

The Estate of Shi Chong  
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Already in the Western Jin period, wealthy persons created large gardens on their private estates. The most famous garden owner of this period is Shi Chong 石崇 (249–303),<sup>1</sup> whose Jingu yuan 金谷園 (Golden Valley Garden) was the most lavish country estate in the Luoyang area, if not the entire realm.<sup>2</sup> Shi Chong was the son of Shi Bao 石苞 (d. 273), a wealthy and powerful supporter of the Sima clan at the end of the Wei dynasty. Shi Chong was the youngest of Shi Bao's six sons. When Shi Bao was on his deathbed, he distributed his property to all of the sons except for Chong on the grounds that he had the ability make a fortune on his own. About age twenty-five (ca. 274–275), Shi Chong obtained his first official post, that of prefect of Xiuwu 修武 (modern Xiuwu, Henan), where he earned a reputation as a capable administrator.<sup>3</sup> A year or so later, he then went to the capital where he served as cavalier attendant-in-ordinary.<sup>4</sup>

Ca. 278, Shi Chong took up the post of governor of Chengyang 城陽 (equivalent to the southeastern portion of the Shandong peninsula) located in the area of Qingzhou. In 280, he led an army to victory over forces from Wu and was rewarded with the noble title of Marquis of Anyang xiang 安陽鄉.<sup>5</sup> Soon thereafter, he resigned his post on grounds of illness. However, two years later (282) he took up a position at court as gentleman of the palace gate.<sup>6</sup> In this capacity, he was in charge of transmitting court documents. After his elder brother Shi Tong 石統 was pardoned for having offended the Prince of Fufeng 扶風, Sima Jun 司馬駿 (232–286), some court officials wanted to have Shi Tong punished because his younger brother Chong failed to thank the emperor for his mercy. Chong addressed the throne with a petition in defense of his brother, and no more was made of the

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<sup>1</sup> Shi Chong has a biography in *Jin shu* 33.1004–8. For an annotated translation see Hellmut Wilhelm, “Shih Ch’ung and His *Chin-ku yuan*,” *Monumenta Serica* 18 (1959): 315–27.

<sup>2</sup> For a good account of the Jingu yuan see Wang Duo 王鐸, “Dong Han, Wei Jin he Nanbeichao de Luoyang yuanlin 東漢、魏晉和北魏的洛陽園林,” *Zhongguo gudu yanjiu* 7 (1991): 117–20.

<sup>3</sup> On this date, see Lu Kanru 路侃如, *Zhonggu wenxue xinian* 中古文學繫年 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1985), 2: 665. See also Cao Daoheng 曹道衡 and Shen Yucheng 沈玉成, *Zhonggu wenxue shiliao congkao* 中古文學史料叢考 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2003), 122.

<sup>4</sup> See Lu Kanru, *Zhonggu wenxue xinian*, 2: 669.

<sup>5</sup> For this date, see Lu Kanru, *Zhonggu wenxue xinian*, 2: 694.

<sup>6</sup> For this date, see Lu Kanru, *Zhonggu wenxue xinian*, 2: 705.

matter.<sup>7</sup>

In the late 280's, Shi Chong rose to the positions of cavalier attendant-in-ordinary and palace attendant.<sup>8</sup> According to his biography in the *Jin shu*, “because Chong was the son of a meritorious official, and he had a capacity as a good administrator, Emperor Wu held him in high regard.”<sup>9</sup> In 290, Emperor Wu died. The grand tutor Yang Jun 楊駿 (d. 291) served as regent for the young Emperor Hui 惠 (r. 290–306). Shi Chong and He Pan 何攀 presented a petition to Emperor Hui protesting the excessive rewards given to Yang Jun and his cohorts.<sup>10</sup> After his advice was not accepted, Shi Chong was sent out to Jingzhou 荊州 (modern Hubei and Hunan) as inspector. He also held the military titles of gentleman general of the south and colonel in charge of the Southern Man.<sup>11</sup> While in Jingzhou, Shi Chong extorted money and goods from traveling merchants and in this way amassed a large fortune.<sup>12</sup> He became one of the wealthiest men of his time. However, Shi Chong may have acquired wealth even earlier. According to the monograph on “food and money” in the *Jin shu*, when the Jin conquered Wu in 280, the invading armies “took millions of cash, depleted the resources of the Three Wu regions and took control of the resources of Shu that had been accumulated over a thousand years.... Thereupon, Wang Kai 王愷, Wang Ji 王濟, Shi Chong and others competed in boastful displays. The splendor of their conveyances, apparel, and eating vessels rivaled that of the imperial court.”<sup>13</sup> Wang Kai, the younger brother of Empress Wenming 文明, wife of Emperor Wu's father Sima Zhao 司馬昭 (211–265),<sup>14</sup> was a wealthy man who competed with Shi Chong in displays of ostentation. Cao Daoheng and Shen Yucheng

