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# A NOTE ON CH'EN LIANG'S TZ'U

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The\* eminent political philosopher Ch'en Liang<sup>1</sup> also occupies an eminent place in Chinese literature. Not only did he write a distinctive and much emulated prose style but also his contributions to poetry are of a very high order. To be sure, Ch'en was never a writer of Shih poems. He remarked himself once:

'All my life I was never able to compose shih poetry nor was I ever able to judge its depth or value.'<sup>2</sup>

His collection actually contains just two poems, both of them command poems written after he had attained his *chuang-yüan*<sup>3</sup>. The *Adenda* have one more poem on the flowering plum<sup>4</sup>.

However, shih poetry did not always leave him as uninspired as this remark might indicate. He did not think highly of barren exercises in shih prosody, but the personality of one great poet, Li Po, infused him with reverence, if not awe. He once, in 1159, wrote the 'Song of the Banished Immortal' *che hsien ko* [1] in the introduction to which he states:

'Sitting alone in a clear night, when Heaven and Earth do not emit a sound and the constellations perform their orbits, I indulged in the pleasure of reading the *Collected Works* of Li Po. I recited aloud several pieces, none of them fits into what has been considered through the ages as words about the way of man. His rhapsodic stanzas and

\* The numbers in square brackets refer to the list of characters at the end of the article.

1. 1143-1194. See 'The Heresies of Ch'en Liang' in: *Asiatische Studien* 11 (1957-58, issued 1960), 102-112, for a short summary of Ch'en's biography and his political thought.

2. In: Sang Tse-ch'ing-shih-chi *hsü* [7], *Collected Works* 14. For Ch'en's *Collected Works* the Chin-hua ts'ung-shu edition has been used; for Ch'en's *tz'u* the edition of Hsia Ch'eng-t'ao [8] and Mou Chia-k'uan [9], *Lung-ch'uan tz'u chiao-chien* [10], Shanghai, 1961.

3. *Collected Works* 17. See Teng Kung-san, *Chen Lung-ch'uan chuan*, Chungking 1944, p. 150.

4. *Mei hua shih* [11], *Collected Works*, *pu-i*.

leisurely verses are full of vigor and come from an unrestrained mind, solitary for several hundred years, a lone pacer swinging his whip. Among those whom I revere and love, T'ai-po is unique. This I have bemoaned since long and I hate to see that nobody was able to continue T'ai-po's heritage. I have therefore composed the Song of the Banished Immortal as a prayer to T'ai-po and I lift my goblet to offer a libation to T'ai-po. And if T'ai-po has a soul, he will hear my word and know my kind.'<sup>5</sup>

As he states in the song: it is not Li Po's ease with the rules of prosody which makes him in Ch'en's judgment venerable but the fact that in his poetry a great and unbridled personality is reflected.

In his songs, however, Ch'en has shown himself not just a great poet but a poet of a high degree of prosodic sophistication. The *Tz'u-p'u* gives two of his songs as models for new patterns and three others for their distinctive variations. What inspired Ch'en's prosodic skill in the song form might have been his ear for music and possibly even his personal musicianship. He shared with other Sung writers, as the *Tz'u-p'u* once remarks, a finesse in the handling of tunes which made him alter given tunes and invent new ones<sup>6</sup>. The song patterns introduced by him are refined to a degree that he has found no match among later writers; among these song patterns is the *Ts'ai feng fei*<sup>7</sup>.

Ch'en himself once justified his song writing in a rather playful vein:  
'I am living in leisure and without any pressure to exert myself;

5. *Che-hsien ko hsü* [12], *Collected Works* 17.

6. *Tz'u-p'u* 13, 5r.

