period that Yang Yi obtained a collection of Li Shangyin's poetry. Coincidentally, from the first year of the Xianping reign period (998) to the third year (1000), Yang Yi was the administrator of Chuzhou 處州 (present Lishui 麗水 of Zhejiang Province), which was a prefecture in the Zheyong area.

As for the motivation of the other poets' participation in the poetry exchange, their backgrounds and social circles yield some clues. Most of the participants in the Xikun poetry exchange were either unusually intelligent when very young or had taken part in imperial compilation projects, or even both. Some of the ancestors of the poets had served the southern kingdoms, especially the Southern Tang Kingdom, which was regarded as the most culturally developed area since the later Tang Dynasty. Some poets, such as Li Zong'e, were from prominent families. Many of the poets had extraordinary literary talent. Their educational backgrounds may account for their capability for composing in the Xikun Style, which heavily emphasizes the use of complex allusions.

Their social circles overlapped before the compilation of the *Cefu yuangui* started. Therefore, the personal relationships of the participants were an important factor that brought them together. As the leading figure in the Xikun poetry exchange, Yang Yi not only socialized with Liu Yun and Qian Weiyan, but also maintained social connections with many of the other *Xikun ji* poets before the Xikun poetry

¹⁵⁸ *Song shi. juan* 441. p.13042.

exchange. Most of the poets of the Xikun Group had personal connections with Yang Yi, including Zhang Yong, Shu Ya, Diao Kan, Chao Jiong, Li Wei, Li Zong'e, Liu Zhi. Some other long-standing friendships began in previous generations, matrimonial ties, and political confederacy shaped their social circles.

Several figures played important roles in their connections, such as Yang Huizhi 楊徽之 (921-1000), Li Fang 李昉 (925-996) of the older generation, mainly under the reign of Emperor Taizong (r. 976-997); and Li Hang 李沆 (947-1004), Shen Congji 慎從吉 (951-1020), Wang Yucheng 王禹偁 (954-1001), and Kou Zhun 寇准 (961-1023) of the younger generation during the reign of Emperor Zhenzong (r. 997-1022). Besides the social connections from the older generation, political confederacy was also a significant factor in connecting the poets.

It is clear that the Xikun poets could appreciate poetry in both the Bai Style and Later Tang Style, however, they were not satisfied with the current poetic styles and were eager to create a new style which included many allusions. It is not because they were against the use of natural scenes as poetic imagery; rather they attempted to enrich the current and natural scenery with cultural implications.

In the later Tang Dynasty, Li Shangyin 李商隱 (813-858) was more famous for his prose than his poetry, and from the later Tang Dynasty to the early Song, Li Shangyin was treated as merely an average poet. In early Song, however, some literati's attention was riveted by Li Shangyin's poetry, among whom Yang Yi was probably the most enthusiastic one. Different from the current simple poetic styles, the ornate and erudite diction was not made up by the poet, but derived from previous

literature. With heavy allusions and complex meanings, the new style poetry was not easy to understand for people without sufficient education.

In sum, Xikun Style poetry is a product of the solution to pacify the cultural anxiety pervading the early Song.

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