

A 40-Year Systematic Literature Review: About Researches of Duan Yucai's Study of the Book of Songs

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Abstract

This study focusses on Qing dynasty scholar Duan Yucai's research on the Book of Songs. Scholars in China from 1984 to 2024 conducted a literature review of related research. This paper uses a systematic literature review method to analyze and discuss existing literature from the three major academic databases over the past 40 years. The results show that the academic community's attention to Duan Yucai's research on the Book of Songs primarily focuses on four areas: general studies on the Book of Songs, phonological studies, exegetical and collation studies, and specific research on Duan Yucai's work Shijing Xiaoxue. According to the study, Duan Yucai made extensive and in-depth contributions to correcting textual errors, analyzing rhyming patterns, and exploring phonetics, all of which play a critical role in these areas. His research on the rhyming patterns of the Book of Songs led to significant advancements in the study of the traditional Chinese rhyme system. Additionally, his work in ancient phonology connected past research with future studies, laying the foundation for subsequent phonological research. Furthermore, Duan Yucai made important contributions to the exegesis and collation of the Book of Songs, particularly in correcting errors, elucidating loan characters, explaining commentaries, and systematically organising content. His method of integrating ancient character studies with the exegesis of the Book of Songs became an important research approach in Qing dynasty scholarship. In his work Shijing Xiaoxue, Duan Yucai's focus on character meanings and phonology played a transitional role in the Qing dynasty, bridging traditional methods with future research methodologies. The article also highlights the limitations of the current research and suggests directions for future studies. For more future research, we could use more recently discovered documents and artefacts, and it could also use the newest discoveries in modern linguistics to help traditional exegetical theories grow.

Keywords: *The Book of Songs, Duan Yucai, Phonological Studies, Exegetical and Collation*

INTRODUCTION

Chinese classical literature deeply embeds the rich cultural heritage of the Chinese nation, amassed over thousands of years. These literary works vividly reflect the lives of the Chinese people, from the survival of their ancestors to the flourishing of future generations, their traditional customs and ways of thinking, as well as their emotional states and aesthetic tastes. Studying Chinese classical literature not only reveals the distinctive characteristics of national culture and promotes the dissemination of Chinese culture and contributing to the global cultural landscape. The Book of Songs (Shijing) has always played a vital role in the political, social, and cultural life of the Chinese nation. The state compiled the Book of Songs, the oldest existing anthology of Chinese poetry, due to its inherent importance, and scholars have esteemed it ever since its compilation. From its inception, the Book of Songs has been regarded as a repository of moral and philosophical teachings, serving as a tool for politics, ethics, culture, and education across different dynasties. It is also a literary gem, cherished by countless literati and scholars as a treasure trove for their poetic and cultural pursuits. In the history of research on the Book of Songs, there has been extensive micro-level study encompassing various aspects such as editions, institutions, objects, geography, astronomy, thought, literature, and historiography. On a macro level, the academic research history of the Book of Songs has seen continuous and abundant horizontal and vertical studies. The meticulous study of the Book of Songs has continued for over three thousand years, and even today, scholars from various countries have not ceased their research on it. They see the revival of ancient traditions as a means of liberation, integrating the poetic texts and ideas left by the original authors into modern life, thereby injecting new vitality into contemporary existence. The classical spirit revitalises the life force of modern people (Fu Daobin, 2021).

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The study of Chinese classics theories reached its peak during the Qing dynasty (Chen Yinque, 2001). This paper chooses the Qing dynasty as the broad background for the discussion. During the Qing dynasty, the Qianlong and Jiaqing periods, which were critical stages in the development of the study of the Book of Songs, did not receive the academic attention they deserved. Upon closer examination, we find several reasons for this. On the one hand, during the Qing dynasty, particularly in the Qianlong and Jiaqing periods, literati, politicians, and scholars were extremely prosperous in their study of Chinese classics. A prominent focus was the textual research and commentary on the Thirteen Confucian Classics, of which the Book of Songs is just one.

During the Qianlong and Jiaqing periods, the study of the Book of Songs, as a branch within these thirteen classics, experienced some overshadowing. On the other hand, in the broader context of the historical development of the Book of Songs studies, the Qing dynasty's research on this text is often compared to that of the Han dynasty, Song dynasty, and Ming dynasty, reinforcing it as a whole part of a continuous tradition across different historical periods. As a result, the study of the Book of Songs during the Qianlong and Jiaqing periods was somewhat diminished in importance, though it played a vital role in connecting the previous dynasty scholarship and the latter dynasty scholarship within the Qing dynasty. However, over the past 40 years, the study of the Book of Songs in the Qing dynasty has gradually regained the attention of scholars. During this time, Duan Yucai, a representative scholar of the Book of Songs, has also begun to receive increasing recognition from the academic community. Known by the courtesy names Ruoying, Qiaolin, and Chunfu, as well as the literary name Maotang, Duan Yucai was also known as a Yanbei lay Buddhist during the latter half of his life. He was a native of Jintan County, Jiangsu Province in China, born in the 13th year of the Yongzheng period of the Qing dynasty (1735) and passed away in the 20th year of the Jiaqing period (October 1815). At the age of 13, he became a student at the county school. In the 25th year of the Qianlong period (1760), he passed the provincial examination and became a successful candidate in the imperial examinations. Despite numerous attempts, he was unable to pass the metropolitan examination; he also failed the higher level of the imperial examination, leading to his appointment as the magistrate of Yuping County in Guizhou Province. Subsequently, the province of Sichuan transferred him as a candidate for official positions, and he served successively as the magistrate of Fushun, Nanxi, and Wushan counties.

At the age of 46, he resigned from his post to care for his ailing parents and returned to his hometown. At 58, he moved to Zhiyuan outside the Changmen gate in Suzhou province, where he dedicated himself to studying in seclusion. While in Beijing, Duan Yucai studied under Dai Zhen and made acquaintances with numerous renowned scholars such as Qian Daxin, Shao Jinhan, and Yao Nai. After returning to his hometown, he befriended book collectors and scholars like Lu Wenzhao, Liu Taigong, Wang Zhong, and Jin Bang. In his later years, he returned to the capital and met his best friend Wang Niansun and his friend's son Wang Yinzhi, with whom he discussed phonology and exegesis. Duan Yucai was a prolific writer, authoring more than 30 works in over 700 volumes, including *Gu wen shang shu zhuan yi*, *Maoshi Xiaoxue*, *Zhouli han du kao*, *Jiguge shuowen ding*, the phonological table, and the *Jingyunlou* Collection. People particularly note his annotation on *Shuowenjiezi* for its comprehensive scope and profound insights. His phonological table, following Gu Yanwu's *Yin xue wu shu* and Jiang Yong's *Gu yun biao zhun*, divided ancient rhymes into 17 categories, marking a groundbreaking contribution to this field. Volume 68 of the *Biographies in the Qing dynasty*, volume 481 of the *Qing History Draft*, and volume 39 of the *Collection and Supplement of stele* all contain biographical accounts of Duan Yucai.

