

王方宇：朱奪世說新語詩

## Chu Ta's "Shih Shuo Hsin Yu" Poems

By Wang Fang-yu

Translated by Aileen Huang Wei and Wang Fang-yu

*Not explainable, then do not explain it.  
Not explaining, then resolve it without explanation.\**  
不可解，則可不解。不解，以不解解之。

### I. What kind of a book is Shih Shuo Hsin Yü?

*Shih Shuo Hsin Yü* is a fascinating book about life and conversation among the Chinese upper classes during the period from the last years of the later Han dynasty to the end of Chin (A.D. 200-419). Most of the stories in this book are based on contemporary records, written in a style and vocabulary that was largely derived from the colloquial of the time. This collection of lively anecdotes can help us understand the life and thought of the people of the period. It is a rare document, unique in Chinese literature. The editor of this book was Liu I-ch'ing 劉義慶 (403-444), himself nearly contemporaneous with the persons whose stories he compiled.

The language of *Shih Shuo Hsin Yü* is not easy to understand, and there are misprints in the book. Also, the stories themselves are not entirely reliable. Therefore, when the book first appeared many tried their hands at annotating it. Most notable of these was Liu Hsiao-piao 劉孝標 (462-521), who was born 59 years after the birth of

the editor Liu I-ch'ing. In his detailed notes he quoted profusely from books which are now lost, without adding much commentary of his own. He simply used quotations from other books to reveal the mistakes in the text. For this reason bibliographers and other scholars who have studied *Shih Shuo Hsin Yü* have high praise for Liu Hsiao-piao's annotations.

### II. Why was Chu Ta an avid reader of Shih Shuo Hsin Yü?

It is easy to see the reason why the artist Chu Ta 朱奪 (Pa-ta-shan-jen 八大山人) was fond of reading *Shih Shuo Hsin Yü*. The life and art of the people in the Chin dynasty, such as the celebrated "Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove", are held in high esteem by later scholars. They are impressed by the independent way of life of the recluse. Chu Ta admired the calligraphy of Wang Hsi-chih 王羲之 and Wang Hsien-chih 王獻之, the paintings by Ku K'ai-chih 顧愷之, the poetry and prose of Ts'ao Ts'ao 曹操, Ts'ao Chih 曹植 and others of the Chien-an school, and the eloquence of the Buddhist-Taoist Chih Tun 支遁 and the drunkard Liu Ling 劉伶, and he found himself a kindred spirit to all the eccentric persons who could not fit into society. It follows that he liked reading about them in this book. He would memorize many passages in *Shih Shuo Hsin Yü* and readily use phrases from them in his own poetry. Sometimes,

This is an abbreviated translation of the original article which appeared in the Hong Kong magazine *Ta Ch'eng* 大成, September 1975.

\*This quotation, source unknown, epitomizes the difficulty of rendering into English the artist's cryptic poems, which were based in turn on some of the more obscure stories found in the book *Shih Shuo Hsin Yü*.

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**Plate 50** STONE PAINTING by Chu Ta. *An Wan Album*. The inscription: "*I heard you can play the flute well . . .*"

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**Plate 51** FISH PAINTING by Chu Ta. *An Wan Album*. The inscription: “‘Gentlemen! What lake is this?’ . . .”

in composing his poems, one such allusion would lead to another, and he would often by association refer to personal incidents that could not be discussed openly for political reasons. He had already formed the habit of using cryptic, metaphorical expressions in all his works; his poetry was no exception. This makes the meaning of his poems very obscure. Trying to understand them is like doing detective work. Some of these poems contain clues which help us get a very clear idea of what he was talking about. With others, we can at best achieve only a partial understanding.

### III. An attempt to explain Chu Ta's Shih Shuo Hsin Yü poems

The eight poems and one colophon discussed in this article are all concerned with stories found in *Shih Shuo Hsin Yü*. Some of them are quite obvious in meaning, while others are not so clear. Some of the references are difficult to understand because when Chu Ta was writing he associated them with other matters on his mind. Others are difficult because Chu Ta misinterpreted the meaning of the text in *Shih Shuo Hsin Yü*.

