A Chinese Zither Tutor

THE MEI-AN CH'IN-P'U

TRANSLATED WITH COMMENTARY BY
FREDRIC LIEBERMAN

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Title-page illustration: Six-generation-old pine on the Mei-an campus

Preface

The seven-string long zither ch'in is an instrument of great antiquity and subtlety. Confucius is said to have played it and composed for it. Though this cannot be proved, the ch'in has been the preferred instrument of Chinese scholars since at least the T'ang dynasty and has accumulated a rich and varied repertory. That repertory is accessible today through the dozens of handbooks *(ch'in-p'u)* written to preserve and teach the music, beginning in the early fifteenth century.

R. H. van Gulik, in his now classic historical and cultural study, *The Lore of the Chinese Lute,* urged musicologists to begin the study of the ch'in. Captivated by the serene beauty of this music, I sought the appropriate way to begin its study. I rejected van Gulik's suggestion to start with problems of compositional and modal practice as preserved in the fifteenth and sixteenth century ch'in handbooks, despite the obvious attraction of the beautifully printed, rich sourcebooks of that period. I felt that too much of such a study would perforce be hypothetical, since no history of performance practice and interpretation yet exists. Rather than attempting to reconstruct early performance practice, I decided to consider contemporary practice as a first step.

I chose the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u* as the text on which to

focus because it is the most popular and widely used contemporary handbook (or tutor) for the ch'in. Furthermore, the school of ch'in-playing that it represents is a living tradition today: through disc and tape recordings one can hear performances by three generations of Mei-an style performers, including Hsü Li-sun, editor of the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u.*

My PhD dissertation (1977) took the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u* as a central text for a number of detailed studies and analyses. It includes a complete reprint of the Chinese text, to which the translated passages are cross-referenced, and the Chinese texts of translated poems. The present publication is an annotated translation of the handbook, intended as a concise and authentic introduction of this fascinating musical tradition to the general reader. My commentary is distinguished from the translated material by a different typeface.

I have taken the liberty, in a few instances, of rearranging sections of the original text in order to clarify the exposition for Western readers. For example, I have grouped together in chapter three essays on the general topics of tuning, scale, and mode, though they do not all appear together in the original; by discussing them in one connected sequence, I hope to explain more easily the abstract and possibly unfamiliar concepts involved. Similarly, I have discussed the three compositions with poetic texts separately (in chapter four), in order to deal with the special problems of text-music relationships, though this displaces slightly the original order of the compositions. Specialists who may wish to refer to the original texts, however, will have little difficulty finding the right passage.

Furthermore, I have omitted occasional small segments of text (primarily in the comments to the texted tunes) that I thought redundant or superfluous. Several introductory essays in later editions have been omitted completely. Unless indicated, however, passages are given in full. Chinese characters have generally been included only when required in the argument. The seven chapter ornaments are brush calligraphy of the notes of the musical scale, drawn by Karl Lo. The photographs showing examples of fingering techniques were taken by Dr. Stanley Summer.

To my knowledge, this is the first translation of a Chinese instrumental handbook. The availability of cassette tapes to accompany the handbook, illustrating most of the transcribed compositions, will increase the usefulness of this publication for the student of Chinese music.

Readers who wish more general background information on Chinese traditional music may consult Laurence Picken's survey in the *New Oxford History of Music* (1957) or the entry on China in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (1980).

The musical transcriptions found herein are essentially transnotated from the Chinese scores; where rhythmic or other interpretations were necessary, they were based on Mei-an performance practice as found on recordings by Wu Chung-han, Lui Pui-yuen, and T'ao Chu-shen. These contemporary masters of the Mei-an tradition have been generous in sharing their artistry, knowledge, and research materials with me; equally supportive were my ch'in teachers Wang Chen-hua and Lui Tsun-yuen. As a small expression of gratitude, I dedicate this book to these fine musicians, in the hope that it will contribute toward spreading their marvelous music to an ever-growing audience.

SEATTLE, 1981 FREDRIC LIEBERMAN

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A Chinese Zither Tutor

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Wang Pin-lu (1867-1921; courtesy name Yen-ch'ing), from Shantung, was a professional performer, teacher, and scholar of the ch'in. He taught at the Mei-an campus of the National Nanking Advanced Normal School. His unique style inspired many students, particularly Hsü Cho (courtesy name Li-sun) and Shao Shen (courtesy name Ta-su). Wang compiled a collection of ch'in scores, notated in his personal versions, entitled *Lung-yin-kuan ch'in-p'u*. When Wang died in the summer of 1921, Hsü Li-sun and Shao Ta-su began to edit their teacher's manuscript. They completed their work in 1923, but publication of the book was delayed for eight years. In 1929 Hsü and Shao organized the Mei-an Ch'in Society and, with their colleagues' assistance, published 500 copies of the book in 1931.[1] In memory of the place where Wang had taught, they changed the book's title to *Mei-an ch'in-p'u*.

The *Mei-an ch'in-p'u* proved to be very popular and was soon out of print. After World War II and the eventual establishment of the People's Republic of China, a renaissance of public interest in the ch'in caused considerable new demand for the book, and Hsü decided to bring out a revised edition. The entire book was recopied, and errors were corrected whenever possible. Hsü added an essay on the book's characteristics, explanatory notes for each composition, an original composition entitled "Yüeh-shang wu-t'ung," and a third section containing cipher notations for all compositions. Although 750 copies of this second edition were printed in 1959, it, too, was soon out of print.

Hsü Li-sun was active as a ch'in player until at least the mid-1960s and possibly much longer.[2] One of his students is Wu Chung-han, an outstanding ch'in

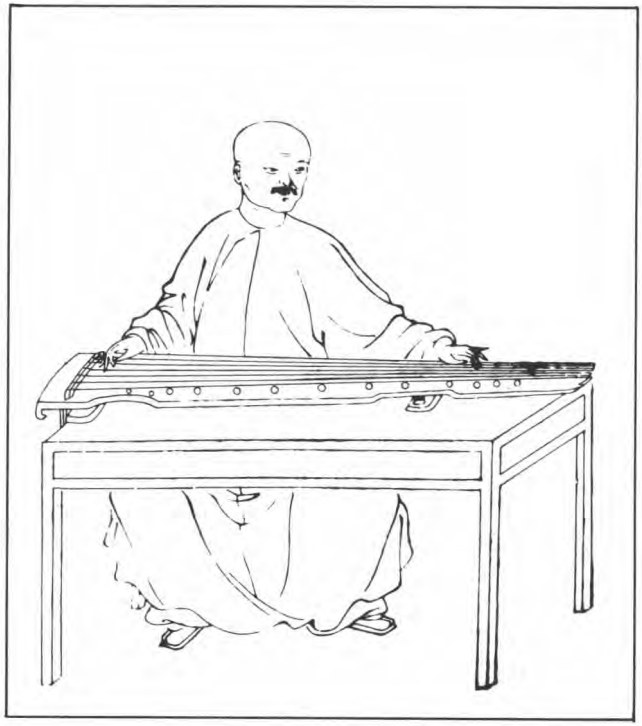

Fig. 1. Playing the ch'in
(From the *Yu-ku-chai ch'in-p'u*)

player now considered to be the leader of the Mei-an ch'in school; among Wu's students are Lui Pui-yuen, T'ang Chien-yüan, and T'ao Chu-shen. T'ang Chien-yüan decided to prepare a new edition of the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u* as a supplement to his massive three-volume anthology *Ch'in fu* (1971a). He wrote a new preface and a chapter of explanatory notes; added three essays by Hsü, which had appeared in the 1940 collection *Chin-yu ch'in-k'an;* reinstated the original preface by Wang Yen-ch'ing, which Hsü had omitted from the second edition; and in Hong Kong in 1971 published these materials integrally with a photolithographic reprint of the text of the second edition.

A fourth edition of the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u* has recently been published in Taiwan under the editorship of the ch'in player and scholar Jung T'ien-ch'i. He added a preface of his own and a frontispiece photograph of Wang Yen-ch'ing, while omitting the line-drawing portrait in Hsü Li-sun's introductory essay. He also restored Wang's original preface. Following the photo-reprinted text, Jung added Hsü's three essays from the *Chin-yu ch'in-k'an,* a new essay of his own about Wu Chung-han, and an extensive (twelve-part) essay on ch'in research. The postface for this edition is by Wang Chin-hsiang.

Following are my translations of two general introductory essays from the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u.*

WANG YEN-CH'ING'S ORIGINAL PREFACE[3]

Fu-hsi fashioned the ch'in from *t'ung* wood and twisted silk for the strings. The Great Unity has two original principles: silence is the internal essence, motion is the external expression. The shape [of the ch'in] can be seen, [its] sounds can be heard. According to the twelve hexagrams,[4] the pitch pipes were determined and the five tones fixed to harmonize with the natural sounds of the universe. Finally, the variations of Yin and Yang produced the five modes [*tiao*].

Huang-chung is the head, *ta-lü* follows, and next *ying-chung;* these three *lü* take the highest place, alternating as Ruler; *t'ai-ts'ou, wu-i,* and so on, do not take part.[5] Scholars from the Sung dynasty to today have been confused about the system of mutual generation by eight, misunderstanding *jui-pin* as *pien-chih.*[6] Through the persistence of these errors, the excellent principles were lost. Furthermore, musical imperfections existed even in the era of the sages. From Ch'in, Han, T'ang, and Sung to the present time, the farther from antiquity, the more the natural tones were corrupted and ignored. But this is not the fault of the elegant compositions. We must seek the reason in those performers who just practice the notes without understanding the principles, or those scholars who understand the principles but know nothing about music.

There is, however, no reason to lose the sages' knowledge or the elegant music they created. From antiquity to today, about four thousand years, spirits have concentrated at mountains and rivers, and each generation has had its inspired sages. Fu-hsi was a sage: he was born with knowledge. Huang-ti, Emperor Shun, Chou Wen, K'ung-tzu [Confucius], were also sages: they studied and gained knowledge. Shih K'uang, Shih Hsiang, Hsieh Chüan, Ch'eng Lien, Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju, Hsi K'ang, Su Shih, were all wise men: though with difficulty, they learned. Tzu-hou, Tzu-chien, Po Ya, Tzu-chi, Yen Tzu-ling, Chu-ko Liang, Mao Min-chung, Liu Tsung-yüan, were also wise men: though with difficulty, they studied.[7]

My family is from Ch'ing-Ch'i [ancient names indicating N.E. Shantung]; our house was close to Chu Feng. When I had free time after studying, I thought about my family—from our founding ancestor, each generation had a proper person to transmit ch'in-playing. Although my knowledge was very poor, I did not hesitate to follow this difficult path. I researched the books kept by my family, and I asked my uncles and my brothers to teach me. We had eighteen complete *ch'in-p'u,* six incomplete ones, and several fragments. I studied continuously, understanding only a little. I also studied the *Li chi, Han shu,* Lai-tzu's annotated *I ching,* and Mr. Chi's anthology.[8] I derived

the principles and understood fully. Though I exhausted my spirit, after several years I still had not reached the internal essence. So then I took my ch'in and went to visit friends. I traveled all over the country for thirty years, always depending on masters of famous ch'in schools, who instructed me in many ways. I gradually asked myself if I had improved, if I felt that this path could cultivate my spirit. I felt that ch'in was like the moon at night and the wind in the morning: truly one cannot abandon them even for a moment. Therefore I shall attempt to describe briefly and correctly the basics, the essentials. I know I will be laughed at by true scholars; I am preparing this for the guidance of students only.

Wang Pin-lu
[from] Chu Ch'eng

SHAO TA-SU'S POSTFACE

At the age of fifteen I dedicated myself to the ch'in. Most people I asked about the ch'in were way off the mark, but thought themselves very profound because they doubted the natural sounds of antiquity. In 1917 my classmate Hsü Li-sun went to study agriculture at Nan-yung [old name for Nanking]. At that time Mr. Chiang I-yüan from Wu-yüan [N.E. Kiangsi] was principal of the school. Famous Confucian scholars often came to give lectures. Thus Mr. K'ang Ch'ang-su[9] from Nan-hai came, bringing the ch'in master Wang Yen-ch'ing from Chu-ch'eng. After [Wang] finished playing one song, Mr. Chiang pressed him to stay. I advised Li-sun, therefore, to study with Mr. Wang.

During summer and winter vacations [Li-sun] returned home, and I was able to talk with him. My former doubts were gradually resolved. After some time Li-sun graduated and left. I then went to study [with Wang Yen-ch'ing]. Mr. Wang was pleased to have me as his student. One night we met at Mei-an. A crescent moon was in the sky. The teacher caressed the strings, finished playing, and said quietly to me, "Li-sun is the best of my students."

Mr. Wang indulged in drinking wine, which resulted in illness. The following year sickness confined him to bed in the Shantung Society Hall on Lung-p'an Street. Medical treatments had no effect, and he died on April 18, 1921. Before [he died], I went to visit him daily. He said to me, "because of the burial arrangements my funeral will burden Mr. Chao from Lu [old name for Shantung], so I shall give my heirloom ch'in to his son." When dying, he asked to be buried on the eastern slope of Ch'ing-liang Mountain [hills just inside the western walls of Nanking].

When Li-sun heard the news, he was deeply saddened. He arranged and edited Mr. Wang's incomplete *Lung-yin-kuan* handbook; I joined in this effort. After that year people came from far and wide to study with Li-sun and me. They asked us to publish the book. We collected money for publishing and placed Ch'en Hsin-yüan from T'ung-i

[district capital in S.E. Shensi, an old name] in charge of copying and calligraphy. Mr. Hsia P'ei-lin from Shao-hsing [N.E. Chekiang] took charge of drafting the illustrations and preparing the work for lithography. Mr. Hsia supervised the project, working very hard without wasting a day. We started in the winter of 1930 and finished in July 1931, taking 240 days altogether. The cost was two hundred dollars; five hundred copies were printed. The name was changed to *Mei-an ch'in-p'u.* Mei-an is on the campus of Nan-yung, a big house on the northern side, with six-generation-old pines, tall and luxuriant: that is where Mr. Wang taught ch'in.

Although this book cannot convey the entirety and essence of Mr. Wang's skill, scholars able to study it will at least become acquainted with the natural tones from antiquity.

Shao Ta-su
Nantung, August 1931

The Mei-an school (or tradition) of ch'in playing is the most recent to achieve an independent identity. It is also one of the most widespread, influential and popular traditions—due, perhaps to the dedication and energy of teachers such as Hsü Li-sun and Wu Chung-han, to the timely appearance of new editions of the handbook, and to the accessibility of the repertory. Several compositions introduced by Wang Yen-ch'ing (either arranged or composed by him), such as "Ch'ang Men yüan" [Lament at the Ch'ang-Men palace] are routinely included in the repertories of ch'in players of all traditions.