<sup>7</sup> For a text of the petition see *Jin shu* 33.1005.

<sup>8</sup> Lu Kanru gives the dates of 284 and 286 respectively for these appointments. See *Zhonggu wenxue xinian*, 2: 710, 716.

<sup>9</sup> See *Jin shu* 33.1006.

<sup>10</sup> See *Jin shu* 33.1006, 45.1290–91.

<sup>11</sup> See Lu Kanru, *Zhonggu wenxue xinian*, 2: 734, who establishes the date of Shi Chong's petition as 290.

<sup>12</sup> See *Jin shu* 33.1006: “When Chong was in Jingzhou, he extorted from merchants who were traveling afar on business”; and the *Jin shu* of Wang Yin 王隱: “When Shi Chong served as inspector of Jingzhou, he extorted and robbed, and killed people. He amassed a great fortune.” See *Shishuo xinyu jianshu* 30.877.

<sup>13</sup> See *Jin shu* 26.783.

<sup>14</sup> See *Jin shu* 33.1006 and Yu Jiayi 余嘉錫, ed. and comm., *Shishuo xinyu jianshu* 世說新語箋疏 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1993), 2: 879, commentary citing *Jin zhu gong zan* 晉諸公贊. For a translation see Richard Mather, *Shih-shuo Hsin-yü: A New Account of Tales of the World* (1976; rpt. and rev. Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, The University of Michigan, 2002), 495.

point out that Shi Chong was already competing with Wang Kai some years before he went to Jingzhou, and thus he must have acquired his riches in 280 when he participated in the expedition against Wu.<sup>15</sup>

Throughout the 290's, Shi Chong maintained a close friendship with Jia Mi 賈密 (d. 300), the nephew of Empress Jia 賈 (d. 300), who was the real power behind the throne during the reign of Emperor Hui (r. 290–306). Shi Chong was a member of Jia Mi's literary coterie known as the "Twenty-four Companions of Jia Mi." The group included many of the most prominent writers of the time, including Pan Yue 潘岳 (247–300), Lu Ji 陸機 (261–303), and Zuo Si.<sup>16</sup> In 300, both Shi Chong and Pan Yue were arrested for their alleged participation in a plot against Sima Lun 司馬倫 (d. 301), who had assumed de facto control of the imperial court. Pan Yue and Shi Chong were both executed in the marketplace.

Shi Chong actually had two estates, the more famous Jingu Garden located on the Jingu Brook 金谷澗 northwest of Luoyang,<sup>17</sup> and a second estate north of the Yellow River in the area of Heyang 河陽.<sup>18</sup> In 296, Shi Chong hosted a large party at

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<sup>15</sup> See *Zhonggu wenxue shiliao congkao*, 121. Lu Kanru dates the competitions between Shi Chong and Wang Kai from 286 while Emperor Wu, who provided luxury goods to Wang Kai, was still alive. See *Zhonggu wenxue xinian* 2: 716–17.

