ABSTRACT

Zhou Bangyan (周邦彦 1056–1121 AD), a literati in the Zhao Sung (赵宋) Dynasty, was often seen as a lyricist who confined himself to the exploration of personal emotions, especially love. He has also been condemned by some modern critics for his alleged “formalism” and “emptiness of contents”. This dissertation aims to provide a reappraisal of Zhou Bangyan’s ci.

At the age of twenty-four, Zhou Bangyan left his hometown for the capital. Since then, he had been travelling around. As such, he often recognised himself as a “guest” in his ci. This to a large extent was brought about by the political reform in the Northern Sung.

Zhou Bangyan was a supporter of Wang An-shih’s (王安石) New Policies (xinfa or hsin fa). He was exiled when the opposing camp was in power. His dejection did not subside even after his return to the court as he found out that the so-called New Policies had already turned sour.

Few attempts have been made to explore or relate his ci to these aspects of his life. This academic exercise hence attempts to explore the artistic style and themes of Zhou Bangyan’s ci in relation to these respects.

The background information for this study was taken largely from Luo Kanglie (罗伉烈) “Zhou Bangyan Qingzhen Ji Jian” (《周邦彦清真集笺》). His poems were also examined for a deeper insight.

This dissertation shows that the study of Zhou Bangyan’s ci in these respects is indeed meaningful as it throws some light on Zhou Bangyan’s deep-felt feelings and the political situations then. His ci should not be seen as “empty in contents”.

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