(1) A poem inscribed on a stone painting on one of the leaves in the An Wan album 安晚册, collection of Sumitomo, reads—

聞君善吹簫(笛)

wen chün shan ch'ui ti  
[hear/you/well/blow/flute]

已是無蹤跡

yi shih wu tsung chi

[already/be/no/trace]

乘舟上車去

ch'eng chou shang ch'e ch'ü

[board/boat/mount/carriage/leave]

一聽主與客

yi t'ing chu yü k'e

[one/listen/host/and/guest]

This poem is based on a story about Wang Hui-chih 王徽之 (the son of Wang Hsi-chih) and Huan Yi 桓伊. Huan Yi was a famous flute-player who later rose to be a general. The story appeared in *Shih Shuo Hsin Yü*, Section 23—

Wang Hui-chih was leaving the capital, and was

still in his boat moored by the riverside. Formerly he had heard that Huan Yi played the flute well, but had never met him. It happened that Huan passed by along the bank of the river while Wang was in his boat. Someone who knew Huan reported to Wang that it was Huan Yi. So Wang sent a man to Huan, saying: "Wang Hui-chih has heard that you are a good flute player. Will you play for him?" Huan Yi, who was already a high official at the time, had heard about Wang Hui-chih also. So he came down from his carriage, sat on his couch and played three tunes. When he had finished playing he got on his carriage and left. Throughout the host and the guest exchanged not a word.

王子猷出都，尚在渚下，嘗聞桓子野吹笛，而不相識。遇桓於岸上過，王在船中，客有識之者云：「是桓子野。」王便令人與相問云：「聞君善吹笛，試爲我一奏。」桓時已顯貴，素聞王名，即便迴下車，踞胡牀，爲作三調；弄畢，便上車去。客主不交一言。

This poem may be rendered as follows:

*I heard you can play the flute well,  
But there was no trace of you anywhere.  
You boarded the boat, then left by  
carriage.  
Just listening—the host and the guest.*

(2) A second poem, inscribed on a fish painting in the An Wan album, collection of Sumitomo, reads—

左右此河水

tso yu ts'i he shui  
[left/right/this/river/water]

名之曰曲阿

ming chih yueh ch'ü ah

[name/it/say/Ch'ü-ah]

更求淵注處

keng ch'ü yüan chu ch'u

[even more/seek/water/flow into/place]

料得晚霞多

liao te wan hsia tuo

[suppose/get/evening/clouds/much]

This poem is based upon a story concerning Hsieh Wan 謝萬. When he was at Yunyang, he saw the Ch'ü-ah (crooked) Lake and had a conversation with his subordinates about it. This story appears in *Shih Shuo Hsin Yü*, Section 2—

Hsieh Wan passed the crooked Ch'ü-ah Lake and asked his subordinates: "What lake is this?" They answered: "Ch'ü-ah Lake." Hsieh said: "So the water can stay here and will not flow away."

謝中郎經曲阿後湖，問左右：「此是何水？」答曰：「曲阿湖。」謝曰：「故當淵注滄海，納而不流。」

"Gentlemen! What lake is this?"

"It's named Ch'ü-ah (crooked)."

"Where then does it lead?"

There are probably many clouds at sunset.

(3) Inscribed on a dog painting in the An Wan album, collection of Sumitomo, there is this poem—

林公不二門  
lin kung pu erh men  
[Lin/Kung/no/second/door]

出入王與許  
ch'u ju wang yü hsü  
[exit/enter/Wang/and/Hsü]

如上法華疏  
ju shang fa hua su  
[resemble/present/Saddharma-/Pumdarika/  
commentary]

象喻者籠虎  
hsiang yü che lung hu  
[look like/illustrate/that which/cage/tiger]

This poem involves a number of stories in *Shih Shuo Hsin Yü*. The association is rather complicated. In the first place, the picture is that of a dog. The pronunciation of the Chinese character for dog 狗 is *kou*. In Section 4 of the book there is a story about Wang Kou-tzu 王苟子 whose other name is Wang Hsiu 王修. Immediately before and after this passage there are several stories about discussions on Buddhism and Taoism logic, most of which demonstrate the eloquence and intelligence of Chih Tun 支遁 (314-366). Having read these stories, and having associated them in his mind with the dog that he painted, he then composed this poem.

In the first line, 林公不二門 *lin kung pu-erh men*, Lin Kung is another name of Chih Tun. A priest of both Buddhism and Taoism, Chih Tun, sometimes called Chih Tao-lin 支道林, was much

admired by his contemporaries for his intelligence and wisdom. He was very good at clarifying vague points of metaphysics and was also a skilled debator.

*Pu-erh-men* is a Buddhist term, meaning the "one undivided truth", "the Buddha-truth", "the unity of the Buddha-nature". In Section 4 of *Shih Shuo Hsin Yü* there is this story—

Chih Tun established the "Theory of Rupanishun-yata". He showed his work to Wang T'an-chih, but Wang didn't say anything. Chih Tun asked: "Do you accept it by silence?" Wang T'an-chih said: "Since Manjusri isn't here, who can appreciate my silence?"

