ABSTRACT

Wang Chang-ling (王昌龄 698? - 756?) was a famous poet of the Tang Dynasty (618 - 907). Called the "Master of Poets" (Shi jia fu zhi 诗家夫子) by his contemporaries, he composed poems on various themes with great artistry, but he excelled in depicting scenes from the far frontiers and the life of the garrison soldiers. Despite his achievements and great popularity during his time, the early textual history of his collection was obscure and the study on his frontier poems was less developed when compared to his contemporaries like Kao Shi (高适 702 - 765) or Chen Shen (岑参 714 - 770).

Thus, it is the objective of this academic exercise to study his frontier poems and to establish their values.

This study begins with an introductory chapter which defines frontier poems and highlights the objectives and approach of the current research.

Chapter two discusses the literary background of Wang's frontier poems and considers the social background of Wang Chang-ling's period.

In the next chapter, the themes and contents of Wang's frontier poems are analysed in five aspects: the exotic scenes of the frontier, the heroic spirit of the soldiery, the war-weariness of the garrisons, the yearning between the soldiers and their love-lorn women and the satiric comments on the government's policy.

Chapter four explores the artistic techniques in three sections: depiction of frontier scenes, portrayal of the garrison and expression of emotions.
Chapter five critically evaluates Wang Chang-ling's poems and the final chapter concludes with a summary of the findings.

The findings in this academic exercise help to establish the reputation of Wang Chang-ling as one of the masters of this literary genre.