

# Fusion and Innovation: Analysis of New Features of Chinese Poetry in Nanfeng Magazine

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**Abstract:** *This paper aims to explore the new features of Chinese poetry creation in the turn of Vietnamese literature from the late 19th century to the early 20th century. This paper takes the Chinese poetry published in Vietnam's Nanfeng Magazine as an example, based on the data of combing the literature of Chinese poetry. The study points out that the creation of Chinese poetry by Vietnamese literati in this period had new characteristics of the times, that is, the number of female poets has been increased in the main body of poetry creation, new themes of the times have been added to the content of poetry creation, and new formats have been tried in the form of poetry creation. These new features reflected the social changes of Vietnam in the collision of eastern and Western cultures at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, and also showed the new era thoughts of Vietnamese scholars in this period.*

**Keywords:** *Vietnam; Chinese Poetry; New features; Nanfeng Magazine*

## 1. Introduction

Before the 20th century, due to the implementation of Chinese character writing in Vietnam, Chinese poetry had always been the most important literary style in Vietnamese literature, and there were many famous writers in the creation of Chinese poetry. In the 19th century, with the French military forces involved in the Vietnamese government, Vietnam gradually became a French colony. At the same time, Vietnamese society had also caused ideological and cultural innovation under the impact of western culture. From the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century, Vietnamese scholars turned from old ideas to new ones. During this period, Vietnamese characters also experienced the transformation from Chinese to Latinized Vietnamese, and Chinese literature was eventually replaced by literature written in the native language of Vietnam. The creation of Chinese poetry in this period reflected the changes in Vietnam's ideological and cultural turn.

*Nanfeng Magazine*, founded in 1917 and finally published in 1934, was an important medium and carrier in the turn of Vietnamese literature. As the mainstream media at that time, *Nanfeng Magazine*, on the one hand, wanted to carry forward the traditional national culture of Vietnam and inherit the culture and history of Vietnam; on the other hand, it needed to promote the change of social thought and spread the new way of life. Therefore, *Nanfeng Magazine* became the carrier of literati's thoughts at that time. In the past 18 years, *Nanfeng* magazine had published 2375 Chinese poems, including 1813 poems written by poets of the previous generation, 524 poems written by poets at that time (including 16 translated European poems), and 38 foreign Chinese Poems (23 Korean Chinese poems, 11 Japanese Chinese poems, and 4 Chinese poems). These selected Chinese poems not only inherited the ancient style poems, but also tried to make new style poems from foreign new poems, reflecting the attitude of Vietnamese literati towards cultural choice in the alternation of old and new ideas.

Chinese scholars began to study Vietnamese Chinese literature in the 1950s, but in this period, due to the lack of attention, there were only a few achievements in the study of Vietnamese Chinese poetry, such as Huang Yiqiu and Mao Han. It was not until the new century that more and more Vietnamese researchers pay attention to Vietnamese Chinese literature and the study of Vietnamese Chinese poetry has also been booming in the past two decades. Although many achievements have been made in the study of Vietnamese Chinese literature, few people have paid attention to the creation of Vietnamese Chinese literature in the process of social transformation from the late 19th century to the early 20th century. The research of Vietnamese scholars in this period focused on Vietnamese literature to explore the ideology and culture of Vietnam. For example, Huang Yongfu mainly discussed the new literature and new culture movement in Vietnam based on the Vietnamese part of *Nanfeng Magazine*[1]. And Fan Huangjun simply introduced the catalogue of *Nanfeng Magazine* according to the types of politics,

economy, culture and history[2]. Based on the Chinese poems in *Nanfeng Magazine*, this paper analyzes the new characteristics of the times reflected in the cultural changes of Vietnamese scholars in the late 19th century and the early 20th century.

