ABSTRACT

Zhangji ( 张籍 | 766 A.D. ? -- 830 A.D. ?) was born in turbulent mid-Tang ( 中唐 766 A.D. -- 826 A.D.), when the imperial court was suffering a decline. Immediately after the An-Shih rebellion ( 安史之乱 755 A.D. -- 763 A.D.), the country's economic condition deteriorated and arrogant warlords kept defying central authority. Besides, there were constant aggressive wars waged by intruders into the empire. All these problems brought untold misery to the common folks and Zhangji, who did not attain much in his official career after acquiring his scholarship, underwent similar misfortunes.

Being poor, he had ample opportunities of contacting the poor people and knowing their grievances and the grave differences that had developed between the rule and ruled. Hence, his poems, especially Yueh-Fu-Shih ( 乐府诗 ) and Gu-Shih ( 古诗 ), mainly depicted the days of insecurity and the people's sufferings, and voiced his criticism of corrupt officials and the people's expectations.

This academic exercise attempts to study Zhangji's life history and works. It comprises seven chapters: the introductory chapter provides the background of the study; chapter two discusses the era in which Zhangji lived; chapter three introduces his life, family, personality and friends; chapter four collates major themes found in his poems; chapter five evaluates the artistic features of his poems, one of which is their
similarity to folk songs; chapter six comments on his influences on fellow and later poets; and the final chapter gives a summary and conclusion.

Despite all the adverse conditions, Zhangji never allowed his political consciousness or concern for the people to decline. His poems, besides providing a link between Du Fu (712 A.D. -- 770 A.D.) and Bai Juyi (772 A.D. -- 846 A.D.), are also a precious heritage of Chinese culture.