Duan Yucai, a significant figure of the Qianlong and Jiaqing periods, first studied under Dai Zhen and later surpassed his master in scholarly achievements. He pioneered the Changzhou School of thought, becoming its venerated leader, while also mastering and synthesising the teachings of the Anhui and Wu Schools, thus establishing a unique scholarly approach. His influence also extended to the Yangzhou School. During the Daoguang period, Duan Yucai made significant contributions to Mao's study of the Book of Songs. His disciple, Chen Huan, was a distinguished scholar who continued his teacher's legacy. In discussing Qing dynasty scholarship, Zhang Shunhui once remarked that Wu studies are the most specialised, Huizhou studies the most refined, and Yangzhou studies the most comprehensive (Zhang Shunhui, 1962). However, in terms of the Book of Songs research, Chen Guoan considers Duan Yucai to be the foremost scholar. Duan's study of the Book of Songs was both specialised and comprehensive, making him the most outstanding representative of the

Book of Songs scholarship during the Qianlong and Jiaqing periods (Chen Guoan 2009). However, there hasn't been a thorough discussion of the specific contributions Duan Yucai made to the Book of Songs, despite his high praise. Moreover, existing academic research clearly lacks substantial discourse on Duan Yucai's work on the Book of Songs, further confirming the existence of this research gap.

Problem Statement

The study of the Book of Songs during the Qing Dynasty, especially during the Qianlong and Jiaqing periods, reached remarkable heights. There were no fewer than a hundred notable scholars, and their specialized knowledge was evident in the research on Xiaoxue. The intense competition between sinology and Neo-Confucianism, marked by vigorous exchanges and mutual influences, ultimately aimed at the pursuit of truth. Official scholars, whether they followed sinology or Neo-Confucianism, adhered to the imperial intent, while independent scholars remained impartial. During that time, Duan Yucai was a typical representative. Born with extraordinary talent, Duan Yucai stands as a distinct figure in the history of Book of Songs studies during the Qing Dynasty.

His extensive body of work reflects his lifelong dedication to the Qing Dynasty's return to the Han Dynasty spirit. Through the principle of seeking truth from facts, he meticulously removed the dust that had obscured the classics, allowing later scholars to return to the origins of history and experience the teachings of the sages. People often marvel at Duan Yucai's achievements in philology and lexicography in his studies of the Book of Songs. However, in my review of his works and related articles in academic databases, I found no comprehensive literature review on this topic. Whenever Duan Yucai came across a word from the Book of Songs in his works, he consistently offered an explanation. His scientific and logical approach to quoting, using, and interpreting the Book of Songs often leaves one with a profound sense of enlightenment, allowing his interpretations to stand out among countless versions. Therefore, considering the high regard the academic community has for Duan Yucai's research on the Book of Songs, it is crucial to explore the aspects scholars have focused on, the content they have examined, the methods he used, and the principles Duan Yucai followed in the exegesis and collation of the Book of Songs. A literature review of the current academic research on Duan Yucai's Book of Songs studies can effectively answer these questions.

METHODOLOGY

This study involved conducting a systematic literature review. The systematic literature review method, initially developed in the field of medical research, has gained widespread recognition in the social sciences. It's a planned way to find studies, evaluate them critically, and put them all together. It lets researchers gather and analyses data that meets certain criteria, which helps them answer specific research questions or test hypotheses (Snyder, 2019). Researchers regard systematic literature reviews as the gold standard among review methods because of their systematic, transparent, and reproducible nature (Davis et al., 2014). This clear and methodical approach reduces bias and ensures the reliability of research findings (Moher, 2009). The systematic literature review is better than semi-systematic and integrative literature reviews because it carefully chooses articles, making sure that they include relevant data. Its processes are also clear and open, and it focusses on well-defined research questions, all of which lead to reliable research results. Three stages typically divide the research process: planning, conducting, and reporting the review. Planning: defining the research question or hypothesis, establishing inclusion and exclusion criteria, and developing a review protocol. systematically searching for relevant studies across multiple databases, selecting studies that meet the inclusion criteria, and critically appraising the quality of the selected studies.

Reporting: analysing and synthesising the data from the selected studies, presenting the findings in a clear and structured manner, and discussing the implications for future research and practice. This method provides comprehensive insights into the research field, including its various subfields, by conducting an extensive literature review (Tranfield et al., 2003). Moreover, it combines the structured and representative aspects of systematic reviews with a critical perspective, providing fresh insights into the area of study (Gregersen & Johansen, 2021).

