Abstract

Su-shi (苏轼), better known as Dong-po (东坡), his literary name, was a literary giant in the Song Dynasty. He was an all-rounder in most literary genres. He not only attained mastery in calligraphy, short proses and traditional poems, Shi (诗), he also reigned supreme in that golden age of Ci (词), surpassing his predecessors and contemporaries.

In the history of Chinese Ci, there were generally two styles of writing, the "concise and subtle" (wan-yue,婉约) and the "free and powerful" (hao-fang,豪放). The former was regarded as the original characteristic style of Ci, whereas the latter was credited to Su-shi's creation.

The aim of this thesis is to bring more attention to Su-shi's "wan-yue" Ci as most people tend to be overwhelmed by his contributions towards the "hao-fang" Ci, thus overlooking the equal superiority he also achieved in its "wan-yue" counterpart. The intention of the present writer is to give readers a clearer picture of the extent on the contributions and influences of Su-shi in the history of Ci, especially in the "wan-yue" style of writing.

This thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter One is the introduction, stating the purpose and scope of the study. Chapter Two studies the external reasons that caused Su-shi's attempt in writing the "wan-yue" Ci. One of the reasons was the path of development of "wan-yue" Ci and the status it had in that literary environment; another reason was the influence caused by the political background and social life-style of that historical era. Chapter Three examines the internal reasons, particularly the poet's personal life, that also contributed to Su-shi's "wan-yue" style. One of the reasons was the effect of the poet's life experience and feelings on his style of writing since these two areas would inevitably constitute to one's different styles; another reason was highlighted on his insights into Ci and the traditional Shi as a family, thus enabling him to write Ci in the same way as he wrote Shi, that is, to blend in the characteristics of Shi into Ci. Last but not least, Chapter Four focuses on his contributions towards the development of "wan-yue" Ci. Firstly, he enlarged the artistic conception to allow a larger scope of themes to be written. Secondly, he changed the distasteful image of the traditional "wan-yue" Ci by expressing his true feelings. Lastly, the poet injected his philosophical thinking into the poems, so as to attain a broader view not only available in "hao-fang" Ci, but also allowed in "wan-yue" Ci. Chapter Five is the conclusion with a summary of the main points of the thesis.