Abstract

This Academic Exercise attempted to study the Three Hundred Tang Poems (《唐诗三百首》), one of the most popular among the anthologies. This was initiated because the anthologies had often been overlooked in research on Chinese literary criticism. The focus of the study was on the selection criteria used by the compiler, Heng-Tang Tui-Shi (黄塘退士), 1711–1778, of this anthology. This area was highlighted as it was an important factor to account for the popularity of this anthology.

Two methods of analysis were used in this investigative study. The first was the use of the qualitative analysis, where the comments of the compiler on the selected poems were closely examined. This involved the reorganisation of scattered pieces of the compiler's comments, and analysis based on inductive and deductive reasoning, in order to discover the criteria used in the selection of poems in this anthology, and the poetic theory of the compiler.

The second, known as quantitative analysis, was based on a new scientific method in the study of anthologies, to extrapolate the poetic theory of the compiler. This statistical evaluation focused on data
such as the exact number of poems in the anthology, and the number of poems from each poet, from which it would help to establish new selection criteria and to reinforce the conclusions drawn from the qualitative analysis.

From the study, about twelve selection criteria were established. Most of the factors affecting the selection of a poem into this anthology were affected by the socio-political environment of that period, the imperialist examinations for the scholars of that time, and the principles and values held by the compiler. The author concluded that the compiler had selected the poems systematically, based on his selection criteria. Although this had resulted in the omission of a few poems that were highly regarded in the literary circle, his selection criteria were still recommended.

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