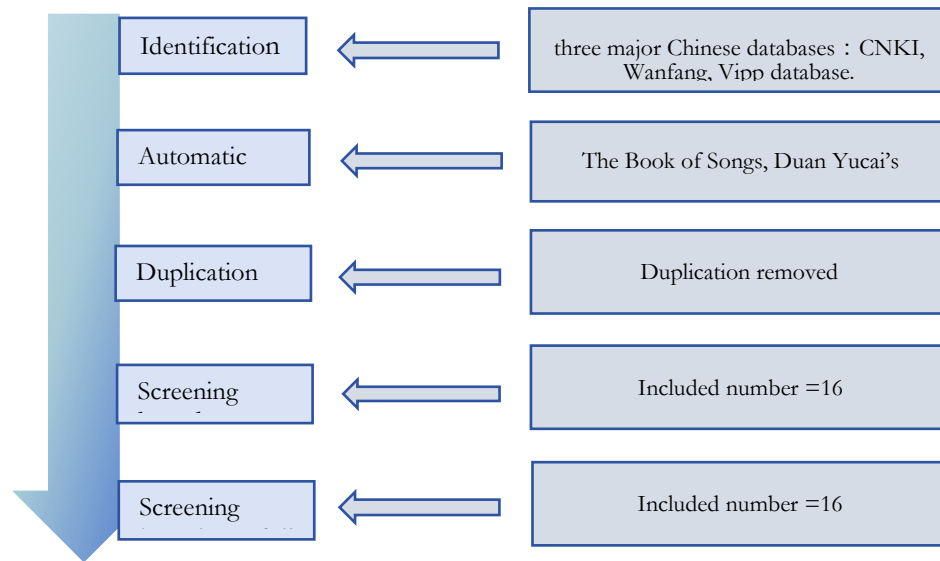


Figure 1 Systematic literature review process

Data Collection and Processing

The search string was developed based on the literature review and analysis conducted during the doctoral research process. It primarily includes keywords related to the specific research field and questions, such as full names or abbreviations of terms, synonyms, and various expressions of keywords. To ensure both precision and thoroughness in the search, the author extensively listed relevant strings. Additionally, the author adjusted the search string to align with the specific syntax of various data sources. The paper primarily selects data sources from three major Chinese databases: CNKI, Wanfang, and VVipp, as it focuses on a systematic literature review of a Qing dynasty scholar's research on the Book of Songs in Chinese classical literature. China National Knowledge Infrastructure is one of the largest academic resource databases in China, covering journals, master's and doctoral theses, conference papers, and more across various disciplines. CNKI offers a wealth of Chinese literature, as well as some foreign literature. Wanfang Data is another major academic database in China.

Wanfang Data includes a large number of journal articles, theses, conference papers, patents, and other documents. Its coverage is broad, spanning fields such as science, medicine, and social sciences. Vipp Database provides a rich collection of academic journals, theses, conference papers, and other scholarly resources. It is one of the key academic resource databases in China, covering various disciplines. These three databases are essential tools for academic research and literature retrieval in China, crucial for accessing Chinese mainland academic achievements and conducting research. Additionally, due to the uncertainty and uncontrollable nature of the Google search algorithm, which does not align with the replicable characteristics of a systematic review (Piasecki et al., 2018), Google Scholar was excluded from the data collection process. To maintain high-quality literature selection, the study focused exclusively on full-text, peer-reviewed journal articles pertaining to Duan Yucai's research on the Book of Songs. Inclusion and exclusion criteria were carefully defined (see Table 2), and each article was meticulously evaluated to ensure it met these criteria.

The first author carried out the initial retrieval process in February 2024, and the second author made subsequent revisions. Adhering to PRISMA review standards (see Figure 1), the process was divided into the stages of identification, automatic screening, eligibility assessment, and analysis. Multiple rounds of screening across different databases identified a total of 16 articles (see Figure 2). The initial retrieval on CNKI yielded 1,384 articles. After applying date restrictions, narrowing the search to journal articles, and excluding early access articles, conference papers, literature reviews, book chapters, and letters, 370 articles remained. Limiting the results to academic research articles further reduced this number to 65. After a final manual screening, we selected 16 relevant articles for the topic. The initial retrieval on Wanfang yielded a total of 122 articles. After

applying publication date restrictions, limiting the subject categories, refining the results to include only journal articles, and selecting specific keywords, 70 articles remained. When further narrowed down to research articles, only seven remained, all of which overlapped with the CNKI search results. The third retrieval was performed using the Vipp database, initially yielding 24 articles. After restricting the results to research articles, only 5 remained, which also overlapped with articles found in the previous searches. Therefore, we decided to remove the search results from the Vipp database.

Inclusion And Exclusion Criteria

Table 2 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

	Inclusion	Exclusion
Theme	The Book of Songs(shijing)	Not a random poem from the Book of Songs
figure	Duan Yucai	Another figure
Content	Any kind of findings relevant to Duan Yucai's study of the Book of Songs	None findings presented
Publication language	Chinese & English	Other language
Type of publication	Research studies	Commentaries, Conference report, literature review
Date	1984-2024	Before 1984

The entire study, which systematically reviews all relevant articles on Duan Yucai's research on the Book of Songs that have appeared in China's three major databases over the past 40 years, established the inclusion and exclusion criteria shown in the table. The first exclusion criterion excludes random, individual poems from the Book of Songs, focusing the search on the Book of Songs as a whole. Since scholars from a wide range of time and geography have conducted research on the Book of Songs since its inception, the second exclusion criterion specifically focuses on Duan Yucai, rather than other scholars. There is extensive research on this topic, so the third exclusion criterion is that the articles must contain findings; articles without findings are excluded. The fourth criterion includes only articles in Chinese and English, excluding those in other languages, as the study's key terms pertain to Chinese classical literature. The fifth criterion excludes conference reports, review articles, and summary articles, focusing solely on research papers, with a time restriction set to the past 40 years.

