Abstract

Cao Tang was not highly notable among poets in the Tang dynasty. However, his writing represents a landmark in the history of youxian poems. This research is a study of Poet Cao Tang’s “Longer Poems on Roaming in Transcendence” focusing on its expansion and evolution of the youxian tradition. Cao Tang who had made overwhelming achievements in writing youxian poems lived in the Late Tang period. Having evolved from Han, Wei and six Dynasties, youxian poetry, which is a special genre of the Chinese classical literature, had reached its culmination in the High Tang period. However, Cao Tang exploited and innovated this genre in many different aspects.

Cao Tang failed the imperial examination several times. His official career is not smooth. He had never climbed up to a high official position, but kept on floundering around different military commissioners. He used to study Taoism in his youth, and he reverted to secular life later. The record of his life story is seldom discovered in historical documents. This is an obstacle for studying about him and his poems.

In addition to introduction and conclusion, this research altogether is divided into four main parts. Part one briefly introduces history of the youxian poetry as a genre. This introduction helps to analyze Cao Tang’s poems from a historical perspective by putting it in the history of the genre. Part two discusses the expansion and evolution of Cao Tang’s “Longer Poems on Roaming in Transcendence” in terms of their content. Main influential factors for the content evolution
such as Cao Tang’s Taoism background have been considered in this part. Part three discusses the expansion and evolution of the set of poems in terms of the artistic expression, in particular, the narrative method and poetics images. In Part four, Cao Tang’s unique sense of time will also be discussed.