The *Mei-an ch'in-p'u,* compared to typical handbooks of the Ming and Ch'ing dynasties, is relatively concise. Its essays tend to avoid history, poetical impressions, or allegories in favor of practical information and clearly expressed pedagogy. On many points it differs from what might be considered the mainstream of ch'in tradition, particularly with regard to tuning and mode (see chapter three). Where such differences do occur, however, they are clearly indicated. Therefore, because of its general reliability, popularity, accessibility, contemporaneity, clarity, and conciseness, the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u* is an excellent source with which to begin one's investigation of the ch'in.

CHAPTER TWO

商

Ch'in Organology

Most ch'in are made from *t'ung* [wood]; some use pine [the Chinese name may also include fir and other conifers]. *Tzu* [wood] is used for the bottom part. The surface is covered with cement-lacquer.[1] This [kind of] construction began with Fu-hsi. Handed down from generation to generation, individual types became different, but nowadays the *chung-ni* type is the most common.[2] The length of the ch'in is a little over three feet, six inches. The surface is rounded like a roofing tile; the bottom is flat and straight; the head is sloping and broad; the tail is narrow, formed somewhat like a vase.

NAMES OF THE PARTS ON THE SURFACE OF THE CH'IN

The head of the ch'in is called "the forehead" [*e*].[3] The slightly raised portion of the forehead is called the "headband" [*ch'eng-lu,* a figurative term for a headdressing or turban]. On this headband are seven openings called "string holes" [*hsüan-yen*] through which pass the string-carrier loops. The part that rises up next to the headband is called "Mount Yo" [*Yo-shan,* i.e., the bridge]. [The point where the indention begins,] about 8 or 9 *fen* [tenths] past the bridge is called the "nape" [*hsiang*]; beyond [the nape] is the "neck" [*ching*]; further down, the widest point is called the "shoulder" [*chien*].[4] Then it gradually narrows to the "waist" [*yao*]. Beyond [the waist] is the "tail" [*wei*]. The raised parts on either side of the tail are called *"kuan-jou"* [apparently a variant or misprint for the more usual *kuan-chüeh,* "ceremonial cap"]. The place in the center of the tail that protrudes above the surface of the ch'in is called the "dragon's gums" [*lung-yin,* the nut]. On the left side of the surface of the ch'in are round dots called *"hui"* 徽, also written 暉 [same pronun-

ciation]. There are thirteen of them. Between the bridge and the nut seven strings are stretched. The string closest to the *hui* is called string 1; then counting from there in toward the player are strings 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7. (See the picture [fig. 2(A)].)

NAMES OF THE PARTS ON THE UNDERSIDE OF THE CH'IN

Directly underneath the forehead is the "crop" [*su,* or gullet]. The area below the bridge is called the "tuning-peg pool" [*chen-ch'ih,* usually a shallow rectangular depression]. In this pool are seven holes that penetrate straight through the headband. Below the shoulders and centered [between the sides] is a long rectangular opening called the "dragon pool" [*lung-ch'ih*], located between *hui* 4 and 7. In the middle of the waist, close to the sides, between *hui* 9 and 10, are two small square holes in which the feet [*yen-tsu,* "goose feet"] are fixed. About one inch beyond the feet is a rectangular opening called the "phoenix pond" [*feng-chao*], smaller than the dragon pool, and located between *hui* 10 and 13. At the end of the tail, analogous to the nut [on the upper surface] but somewhat recessed, is the "nut holder" [*yin-t'o,* that which supports or holds up the nut] [fig. 3(B)].

NAMES OF THE PARTS ON THE HEAD OF THE CH'IN

The front of the forehead is shaped like the keel of a boat, or like paired crescent moons. In the middle is a depression with a ridge [carved in it] called the "lips and tongue" [*ch'un-she*], also called the "eye of the phoenix" [*feng-yen*]. Projecting down on either side are two feet called "wild-duck feet" [*fu-chang*], also called "peg guards" [*hu-chen*][5] [fig 3(A)].

NAMES OF THE PARTS INSIDE THE CH'IN

The space near the bridge is called the "sound pool" [*sheng-ch'ih*]. The part that swells upward slightly [from the underside of the top board] directly opposite the dragon pool is called the "tone receiver" [*na-yin*]. At the place where the feet are fixed, two solid wood sections are retained, shaped as semicircles; they are called the "foot pools" [*tsu-ch'ih*]. The space near the tail is called the "harmony pond" [*yün-chao*]. In the middle of the interior two heaven-and-earth pillars are set up; the heaven pillar is round, the earth [pillar] square. The heaven pillar is position-

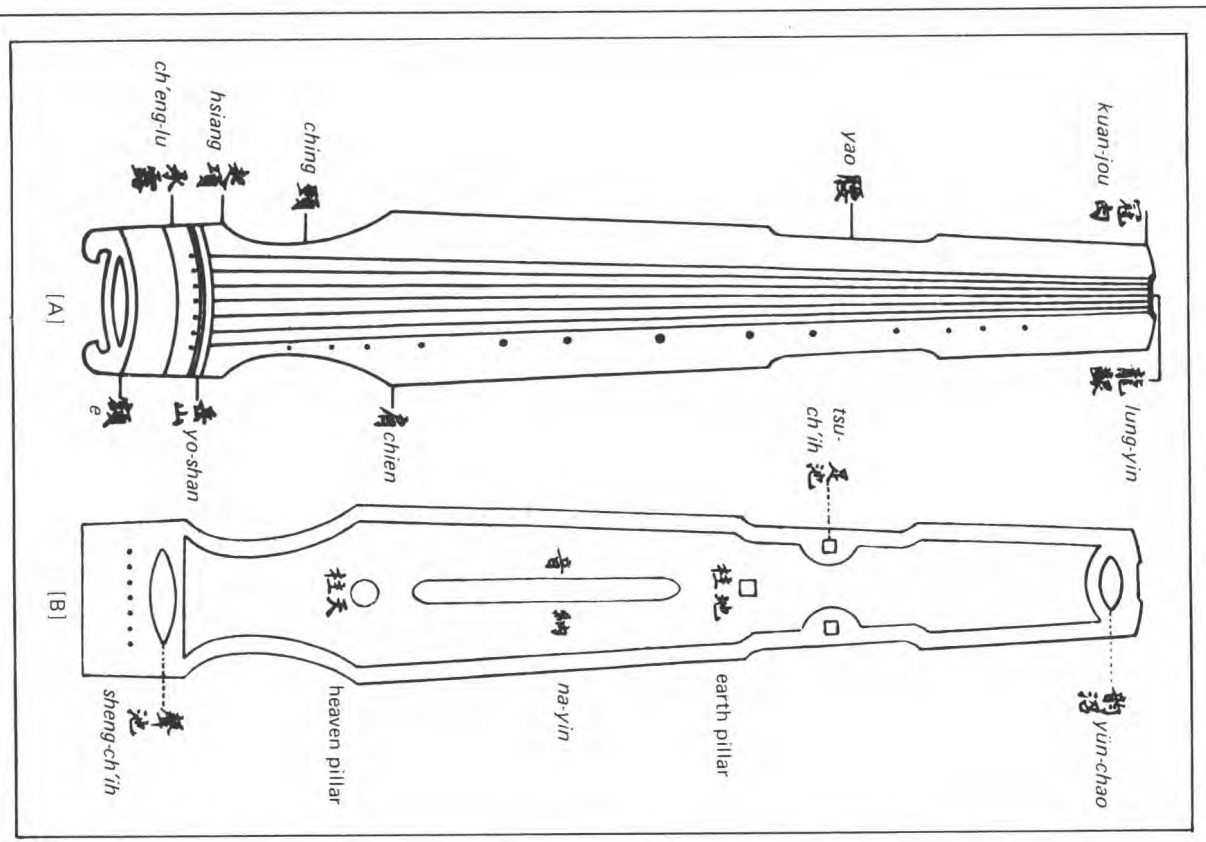

Fig. 2. Parts of the ch'in: (A) surface, (B) interior

ed between *hui* 3 and 4; the earth pillar is positioned between *hui* 8 and 9 [fig. 2B].

ABOUT THE THIRTEEN *HUI* ON THE CH'IN SURFACE

Ch'in *hui* are made from seashells. Some [*hui* are] porcelain, some are gold. There are thirteen *hui* altogether. The middle one is large, the rest become progressively smaller. The one nearest the bridge is called the first *hui*; [the rest are numbered] in sequence down to the one nearest the nut, which is

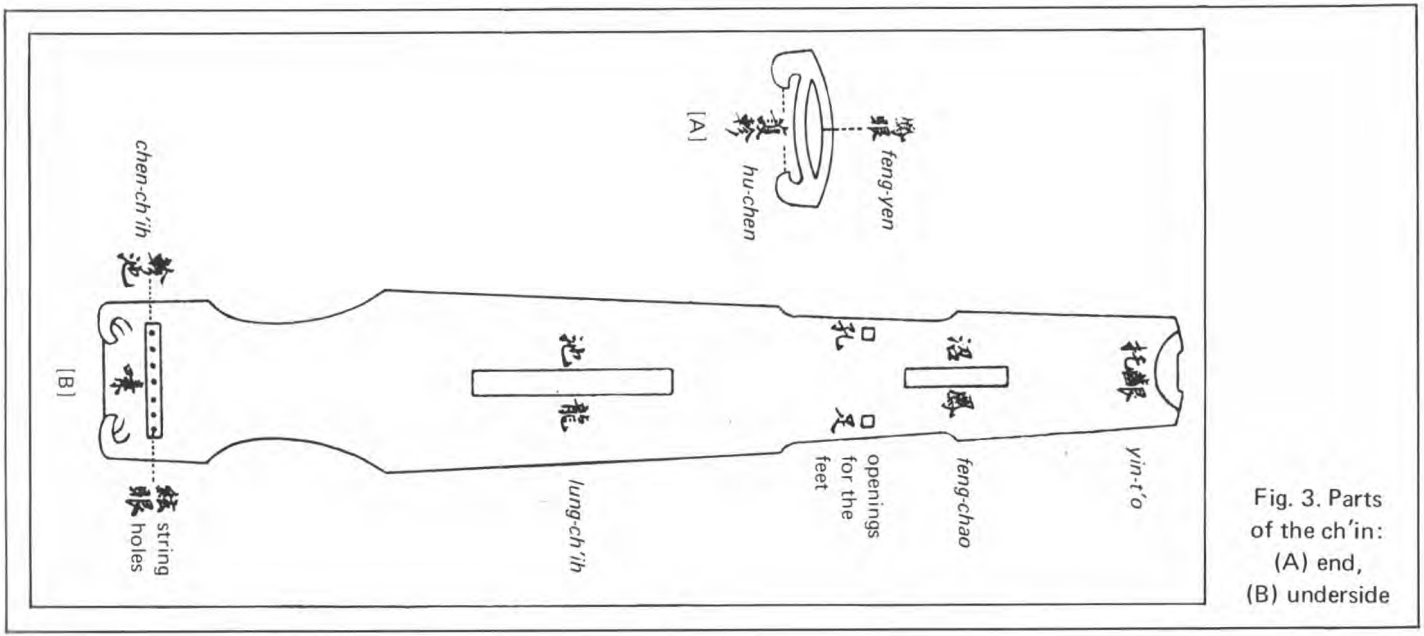

Fig. 3. Parts of the ch'in: (A) end, (B) underside

hui 13. All the positions represent equal divisions of the total length. The point dividing the total length into halves is *hui* 7. *Hui* 4 and 10 divide [the string] into fourths; *hui* 5 and 9 divide it into thirds; *hui* 3, 6, 8, and 11 divide it into fifths; *hui* 1 and 13 divide it into eighths; *hui* 2 and 12 divide it into sixths. See the illustration in the discussion of the ch'in surface [fig. 2A].

CH'IN TABLES

Most ch'in tables are made of earthenware bricks. The center of the table is hollow inside and is constructed with a wooden frame. There are different styles; this [brick] type is very heavy and inconvenient to move. Now a few words about the more usable type. Compared with ordinary tables, a ch'in table is lower, so that when one plays, one's wrist should properly be level with the surface of the ch'in. Light woods such as *t'ung* or pine can be used. The dimensions and shape are given in the picture below [fig.4]. This style is used for [two musicians] to play together. The surface of the table has holes in two [opposite] corners, where the heads of the ch'in are placed. The dimensions are given according to the traditional system.

DIFFERENTIATING INSTRUMENTS

The best ch'in are made from *t'ung* wood, the older the better, because as years go by, the wood will become loose and porous and will produce golden, stone-like sounds, naturally different from ordinary sounds.

The age of a ch'in can be discovered from the pattern of cracks. The cracks are caused by the aging cement [*hui-ch'i*] on the ch'in. After one or two hundred years they appear like a flowing stream or a serpent's belly. If still older, [they look] like a cow's tail. After three or four hundred years they appear like plum blossoms or tortoise shell. As the wood ages, at first it has a yellow color, then finally it takes on a golden yellow color—this is usually the case.

For cement, it is good to use lacquer-cement. The varieties include: "eight-gem cement" (cement mixed with different kinds of [powdered] gemstones); "deer-horn cement" (deer-horn from a medicine store ground into powder and mixed with lacquer); different unnamed cements (mixed with powdered clay); plaster powder cement. Most [cements] have copper dust mixed in [to improve] the sound—then one can obtain golden, stone-like tones.

