

Text sample from:

Pisano, Luca. *The Qinshi 琴史 (History of the Qin)*, by Zhu Changwen 朱長文 (1041–1098). Gossenberg: OSTASIEN Verlag, 2023.

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蔡邕

Cai Yong

蔡邕，字伯喈，陳留圉人也。少博學，師事太傅胡廣。好辭章、數術、天文，妙操音律。嘗作《琴賦》曰：

Cai Yong, style name Bojie, was a man of Yu in Chenliu commandery.⁶¹ When he was young, he widened his erudition following the Grand Mentor Hu Guan as his instructor; he was fond of poetry, prose, divination, astronomy and was skilled in music theory.⁶² Once he wrote a “Rhapsody on the *Qin*” that says:⁶³

「言求茂木，周流四垂。
觀彼椅桐，層山之陲。
丹華燁燁，綠葉參差。
甘露潤其末，涼風扇其枝。
鸞鳳翔其顛，玄鶴巢其岐。
考之詩人，琴瑟是宜。
爾乃清聲發兮五音舉，
發宮商兮動角羽，
曲引興兮繁弦撫。

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- 61 Cai Yong 蔡邕 (132–192) was one of the most erudite scholars of the Late Han dynasty. His official biography is included in *Hou Hanshu* 60B.1979-2008, just after Ma Rong’s biography, very much like Zhu Changwen in his *Qinshi*. The location Yu of Chenliu corresponds to present-day Yuzhenzhen 于鎮鎮, in Qi 杞 county of Kaifeng township, Henan. Cai Yong has been credited with the compilation of the probably earliest monograph relating to the *qin* – the *Qincao* 琴操 – which was a frequent source of reference for Zhu Changwen and quoted extensively throughout the *Qinshi*.
- 62 See *Hou Hanshu* 60B.1980. Hu Guang (91–172), style name Boshi 伯始, was an important official during the Eastern Han who reached the posts of Grand Mentor and Overseer of Imperial Secretariat Affairs in the first years of Emperor Ling (r.168-189). See *Hou Hanshu* 44.1504-1513.
- 63 Cai Yong’s “*Qin*” *fu* is preserved (apparently only as a fragment) in *Yiwen leiju* 44.783 and recorded here in the *Qinshi* with a couple of character variants.

然後哀聲既發，秘弄乃開。

左手抑揚，右手襄回，
指掌反覆，抑按藏摧。
於是繁弦既抑，雅韻乃揚。

〈仲尼思歸〉，〈鹿鳴〉二章，
〈梁甫悲吟〉，周公〈越裳〉，
〈青雀西飛〉，〈別鶴東翔〉，
〈飲馬長城〉，〈楚曲明光〉，
〈楚姬遺歎〉，〈雞鳴高桑〉。

走獸率舞，飛鳥下翔，
感激茲歌，一低一昂。」

I pursued luxuriant trees
with falling branches all around.
Then I saw those paulownias
covering the mountain slope.⁶⁴
Bright and shiny were their cinnabar flowers,
greenish their swaying leaves;
Sweet dew moistened bough tips
while a cool breeze wafted around them.
Phoenixes and simurghs circled around the peaks,
black cranes nested on those branches.
Following poets' scrutiny,
[their wood was] suitable for zithers *qin* and *se*.
Then pure sounds came out
as the five notes soared;
gong and *shang* raised up,
jue and *yu* vibrated;
the melody took shape,
brushing all over the strings.
Sorrowful tones emerged,
the playing was then enchanting.
The left hand lifted and descended,
the right hand moved back and forth,
tossing and turning fingers and palms,
sliding and pressing down, vibrating softly or fiercely.⁶⁵
Then the sound of the strings ceased, and refined rhymes filled the air.

64 This *incipit* clearly shows similarities with Ma Rong's and Ji Kang's "Qin" *fu*. Here the text has *yitong* 椅桐, same as Ji Kang, but different from Ma Rong who has *wutong* 梧桐. The term *yitong* 椅桐 seems referring to two different kinds of wood: *yi* 椅 is an alternative name for *shantongzi* 山桐子, known as *Idesia polycarpa*. See *Han Ying da cidian*, 3007; *tong* 桐 (usually translated as paulownia), is often quoted as disyllabic *wutong* 梧桐. Paulownia is known nowadays as *mao paotong* 毛泡桐 and used in China and East Asia for the construction of various musical instruments. Aged paulownia is often selected to build the upper board of the *qin*. See *Ibidem*, 309. The structure of the verse clearly hints to *Shijing* "Juan A" 卷阿 in *Maoshi* 252/129 while the expression *yitong* 椅桐 can be seen in the poem "Ding zhi fang Zhong" 定之方中 in *Maoshi* 50/23. Both references are also mentioned in the *jinmei* 盡美 (On Supreme Beauty) section in ch.6 of the *Qinshi*.