支道林造即色論，論成，示王中郎；中郎都無言。支曰：「默而識之乎？」王曰：「既無文殊，誰能見賞？」

The meaning of the conversation is clarified by a paragraph of *Vimalakirti Sutra* which was quoted by Liu Hsiao-piao—

Manjusri asked Vimalakirti: "When is the Bodhisattva said to attain the Buddha-truth?" Vimalakirti kept silent. Then Manjusri said with a sigh, "This must indeed be the true state of having entered the 'door of the Buddha-truth!'"

What Wang T'an-chih meant was: "Look, when Vimalakirti kept silent, Manjusri understood him. But now that there isn't a Manjusri here, who could understand my silence?" He was a little sarcastic toward Chih Tun. This passage is the origin of the first line of this poem.

The second line is 出入王與許 *ch'u ju wang yü hsü*. Wang is Wang Hsiu 王修, or Wang Kou-tzu 王苟子, who liked to debate; Hsü is Hsü Hsun 許詢. The two of them discussed and debated with Chih Tun frequently. There is a very interesting story in *Shih Shuo Hsin Yü* about their debating—

When Hsü Hsun was young, people compared him with Wang Hsiu. Hsü Hsun felt it was unfair and became very disturbed. At that time Chih Tun and many other people were gathered in the Western Temple for a discussion. Wang Hsiu was also there. Hsü Hsun was very angry and went to the Western Temple to debate with Wang Hsiu, wanting to see who could do better. Hsü Hsun gave Wang Hsiu a hard time, and Wang Hsiu eventually lost. Hsü Hsun then challenged Wang Hsiu to switch positions and debate again, but again Wang Hsiu lost. After that, Hsü Hsun asked Chih Tun: "What do you think of my argument?"

Chih Tun very casually said: "Your statements were good all right, but why must they be so harsh? How could those kind of remarks be considered logical criticism?"

許掾詢年少時，人以比王荀子，許大不平。時諸人士及林法師，並在會稽西寺講，王亦在焉。許意甚忿，便往西寺與王論理，共決優劣；苦相折挫，王遂大屈。許復執王理，王執許理，更相覆疏，王復屈。許謂支法師曰：「弟子向語何似？」支從容曰：「君語，佳則佳矣，何至相苦邪！豈是求理中之談哉！」

In the third line, 如上法華疏 *ju shang fa hua su, fa-hua* is Saddharma-pumdarika or the Lotus Sutra. In this line, I presume that Chu Ta particularly

referred to the "three vehicles" in the Lotus Sutra. In Section 4 of *Shih Shuo Hsin Yü*, there is this story—

To explain the "three vehicles" is not an easy job. Once, when Chih Tun was at the altar, he explained them very clearly. It seemed everybody understood them. But after he had finished, the people in the audience started discussing them, and they could only understand two vehicles. When they talked about the third one, they became confused again.

三乘佛家滯義，支道林分判，使三乘炳然；諸人在下坐聽，皆云可通。支下坐，自共說，正當得兩，入三便亂。

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Plate 53 COLOPHON  
by Chu Ta. *An Wan Album*. "Between the sixth and fifteenth of the fifth month in the summer of the year Chia-hsu [1694], I painted these sixteen leaves for T'ui Weng. . . ."

"Vehicle" is an instrument for reaching a goal. The so-called "three vehicles" means there are three ways to reach Nirvana. If we try to explain it as two vehicles, "great vehicle" (Mahayana) and "small vehicle" (Hinayana), it would be easier to understand. "Small vehicle" means to acknowledge the misery of human life and to try to suppress one's desires. In order to reach Nirvana, he may be enlightened by Sravaka or by Pratyekabuddha. These two, although they are thoroughly different channels, are both "small vehicles". The "great vehicle" means not only to save oneself but also to save others; the purpose is to have all people reach Nirvana. If one has this intention, he must go through the path of Manjusri. In other words, basically there are "two vehicles". But the "small vehicle" may be subdivided into two more vehicles, Sravaka and Pratyekabuddha. The results are: great vehicle, middle vehicle and small vehicle.

The fourth line is 象喻者籠虎 *hsiang yü che lung hu*. It is possible that Chu Ta, at this moment, because of seeing the "dog" which he had painted, thought of another story.

There is a story in Section 6 of *Shih Shuo Hsin Yü* that goes—

Emperor Wei Ming-ti had a tiger. He had the tiger's teeth and claws removed, and displayed the beast to the people in a field. Wang Jung who was only seven years old was among those who went to look. The tiger grabbed the railings of his cage and roared very loudly. The spectators were all frightened and fell over one another backwards. But Wang Jung stood there, motionless and not afraid.