If the powdered-earthenware cement [*wa-hui,*

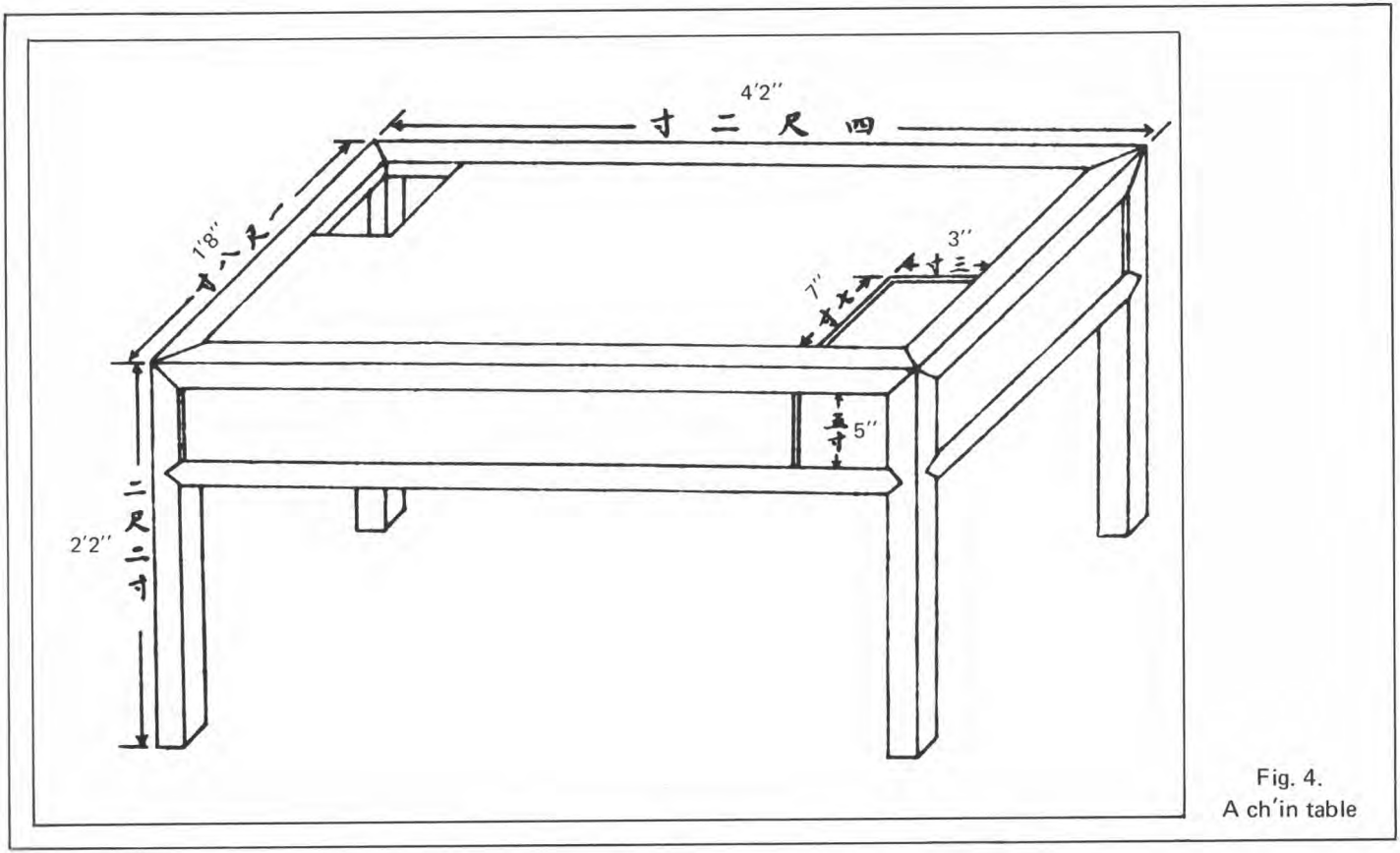

Fig. 4.
A ch'in table

that is, the plain base cement] is not mixed with lacquer, then the surface will strip off easily with aging. Where cracks appear, and wherever there are raised portions, it will come off especially easily and will be difficult to repair. Lacquer-cement and powdered-earthenware cement are very easy to distinguish. If one scratches the surface of the ch'in with the fingernail without leaving a mark, that is lacquer-cement. If one scratches and leaves a gouge, that is powdered-earthenware cement.

If the sound at the ch'in head is dull [when tapped], if there are cracks [in it], and if the tone is not good, then [the instrument] is unacceptable. The best ch'in are light. If bulky, most will not be desirable instruments.

From *hui* 4 to the nut the surface of the ch'in should be very flat, with no slight bumps or dips. From *hui* 4 to the bridge it should gradually slope downwards by one or two *fen*. The bridge should not be too high; the usual height is about five *fen*, taking as the measure a string height above the ch'in surface by one *fen* at *hui* 7. Because the strings have different tensions, the bridge should become slightly lower as it nears string 7, then when played it will not resist the fingers. At string 1 [the bridge] should be slightly higher, then there will be no buzzing tones. The sides and tail of the ch'in should be thin, which is beautiful; too thick is artless. At the dragon pool there should be just enough room to slide the fingers in. If the interior hollow is too large, the tone will be hollow and scattered; if the interior hollow is too small, the tone will be obscure and low—these [faults] are not acceptable.

DIFFERENTIATING STRINGS

Tightly woven and translucent ch'in strings are the best. The overwindings of the first, second, third, and fourth strings should be flat and tightly wrapped, all uniform and without lumps. Strings 5, 6, and 7 should also be woven tightly, like strings of pearls. All must be transparent like glue. If tightly woven, they will be pliable but tough, not easily spoiled; if loose, they will be weak—these are easy to distinguish. Most very old strings are loose, not tightly woven, and they all make buzzing sounds. They can be soaked in glue or in mulberry-leaf juice, and they will become transparent and good.

CH'IN DEFECTS AND HOW TO REPAIR THEM

If the surface of the ch'in has concavities, it is

called swaybacked; if it has convexities, it is called hunchbacked. These problems result because the wood was not dry, or because [the instrument] was stored too long in an unsuitable place. If swaybacked, [the strings] resist the fingers when one plays; if hunchbacked, [they] produce buzzing sounds.

Repairing methods: if the ch'in is swaybacked, one should fill in some lacquer-cement to make it level; if hunchbacked, one should use a water-grinding method to level it. If, instead, one merely presses it and exposes it to sunlight, this is not the basic method because after some days the problem will recur.

If the surface of the ch'in is slightly high or low, it will produce buzzing sounds, and the water-grinding method should be used. Applying lacquer-cement and grinding with water both require skilled craftsmanship.

If the bridge produces buzzing sounds, one should make the outside edge [toward the ch'in head] slope downward one *fen,* then tighten the fly-head [knot at each string's end] against the bridge; this will eliminate the buzzing sounds. If the nut is too high, then when one plays, [the strings] will resist the fingers [that is, they must be pressed too far down, giving the feel of a "stiff action"]; [the height of the nut] should be corrected [by lowering it as far as possible] before the strings begin to produce buzzing sounds.

If the *hui* positions are not accurate, they should be corrected according to the method of equal division [see page 12, above]. If a tuning-peg slips and turns, one should use a knife to carve a depression in the peg surface, so that the center curves down; then it will not slip. The ch'in feet should also have a slight depression in the center; when playing, put them on sand bags, then they will not have the problem of instability. On old ch'in that have crack-patterns, the cracked places become bumpy and produce buzzing sounds. One should use the water-grinding method, or use a knife to plane away the bumps, then use lacquer to smooth [the surface].

HOW TO THREAD THE STRING-CARRIER LOOPS INTO THE TUNING PEGS

String-carrier loops are ordinarily made from silk thread. A yellow or gray color is best. Each loop requires about one-half liang [of silk]. First wind a loop about one foot in diameter, then cut it. Next divide the strand equally into seven bundles [one for each loop to be made]. Twist each bundle [to form a

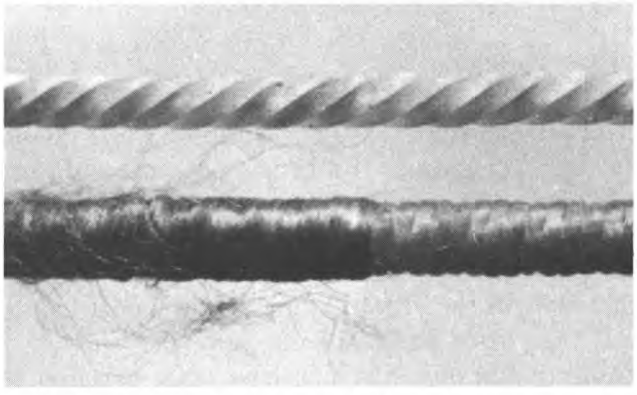

Fig. 5. Core and wrapped sections of string 1, showing thread binding the outer wrapping

cord], then double the cord and twist [to form the string-carrier loop], finally tie the loop in the middle of the lower part. This is the simplest method. The style and procedure of threading the loop is illustrated in the following picture [fig. 6(B)].[6]

How to Tie the Knots in the String Ends

As illustrated, put part B around part A and tighten [fig. 6(A)].

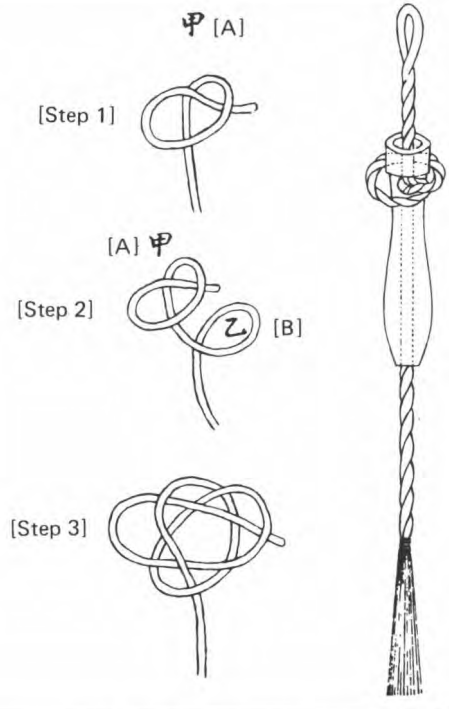

Fig. 6. *Left:* string-end knot; *right:* tuning peg with loop threaded

CHAPTER THREE

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Essays on Tuning, Scale, and Mode

ON THE TWELVE *LÜ*

The twelve *lü* are: *huang-chung, ta-lü, t'ai-ts'ou chia-chung, ku-hsien, chung-lü, jui-pin, lin-chung, i-tse, nan-lü, wu-i,* and *ying-chung. Huang-chung* is *kung, t'ai-ts'ou* is *shang, ku-hsien* is *chiao, lin-chung* is *chih, nan-lü* is *yü:* these are the five basic pitches. The interval from *kung* to *shang* is two *lü; shang* to *chiao* is two *lü, chiao* to *chih* is three *lü; chih* to *yü* is two *lü; yü* to *kung* is three *lü;* the total [span is] twelve *lü.*

COMMENTARY. Hsü defines the tuning system here by naming each element in ascending scalar order. He then defines the interval-series *kung-shang-chiao-chih-yü* in two ways: first, by correlating it with a series of absolute pitches in the tuning system; and second, by assigning relative sizes to each interval. Since the interval series may shift from the absolute pitches given here, they are called basic pitches, in the sense of "origin" or "starting point." See figure 7.

The twelve *lü* mutually generate each other, starting at *huang-chung,* ending at *chung-lü.* There are two ways [to accomplish] mutual generation. If the *lǜ* (律) generate the *lǚ* (呂), it is called descending generation. If the *lǚ* generate the *lǜ* it is called ascending generation.[1] These methods are called "adding and subtracting thirds," or "method of adding and subtracting thirds." The *lǜ* are: *huang-chung, t'ai-ts'ou, ku-hsien, jui-pin, i-tse,* and *wu-i.* The *lǚ* are: *ta-lü, chia-chung, chung-lü, lin-chung, nan-lü,* and *ying-chung.* The *lǜ* are Yang; the *lǚ* are Yin: there are six of each.

COMMENTARY. Here Hsü defines the tuning principle employed to generate the tuning system. In similar explanations in other works, the first step usually establishes the cosmological appropriateness of the

	Lü	*Basic Pitches*
1.	*Huang-chung*	**KUNG**
2.	*Ta-lü*	
3.	*T'ai-ts'ou*	**SHANG**
4.	*Chia-chung*	
5.	*Ku-hsien*	**CHIAO**
6.	*Chung-lü*	
7.	*Jui-pin*	
8.	*Lin-chung*	**CHIH**
9.	*I-tse*	
10.	*Nan-lü*	**YÜ**
11.	*Wu-i*	
12.	*Ying-chung*	

Fig. 7. The twelve *lü* and the five basic pitches

2:3 ratio by associating the numbers with Heaven (3) and earth (2). The *Mei-an ch'in-p'u* maintains its pragmatic stance by omitting this step and proceeding directly to the process of generation. The "thirds" being added or subtracted refer to the length of pipes or strings rather than to vibration numbers. Adding a third (equivalent to multiplying a length by 4/3), therefore, lowers the corresponding pitch by a perfect fourth (498 cents); subtracting a third raises the pitch by a perfect fifth (702 cents). Applying the process without modification results in the series shown in figure 8. Since this series exceeds the span of an octave, the upper three *lü* are usually lowered an octave, which explains the listed order of pitches.

Huang-chung is 9 inches; subtracting one third generates *lin-chung*, 6 inches. Adding one third to *lin-chung* generates *t'ai-ts'ou*, 8 inches. Subtracting one third from *t'ai-ts'ou* generates *nan-lü*, 5.333 inches. Adding one third to *nan-lü* generates *ku-hsien*, 7.111 inches. Subtracting one third from *ku-hsien* generates *ying-chung*, 4.74 inches. Adding one third to *ying-chung* generates *jui-pin*, 6.32 inches. Adding one third to *jui-pin* generates *ta-lü*, 8.427 inches. Subtracting one third from *ta-lü* generates *i-tse*, 5.618 inches. Adding one third to *i-tse* generates *chia-chung*, 7.491 inches. Subtracting one third from *chia-chung* generates *wu-i*, 4.994 inches. Adding one third to *wu-i* generates *chung-lü*, 6.659 inches. The mutual generation of the twelve *lü* ends here.