[Those tunes were:]

- “Master Kong Thinks of Returning”,⁶⁶
the three stanzas of “The Deer Call One Another”;⁶⁷
“Liangfu’s Lament”;⁶⁸ “The Yueshang” of the Duke of Zhou;⁶⁹
“Blue Sparrows Flying West”;⁷⁰
“Cranes parting to the East”;⁷¹
“Watering Horses at the Great Wall”;⁷²
“Ming Guang of Chu”;⁷³

- 65 The four characters *yi an cang cui* 抑按藏摧 look like a parallel juxtaposition (quite common stylistic device in *fu* poems) of left hand movements, recorded as tablature fingering in later times: “*yi*” 抑 as “slide up onto tone then slowly slide down or reach a tone then slide up a little from the position and slowly go back” (Zhang Zisheng 2016, 352); “*an*” 按 as “left hand presses the string to get a sound as pressed tone, also called stopped sounds” (ibidem, 19); *cang cui* 藏摧 could hint to a soft vibrato (*cang yin* 藏吟, same as *xi yin* 細吟) while “*cui*” 摧 (intended as *tui* 推) to a higher one strongly pulling the string while pressed down (as *tui yin* 推吟). See ibidem 391, 410.
- 66 It clearly refers to the piece “Jianggui” 將歸 (About to Return) recorded in the *Qincao* 2.1 [A4a] that says it was written by Confucius while he was about to cross the Di 狄 river and came to know that the sovereign of Jin, Zhao Jianzi, killed his advisor Dou Mingdu. Grieved by this news, he composed this song then did not to cross the river and returned to Zou 郕. Zhu Changwen also mentions this melody in his account on Confucius underlining that “Zou” *cao* is an alternative title of “Jianggui” *cao*.
- 67 “Luming” 鹿鳴 (The Deer Call One Another) is a popular banquet poem from the *Book of Songs* (*Maoshi* 161/71) sung to entertain king’s ministers and guest from feudal kingdoms during state visits. It is the first song found in the *Qincao* 1.1 [A2b], then regarded as the oldest.
- 68 It likely refers to “Liangfu yin” 梁甫吟 (Liangfu’s Lament), also written “Liangfu yin” 梁父吟. In *Yuefu shiji* 41.605 several sets of lyrics are recorded with this title, the oldest one credited to Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮, Chancellor of Shu Han between 221 to 234. According to *Yuefu shiji*, Liangfu is the name of a summit belonging to Mount Tai: since many burials were arranged on this mount, this piece was later used as funeral song. However, it should be noted that *Yuefu shiji* includes these lyrics in the Xianghege 相合歌 music section. There are no surviving *qin* songs related to this title.
- 69 The short lyrics, attributed to Dan 旦, Duke Wen of Zhou (r. 1042–1035 BC), of “Yueshang” *cao* 越裳操 (The Yueshang) are recorded both in the *Qincao* 2.4 [A5b] and in *Yuefu shiji* 57.831-832. They say: 於戲嗟嗟，非旦之力，乃文王之德。“Woe, alas! It was not my strength, but the virtue of King Wen.” The *Qincao* states that Duke Wen assisted King Cheng to pacify the empire according to the moral standard of King Wen. A delegation came from the far kingdom of Yueshang (roughly corresponding to today Vietnam and Laos regions) offering him as tributes nine interpreters and white pheasants; then the Duke wrote this song to humbly express he had no merits but were all of King Wen (namely his father).
- 70 According to the glosses in the *Guwen yuan* 古文苑 21.5a, “Qingquan xi fei” 青雀西飛 “refers to the song “Li luan” 離鸞 (Parting Simurghs) in the *Qincao*”; however, it cannot be found in the modern editions of the work. “Li luan”, only as song title, is included in the list “Hejian zage” 河間雅歌 contained in *Taigu yiyin* 太古遺音 (QQJC, vol.1, 27). It is said that Zhang Anshi excelled in playing this song (see his account above n. 67).
- 71 “Biche” *cao* 別鶴操 (Cranes Parting) is also known as “Biechu” *cao* 別鶴操 (Parting Swans). *Qincao* says it was written by Shangling Muzi moved by his wife’s grieved lament. See Shangling Muzi’s account in ch. 2 n.47.
- 72 The lyrics of “Yin ma changcheng” 飲馬長城 (Watering Horses at the Great Wall) are included in the Xianghege 相合歌 music section of the *Yuefu shiji* 38.555-556. It says the title is inspired by an ancient cave located near the Great Wall where horses usually went watering.