魏明帝於宣武場上，斷虎爪牙，縱百姓觀之。王戎七歲，亦往看，虎承間攀欄而吼，其聲震地，觀者無不辟易顛仆，戎湛然不動，了無恐色。

Taking into account all the above references,

the poem can be rendered thus—

*Chih Tun's supreme theory,  
Concurs with Wang Hsiu and Hsü Hsun.  
As mystical as explaining the Lotus Sutra,  
This puppy resembles the caged tiger.*

In the colophon of the An Wan album, there are also a number of lines relating to a story in *Shih Shuo Hsin Yü*. The colophon may be translated as follows—

Between the sixth and fifteenth of the fifth month in the summer of the year Chia-hsü [1694], I painted these sixteen leaves for T'ui Weng. I put them in the cabinet, but one painting of lotus flowers was stolen by someone the next day. Where did it go, that has been put away in the cabinet? I may compare this instance with the Chin person asking the "water-and-mirror" (lucid) Yueh Kuang concerning the meaning. Yueh Kuang used the handle of his fly whisk to touch the table, and asked: "Has it arrived?" The person answered: "Yes." If it has "arrived", how come it has "gone?" I write this anecdote for you to get a laugh. (Signed) Pa-ta-shan-jen.

甲戌夏，五月六日以至既望，爲  
退翁先生採此十六副，筒中。翌日示之，已被人竊去  
荷花一副，筒中之物，何處去也？比之晉人問旨於樂  
廣水鏡，廣直以塵尾柄確几，曰：「至不？」客曰  
「至。」若至，那得去也？  
書附  
高明一笑  
八大山人

Yueh Kuang was known for his ability to use very few words to clarify a point. All his contemporaries praised him for this.

In Section 8 of *Shih Shuo Hsin Yü*, there is this incident—

Wang Yi-fu had said: "I have always felt that I was too wordy when I talked with Yueh Kuang.

王夷甫自嘆：「我與樂令談，未嘗不覺我言爲煩。」

As to addressing Yueh Kuang as "lucid," a story also appears in Section 8 to the following effect—

When Wei Po-yü was in the position of minister, he saw Yueh Kuang in a discourse with the scholars. Wei Po-yü was amazed, and said: "I have always been afraid that the good words would be extinguished after the ancient people were gone. But

now I can hear them from you." He commanded his students to visit Yueh Kuang and said to them: "This person is a person of "water-and-mirror" (lucid). When you see him, you will feel that the misty cloud is erased and you can see the blue sky."

衛伯玉爲尚書令，見樂廣與中朝名士談議，奇之曰：「自昔諸人沒已來，常恐微言將絕，今乃復聞斯言於君矣！」命子弟造之，曰：「此人人之水鏡也，見之若披雲霧覩青天！」

The story which Chu Ta referred to in his colophon is in Section 4 of *Shih Shuo Hsin Yü*—

There was a guest of Yueh Kuang who asked him about the meaning of "*chih pu chih*". Yueh Kuang did not analyze the sentence. He directly used the handle of his fly whisk to touch the table and said: "Has it arrived?" The guest said: "Yes." Yueh Kuang then lifted the handle and said: "If it has arrived, how come it has gone?" Then the guest understood and admired his method of explanation. Yueh Kuang can use few words, but he makes his meaning clear. There are other instances like this.

客問樂令「旨不至」者。樂亦不復剖析文句，直以塵尾柄確几曰：「至不？」客曰：「至。」樂因又舉塵尾曰：「若至者，那得去？」於是客乃悟服。樂辭約而旨達，皆此類。

The important point in this story lies in the meaning of the phrase "*chih pu chih*". It seems that Chu Ta did not understand it, although Liu Hsiao-piao indicated the origin of this statement. Chu Ta wrote in his colophon:

晉人問旨於樂廣水鏡  
*chin jen wen chih yü yueh kuang shui ching*

In this sentence, the character 旨 *chih* stands for "meaning".

It is true that 旨 may be used in this sense, and there are many instances in *Shih Shuo Hsin Yü* in which 旨 is used to mean "meaning". But in the original text of *Shih Shuo Hsin Yü*, the first line reads:

客問樂令旨不至者  
*k'e wen yueh ling chih pu chih che*  
[guest/ask/Yueh/Kuang/"chih/pu/chih"/one that]  
*There was a guest of Yueh Kuang who asked him about "chih pu chih".*

Chu Ta punctuated this line thusly:



客問樂令旨，不至者  
*k'e wen yüeh ling chih , pu chih che*  
 [guest/ask/Yüeh/Kuang/the meaning/pu/chih/one that]  
*There was a guest of Yueh Kuang who asked  
 him about the meaning of "pu chih".*

The problem is with the character 旨 *chih*, which is used as a variation of 指 *chih*.