COMMENTARY. Since lowering a pitch by an octave requires the use of the ratio 1:2, which is excluded from the chosen tuning principle, in practice the

sequence of adding and subtracting thirds is usually modified in order to keep the total span within an octave. The procedure given here breaks the orderly sequence at *jui-pin,* which generates *ta-lü* by repeating the addition phase. See figure 9. The numbers cited are mathematically accurate and, therefore, do not correspond to the numbers in most classical sources, where the precise figures are modified by dropping fractions in various ways.[2]

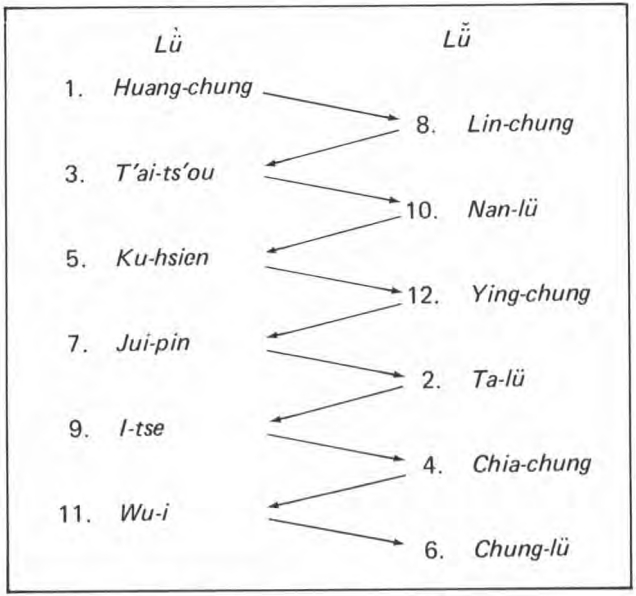

Fig. 8. Mutual generation of the *lü*, by adding and subtracting thirds

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It is said that *chung-lü* cannot regenerate *huang-chung;* therefore, a theory of "continuing on like the beginning" was developed, which generated cyclically forty-eight *lü* in addition to the original twelve, making sixty *lü* altogether. [These are] not suitable for application, only producing complications. Furthermore, forty-eight [additional] *lü* cannot close the circle either; actually the path of mutual generation is already complete on reaching *chung-lü.* One obtains the number [measure] of the half-*lü* [the upper octave] by halving the number of the original *lü.* The double *lü* [lower octave] are analogously [formed], so actually it is not necessary to complete the circle. [All] the above discusses *kuan-lü* [pipe-*lü,* or pitch-pipes] ; string-*lü* numbers take *huang-chung* to be 81. Others [that is, the rest of the number series beginning with 81] are mutually generated according to the previous method, or by multiplying the pipe-*lü* numbers by 9.

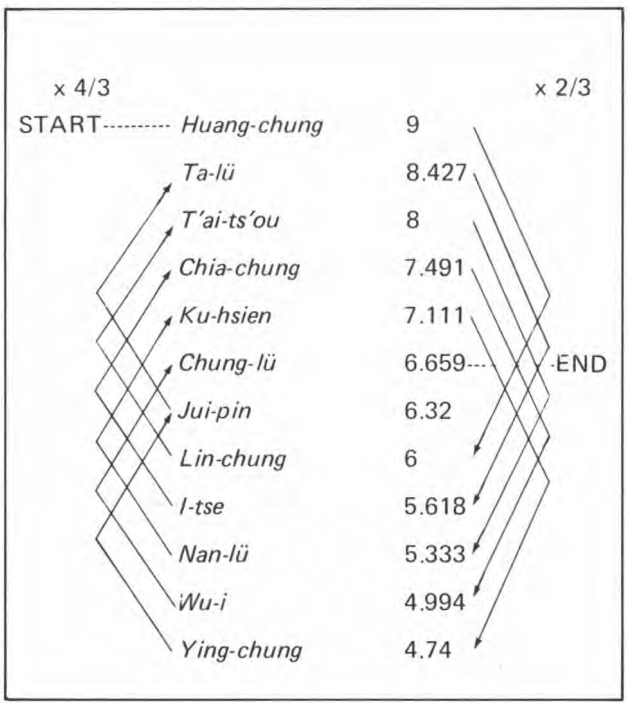


Fig. 9. Mutual generation of the *lü*, keeping the range within an octave

COMMENTARY. The series of 60 *lü* was calculated by the Han dynasty scholar, Ching Fang (fl. B.C. 45.); five hundred years later Ch'ien Lo-chih calculated the series to 360 *lü*.[3] These series, however, were highly theoretical. Ching Fang's ten-foot-long tuning-zither was capable of the fine pitch distinctions required, but most practical musical instruments are not. Hsü Li-sun recognizes that it is theoretically impossible to obtain the numbers for true octaves of the 12 *lü* by continuing the process of mutual generation. He concludes, therefore, that the process should be considered complete with 12 pitches. One then simply finds their true upper and lower octaves by halving or doubling the original numbers. This line of reasoning is quite natural for a ch'in player, since the true octave, missing from the *lü*-series and from such traditional ritual instruments as the bell-chime and stone-chime, is prominently employed in ch'in music. It appears as the first harmonic on each string and also the pitch resulting when a string is stopped at half its length (that is, at the seventh *hui*).

Furthermore, if we talk about the original pitches of the twelve *lü*, they do form a closed circle. That means *chung-lü* can regenerate *huang-chung*, which can be proved by experiment and changing tunings (changing tunings will be dealt with later). Because

tuning-scales can [modulate through a] circle completely, without obstruction, it is obvious that the *lü* can also circle completely. The method of mutual generation can only obtain approximate numbers for each *lü*. *Chung-lü*, generated according to the above method, is 6.659 inches. But this number is actually not suitable for application. The fundamental pitch of *chung-lü* is [produced by a pipe of] 6.75 inches. This number comes from subtracting one fourth from *huang-chung*. Whenever one divides [a quantity] into thirds and adds one third, the opposite is to divide into fourths and subtract one fourth. Also, [if one] divides into thirds and subtracts one third, the opposite is to divide into halves and add one half. This can be handled very easily. From this one can see that the spontaneous natural sounds of pitches and *lü* originally form a closed circle and cannot be completely explained by mathematics. This is like the earth's orbit, which originally has a particular time. If one uses the day as a unit and calculates the number of days in the orbit, then at the end there must be some discrepancy, and one cannot explain all the variations.

COMMENTARY. Here Hsü Li-sun makes a somewhat radical argument but does not follow it up sufficiently. He argues from experience on the ch'in, where the so-called comma of Pythagoras does not rear its head. Since the strings are tuned in perfect consonance to one another, usually by matching harmonics (see p. 27), then if *chung-lü* is to be taken as *kung*, *huang-chung* as *chih* will naturally be a perfect fourth below or perfect fifth above it, since these are the proper intervals between *kung* and *chih*. Therefore, if *huang-chung* is 9, it must have been generated by adding a third to a *chung-lü* of 6.75. This is the same as subtracting a fourth from *huang-chung* (if $4/3x = y$, then $3/4y = x$). The comma 6.659:6.75 (23.5 cents) is irrelevant simply because it does not occur in ch'in playing, nor need it occur in any instrument whose pitches can be adjusted for each change of tuning. It does not follow, however, that because of ch'in practice the *lü* must form a closed circle, as Hsü suggests, and at this point I cannot believe that Hsü is simply repeating the teachings of Wang Yen-ch'ing. Hsü's proposition that the cycle of fifths is just an imperfect attempt to divide and measure a natural quantity cannot be maintained, but it is, nevertheless, a fascinating argument, reminiscent of arguments by Wang Yang-ming, a Neo-Confucian scholar of the Ming dynasty (Chan 1963:233-34).

Scepticism and rejection of orthodox rationales

for music theory and its relationship to the cosmos were not the products of modern technology and Western education alone. I have the impression, however, that Hsü's assertion was due more to an admiration for the piano (and things Western generally) and an imperfect understanding of Western temperament theory. His line of thinking may also be derived from the indigenous Chinese temperament theory, but since no traditional scholar is mentioned or cited as authority, I consider it unlikely. More probable is that Hsü noticed what Prince Chu Tsai-yü (and undoubtedly others before him) perceived in the tuning of ch'in strings:

> I had attempted, using the theory of the Sung (scholar) Chu Hsi, based on the ancient up-and-down principle, to get the position for the standard pitches on the ch'in. But I noticed that the (normal) notes of the ch'in were not in consonance with (those produced from) the positions of the standard pitches, and suspicions therefore arose in my mind.
>
> Night and day I searched for a solution and studied exhaustively this pattern-principle. Suddenly early one morning I reached a perfect understanding of it and realized for the first time that the four ancient sorts of standard pitches all gave mere approximations to the notes. This moreover was something that pitch-pipe exponents had not been conscious of for a period of two thousand years.
>
> Only the makers of the ch'in, in their method of placing the *hui* at three-quarters or two-thirds, had as common artisans transmitted [the principle] by word of mouth from an unknown source. I think that probably the men of old handed down the system in this way, only it is not recorded in literary works. [from the *Lü hsüeh hsin shuo,* chap. 1, p. 5R; translation slightly modified from Needham 1962:221.]

Given, then, an understanding of the essential incompatability between the traditional derivation of the *lü* through the cycle of fifths and those pitches actually employed on the ch'in, it is easy to understand why Hsü Li-sun does not go to great lengths to refute the old conceptions, but merely registers his objection and then drops the matter. In the rest of the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u* there is no further reference to, or use made of, the traditional *lü* measurements.

ON THE FIVE TUNINGS

Although the ch'in has seven strings, strings 1 and 6 have the same pitch, and strings 2 and 7 have the same pitch, so there are only five basic pitches. (Here we are talking about the basic tuning.) There are also five tunings. Nowadays there are two theories about the tunings. One starts with string 3 as *kung.* String 3 as *kung* is called the *huang-chung* tuning [*huang-chung-tiao*]; it is also called the *kung* tuning [*kung-tiao*]. [Then,] string 4 as *kung* is called *t'ai-ts'ou-tiao* or *shang-tiao.* String 5 as *kung* is called *chung-*

lü-tiao or *chiao-tiao*. Strings 1 and 6 as *kung* is called *lin-chung-tiao* or *chih-tiao*. Strings 2 and 7 as *kung* is called *wu-i-tiao* or *yü-tiao*.

Another theory starts with String 1 as *kung*. Strings 1 and 6 as *kung* is called *huang-chung-chün* or *kung-tiao*. Strings 2 and 7 as *kung* is called *chia-chung-chün* or *shang-tiao*. String 3 as *kung* is called *chung-lü-chün* or *chiao-tiao*. String 4 as *kung* is called *i-tse-chün* or *chih-tiao*. String 5 as *kung* is called *wu-i-chün* or *yü-tiao*. In this book we follow the theory of starting with string 3 as *kung*. A summary of the five tunings is given in the following table [fig. 10]. The numbers in the table stand for ch'in strings.

COMMENTARY. The term *tiao* (調) is used in many different senses in Chinese writings on music and has been translated variously as: mode, scale, mode-key, tuning-mode, and tune. I have chosen to render it as "tuning" in this passage because this seems to reflect Hsü Li-sun's meaning most accurately. As later chap-

Ch'in strings:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Huang-chung-tiao (*Ta-lü* is the same)	*chih*	*yü*	***kung***	*shang*	*chiao*	*chih*	*yü*
T'ai-ts'ou-tiao (*Chia-chung* and *Ku-hsien* are the same)	*chiao*	*chih*	*yü*	***kung***	*shang*	*chiao*	*chih*
Chung-lü-tiao (*Jui-pin* is the same)	*shang*	*chiao*	*chih*	*yü*	***kung***	*shang*	*chiao*
Lin-chung-tiao (*I-tse, Nan-lü* are the same)	***kung***	*shang*	*chiao*	*chih*	*yü*	***kung***	*shang*
Wu-i-tiao (*Ying-chung* is the same)	*yü*	***kung***	*shang*	*chiao*	*chih*	*yü*	***kung***

Fig. 10. The five tunings

ters will make clear, Hsü uses the term *yin* (音) in one sense to mean "mode" as defined by phrase cadence pitch, so *tiao* is released from covering that meaning here as it does in other texts. The pitches of a ch'in tuning are also a scale in two senses. First, they are the open-string instrumental scale; second, they are the main pitches (but not necessarily the only ones) of the compositions played in that tuning. *Chün* can probably also be translated as "tuning" or "scale," though it is not a term used to describe actual tuning practices in the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u* and appears here only for names in a system used in other works but which Hsü rejects.

To explain the names for each tuning, one must first consider figure 8, above. The names *kung-tiao, shang-tiao, chiao-tiao, chih-tiao,* and *yü-tiao* derive directly from a comparison of each tuning with the original *kung-tiao* tuning. *Kung-tiao* is the origin by definition. *Shang-tiao* is so-called because *kung* in the new tuning moves to the string that was tuned to *shang* in *kung-tiao. Kung* in *chiao-tiao* is on the string that was tuned to *chiao* in *kung-tiao,* and so on. Note that these names refer to the *string* of the original tuning, not to the *pitch* of the string, which will undoubtedly change as one adjusts the strings for the appropriate interval-series.

Applying the same procedure to the *lü* names for the *tiao,* however, does not seem to work out so neatly. In *huang-chung-tiao,* the strings correspond to the *lü* as follows:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
lin-chung	*nan-lü*	*huang-chung*	*t'ai-ts'ou*	*ku-hsien*	*lin-chung*	*nan-lü*

One would expect, therefore, that:

String 3 as *kung* equals *huang-chung-tiao* (by definition)
String 4 as *kung* equals *t'ai-ts'ou-tiao*
String 5 as *kung* equals *ku-hsien-tiao*
Strings 1 and 6 as *kung* equals *lin-chung-tiao*
Strings 2 and 7 as *kung* equals *nan-lü-tiao*

Instead of *ku-hsien-tiao* and *nan-lü-tiao,* however, the text reads *chung-lü-tiao* and *wu-i-tiao,* respectively. The reason for this apparent anomaly is found in the passages that explain how one actually goes about adjusting the strings from one tuning to another. The name for the new tuning is in fact taken from the pitch of its *kung*-string in reference to the *huang-chung-tiao lü* series, but only after the pitches of the appropriate strings have been sharpened or flattened. The procedure will be described in detail in the passages on tuning procedure below.

For the sake of completeness Hsü includes all

twelve *lü* in his list of tunings, saying that one or two different *tiao* are "the same as" each of the five basic tunings. This seems to mean that if one were to tune the ch'in for any *tiao* other than the five basic ones, the interval series would be the same as a basic tuning, but the absolute pitch of the strings would differ by one or two semitones. Since the ch'in is not considered as an absolute-pitch instrument in the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u,* these distinctions become meaningless; the five interval-series tunings thus suffice for all compositions in the book.

DETERMINING THE POSITIONS OF THE FIVE DEGREES

The ch'in is divided into three sections: upper, middle, and lower. From the bridge to *hui* 4 is the upper section; from *hui* 4 to *hui* 7 is the middle section; from *hui* 7 to the nut is the lower section. Each section includes the five basic degrees and two auxiliary degrees. The length of [string corresponding to] each degree in the middle section is half that of the degrees in the lower section. The length of each degree in the upper section is half that of those in the middle section. Now, taking the *kung* string as an example: the open string is *huang-chung;* outside *hui* 13 is *t'ai-ts'ou;* at position 10.9 is *ku-hsien;* at 10 is *chung-lü;* at 9 is *lin-chung;* at 7.9 is *nan-lü;* at 7.3 is *ying-chung.* The middle and upper sections follow from this analogously. (Details are in [figures 11 and 12].)