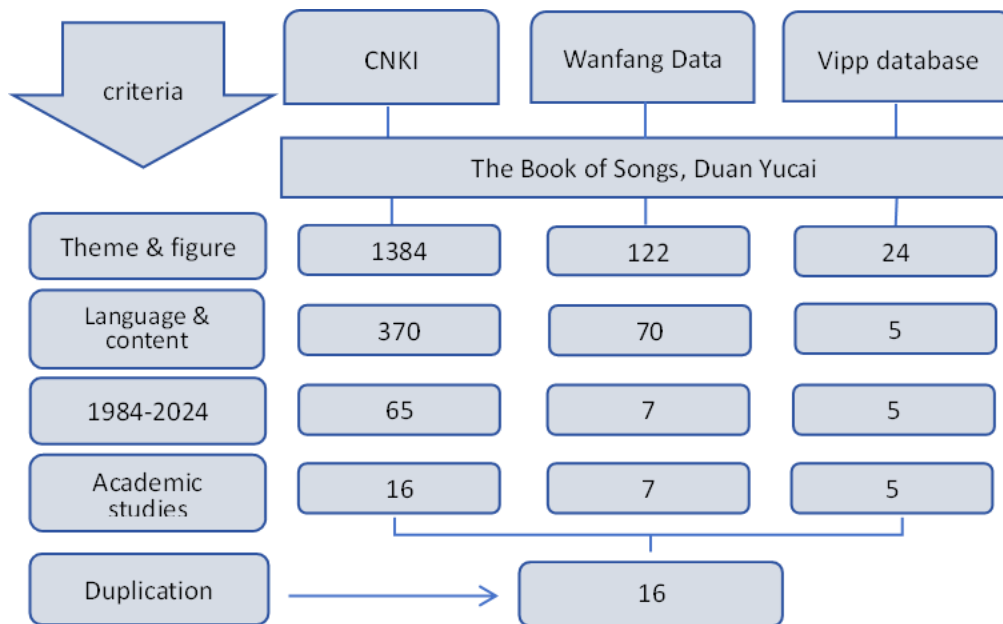


Figure 2. Exclusion process

After a detailed exclusion process from the three major Chinese databases, we selected a total of 16 articles, as shown in the figure. Initially, the retrieval was defined using the keywords the Book of Songs and Duan Yucai, resulting in 1,384, 122, and 24 articles, respectively. Then, by further refining based on language and content, the results were narrowed down to 370, 70, and 5 articles. Next, we reduced the results to 65, 7, and 5 articles by setting publication date restrictions. Finally, we further refined the results to 16, 7, and 5 academic research articles. After removing duplicates, a total of only 15 articles remained.

FINDINGS

After conducting an intensive and careful analysis of these 16 articles, we discovered that the current academic research on Duan Yucai's study of the Book of Songs in China primarily focuses on four major aspects: general research on the Book of Songs, phonological studies related to the Book of Songs, exegetical and collation studies of the Book of Songs, and specific research on Duan Yucai's work *Shijing Xiaoxue*.

Generally, research on Book of Songs

Duan Yucai conducted profound research on the Book of Songs. He wrote a number of specialised works on the subject (Wu Peide, 1989), such as *Mao's Annotation of the Classic of Poetry* (20 volumes), which fixes mistakes in the old version of *Mao's Annotation*; *Shijing Xiaoxue* (30 volumes), which looks at and explains the phonetics and meanings of characters in the Book of Songs; and *Table of Seventeen Rhyming Sections of the Book of Songs*, which divides the ancient phonological system into seventeen sections based on the rhymes used in the Book of Songs and lists the original or combined sounds for each rhyming character. This work helps readers accurately analyse the rhyming patterns in the Book of Songs. Scholar Chen Guoan provided an overview of Duan Yucai's works related to the Book of Songs, including *Shijing Xiaoxue* and *Mao's Annotation of the Classic of Poetry*. Chen's summary covers the composition time, different versions, and stylistic aspects of these works, while also concisely discussing their main content and relationships (Chen guoan, 2009). In his study of ancient classics, Duan Yucai placed the greatest emphasis on the Book of Songs. His research on the Book of Songs began with the study of its rhyming patterns and extended over more than fifty years, yielding significant achievement. His contributions include not only specialised works such as *Shijing Xiaoxue* and *Mao's Annotation of the Classic of Poetry* but also a wealth of scattered materials in his *Annotation on the Shuowen Jiezi*, as well as individual essays collected in the *Jingyunlou Collection*. Through a thorough and detailed analysis of Duan Yucai's research achievements, we can gain a comprehensive understanding of his work on the Book of Songs, summarising both his achievements and shortcomings in this area (Dong Lulu, 2021). The following aspects primarily reflect Duan Yucai's achievements in the study of the Book of Songs.

First, based on his summary of the rhyming patterns in the Book of Songs, he made new advancements in the study of the traditional Chinese rhyme system. Duan Yucai's summaries of the rhyming patterns in the Book of Songs are largely reliable and offer valuable references for future research on the subject. His various related works also demonstrate his significant contributions to ancient phonology. Secondly, Duan Yucai used ancient phonology's findings to explain difficult words in the Book of Songs. Duan held the belief that the wise ancestors crafted characters with a meaning that preceded their pronunciation, and once they established the pronunciation, they linked it to the character's form. Scholars, when studying the meaning of characters, would first identify their form and then derive their pronunciation, ultimately exploring the meaning through the pronunciation. In essence, for language, sound is primary, while writing is secondary. Language's sound, not its written form, fundamentally determines its meaning. Duan Yucai grasped this characteristic of language and often connected words in the Book of Songs that had similar ancient pronunciations, allowing for a more accurate understanding of their meanings. Later scholars, such as Ma Ruichen, built on this foundation to explain many of the difficult words in the Book of Songs.

Thirdly, Duan Yucai made significant contributions to the textual criticism of the Book of Songs through his use of diverse collation methods and sound principles of textual criticism. When collating the Book of Songs, Duan Yucai often employed multiple methods and approached the text from various angles, which typically led to more reliable conclusions. He strongly emphasised the importance of first determining the correctness of the base text before establishing the correctness of interpretations. Duan also advocated for the principle of restoring Mao to Mao and estoring Zheng to Zheng, which aimed to differentiate the various layers of the

classic text and its annotations—a forward-thinking perspective at the time. Chen Huan later completed *The Commentary on the Mao Edition of the Book of Songs*, based on Duan Yucai's textual criticism principles and practices. Duan Yucai inherited the research tradition from Gu Yanwu to Dai Zhen, using characters to study the classics and vice versa, achieving enormous success.

His research methods set a paradigm for subsequent studies of the *Book of Songs*. Duan Yucai's research on the *Book of Songs*, bridging past and future scholarship, played a pivotal role in the study of this classic during the Qing dynasty.

Duan Yucai's phonological studies related to the Book of Songs

This study reveals that scholars have explored and summarized Duan Yucai's fundamental principles and methods for determining the ancient original sound of phonetic transcriptions, focusing on how Duan classified characters that rhyme only once, achieving a partial understanding. However, due to space limitations, we have not conducted a phonetic corroboration analysis for characters with multiple rhymes. The basic ideas and methods in this text can also be used to find the ancient original sound of co-rhyme characters (Liu Zhonghua, 2022). This is because both the ancient original sound of phonetic transcriptions and the ancient original sound of co-rhyme characters come from the way characters were grouped in the ancient phonological system. The entire text in the *Book of Songs*, *Table of Seventeen Rhyme Categories*, reveals that Duan Yucai employs five methods to determine phonetic transcriptions and the ancient original sound. These methods include counting the number of rhymes, examining the rhymes of other words in the same phonetic series, examining phonetic relationships, consulting ancient phonological materials, and relying solely on rhymes when no other evidence supports them. Overall, the categorisation of rhyme-ending characters is based on but not limited to rhymes. Duan Yucai's fundamental principle for determining the ancient original sound is the double evidence principle, which combines rhymes with corroborative materials. Specifically, for characters that rhyme only once or whose modern pronunciation does not align with the rhyme, there must be phonetic or other ancient phonological materials as references to determine whether the rhyming sound is the ancient original sound. The repetition of rhymes serves as corroboration for determining the ancient original sound.