7. [13], also called *Ts'ai-feng-wu* [14], dedicated to an unidentifiable Ch'ien Po-t'ung [15]. *Tz'u-p'u* 19, 18 r, Hsia and Mou 15 v. The other pattern of which Ch'en was the first author is the *Jui-yün-nung man* [16], *Tz'u-p'u* 33, 19 r; Hsia and Mou 12 r (Hsia and Mou read *hsüeh* [17] for *yün*), which is a birthday song for Lo Tien, Tzu Ch'un-po [18], biography Sung-shih 393. Lo, at that time heading the Department of the Army, had helped out when Ch'en was imprisoned in 1190. Types for which the *Tz'u-p'u* lists Ch'en's distinctive variations include the (*Chuan-tiao*) *T'a-sha-hsing* [19], *Tz'u-p'u* 13, 4 v; Hsia and Mou 24 r, the *Tsui-kao-lou* [20], *Tz'u-p'u* 19, 13 v; Hsia and Mou 24 v, a song in praise of the flowering plum; and the *Kuei-chih-hsiang* [21], *Tz'u-p'u* 29, 12 r; Hsia and Mou 10 r, dedicated to Lü Tsu-ch'ien [22].

but for the sake of old friends of my generation, I wanted to collect 30 recent songs<sup>8</sup> so that they might become known to posterity. They are based on local patois and popular expressions and are mixed in with the gossip of the streets and the songs of the byways. Some general principles are kneaded into them and the Classics have been raided for their sake in order to provide a laugh for the heroes of a hundred generations.'<sup>9</sup>

Ch'en Liang's song writing must have been quite extensive if we are to believe a remark of Yeh Shih that he left four chüan of them. The traditional editions, including the one in his Collected Works, contain 30 pieces. More have however been culled from other sources. Hsia and Mou's corpus of Ch'en's songs contains 64 pieces which still might be far short of the original number.

There are songs of a varying nature in this collection. There are a great number of so-called «cultivated» songs which were frequently sent as messages to friends, many of them as birthday congratulations. Even with Chu Hsi, Ch'en exchanged habitually such birthday messages in spite of their violent disagreement in matters of ideology. Recent observers usually single out for special mention his pathetic and heroic pieces which in strength come close, and at times surpass, those of Hsin Ch'i-chi. Hsia considers the ones he sent to Hsin after their meeting at the Goose Lake [2] in 1188 as his most distinguished. This meeting had taken place to discuss strategy in promoting their common aim: the revitalization of the political atmosphere. Chu Hsi had also been expected there but had chosen to remain aloof. Apparently much more transpired at this encounter than the establishment of common political goals. Hsin Ch'i-chi once reminisced about it in the following way:

'Ch'en Liang came from Tung-yang [3] and passed by my place,

8. This statement has given rise to the speculation that the traditional selection of 30 pieces was done by Ch'en Liang personally. Hsia argues with good reasons against this suggestion.

9. *Yü Cheng Ching-yüan t'i-kan* [23], *Collected Works* 21.

staying for ten days. Together we wandered to the Goose Lake, expecting to meet Chu Hsi at Tzu-ch'i [4]<sup>10</sup> but he did not come having drifted back toward the east. On the day (Ch'en and I) had parted, a feeling of strong attachment pervaded my mind and I decided to go after him. When I arrived at the Heron Forest (Lu-ssu-lin [5]) however, the snow was deep and the mud slippery and I could not proceed any farther. Alone I sat drinking at the small village, dejectedly, for a long time, hating that I was retained and could not follow him. In the middle of the night I requested hospitality at the Ch'üan-hu Ssu-wang-lou [6] of the Hu family and I heard a neighbor play the flute mournfully. Then I recited the song "The Young Swallow flies"<sup>11</sup> to express what I had on my mind. Five days later a letter arrived from Ch'en Liang in which his song was enclosed. That our minds harmonized to this extent gives rise to laughter which can be heard for a thousand miles.'<sup>12</sup>

What has aroused commendation of songs like these is, of course, the strength of their patriotic emotions. Some of Ch'en's lyrical pieces, however, show a degree of poetic density which was achieved by few, if any, of his contemporaries. Ch'en's personality and his own mood merge here superbly with the flavor of the song.