The ch'in has seven strings, but strings 1 and 2 have the same degrees as strings 6 and 7, so there are just five basic degrees. This has been discussed in the previous essay on the five tunings. The following tables [figs. 11 and 12] list only the fixed positions of the five degrees on the three sections of five strings, [but] this will serve for all of the five tunings, [since] the only difference [between the tunings] is in the position [order] of the strings. For example, the *kung* string is string 3 in *huang-chung-tiao,* but in *lin-chung-tiao* it is string 1. The rest may be found by analogy.

COMMENTARY. In the first paragraph above, fractions are used to specify points between two *hui.* The convention is to imagine that the distance between each pair of *hui* is divided into ten equal segments, or *fen.* The number y.x then denotes "x *fen* to the left of *hui* y." Since the distance between pairs of *hui* varies, the *fen* do not have a fixed length.

The second paragraph explains that figures 9 and 10 are schematic and do not refer to specific strings on the instrument. Rather, they give the positions

along the *kung, shang, chiao, chih,* and *yü* strings, no matter which physical string corresponds to which degree.

Like *tiao,* the word *yin* (音) also changes meaning like a chameleon and creates some problems in translation. From Fritz A. Kuttner (1969) we learn that in early texts *yin* is differentiated from *sheng* (聲) in that ". . . *Sheng* is the 'outer' (external) sound (that is, the physical-acoustical phenomenon produced in nature or by a living being), in contrast to which *Yin* is the 'inner' (internal) sound (the physiological-psychological reacton of the listener to the aural event)."

Later on, the two terms become conventionally differentiated as "sound" or "degree" for *sheng* and "timbre" for *yin.* In modern texts the terms are frequently interchanged, and their sense must be determined from context. In modern spoken Chinese the

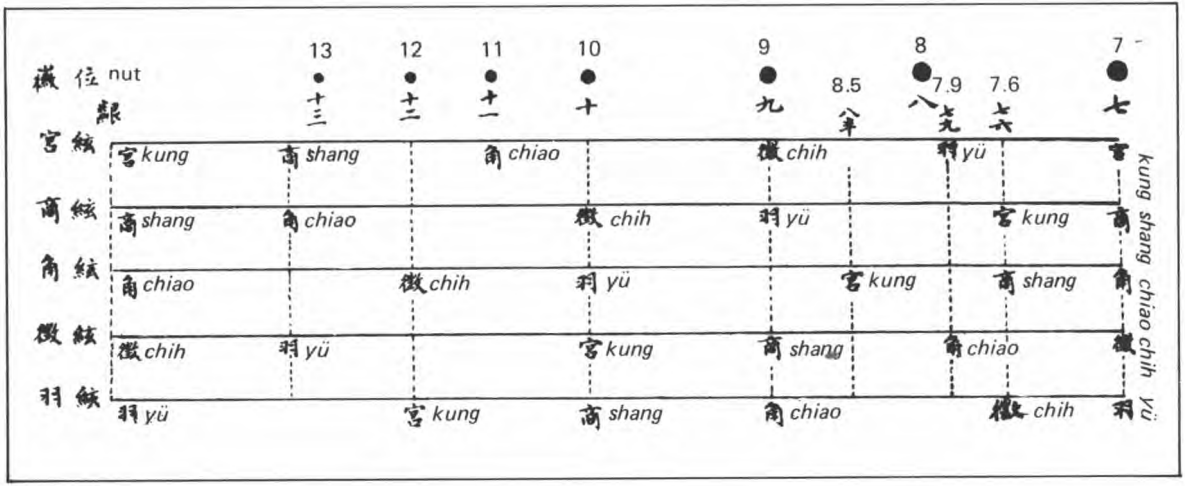


Fig. 11. Lower section of the ch'in strings

binome *sheng-yin* simply means "sound." In the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u, yin* takes on several different meanings, two of which are used contiguously in this chapter. In the above paragraphs *yin* refers to the five degrees of the interval-series *kung-shang-chiao-chih-yü.* In the paragraph immediately following this commentary, *yin* means "timbre" or "quality of sound."

The ch'in has three qualities of sound: open sounds, stopped sounds, and harmonics. If the left hand does not press down and one uses just the right hand to pluck the string, it is called an open sound. If the left hand presses down and the right hand plucks, it is called a stopped sound. If the left hand presses at a precise position, just slightly touching the string, and the right hand plucks, it is called a harmonic.

Pressing down anywhere at all will produce a stopped sound, but harmonics have a fixed position. All points that divide the string into segments of equal

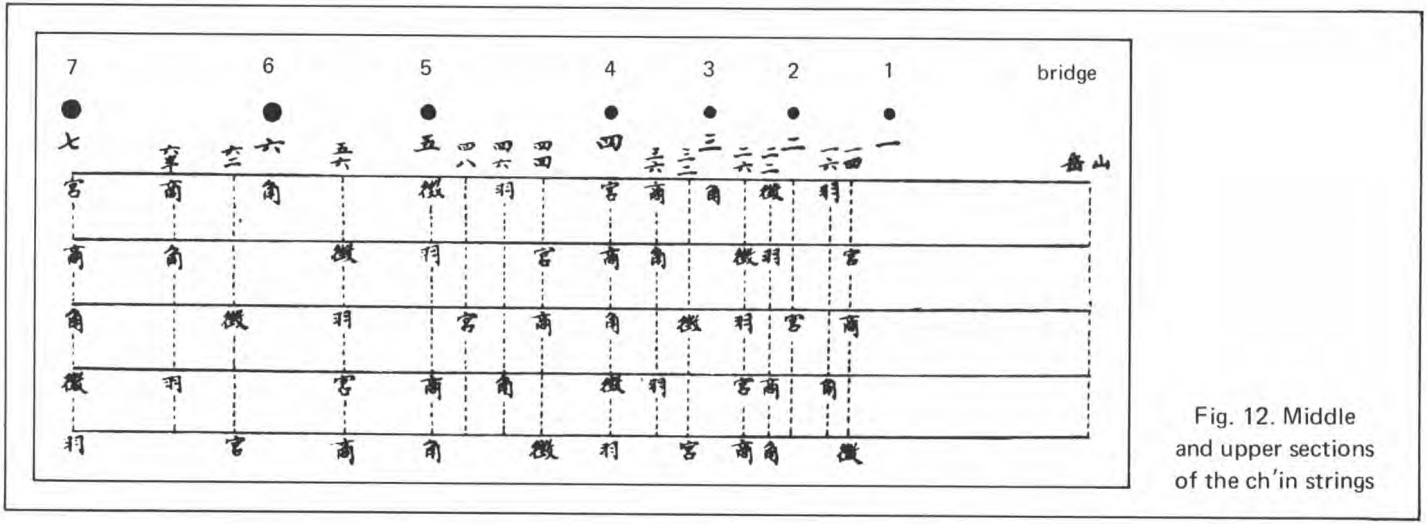


Fig. 12. Middle and upper sections of the ch'in strings

length will produce harmonics. Division into few parts gives lower pitches. Division into many parts gives higher pitches. At each *hui* position is a harmonic, because the *hui* positions [mark] equal divisions of the string. The method of dividing harmonics into sections is not the same as that for stopped pitches; it takes *hui* 7 as the fundamental pitch. From *hui* 7 to *hui* 4 is one section; from *hui* 4 to *hui* 1 is one section; from *hui* 7 to *hui* 10 is one section; from *hui* 10 to *hui* 13 is one section—altogether four sections. But the harmonics from *hui* 7 up to *hui* 1 are the same as those from *hui* 7 down to *hui* 13. [fig. 13].

COMMENTARY. Note that figure 13 is doubly abstract. As in figures 11 and 12, the strings are indicated as scale degrees, not physical strings. Furthermore, the strings have been "folded" in half around *hui* 7 to show that the corresponding points in each section

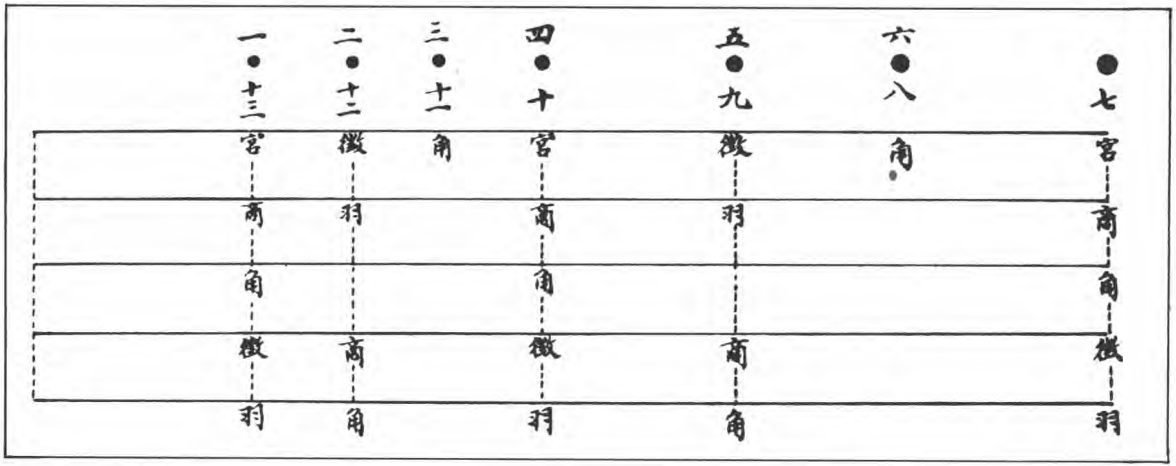


Fig. 13. Positions of the harmonics

produce the same harmonic pitch—that is, the *hui* pairs 1 and 13, 2 and 12, 3 and 11, 4 and 10, 5 and 9, 6 and 8.

The information in these sections, and figures 10, 11, 12, and 13, together define the available pitches or instrumental scale of the chin.

CHANGING TUNINGS

There are two ways to change tunings: the lowered-*kung* method and the raised-*chiao* method. Both can make a full circle. The lowered-*kung* method is to lower the *kung* pitch in a certain [i.e., the original] tuning by one *lü*, changing it to the *chiao* pitch in another [i.e., the new] tuning. This is also called the "lowered-*kung*-becomes-*chiao* method." For example, to change from *huang-chung-tiao* to *lin-chung-tiao:* string 3 is *kung* in *huang-chung-tiao*, strings 1 and 6 are *kung* in *lin-chung-tiao;* now lower string 3 in *huang-chung-tiao* by one *lü*, changing the tuning to *lin-chung-tiao. Huang-chung-tiao*'s third string thus becomes *lin-chung-tiao*'s *chiao* string.

The raised-*chiao* method is to raise the *chiao* pitch in a certain tuning, changing it to the *kung* pitch in another tuning. This is also called "raised-*chiao*-becomes-*kung* method." For example, to change from *huang-chung-tiao* to *chung-lü-tiao*, string 5 in *chung-lü-tiao* is *kung;* now raise string 5 in *huang-chung-tiao* by one *lü*, changing the tuning to *chung-lü-tiao. Huang-chung-tiao*'s fifth string becomes *chung-lü-tiao*'s *kung* string. Now the table below follows all the same principles [figure 14].

The two methods, raised *chiao* and lowered *kung*, actually have reciprocal functions—one is the reverse of the other, for example, lowering *kung* in *huang-chung-tiao* produces *lin-chung-tiao.* The reverse is that raising *chiao* in *lin-chung-tiao* produces *huang-chung-tiao.* The others are the same. (See [figure 15].)

COMMENTARY. This section demonstrates the two basic principles employed in changing from one tuning to another. There are, of course, any number of other ways in which one could effect the same mutations of interval series, but invariably these would require retuning more strings. For example, to change from *huang-chung-tiao* to *lin-chung-tiao* one might raise strings 1, 2, 5, 6, and 7 by one *lü;* it is clearly easier to make the same change by lowering string 3. The tuning sequences presented, therefore, are designed to require minimal effort and are in this respect quite elegant.

The concept of passing around a full circle is not employed in practice. Instead, *huang-chung-tiao* is treated as a central reference point. From it, one uses the lowered-*kung* method to tune to *lin-chung-tiao* and *t'ai-ts'ou-tiao* and the raised-*chiao* method to tune to *chung-lü-tiao* and *wu-i-tiao*.

To make the two methods clear, I have added the figures 16a and 16b, which show the sequence step-by-step. The degrees *kung-shang-chiao-chih-yü* are indicated on the tables as 1-2-3-5-6 for convenience. In tuning through either circle it is necessary to move every string once and only once, and in every case the strings are required to span a tuning range of only two *lü*.

If one takes the traditional, theoretical sizes for the *lü* (as derived from the 2:3 series, given in cents below their names), the lowered-*kung* method maintains the 204-204-294-204-294 interval sequence in every step, while the raised-*chiao* method introduces different intervals and is different in every step, as shown here:

1	2	3	5	6	i	
204	204	294	204	294		*huang-chung-tiao*
180	204	294	204	318		*chung-lü-tiao*
180	204	318	180	318		*wu-i-tiao*
204	180	318	180	318		*t'ai-ts'ou-tiao*
204	180	318	204	294		*lin-chung-tiao*

Method 1: Lowered *Kung* Becomes *Chiao*
(lower by one *lü*)

Huang-chung, lower 3rd string, becomes *lin-chung*
Lin-chung, lower 1st and 6th strings, becomes *t'ai-ts'ou*
T'ai-ts'ou, lower 4th string, becomes *wu-i*
Wu-i, lower 2nd and 7th strings, becomes *chung-lü*
Chung-lü, lower 5th string, becomes *huang-chung*

Method 2: Raised *Chiao* Becomes *Kung*
(raise by one *lü*)

Huang-chung, raise 5th string, becomes *chung-lü*
Chung-lü, raise 2nd and 7th strings, becomes *wu-i*
Wu-i, raise 4th string, becomes *t'ai-ts'ou*
T'ai-ts-ou, raise 1st and 6th strings, becomes *lin-chung*
Lin-chung, raise 3rd string, becomes *huang-chung*

Fig. 14. The two methods of changing tunings

DISTINGUISHING THE TUNINGS

Every ch'in composition must specify the tuning and mode. If only the mode is given, one can nevertheless discover [the tuning]. The tuning is fixed by the strings; the mode is determined by the final pitch of each section. For example, "Kuan shan yüeh" is in *huang-chung-tiao*, *kung* mode. If only "*kung* mode"