<sup>16</sup> On this group see Zhang Guoxing 張國星, "Guanyu Jin shu 'Jia Mi zhuan' zhong de 'Ershi si you'" 關於晉書賈謐傳中第二十四友, *Wen shi* 27 (1986): 207–17; Shen Yucheng 沈玉成, "Zhulin qixian' yu 'Ershisi you'" "竹林七賢" 與 "二十四友", *Liaoning daxue xuebao* 106 (1990): 40–44; Xu Gongchi, "Shi Chong yu 'Ershisi you'" 石崇與"二十四友", *Wei Jin wenxue shi*, 327–333; Deng Fushun 鄧福舜, "Ershisi you wenren jituan xingcheng shijian kao" 二十四友文仁集團形成時間考, *Daqing gaodeng zhuanke xuexiao xuebao* 15.1 (1995): 47–51; Zhang Zhenlong 張振龍, "'Ershisi you shi Jia Mi yuanyin chutan'" "二十四友"事賈謐原因初探, *Yindu xuekan* (1998: 3): 39–74; He Yuhong 何玉紅, "'Ershisi you' yu Xin Jin shiren jingsheng fengmao" "二十四友"與西晉士人精神風貌, *Gansu lilun xuekan* 147.2 (2002): 70–73; Zhang Aibo 張愛波, *Xi Jin shifeng yu shige—yi 'Ershisi you' yanjiu wei zhongxin* 西晉士風與詩歌—以 "二十四友" 研究為中心 (Ji'nan: Qi Lu shushe, 2006).

<sup>17</sup> The Jingu Creek was a tributary of the Gu River 穀水 that flowed east of Luoyang. See Yang Shoujing 楊守敬 and Xiong Huizhen 熊會貞, ed. and comm., *Shui jing zhu shu* 水經注疏, Duan Xizhong 段熙仲, punc. and coll., Chen Qiaoyi 陳橋驛, re-coll. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1989), 16.1384. The site of Shi Chong's estate has been located in the southern foothills of the Beimang Mountains near modern Mengjin 孟津, Henan. See Zhang Shiheng 張士恆, "Jingu yuan yizhi kao yi" 金谷園遺址考異, *Mengjin shihua* 孟津史話 (Mengjin: Mengjin xian zhi zongbian shi, 1988), cited in Wang Duo, "Dong Han Wei Jin he Bei Wei de Luoyang yuanlin," 119, n. 1.

<sup>18</sup> Heyang was located north of the Yellow River northwest of modern Meng 孟 county, Henan. This estate is often confused with the Jingu estate. However, Shi Chong makes a clear reference

Jingu attended by high officials and prominent men of the area who gathered there to pay tribute to Shi Chong and another official who was about to depart for Chang'an. Thirty of the participants composed poems, and Shi Chong wrote a preface to the poems in which he describes the estate.<sup>19</sup> He gives the location of his villa as ten *li* (4.175 km) from the Luoyang city wall in the outskirts of Henan prefecture, thus placing it in the northwestern suburbs of the capital. The garden was not simply a pleasure park, but seems to have had an agricultural and economic function. Shi Chong mentions that his fields extended for ten *qing* (110.4 acres). He also had an orchard, a bamboo grove, fishponds, and an herb garden as well as chickens, pigs, geese, ducks, and two hundred goats. Shi Chong's estate must have been a thriving economic unit, for it had thirty sites where water-mills were installed.<sup>20</sup> He also owned over eight hundred slaves.<sup>21</sup> Beginning in the third and fourth centuries, ownership of water mills, fields, and slaves was an indication of great wealth.<sup>22</sup>

Shi Chong used the Jingu Garden to entertain guests. At the gathering in 296, the guests roamed about the estate climbing hills to look at the view or sitting together on the edge of a stream. They listened to music played by zithers and mouth organs (*sheng* 笙). Each person was obliged to compose a poem. Whoever could not write a

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to the Heyang estate in his "Si gui yin xu" 思歸引序 (Preface to Song of Longing to Return) in *Wen xuan* 45.2041: "I then retired to my villa in Heyang." The *Jin shu* of Wang Yin in the commentary to *Shishuo xinyu* 36/1 (see Yu Jiayi, *Shishuo xinyu jianshu*, 924) also says that at the time of Shi Chong's execution his home was north of the Yellow River. This must refer to Heyang, which was on the north bank of the Yellow River. It could not be Jingu, which was south of the Yellow River in the northwestern suburbs of Luoyang. For a more detailed discussion see David R. Knechtges, "Jin-gu and Lan Ting: Two (or Three) Jin Dynasty Gardens. In Christoph Anderl and Halvor Eifring, eds. *Studies in Chinese Language and Culture*. Festschrift in Honour of Cristoph Harbsmeier on the Occasion of His 60<sup>th</sup> Birthday (Oslo: Hermes Academic Publishing, 2006), 395–406.

