SUMMARY

During the Tang Dynasty (618-906), China became the hub of the Western world. The splendour and the subsequent decline of the Tang period are reflected in its poetry. The Tang Dynasty is commonly recognised as the Golden Age of Chinese poetry. The progress of Tang poetry may be divided into four periods, as distinguished by different styles and a differing spirit. These four periods are called the Early Tang, High Tang, Mid Tang and Late Tang respectively. Although Tang Poetry reached the zenith of its glory in the works of Li Bai and Wang Wei, it continued to flourish and change in the second half of the dynasty. An impressive number of poets wrote during this period and the poetic output was larger than ever before. Moreover, the later poets were by no means imitators of the earlier masters; they either branched out in new directions towards realism, social criticism, aestheticism and symbolism or extended the art of narration.

Qian Qi (713? -785?) was one of the many important poets of the Mid Tang period. He left to posterity more than 430 poems. However, living between the High Tang and Mid Tang periods, he was overshadowed by the great poets of Li Bai, Du Fu and Wang Wei of High Tang and the popular poet Bai Juyi and prominent minister-poet Han Yu of the Mid Tang. Therefore the scholars of Tang poetry considerably neglected Qian Qi. QianQi sought to break away from the poetics of the High Tang, which gave attention to a style of extreme refinement and density, and to substitute a style embodying the simplicity, naturalness and respect for speech rhythms. His efforts to introduce reform in poetic style made him the leader of an important school of poets called Da Li Talents.

This thesis is a comprehensive study of the all-rounded poet Qian Qi. He was highly recommended by Gao Zhongwu, who recognised Qian Qi as Wang Wei’s successor because of his achievements. However, to do a research on Qian Qi’s poems, we have to evaluate his life, his encounters and his thinking from different points of view. Altogether there are nine chapters in this thesis. The first chapter is an introduction, stating the objectives, scope and methods of study.

Chapter Two is a study of Qian Qi’s life. According to the textual researches of experts like Mr Fu Xuanrong, Mr Jiang Yin, Mr Wang Dingzhang and Mr Wu Qiming, a report of Qian Qi’s place of origin and his actual birth date and death date have been verified although these were not specifically recorded in literary history.
Chapter Three clarifies the historical background, and development of ‘Da Li’ s Ten Scholars’ and the concept of ‘Da Li’ s Poems Characteristics’ so as to further understand the style of Qian Qi’ s poems.

Chapter Four focuses on Qian Qi’ s collections of poems. Throughout the changes in time, Qian Qi’ s works had been combined and mixed with his son’ s as well as great grand son’ s poems and also the poems of other poets. Thus, this chapter lists the actual works written by Qian Qi with the aid of different textual criticism and researches from various expertises.

Chapter Five reveals the influences of Xie Tiao and Wang Wei on Qian Qi’ s poems. Also included is a comparison of their styles of writings.

Chapter Six probes into the characteristics of Qian Qi’ s poems, as well as classifies his 430 poems into six main themes. This chapter also analyses his objectives and his feelings.

Chapter Seven studies the writing skills and techniques of Qian Qi. In addition, this chapter verifies his artistic attainments from the study of his different artistic writing conceptions, for instance, the straight forward style of writing, analogy and language refinement.

Chapter Eight emphasizes the unique art of language in Qian Qi’ s poems. His success had greatly contributed to the development of poems and had highly influenced his followers.

Chapter Nine, the Conclusion, begins with a summary of the main points of the thesis. This is followed by an understanding of the literary trends in Mid Tang Dynasty and the analysis of Qian Qi’ s writing skills after going through books, essays and reports of various experts.

The last section concludes with a summary of the achievements made by Qian Qi with reference to his unique artistic writing conceptions, which I feel, should be given more importance and recognition.

An analysis of the various aspects of his poetry and a comparative study of his works with those of Wang Wei’ s, a contemporary and close friend, will be helpful in understanding his poetry and full evaluation of his artistic achievements. It may also bring us many insights into his contributions to the renovations in poetic form, theme and expression of poetry.