A Critical Study of the Origins of *Chhieh-chü* Poetry

**INTRODUCTION**

Stated simply, a literary genre is a code of conventions and expectations shared by author and reader; a genre is identifiable when literary works are composed and interpreted in relation to similar previous works. China’s earliest literary criticism dealt with genres. The “Preface to the Mao Text of the Book of Poetry” 毛詩序 (ca. 202 BC–9 AD) gives “Six Aspects” 六義 of poetry, three of which (“airs” fēng 風, “odes” yu 雩, and “hymns” sōng 歌) refer to generic classifications. “On Literature” 論文 by Ts’ao Pi 曹丕 (157–226) and “Rhyme-prose on Literature” 文賦 by Lu Chi 劉昞 (261–303) match genres with ideal styles of language. *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons* 交心雕龍 by Liu Hsiêh 劉勰 (ca. 465–ca. 520) contains twenty chapters (out of a total of fifty) solely devoted to describing literary genres; and *Evaluation of Poetry* 詩品 by Chung Jung 蘇頌 (ca. 465–518) is structured entirely by generic considerations—only lyric poetry (shih 詩) in pentasyllabic line-lengths is included. Yet these critical works described literary genres almost entirely in general qualitative terms. Critics made relatively little attempt to define genres in terms of specific formal characteristics. Formal compositional methods were left by-and-large to an implicit agreement between author and reader: Literary forms—comprising length, line-length, rhyme schemes, phonetic and rhetorical patterns—were not fixed, and there was great variation.4

Literary criticism beginning in the T'ang (618–907) era transformed the specific methods of composition (fa 法) into a major topic; genres came to be defined partly by strict rules. T'ang-era “how-to” manuals offered mastery over the complex “recent-style verse” (ch'ing-t'i shih 近體詩) forms, which were the most important of contemporary poetic developments.4 A similarly functional

---

4 The other three of the “Six Aspects” are types of poetic language: “narrative-descriptive” (yu 雩), “similific” (li 比), and “associative” (heng 恆).


4 Selections from these T'ang manuals are in Wang Li-ch'i 王利器, ed., *Wen-ch'ing mi-fu-lun chu-ku* 文鏡秘府論校注 (Peking: She-hui k'o-hua ch'ub, 1983).
goal remained central to the “poetry talks” (shih-hua 詩話) tradition of the Sung (960–1279) and later dynasties. Political and social reasons help explain the change in critical approach. For instance, T'ang scholars became proficient in poetry composition because it had become a prerequisite for both the imperial examinations and acceptance in elite society. Thus, critics took on an important role in education. Although they did not invent “recent-style verse,” at least they influenced the standardization and perpetuation of its forms.

The most common forms of recent-style verse are the eight-line “regulated-verse” (lui-shih 律詩) and the four-line “cut-off lines” (chih-chii 絕句). Both were commonly written in pentasyllabic and heptasyllabic line-lengths. The lui-shih forms (the pentasyllabic wu-lui 五律 and the heptasyllabic chi-lui 七律) have been extensively studied in recent years, but the chih-chii forms (the pentasyllabic wu-chih 五絕 and the heptasyllabic chi-chih 七絕) have received relatively less attention. The goal of this article is to present and explain the essential materials concerning chih-chii origins that are found in both traditional poetry criticism and seminal articles from the 1940s. Critics attempted to answer two questions about chih-chii origins: what are the sources of the chih-chii genres as practiced in the T'ang; and what is the etymology of the term chih-chii? The critical material is complicated by the fact that views on etymology could be influenced by assumptions about the T'ang genres, and vice versa; no one source is definitive. Thus gaps remain in the picture presented in the critical literature. This article is meant as a preliminary to a larger study of chih-chii stylistic development.

Because chih-chii were often described in relation to lui-shih, it will help to summarize the formal elements of both, as put into practice during the T'ang. Certain elements were common to both:

1. brevity, which increased the use of ambiguity and symbolism in order to project meaning beyond the literal words;

2. lines containing a caesura before the final trisyllable and organized in couplets;
3. the occurrence of rhymes at the ends of even-numbered lines (and sometimes the first line);
4. fixed length, which allows a predictable functional hierarchy of couplets;
5. a requirement for tonal prosodic patterning, in which characters of unstressed, “level 平,” tone alternated with those of the stressed, “oblique 仄,” tone (comprising “rising 上,” “departing 去,” and “entering 入” tones) on the principle of maximum contrast and symmetry;
6. a preference for dense language, in particular avoidance of “empty words” (hsii-til 虛字 — grammatical particles, affixes, and many adverbs) in favor of “full words” (shih-til 實字 — primarily nouns, verbs and adjectives); and
7. a tendency to merge themes of the natural world with those of personal states-of-mind — often described as a “fusion of feeling and scene” 情景交融.

However, there are major differences between lui-shih and chih-chii, most evident in the relative importance of “parallel” versus “continuous” couplets. In a parallel couplet, words in the first line are complemented with corresponding second-line words that have similar syntactic function but contrasting meaning. Each line is independent, yet tied to the other through a series of equivalences. Nominal phrases dominate, making parallel couplets ideal for concise imagistic description of a scene, and often resulting in fragmentary syntax. The tense opposition of components creates an enclosed quality which can be termed “circular,” or “static.” In a continuous couplet, a single idea is carried through from one line to the next, either through strong syntax (the proclivity against hsii-til is less evident here) or through implied progression (temporal, logical, hypothetical). Verbs dominate, making continuous couples ideal for narration; the forward momentum from subject to predicate gives such couples a “linear” or “dynamic” quality.

In lui-shih, the first couplet, which is most often nonparallel, usually just introduces the topic. The second and third couplets, where parallelism is required, are the heart of the poem. Only the final couplet is expected to be continuous, so as to provide context for the preceding description. As a result,

---

1 A less common form was the “extended lui-shih” (p'yu-lui 排律).
2 A note on terminology: following most commentators, I use the term “chih-chii” broadly, referring to virtually any four-line poem, or quatrains, from the T'ang or later (and for some pentasyllabic quatrains of the late-Six Dynasties, as long as they are tonally regulated). A few commentators use the term more narrowly, and where appropriate I explain their usage. The word “quatrains” is used even more inclusively, to refer to any four-line poem from any period. Within any genre, differing “styles” of composition can be distinguished by linguistic or thematic characteristics.

the focus of most lu-shih is in the central parallel couplets, thus the overall effect is circular. The chüeh-chü forms favored continuous couplets; parallelism is sometimes employed in the introductory first couplet, but almost never in the dominant second, and final, couplet. Thus the overall effect is linear.

This study presents three distinct arguments regarding the origins of chüeh-chü, based on scattered comments in shih-hua texts.

The first two arguments stem from critical attempts to explain origins through the meaning of the term “cut-off lines” (chüeh-chü). One group of critics believed that chüeh-chü were “cut-off” sections of lu-shih; their opinion is termed the “truncated lu-shih” view. Another believed that chüeh-chü referred to poems in which each line is syntactically isolated and end-stopped — “cut-off” from surrounding lines; their opinion is termed the “isolated lines” view. These two views contain perceptive and influential observations concerning chüeh-chü styles and structures. But they have no historical basis and must be rejected.

Beginning in Ming times (after about 1400), a minority of commentators introduced a third and more convincing view, which attacked the question of chüeh-chü origins from a literary-historical perspective, studying the earliest examples of quatrain-length poems to trace their development, and looking for the earliest usage of the term chüeh-chü. Twentieth-century articles by authors such as Lo Ken-tei 羅根泰 and Sun K'ai-tei 孫楷第 fall squarely within this literary-historical tradition. Below, these are systematically presented in their turn.

CHÜEH-CHÜ AS “TRUNCATED LU-SHIH”

The prevailing view, still held as a commonplace assumption by many today, is that the chüeh-chü forms are simply cut-off versions of the eight-line lu-shih forms. Besides giving meaning to the term, the view provides a convenient source for the quatrains-length chüeh-chü and a reason why chüeh-chü follow the rules of tonal prosody. The prevailing view also places both the term chüeh-chü and the quatrains form itself historically later than the lu-shih forms, which developed late in the Six Dynasties as wu-lü and from early to high-T’ang as ch’i-lü. Moreover, it gives inordinate importance to the presence or absence of parallelism in chüeh-chü.

The first commentator known to have stated the “truncated lu-shih” view systematically was Fu Jo-chin 博若金 (1904–1343):

Chüeh-chü are cut-off lines (chüeh-chü) 绝句者截句也. Poems in which the last two lines are parallel cut off the first four lines of regulated-verse; those in which the first two lines are parallel cut off the last four lines of regulated-verse; those in which all lines are parallel cut off the middle four lines; and those in which no lines are parallel cut off the two lines each from the beginning and end. 16

Hsu Shih-tseng 徐師曾 (1571–1586) repeated Fu’s assertion, and cited textual evidence claimed by him to have traced the idea back to the T’ang. Hsu noted that Li Han 李漢 (fl. 824) included chüeh-chü under the lu-shih heading when compiling Han Yu’s 韓愈 (768–824) poetry collection, Ch’ang-lü chi 昌黎集.

According to the critic Wu Ch’iao 吳翱 (1611–1695), at least three other T’ang collections — the two separate Ch’i-ch’ing ch’i 長慶集 by Yuan Chen 元稹 (779–831) and Po Chu-i 白居易 (772–846), and Tu Mu’s 杜甫 (803–859) collection — do likewise. 17 In addition to this evidence from the organizational style of T’ang collections, it is the fact that “little regulated-verse” (hsiao lu-shih 小律詩) was used as an alternative term for chüeh-chü beginning at least in the middle-T’ang Po Chu-i used the term at least twice. In a poem entitled “Reciting chüeh-chü by Yuan’s Eight on the River” 江上吟元八絶句 Po writes, “In deep places on the great river while the moon shines bright 大江深處月明時, for a whole night I recite your little regulated-verse 一夜吟君小律詩.” He used

---


18 Wu Ch’iao argued that these three collections, plus Han Yu’s 韓愈’s, were reliable as evidence because early editions were available, or editions based on early editions. Thus the poems in these four follow their original order. Wu Ch’iao, Wei-shih shih-hua 危齋詩話 (Ch’ing copy held in National Central Library, rpt. Taipei: Kuang-wen, 1973), pp. 110–111; Fu Li, p. 946.

the term again in a statement of literary criticism sent to his friend Yuan Chen, the well-known "Letter to Yuan Nine 與元九書,"4 However, the arrangement of these literary collections and the alternative term are not convincing evidence that T’ang writers believed the "truncated li-shih" view. T’ang compilers may have included chiueh-ch’u under li-shih simply because it is tonally regular; the term li-shih in these cases can be taken in its more general meaning of "regulated poetry," rather than as specifically referring to the eight-line li-shih form. The same can be argued for the term "little regulated-verses." This is Wu Chi-yao’s assumption; he explains the inclusion of chiueh-ch’u among regulated-verses in the four T’ang collections as evidence that T’ang literati understood chiueh-ch’u as "two-rhyme li-shih 二韻律詩." Besides these few pieces of indirect evidence, no other material indicating a T’ang origin for the truncated li-shih view comes to light.