Among the 473 phonetic transcriptions, only a few characters had to rely solely on a single rhyme occurrence to determine the ancient original sound due to the lack of corroborating materials, as analysed in the fifth section of his article. Some characters guess the original sound based on their shape, or they don't follow the classification in *Annotation on Shuowenjiezi*. This shows how unreliable it is to classify something based on a single instance of rhyme without any other evidence.

It is also evident that within the double evidence principle, phonetic materials are crucial corroborations, and the combination of rhymes and phonetic relationships is the most basic and convenient method. Because the vast majority of characters belong to phonetic systems and can refer to phonetic materials to determine the ancient original sound, the *Table of Seventeen Rhyme Categories* in the *Book of Songs* consistently uses the explanatory format; a certain sound belongs to this category for phonetic transcriptions. In Duan Yucai's phonological table, *Table of Seventeen Rhyming Sections of the Book of Songs*, he recorded a total of 109 ancient combined rhyme characters from the *Book of Songs*. For each of these characters, Duan Yucai first indicated which rhyming section its original sound belonged to and then systematically listed the examples of its combined rhymes, making the organization very clear and easy to understand at a glance. Duan Yucai didn't give clear reasons for why these ancient combined rhyme characters rhyme in one place while their original sound belongs in another, and he also didn't make it clear what the criteria and rules were for figuring out these combined rhyme characters. Nevertheless, his theories and views on ancient phonology (Zhang Jing, 2011) support his conclusions. Upon conducting a thorough analysis of the 109 combined rhyme characters from the *Book of Songs*, Duan Yucai identified four general criteria for determining ancient combined rhymes. Frequency of Rhyming: determining the original sound and combined rhyme based on the frequency with which a character rhymes. Principle of Shared Phonetic Components: determining the original sound and combined rhyme according to the principle that characters with the same phonetic component belong to the same rhyming section. Modern Rhymes Divided into seventeen sections.

This table to identify characters' original sounds and combined rhymes. Ancient Phonetic Loans and Sound Training: We determine the original sound and combined rhyme based on the principle that ancient phonetic loans and sound training often occur within the same section. Overall, the first two of these four principles should be regarded as the fundamental ones, as the ancient combined rhyme characters determined using these principles exhibit direct or indirect evidence of rhyme. In fact, these two principles determined 88% of the combined rhyme characters. However, it's crucial to remember that the application of these two principles varies depending on the specific situation. If a combined rhyme character has both its own rhyming evidence and rhyming evidence from other characters within its phonetic series, then both principles are applicable, and they complement each other rather than conflict. As for the latter two principles, they are considered supplementary. The combined rhyme characters determined using these principles generally lack direct evidence of rhyming. However, it is important to note that, unlike the first two principles, which can be compatible under certain conditions, these latter two principles are somewhat mutually exclusive. Specifically, the fourth principle can sometimes constrain the application of the third principle. Duan Yucai's research on pre-Qin dynasty rhyming examples is closely related to his achievements in ancient phonology. His phonological table, Table of Seventeen Rhyming Sections of the Book of Songs, represents his achievements in the study of rhyming examples in the Book of Songs. By summarising and analysing this table and comparing Duan Yucai's findings with those of other scholars, we can outline both the strengths and shortcomings of his research on the rhyming examples in the Book of Songs (Dong Lulu, 2021).

Strengths showed like treatment of rhymes: Duan Yucai considers any word that can rhyme as a rhyme-ending syllable, and typically disregards the rhyming rules of the entire poem. He generally excludes function words, such as particles, from the rhyming analysis, and the rhyming scheme does not include words located at the beginning or middle of lines. He avoids the use of forced rhyme by not altering characters just to fit the rhyme scheme. Some of his shortcomings include his consideration of initial rhyme, his treatment of words in the first line as remote rhymes varying between poems, his focus on chapter-level rhyme, his disregard for rhymes within a chapter, and his overly broad standards for combining rhymes, which can lead to a relaxed approach. Tone Alteration: He sometimes alters the tone of characters just to fit the rhyme. Due to contextual constraints, Duan Yucai occasionally disregards the text's meaning when identifying rhyme-ending syllables, leaving out words that the rhyme should have included. This study used the phonological table at the end of Duan Yucai's Annotation on *Shuowen Jiezi* as a starting point for our statistical analysis of the 109 examples of ancient combined rhymes that he found in his study of the Book of Songs (Huang ying, 2000). Using modern research on ancient phonology, each example was re-examined, reorganised, and analyzed. We divided the examples that truly belong to combined rhymes into three groups, totalling 102 cases, and provided phonological analysis for each major category. We individually analysed the other 7 examples that do not belong to combined rhymes, highlighting them as among the few errors in Duan Yucai's study of ancient combined rhymes in the Book of Songs. Duan Yucai's research on ancient combined rhymes in the Book of Songs plays a transitional role in the field of phonology, linking past and future research. It largely reflects the various aspects of combined rhymes in the Book of Songs, making it more convenient to study and read the rhymes in this ancient text.

The study of combined rhymes in the Book of Songs also reveals the relationships between different ancient rhyme categories, providing a reference for phonologists in their reconstruction of traditional classic Chinese.

Exegetical and collation studies of the Book of Songs

Duan Duan Yucai made remarkable contributions to the study of the Book of Songs (Xiangxi, 2017). He authored the corrected edition of the Mao Commentary on the Book of Songs in 20 volumes, which focused on correcting textual errors in the old editions of the Mao Commentary on the Book of Songs. In this work, he occasionally added annotations, calling it the Minor Annotations on the Mao Commentary on the Book of Songs. He also wrote *Shijing Xiaoxue* in four volumes, which concentrated on studying the meanings of the characters in the Book of Songs. Another of his works, the phonological table, primarily classified the ancient rhymes based on the phonological harmony and radicals in the Book of Songs, summarising the rhymed characters. This work is considered an important contribution to the study of the Book of Songs. In Xiang Xi's essay, Duan Yucai and the Exegesis of the Book of Songs, he discusses Duan Yucai's achievements in exegesis (the critical explanation or interpretation of texts) without touching upon phonology and thus does not address

the phonological table. Xiang Xi utilises materials from Duan Yucai's annotations on the *Shuowen Jiezi*, *Shijing Xiaoxue*, and minor annotations on the Mao commentary on the Book of Songs to analyse the characteristics of Duan Yucai's exegesis of the Book of Songs.