<sup>19</sup> The longest portion of the text is found in the commentary to *Shishuo xinyu* 9/57. See Yu Jiayi, *Shishuo xinyu jianshu*, 1993), 529. There are two reconstructed texts: Yan Kejun 嚴可均, *Quan shanggu sandai Qin Han Sanguo Liuchao wen* 全上古三代秦漢三國六朝文 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), "Quan Jin wen" 全晉文, 33.13a; and Sun Xingyan 孫星衍, *Xu Guwen yuan* 續古文苑 (Taipei: Dingwen shuju, 1973), 11.634–44. Previous translations include Wilhelm, "Shih Ch'ung and His Chin-ku-yüan," 326–27 (complete); and Mather, *Shih-shuo Hsin-yü*, 284–85 (the portion of the text preserved in the *Shishuo xinyu* commentary).

<sup>20</sup> See Wang Yin's *Jin shu* cited in *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1960), 763.10a and *Jin shu* 33.1008.

<sup>21</sup> See *Jin shu* 33.1008.

<sup>22</sup> See Lien-sheng Yang, *Studies in Chinese Institutional History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), 130.

poem had to drink three *dou* (6.5 quarts) of wine. The only complete poem that survives is by Pan Yue, “Jingu ji zuo shi” 金谷集作詩 (Poem Written for the Jingu Gathering).<sup>23</sup>

The preface reads:

In Yuankang 6 [296]<sup>24</sup> I left the office of chamberlain of the imperial stud as an emissary, and I was given credentials authorizing me to supervise military affairs in Qing and Xu [modern Shandong, northern Anhui and Jiangsu] with the title General of Caitiff Campaigns. I have a villa on Jingu Creek on the outskirts of Henan county. It is ten *li* 4.175 km] from the city wall, and it has ten *qing* [121 acres] of fields. The terrain is both high and low and there are limpid springs, lush groves, diverse fruit trees, bamboo, cypress, and medicinal herbs. Two hundred head of goats and such creatures as chickens, pigs, geese, and dogs are all fully supplied. There also are water mills, fishponds, caves in the ground, and all things to please the eyes and gladden the heart. The chancellor and General of the Western Campaigns Wang Xu was about to return to Chang’an,<sup>25</sup> and thus I and various distinguished gentlemen escorted him to the creek. Day and night we roamed and feasted, frequently shifting our sitting places. Sometimes we climbed to a high place and looked down, other times we sat together at the edge of a stream. Occasionally seven-stringed and twenty-five stringed zithers, mouth organs, and bamboo zithers joined us in the carts, and were played together on the road. When we halted, I had each one take turns performing with the orchestra. Then each person composed a poem in order to express his feelings. Whoever

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<sup>23</sup> See *Wen xuan* 20.977–78. For an attempt to discover which guests attended this gathering see Zhang Jinhui 張金輝, “Jingu you yan renwu kao” 金谷游宴人物考, *Fudan xuebao* (Shehui kexue ban) (2001: 2): 128–32.

<sup>24</sup> The *Shui jing zhushu* (16.1384) reads Yuankang 7 (297). Virtually all scholars accept the date of Yuankang 6 as authoritative. See Lu Kanru, *Zhonggu wenxue xinian* 2: 761.

<sup>25</sup> Wang Xu 王詡, courtesy name Jiyin 季胤, was a native of Langye. The *Wangshi pu* 王氏譜 (Genealogy of the Wang clan) says that Wang Xu was a younger brother of Wang Yifu 王夷甫 = Wang Yan 王衍—256–311. See Yu Jiayi, *Shishuo xinyu jianshu* 14.612. In Yuankang 6 (296) Wang Yan held the position of *lingjun jiangjun* 領軍將軍 (general of the palace guard). In Yuankang 7 (297) he was appointed *shangshu ling* 尚書令 (director of the imperial secretariat). See Qin Xigui 秦錫圭, *Bu Jin zhizheng biao* 補晉執政表, *Ershi wushi bubian* 二十五使補編 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1957), 3375.

could not do so paid a penalty of drinking three *dou* [6.5 quarts] of ale. I was moved by the impermanence of human life, and I was fearful of not knowing when someone might “wither and fall.” Thus, I have recorded the official titles, names, and ages of those who were present. Following this information, I have copied the poems. I hope someone of a later time who is interested will read them.