The earliest specific evidence of the “truncated li-shih” view before Fu’s time comes from Chou Pi 周弼 (fl. 1228). Chou referred to quatrains as chiueh-ch’u 数句—a term post-Sung critics used only in relation to quatrains as reduced-length li-shih.5 It is possible that Chou Pi had the view in mind, although the context is not clear. Ming (1368–1644) and Ch’ing (1644–1911) writers who disagreed with the “truncated li-shih” view frequently assumed that it was an invention of the Sung era.

There is one other bit of evidence pointing to a Sung origin for the “truncated li-shih” view, but it is questionable. In a preface to his Chiueh-ch’u pien-i 絕句編, the literata Yang Shen 楊慎 (1488–1559) quotes Chiueh-ch’u shih-ko 金針詩格 and names as its author the poet Mei Yao-ch’ en 梅堯臣 (1002–1062). Yang states the “truncated li-shih” view in wording similar to that of Fu-Jo-chin:

Mei Yao-ch’ en’s Chiueh-ch’ u shih-ko says, “Chiueh-ch’ u are cut-off lines (chiueh-ch’ u). Poems in which the four lines are not parallel cut off the beginning and ending four lines of li-shih; those in which all four lines are parallel cut off the middle four lines of li-shih; those in which the beginning is parallel and the ending is not parallel cut off the last four lines of li-shih; those in which

If this passage is reliable, then the “truncated li-shih” view of the origin of chiueh-ch’ u may have been very early indeed. The treatise ascribed to Mei in various other sources is not Chiueh-ch’ u shih-ko itself, but its continuation entitled Hsiu Chiueh-ch’ u shih-ko 縱金針詩格. The former supposedly was written by Po Chü-i and was the inspiration for Mei to add comments. Chao Kung-wu 柯公武 (c. 1192) described both books (and assumed their authenticity), which proves that texts by those names were extant as early as the beginning of Southern Sung (roughly 1127–1160). However, they cannot be firmly dated before that period, because in the next century Ch’ en Ch’en-sun 陳振孫 (fl. 1211–1249) cast doubt on their authenticity.6 Based on examinations of the short extant text, the modern scholars Kakehi Fumio and Jonathan Chaves both state that Mei Yao-ch’ en did not author Hsiu Chiueh-ch’ u shih-ko.7 Even so, Chao Kung-wu’s note shows that both books were extant at least a century and a half before Fu-Jo-chin.

Unfortunately, the quotation in Yang Shen’s preface does not appear in the available texts of the two treatises.8 There is circumstantial evidence that the text is not complete. In sum, we are left with two possibilities: either the “truncated li-shih” view was included in Hsiu Chiueh-ch’ u shih-ko (and is therefore Southern Sung or earlier) but was left out in transmission; or Yang Shen mistook the source of his quote.

After Fu-Jo-chin, the “truncated li-shih” opinion was widely copied by such writers as Ao Ying 敖英 (c. 1521), Hsiu Shih-tseng, Wu Na 沃若 (1372–1457), Ma Lu 马魯 (Ch’ing period), Wang Shih-chen 王士禎 (1634–1711), Shih Pu-hua 施補華 (1835–1890), Ch’u Chao-foo 仇兆鰲 (1698–1713 or after), and Sung
Lo 宋華 (1634–1713). Recently, Wang Li 王力 has asserted that the opinion was generally held after the T'ang. An apparent twentieth-century follower of the “truncated lü-shih” view was Cheng Chen-t'o 鄭振鐸 (1898–1958), who wrote:

Five-character lü-shih was the first to be established. Next, seven-character lü-shih developed into one of the most important literary forms of the T'ang period. Next, a separate type of new poetic form, the so-called chu-chü and ch'i-chü forms, was born. Next, the custom of stringing together several rhymes of lü-shih to create longer poems—the so-called p'ai-lü—also began to appear. 20

Fundamentally, the view was adopted as a means to explain the term chu-chü, but it also represented certain assumptions about aesthetics. To say that the chu-chü is half of the lü-shih implies an aesthetic connection between the two forms. This idea must have appeared logical to critics, otherwise they would not have followed Fu so readily. We are presented with two theoretical possibilities regarding the relationship between lü-shih and chu-chü. First: chu-chü are imperfect, incomplete lü-shih. In other words, the two-couplet chu-chü structure is a fragment of the integrated four-couplet lü-shih structure. Because the lü-shih structure consists of one nonparallel couplet of introduction, two parallel couples of images, and one nonparallel couplet of resolution, thus depending on which of the four truncating methods is employed, a chu-chü either breaks off in the middle, begins abruptly, lacks an image-building center, or lacks introduction and resolution. Second: chu-chü are concentrated, distilled versions of lü-shih. Thus they provide introduction, images, and resolution, as do their equally complete and integrated poems. The implication is that somehow each line of a chu-chü corresponds to a couplet of lü-shih.

Which of these two alternatives did critics follow? The answer appears to be a combination of both. Critics who accepted the “truncated lü-shih” view all took as their starting point the four quatrains structures that the theory created—thus chu-chü are halved lü-shih. However, at the same time none of these critics saw chu-chü as incomplete or fragmentary; on the contrary, the integrity of the chu-chü forms was invariably stressed. Elaborate explanations were needed to harmonize these two alternatives, culminating in the widespread idea that chu-chü structurally are halved lü-shih, but critically can be understood as four separate lines corresponding to the four couples of the longer forms.

Logical Problems with the “Truncated lü-shih” Idea

Scholars soon realized that to follow strictly the four quatrains structures of the “truncated lü-shih” view could be problematic. A useful example is the discussion of ch'i-chü by Shih Pu-hua:

Ch'i-chü can be cut off from ch'i-lü in any way one pleases 隨意裁, but cutting off the second half, in which lines one and two are parallel and lines three and four are nonparallel, easily highlights the resonance 韻韻, cutting off the first half, in which lines one and two are nonparallel and lines three and four are parallel, easily results in rigidity 板澀, cutting off the middle two couplets is even more monotonous 更板; and cutting off the first and last couplets, by which the entire poem is nonparallel, easily results in vacuity 虛。Only a scholar's penetrating mind can know this. 21

In this statement, Shih exhibits not only his acceptance of lü-shih's influence on chu-chü, but simultaneously a realization that chu-chü are independent forms. Shih's preference for parallelism in the first couplet of chu-chü indicates his belief that the four-line forms should have the concentrated image-building strength of the eight-line forms. Thus quatrains without parallelism cannot result in “vacuity.” However, his rejection of parallelism in the second couplet of chu-chü shows an understanding that the four-line forms are weighted towards the closure, and that circularity and stasis in this position would be problematic. The shorter forms require a resolution that strict parallelism cannot supply.

Critics as early as Chou Pi pointed out the difficulties of using parallelism in second couplets of chu-chü. Commenting on parallelism in the second couplet of ch'i-chü, he wrote:

T'ang writers used this form very seldom. It is necessary that the last couplet, although parallel, has sufficient words and completed meaning, as if it was not parallel 頃足意盡若未嘗對. Otherwise the poem will seem like a regulated-verse poem cut in half 半截長律—pure white and uniform, and
Although Wei says that chüeh-chü derive historically from lü-shih, he does not think that quatrains are shortened regulated verse. He does not go so far as to deny the "truncated lü-shih" view, but is clearly uncomfortable with it on stylistic grounds."

The reasoning behind the emendation of the "truncated lü-shih" view is not difficult to find. The eight-line lü-shih is a perfectly unified form; each part has a specific function tied to the whole. It is inevitable that cutting a lü-shih in half will result in a fragment. The recognition that in practice the chüeh-chü forms were also unified forms led critics to add their emendations. Essentially they were praising the "truncated lü-shih" opinion, on the one hand, while denying its effects on the other.

The belief that chüeh-chü derived from lü-shih gave rise to a compelling but misleading critical explanation of quatrain structure: that a four-line chüeh-chü requires an introduction (ch'i 起) in the first line; an elaboration (ch'eng 承) in the second; a transition (chuan 轉) in the third; and a conclusion (ho 合) in the fourth. This structure (hereafter, the "four-part pattern") was frequently applied to lü-shih.

The "four-part pattern" is the ideal manifestation of the belief that chüeh-chü are lü-shih in miniature. Theoretically speaking, the pattern is the perfect means to ensure the integrity of the quatrains forms; as each line in a chüeh-chü corresponds to a couplet in lü-shih, the shorter poem is certain to reflect the perfectly unified aesthetics of its longer relative, but in more concentrated form. Interestingly, no contradiction was seen between the "four-part pattern" and the four structures resulting from the "truncated lü-shih" view. Quite frequently the same critics held both opinions. It appears that the four truncated lü-shih structures were understood as the physical bounds of chüeh-chü poems, while the "four-part pattern" was a compositional and critical technique applied within those physical bounds.

Again, Fu Jo-chin is the first on record to apply the idea to chüeh-chü. In fact, Fu believed the four-part structure could be applied to all forms of poetic

---

77 Chou, Sun-siu Tang-shih, p. 4; Fu, Lui, p. 1935.
78 Mao Ch'ung-yung, Shih-shih shih-shih 詩詩詩詩, in Fu-kuei Mao shih hsing-shu 頑氏敬書 (1903), p. 92; Fu, Lui, p. 1935. Mao's work is also in Kao Shih-yi 郭紹堂, ed., Chang shih shih hsi-pei 常詩詩篇 (Shanghai: Kuchi, 1953).
79 These concluding parallel couplets that "complete the meaning" are from Hua Ying-hsi 華英喜, Shih shih yün-chieh 詩詩英解 (1835), p. 152, cited in Pui-te hsiao-wen 伯子論文, in Chang Ch'ao 陳道, ed., Chou-chao li-shih-chu 昭代詩集 (Shih-k'ai T'ang, 1835), t'ui, ch. 30, p. 56, Fu, Lui, p. 1935.
individual lines within couplets are expected to fulfill different functions, which is counter to usual Chinese poetic practice. Although, for example, some concluding couplets may be explained as two parts with different functions (as in the question-answer form of “If friends and family in Lo-yang should ask of me — / A piece of icy heart in a jade vase” 洛陽親友如相問一片冰心在玉壺), more commonly the final two lines share the weight of the closure (as in “In a solitary boat, an old man with coir coat and bamboo hat. / Alone fishes the cold river snows” 孤舟蓑笠翁獨釣寒江雪). In the same way, beginning couplets often share the weight of introducing the topic. Ch'iu Chao-ch'ao once noted that the topic should fall in the first line of the “four-part pattern,” which he considered the orthodox method for chu-hueh. However, he then proceeded to give a large number of examples in which the topic falls in the second line, or even the third or the fourth, or is delineated by various pairs of lines (not necessarily contiguous). The orthodox pattern is thus fairly well debased.