Xiang Xi highlights five main achievements in Duan Yucai's exegesis of the Book of Songs: correcting errors, clarifying loan character translation, elucidating the Mao Commentary and Zheng Commentary, analysing differences and similarities, and organising content systematically. Xiang Xi further divides the first achievement, error correction, into four aspects: correcting errors in the Mao Commentary and Mao's Interpretation, identifying missing text, deleting redundant characters, and correcting misplacements. We also divide the second achievement, which clarifies loan character translation, into four aspects: homophonic loan character translation, loan character translation based on similar sounds, borrowing a single character as multiple characters, and mutual substitution between two characters. We divide the third achievement, which elucidates the Mao Commentary and Zhen Jian Commentary, into four aspects: we further explain the overly obscure Mao Commentary, we explore the basis of the Mao Commentary's interpretations, we highlight the differences between ancient and modern languages, and we offer new interpretations that deviate from traditional ones. The fourth achievement, analyzing differences and similarities, is also divided into four aspects: different characters leading to different meanings; identical characters with different interpretations; interpretations by Mao and Xu seeming different but actually complementing each other; and comparing the strengths and weaknesses of Mao's and Xu's interpretations. The Mao Commentary divides the fifth achievement, systematically organizing content, into six aspects: facilitating the explanation of loan character translation, interpreting differing characters in the Book of Songs, explaining context-based meanings in the Mao Commentary, facilitating the understanding of compound words with partial meanings, facilitating the interpretation of characters with multiple sounds and meanings, and facilitating the understanding of similar-sounding characters with related meanings.

The perspective of textual research methods, Duan Yucai's *Shijing Xiaoxue* holds a special significance in the history of Book of Songs studies and textual criticism. During the Qianlong and Jiaqing periods, the original characters and meanings as presented in the *Shuowen Jiezi*, which is an ancient Chinese dictionary, became increasingly prominent in the exegesis of classical texts. Chinese characters, as logograms, share connections with the Chinese language yet fundamentally diverge from it. Therefore, Chinese characters play a unique and important role in exploring and interpreting the meanings of the language. In terms of academic thought, Duan Yucai inherited Dai Zhen's scholarly concept of examining the classics through the characters and understanding the characters through the classics. He emphasised the importance of the original characters in the *Shuowen Jiezi* for interpreting the meanings of the classic texts. In academic practice, Duan Yucai extensively collected variant textual materials and the lost interpretations from the Three Schools of Poetry, using the original characters in the *Shuowen Jiezi* to interpret the characters used in the Book of Songs. He clearly emphasized the use of *Xiaoxue* in his textual research on the Book of Songs. Later Qing scholars' absorption of Duan Yucai's specific achievements in *Xiaoxue*, as well as their adoption of his textual research methods, deserves attention and further study.

The perspective of academic history, in the early Qing dynasty, Gu Yanwu advocated for classical studies as philosophy, leading to a gradual return to classical studies. However, with the advancement of textual research methods, early scholars did not have a deep understanding of the role of the *Shuowen Jiezi* in classical studies. Gu Yanwu never saw the complete *Shuowen Jiezi*, and although Hui Dong referenced it in his *Nine Classics and Ancient Meanings*, his work primarily focused on elucidating the interpretations of Han dynasty scholars without specifically clarifying the original characters. The Complete Library in the Four Branches of Literature praised Chen Qiyuan's *Mao Poems and Studies on Antiquity* for its extensive citations and clear annotations, but its significance lay in adhering to the traditions of Mao and Zheng, with few innovations in textual research methods. It wasn't until Dai Zhen authored *Examination of the Mao and Zheng Interpretations of the Book of Songs* that the use of *Xiaoxue* to interpret the Book of Songs began. In the history of Book of Songs research, the method of using the *Erya* to explain the Book of Songs and *Shujing* dominated the study of the Mao Commentary, Zheng Commentary, and Kong Yingda's *Correct Meaning of the Mao Commentary on the Book of Songs*. When dealing with the differences between Mao and Zheng, the *Correct Meaning* mainly

highlighted examples where the Mao Commentary and Erya shared the same interpretations, with little analysis of variant readings or the interpretation of ancient texts.

The Explanations of the Texts recorded both the Mao and Han interpretations but did not differentiate between right and wrong; Scholar Wang Yinglin from Song dynasty's Examination of the Book of Songs collected the variant readings of the three schools but did not examine them from the perspective of original characters. During the Qianlong and Jiaqing periods, the study of Shuowen Jiezi gained prominence. Wang Zhong, a contemporary of Duan Yucai and Wang Niansun, wrote in a letter to Liu Duanlin that, in the early Qing dynasty, classical studies were in their infancy and gradually became well-developed.

In recent decades, within a thousand miles of Jiangnan, even young scholars and humble literati are familiar with Xu and Zheng (Wang Zhong, 2013). This reflects a shift in scholarly trends toward using the Shuowen Jiezi for classical studies. Against this historical backdrop, Duan Yucai's Xiaoxue emerged. The work primarily consists of notes on individual chapters, with little involvement in the longstanding debates over the minor prefaces and poetic intentions in Book of Songs studies. However, in terms of textual research methods, Duan Yucai combined the study of ancient phonology with the Shuowen Jiezi to seamlessly integrate research on the Shuowen Jiezi with exegesis of the Book of Songs. He upheld the principle of examining the classics through the characters and understanding the characters through the classics, emphasizing the importance of original characters and their meanings. This approach aimed to clarify the original meanings of the characters, thereby elucidating the meanings of the poems and reflection of his scholarly methodology. Duan Yucai incorporated many of the methods and achievements from Shijing Xiaoxue into his later works, including the Corrected Edition of the Mao Commentary on the Book of Songs and his Annotations on the Shuowen Jiezi. Duan Yucai's methods had a significant impact on Qing dynasty Book of Songs studies. For example, the Collation Notes on the Mao Commentary and Sub-commentary on the Book of Songs, compiled under Duan Yuan's supervision with contributions from Duan Yucai and Gu Guangqi, adopted some of Xiaoxue's textual research achievements early on. However, due to differing purposes, while Duan Yucai's work emphasized the use of elementary studies to examine original characters, the Collation Notes focused on collating various editions. Therefore, while the Collation Notes incorporated Duan Yucai's research on variant readings, it largely adhered to the original text when it came to character corrections. As the textual research methods of the Qianlong and Jiaqing periods became more defined in both theory and practice, numerous Book of Songs studies emerged in the late Qing dynasty. Duan Yucai's scholarly approach of mutually examining the classics and characters not only influenced his disciple Chen Huan's annotations on the Mao commentary on the Book of Songs but also impacted other exegetical works on the Book of Songs, such as Hu Chenggong's later annotations on the Mao commentary on the Book of Songs and Ma Ruichen's comprehensive annotations on the Mao commentary on the Book of Songs. Duan Yucai often inspired these scholars in their exploration of sound shifts and their use of the Shuowen Jiezi to interpret the Book of Songs. This way, Shijing Xiaoxue's influence is evident.

