Abstract

Du Mu ( 杜牧 , 803-852) was one of the most famous, remarkable and unconventional poets of the late Tang Dynasty (the second half of seventh century). As most studies of Du Mu concentrate on his love poems, which are so well known that they almost overshadow all his other works, his graffiti poems on scenic spots have never been systematically analysed. Hence, the objective of this Academic Exercise is to establish the value of his graffiti poems on scenic spots and his position in the history of development of poems of such nature in the Chinese literature.

As an introduction, Chapter One defines the graffiti poems on scenic spots. The objective and the approach of this Academic Exercise are highlighted.

Chapter Two discusses the development of graffiti poems since Eastern Jin (317-420) till late Tang. The existence of graffiti poems are examined.

Chapter Three analyses the themes and contents of Du Mu's graffiti poems on scenic spots in five aspects: the appreciation of natural beauty; the desire for leisure and retirement; the sentiment towards wandering and official transfer; the sorrow of uncertainty in human life and the critical views on historical spots.

Chapter Four explores the artistic techniques of language. It consists of four parts: (i) selection of phrase and words; (ii) imagery and symbol; (iii) contrast and foil; and (iv) the use of allusion.
Chapter Five emphasizes Du Mu's achievements in passing on the tradition of such poetic writing to the poets of the late Tang Dynasty and the Song Dynasty (960-1279).

The Final Chapter concludes with a summary of findings, emphasizing the importance and the value of Du Mu's graffiti poems on scenic spots.

This Academic Exercise hopes to establish Du Mu's reputation as a great writer of graffiti poems, a fact much ignored by literary critics and the reading public. The findings confirm his achievement in this unusual literary genre in the history of Chinese poetry.