## **2. The increase of female poets in the main body of poetry creation**

Vietnam was deeply influenced by Chinese Confucianism. In the feudal society, it also adhered to the concept that "a woman without talent is virtue". Therefore, it had become a common social norm that women didn't learn culture. At the same time, because Chinese characters didn't conform to the expression habits of Vietnamese native spoken language, ordinary people had to go through a long time to learn Chinese writing in that time. Poetry has a high demand for language and rhythm. Even though Vietnamese male literati who had been studying for several years, many of them were not familiar with the creation of Chinese poetry. In this social environment, only a few women in ancient Vietnam were able to write Chinese poetry, and most of the female poets now known created popular literature in the local language of Vietnam, such as Duan Shidian (1705-1748) and Hu Chunxiang (1772-1822) who were famous for their poems in Chu Nom. Chu Nom was a kind of writing that borrows the radical of Chinese characters and recreates according to the spoken language of Vietnam. Even if it was mentioned in Vietnamese literary works that there were women who had created Chinese poetry, most of these women's works were lost except for a few selected ones. For example, according to *Lao Chuang Cu Ji* records, Ding Ruwan and his wife often wrote poems in 1715, which shows that they used to have the habit of singing poems in their daily life, but only five poems created by his wife were remained in *Lao Chuang Cu Ji*. It can be seen that ancient Vietnamese women were regarded as the vassal of men in life, and their literary creation was not valued. Therefore, the ancient Chinese poems created by Vietnamese women are only a small number of them occasionally preserved, and they are not paid attention to.

By the end of the 19th century, it had a great change in the concept of women in Vietnam. As the mouthpiece of the times, *Nanfeng Magazine* also expressed women's voice, conveying new ideas to change the old concept. At that time, there were even newspapers for women. These magazines also interacted with each other, such as Ruan Wentao's poems specially written for the *Women's Liberation Bell* were published in *Nanfeng* magazine No. 182 (March 1933). Under the influence of the new trend of thought, *Nanfeng Magazine* focused on the creation of many female poets at that time, such as Xia Hung lady's a series of Chinese poems about famous scenic spots in Vietnam including Dongmen, Erhe, chengdi temple and HuanJian lake etc. The tenth issue in *Nanfeng Magazine* contained Chinese poems by Dan Fang and Wang Yuying. Although women's Chinese poetry creation in this period all adopted the form of old style poetry, it could be seen that they had used the writing techniques of Chinese poetry freely.

The poems published in *Nanfeng magazine* are almost the same as those of Vietnamese male poets in that period, which is really commendable. Because the Chinese language is not consistent with the spoken language of Vietnam, the Vietnamese literati have to go through several years of hard work in order to initially master the writing skills of Chinese literature. Chinese poetry emphasizes phonology, which is more difficult for Vietnamese literati who are not good at spoken Chinese to master than prose. For example, Pan Huiyi, a famous writer in the Xishan Dynasty, began to write poems only after he became an official in Zhongjin. The Chinese poems selected in *Nanfeng Magazine* at that time were complete in style and fluent in diction, which reflected that women in the late 19th century and the 20th century were no longer limited to the traditional way of teaching their husbands and children, but also began to pursue talent and learning, representing a new literary force in the turn of new literature.

## **3. New themes of the times had been added to the poetry**

At the end of the 19th century, when the East was still immersed in its own civilization, the western society had completed the vigorous industrial revolution and began to expand its colonization. By the beginning of the 20th century, Vietnam had been colonized by France for half a century. French colonization stimulated the rise of Vietnamese national consciousness, and prompted Vietnamese literati to think about and take the initiative to learn from the progress of Western civilization. They also expressed new ideas in the new era in their poems. Before the French colonial forces entered Vietnam, Vietnam was a relatively closed feudal society just like China. However, the French colonial forces broke the closed policy in Vietnam's past society. Instead, they used force to connect Vietnam with the world, and then new things came to Vietnam. The Chinese poetry of Vietnamese literati also

recorded new things of the times. For example, Zhang Min mentioned the motorcycle he was riding in Guangping road. In his poems, he described the scenery he saw when he got off the motorcycle and walked because the wheel of the motorcycle he was riding was broken, accompanied by the sound of partridges. For him, it was a different experience. For another example, in Pu Cao's poems, he wrote about watching various performances of Japanese artists in Vietnam with his wife. Japanese artists performed a variety of novel arts, such as ball riding, whirling dance, stick climbing, towel burning and other acrobatics, which made fucao feel very magical. Therefore, he wrote down this event in the form of poetry. For the Vietnamese, the motorcycles used in western society and the acrobatics performed by the Japanese at that time were new things that they had never touched before. Therefore, they paid special attention to such things, and recorded these things in the form of Chinese poetry.