In sum, the two lines in a couplet tend to depend on each other—through loose or strict parallelism, propositional continuity, and so on—and so structures which require that the lines work apart seem forced. Instead of “four-part pattern” or “crucial third line,” a more natural way of understanding a chu-hueh poem is to think of it as two integrated couplets, one of introduction and one of conclusion.

The “crucial third line” pattern has an additional problem, in that it asserts that one line in a poem is more important than the others. The danger is that poets might concentrate on composing one good line and dismiss the other three. Pan Te-yü 潘德濟 (1785–1839) addresses this possibility, and argues instead for complete integration of the four lines in a quatrain.

In discussing heptasyllabic chu-hueh, Yang Chung-hung [Yang Tsai] takes the third line as chief, and the fourth line as an elaboration of it. Shen Ch'ueh-shih [Shen Te-ch'ien] says that the majority of high-T'ang poets follow this rule. These are arbitrary judgments. Chu-hueh are only four lines, and should progress directly in a single breath—气直下，涕完全闭合其里而无杂。If the third line is chief and the fourth line elaborates it, then do the first two lines become useless?... Chu-hueh-shih contrarily...
Charles H. Egan

says that the majority of high-T'ang writers follow this rule (that of "crucial third line") because he does not understand the high-T'ang; if a ch'iu-chiü conforms to this rule then its structure will fall apart.†

The well-known literatus Wang Fu-chih 王夫之 (1619–1692) also cited the necessity of balance in chüeh-chiü.

If one only searches for good lines when composing poetry, then one has already fallen to the "Lesser Vehicle." It is worse in chüeh-chiü, which has such a small number of lines that breaking the form up to compose single intriguing lines cannot result in poetry.

百戰方萬頃 A hundred battles before Hsiang [Yu] was eliminated;
三章且易泰 A three-point code and Ch'in was changed.
功勳奮同勵 He gave credit to Prime Minister Hsiao;
氣盡誠夫人 His spirit was exhausted by Lady Ch'i.

seems just like a riddle for Han Kao-tsu. Thrown together these lines are four [distinct] pieces, not at all integrated. If the Buddha appeared in the world even he could not save poetry composed in this way.‡

The "truncated ch'iu-chiü" view began as a convenient explanation for a term that mystified commentators, but when taken to its logical conclusion it resulted in compositional patterns that cannot be easily applied to standard (T'ang) examples of the two chüeh-chiü forms. The comments by Pan Te-yü and Wang Fu-chih, as well as those by Shih Fu-hua, Chou Pi, Mao Ch'un-jiang, and Wei Chi-jui, noted earlier, represent attempts to characterize chüeh-chiü through formal analysis of poems, rather than by means of grand theories, and as such reveal a healthy skepticism.

CHÜEH-CHIÜ AS "ISOLATED LINES"

The second ahistorical explanation of the origin of the term chüeh-chiü appeared first in the writings of Chang Tuan-i 張鎰彛 (1779–ca. 1835). Chang

† Pan Te-yü 張德緯, Yang-i chi shih-hao 姚一詩話 (Shao-yeh shan-fang, pref. 1832 and 1836 ed. 3, p. 8a; Fu/Liu, p. 1071.
‡ Wang Fu-chih, ed. Tai Hung-sung 戴洪昇, Chüeh-chiü chi shih-hao ch'en-chü 織錦詩話續注 (Peking: Jen-min, 1918), p. 156; Fu/Liu, p. 1090. The poem, by Yu Chi-tu 玉芝谷 (ca. 670–74), is titled "La Praise of Han Kao-tsu" 繢繡長廊. See Ch'ien Tung-shih 金瑋詩, p. 87a. Each line of the poem refers to a person or event in the life of Han Kao-tsu (Fu/Ran, p. 206–194 ed.): defeat of Huang Yu (299–292 BC) for control of the empire, simplification of the legal code; employment of Hsiao Hsü to replace Hsiao Hsü (d. 194–187) as prime minister; and relations with his consort Lady Ch'i.

believed that the term chüeh-chiü refers to poems in which each line is isolated and end-stopped.‡ A quatrains of this type contrasts with another type, which is grammatically continuous from line to line. Thus the term chüeh-chiü does not cover all quatrains, and Chang's use of it is relatively narrow:

春水滿四澤 Spring waters fill the four marshes;
夏雲多奇嶽 Summer clouds numerous on the fantastic peaks.
秋月揚明輝 Autumn moon displays its brightness;
冬樹秀孤松 Winter mountains show the beauty of solitary pines.

This [T'ao] Yüan-ming (365–417) poem is the ancestor of chüeh-chiü. There is one stop in every line 一句一結. In composing poetry there are line patterns 句法. [Quatrains in which] the meaning is continuous and the sentences are complete include,

打起黃鶯兒 Hit the yellow orioles.
莫教枝上啼 Don't allow them to sing on the branches.
幾回驚妾夢 How many times they have broken in on my dreams.
不得到達西 And kept me from Liao-hsi.

Each line follows on the previous line without break 一句一接. When composing poetry, this idea (of two types of quatrains) should be considered, then the poems will be divinely skilled.†

The first of Chang's two types of quatrains would be termed "chüeh-chiü" (as a description of poetic structure), and the second presumably would not be. Chüeh-chiü in this context can be translated as "isolated lines," since each line in the quatrains describes an independent set of images, and there are no grammatical links between lines. Each line of "Spring waters ..." has a simple topic-comment

‡ A similar idea is ascribed to Liu Ch'en-wen 劉辰翁 (1234–1293) by the anthologist Kao Ping, and by Ma Lu in Nan-yuan yishih chi, but I have not found the reference in Liu's works. See Kao, T'ung-shih shih-hao, p. 51; Fu/Liu, p. 916.
† Although included in T'ao Ch'ien's collected works, titled "Poem of the Four Seasons" 四時詩, it is now attributed to Ku K'ai-chhi 喬僑 (ca. 550–ca. 510) and titled "Poem on Appearances" 繽繡詩. See Lu Ch'ü-hsü 薛湖, Hsin Ch'ien Han Wei Chieh Nan P'o-chii shih 先秦漢魏南北朝詩 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1983), hereafter Lu, p. 931. Lu records several other pentasyllabic quatrains that use a similar four-part structure. See pp. 1000, 1004, and 1553.
† This poem, "Spring Lament" 春怨, is attributed to Chin Ch'ang-hsi 金昌緯 (fl. 713–742). See Fu/Liu, p. 219.
†† Chang Tuan-i 張鎰彛, Kuan-chi chi 賁錄 (1883 Wen-yuan-lo SKCS edn.) vol. 655, pp. 1424–25, Fu/Liu, pp. 947, 1028.
structure, and there is a lack of grammatical function words (hsü-tzu). The two lines of the first couplet of “Hit the yellow orioles” function as a complete sentence, as do the two lines in the second couplet. An impression of colloquial speech is created in a number of ways: the imperative in the first couplet, the rhetorical question in the second couplet, the negative function words in lines two and four, and the pronoun in line three. I do not go so far as to say that Chang’s two quatrains types are separate genres, because both exhibit a common length, a tendency towards emblematic images that maximize meaning, and integration. However, a difference in language distinguishes their styles.

Chang’s description of two competing styles of quatrains is apparently in answer to the mid-Southern Sung critic Tseng Ch’i-li 曾季狸 who proposed a single style based on “Hit the yellow orioles.”

Someone asked Han Chü 華(za 1086-1135) about poetic method. He quoted the T’ang poet’s lines, “Hit the yellow orioles . . .” I have used Han Chü’s words to take an overall look at the ancients’ patterns for poetry composition, and all are in this poem. 44

Tseng follows this statement with several other “grammatically continuous” examples that support his assertion. Shih-hua writing often presented lively debates over the relative merits of the continuous versus noncontinuous styles, as represented by “Hit the yellow orioles.” 46

Yang Shen elaborated on Chang, and named the one “chüeh-chü” and the other “chiō-fu”:

In chüeh-chü there is one stop in every line. This begins with the “Song of the Four Seasons”: “Spring waters fill the four marshes . . .” Some say this is Tao Yuan-ming’s poem, but it is not. Ti Fu’s “Two orioles sing among green willow trees” definitely is descended from this poem. 49 Wang Wei’s poem,

柳梢拂地不忍折 Willow branches brush the ground—I cannot bear to break them;

蕲柏搖雲從更長 Pine and cypress touch the clouds—growing higher unhindered.

The text of the complete Ti Fu poem, one of a set of four named simply “chüeh-chü,” runs, “Two orioles among green willow trees.” A line of white egrets flies up into the blue sky. A thousand thousands of snow on the western range are framed in my window. And the toast which will go ten-thousand is to Eastern Wu and moored at my door.” 50

The T’ang and Sung chüeh-chü citations made by Yang are particularly revealing: quatrains that utilize static parallelism in both couplets would fit his “isolated lines” idea better than any other structure. Note that of the three chiō-chü examples, Ti Fu’s and Ou-yang Hsiu’s poems use perfect syntactic parallelism, and Wang Wei’s poem is almost perfect in its parallelism.

The reason why the structure of “Song of the Four Seasons” is desirable within the bounds of Yang’s argument is that static parallel couplets allow each line to present discrete, isolated sets of imagery, while still adhering together in standard couplet structure. Thus, although each line in a quatrain is isolated and end-stopped, the poem still holds together as two couplets. In a separate pronouncement on chüeh-chü, Yang again cites Ti Fu’s “Two orioles among green willow trees,” this time noting that because the lines are not linked together, the poem is “like the four central lines of a ti-shah” 即是律中四句. 51 He goes on to assert that among T’ang chüeh-chü composed entirely of parallel lines, all but one or two are like Ti’s poem, that is, the vast majority of poems.
do not use running-water parallelism. Although this assertion buttresses his argument, as a point of fact it is very questionable.

Chang's and Yang's two quatrains styles should not be considered mutually exclusive; rather, I assume they are the endpoints of a sliding scale that reveals the relative presence of one style or the other. "Yuē-fu" and "chüeh-chü" thus are descriptive terms covering all quatrains. This is the implication of the following comment by Hsieh Chen 謝榛 (1495–1575), which can function as a gloss to Chang's and Yang's interpretation of chüeh-chü.

Tso Shun-ch'i (the Ming poet Tso Kuo-chi 左國曠) said, "One meaning for each line; the meanings are separate but ch'i氣 ties them together. This is the method of chüeh-chü. If there is one meaning for each line, but the poem is not skillfully done, it is nonetheless inferior. If there is one meaning for two lines, the poem is skillfully done, it is still superior. Take skill as the criterion; do not speak of 'lines'..."

Yang Shen was perhaps the first commentator to question directly the authority of the "truncated lu-shih" view, a logical outgrowth of his distinct interpretation of the term chüeh-chü. However, the aesthetic implications of his theory do coincide to a great extent with those arising from the "truncated lu-shih" view. He once noted that:

... in the Ch' (479–502) and Liang (502–557) periods seven-character chüeh-chü already existed, long before there was seven-character lu-shih. However, chüeh-chü of the T'ang writers generally does not depart from these four patterns 四體 (the four pattern possibilities of the "truncated lu-shih view").

