Abstract

“Shui Shi Yuan” (《水 石 缘》) was a novel written by Li Chun Rong (李春荣) in 1774 A.D. A typical novel of the "scholar-beauty romances" genre, it told the story of the pursuit of an ideal wife by a talented young scholar with the help of predictions by a monk with mythical powers.

In a rather predictable style alike to its counterparts of the same genre, the story unfolded told a tale of triumphs and ended with a blissful and happy setting with the scholar marrying three other wives other than the virtuous "beauty", as well as emerging as the "top-scholar" in the Imperial Examinations.

However, the theme of living in reclusion even after winning the top title in the Examinations was an aspect to be explored further. Other interesting observations included the topic on the differences in status and treatment for different "beauties" in the novel, the influences of Buddhism and a few other literary works on the novel and so on.
My thesis will be focusing on these aspects of the novel as well as the connection between the author and his work. In Chapter One, I will briefly describe the story and its author's background. In Chapter Two, I will proceed to discuss on the topics regarding the author and the prominent relationship between him and the story as well as the characters. In Chapter Three, I will be focusing on three aspects of the narrative structure of the story.

In Chapter Four, my emphasis will be on the main male character of this novel or the "scholar". It was not only due to that the storytelling was revolving around the scholar, but also due to the significance that he was the symbolic representative of the author in his fictional ideal world, conveying his thoughts. Then in Chapter Five of this thesis, I will analysis the characters of the four wives of the scholar in terms of their social identities and their roles in the novel. Last but not least, I shall briefly discuss in Chapter Six the connections between other literary works and this novel.