During this period, Vietnamese Chinese poetry not only recorded the foreign things entering Vietnam, but also recorded the new things they saw when they went abroad. In the feudal society. There was little opportunity for Vietnamese to go abroad, however more and more Vietnamese began to go abroad with the French colonial forces breaking the closed policy of Vietnam. They went to Europe, the United States, Japan, South Korea and other countries for tourism or business. So they saw a lot of things that they had never seen or heard before. For example, the 43rd issue of *Nanfeng Magazine* (January 1921) selected the British travel poems of the time, and said that although the poems were not good at art, the contents were quite novel, from which we can see the folk customs of London, England. In his poems, *A journey to London (written after the winter of 1919)* recorded 15 poems. After each poem, there were detailed descriptions to convey the poet's views and comments. Among them, the most important was the observation and thinking of the current situation at that time. For example, in the first of these poems, there was a line: "trade does not change the sound of hometown, only the British are patriotic." It was the "patriotism" and "solidarity" of the British that make them "global". There were detailed notes at the bottom of the poem:

British territory is all over the world, and there are British people everywhere. However, the British love their home country very much and are very united. Most of them are enemies in their home country, but they are brothers in the United States. Not only those who have surplus will buy land and live in their home country, but also they will educate their children in their home country. Even those who are poor enough to make a living will return to their home country once every three years. In addition, the English did not change their native sounds and speak other languages. In one place, they taught their native speakers English, thus protecting their home country. As a result, the UK is a small island with nothing to go out of, but rich in the world.[4]

In the annotation of his fifth poem, he directly unveils the veil of democracy and gentlemanly spirit on the surface of Western civilization, and calls the British "gloomy, cold and hot" and "belligerent", and reveals the sinister and cunning of the British by taking the current events of the British French allied forces in 1916 as an example:

Most British people are gloomy, cold and spicy, out of their nature. This is also the result of the consolidation of traditional culture. Britain is just an island, low and wet. There are as many people as ants, so if they don't engage in trade, they can't live at all. If they don't have a resolute personality, they can't relax from hardship. The British claimed that they did not like war, but they were good at it. For example, the defeat of the Allied forces in 1916 was attributed to the selfishness of the British, who secretly stationed millions of soldiers in the Su Yi Shi canal to transport food to the Soviet Union. The division of military interests is small, so it is unfavorable. However, the final victory is still in the coalition.[5]

In his poems, he summed up all kinds of things different from Vietnam in England as "nationalities and customs", which also reflects the poet's thinking about the eastern and Western cultures. In the Chinese cultural circle, it advocates "harmony" rather than "belligerence". At the same time, the poem also observed and recorded the social customs of Britain. As mentioned in the third poem, "Although Britain is very rich, there are many very poor people. When I first came to England, I saw a little girl selling cigarette cakes along the train basket, which is unique in the United States. And Britain is everywhere. "Showing the gap between the rich and the poor in capitalist society.

In *Nanfeng magazine*, there were not only poems about Europe, but also some poems about Japan and Korea. As mentioned in the Chinese poetry about Japan published in issue 55 (February 1922), the cherry blossomed in Edo-gawa "bloom in early April every year" had a typical Japanese style. In *Memory of the Ancients in Kamakura*, it was recorded that in 1814, the generals who came from the Lai dynasty built a mansion in the local area. After three generations and thirty-five years of unification, they passed away. The 60th issue (June 1922) was a Chinese poem "visiting Japanese novelist Maqin

cemetery" written by Xinting. The 84th issue (June 1922) contains Chu Kuang's poem "mourning at the tomb of Jizi in Korea". The poems written by Vietnamese scholars in this period revealed the characteristics of the times. For example, there was a note under the second poem of *Edo Bamboo Branch Poem*: "The Japanese soldier system is that all the people are soldiers. When they are at the age of conscription, they have to work as soldiers in the camp. Because they often have to guard far away, it's sad to see them off in front of the train post. "