Thus Yang does not deny the importance of the prevailing view – he implies that there is a connection between T'ang chüeh-chü and lu-shih – but he rejects the assumption that chüeh-chü originate as "cut-off" lu-shih. When we probe the aesthetic implications of the "isolated lines" view, we can see why Yang accepted "truncated lu-shih" structures – and by extension, aesthetics. His theory is value-laden; it implies that the best chüeh-chü are those that are the most imagistic and fragmentary (since propositional-grammatical language would result in unwanted continuity). The best of the best, as evidenced by his examples, are poems that resemble the middle couplers of lu-shih, presenting fragmentary images in tense opposition. It follows that the lu-shih characteris-

The literary-historical explanation of chüeh-chü origins

Through the study of Six Dynasties literary history, a small number of observers in the Ming and Ch'ing began to separate fact from fallacy concerning chüeh-chü origins. They wanted to determine which extant Six Dynasties quatrains were the precursors of the T'ang forms and to record pre-T'ang uses of the term chüeh-chü. While never a majority opinion, the cumulative findings of a few of these writers — although incomplete in some respects — form the basis for the twentieth-century reconstructions of chüeh-chü origins by Sun K'ai-ti, Lo Ken-tse, and others.

Perhaps the first of these literary historians was Kao Ping 高棅 (1359–1423), the compiler of T'ang-shih p'ao-hui 唐詩品彙, an annotated anthology of T'ang poetry published in 1393. Kao divided his anthology according to poetic form, and prefaced each form with comments about origins and characteristics. Kao does not provide comprehensive explanations, but his ideas were the starting points for Hu Ying-lin's more detailed research two centuries later.

Kao has the following to say about five- and seven-character chüeh-chü:

Five-character chüeh-chü have been composed since ancient times. Among the ancient lyrics of Han (202 BC–220 AD) and Wei (220–265) yüeh-fu are "Pa-i-tou yin" 白頭吟, "Ch'ü-sai ch'u" 出塞曲, "T'ao-yeh ko" 桃葉歌, "Huan-wen ko" 歡問歌, "Ch'ang-kan ch'u" 長干曲, "T'uan-shan lang" 團扇郎, and other verses. Later, in the Six Dynasties compositions gradually became numerous. In the beginning of the T'ang those who were skilled at it [wu-chüeh-chü] were many.

Seven-character chüeh-chü originated in the old yüeh-fu "Hsia-se ko" 賈瑟歌, "Wu-ch'i ch'u" 胡惟曲 by emperor Yuan of the Liang dynasty (Hsiao I
Charles H. Egan

"Yüan-shih hsing" (怨詩行) by Chiang Tsung 江總 (519-594), and other compositions. All are seven-character four-line poems. In the early-T'ang sound patterns 細聲 were stabilized, and the examples are definitely ch'iüeh-chü. However, there are not many authors. (1) The earliest examples of the titles Kao cites are quatrains—lengths that do not follow the rules of tonal prosody. (The single exception is "Pai-t'ou yin," which is longer in the earliest examples.) (2) The implication is that yüeh-fu quatrains become ch'iüeh-chü when tonal prosody is introduced. Kao does not offer a theory explaining the meaning of the term ch'iüeh-chü itself.

Of the five-character titles cited, "T'ao-yeh ko," "Huan-wen ko" 歡聞歌 (note the error in the T'ang-shih p'ien-hui transcription), and "T'uan-shan lang" are all anonymous quatrains—lengths that are listed as Chin-period (265-420) "Songs of Wu from Chiang-nan" (Chiang-nan Wu-shiang 江南吳聲) under the yüeh-fu category of "Song lyrics in the clear shang mode" 清曲舊歌. (3) The "Songs of Wu" are primarily love songs, written in colloquial language. The songs originated probably as folksongs in the Wei and Chin periods, but attained their greatest popularity in the Ch'i and Liang periods when scholar-poets modeled great numbers of works after them.

"Ch'ang-kan ch'u" and "Ch'u-sai ch'u" are also colloquial folksongs, listed as "Miscellaneous song lyrics" 零曲歌諷. Several examples of "Ch'u-sai ch'u" are longer than four lines; only one example is a quattrain.

The heptasyllabic quatrains Kao Ping cites are a mixed lot, and as such are not entirely convincing as the precursors to ch'iüeh-chü. Of the three titles, "Hsiao-se ko" and "Wu-ch'i ch'u" were quatrains—lengths that are numbered late-Six Dynasties court poets wrote lyrics. Rhyme schemes differ: 4-extant "Hsiao-se ko" use a single rhyme in the AAXA pattern (as do most T'ang ch'iüeh-chü), while most of the "Wu-ch'i ch'u" use two rhymes in an AABB pattern. Examples of the other title mentioned, "Yüan-shih hsing," are generally longer than quattrain length. Only two poems by Chiang Tsung, simply titled "Yüan-shih," are seven-character quatrains. The poems utilize the AAXA rhyme scheme.

The development of quatrains

The origins of the five- and seven-character ch'iüeh-chü forms, Hu argued, were in penta-syllabic ancient-verse and heptasyllabic song, respectively. The implication is that writing short poetry eventually crystallized into the fixed quatrains of the ch'iüeh-chü forms.

Five- and seven-character ch'iüeh-chü are transformations of penta-syllabic short-ancient-verse (tuan-ku) and heptasyllabic short-song (tuan-ku 短歌). There are countless examples of five-character short-ancient-verse to be seen in any cursory examination of Han and Wei poetry. The ch'iüeh-chü

Huang-hsin's Critical Approach

The most comprehensive of the early literary historians was Hu Ying-lin 胡應麟 (1551-1622), who included an entire chuan of material on ch'iüeh-chü in his well-known critical work, Shih-shu 詩薮. Like Yang Shen, Hu noted that the ch'iüeh-chü forms predated their li-shih counterparts; he doubted the prevailing "truncated li-shih" view.

The meaning of "ch'iüeh-chü" still cannot be ascertained with certainty. Those who say ch'iüeh-chü are cut from the opening and closing couplets or the two middle couplets of recent-style verse perhaps do not have sufficient basis. Five-character ch'iüeh-chü began in the period of the Two Capitals (Nanking and Lo-yang—the Six Dynasties epoch). At that time there were no five-character li-shih. Seven-character ch'iüeh-chü began with the Four Talents (Wang Po, Zhang Qi, Yang Chiu-yun, Lo Chao-lin 羅昭諧), and Lo Pin-wang 韓賀王 (of the early-T'ang). At that time there were no seven-character li-shih. All Six Dynasties short ancient-verse (tuan-ku 短古) were indiscriminately called songs (ko-ko 行). Not until the T'ang were they finally termed ch'iüeh-chü.

Yang Shen assumed that ch'iüeh-chü was a descriptive word for quatrains, and so conceived of his theory of styles. The proponents of the "truncated li-shih" view also assumed that "ch'iüeh-chü" was a descriptive for quatrains, which led to their theory. Hu Ying-lin made no such assumption. Instead, he saw the problem of ch'iüeh-chü origins as divided into three independent parts: the development of the quatrains form; the introduction of tonal prosody to quatrains; and the etymology of the term ch'iüeh-chü. The first of these was uppermost in his discussion and was the most complete (based in part on Kao Ping); the last remained the most sketchy.

Ibid., p. 427.
(1) The earliest citation from "Pai-t'ou yin" in Yüeh-fu shih shih 鳳府碑銘 is a six-line, but the poem is divided into stanzas of mostly quatrains—lengths marked as "ch'iüeh." The fact that Kao Ping used this poem as an example of penta-syllabic quatrains implies that he accepted the practice of taking stanzas out of context, and possibly implies that he thought "cutoff lines" originated in longer yüeh-fu poems. This is followed by Hu Ying-lin, and in this century, Sun K'ai-i.
(4) Lu, pp. 2135, 2135, 2750 ("Hsiao-se ko"); 1858, 2035, 2511, 2549, 2573 ("Wu-ch'i ch'u"); 2572 ("Yüan-shih").

Ibid., p. 2a. [2a], Fu/Liu, p. 543.
genre 绝体 of the T'ang writers certainly came from these. Seven-character short-song began with "Kai-hsia" 岸下 [by Hsiang Yu 禹; 233–202 BC]. After the Liang and Ch'en (557–587), writers abounded.64

To Hu, the chüeh-chüe genre came out of five-character short-ancient-verse, and not out of seven-character. This is due to chronology -- see-chüeh predates ch'i-chüeh -- and in no way implies that ch'i-chüeh grew out of see-chüeh. Hu consistently argues for the independent development of pentasyllabic and heptasyllabic chüeh-chüe.

Hu provides further information on the development of both forms, just as Kao Ping listed specific titles and genres that influenced them.

The oldest poems in the T'ang pentasyllabic chüeh-chüe genre are Han dynasty examples like: "Where is the straw-chopper now?" "A dried fish crosses the river weeping," "On the southern mountain, a cassia tree," "At sunrise, the autumn clouds are dark," and "Dodder waves in the strong wind." All are T'ang chüeh-chüe. The number of examples in the Six Dynasties is very large. Many T'ang writers use this style. Li Po and Wang Wei were the first to become masters.65

The first, third, fourth and fifth lines are the opening lines of the four "Ancient chüeh-chüe" 古絕句 included in Hsü Ling's 徐撝 (507–583) Yü-t'ai hsìn-yüng 玉臺新詠 (compiled ca. 545 AD). The complete texts, in their usual order, are as follows. The first two poems depend on puns for intelligibility.

華砧今何在
山上有舊山
何當大刀頭
破鏡飛上天
日暮秋雲陰
江水清且深

Where is the straw-chopper now? On the mountain-top is another mountain. When will the great knife return? When the broken mirror flies to heaven.66 At sunset, the autumn clouds are dark; River water is clear and deep.

64 Ibid. 6, p. 18 [321]. Hsiang Yu's "Song of Kai-hsia" 陔下歌 was purportedly written before his army's final defeat at Kai-hsia, in present-day Anhui province. Unlike T'ang chüeh-chüe, the song uses two rhymes and adds the semantically valueless particle 安 in every line.
65 Ibid. 6, pp. 367a-367b [331-332].
66 The poem is based on a rebus picture and puns. Another word for kau (straw-chopper) is fu 鳥, which is a homonym for fu 夫 (husband). In 1.4, the character shen 神 (mountain) placed on top of another shan resembles the character of a 花 (to leave). In 1.4, the sword implies the act of returning, because sword-hilted had metal rings affixed to them, called tao-hsense 刀顯. The word huang is a homonym for huang 黃 (to return). The "broken mirror." 1.4 refer to the partial image (not round like a mirror). Thus the poem can be translated, "Where is my husband now? He is gone. When will he return? When the crescent moon flies in heaven."

