ABSTRACT

Du Fu (杜甫 712 - 770) was a famous poet of the T'ang Dynasty (705 - 907). He was crowned with the great reputation of the sage of poets (shisheng 诗圣) and was considered as providing a link for Early T'ang (初唐), Mid-T'ang (中唐) and Late T'ang (晚唐) poets.

Most scholars study his poems that reflect the social realities of his days (shishi 诗史). His poems of contemplation of the past (huaguishi 怀古诗) have thus been neglected. As studies of Du Fu's poems of contemplation of the past are still lacking, it is the objective of this academic exercise to establish the values of such poems.

Chapter One defines the poems of contemplation of the past by contrasting them with the poems on history (yongshishi 咏史诗). The objectives and the approach are also highlighted.

Chapter Two dwells on the characteristics of poems of contemplation of the past as well as poems on history in period prior to Du Fu; such poems laid the foundation for Du Fu's distinctive works.

Chapter Three analyses the themes and contents of Du Fu's poems of contemplation of the past in four aspects: admiring the ancients' merit and virtues, lamenting the ancients' eternal regrets, sorrowing for personal frustration, and grieving over the passing of time.

Chapter Four explores the artistic techniques in four sections: general structure, depiction of ancient sites and
natural scenes, flashback on ancient personalities and historical events, and expression of emotions.

I wish to express my greatest gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Hsiao Wang Kuo-Ying (巋虛望僑英), lecturer of the Department of Chinese Studies, National University of Singapore, for her kind encouragement, invaluable guidance and constructive criticism.

Chapter Five critically evaluates Du Fu's poems, basing on the conclusion drawn in the last two chapters. The effects of his poems on later poets are also discussed.

The final chapter concludes with a summary of the findings, emphasising the values of Du Fu's poems of contemplation of the past that make him outshine other poets in the same field. My appreciation also goes to teachers and friends who have contributed to the successful completion of this academic exercise.