“Sighs of a Consort from Chu who was Left Behind”;⁷⁴
“A Cock Crowing Deep in the Mulberries”.⁷⁵

Wild animals started dancing one after another,
birds glided down excited by those songs,
some with loud shrieks,
some with soft cries.⁷⁶

桓帝時，中常侍徐璜、左悺等五侯擅恣，聞邕善鼓琴，即日天子，敕陳留太守督促發遣。邕行次偃師，稱疾而歸。後應辟累遷議郎。疏論奄宦，謫徙朔方。既會赦還，乃亡命江海，遠迹吳會。嘗經會稽高遷家，見屋椽竹東間第十六可以為笛，取用之，奇聲獨絕。吳人有燒桐以爨者，邕聞火烈之聲，知良材也，裁以為琴，果有美音，而其尾猶焦，時人名曰「焦尾」琴焉。董卓為司空，聞邕名高，辟之，稱疾不就。卓大怒，將害邕。邕不得已，遂應命。既至，旬日之間歷三臺。卓重其才，遇邕甚厚。每燕集，輒令邕鼓琴贊事，邕亦每存開益。後坐卓，為司徒王允所誅，天下惜之。

In the time of Emperor Huan [r.147–167], five marquises who had usurped the power, among them the court attendants Xu Huang and Zuo Guan, had heard that Cai Yong was an excellent player of the *qin*; they informed the emperor who ordered the Governor of Chenliu to urgently summon Cai Yong [to the capital].⁷⁷ When Cai arrived in Yanshi,⁷⁸ he pleaded ill health and returned home.⁷⁹ In later times he accepted official positions such as the post of Court Gentleman for Consultation. After reporting [some misbehaviours] of eunuchs and officials, he had been demoted and imprisoned in Shuofang.⁸⁰ After a general amnesty he

73 “Chu Ming Guang” 楚明光 (Ming Guang of Chu) is quoted in the *Qincao* 4.11 [B7a]. This song had been written after Ming Guang’s story, even recorded here in the account of the “Three Gentlemen” in ch.2 n.51 (Sanshi 三士).

74 It likely refers to Fan Ji 樊姬, one of the consorts of King Zhuang of Chu (r. 613–591 BC), whose story is the setting of the “Lienü” *yin* 烈女引, recorded in *Qincao* 3.1 [A9b-10a]. The account on her is in ch.2 n. 55.

75 “Ji ming gao sang” 雞鳴高桑 could hint at the piece “Ji ming du guan” 雞鳴度關 (Going through the pass while the cock is crowing), a melody regarding the escape of Lord of Mengchang (?–279 BC) from Qin. One of his Attendants helped him, thanks to his skills imitating animal sounds. After escaping from Qin prison, Lord of Mengchang arrived at the Hangu pass and found it closed. He was worried the guards were already after him and cannot wait any longer, so the attendant imitated the sound of the crowing cock to cheat the border guardians that it was almost dawn; he indeed succeeded as the guards opened the pass and Mengchang could fled back to Qi. Lord of Mengchang is also mentioned in the section on Yongmeng Zhou, ch.2 n.41.

76 For a German translation of Cai Yong’s *fu*, see Schaab-Hanke [forthcoming].

77 The expression *wuhou* 五侯 (Five Marquises) refers to Shan Chao 單超 (?–160), Chu Heng 徐璜 (?–164), Ju Huan 具瑗 (?–165), Zuo Guan 左悺 (?–165) and Tang Heng 唐衡 (?–164), five eunuchs that had formerly helped Emperor Huan to arrange a coup overthrowing the powerful and ruthless Grand Marshal Liang Ji 梁冀 (100–159) and his clan. However, the subsequent increasing power of the eunuchs lead to rampant corruption in the all the spheres of the government, eventually leading to the collapse of Han dynasty. See also De Crespigny 2007, 597–599.

78 Yanshi 偃師 was located east of Luoyang in western Henan.

79 *Hou Hanshu* 60.1980.