何用通音信
蓮花吹暗香
英絲從長風
根塵無斷絕
無情尚不離
有情安可別

What need for exchange of letters? Put lotus blossom in my tortoise-shell hairpin.67 Dodder waves in the strong wind, But roots and stem are never severed. If even nonsentient things will not separate, Why should the sentient be willing to part?68

南山一樹桂
上有雙鶩客
千年長交頤
歡慶不相忘

On the southern mountains, a cassia tree; At the top, a pair of mandarin ducks. For a thousand years entwining their necks in love; Never forgetting their joyful blessings.

The remaining example is the first line, and the title, of the following poem:

枯魚過河泣
何時悔復及
作書勸驥麟
相教慎出入

A dried fish crosses the river weeping; When will such grief occur again? He writes a letter to the bream and tench, Advising them to be careful when going out.69

An oral influence is evident in the puns, frequent repetition, propositional syntax, enjambment, and simple imagery. All were probably songs, or song-influenced poems. Hu Ying-fìn dates them to the Han, but this is by no means certain. None has a firm date, and transmission before the Liang period is unknown.70 This makes their place as the "oldest" poems of the chüeh-chüe genre somewhat uncertain.

Hu Ying-fìn points to two distinct Six Dynasties sources for pentasyllabic chüeh-chüe, the anonymous yüeh-fu and the shih quatrains by scholar-poets.

Like Kao Ping, he notes titles of quatrains-length yüeh-fu song series: "Tzu-yeh" 子夜, "Ch'ien-hsi" 前溪, "Huan-wen" 斐訥, "Huan-shan" 輪山, and...
"Lai-lo ch'ü” 赖洛曲” He also records an entire poem of the “Huang-hu ch’ü” 黄鹤曲” title. Unlike Kao Ping, all of the penta syllabic yüeh-fu titles Hu cites are of the “clear-shang lyric” category. All except “Lai-lo ch’ü” are in the subcategory “Songs of Wu”; “Lai-lo ch’ü” is listed under the “clear-shang lyric” subcategory of “Western songs of Ching and Ch’ü” (Ching-Ch’ü hai-sheng 聊城西), which is similar in style and form to the “Songs of Wu.”” Hu mentions “clear-shang lyric” specifically by name as the inheritor of the Han-Wei hsien-ho yüeh-fu style: “After all of the hsien-ho songs, only the ch‘ing-shang and other ch‘ien-ch‘i can follow” 相和诸歌后惟清商等绝差可继之.73

Like the “clear-shang lyric” titles noted by Kao Ping, the new titles offered by Hu Ying-lin consist of colloquial love songs. The “Tzu-yeh” song series, named for an Eastern Chin (317–420) songstress, is most often quoted. Following it, below, is also an example of the “Ch‘ien-hsi” songs:

**Tzu-yeh ko**

自從別郎來    Since I parted from you,
何日不言愁    Which day have I not lamented?
黃葉葉成林    Cork trees flourish and become a forest—
當奈苦心多    How to endure the profusion of bitter trunks?

**Ch‘ien-hsi ko**

黃葛生漫漫    Yellow kudzu grows in brilliant profusion;
誰能斷葛根    Who can cut the kudzu root?
寧斷蠶兒乳    I’d rather cut off my baby’s milk,
不斷郎殷勤    Than cut off my affections for you!79

The style is quite distinct from that of Six Dynasties shih poetry. Each poem’s structure breaks into two parts: the natural world, in one couplet, is compared with the singer’s personal situation in the other. An impression of direct speech is created in several ways. Both poems use strong syntax, which makes the couplets into complete sentences; both use grammatical function words for this purpose (for example, the negative fu 不, and the preposition “since” ts‘u-ts‘ang 自從); both use the second-person pronoun lang 君;78 and both ask rhetorical questions.

Two other distinctive elements are also evident: puns and repetition. In “Tzu-yeh ko,” a verbal pun ties the human situation of the first couplet with the natural scene in the second. The Amur cork tree was the source of a bitter-tasting medicine, and in “clear-shang lyrics” it is used as a metaphor for lost love; the words “bitter trunks” 苦心 here are literally “bitter hearts.” In “Ch‘ien-hsi ko,” the character for “kudzu” (ko 葛) appears twice and “cut” (tuan 断) appears three times. Repetition of tuan ties the natural and human situations together: like the hardy plant, the singer’s love for her man is ineradicable. These poems are typical of “clear-shang lyric” quatrains.

Hu argues elsewhere, however, that Six Dynasties yüeh-fu did not develop directly into T‘ang wu-ch‘i; rather these songs are the root of a yüeh-fu style of T‘ang penta syllabic quatrains.

Penta syllabic ch‘i-ch‘i originates in the period of the Two Capitals. Examples of the form were composed by Wei writers, but it particularly flourished in the Chin and Sung (420–479) periods. Poems like “Tzu-yeh” and “Ch‘ien-hsi” reach the level of exquisiteness. Many T‘ang writers imitated them—however, these are in the yüeh-fu genre and are not T‘ang ch‘i-ch‘i. Among them the style and sound 韵響 are very much like T‘ang ch‘i-ch‘i, but they should be categorized separately 悉影於方.79

Instead, he immediately offers Six Dynasties penta syllabic shih quatrains as the precursors of T‘ang wu-ch‘i, giving the full texts of thirteen Six Dynasties quatrains, twelve by named scholar-poets and one by an anonymous author. Almost all of the works are categorizable as shih rather than yüeh-fu.80 The following two examples are “Chung-hsing Song 中興歌” by Pao Chao 鮑照 (ca. 414–466), and “Poem Composed at Wei-shan Pavilion on the Ninth Day of the Ninth Month” by Ch‘ang-yu 楚’a.81

**Chung-hsing Song (1 of 10)**

白日照前萎    The bright sun shines in the front window,
玲瓏結羅中    And sparkles among the silken dresses.
美人梳輕鬟    A beauty hides behind a light fan;
合思歌春风    Concealing her thoughts, she sings of the

**Poem Composed at Wei-shan Pavilion**

心澤南霧逝    My heart pursues the southern clouds;
形隨北雁來    My body follows the northern geese.

---

80 Ibid. 6, p. 120 [342]. 81 Ibid. 6, pp. 124–138 [342–44]. 82 Lu, pp. 1771, 2595.
T’ang writers; and the third is ǐz’u and shih’u lyrics of the Sung and Yuan (1276–1358)."% The contradiction in Hu’s arguments is only apparent. I believe his object in citing both the Six Dynasties yüeh-fu and the scholar-poet examples is to explain the genesis of two separate types of T’ang pentasyllabic quatrains, one more literary than the other. Although he argues that in the T’ang period yüeh-fu quatrains and chüeh-chü quatrains “should be categorized separately,” yet the difference to Hu appears to be one of style, not genre; he notes that the two are not that different, since T’ang yüeh-fu quatrains in “style and sound are very much like T’ang chüeh-chü.” His changing use of the term chüeh-chü also is evidence that he posited one genre, not two. When he argues that yüeh-fu quatrains “are not T’ang chüeh-chü,” his use of the term is fairly narrow, referring only to poems with a literary flavor. More commonly he uses the term broadly, including both yüeh-fu and shih. In sum, Hu says that T’ang pentasyllabic quatrains poets drew their major influence from Six Dynasties yüeh-fu, but also developed a denser, more imagistic and varied style by adding shih characteristics to the yüeh-fu base; the yüeh-fu quatrains was paired with the distinct chüeh-chü quatrain. At first glance, the bifurcation of styles appears identical to that of Yang Shen, but this is deceptive. While Yang conceived a distinct break between continuous yüeh-fu and the noncontinuous chüeh-chü (which he thought was close to lü-shih), Hu thought that early yüeh-fu and T’ang chüeh-chü were two parts of an unbroken yüeh-fu tradition. Further, Hu’s conception of chüeh-chü had little to do with lü-shih, even though termed “lü-chüeh” (regulated-quatrain) in several places.

In fact, Hu criticizes chüeh-chü that were too close to lü-shih. Singled out were quatrains that concluded with perfect parallelisms:

* Hu, Shih-sou 1, p. 20a [62].
* Two such quatrains types exist in T’ang poetry. Wang Wei’s colloquial “Miscellaneous Poem” 難詩 states: “You have come from my hometown, / And should know of hometown affairs. / On the day you came, before the decorated entrance, / Was the cold plum in flower or not?” 范自作吏來念怨家歸客前庭梅花未. Contrast this with his much denser “Deer Enclosure” 鹿苑. “Empty mountain, no man is seen. / Only heard are the sounds of man’s talk. / Sunset light even the secluded grove. / And again shines on the green moss.” 空山不見人遠客聞人語夜來煉stätes: Fu/Tsu, pp. 107, 112.

Hu had stated (see paragraph above) that pentasyllabic chüeh-chü sprang from Wei compositions and Chin-Sung yüeh-fu-like "Tu-neh" and "Ch’ien-hai." Elsewhere he writes, “The ‘Hsi-chou ch’ü’ yüeh-fu is a single composition, but actually it is eight stanzas of chüeh-chü.” 西洲曲宴時作一編實絕句八章也. “And at the beginning of the 6th and high-T’ang, most pentasyllabic chüeh-chü were yüeh-fu. In the early-T’ang, such ones were merely the echoes of Ch’ien and Sui. Not until after the K’ai-yuan period (713–755) does the style acquire more” Hu, Shih-sou 6, pp. 12a [342], 49 [366], 139 [344].


Charles H. Egan

"Vast wilds, Heaven lower than the trees; Clear river, the moon is close to man."

野蠻天低樹江月近人。has spiritual tone without peer. "Heaven's force surrounds the flat wilds; / The river's rush enters the broken mountains."

天勢圍平野西流入斷山。has incomparable robust unity. But both are incomplete regulated-verse 成律詩, and not of the ch'ü-ch'i genre. Presumably it is the circularity of the concluding couplets that convinces Hu that the poems are not ch'ü-ch'i. In short, Hu and Yang Shen can be considered as standing in mutual opposition on the question of the dominant (and proper) pentasyllabic ch'ü-ch'i style.

Hu Ying-lin's sources for heptasyllabic ch'ü-ch'i are fewer. Like Kao Ping, he argues that true ch'ü-ch'i began in the early-T'ang: "Seven-character ch'ü-ch'i began with the Four Talents. . . ." He mentions fewer than ten Six Dynasties tides.

Following Kao Ping, Hu cites the three titles "Hsia-se ko," "Wu-ch'i ch'ü," and Chiang Tsung's "Yuan-shih." However, he is more critical as regards their having been "sources" for ch'ü-ch'i.