Research specifically on Duan Yucai's work Shijing Xiaoxue

Duan Yucai, a representative of the Qian-Jia School in the Qing dynasty, was an outstanding phonologist, philologist, and exegete with deep knowledge of elementary studies. His Shijing Xiaoxue is a specialized book that focuses on the study of characters as well as the interpretation of words and meanings in the Book of Songs. It is one of the key materials for researching Duan Yucai's thoughts on Xiaoxue studies and his scholarly methods. Currently, we can broadly divide academic research on Shijing Xiaoxue into two approaches: a macro-level overview of the work and a micro-level, in-depth exploration of Duan Yucai's exegetical methods and linguistic thoughts within the text. From a macro perspective, Yu Wanli's two-part study on Shijing Xiaoxue mainly focusses on the 30-volume version, providing a detailed introduction to the editions, the motivation behind the writing, structure, and the relationship between Shijing Xiaoxue and other works (Yu anli, 1985). He also talks about Shijing Xiaoxue's value and contributions.

Additionally, Yu Wanli compares the differences between the 30-volume and 4-volume versions. Chen Guo'an introduces both Duan Yucai's Shijing Xiaoxue and his Corrected Edition of the Mao Commentary on the Book of Songs, exploring the editions, content, and characteristics of Shijing Xiaoxue (Chen Guoan, 2009). Dong Lianchi, in his book A Critical Biography of Duan Yucai, mentions Shijing Xiaoxue, introducing its time of

writing, structure, and reasons for its creation, and elaborates on its value in detail (Dong Lianchi, 2006). Zhao Hang provides a detailed explanation of the content and research methods in *Shijing Xiaoxue*, examining Duan Yucai's achievements in the study of the Book of Songs (Zhao Hang, 2010). Studies on the four-volume version of *Shijing Xiaoxue*, from a micro-level research perspective, include the following: According to Yuan Liping (2013), the exegetical content in *Shijing Xiaoxue* was carefully categorised. This included things like analysing character usage, making sentence meanings clearer, checking pronunciation, noting rhetorical devices, giving textual collation notes, and explaining institutions. Based on these analyses, Yuan discussed the exegetical methods and terminology used in *Shijing Xiaoxue* and summarized Duan Yucai's exegetical achievements.

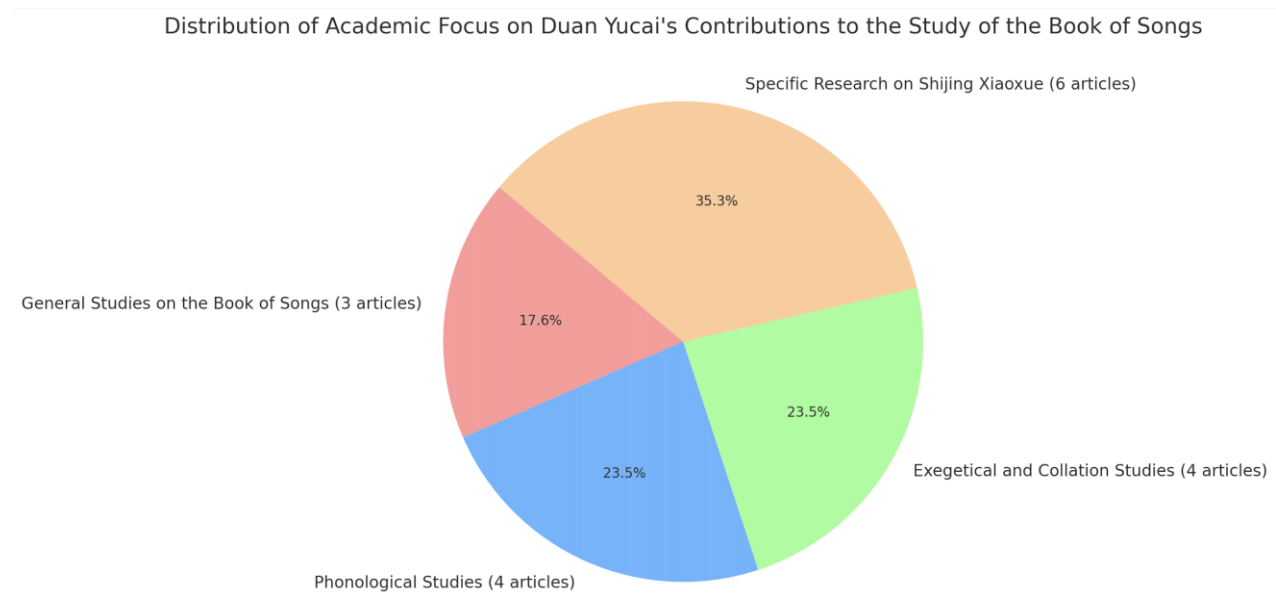
Zhang Huiyin examined *Shijing Xiaoxue*'s characteristics and impact in terms of textual collation and exegesis. By comparing *Shijing Xiaoxue* with Mao's Collation Notes on the Book of Songs, Zhang pointed out that *Shijing Xiaoxue* uses collation to identify correct characters. The purpose of collation is to verify characters' meanings and explain word meanings in the Book of Songs (Zhang Huiying, 2017). Zhang highlighted that the ultimate goal of collation is exegesis, emphasising the close integration of collation and exegesis. For studies focusing on the thirty-volume version of *Shijing Xiaoxue*, Wang Lihui used this version as linguistic material to organise and analyse its exegetical content and methods (Wang Lihui, 2018). Wang described and explored how *Shijing Xiaoxue* interprets characters and clarifies the meanings of the poems, summarizing Duan Yucai's empirical methods. Wang provided a general overview of *Shijing Xiaoxue*'s contents and characteristics. Additionally, Wang compared the exegetical perspectives between *Shijing Xiaoxue* and *Annotation on the Shuowen Jiezi*, highlighting the academic value of *Shijing Xiaoxue* and Duan Yucai's thoughts on *Xiaoxue* studies.

