

## Chinese Classical Poetry - Poems of Song Dynasty

The poems of the Tang Dynasty and Ci of the Song Dynasty are both important legacies of China's cultural heritage. Poems are recited while Ci is for singing. Some Ci, such as “Like a Dream”, “Nanxiangzi” and “Nian Nu Jiao”, have their own melodies, and are also known as “tune patterns”. First, the lyricist selects the tune pattern. Then he follows its specific rules concerning word count, tones and rhymes in order to choose the words and rhymes of the Ci. Besides, he must also pay attention to the meaning of the lyrics. The difficulty level of all this is quite high. This is why Song Ci is considered the greatest achievement of Song Dynasty literature. Song Ci has both long and short verses, making it suitable for singing, and those verses are the lyrics of the song, which are also known as “song lyrics”, “houses of music”, “movements”, “long and short sentences”, among others.

The Macao Post and Telecommunications Bureau has chosen five Ci of the Song Dynasty for issuing stamps, to be enjoyed and collected by philatelists.

**“Like a Dream”, by Li Qingzhao: I often remember going on the boat to traverse the beautiful landscape by the pavilion near the stream until dusk and forgetting the way back. Upon returning home, I accidentally entered the depths of the lotus flowers. I hurried and paddled out. I moved while rowing the boat. The sound of the oars startled a flock of gulls and herons.**

Li Qingzhao (李清照 1084 - 1155), also known as Yian Hermit, was a Chinese scholar known as the “Master of Euphemism”, and that can be recognized in this Ci: I was deeply fascinated by the boat ride and forgot about the time and the route. The boat, on its way back, inadvertently entered the lotus flowers, frightening a large flock of seagulls and herons. Li expressed euphemism with a few words and possessed great writing skills. She managed to depict a great beauty for people to enjoy in short texts.

**“Nanxiangzi” by Xin Qiji: Where can the Divine Land be seen? In the Beigu Pavilion, the eyes are filled with beautiful landscapes. From ancient times to the present day, how many countries rose and fell? Many, like the endless Yangtze River that flows continuously. In his youth, Sun Quan became the commander of three armies. He occupied the Southeast, persisted in the war of resistance and did not bow nor give in to the enemy. Of the world's heroes, who were Sun Quan's opponents? Just Cao Cao and Liu Bei. It is not by chance that Cao Cao said, “If only I could have a son like Sun Quan!”**

Xin Qiji (辛弃疾 1140 - 1207), also known as Jiakuan, is the representative lyricist of the “Bold and Unconstrained School”. In 1204, Xin Qiji was appointed mayor of Zhenjiang, a city in Jiangsu Province, the former capital of Eastern Wu during the Three Kingdoms. At that time, 19-year-old Sun Quan commanded thousands of soldiers and occupied his territory, coexisting with Shu and Wei to become the Three Kingdoms. Today, in the Beigu Pavilion, overlooking the Yangtze River, looking out, and just seeing wind and smoke, countless thoughts arise in one's mind. In ancient times, DouMou was a helmet worn by warriors. It is a metaphor of the young Sun Quan, who led thousands of soldiers and horses, fighting Cao Cao and Liu Bei. He was revered and admired by the later generations, and everybody wanted to have a child like him.

**“Sand-Sifting Waves” by Wang Anshi: Yi Yin and Lu Shang, a fisherman and a farmer, had experienced abject poverty. Had they not known the wise kings, they would have perished in the wilderness. By chance, they encountered the Tang and Wu Kings. Wise kings with responsible ministers, like the dragon born in the clouds and the tiger in the wind, easily built their imperial supremacies. But up to now, over a thousand years later, who dares to compete with Yi Yin and Lu Shang's merit?**

Wang Anshi (王安石 1021 - 1086) was prime minister twice, once in the Northern Song Dynasty and once under Emperor Shenzong. This artwork is very popular: Yi Yin and Lu Shang, the former a fisherman and the latter a farmer, had lived through good and bad times. Had they not met the wise kings, they would have died in the wilderness. By mere chance, they met King Cheng Tang and King Wu of Zhou. Wise kings with competent ministers, like the dragon born in the clouds and the tiger in the wind, easily built their imperial hegemonies. Now that more than a thousand years have passed, who can compete with them by comparing with their achievements? Wang Anshi had a similar experience, so he used the past as an example to express his emotions in the present.

**“Calming the Wind and Waves” by Su Shi: Listen not to the sound of the leaf-lashing rain throughout the woods. Why don’t you slowly walk and chant at ease? Walking with bamboo canes and straw shoes is better than riding a horse, who should fear? I let the wind and rain hit my straw mantle, and so I live my life. The spring breeze is pleasant, as it blows and wakes me from my drunkenness, and when the cold arrives and the sun sets on the top of the mountain, they greet each other. Looking at the path where I found the wind and the rain, I go back, regardless of whether it is wind, rain or fine weather.**

Su Shi (蘇軾 1037 - 1101), also known as Dongpo Hermit, was arrested for writing a poem satirizing Wang Anshi's new law and was exiled to Huangzhou. This Ci describes his encounter with the rain on the way to Huangzhou. That situation was common, but Su Dongpo understood the importance of an optimistic and open-minded attitude towards life, having shown that he remained indifferent to honour and disgrace and that he forgot both sadness and joy in the face of adversity. Su Dongpo had had many highs and lows in his life, held important positions and was exiled to the border, but his mood and sense of humour remained unchanged, growing stronger with frustrations, which reflects the author's unbridled and philosophical mind.

**“Nian Nu Jiao – Reminiscing Olden Days at Chibi” (souvenir sheet), by Su Shi: The great river flows east and the waves sweep away, carrying heroes of the remote bygone days. People said that the west of the fortress is Chibi, the battleground of Zhou Yu during the Three Kingdoms period. Rocks pierced the air, waves crashed against the shore, and a thousand piles of snow rolled. The country is very beautiful and countless heroes emerged. I think of Zhou Yu's victorious times, when the utterly beautiful Xiao Qiao married him, leaving him filled with heroism and pride. With a fan in her hand and a scarf on her head, between conversations and laughter, the battleships of the strong enemy were burned to ashes. Today, I walk through the battlefields of those years, being laughed at my sentimentality and premature grey hair. Life is like a dream, and I toast with a glass of wine to honour the bright moon on the river.**

This is one of the representative works of “Bold and Unconstrained” Ci by Su Shi. It expresses admiration for the ancient battlefield of Chibi and the memory of the talent, grace and merit of the romantic figure of Zhou Yu, showing the author's love for his country and admiration for the young Zhou Yu. The Ci goes back to ancient times to express the author's feelings. It is majestic, integrating history, its atmosphere and lyricism, thereby having been known as “the best piece ever”.

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