The P'in-hua (Kao's T'ang-shih p'in-hua) asserts that "Hsia-se ko," "Wu-ch'i ch'ü," and "Yuan-shih and hsiang" are the sources of ch'ü-ch'i. I have examined each of the four "Wu-ch'i ch'ü," and each uses two rhymes, just like the style of Hsiang Yu's "Kai-hsia." T'ang writers often imitated this style, as in Li Ch'ang-chi's (Li Ho 李賀; 790–816) "Willow cattails hit the bed-curtain, spring clouds burn it:" 梨花雙燕春夢熱．In each of Chiang Tsung's "Yuan-shih," the last couples all conclude with parallelism. These are not in the orthodox ch'ü-ch'i style. Only "Hsia-se ko" alone, although not tonally harmonious, has style and content that definitely match T'ang ch'ü-ch'i. All come from this source. However, in the Six Dynasties very few examples follow.

Following is one of the anonymous "Hsia-se ko," dating to the Liang period. Hu is emphatic about the fact that the ch'ü-ch'i genre began in the Liang.

Hsia-se ko

春風宛轉入曲房

And brings a hundred flowers' fragrance from the

春風宛轉入曲房

small garden.

Horse with gold saddle has gone and not returned;

白馬金鞍去未返

Jade tears on rouge makeup fall down in lines.

紅妝玉筯下成行

Except for the lack of tonal prosody, this poem compares well with T'ang ch'ü-ch'i by such acknowledged masters as Wang Ch'ang-ling. Although technically a yüeh-fu song, the style of "Hsia-se ko" is precise and elegant—quite unlike the colloquial pentasyllabic "clear-shang lyrics." This is understandable: the rise of heptasyllabic poetry in the late-Six Dynasties and early-T'ang was based in imperial courts.

As in many of Wang's poems, an archetypal human situation is the topic—the lonely woman left behind by her traveling (soldiering?) husband-lover. Strong emotion is presented in a very subtle way: visual details take the place of direct introduction of the parted couple. In fact, the entire poem is in a third-person descriptive mode. Integration is found in the second couplet, where the spring wind of the first couplet causes the woman's reawakened lovesickness—thus the poem can be termed a "fusion of feeling and scene." The rhetorical structure is "linear," in that both couples are continuous (the second couplet is continuous running-water parallelism, since the third line is in the past, and the fourth line is in the present).

Of the other Six Dynasties titles Hu cites, Hsiao Kang's 蕭綱 (593–551) well-known "Watching a Lone Goose Fly at Night" 夜望單飛雁 is representative. It is a good example of how the style employed in the "Hsia-se ko" yüeh-fu also occurred in shih poetry.

Watching a Lone Goose Fly at Night

天風河白夜星稀

Heaven frozen, the river white, stars few at night;

一雁聲嘶何處歸

A single goose cries—where now to go?

早知半路應相失

If he had known that halfway he should lose

不如從來本獨飛

the flock,

"T'were better that he had always flown alone.

98 [199]; Lu, p. 1245. Another Song era poem that follows AAXA is Pao Chun's "Hearing a Singer at Night; 高鶴; "Lu, p. 1395.
99 Lu, p. 2750. The poem is also attributed to Wei Shen 聖 (d. 573); p. 2269.
100 Hu, Shih-I 6, pp. 5a-b [328–39]; Lu, p. 1597.
The addition of tonal prosody

Tonal prosody is the simplest of Hu's three problems. He notes that early five- and seven-character quatrains were tonally unregulated. Tonal regulation was added to the forms by the T'ang period. Hu's explanation of the transformation of quatrains, however, chiefly concerns style: he argues that poetic language changed just when tonal prosody was added. Presumably, this is when shih characteristics were added to the yueh-fu quatrain base. Discussing the evolution of the two chüeh-ch'i forms, Hu says:

Within four lines, two rhymes mutually harmonize, but transitions are rapid 轉換既迫 and sound patterns are not fluid 音調未舒. With the advent of the T'ang masters there was a transformation; the pitchpipes were harmonized 律吕略齊 and line-style stabilized 句格稍順. The language is half like recent-style verse, but the meaning and flavor far exceed it.\(^9\)

Elsewhere, concerning seven-character quatrains:

Yu Tzu-shan's (Yu Hsin 廣信; 512-581) three-poem "Tai-jen shang-wang" 代人惆往 is close to the chüeh-ch'i genre but the sound-pattern is extremely unharmonious 調殊不諧. The language is not flowing either 詞亦未暢. Only with the anonymous late-Sui (581-618) poet's

楊柳青青著地垂 Green, green the willow brushing the ground;
楊花漫漫攬天飛 Wild, wild the willow cattkins flying to heaven.
柳絮折盡花飛盡 Willow branches are all broken—cattkins are all flown;
借問行人歸不歸 I ask the traveler, will he return?\(^9\)

does seven-character chüeh-ch'i become tonally regulated 音律.\(^9\) This is the first poem in which every character is harmonious. Its language also has much T'ang flavor.\(^9\)

Hu Ying-lin's argument is that the five- and seven-character quatrain forms derived from yueh-fu, specifically originating as short versions of pentsyllabic ancient-verse and heptasyllabic song. Later, tonal prosody was added and the language was "stabilized," resulting in the chüeh-ch'i genres.

The meaning of the term chüeh-ch'i

Hu's information on the meaning of the term chüeh-ch'i is rather incomplete. He disproved the "truncated lü-shih" view on historical grounds and disagreed with the "isolated lines" view stylistically. Nowhere, however, does he clearly define the term; he simply implies the possibility that chüeh-ch'i are so called because some early examples appear to be stanzas lifted out of longer yueh-fu poems.

步出城東門 Walking out of the city's east gate;
遠望江南路 Looking afar at the road to Chiang-nan.
前日風雪中 On a past day amid wind and snow,
故人從此去 An old friend passed this way.

cuts off the first four lines of a poem by a Han writer.\(^9\)

自君之出矣 Since you have gone,
明鏡暗不治 The bright mirror is always dark.
思君如流水 My thoughts of you are like the flowing waters—
無有窮已時 That never for a moment are exhausted.

cuts off the middle four lines of a poem by a Wei writer.\(^9\) Thus to say "chüeh" is "chüeh" is possible, but does not apply specifically to [truncating] recent-style verse. To insist upon this ["truncated lü-shih" view] is not the correct argument.\(^9\)

And elsewhere:

The "Hsi-chou ch'ü" 西洲曲 yueh-fu is a single composition, but is actually eight stanzas (ch'ang) of chüeh-ch'i. The beginning and end of each stanza are integrated and complete 一首尾相應, and the stanzas link together in a single unity 寫為一. The form and style are very fresh, and the language is also extremely skilled. For example,

渡飛滿西洲 Flying geese cover the Western Island;
望郎上青樓 Looking for him she climbs the green tower.
樓高望不見 The tower is high but she cannot see so far—
葦日闊干頭 A whole day by the balcony rail.

\(^{9}\) The anonymous original poem, entitled "Ancient Poem 古詩," is eight lines. The second stanza exhibits a change in rhyme: Lu, p. 336.

\(^{9}\) Kuo Mao-ch'ien 郭茂倩, "Tai-fu shih-chi" 樂府詩集 (1932 Hsin-yüan-ko SKCS edn.), vol. 1947, ch. 85, p. 599. The lines are the third stanza (ch'ang 軍) of a five-stanza poem by Hsu Han 徐斡 (5-618).

\(^{9}\) Hu, Shih-ssu 6, p. 26 [329].
The ocean water is green and vast;  
You are sad and I am also sad.  
The south wind knows my thoughts,  
And blows my dreams to the Western Island.**

These are just like poems by the T’ang writers.**

The quatrains-length stanzas in the above poems can function as independent chüeh-chü poems. The first two are often read as such, and Hu argues that the latter two could be. Above, he noted that stanzas taken out of context can be said to have been “cut-off” (chüeh). Thus chüeh-chü are “chüeh-chü,” the term usually applied by critics only to quatrains as truncated li-shih, but here signifying “truncated yüeh-fu.”

But Hu also believed that chüeh-chü was a T’ang term, once claiming, “All Six Dynasties short ancient-verse (tuan-ku) were indiscriminately called songs (ko-hsing). Not until the T’ang were they finally termed ‘chüeh-chü.’”** Faced with evidence to the contrary, Hu still dates the term to the T’ang.

Among Han poems are recorded four “Ancient chüeh-chü” poems. But at that time the rules and styles were inchoate, so how could there be this appellation? These are in the category of songs 歌謠, and anthologists topped them with T’ang headings.**

Granting Hu’s assertion that the Han period did not give rise to the term chüeh-chü, it is puzzling that he did not date its origin to the Six Dynasties, since Yu-t’ai hsia-yung, where the poems appeared, was a Liang-period compilation.

These two points about chüeh-chü origins—that chüeh-chü are truncated yüeh-fu and that chüeh-chü is a T’ang term—tend to contradict each other. As evidence of the former Hu cites the pre-T’ang practice of writing yüeh-fu with independent quatrains-length stanzas that could be taken out of context, but according to Hu these stanzas were not called chüeh-chü at the time. Then in the T’ang quatrains were independent poems, but their genre name probably could not have derived from a practice no longer in fashion. Hu Ying-lin’s argument was missing something.

CH’ING RESEARCH ON THE TERM “CHÜEH-ChÜ”

Ch’ing critics found that the term chüeh-chü was indeed pre-T’ang. Several noted its use in Yu-t’ai hsia-yung in this regard, including Tung Wen-huan 董文煥 (1832–1877), Wu Ch’iao, Li Ying 李英 (fl. 1760s), and Ch’ien Liang-tse 錢良澤 (fl. 1680s–1710s). Their specific reference was the same four “ancient chüeh-chü” mentioned by Hu Ying-lin (and translated above).”

Such critics as Wu Ch’iao, Li Ying, and Chao I 趙壹 (172–1814) discussed the use of the term in Nan-shih 南史—the history of the Southern Dynasties that was compiled by Li Yen-shou 李延壽 and his father Li Ta-shih 李大師 early in the T’ang. Chao cited the history’s section on the Liang emperor Yüan (Hsiao I):

The Wei army invaded, and on the twenty-eighth day attacked from all sides. Even before [the army] reached it, the city was conquered. At Yu-pi, [the emperor Hsiao I] called for wine and drank it, and composed four “chüeh-chü” poems 詩四絕...**

All four of those poems are rather labored shih quatrains on the topic of death. The third runs as follows:

松風侵曉哀  
霜霧霧夜來  
寂寞千載後  
誰畏軒轅臺

A pine wind permeates the dawn sadness;  
Frost has come in the night.  
After a thousand years of emptiness,  
Who will fear to pass the Hsia-shen Terrace?**

In Nan-shih’s biography of Liu Ch’ang 劉昶 (434–497),** the alternative term “broken lines” (tuan-ku 斷句) is used instead of “chüeh-chü.” Chao assumes the terms were interchangeable in the Six Dynasties, as they were later. Li Ying argues that the old form of the character “chüeh” (written 竹) resembles the character “tuan” (written 斷), and assumes that “tuan-ku” is a mistake for “chüeh-chü.”