#### **4. Poetry was integrated with propaganda function**

In traditional Chinese poetics, it is emphasized that "poetry can be grouped". What is "group"? Kong Anguo said: "living in groups and discussing with each other" [3] The concept of group is that people gather together and learn from each other. As an agricultural civilization, China needed a lot of people to gather together and cooperate in ancient times. In the long-term cooperation, Chinese people are used to living in groups. They often like to gather together in life, or hold banquets and celebrations together. Literature is a kind of reflection of life. There are many poems in Chinese poetry that embody interpersonal communication, such as singing poems, giving poems, banquet poems and so on. This kind of poetic expression reflecting social life in Chinese literature also affects every country in the Han culture circle. Although Vietnam lives near the sea, it is a typical farming culture. In the ancient Chinese poetry of Vietnam, the Vietnamese literati also accepted the tradition of Chinese literati living together to recite poetry, drinking poetry and seeing off poetry. At the beginning of the 20th century, the traditional communicative functions of Chinese poetry were still frequently used, such as the harmony poem "The rhyme of Mr. Chen's Poems" (No. 123), the farewell poem "Farewell to the governor of Nanding Mr. Fan Linyuan" (No. 69), etc. In order to strengthen the connection with readers, Nanfeng Magazine often selected some poems of harmony and even a collection of requital songs, for example, the 57th issue (March 1922) publishes nine requital poems of five people.

However, there were some changes in the communicative function of Chinese poetry during this period: first, it frequently appeared in some applied prose and became a means to strengthen the function of literary expression. For example, Chu Kuang's prose "feeling of hearing the obituary sound of Mr. Shen" (issue 97) not only wrote the related deeds of remembering Mr. Shen, but also attached a poem "crying for Shen Xianggong" in this prose, which conveyed the feelings between the author and Mr. Shen in a concise way. The second is to become a realistic propaganda poem. For example, the 16th issue (October 1918) of the article "Persuading Vietnamese Compatriots to Collect Treasury Bonds" proposed to protect the Treasury bonds issued by the Vietnamese government. Six quatrains were attached in the article, which succinctly pointed out the reasons and benefits of buying Treasury bonds. The editor also annotated some Chinese poems. For example, after the poem of raising national debt, he said,

"Germany and Austria were defeated to seek peace, and the great France replied," raising national debt. ". Life and money are the most important things in the world. Our people have been greatly favored by France and should be rewarded with what they have valued. Those who go to Europe will serve their country with their lives, while those who pay for national debt will serve their country with money. We should be rewarded by the French for the happiness of our country after the victory. "[6]

In fact, this is a typical Pro French speech. These people used Chinese poetry to promote the spread of Pro French thought. At the beginning of the 20th century, Vietnam was full of various thoughts and opinions. It was very important for the rulers to use Chinese poetry to carry out ideological persuasion and propaganda. For example, the 16th issue of Deng wuzhu, the magistrate of Fengyan County, published a poem "persuading the gentry to buy Treasury bills".

On the basis of the communicative function of traditional social singing, these poems further strengthen the function of "gathering", that is, to strengthen the social cohesion and play a subtle role in the function of gathering people.

#### **5. A new format had been added to the form of poetry creation**

Vietnamese literati not only incorporated new contents into their poems, but also absorbed new forms in their specific writing techniques, which reflected in that they broke the restrictions of the old style poems such as flat tone and antithesis. Although the ancient style poetry was still the main part of Vietnamese Chinese poetry in this period, Vietnamese literati had begun to use a more free and lively format to express in Chinese poetry writing, especially in contact with the expression style of new

poetry after the May 4th Movement in China. As a result, the Vietnamese literati combined the Chinese new poetry they came into contact with with the ancient poetry they were familiar with, and created a new style which not only had the elegance of the ancient poetry, but also broke through the shackles of the ancient poetry. It can also be seen that during this period, Vietnamese Chinese poetry and Chinese poetry followed suit. At the beginning of the prosperity of Chinese new poetry, it spread to Vietnam through overseas Chinese. *Nanfeng Magazine* began to publish new poems in 1921. The poet was the overseas Chinese living in Mong Cai, Vietnam. The editor said when he published this poem