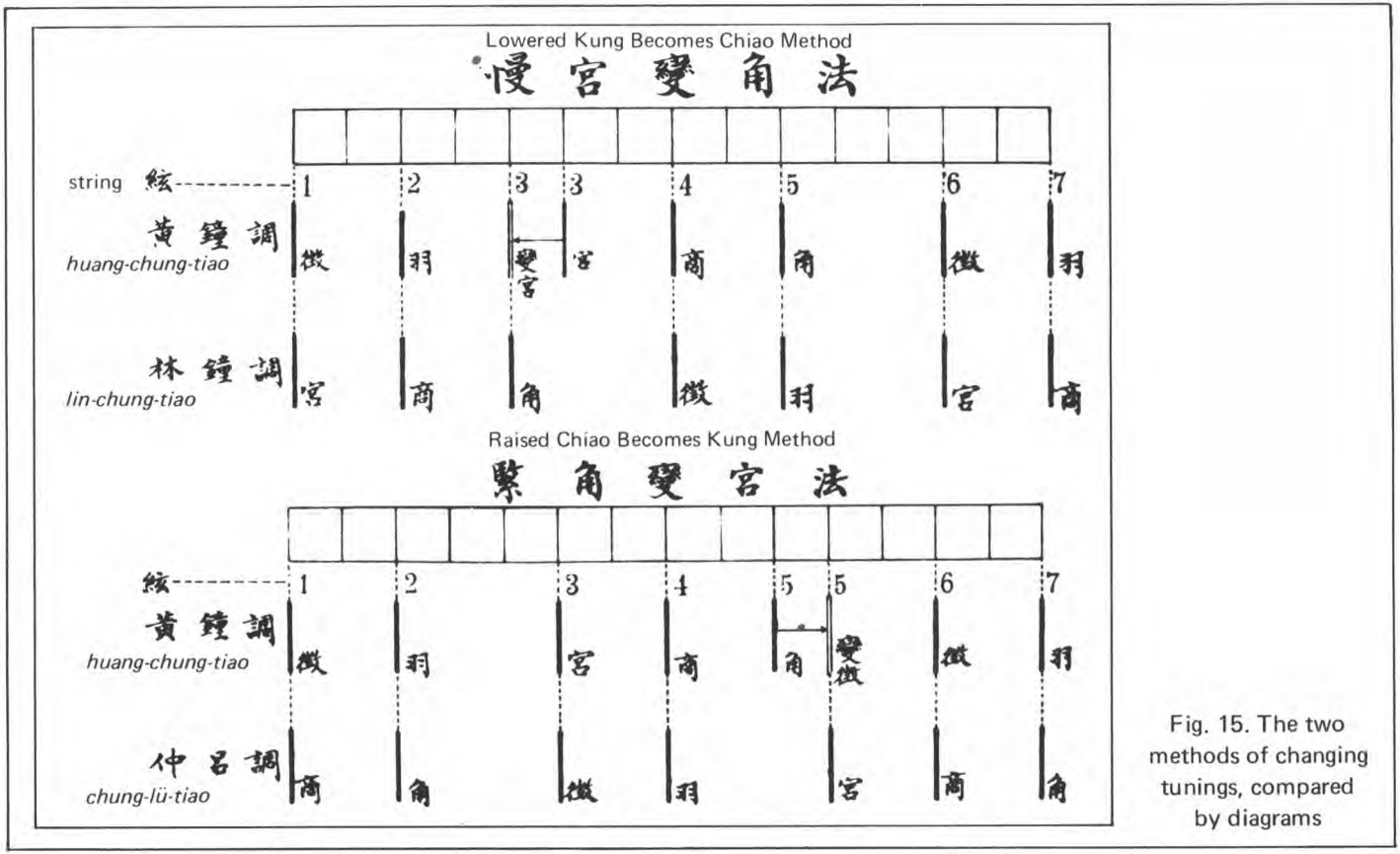


Fig. 15. The two methods of changing tunings, compared by diagrams

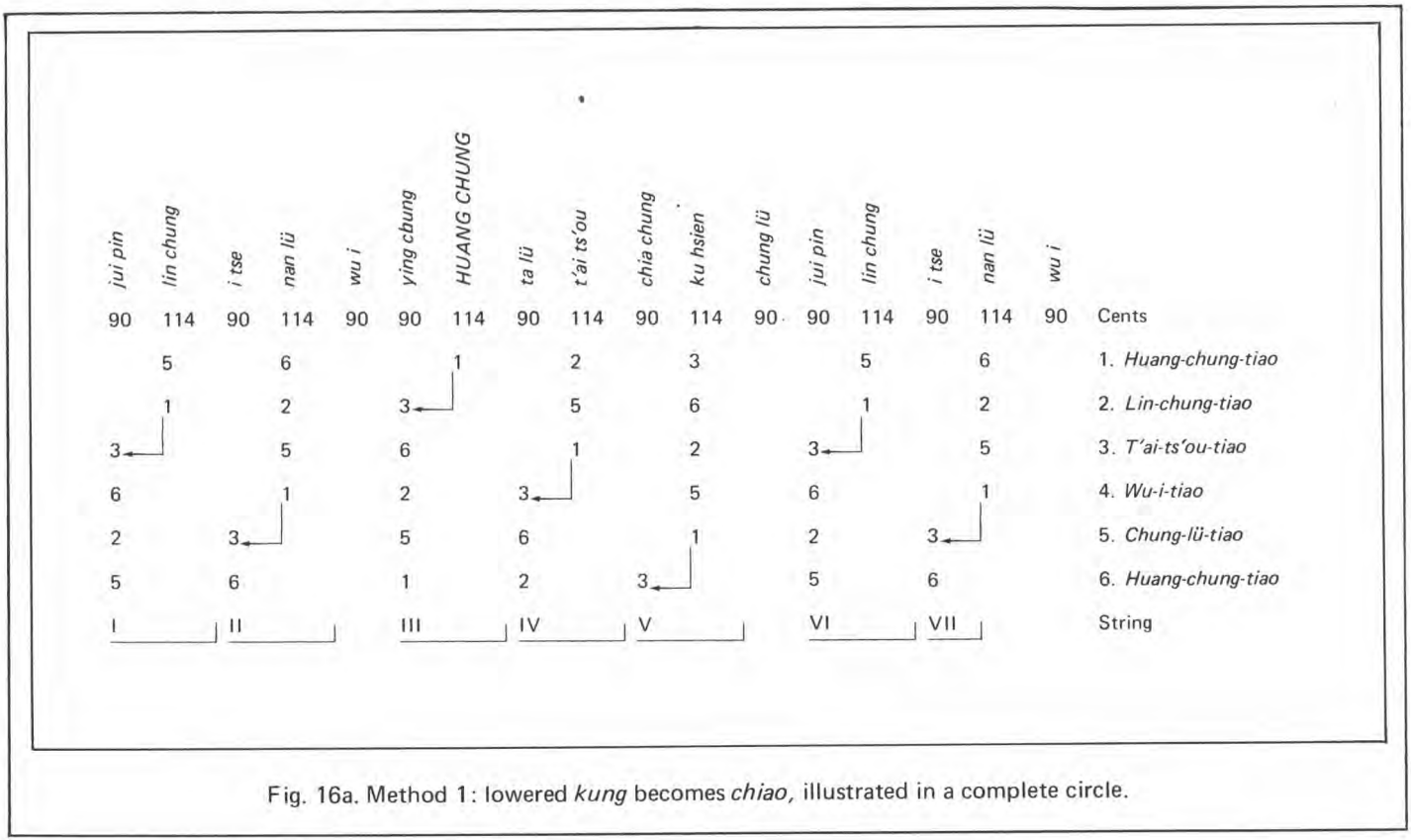


Fig. 16a. Method 1: lowered *kung* becomes *chiao,* illustrated in a complete circle.

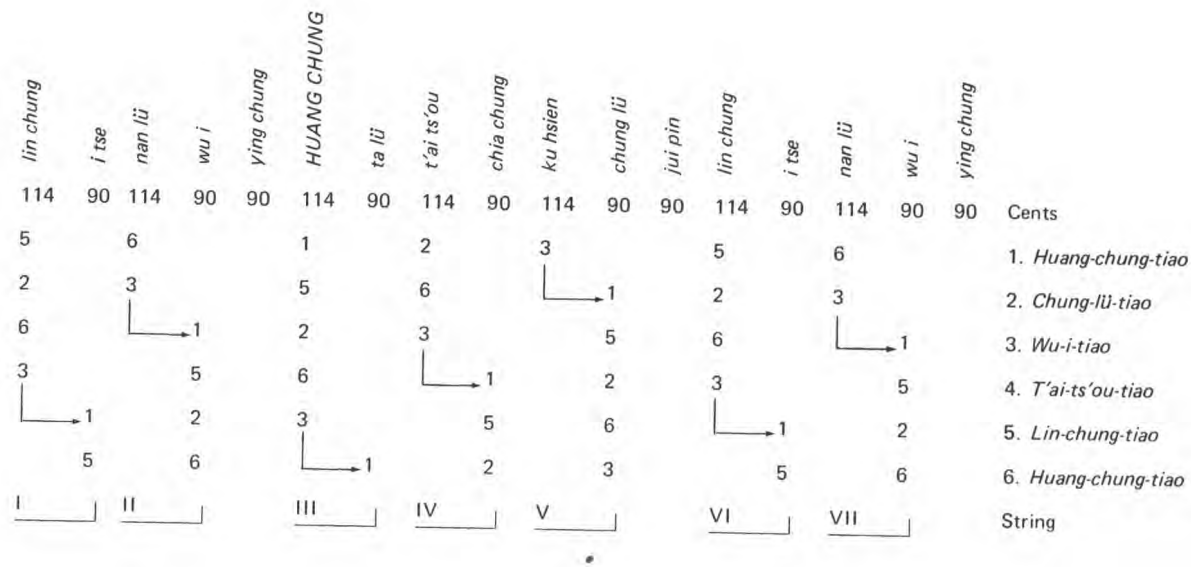


Fig. 16b. Method 2: raised *chiao* becomes *kung,* illustrated in a complete circle.

is given, one can also find that it is in *huang-chung-tiao*. This is because the final pitch of the first section is a stopped tone at *hui* 7 on string 3, the final pitch of the second section is an open tone on string 3, and the final pitch of the coda is a stopped tone at *hui* 10 on string 6: all are the same scale degree. Now the composition is specified to be in the *kung* mode, so these three final pitches definitely are all the *kung* degree. And since these three final pitches all correspond to the pitch of the open-string 3, then the pitch of the open-string 3 is definitely *kung*. Therefore, we know that this is *huang-chung-tiao* because string 3 in *huang-chung-tiao* is *kung*. The others may be found by analogy.

COMMENTARY. This brief chapter is significant in that it establishes an unambiguous definition of mode: "mode is determined by the final pitch of each section." This implies that, in compositions with more than one section, each section is expected to end with the same pitch (or, rather, modal degree, since octave placement is disregarded). Examination of the fifteen compositions in the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u* reveals only a few minor deviations from this theoretical rule. Of the eighty-two sections indicated in the scores, seventy-seven have the expected modal degree as the final pitch, three have the expected degree as the final plucked pitch but add an additional ornament or slide ("Chiu chiang yeh po," section 2; "P'ing sha lo yen," section 4; "Tao i," section 2), one section has a different degree as finalis ("Hsia hsien yu," section 4), and one case is indeterminate because no mode is stated ("Feng ch'iu huang"; see discussion in chapter five on texted compositions). Section 4 in "Hsia hsien yu," ending with *chiao* rather than *kung*, is in any case a very brief transitional section and does not establish a contrasting tonal center.

METHODS OF ADJUSTING THE STRINGS *[AN-HSIEN]*

There are two methods of adjusting the strings: the open-string method and the "Hsien Weng" method. Beginners should use the "Hsien Weng" method. As time passes and proficiency develops, then one may use the open-string method as a [time-saving] convenience.

COMMENTARY. The distinction to stress here is that drawn in the text between *an-hsien* (安絃), which I translate "adjust strings," and *ho-hsien* (和絃), which I translate as "tune strings." In this context *an-hsien* means to establish the relative tensions of the strings in the basic *huang-chung* tuning, as, for

example, when mounting a new set of strings or when beginning a playing session. That is why the first order of business in both *an-hsien* methods is to set the proper tension for a middle-range string to serve as a standard to which all the others can be compared, preventing over-taut or over-slack strings in the extreme ranges. In the *ho-hsien* methods the primary concern is the proper intervals between the strings, assuming that they have already been adjusted to the appropriate general range of tension. With these distinctions in mind it should be obvious why a particular method is recommended in each case. The *an-hsien* process normally involves pulling the strings tight by force and securing them around the proper foot of the ch'in; the *ho-hsien* process is accomplished with the tuning pegs only. (See figure 17, an illustration of *an-hsien.*)

The Hsien-Weng Method

Matching [the pitches of] open tones with stopped tones is called "Hsien Weng."[4] The order of adjusting the strings [is], first, to adjust string 5, not [too] loose, not [too] tight, as the standard. If too loose, then string 1 will be too low and will not sound. If too tight, string 7 will be too taut and will break easily. Next adjust string 6, using the method of pressing and plucking. (The ring finger of the left hand stops the string, the thumb plucks the pair of open and stopped strings.)[5] First stop string 5 at *hui* 12, then pluck open-string 6 and stopped-string 5; the two pitches [should] correspond to each other. If the pitches correspond [when string 5 is stopped] above *hui* 12, then open-string 6 is too high and should be loosened. If the pitches correspond below *hui* 12, then open-string 6 is too loose and should be tightened. Next adjust string 7 so that it corresponds to string 5 stopped at *hui* 10. These three strings attach to the right foot [of the ch'in.]