In the texts of *Chuang Tzu* and *Lieh Tzu*, the written forms of this phrase appear as 指不至, not 旨不至. However, in *Shih Shuo Hsin Yü*, it is 旨不至.

The meaning of the phrase 指不至 may be explained as follows:

The 指 *chih* in 指不至 *chih pu chih* means: "to have a definite and unchangeable concept". Since all things constantly change, then a permanent

concept of objective reality (physical universe) is impossible. If one has a definite and unchangeable concept, then that concept will never reflect objective reality 不至. That is why Yueh Kuang asked when the handle of his fly whisk touched the table: "Has it arrived 至不?" After the guest answered: "Yes 至", he moved the handle away from the table and asked again: "If it has arrived, how come it has left now?" The implication is that everything is continuously changing.

This argument was raised by Kung-sun Lung 公孫龍 and appeared in several philosophical texts of the Warring States period. In *Chuang Tzu* and *Lieh Tzu* this parable is discussed at length. Since Liu Hsiao-piao used excerpts from both *Chuang Tzu* and *Lieh Tzu* in his annotation, he apparently knew that the 旨不至 in *Shih Shuo Hsin Yü* is the

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Plate 54 CALLIGRAPHY  
 by Chu Ta. *Authentic Works  
 by Pa-ta-shan-jen. "Midnight  
 in the studio, ..."*

same thing as the 指不至 in *Chuang Tzu* and *Lieh Tzu*. However, it seems that Chu Ta did not know that 旨 is a variation of 指. He thus wrote in his colophon 比之晉人問旨於樂廣水鏡 "I may compare this instance with the Chin person asking the 'water-and mirror' (lucid) Yueh Kuang concerning the meaning 旨."

Actually, the Chin person did not ask about 旨 *chih* but asked about 指不至 *chih pu chih*.

(4) The following poem appeared on two different album leaves: *Ta Feng T'ang Ming Chi* 大風堂名蹟, Vol. III, and *Authentic Works by Pa-ta-shan-jen* 八大山人真蹟, Vol. I—

齋閣值三更  
*chai ko chih san keng*  
[studio/pavilion/happen/third/beat]

寫得春山影  
*hsieh te ch'un shan ying*  
[paint/obtain/spring/mountain/shadow]

微雲點綴之  
*wei yün tien chui chih*  
[little/cloud/decorate/it]

天月偶然淨  
*tien yueh ou jan ching*  
[sky/moon/occasionally/clear]

The origin of the poem is in Section 2 of *Shih Shuo Hsin Yü*.

Ssuma sat in his studio at night. At that time the sky was very clear, and there were no clouds. He commented admiringly on the beautiful clear sky. Hsieh Ching-chung, who was sitting with him, said: "I feel it would be better if there were some spots of clouds." Ssuma joked with Hsieh, saying: "Is it just because you have a dirty mind that you want to smear the clear sky?"

司馬太傅齋中夜坐，于時天月明淨，都無纖翳；太傅歎以為佳。謝景重在坐，答曰：「意謂乃不如微雲點綴。」太傅因戲謝曰：「卿居心不淨，乃復強欲滓穢太清邪？」

This poem may be rendered as:

Midnight in the studio,  
Painting the spring hills.  
It would be prettier with spots of clouds,  
In the clear moonlit sky.

(5) In *Authentic Works by Pa-ta-shan-jen*, Vol. I, there is one leaf of calligraphy with a poem after a *Shih Shuo Hsin Yü* story—

亦可揚州賦  
*yi k'e yang chou fu*  
[also/may/Yang-/chou/prose-poetry]

翻思山海人  
*fan ssu shan hai jen*  
[turn/think/mountain/sea/people]

羣公未霑接  
*ch'ün kung wei chan chieh*  
[group/gentlemen/not yet/entertain]

蘭闈已回春  
*lan she yi hui ch'un*  
[Lan/She/already/return/spring]

The story behind this poem concerns the diplomatic talent of Wang Tao 王導 (276-339). The story is in Section 3 of *Shih Shuo Hsin Yü*—

When Wang Tao was the Governor of Yangchou, he gave a party. Several hundred guests were there. He went around and talked with everybody except a certain Mr. Jen from Linhai and several foreigners. Later on he casually went over to Mr. Jen and said: "Now that you have left Linhai, there are no talented people in Linhai anymore". This made Jen very happy. Then he went over to the foreigners, snapped his fingers and said: "Lan She, Lan She." The foreigners all laughed. All the guests were very happy.

王丞相拜揚州，賓客數百人並加霑接，人人有悅色；唯有臨海一客姓任，及數胡人為未洽。公因便還，到過任邊云：「君出，臨海便無復人。」任大喜悅。因過胡人前彈指云：「蘭闈，蘭闈。」羣胡同笑，四坐並權。

What does "Lan She" mean?