Dong Jinchen discussed Duan Yucai's scholarly method of using characters to interpret the classics, and the classics' significance in Qing dynasty studies of the Book of Songs from the perspective of textual criticism (Dong Jingchen, 2016). Li Xiongxi also researched the thirty-volume version of *Shijing Xiaoxue* (Li Xiongxi, 2019). Duan Yucai's use of *Shuowen Jiezi* to interpret the Book of Songs was explained by Li, who focused on six aspects: explaining the meanings of words in detail, illustrating phonetic loan character translation, explaining variant characters, pointing out textual variations, citing the ancient character, and distinguishing between ancient and modern characters. Li also compared the relevant exegeses in *Shijing Xiaoxue* and *Commentary on the Shuowen Jiezi*, clarifying Duan Yucai's approach to studying the Book of Songs and philology.

CONCLUSION

Based on the above findings, we can conclude a comprehensive analysis of Duan Yucai's contributions to the study of the Book of Songs. In the 16 articles reviewed, academic scholars primarily focus on four major areas (see Figure 3), with some articles covering more than one aspect: general studies on the Book of Songs, which has 3 articles; phonological studies, which has 4 articles; exegetical and collation studies, which has 4 articles; and specific research on Duan Yucai's work, *Shijing Xiaoxue*, which has 6 articles. This study provides a detailed overview of the major aspects of Duan Yucai's contributions, as reflected in the current academic research.

Figure 3



General Studies on the Book of Songs

Duan Yucai's scholarly contributions to the study of the Book of Songs (Shijing) have had a lasting impact on the fields of classical Chinese literature and philology. He conducted thorough research in various areas, such as textual criticism, phonological analysis, and exegesis. Duan's works, including Mao's Annotation of the Classic of Poetry and *Shijing Xiaoxue*, significantly contributed to the advancement of ancient Chinese text studies. They specifically focused on rectifying textual errors, examining rhyming patterns, and investigating phonetics. His methodical approach, utilizing ancient phonological discoveries to clarify challenging words, enhanced the accuracy of our understanding of the Book of Songs. Duan's contribution to phonology, specifically his development of the Table of Seventeen Rhyme Categories in the Book of Songs, showcased his inventive method of classifying characters within the ancient phonological system. The table, consisting of 109 ancient combined rhyme characters, played a crucial role in connecting previous and subsequent phonological investigations. His techniques, which included utilizing rhyme numbers and examining phonetic correlations, laid the groundwork for future progress in the field. Duan's corrected edition of the Mao commentary on the Book of Songs was a notable accomplishment in the field of textual collation from an exegetical perspective.

The individual's meticulous approach was evident in their corrections of textual errors, clarifications of loan characters, and systematic content organization. Duan's incorporation of ancient phonology into the analysis of ancient characters, as exemplified by his utilisation of the *Shuowen Jiezi*, became a distinctive feature of Qing dynasty scholarship and had a significant impact on the research of subsequent scholars such as Chen Huan and Hu Chenggong. Duan's work, *Shijing Xiaoxue*, is particularly noteworthy for its emphasis on the semantic and phonological aspects of characters in the Book of Songs. This work established a benchmark for future studies, exerting a significant influence on the advancement of textual research methods during the Qing dynasty. By combining basic studies with research on classical texts, he successfully established a new model for scholarly investigation. Although Duan's scholarship was extensive, certain aspects, such as nomenclature, ritual systems, and geography, were not as well developed due to limited academic resources and the challenges of his era. Contemporary academics, equipped with recently discovered documents, artefacts, and advancements in linguistics, now have improved capabilities to evaluate and expand upon Duan's contributions.

The inclusion of interdisciplinary methodologies encompassing disciplines such as archaeology, botany, and zoology presents promising avenues for future investigations. In the end, although Duan Yucai's work is fundamental, modern academic research has the ability to enhance the understanding of the Book of Songs by utilizing innovative approaches and supporting evidence.

Limitation and Future Study

This study examines Duan Yucai's contributions to the study of the Book of Songs (Shijing), acknowledging certain limitations and suggesting potential directions for future research. Firstly, despite employing a systematic literature review that encompasses scholarship from three major databases over the past 40 years, the review remains incomplete. A more exhaustive literature review in future studies could help address this shortfall. Secondly, while Duan Yucai's research is extensive, covering phonology, lexicography, textual criticism, exegesis, cultural artefacts, geography, and philosophical thought, the present study has not fully captured the overall influence and interactions of these aspects. Future research could provide a more comprehensive analysis by exploring Duan's personal background, academic lineage, and relationships with his peers. This would contextualize his research within the broader intellectual environment in which he worked and offer deeper insights into his study of the Book of Songs.

Additionally, the focus of this study on Duan Yucai's research on the Book of Songs required the exclusion of some of Duan's works that did not directly relate to this text. Specifically, keyword searches limited to the Book of Songs may have filtered out articles that, while not explicitly titled, still contained relevant discussions of his work on the text. Future research, which aims to supplement the missing material, will address this aspect, which remains underexplored due to space constraints. The systematic literature review found that Duan Yucai's research can be broken down into four main groups: general studies on the Book of Songs, phonological studies, exegetical and collation studies, and studies that are specifically about Duan's Shijing Xiaoxue. Although these categories encompass most aspects of Duan's research, they largely overlook an important issue. Scholars often concentrate on works like Shijing Xiaoxue and Mao Shi Gu Xun Zhuan Ding Ben, which explicitly mention the Book of Songs. However, they often overlook the substantial research that Duan Yucai's Annotations on the Shuowen Jiezi also includes. Future research should expand the scope by incorporating an analysis of Duan Yucai's Annotations on the Shuowen Jiezi and other works, thereby providing a more holistic view of his scholarly contributions to the study of the Book of Songs.

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