ABSTRACT

The Qing Dynasty was well known for literary criticism. Many monographs were written during this golden period. Most of the unknown writers were long forgotten due to the immense production of literary criticism monographs during this particular period.

Mao Xian shu (毛先舒) AD 1620-1688, was a literary figure in early Qing Dynasty. He was born in Zhejiang province. He refused to serve the Qing government after the latter overruled the Ming Dynasty. His scholastic studies consist mainly of poetry and literary criticism writings. His literary criticism work Shi Bian Di (诗辩坻) was being neglected during and after this period.

Shi Bian Di focused mainly on the criticism of poetry before Mao Xian shu's time. His literary theory centred on Ge (格) and Fa (法). He stressed the importance of feelings “Qing” (情), content “Zhi” (质), subtlety “Han Xu” (含蓄), naturalness “Zi Ran” (自然), depth without density “Dan Yuan” (淡远) as well as the vigour of style “Feng Gu” (风骨). Besides emphasizing the prose style of the poetry, he also paid great attention to the rules governing the writing of poetry. Furthermore, he stresses the close relationship among the writers, poets and the readers.

However, because of the negligence of Mao Xian shu and Shi Bian Di, there were not many treatises in the study of Shi Bian Di. Therefore, I have to use the source materials in the study of Mao Xian shu's Shi Bian Di. By doing so, I hope to achieve my aim in enhancing the status of Mao Xian shu and his Shi Bian Di.

It is hoped that the study will stimulate readers' interest in Mao Xian shu and his contribution to Chinese literary criticism.