80 The Shuofang 朔方 commandery was located in the far north, west of present-day city of Bayannur in Inner Mongolia.

could return and then travelled along the southern coastal areas, getting as far as to the Wu and Guiji commanderies.⁸¹ Once passing through his home in Gaoqian of Guiji he saw that among the bamboo growing on the eastern part of the rafter the sixteenth [plant] was suitable to carve a traverse flute; he took it, made [a flute] from it, and its sound was indeed marvelous.⁸² Once in the Wu area there were people burning paulownia wood for cooking. [Cai Yong] heard the sharp sound [of the wood cracking] in the fire and realized it was fine wood, so he cut it to make a *qin*, and indeed its sound was wonderful; since its tail was burnt, his contemporaries called it “Jiaowei” (Burnt tail).⁸³ The Minister of Work Dong Zhuo, hearing the fame of Cai Yong, wished to hire him but Cai claimed he was ill and refused. Zhuo was enraged and wanted to harm him, therefore Cai had no alternative but comply with his wish. In ten days, he advanced through three censorate offices. Zhuo valued his talents and treated him generously. Every time there were banquets or gatherings, he ordered Cai to play to liven up the bystanders, therefore Cai was often of help for him. In later times, since Cai was involved in Zhuo’s affairs, he was put to death by the high government official Wang Yun, and the whole world mourned him.⁸⁴

邕在陳留，其鄰人有以酒食召邕。此往，客有彈琴於屏，邕至門，試潛聽之，曰：「嘻！以樂召我而有殺心，何也？」遂反。將命者以告主人，遽自追而問其故，邕具以告，莫不憮然。彈琴者曰：「我向鼓弦，見螳螂向鳴蟬，將去而未飛，螳螂為之一前一卻。吾心聳然，惟恐螳螂之失蟬也，此豈為殺心而形於聲者乎？」邕莞然而笑曰：「此足以當之矣。」由此觀之，人之善惡，存於思慮，則見於音聲，惟知音者能知之。故曰惟樂不可以偽為。人之思慮且知之，則世之治亂，舉不能隱矣。漢世樂道廢缺。如伯喈者，一人而已。

While Cai Yong was in Chenliu, there were some neighbors who prepared wine and food to invite him. Once he arrived, there was a guest that was playing the *qin* behind a screen; he went next to the door, secretly listened to him and said: “Eh?! They used music to make me come here and then kill me? Why?” Then he left. The servant informed the owner of the house that immediately went after him to ask him the reason; Cai told him all about it, there was none who was not surprised. The player said: “While I was playing, I saw a mantis in front of a cicada that was about to fly away but not yet left, and the mantis was swaying back and forth. I felt agitated, fearing that the mantis would not grab the cicada, how is possible that the deadly intent found shape in sound?” Cai Yong smiled and laughing said: “It was enough for this to happen.”⁸⁵ Judging from this, good or evil intents of the people

81 The Wu region was a vast territory extending from Suzhou, Jiangsu, to northern Zhejiang province. Guiji 會稽 (also read Kuaiji) comprised the area between the cities of Shaoxing 紹興 and Ningbo 寧波, Zhejiang.

82 *Hou Hanshu* 60.2003. This event is quoted in the glosses of Zhang Zhi’s 張鷟 (early fifth century) *Wenshi zhuan* 文士傳 (Biographies of Literati).

83 *Hou Hanshu* 60.2004.

84 Paraphrased from *Hou Hanshu* 60.2005-6. Dong Zhuo 董卓 (?-192) is generally considered the traitor that destroyed the Han dynasty. Wang Yun (137-192), a former minister of Dong Zhuo’s government, disapproved Dong’s unstable regime and practices, planning his assassination in 192, then killing his family and supporters, among them Cai Yong himself. See De Crespigny 2007, 157, 842.

85 Episode quoted abridged from *Hou Hanshu* 60.2004-5.

are kept in their thoughts, therefore can be observed in music sounds, but only music connoisseurs can realize that. Therefore, it is said that only music cannot be disguised by hypocrisy. If people's thoughts are known, even prosperity or decline of an epoch cannot be hidden. During the Han era, the Dao of music had been abandoned and lost. A person like Bojie was really one of a kind.