Then adjust string 1 so that when stopped at *hui* 8 it corresponds to open-string 5. If it corresponds when stopped above the *hui,* then it is too loose and should be tightened. If it corresponds when stopped below the *hui,* then it is too tight and should be loosened. Next adjust string 2 so that when stopped at *hui* 9 it corresponds to open-string 5. Next adjust string 3 so that when stopped at *hui* 11 it corresponds to open-string 5. Next adjust string 4 so that when stopped at *hui* 13 it corresponds to open-string 5. All of these strings are attached to the left foot [of the ch'in.] Whenever new strings are first adjusted,

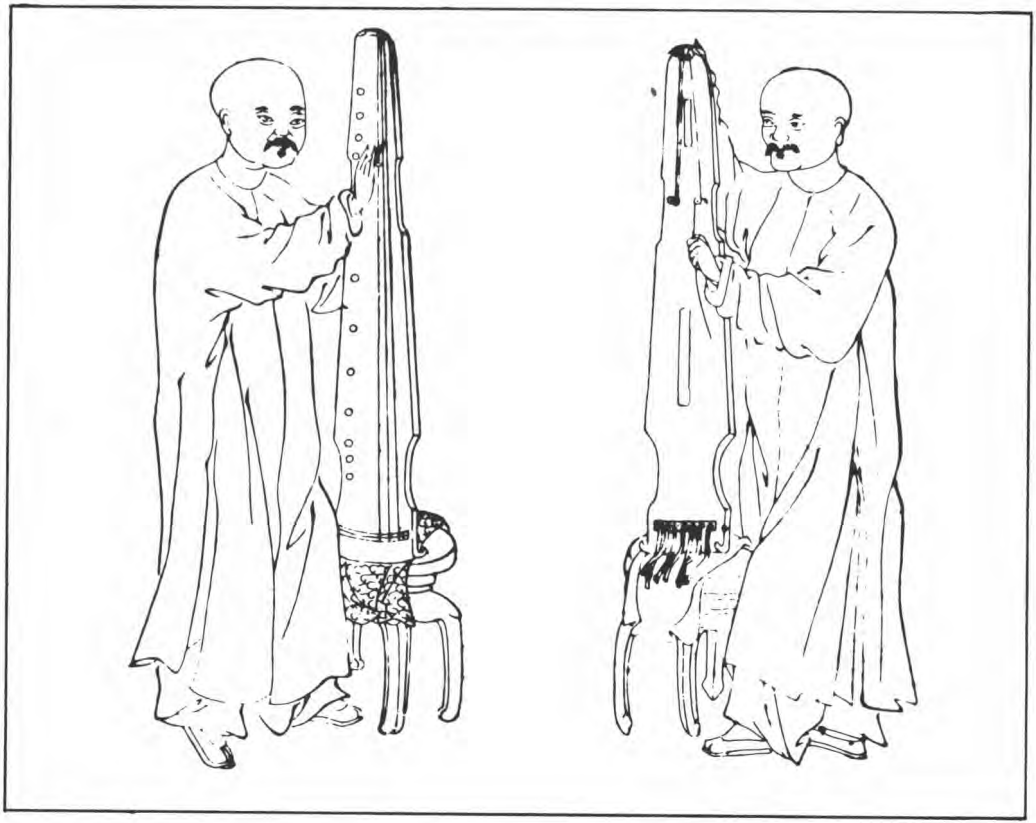


Fig. 17. Mounting new strings: front and back views (From the *Yü-ku-chai ch'in-p'u*)

the pitches change easily; therefore, one must adjust them again, then they will become stable.

Open-String Adjusting Method

Although this method is difficult, actually it is easy depending on aural discrimination and quickness of the wrist. As before, first adjust string 5, then adjust string 6 one-and-a-half steps (i.e., three *lü*) higher than string 5. Then adjust string 7 one step (two *lü*) higher than string 6. Next adjust string 1 one octave lower than string 6. Then adjust string 2 one octave lower than string 7 and one step higher than string 1. Then adjust string 3 one-and-a-half steps higher than string 2. Then adjust string 4 one step higher than string 3. Both of these adjusting systems take *huang-chung-tiao* as the principle and result. All of the other tunings can be derived from it.

Note: The absolute pitch for adjusting the strings can take Western musical instruments as a reference, making it easier to be precise. Ordinarily take open-string 1 as equivalent to middle C, or open-string 5 as equivalent to A.

COMMENTARY. The Hsien Weng method is easier for the beginner because it requires only the matching of unison pitches. The open-string method is easy in that it does not entail careful stopping of strings, but is more difficult than Hsien Weng because it requires a developed perception of accurate intervals.

The order in which the strings are adjusted is the same in both methods. It is the only order possible given the constraint of the traditional string-mounting system: 1, 2, 3, and 4 wrapped on the left foot; 5, 6, and 7 on the right foot, the heavy strings always wrapped under the lighter ones. Thus one must begin wrapping the left foot with string 1, the right foot with string 5. Since it is best to begin with a mid-range string (as mentioned previously) and also best to wrap all of the strings on one foot in sequence to prevent slippage, the given order results naturally.

The text note referring to Western instruments confirms that Hsü Li-sun was familiar with at least some aspects of Western music. The pitches he gives, however, are relative rather than absolute; the accepted actual standard pitch of string 1 in *huang-chung-tiao* is C below the bass staff.

The most accurate way to check the proper adjustment of the string tensions would be to compare unison intervals generated by harmonics on different strings (see below on tuning methods). This method is not possible when actually mounting a new string because of the posture necessary to hold the ch'in vertically. In other cases it is not used here because

the extreme accuracy it can produce is not, in fact, required at this stage since it is assumed that one will proceed to tune the instrument to the proper interval-series after one has finished adjusting the strings.

METHODS OF TUNING THE STRINGS *[HO-HSIEN]*

There are three methods of tuning the strings: open-string tuning, harmonic tuning, and stopped tuning. Open-string tuning is comparatively difficult, harmonic tuning is most accurate, and stopped tuning (that is, the Hsien Weng method) is easiest for the beginner, but cannot attain great precision. The following [sections] discuss each method.

Open-String Tuning Method

Open-string tuning depends completely on the hand and ear. Its excellent use lies entirely in the correspondence of pitches and is built on the basic tuning of *huang-chung*. Between every two strings, the pitches of the open strings are compared.

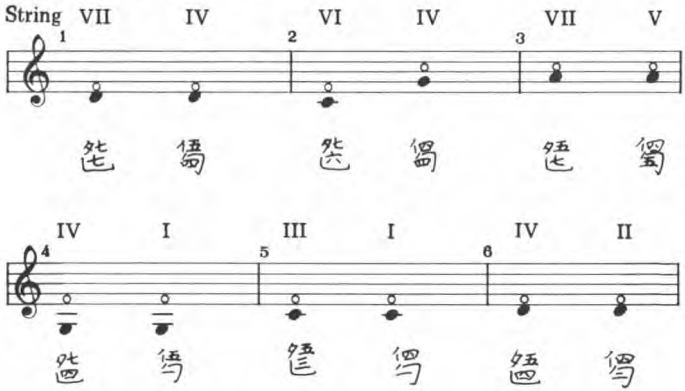
First, therefore, tune [strings] 4 and 7, then 2 and 7; the pitch of string 2 is one octave below string 7. Next [tune] 1 and 4, then 1 and 6; the pitch of string 6 is one octave above string 1. Next [tune] 2 and 5, then 3 and 6.

The determination of *huang-chung-tiao* having been completed, then the other tunings can be derived from it.

The open-string tuning method requires extensive experience and skill, then it can be truly accurate.

Harmonic Tuning Method

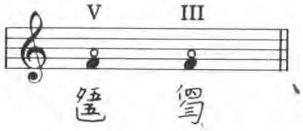
Huang-chung-tiao:



Step 1. The two strings [should give] the same pitch, no difference higher or lower; [this] must be extremely accurate.

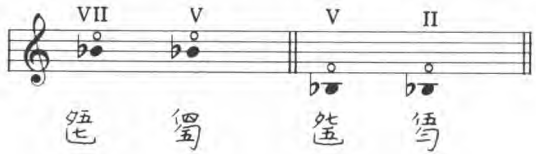
Step 2. In tightening and loosening, one should move only string 6, not string 4.
Step 3. In tightening and loosening, one should move only string 5, not string 7.
Step 4. In tightening and loosening, one should move only string 1, not string 4.
Step 5. In tightening and loosening, one should move only string 3, not string 1.
Step 6. In tightening and loosening, one should move only string 2, not string 4.

Chung-lü-tiao (from *huang-chung-tiao* raise string 5 by one *lü*):



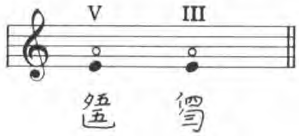
Do not move string 3. The two strings [should give] the same pitch.

Wu-i-tiao (from *chung-lü-tiao* raise strings 2 and 7 by one *lü each):*



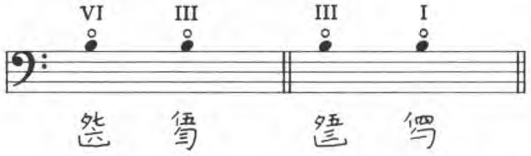
Step 1. Do not move string 5. The two strings [should give] the same pitch.
Step 2. Do not move string 5. The two strings [should give] the same pitch.

Lin-chung-tiao (from *huang-chung-tiao* lower string 3 by one *lü*):



Do not move string 5. The two strings [should give] the same pitch.

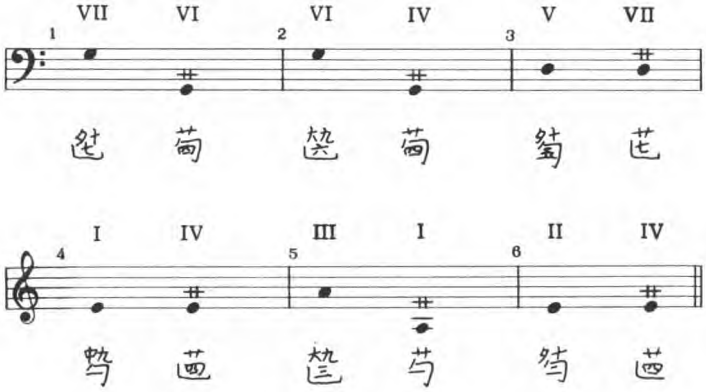
T'ai-ts'ou-tiao (from *lin-chung-tiao* lower strings 1 and 6 by one *lü* each):



Step 1. Do not move string 3. The two strings [should give] the same pitch.
Step 2. Do not move string 3. The two strings [should give] the same pitch.

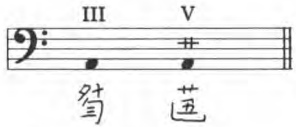
Stopped-Tuning Method

Huang-chung-tiao:



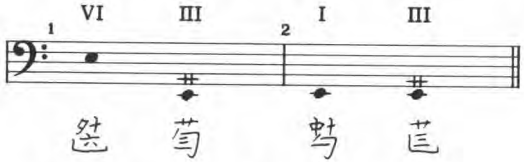
Step 1. The two strings [should give] the same pitch; [this] must be extremely accurate.
Step 2. In tightening and loosening, move [only] string 6, not string 4.
Step 3. In tightening and loosening, move string 5, not string 7.
Step 4. In tightening and loosening, move string 1, not string 4.
Step 5. In tightening and loosening, move string 3, not string 1.
Step 6. In tightening and loosening, move string 2, not string 4.

Lin-chung-tiao (from *huang-chung-tiao* lower string 3 by one *lü*):



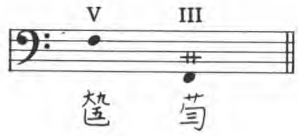
In tightening and loosening, move string 3, not string 5.

T'ai-ts'ou-tiao (from *lin-chung-tiao* lower strings 1 and 6 by one *lü* each):



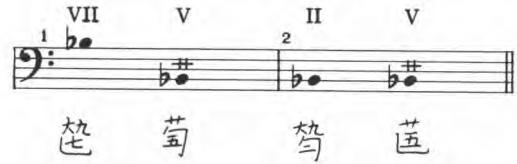
Step 1. In tightening and loosening, move string 6, not string 3.
Step 2. In tightening and loosening, move string 1, not string 3.

Chung-lü-tiao (from *huang-chung-tiao* raise string 5 by one *lü*):



In tightening and loosening, move string 5, not string 3.

Wu-i-tiao (from *huang-chung-tiao* raise strings 2 and 7 by one *lü*):



Step 1. In loosening and tightening, move string 7, not string 5.
Step 2. In loosening and tightening, move string 2, not string 5.

Note: When matching each pair of open and stopped strings, if the open string corresponds to the other when stopped below the *hui* position, then the stopped string must be lowered until, when stopped at the *hui* position, it corresponds to the open string. If the open string corresponds to the other when stopped above the *hui* position, then the stopped string must be raised, until when stopped at the *hui* position, it corresponds to the open string.

Every tuning method begins with string 4. Therefore, when two ch'in are played together, first pluck string 4 on both ch'in and match them exactly. From there on each can follow a different method of tuning.

COMMENTARY. The three tuning methods presented in this chapter all result in the same intervals between

the strings but arrive there by different strategies. The open-string method relies on the ear's ability to judge "true" fifths and octaves. Though with practice one can learn to listen for beats between overtones of complex pitches (the basic skill of the piano tuner), that skill is not essential here, since one can easily sound those harmonics in isolation. The open-string tuning method is, therefore, comparatively inaccurate and will give varying results depending on the player's degree of experience and the sort of fifth (tempered or untempered) to which his ears are accustomed. Assuming 3:2 fifths, the open-string tuning sequence may be summarized as in figure 18.

The harmonic- and stopped-tuning methods both employ the same sequence of string-matching, but they obtain the matched pitches differently. The harmonic method is the most accurate, since the beats can be heard most clearly because the fundamentals are not present to mask them. The harmonic method outlined here employs unisons—the easiest interval to tune—for all matchings except one, which is a fifth.[6] The stopped-tuning method employs three unisons and three ocatves. Figures 19a and b summarize the tuning sequence for both methods. Dotted lines show resulting intervals. Note that the interval sizes in *chung-lü-tiao* and *wu-i-tiao* remain the same as those in the other tunings. This confirms that the *lü* as traditionally derived from the cycle of fifths are not systematically used here (see Commentary, pages 21-22, above).