"Recently, Chinese people have made great progress in the field of poetry. They have received a draft of poems written by the Chinese despondent son from mang street. The meaning and style of the poems are quite novel, and they are eager to register them for the common good." [7]

The style of Chinese new poetry had broken the previous recognition of Chinese poetry by Vietnamese scholars. They also appreciated this novel style, because they also imitated the style of Chinese New Poetry in their creation. For example, in the 70th issue of *Nanfeng magazine*, Yuan Xiao's poem "lotus pond" was published [8]. Although the whole poem was written in ancient style, its language was popular, fresh and natural, and some sentences were closed to colloquial expression.

*Nanfeng Magazine* also selected some famous Chinese poets' new style poems, such as Hu Shi's new style poems Cui Lou Yin and a group of poems written shortly after marriage, which issue in the 77th (November 1922). The 111th issue (November 1926) published Xu Zhimo's *AI Manshu Fei Er*. Hu Shi's Cui Lou Yin was written in 1910, and his poems written in honeymoon were published in the "New Youth" magazine in April 1918. Xu Zhimo's poem published in May 1923, the fourteenth volume of the "Novel Monthly". It could be seen from the publication time that the biography of Chinese new poetry had spread to Vietnam in a few years.

Vietnamese literati not only pay attention to the changes in Chinese literature, but also actively learn from European literature. They had a positive attitude towards Western civilization in the new cultural turn, and tried to convey European poetry in Chinese. For example, the 78th issue of *Nanfeng magazine* (December 1922) recorded several French poems translated by Zhongming, a Chinese newspaper. One of them is Xavier de Maistre's poem "Missing Words", Marceline Desbordes valmore's poem "Picking Roses" and "What do you do now". In its 81 issue (March 1922), "The song on the lake", which was originally published in *Pacific Magazine* and translated by Si Lan, was recorded. On the one hand, Vietnamese literati used traditional old style poetry to translate European poetry into Chinese, using five or seven character form in genre. On the other hand, they broke the rules of sentence form and rhyme of old style poetry, and mixed ancient and modern language with refined and popular language. For example, in the 17th issue (January 1918), the translation of the European poet's poem "Bherishing a beautiful woman by the lake" was published, and a column of "European poetry excerpts" was opened up in its later journals.

As the medium of the transition period between the old and the new, *Nanfeng magazine* had a more open attitude towards the times. It not only published Chinese translated European poems, but also directly selected Chinese poems that created by Korean and Japanese people. For example, it selected 13 Korean poems in its 104th issue (March 1926) and 11 Japanese soldiers' poems in its 109th issue (September 1926). It can be seen that *Nanfeng magazine* had become a window for Vietnamese literati to understand the society at that time.

## 6. Conclusion

From the Chinese poetry published in *Nanfeng Magazine*, it can be seen that in the turn of the old and the new era, the Chinese poetry creation of Vietnamese literati experienced the process of turning from the old style poetry creation to the new style poetry creation. In this process, they actively absorbed the creative forms of Chinese new style poetry and paid attention to the creation of Chinese poetry in Japan and Korea at the same time. Vietnamese literati had been trying to combine the old culture influenced by Chinese culture with the new culture influenced by Europe in the creation of Chinese poetry. The creative group, content and form of Chinese poetry in Vietnam were all cultural changes in the process of integrating the old and innovating, representing the cultural changes of an era. However, under the background of the turn from Chinese to Vietnamese, the creation of Chinese poetry in Vietnam was still limited to the creation of old style poetry, and had not completed the turn to new style poetry. Chinese poetry eventually declined in Vietnam and was replaced by Vietnamese. This is necessary for the development of the times.

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