或云，邕嘉平中嘗謁鬼谷先生，不遇。憩於清溪，遊覽巖谷。山有五曲，曲有幽居靈迹。每一曲制一弄。三年曲成，出示，馬融、王允等異之。蓋所謂〈遊春〉，〈淶水〉，〈幽居〉，〈坐愁〉，〈秋思〉五弄得於此也。余以為不然，伯喈所以寓其哀思者，蓋在此五曲，特假物以名之耳。噫！伯喈始不屈於王侯，而終見羈於董氏，豈流殛困窘，不堪其苦，而聊以息肩乎。將欲忠論正音、規諷暴戾而感發其善心，以救生民乎？何所遭之不幸也。邕所製「焦尾」琴，至南齊猶在衣庫，明帝嘗以給王仲雄彈之。

It is also said that Cai Yong, during the Jiaping era, went to pay respect to the Master of the Ghosts' Valley [Guigu] but did not meet him. He rested near clear streams while roaming around cliffs and valleys. There were five bends on the mountain, with seclusion shelters holding traces of deities. In each spot he wrote a piece; it took three years for their completion, then presented them to Ma Rong, Wang Yun and others, all expressing their amazement. It is assumed that the so-called five variations – “You chun” (Roaming in Spring), “Lushui” (Limpid water), “Youju” (Dwelling in Seclusion), “Zuochou” (Sitting in Melancholy), “Qiusi” (Autumn Thoughts) – derived from this.⁸⁶ I am of a different opinion: Bojie has probably put his melancholic thoughts into these five pieces, by alluding to things in order to give them names.⁸⁷ In the beginning he refused to serve the marquises, but

86 The story is part of the introduction found in *Yuefu shiji* 59.855-856 of the “Caishi wunong” 蔡氏五弄 (Master Cai's Five Variations). Quoting the *Qinshu* 琴書, it says: 邕性沈厚，雅好琴道。嘉平初，入青溪訪鬼谷先生。所居山有五曲：一曲制一弄，山之東曲，常有仙人游，故作《游春》；南曲有澗，冬夏常淶，故作《淶水》；中曲即鬼谷先生舊所居也，深邃岑寂，故作《幽居》；北曲高岩，猿鳥所集，感物愁坐，故作《坐愁》；西曲灌水吟秋，故作《秋思》。三年曲成，出示馬融，甚異之。[Cai] Yong had a profound and steady disposition, with a refined taste for the way of the *qin*. At the beginning of the Jiaping era [249–254], he ventured on the Qingxi [mount in western Hunan] to visit the Master of Ghosts' Valley. On the mount [where the Master] lived there were five bends: at each spot Cai wrote one song. The eastern bend was a place where immortals often went roaming, so he wrote “You chun” (Roaming in Spring); at the southern bend, there were streams whose water was always clear in winter and summer, so he wrote “Lushui” (Limpid Water); the central bend was the place where the Master of the Ghosts' Valley lived, quiet and remote, so he wrote “Youju” (Dwelling in Seclusion); the northern bend was on a high cliff where apes and birds often gathered, moved by those things he sat quietly in sorrow; then he wrote “Zuochou” (Sitting in Distress); at the western bend there was the pouring rain and the calls of birds and insects in autumn; so he wrote “Qiusi” (Autumn Thoughts). It took three years for their completion, then presented them to Ma Rong who found them marvelous.”

87 While Zhu Changwen's remark is indeed fair (as the extant lyrics are all written by various poets of the Tang dynasty), it should be noted that he actually echoes a similar statement found at the end of the introduction of the “Caishi wunong” in *Yuefu shiji* saying: 今按近世作者多因題命辭，無復本意云。“Since in recent times several authors assigned lyrics to these titles, it is said that there is no way to recover their original signification.” See *fu* above and *Yuefu shiji* 59.856.

then Zhuo bought him off; it is possible that he could not bear the burdens of the time spent in exile and distress, and found a way to lay them down. Did not he reveal his uprightness through honest reports, rectified music, admonishing and ridiculing ruthless conducts, for the benefit of the people? How disgraceful was the suffering he had to endure!⁸⁸ The “Jiaowei” *qin* he built was stored in the imperial treasury until the Southern Qi dynasty; Emperor Ming once gave it to Wang Zhongxiong to play it.⁸⁹

88 It is recorded that Wang Yun was strongly criticized for having ordered to execute Cai Yong; he soon regretted the decision and sought to countermand the order, but Cai Yong was already dead. See De Crespigny 2007, 842.

89 See *Nan-Qi shu* 26.845. Wang Zhongxiong was a skilled player, son of the eminent official Wang Jingze 王敬則 (479–502), during the Southern Qi dynasty. Emperor Ming 明, whose personal name was Xiao Luan 蕭鸞, was the fifth ruler of Qi; he took the throne with a *coup d'état* and killed numerous royals and court officials during his reign [r.494–498]. See Xiong 2009, 572.