There are altogether thirty persons. Su Shao,<sup>26</sup> age fifty, of Wugong in Shiping, tutor to the Prince of Wu, court gentleman for consultation, Marquis within the Pass, was at the top of the list.

余以元康六年，從太僕卿出為使，持節監青、徐諸軍事、征虜將軍。有別廬在河南縣界金谷澗中，去城十里，有田十頃。或高或下，有清泉茂林，衆果竹柏藥草。羊二百口，雞豬鵝鴨之屬，莫不畢備。又有水碓、魚池、土窟，其為娛目歡心之物備矣。時征西大將軍祭酒王詡當還長安，余與衆賢共送往澗中，晝夜遊宴，屢遷其坐。或登高臨下，或列坐水濱。時琴瑟笙筑，合載車中，道路並作。及住，令與鼓吹遞奏。遂各賦詩，以敘中懷。或不能者，罰酒三斗。感性命之不永，懼凋落之無期。故具列時人官號、姓名、年紀，又寫詩著後。後之好事者，其覽之哉。凡三十人，吳王師、議郎、關中侯、始平武功蘇紹字世嗣，年五十，為首。

Shi Chong was also known for his extravagance. The *Xu Wenzhang zhi* 續文章志 (Sequel to the Treatise on Literature), a work of the early fifth century, says the following about the extent of Shi Chong’s riches:

Shi Chong’s assets and property amounted to many tens of thousands of gold pieces, and his dwellings, conveyances and horses presumptuously emulated those of the royal house. His kitchen produced the best delicacies of water and land. His concubines numbered in the hundreds, and they all were draped in silks and embroideries, and had ear ornaments made of gold and kingfisher plumes. The artistes of his string and pipe orchestra were the elite of the time. In constructing pavilions and digging ponds, he fully exercised all manner of

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<sup>26</sup> Su Shao 蘇紹 (247–300) was the grandson of Su Ze 蘇則 (223), who served as palace attendant under Cao Pi after the founding of the Wei dynasty. Su Shao’s father, Su Yu 蘇愉, was known for his loyal devotion and his wise advice. He rose to become grand master of splendid happiness.<sup>26</sup> Shi Chong was married to Su Shao’s elder sister, and an elder sister of Shi Chong was married to Su Shao. See *Shishuo xinyu jian shu* 9.529 (9/529).

human ingenuity. He competed with members of the consort clan such as Wang Kai and Yang Xiu in displays of extravagance.<sup>27</sup>

Although this figure may be an exaggeration, one source says that Shi Chong kept on his estate several thousand female servants and entertainers.<sup>28</sup> According to one near contemporary account, Shi Chong's privy was more like a large bedroom. It was decorated with scarlet curtains, and was equipped with a large bed, cushions, and mats. Maidservants were stationed there to help guests with their ablutions.<sup>29</sup>

Shi Chong describes his Heyang estate in the "Preface to the Song of Longing to Return." He portrays it as a refuge from the troubles and burdens of service at the court. In contrast to the preface to the Jingu gathering, this does not seem to be a place of large social gatherings, but rather a refuge from the turmoil and annoyances of court life. It is also a place where he engages in Taoist macrobiotic practices such as performing breathing exercises and ingesting various herbs and elixirs:

In my youth I had great ambition, and wished far to outdistance the common folk. After being capped [at age twenty], I advanced to the court, where I spent twenty-five years in office. At age fifty, I was dismissed from my post because of a certain matter.<sup>30</sup> In my later years I all the more engaged in carefree abandon, and I was quite fond of woods and meres. I then retired to my villa in Heyang. This is how my dwelling is laid out:

The rear is blocked by a long dike, and the front overlooks a limpid waterway. Cypress trees nearly number ten thousand, and flowing water circles beneath the house. There are towers and pavilions, ponds and pools, where I raise fish and birds. My family long has been practiced in the musical arts, and we have not a few singers from Qin and Zhao. When I went out I went sightseeing, fowled, and fished, and when at home, I had the pleasures

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<sup>27</sup> See Yu Jiayi, *Shishuo xinyu*, 882.

