

Examples of Silk Road Poetry

Chinese

Silk Road Poems by Li Bai

Poems by Li Bai (Tang dynasty). During China's long history there have been long periods of turbulence and conflict along her Western and Northern borders due to attacks by Huns, Mongols, Tibetans, Uighers, Manchurians, and others. Soldiers sent to lonely and dangerous posts guarding the border and their loved ones are the subject of these compassionate poems by China's greatest poet:

Moon over Mountain Pass

A bright moon rising above the Tien Shan Mountains,
Lost in a vast ocean of clouds.
The long wind, across thousands upon thousands of miles,
Blows past the Jade Gate Pass.

The army of Han has gone to protect us,
As the barbarian hordes attack us
It is known that from the battlefield
Few of our men will live to return

Men in lonely outposts look on the border scene,
Home thoughts deepen the sorrow on their faces.
In the towered chambers tonight,
Ceaseless are the women's sighs

Tzu-yeh Song

Chang-an -- one slip of moon;
In ten thousand houses, the sound of fulling mallets.

Autumn winds keep on blowing,
all things make me think of the Jade Pass !

When will they destroy the barbarian army
and let my good man come home from his far campaign?

Note: The Jade Gate, near Dun Huang on the Gobi Desert, is often considered a symbol of hardship and tragedy. The Han army is Chinese, Fulling mallets are used to pound fabric traditionally a woman's job.