In *Chu-tzu Yü Lu* 朱子語錄 by Chu Hsi 朱熹, the two characters were written as 蘭奢. Definitely it is a transliteration of a foreign word. Chu Hsi's explanation is: "It is a foreign term used for praising." This fits the situation perfectly. But what is the origin of this word?

In *K'un Hsueh Chi Wen* 困學紀聞 by Wang Ying-lin 王應麟 of the Sung dynasty, the author tried to connect the sound with a Sanskrit word, "aranya". Therefore, he explained it as a variation of 蘭若. In Chinese text 蘭若 usually refers to "a

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Plate 55 CALLI-  
GRAPHY by Chu Ta.  
*Authentic Works by  
Pa-ta-shan-jen. "This  
may also be in the  
Yangchou Lyric. . ."*

temple", but "aranya" may mean "a quiet place."

The passage may be more understandable if we adopt the meaning of "praising." If we can imagine a kind of situation in which Wang Tao said something in a foreign tongue and everybody was laughing, he must have sounded like an American host speaking to a group of Chinese, saying: "Ding-hao, ding-hao."

This poem may be rendered as follows:

*This may also be in the Yangchou Lyric,  
Thinking of the strangers at the gathering.  
Just as the gentlemen felt somewhat  
neglected,  
The words "Lan She" brought them a  
touch of spring.*

(6) In a hanging scroll of calligraphy by Chu Ta collected in the *Authentic Works by Pa-ta-shan-jen*, Vol. I, this poem is carried with illustration—

漢 去 昇 平 樂  
*han ch'ü sheng p'ing yüeh*  
[Han dynasty/go/peace/music]

柏 梁 臺 上 人  
*po liang t'ai shang jen*  
[Po-liang/Terrace/on/people]

六 花 誰 受 簡  
*liu hua shuei shou chien*  
[snow/who/receive/slip of number]

七 字 總 宜 春  
*ch'i tzu tsung yi ch'un*  
[seven/words/always/suitable/spring]

This poem cannot be fully understood. But we found a story in Section 2 of *Shih Shuo Hsin Yü* which might have some relationship with it —

When Yü Chih-kung was the governor of Chingchou, he presented a feather fan to the Emperor Wu-ti. The Emperor suspected that it was a used one. One of the Emperor's close attendants, Lin Shao, said: "When Po-liang Terrace was constructed in the Han dynasty, it wasn't the Emperor who was there first, it was the workers. When the music was rehearsed, it was not the Emperor who heard it first, but Chung and Kuei. When Yü Chih-kung presented the fan to Your Majesty it is because it is good, not because it is a new one." Later on, Yü Chih-kung heard this story and said: "This person should be kept near the Emperor."

(庚釋恭)[庚叔預]爲(荊州)[豫州],以毛扇上(武帝)[成帝],(武帝)[成帝]疑是故物。侍中劉劭曰:「柏梁雲構,工匠先居其下;管弦繁奏,鍾夔先聽其音;(釋恭)[叔預]上扇,以好不以新。」庾後聞之曰:「此人宜在帝左右!」

This poem may be rendered as:

*Music of the peace of Han,  
People on the Po-liang terrace.  
Receiving favors in snow and ice,  
Seven words established spring.*

(7) In the book *Pa-ta-shan-jen and his Art* 八大山人及其藝術 by Chou Shih-hsin 周士心, one poem by the artist is cited without illustration. It reads—

西南畫史丹還轉  
*hsi nan hua shih tan huan chuan*  
[south/west/painter/pills/change/turn]

二子廬山一片心  
*erh tzu lu shan yi p'ien hsin*  
[two/gentlemen/Lu/Shan/one/stretch/heart]

畢竟阿瓜稱法護  
*pi ching ah kua ch'eng fa hu*  
[after/all/ah-/kua/call/fa-/hu]

黃冠莫定老元琳  
*huang kuan mo ting lao yüan lin*  
[taoist/not/decide/old/yüan/lin]

A colophon reads:

"The Taoist Mu-kua-yen brought a painting of Mukua by Wang Ching-pi for me."

木瓜壘道人携王荆璧先生所畫木瓜見遺老夫。

西南畫史 *hsi-nan hua-shih* (the artist from the Southwest) refers to Wang Ching-pi. 二子廬山 *erh-tzu Lu Shan*, the two gentlemen who came to Lu Shan (which is close to Nanchang), refers to the Taoist Mu-kua-yen who had the good will to come to Lu Shan with a painting by Wang Ching-pi. Ah-kua, Fa-hu and Yüan-lin are all names of Wang Hsün 王珣 (349-400), a calligrapher.