<sup>28</sup> This is from a near contemporary account by Wang Jia 王嘉 (d. ca. 390). See Qi Zhiping 齊治平, ed., *Shi yi ji 拾遺記* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), 9.214, which says that "Shi Chong's [female] attendants numbered several thousand beauties."

<sup>29</sup> See Zhou Lengqie 周楞伽, ed. and comm., *Pei Qi Yulin 裴啟語林* (Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 1988), 43–44.

<sup>30</sup> Here Shi Chong must be referring to the dismissal from his position as supervisor of military affairs in Xuzhou and Qingzhou for having insulted Wang Dan during a drinking bout. See *Jin shu* 33.1006. Shi Chong began his official career around age twenty-five, and he was about age fifty when he was dismissed from his position in Xuzhou and Qingzhou. For this date see Lu Kanru, *Zhonggu wenxue xinian*, 2: 770.

provided by zither and books. I was also fond of ingesting elixirs and performing breathing exercises. My goal lay in attaining immortality, and I proudly assumed the manner of soaring the clouds. However, I suddenly again have become entangled in worldly affairs,<sup>31</sup> and I now loiter and linger in the official ranks. Distressed by the annoyances and corruption of the human world, and constantly longing to return home, I heave long sighs. I have read through various musical pieces and found the “Song of Longing for Return.” Presumably the ancients’ feelings are the same as ours today, and thus they composed this tune. This tune had music but no lyrics. Now I have composed lyrics in order to relate my feelings. I regret that there is now accomplished musician who could compose new music and convey the tune by means of strings and reeds.<sup>32</sup>

余少有大志，夸邁流俗。弱冠登朝，歷位二十五年。年五十，以事去官。晚節更樂放逸，篤好林藪，遂肥遁於河陽別業。其制宅也，却阻長堤，前臨清渠。百木幾於萬株，流水周於舍下。有觀閣池沼，多養魚鳥。家素習技，頗有秦趙之聲。出則以游目弋鈎爲事，入則有琴書之娛。又好服食咽氣，志在不朽，傲然有凌雲之操。歎復見牽羈，婆娑于九列，困於人間煩黷，常思歸而永歎。尋覽樂篇，有《思歸引》，儻古人之情，有同於今。故制此曲。此曲有弦無歌，今爲作歌辭，以述余懷。恨時無知音者，令造親新聲而播於絲竹也。

The following is the “Song of Longing for Return” that has been transmitted under Shi Chong’s name:

[Singing?] the tune of “Longing to Return,”	思歸引，
I return to Heyang.	歸河陽。
Lending me their wings,	假余翼，
The swan and crane soar on high.	鴻鶴高飛翔。
I traverse the hills of Mang, <sup>33</sup>	經芒阜，
I cross the Yellow River bridge.	濟河梁。
I gaze upon my old lodges	望我舊館，
And my heart rejoices.	心悅康。
The waters of the limpid sluiceways pulse,	清渠激，
Fish dart to and fro.	魚彷徨。

<sup>31</sup> This refers to Shi Chong’s appointment as chamberlain for the palace garrison

<sup>32</sup> *Wen xuan* 45.2041

<sup>33</sup> These are the mountains located directly north of Luoyang.

Wild geese startled by backward flowing waves,	雁驚汭波
Swim together in flocks.	羣相將。
All day I gaze around	終日周覽
And my joy is beyond compare.	樂無方。
I climb a cloud-capped pavilion,	登雲閣，
Where arrayed are ladies like the Ji and Jiang.	列姬姜。
They play strings and reeds,	拊絲竹，
Tap tunes to <i>gong</i> and <i>shang</i> .	叩宮商。
Feasting at a scenic pond,	宴華池，
We drink from jade goblets. <sup>34</sup>	酌玉觴。

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<sup>34</sup> See *Yiwen leiju* 42.765; *Yuefu shiji* 58.838; Lu Qinli 1: 643–44.