ABSTRACT

Meng Haoran (A.D. 689 - 740) was a famous landscape and pastoral poet during the Tang dynasty. The main purpose of this academic exercise is to study his life of seclusion in Xiang-yang (襄阳). During his time of seclusion, he wrote many poems which described the beautiful scenery around his homeland Xiang-yang. Therefore, this collection of his landscape and pastoral poems could be called the "Poems of Xiang-yang". Thus, another aim of this academic exercise is to analyse these works.

The period, when he was twenty to forty, could be considered the time of his seclusion. Because of the teaching of Buddhism and Taoism, many scholars during the Tang dynasty tempted to isolate themselves from the secular world, so did Meng Haoran. Tracing back to his family background, it is found that he spent most of his time in the countryside, perhaps this love of nature had influenced him into opting for a life of seclusion. Furthermore, he was frustrated by failing his examination and by not being appreciated by the emperor Tang Xuan-zhong (唐玄宗). All these reasons contributed to his life of seclusion. Generally, most people think that Meng's residence Jian Nan Yuan (涧南园) was situated at Lu-men Mountain (鹿门山). However, after research and findings, this study shows that his residence was at Xian Mountain (岘山).

Among his 218 poems, 29 poems are chosen for analysis and these poems are all about Xiang-yang. These "Poems of Xiang-yang" describe the beautiful landscapes of Xiang Mountain, Wan Mountain (万山), Lu-men Mountain, Tan Brook (檀溪), Gao-yang Pool (高阳池,
Feng-lin Temple (凤林寺) etc. Equally important, these poems also portray his life of seclusion. During his life of seclusion, he participated in plantation work and spent most of his time strolling around the famous, attractive scenic spots as mentioned above. Apart from these casual activities, he also went boating, fishing, and visiting his friends and taoists. His poems also reflect his thinking with regard to Buddhism and Taoism and his life experiences of frustration and aspiration.

The artistic display of Meng's "Poems of Xiang-yang" will be analysed in terms of the use of metaphor, content, artistic conception and language. All in all, it can be concluded that the plain diction that Meng used in his poems was a great artistic achievement that we can learn from. Apart from the main contents, four pictures of Xiang-yang, relevant to the study, are attached.