10. On the border between Kiangsi and Fukien.

11. *Ju yen fei* [24], another name for the *tz'u* pattern *Huo-hsin-lang* [29], which Ch'en Liang had used.

12. Hsin's introduction to his *Huo-hsin-lang*.

*Shui-tiao-ko-t'ou* [25]

Sent to Chu Hsi on his birthday on the 15th of the 9th moon of the kuei-mao year (1183) (This was Chu Hsi's 54th birthday)

(Hsia and Mou 2 r)

Personalities are rare, indeed!

For whom does the chrysanthemum next to the fence display its  
This day last year<sup>1</sup> [yellow?

Leaning against the tower<sup>2</sup> we were waiting for the time to act or to  
Forgetful of the vagrancy of hoarfrost and wind [withdraw,

We enjoyed the watery halo of the moon,  
And our concerns extended with the clear sky.

Our discussions joined with those of the Shu and the Ssu<sup>3</sup>  
And we poured libations for Yao and Shun.

The company was not drunk yet,  
Songs turned pliantly,  
Rising softly and then strongly.

As to the plans to bring about peace,  
We derided their bumpiness, almost going mad over it.  
Now my thoughts go toward that hidden spot in Wu-i,<sup>4</sup>  
Where you sit, withdrawn,<sup>5</sup> in the midst of clouds and mist,  
And your leisurely thoughts enter the subtle and the boundless.  
Wanting to wish you a long life,  
Where do I find a new tune?

1. Ch'en Liang had visited Chu Hsi the year before.

2. Taking up Tu Fu's line [26]. The reference is to *Lun-yü* 7, 10, Legge, p. 197.

3. [27] i.e. the teaching of Confucius and Mencius.

4. Chu Hsi had the year before built himself an abode in the Wu-i [28] mountains in Fukien.

5. There might be a slight reproach intended here.



*Ho-hsin-lang* [29]  
Sent to Hsin Ch'i-chi  
(Hsia and Mou 6 v)

Now that I have left you for good, on whom can I rely for my con-  
All I see are a few marvels turned into stinking corpses<sup>1</sup> [versation?  
A few furs in summer and a few fine fibred gowns in winter.  
From the elders, how many do remain in Ch'ang-an today?  
Once they are dead there is no revenge they can take,  
And still their hair, grown at that time, is not yet parched.<sup>2</sup>  
How baneful the twenty five string zither!<sup>3</sup>  
Reviewing the world of man, where is there a moon which would  
Toyed with by Hunnish women, [condone division?  
The zither in the Han palace.  
How can trees even thus bear repeated separation!  
When I recently was together with you,  
That was an occasion when our talks fitted well.  
Now that I am gone, this has to be put aside beyond concern.  
Who exchanges elegant skin for silly bones?<sup>4</sup>  
But let not the sound of Po Ya's strings be extinguished!  
Cinnabar sand, turned nine times, yields definite results.<sup>5</sup>  
Just take care that pure gold does not<sup>6</sup> turn out to be ordinary iron.

1. Reference to a passage in *Chuang-tzu*, *Chih pei yu*.

2. A quote from Ch'en's own *Chung-hsing lun* where the image is used to convey never dying determination to recover the lost territory.

3. *Han-shu*, *Chiao-ssu chih* [30], referring to the melancholy sound of the 50 string zither [31], when struck by the girl musicians. The Emperor told them to stop but they continued, whereupon the Emperor broke the zither so that only 25 strings were left. This image has frequently been used in Chinese poetry.

4. According to *Chin-shu*, *Mu-yung Ch'ao tsai-chi* [32], there was a proverb: An elegant skin does not cover silly bones, which Mu-yung Ch'ao declared to be misleading.