Material not available due to  
copyright restrictions.

Plate 56 CALLIGRAPHY by Chu Ta. *Authentic Works by Pa-ta-shan-jen. "Music of the peace of Han..."*

The poem does not describe nor is it directly concerned with any story in *Shih Shuo Hsin Yü*. Chu Ta is merely using the names to make a play on words in order to write some ambiguous lines. The third line of the poem may mean that, "After all, Ah-Kua is named Fa-hu, (both are names of Wang Hsün)". Since "hu" 護 means "to protect, to take care of" and "kua" 瓜 may also refer to the Taoist Mu-kua-yen, then, the same line may also mean, "The Taoist Mu-kua-yen brought a painting to me. He could be called a caretaker of the painting." The last line may be interpreted this

way: Since Yüan-lin's surname is Wang, and the painter's surname is also Wang, then this Yüan-lin really refers to the painter Wang and his work. The poem may be rendered like this:

*The southwest artist has become active  
again,  
Two gentlemen whole-heartedly visited  
Lu Shan.  
After all Ah-kua served as the protector,  
A Taoist cannot judge the work of old  
Wang.*

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Plate 57  
CALLIGRAPHY  
by Chu Ta.  
*Authentic  
Works by  
Pa-ta-shan-jen.  
"The trick  
in forging  
a sword  
is skill. . . ."*

(8) An album leaf of calligraphy in the *Authentic Works by Pa-ta-shan-jen*, Vol. II contains this statement: "This is one of the twenty poems concerning *Shih Shuo Hsin Yü*." The poem reads—

使劍一以術  
Shih chien yi yi shu  
[make/sword/one/use/skill]

鑄刀若爲筆  
chu tao jo wei pi  
[cast/knife/like/use/brush]

鈍弱楚漢水  
tun jo ch'u han shui  
[dull/weak/Ch'u-/Han/water]

廣漢淬爽烈  
kuang han ts'ui shuang lieh  
[Kuang-/Han/temper/lively/violent]

何當雜涪川  
ho tang tsa fu ch'uan  
[how/should/mix/Fu/River]

元公迺刀劃  
yuan kung nai tao hua  
[Yuan/Mr./then/sword/strike]

明明水一劃  
ming ming shui yi hua  
[clear/clear/water/one/strike]

故此八升益  
ku ts'i pa sheng yi  
[reason/this/eight/liter/add]

昔者阮神解(去聲)  
hsi che juan shen chieh  
[formerly/Juan/spirit/understand]

閣解荀濟北  
an chieh hsün chi pei  
[clear/understand/Hsun/Chi-/pei]

雅樂既以當  
ya yüeh chi yi tang  
[ceremonial classical/music/already/proper]

推之氣與力  
t'ui chih ch'i yü li  
[apply/it/air/and/force]

元公本無力  
yuan kung pen wu li  
[Yuan/Mr./originally/have no/force]

銅鐵斷空廓  
t'ung t'ieh tuan k'ung kuo  
[brass/iron/broken/emptiness]

This poem is very difficult. I tried to unravel it by starting with the name Yuan Kung 元公. There is a person named Ku Jung 顧榮 in *Shih Shuo Hsin Yü*. He is also called Yuan Kung. There are four stories concerning Ku Jung in *Shih Shuo Hsin Yü*, but none of them has anything to do with this poem. I also found another Yuan Kung in *Ming History*. Huang Tuan-po 黃端伯 in the Ming dynasty was also called Yuan Kung because—

1. He was a contemporary of Chu Ta.
2. He was from Chianghsi, same as Chu Ta.
3. At the end of the Ming dynasty he didn't surrender to the Ch'ing and was executed.
4. He was once a monk and then came back to society.

Therefore, I thought that he was probably the one Chu Ta was talking about. I sent my draft to Mr. Jao Tsung-i 饒宗頤 and received a long letter from him. In his letter he pointed out that Yuan Kung was P'u Yuan 蒲元 who lived in the Three Kingdoms period. He generously gave me all the materials he found. After I read the biography of P'u Yuan in *Yi Wen Lei Chü* 藝文類聚, Vol. 60, I realized that P'u Yuan is the very person that Chu Ta was talking about. The passage reads—

P'u Yuan has a lot of imagination. He made three thousand swords at Hsieh K'ou for Chu Ke Liang. After they were finished, he said that the Water of the Han River (which is close to Hsieh K'ou) was weak and that it could not be used for tempering iron. The water in the rivers of Szechuan was strong and it had the spirit of metal. Nature made it that way. So he ordered his men to go to Chengtu to fetch water from the river there. He dipped the sword in the water, and said that the water had been mixed with some water from the Fu River. Thus it could not be used. The men who fetched the water insisted that it was not mixed. P'u Yuan struck the water with the sword and pronounced that there were eight liters of water from the Fu. Then the men knocked their heads on the ground and admitted that while they were at the Fu River, some water had spilled, and so they added eight liters of water from the Fu. The swords P'u Yuan made were very sharp. He put iron balls in a bamboo container and used his sword to cut it. It broke immediately. They were called "spiritual swords".

