ABSTRACT

The Northern folksongs of the Northern and Southern Dynasties (A.D. 386 - 581) consist of the following three main categories:

1. Liang gu-jiao-heng-chui qu 梁鼓角横吹曲
2. Za-qu ge-ci 杂曲歌辞
3. Za-ge-yao-ci 杂歌谣辞

These folksongs flourished in the mid- and lower-regions of the Yellow River, are distinguished by an air of vigour and simplicity, characteristic of the Northern Chinese.

Though smaller in number than the Southern folksongs, they, nevertheless, are of high literary value. With their wide-ranged theme and content, they not only reveal various thoughts and feelings of the common folks, but reflect a realistic picture of a society tinted with nomadic bearings. A study of their diction, syntax, structure and rhetorical devices can further prove that the achievements of those anonymous song-makers in artistic technique are also distinctive. In fact, it was these folksongs that had kept the literary scene of the North alive. The contemporary poets and those of later generations had successfully adapted its form and style in their own works, and thus greatly enriched the Chinese literature as a whole. There is little doubt that its long narrative ballads and five- or seven-syllabic lyrics（长篇叙事诗，五、七言抒情小诗）were the forerunners of the five- and seven-syllabic songs（五、七言歌行）and the Quatrains（五、七言绝句）of the T'ang dynasty.