5. *Pao-p'u-tzu*, *Chin-tan*, Feifel in *Monumenta Serica* 9 (1944) 16-17: If you turn cinnabar sand once, you will achieve immortality after three years, if you turn it twice, after two years ... if you turn it nine times, after three days.

6. Reading *pu* for *chih* [33] following a Ming manuscript.

When the dragon joins the tiger,  
Their matched roar is splitting.

*Spring Sorrow*

Tune: *Yü-mei-jen* [34]

(Hsia and Mou 19 v)

The east wind whirling, light clouds in strands,  
The season sends whistling rain.  
To the pavilion next to the pond the swallows have recently returned,  
With a beakful of fragrant mud,  
Its moisture containing faded flowers, they fly.  
Crabapples along scattered paths providing scented ornaments,  
Time passing has changed into the old age of spring.  
At dusk on the courtyard willows chattering crows,  
And I recall with whom I plucked pear blossoms in this same month.

*Loathsome Spring*

Tune: *Shui-lung-yin* [35]

(Hsia and Mou 19 r; Hu Yün-i, *Sung Tzu-hsüan* 320–321)

Where the noisy flowers are deepest, a storied building,  
The painted curtain half rolled up, a soft east wind.  
Spring returns, kingfisher green, to the paths between the fields,  
Sedge sprouting delicately,  
Weeping willows in faded gold,  
Late in the season<sup>1</sup> the flowers urging on.  
Thin clouds, the rain has just stopped,  
Light chill, then light warmth.  
How I loathe this scented world!  
The wanderer remains unrewarded,  
Everything is committed  
To the orioles and swallows.

1. *Shih* 154,2 and 168,6. Waley p. 164 and 125.



In my loneliness I climb high and think afar.  
 Toward the southern tower the honk of a returning wild goose.  
 The meadow game played with golden hairpins,<sup>2</sup>  
 The horse reined with black silk threads,<sup>3</sup>  
 Drifting winds and scattered clouds.  
 Tied with a gauze ribbon, distributed perfume,<sup>4</sup>  
 Wrapped in a green kerchief, accumulated tears.<sup>5</sup>  
 What heaps of sorrow!  
 Thus, then, the soul is overwhelmed<sup>6</sup>  
 This mist and a faded moon,  
 And the cuckoo's voice trailing off.

2. The meadow game was played by kids on the 5<sup>th</sup> of the 5<sup>th</sup> moon. Golden hairpins is an expression for concubines. The meaning might also be that the silly kid's game is played with a much too precious instrument.

3. According to the *Yüeh-fu* song *Mo shang sang* [36], black thread was meant to dress up a horse's tail, and gold should be used as a bridle.

4. Tied as a farewell present would be.

5. Shed after separation.

6. From Chiang Yen's *Pieh-fu*.

## LIST OF CHARACTERS

- |           |             |
|-----------|-------------|
| 1. 謫仙歌    | 19. [轉調]踏莎行 |
| 2. 鵝湖     | 20. 最高樓     |
| 3. 東陽     | 21. 桂枝香     |
| 4. 紫溪     | 22. 呂祖謙     |
| 5. 鷺鷥林    | 23. 與鄭景元提幹  |
| 6. 泉湖回望樓  | 24. 乳燕飛     |
| 7. 桑澤卿詩集序 | 25. 水調歌頭    |
| 8. 夏承燾    | 26. 行藏獨倚樓   |
| 9. 牟家寬    | 27. 洙泗      |
| 10. 龍川詞校箋 | 28. 武夷      |
| 11. 梅花詩   | 29. 賀新郎     |
| 12. 謫仙歌序  | 30. 郊祀志     |
| 13. 彩鳳飛   | 31. 瑟       |
| 14. 彩鳳舞   | 32. 慕容超載記   |
| 15. 錢伯同   | 33. 不, 只    |
| 16. 瑞雲濃慢  | 34. 虞美人     |
| 17. 雪     | 35. 水龍吟     |
| 18. 羅點春伯  | 36. 陌上桑     |