Literati Attitude Towards Life and Style of Living
Within the Garden as Reflected in Late Ming’s Prose

Abstract

This honours thesis examines the attitude of Late Ming’s literati towards life and their style of living in the garden. There was a fast development of garden building in late Ming cities in the southern region of China. The garden served as a place for reclusive life for these literati. This life style was found in gardens of cities instead of garden in nature. The purpose of this thesis is to study the behaviour and attitude of the literati living within the garden.

The primary sources for the study are prose of late Ming. Books related to gardens and works written by the literati living within the garden were surveyed. These include letters, prefects and “qingyan” (清言). They explain the great marks of gardens within this period. They also show their thoughts and content of their reclusive life style.

The study shows that there was an increase of “self-consciousness” in intellectuals in late Ming. They liked to enjoy life and they were more liberal and individualistic in their thinking. They withdrew from the arena of politics and devoted themselves to artistic life to satisfy individual’s needs.