Ch’ang knew that he could not win [military victory], so by night he opened the gate and fled to Wei, abandoning his mother and wife and taking with him only one concubine, who followed him on horseback wearing men’s clothing. On the road he impassionedly wrote a “tuan-ku,” which says,
In Nan-shih's biography of T'an Ch'ao 檀超 (5th c.), a certain well-known writer Wu Mai-yüan 吴迈远 (fl. 465–473) is the most interesting example. The emperor Ming of Sung summoned Wu to a court audience, after which the disappointed emperor was recorded as having said, "Besides 'ten' and 'chüeh-chüeh this man has nothing else."" Both Wu Ch'iao and Li Ying assume that tsen refers to couplets, and chüeh refers to quatrains, as these are the commonplace meanings of the terms in later periods. As a result they missed an opportunity to provide a semantic explanation for the term chüeh-chüeh.15

The Ch'ing poet and critic Wang Shih-chen 王士禛 (1634–1711) provided a new interpretation. He proposed that the term chüeh-chüeh was related to the practice of writing "linked-verse" (tien-chu 联句) in the Six Dynasties period.16

In tien-chu each person writes four lines. Separately [these four-line segments] become "chüeh-chüeh," while together they remain a single composition. Many in the generation of Hsieh Tiao 谢眺 (464–499), Fan Yun 范云 (ca. late 5th c.), Ho Sun 何逊 (d. 527) and Chiang Ko 江淹 (d. 535) have examples of this genre.17

According to this argument, chüeh-chüeh are so-called because they are segments of longer tien-chu compositions taken out of context. The idea may be applied to the Nan-shih comment about Wu Mai-yüan; it makes sense to say that a poet is skilled at a distinct genre like tien-chu, while mention of his skill at mere couplets is less likely. To assume that tien and chüeh are related helps explain why the two terms were singled out and others, such as yüeh-fu and shih, were omitted.

Wang Shih-chen provided an interesting starting point for understanding the term chüeh-chüeh, but did not carry his argument through. This task was left to twentieth-century literary historians, who rigorously analyzed the disparate information on chüeh-chüeh origins.

THE MODERN HISTORICAL UNDERSTANDING OF CHUEH-CHUEH

In 1934 Hung Wei-fa 洪万法 was the first of several modern Chinese critics to address the question of chüeh-chüeh origins.18 Although Hung adequately summarized the two major competing views—that chüeh-chüeh are cut-off from tien-chu and that they are descended from yüeh-fu—his work was superseded by Sun K'ai-ti 孙楷第, Fu Mao-mien 付茂謨, Li Chia-yen 李嘉言, and Lo Ken-tse 罗根泽 in the 1940s.19 Lo Ken-tse's work can be regarded as the most complete, however none of these critics covered every facet. Further, none comments extensively on the origins of heptasyllabic chüeh-chüeh, instead the focus is on penta-syllabic poetry.

These four scholars discovered further examples of Six Dynasties usage of the term chüeh-chüeh. Lo Ken-tse notes that Yü-t'ai hsin-yung 绍庭 recorded the term in instances other than the "Ancient chüeh-chüeh." The tenth chuan of the anthology consists entirely of pentasyllabic quatrains, and among them titles by Wu Chun 吴均 (469–502), Hsiao Kang 刘孝绰, and Chiang Po-yao 乔江瑶 use either the term "chüeh" 绝 or "chüeh-chüeh," although problems exist according to varying editions.20 Chi Jung-shu's 叶曾寿 (1686–1764) Yü-t'ai hsin-yung kao-iss

15 Hung Wei-fa, Chüeh-chüeh shih 絕 句論 (Shanghai: Shang-wu, 1934). Japanese critics have also researched chüeh-chüeh origins. The first substantial contribution, earlier even than those of the modern Chinese critics, was by SUZUKI Takao 鈴木隆雄, "Zekku sogen 練句源流," Shina bunka kenkyû 科学研究所 (Kosei, 1957), pp. 57–72. Suzuki notes the use of the term chüeh-chüeh in the Six Dynasties period, and assumes that quatrains named their game through being "cut off" from longer compositions at that time. He does not cite the "linked-verse" theory. The large number of Six Dynasties example poems are helpful. See also more recent articles synthesizing the various arguments: Hiruno Hikōro 平野彦次郎, "Zekku ni tsuteu 練句につれて," Tōshin kenkyû 同新研究 (Tokyo, 1974), pp. 56–77.

16 Sun K'ai-ti, "Chüeh-chüeh shih shen-yang chi-hai ti" 绝句是怎樣起源的, Huaiwen 學論 1 (1947), pp. 93–98; Fu Mao-mien, "T'ung-chüeh-chüeh shih chi-yen shuo ch'ao" 論絕句詩詞, Hsieh Wen 陶文, pp. 192–201; Li Chia-yen, "Chüeh-chüeh yu tien-chu" 绝句與聯句, Ku-k'ou yüan kan 眾口語, (1940), pp. 9–15; in Li Chia-yen ts'ai hua-chiao hun-chou chien 里嘉言談文化集, pp. 192–201; Li Chia-yen, "Chüeh-chüeh yu tien-chu" 绝句與聯句, Ku-k'ou yüan kan 眾口語, (1940), pp. 13–14; and Lo Ken-tse, "Chüeh-chüeh chu yu k'ou yen-shu" 绝句與聯句附論, in his Chüeh-chüeh 莊哲 (Shanghai: K'uei-tien wen-hsueh, 1973), in his Wen-hsueh hun-shu 人文集, pp. 188–199; and Lo, "Chüeh-chüeh san-yun." All of these articles are based largely on shih-sha, but there is relatively little citation of the earlier material.

17 Wu Chiao 吳兆基 and Cheng Yen-shan 鄭 Genç. eds., Yu-t'ai hsin-yung chüeh-chüeh 紹庭詩話 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1982), pp. 418–419 (Wu Chiao's "Four Miscellaneous chüeh-chüeh 絕句四首", 518 [Hsiao Kang's "Chüeh-chüeh Given to a Lady" 绝句贈閨麗], 518 [Liu Hao-wai's "One Poem Modeled on the Duke of Ting-hsiang's Eight chüeh on Coming of Age" 】
The gist of this is that Wang Wei was heavy-handed in his editing, and that others were more appreciative. The important point as regards the present discussion is that the Six Dynasties, shih, lien-chi, and chueh-chü were considered distinct genres of poetic writing.

Hu Ying-lin did not accept Yu-t'ai hsin-yung's use of “ancient chueh-chü”: he thought the term had been added by T'ang editors. Kojima Kenkichi questions the references in the Nanshih as well, because the work was compiled in the early T'ang period. Kojima has a point; in fact, none of the references to chueh-chü listed in the Nan-shih biographies is included in the parallel biographies in the separate Southern Dynasties histories (Liang-shu and Sung-shu), which were compiled before the founding of the T'ang, and from which Li Yen-shou and his father Li Ta-shih derived source material. The implication is that they added these references and their contexts. Lo Ken-tse, however, argues that the fact both Yu-t'ai hsin-yung and Nan-shih use the term is evidence that it is genuinely from the Six Dynasties, and that it would have been unlikely that separate editors made such additions. Further, the term is used so often and in so many different forms (chueh, chueh-chü, chueh-chü shih, and lien-chi) that later editorial additions become even more unlikely. A fair assumption is that Li Yen-shou and Li Ta-shih were in possession of a Six Dynasties period work on poetry that was unavailable to the compilers of the Southern histories, and which is no longer extant.

Besides uses of the term chueh-chü, Sun K'ai-ti found that “tsun-ch'ü” (literally “short lines”) was another Six Dynasties alternative term for pentasyllabic quatrains. Nan Ch'i shu South Treasury includes a biography of a royal relative named Hsiao Yeh 蕭澈 in which Hsiao reported wrote tsun-ch'ü in the company of the other princes. His style was said to follow that of Hsieh Ling-yun 謝靈運 (385–443). The emperor praised Hsiao Yeh’s work: “I have seen your twenty-character [poems], and among all writers' pieces yours are the best...” In 385, twenty characters were considered the best. "

At this point, all the alternative terms for chueh-chü have been introduced. To summarize, in the Six Dynasties three terms were current: chueh-chü (cut-off lines), tsun-ch'ü (broken lines), and tsun-ch'ü (short lines). In the T'ang, liu-shih 小律詩 (little regulated-verse) was added. Finally, late in the Sung, chueh-chü 載句 (truncated lines) referred specifically to quatrains as down versions of liu-shih.

The four modern scholars contradict each other as regards the meaning of the term chueh-chü and the origins of the quatrains form. Sun K'ai-ti takes up where Hu Ying-lin left off, attempting to prove that form and term are a result of the practice of taking yü-shu stanzas out of context. He does mention a second possibility, that chueh-chü are descended from the southern “Songs of Wu” (Wu-sheng), a source mentioned by Kao Ping and Hu Ying-lin. The songs are a possible origin for the quatrains, but not for the term chueh-chü.

Sun does not elaborate on this possibility, instead concentrating on the other, which provides an explanation for both form and term. He argues that long pieces in the yü-shu categories “hsiang-ho ko-tse” 相和歌, “ch'ung-shang..."
san-tiao ko” 清商三调歌, and “tsa wu-ch’u” 雅舞曲 beginning in the Han-Wei era (roughly 100-265 AD) became broken into stanzas (chieh 诗).

Sun notes that various line-lengths were used, but pentasyllabic lines were dominant, and that although stanza-length varied, quatrains were dominant. In a statistical study of “ch’ing-shang san-tiao ko” in the “Record of Music 樂記” of Sung-shu, Sun finds that over half the stanzas are of quatrains length (although these are not necessarily pentasyllabic). His survey included thirty-five titles with 181 stanzas, each one of which was clearly marked by the editors of Sung-shu as a “chieh.” He does not have similar evidence for hsiang-ho ko-tz’u and tsa wu-ch’u, since in Sung-shu and Yüeh-fu shih-chieh stanzaic divisions for these poems are not marked.

Thus Sun concludes that extant Han-Wei yüeh-fu tend to be pentasyllabic quatrains stanzas. He introduces the possibility that chieh-chieh are so called because the form originates as stanzas taken out of context. His idea is that musicians occasionally preferred to sing one or two good stanzas rather than an entire composition. He has no Han-Wei evidence that lifting stanzas out of longer poems was a practice, but does list a good number of Ch’i-period (479-501) examples. He notes a half-dozen tsu-wu ch’ü lyrics from Nan Ch’i shu and Yüeh-fu shih-chieh that are accompanied by text claiming that the words are a stanza or stanzas from longer poems.

Sun assumes that the practice of lifting stanzas out of context affected the ch’ing-shang san-tiao ko and hsiang-ho ko-tz’u as well. However, his single piece of evidence is from the biography of Wang Seng-ch’ien 王僧虔 (late-fifth century) in Nan Ch’i shu. Towards the end of the Liu-Sung dynasty (420-479) Wang memorialized the throne lamenting the fact that “ch’ing-shang” pieces were in decline, and criticized musicians for allowing many of them to either disappear or become incomplete. Sun K’ai-ti takes this as evidence that taking stanzas out of context resulted in a permanent loss of many lyrics.

