ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a study of Singapore-Malayan Chinese poems over the period of 1959-1965. This phase was a significant turning point in the development of Singapore-Malayan Chinese poems. Since the year 1919, the main stream of Singapore-Malayan Chinese poetry was social realism. Modernist poetry emerged in 1959 and transformed the language and style of Singapore-Malayan poetry. It subsequently became firmly established by the end of the decade, despite great hostility from poets whose work was based on social realism. These two different trends of development in Singapore-Malayan poetry led to an intensified literary exchange between the poets who supported different views of writing.

This dissertation comprises of six chapters. The first chapter is about the objective, significance and scope of the thesis. The second chapter provides an overview by introducing the development of Singapore-Malayan Chinese poems from 1959 to 1965. The third chapter introduces the background, the various poets and the kind of work associated with the two different styles of poetry writing, i.e. social realism and modernism. The fourth chapter gives a detailed analysis of the intensified literary exchange between the poets supporting the different trends, its background and its cause-and-effect. The fifth chapter analyses the different concerns of poets associated with the two trends of poetry writing, their art form and style of poems from different perspectives such as content, structure and language. The final chapter assesses the significant contributions of the poets, the future direction and likely obstacles of the Singapore-Malayan Chinese poems.

In this dissertation, the writer attempts to trace the development of Singapore-Malayan Chinese poems by analysing the underlying factors, mindsets of the poets, impact of the two different styles of poetry writing, i.e. social realism and modernism. The writer’s opinions, feedback, summary and detailed analyses on some of the phases in the development and issues of literary exchange between the poets supporting the different trends are also incorporated to provide a complete, objective and comprehensive picture.
After the Singapore-Malayan Chinese poetry diverged into two different directions in the year 1965, how the poetry of the two countries started off from a common foundation and their subsequent development, resulting similarities and differences are some areas that the writer proposes for future research.