君性多奇思，于斜口爲諸葛亮鑄刀三千口。刀成，自言漢水鈍弱，不任淬用，蜀江淬烈，是謂大金之元精，天分其野，乃命人于成都取江水，君以淬刀，言雜涪水，不可用。取水者捍言不雜，君以刀畫水，言雜八升。取水者叩頭云：「於涪津覆水，遂以涪水八升益之。」以竹筒納鐵珠滿中，舉刀斷之，應手虛落，因曰神刀。

There is no information about the author of the biography of P'u Yuan. This anecdote does not appear in Chen Shou 陳壽's *San Kuo Chih* 三國志 (History of the Three Kingdoms), but it does appear in both the encyclopedias. There is no doubt that the Yuan Kung whom Pa-ta-shan-jen referred to is P'u Yuan, and I am deeply indebted to Mr. Jao for this discovery.

Two lines in this poem concern Hsun Hsü 荀勗, also known as Hsun Chi-pei 荀濟北. A story in Section 20 of *Shih Shuo Hsin Yü* says—

Hsun Hsü was a connoisseur of music. People called him "an-chieh" (clear understanding). He corrected the musical scales and scores of ceremonial classical music. Whenever there were court gatherings he would perform and produce fine harmony. Juan Hsien also understood music well, and people called him "shen-chieh" (spiritual understanding). Whenever Hsun Hsü performed, Juan Hsien would feel that something was not right. He never commented favorably on Hsun Hsü's performance. Disliking this, Hsun Hsü ousted Juan Hsien and made him the Prefect of Shih-p'ing. Later, a farmer found some jade measurements in his field. They dated from the Chou dynasty and were the final standard for all musical instruments. Hsun Hsü used them to check the percussive, brass and string instruments that he was working on, and realized they were all a little bit shorter than they were supposed to be. He then surrendered to Juan Hsien's superior judgement.

荀勗善解音聲，時論謂之闇解。遂調律呂，正雅樂。每至正會，殿庭作樂，自調宮商，無不諧韻。阮咸妙賞，時謂神解。每公會作樂，而心謂之不調。既無一言直勗，意忌之，遂出阮爲始平太守。後有一田父耕於野，得周時玉尺，便是天下正尺。荀試以校己所治鐘鼓，金石，絲竹，皆覺短一黍。於是伏阮神識。

Hsun Hsü is mentioned in another story, in Section 21 of *Shih Shuo Hsin Yü*—

Chung Hui is an uncle of Hsun Hsü. They did

not get along very well. Hsun had a very good sword, which was worth a million dollars. It was in the custody of his mother (Chung's sister). Chung Hui was a good calligrapher and could imitate other people's hand-writing. He wrote a letter to Hsun's mother asking for the sword, imitating Hsun's style of writing and signature. After he got the sword, he did not return it.

鍾會是荀濟北從舅，二人情好不協。荀有寶劍，可直百萬金，常在母鍾太夫人許。會善書，學荀手跡，作書與母取劍，仍竊去不還。

Now that we know the references to Yuan Kung, Hsun Hsü and Juan Hsien, we can understand what this poem is trying to say.

Chu Ta connected the story of music and the story of tempering the sword, both of which revolve around the point that there is a subtle difference between the perfect and the imperfect. In Chu Ta's mind this subtle difference is also associated with brushwork. When one uses a brush in calligraphy or painting, one must seek to catch this subtlety. It is just like tempering an iron sword and making musical instruments. The important thing is to catch the subtlety through "spiritual understanding".

The poem may be rendered as follows:

*The trick in forging a sword is skill,  
Forging a knife is like making a brush.  
The water in Ch'u-Han is dull and weak,  
The water in Kuang-Han is strong and sharp.*

*How can it be mixed with the water of Fu?*

*So struck P'u Yuan with his sword.  
Everything is made clear with one stroke of the sword,*

*Thus revealing the eight added liters.  
In the past Juan Hsien had spiritual understanding of music,*

*Hsun Hsü also clearly understood.  
The scores of ceremonial classical music were righted,*

*Air and strength must be applied.  
P'u Yuan at first didn't have any strength,  
Brass and iron broke the thin air.*