It must be admitted that Sun’s argument is rather thin. First, the proportion of pentasyllabic quatrains stanzas in the categories of Han-Wei yüeh-fu that he considers is not large, particularly as compared with the much higher per-

centage of pentasyllabic quatrains among the “Songs of Wu.” Second, stanzas out of context would not necessarily function as independent poems, as do chieh-chieh. Finally, he offers no examples of stanzas taken out of context that are specifically termed chieh-chieh. His findings are interesting, however, if we accept that the quatrains form may have been influenced from more than one direction. That is, taking quatrains-length stanzas out of context of longer poems may have contributed, if only in a minor way, to the acceptance of the pentasyllabic quatrain as a fixed-length form. More convincingly, the practice of taking quatrains-length stanzas out of context may have been catalyzed by the dominance of the quatrains form in other types of poetry.

Sun K’ai-ti does not address the possibility that the term chieh-chieh originated in linked-verse writing. The relationship between chieh-chieh and lien-chieh is the topic of articles by Fu Mao-mien and Li Chia-yen, published together in 1940. Fu and Li introduce further evidence to link chieh-chieh and lien-chieh during the Six Dynasties. Lo Ken-tse introduces similar evidence in his slightly later article.

Fu notes that beginning in the Liu-Sung period participants in a linked-verse cycle usually wrote in pentasyllabic quatrains, for example, the cycle by Pao Chiao and others titled “Lien-chieh on Climbing a Tower beneath the Moon” 月下登樓連句, or that by Hsieh T’iao and others titled “Lien-chieh on Being Blocked by Snow” 阻雪連句. The linked-verse set (of two or more quatrains) would describe a single topic, but each quatrains could stand alone as an independent poem. This is in contrast to the Tang practice of linked-verse, in which each participant generally wrote a couplet of a single long pentasyllabic poem.

The practice of writing linked-verse became quite popular in the Ch’i and Liang periods. Examples include that by Ho Sun’s group titled “Lien-chieh Imitating the Ancients” 擧古連句, that by Hsiao Kang’s group titled “Lien-chieh on a Curving Stream” 曲水連句, and that by Tao Kai’s group (d. 549) group titled “Lien-chieh on Reviewing Flowering Talents at L-hsien Pavilion” 儀賢堂宴集秀才聯句. Lo Ken-tse counts a total of thirty-eight extant pentasyllabic lien-chieh series from the Six Dynasties period. All but three are written in quatrains segments.

To argue further that chieh-chieh and lien-chieh are related, Fu shows that at times the terms were apparently interchangeable. Sometimes, a multi-authored linked-verse set was anthologized under a single one of the authors’ names, in which case the names of the individual contributors would be noted following

19 The ch’ing-shang san-tiao ko type of yüeh-fu, which continued into the Six Dynasties, should not be confused with the distantly related Six Dynasties category of “clear-shang lyric” or ch’ing shang ch’i-tzu, of which the “Songs of Wu” and “Western songs” are subcategories. The former is a general term for songs under three (thus san-tiao) of the ten hsiang-ho ko-tz’u subcategories: ch’ing-shang 不調, ch’ing-bao 清調, and chiao 巧調. See Wang Yun-lai, “Ch’ing-yüeh k’ao-chieh” 清樂格類, in Yüeh-fu shih lien-chieh, pp. 11-38.
20 Sun, “Tien-yang ch’i-hai,” p. 84.
21 Nan Ch’i shu 55, p. 595.
22 Sun, “Tien-yang ch’i-hai,” p. 87.
their poems and the set would be termed a lian-chi in the title. At other times, only a poet’s individual contribution was listed in his poetry collection, in which case the quatrains poem was still often termed a lian-chi. Individual poems were often taken out of context from longer sets. For example, “Lien-chi Imitating the Ancients” was the combined creation of Ho Sun, Fan Yun, and Liu Hsiao-ch’o (401–399). Under Ho Sun’s name the entire set is recorded using this title, while under Liu Hsiao-ch’o’ s name only his own quatrains is recorded (this time omitting the term lian-chi). In Ho Sun’s works two separate pentasyllabic quatrains are recorded that do use the term lian-chi in their titles, and in Yu Hsin’s works a similar example can be found. We can assume that Ho’s and Yu’s poems, like Liu Hsiao-ch’o’s, were originally complemented by others, which were not recorded.

Thus at times a pentasyllabic quatrains was called a chieh-chi, and at others it was called a lian-chi. Then what is the difference? The assumption is that a single quatrains termed a lian-chi is a poem that originally was part of a whole cycle of poems, while a chieh-chi is a poem that never existed as one of several complementary pieces.

In claiming that a poem termed a lian-chi must have had a complement piece, Li Chia-yen notes three instances, the first by Ho Sun and the second by Chiang Ko, in which the poet wrote pentasyllabic quatrains without complements, and thus were termed “uncontinued linked-verse” 齊句不成. Presumably, these were identical with chieh-chi.

In sum, the evidence pointing to a relationship between lian-chi and chieh-chi is circumstantial, but still strong. Style also supports the relationship, since lian-chi and chieh-chi from the early periods can both be defined as shih, and not yueh-fu. Topics for both tended to be occasional, and the language is of a density typical of Six Dynasties shih poetry. Quatrains in the yueh-fu style of the “Songs of Wu” were not contemporaneously termed chieh-chi; moreover, they contained generic topics and colloquial language.

Li Chia-yen and especially Fu Mao-mien use style to deny that quatrains-length folksongs had anything to do with chieh-chi origins. Following this argument, chieh-chi are short shih poems and lian-chi are series of such poems, while yueh-fu quatrains developed independently. Li’s and Fu’s conclusion is probably too narrow: it does not explain why the quatrains form became the norm in Six Dynasties chieh-chi and lian-chi. A better explanation is that composition of short shih poetry in the Six Dynasties was influenced by the overwhelming dominance of pentasyllabic quatrains in short yueh-fu. However, the two scholars’ point that chieh-chi quatrains and yueh-fu quatrains were quite distinct in the Six Dynasties period is well taken. Not until the T’ang and the post-T’ang periods did the term chieh-chi broaden in scope to include relatively all independent quatrains-length poems.

Lo Ken-te’s article is the most comprehensive of all those dealt with here. Lo refers to three origins for chieh-chi: the term arises from lian-chi, the form of folksong, and tonal prosody from the late-Six Dynasties trend towards recent-style verse. Lo arrays impressive evidence for each point, and he ultimately strengthens the assertion that the pentasyllabic quatrains has roots in folksongs.

Lo undertook a statistical survey of all extant folksongs from the Six Dynasties period contained in Yueh-fu shih-chi. He found for the south 329 extant “Songs of Wu,” of which 275 are pentasyllabic quatrains; and for the west 146 “Western songs of Ching and Chu’u” (Ching Chu’u hsi-sheng), of which 105 are pentasyllabic quatrains. To these, Lo adds a third class of examples not cited by Hu Ying-lin: the northern “Songs for drum, horn and transverse flute” (ku-chiao heng-ch’u ch’u 敲角擊吹曲). Of the 66 extant songs, 44 are pentasyllabic quatrains. Thus 424 pentasyllabic quatrains, out of a possible 541 exist, or almost eighty percent. The implication is that the overwhelming dominance of pentasyllabic quatrains in popular song became the fixed-length quatrains genre used by poets.

However, Lo does not comment on Six Dynasties pentasyllabic quatrains in the shih style. This leads to a contradiction in his conclusions: in effect he argues that the chieh-chi term, which derives from the shih practice of lian-chi, was eventually applied to works in an independent yueh-fu tradition.

CONCLUSION

No one traditional or modern critic fully explained chieh-chi origins or comprehensively described all facets of the chieh-chi genres, yet the comments of each are valuable pieces in a complicated puzzle. My interpretations of a com-

---

18 Lu, pp. 1710 and 1844.
19 Lu, pp. 1708 (Ho Sun) and 2400 (Yu Hsin).
20 Lu, pp. 1714 (Ho Sun) and 1716 (Chiang Ko).
22 The ku-chiao heng-ch’u ch’u were popular at the Liang-dynasty court, where they were known as "northern songs 北 歌." Kuo Mao-ch’ien argues that the majority used tunes composed by northwestern tribes, and that some of the lyrics were translated from tribal languages. Topics include love, social customs and war. See Kuo, Yueh-fu shih-chi 25, p. 230.
bination of critical views suggest the following development of penta syllabic chu-i-chu: the penta syllabic quatrains-form first became dominant in Six Dynasties colloquial yu-i-fu, and it carried over into contemporary shih composition. However, shih quatrains in the period were written in the descriptive, literary style of longer shih poetry. T'ang uu-chu is a hybrid combination of the Six Dynasties yu-i-fu quatrains style (the predominance of continuous couplets in uu-chu certainly derives from colloquial yu-i-fu) and the shih quatrains style (the descriptive power, general density of language, and occasional parallelism of uu-chu certainly derive from shih). Tonal prosody was added late in the Six Dynasties period, and the uu-chu form became one of the recent-style verse-forms. The term chu-i-chu originated in the Six Dynasties practice of writing uu-chu and was used to describe independent penta syllabic quatrains in the shih style. Only in the T'ang and post-T'ang periods was the use of the term expanded to include virtually all penta syllabic quatrains. The dominance among critics of the "truncated li-shih" view after the Sung presumably influenced later uu-chu composition, but we should not apply it to T'ang examples.

Critics indicated various sources for uu-chu but seldom explained those indications. My broader research focuses on a major gap in the critical arguments: what exactly are the contributions of Six Dynasties yu-i-fu and shih quatrains to the development of T'ang uu-chu? The answer should be determinable through linguistic and thematic comparison of Six Dynasties examples and uu-chu by major T'ang poets.

Critics are less clear about the origins of chu-i-chu; they devoted much more space to uu-chu development. The implication, it seems to me, is that the majority believed that uu-chu was the dominant chu-i-chu genre; chu-i-chu was simply an extended version of uu-chu. Although uu-chu developed earlier than chu-i-chu, should we assume that the longer form grew out of the shorter? This is not a simple yes or no question—chu-i-chu may have derived some of its characteristics from uu-chu, but not others. Kao Ping and Hu Ying-lin argued for an independent development, saying that chu-i-chu derived from a small number of late-Six Dynasties yu-i-fu songs, which catalyzed creation of the new genre early in the T'ang. Yet they disagree on whether songs with rhyme schemes other than AAxA should be considered, and do not explain exactly what characteristics from heptasyllabic song carried over into chu-i-chu. Whether chu-i-chu origins are dependent on uu-chu, independent, or a combination of both cannot be determined by reference to shih-hua alone; a separate study is war-

---

\[\text{Lo Ken-te states specifically that chu-i-chu is an "extension" of uu-chu;} \text{ibid., p. 23.}\]