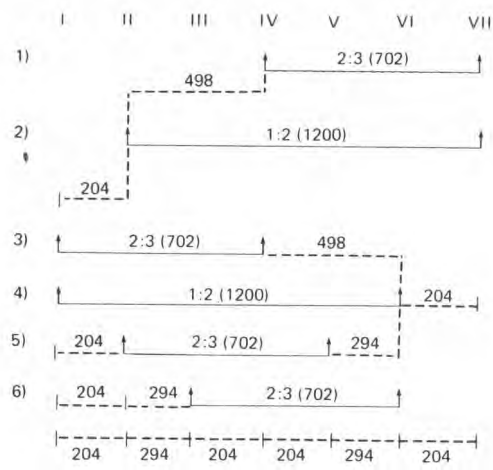


Fig. 18. Open-string tuning method: *huang-chung-tiao*

This tuning procedure elegantly establishes the appropriate pitch for each string with a minimal number of steps: 7 strings, 6 steps. After many ob-

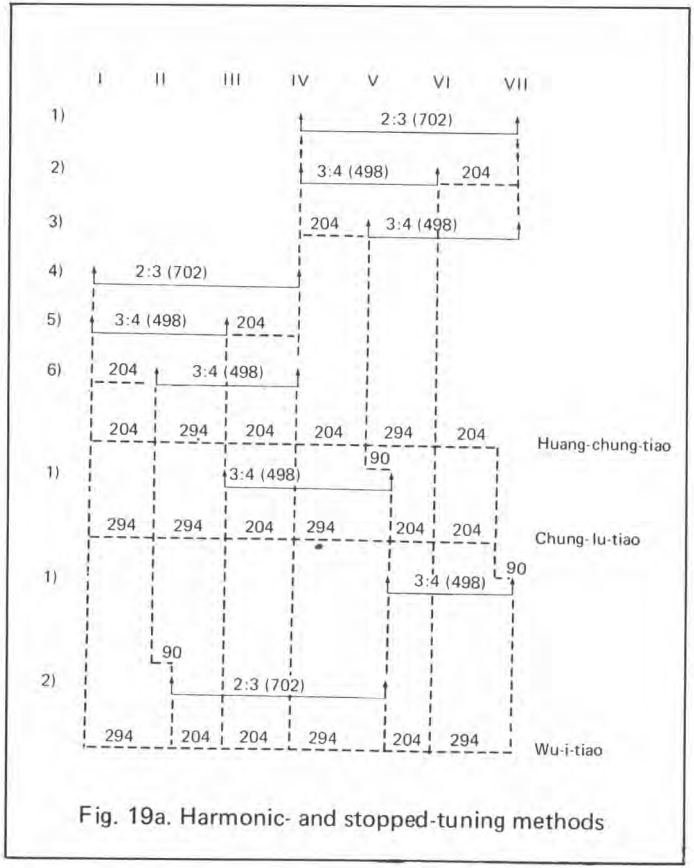


Fig. 19a. Harmonic- and stopped-tuning methods

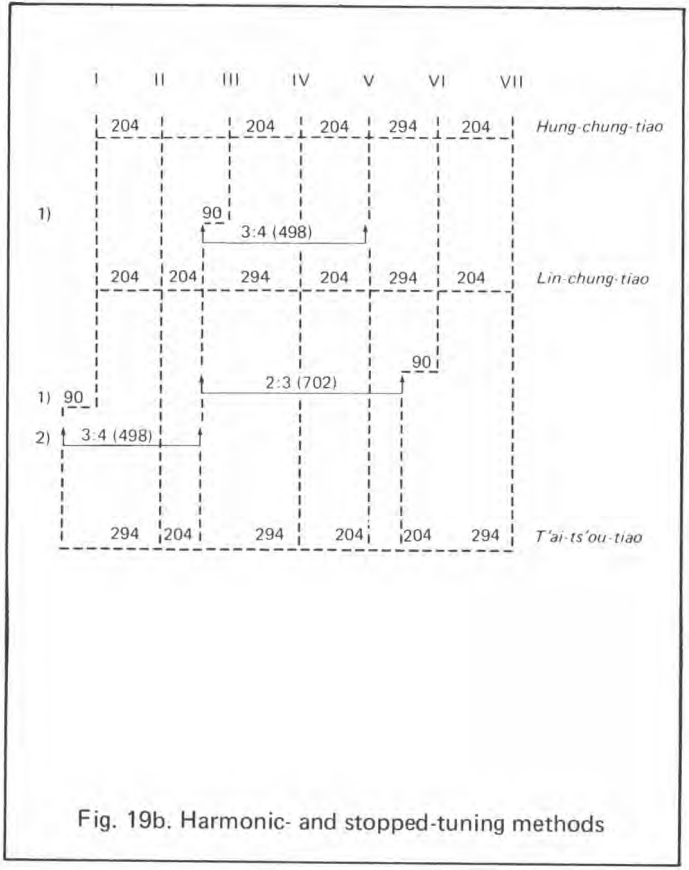
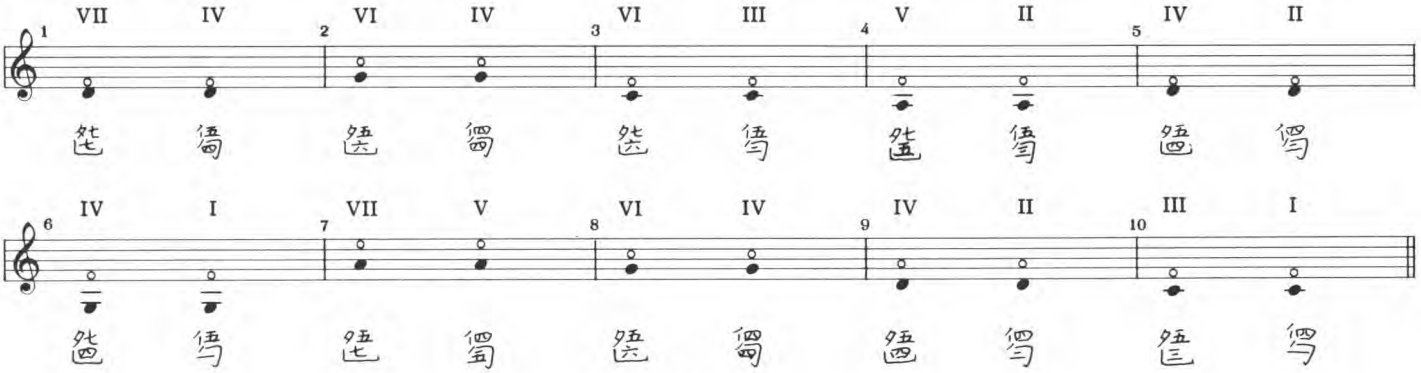


Fig. 19b. Harmonic- and stopped-tuning methods

servations of tuning procedures by ch'in players in both public and private contexts, however, it became apparent to me that the comforting redundancy of more steps is usually involved. To check, therefore, on the relationship between the theory as expressed in the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u* and the practice adopted by a Mei-an ch'in player, I asked Mr. Lui Pui-yuen to permit documentation of his tuning procedure.

Lui is an outstanding musician, who has studied ch'in with the Mei-an master Wu Chung-han and uses the Mei-an versions of most compositions as the core of his ch'in repertory.

Lui's tuning procedure involves ten steps, as shown below:



As summarized in figure 20, the basic features of this procedure may be seen to contrast with the Mei-an procedure in several ways. The Mei-an procedure first establishes the upper fifth, infixes an upper and lower perfect fourth, then repeats the process for the lower fifth.

Lui, on the other hand, seems to proceed systematically from the upper strings to the lower ones and then rechecks from top to bottom by a series of fourths. One apparent flaw in this procedure occurs at step 4, where neither pitch has yet been fixed as a reference point. Logically, step 4 should come after step 5. Perhaps the less logical sequence is used on account of its more pleasing symmetry. In any case,

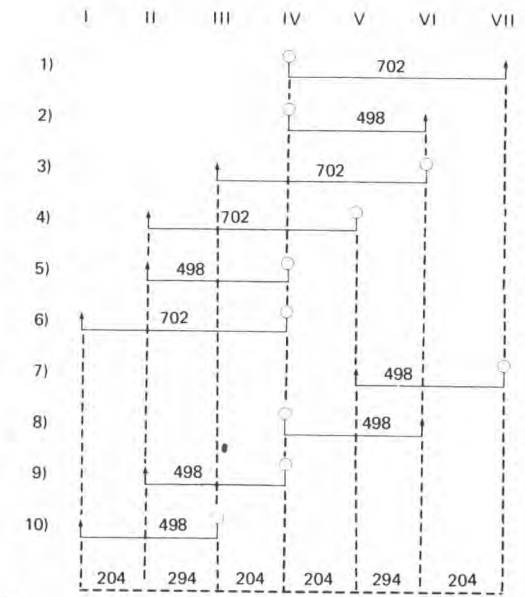


Fig. 20. Lui Pui-yuen's harmonic tuning

string 5 is supplied with a fixed reference pitch in step 7, so that the complete sequence of ten steps will, in fact, be capable of producing the theoretically correct tuning patterns.

CHAPTER FOUR

徽

Ch'in Tablature and Finger Technique

Many writers have described the characteristics and structure of ch'in tablature. Liang Ming-yüeh discussed the earliest extant ch'in notation, the so-called *wen-tzu-p'u,* or "word-tablature," dating probably from the T'ang dynasty, and transcribed the sole composition that it preserves (1972:210-23). Rulan Chao Pian described notational practices in Sung and Yüan times and listed and explained finger techniques, translating Sung sources and comparing them in some cases to contemporary usage (1967:76-92). Dr. Pian also transcribed the ch'in compositions found in extant Sung sources (1967:137-54). Laurence Picken has, in several articles, commented on Pian's work and offered his own transcription of the most significant Sung ch'in composition, Chiang K'uei's "Ku yüan" (Picken paraphrased the title, "Complaint in an Old Mode"; 1969a:612-17; 1971).

Lui Tsun-yuen has prepared an extremely helpful guide to the ch'in tablature, including an annotated translation of the chapter on finger techniques that appears in the *Wu-chih-chai ch'in-p'u,* an influential, excellent eighteenth-century handbook (1968:180-204). R. H. van Gulik also has written an extensive discussion of ch'in tablature in which he lists fifty-four of the most common techniques, based on authoritative Ming and Ch'ing handbooks (1969:117-39). One could go on to catalog many derivative studies in more general sources, and, of course, one could cite numerous modern works in Chinese by such excellent authors as Yang Yin-liu, Cha Fu-hsi, and Wang Kuang-ch'i.

Given this comparatively rich literature, to backtrack over such well-trodden ground would be superfluous. My introductory material, therefore, will be cursory—intended only to orient the reader. Please refer to the above-cited studies for further information.

Ch'in tablature is organized as a string of large

compound symbols *(cheng-wen)* interspersed with instructions and comments in smaller characters *(fu-wen).* Each large compound symbol is composed of one or more abbreviated characters *(chien-tzu)* and normally represents one or more articulations. The smaller characters indicate connections between articulations, manner of attack, ornaments, vibrati, tempi, et cetera.

Most compound symbols consist of an upper part and a lower part. The upper part directs a left-hand finger to press the string at the indicated *hui* position. The left thumb, middle, and ring fingers are used to stop the strings and also to play harmonics (though the middle finger is used almost exclusively on string 1). The little finger is never used. The index finger is not used to stop strings but is commonly used to play harmonics. The symbols for the left-hand fingers are placed in the upper left corner of the compound symbol; they are abbreviations of the natural-language names of the fingers:

大 *ta,* thumb
中 *chung,* middle finger
名 *ming,* ring finger
食 *shih,* index finger

In the upper right corner are one or two numerals indicating a *hui* position and, possibly, a fractional deviation from the *hui* position expressed in tenths *(fen)* of the distance between the *hui* and its left-hand neighbor. The symbols for the *hui* and *fen* positions are the unabbreviated forms of the natural-language cardinal numbers:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
一	二	三	四	五	六	七	八	九	十	十一	十二	十三

The lower part of most compound symbols indicates the right-hand stroke to be applied when plucking and the string in question. The string is indicated by the same series of cardinal numbers as the *hui;* the right-hand strokes employ many different abbreviated symbols, as delineated in the translation below.

Here, for example, are two typical compound symbols followed by the explanation of each component.

名 left-hand ring finger
九 presses at *hui* position 9
勹 while right middle finger plucks inward
三 on string 3

大 left thumb

𠂇 presses at *hui* position 7.2

乚 while right index finger plucks outward

六 on string 6

Most ch'in handbooks include a chapter, usually called "Chih fa" [Finger technique], in which the fingering symbols are explained. In addition to describing the action to be performed, the explanations may include poetic images intended to evoke a special feeling or quality. There may also be illustrations showing correct hand and finger positions, perhaps with appropriate visual metaphors added (van Gulik reprints some of these pictures).

Van Gulik notes, however, that "unfortunately this chapter has often been torn out, to prevent the handbook from being used by unqualified people" (1969:33). Though certainly a possible explanation for the frequently-found lacunae in old ch'in handbooks, it is not entirely convincing to me. Would it not have been simpler to omit the chapter in the first place, or to write it with either laconic or purposely diffuse definitions? Why go to the trouble of doing the writing, having the woodblocks cut and printed, and binding the chapters into the handbooks, only to have them torn out later? One might more reasonably suppose that the finger-technique chapter was frequently removed and bound separately as a pamphlet for easy reference when studying a new composition.

In the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u* the explanations are generally straightforward. Only occasional use is made of poetic metaphor, and no illustrations are provided. Some abbreviations are defined by the full form of the characters they represent, others laconically, by a word or two; most, however, are defined in one or two sentences with sufficient precision to leave no questions as to what is intended. In the original text of the lists of fingering techniques, for the most part, the abbreviated form of the character appears first, then the unabbreviated form, then the prose definition of its meaning in the context of ch'in tablature. To clarify this distinction for those unfamiliar with Chinese, I enclose the unabbreviated form within angle brackets. I have also numbered each symbol to facilitate cross-reference and discussion.

I have occasionally appended expansions or clarifications to my translation in square brackets. Most glosses, however, would be superfluous in Chinese—the reader of English normally expects the author to spell things out with greater specificity than is proper

in literary Chinese. For the convenience of students who might like to compare the Mei-an definitions with others (there are a few divergences and idiosyncratic usages), I have added cross-references to the lists by van Gulik (abbreviated VG) and Lui Tsun-yuen (LTY).

FINGER TECHNIQUE

When playing, sit solemnly and with concentration, the nose opposite *hui* 5. Hand gestures should be level and straight; the worst mistake is to have a curled fist. Beginning students should press firmly with the left hand and pluck heavily with the right hand. With time you will not fear to use strength, it will flow naturally. In general, [plucking is] not excessively light or heavy, fast or slow: light but not floating, heavy but not turgid, quick but not jerky, slow but not discontinuous.

Specifically, the left hand should be very lively in stopping the strings, going right to the mark, neither excessive nor insufficient. The right-hand fingers should be rigid and neither insubstantial nor unresponsive. Open tones should strive for the wide and deep, harmonics should strive for the clear and distant, stopped sounds should strive for the ancient and pure. When one practices the principles of these three kinds of tones for some time, one will be able to harmonize fingers and strings, string and tones, tones and spirit.

Errors to Avoid in Finger Technique

1. When the left thumb stops a string, the index finger curves into a circle to give extra strength—avoid this [figure 21].
2. When the left ring finger stops a string, the middle and index fingers assist to give extra strength—avoid this [figure 22].
3. When the left ring finger does a kneeling technique [*k'uei,* no. 60 in the list of techniques, p. 59] in stopping a string, the middle and little fingers also curl down—avoid this [figure 23].
4. When the right hand plucks, thumb and index make a circle—avoid this. It is proper to press the thumbnail against the center of the fleshy pad of the index finger [figure 24].
5. If the little fingers of both hands curl, it looks extremely inelegant—avoid this [figure 25].

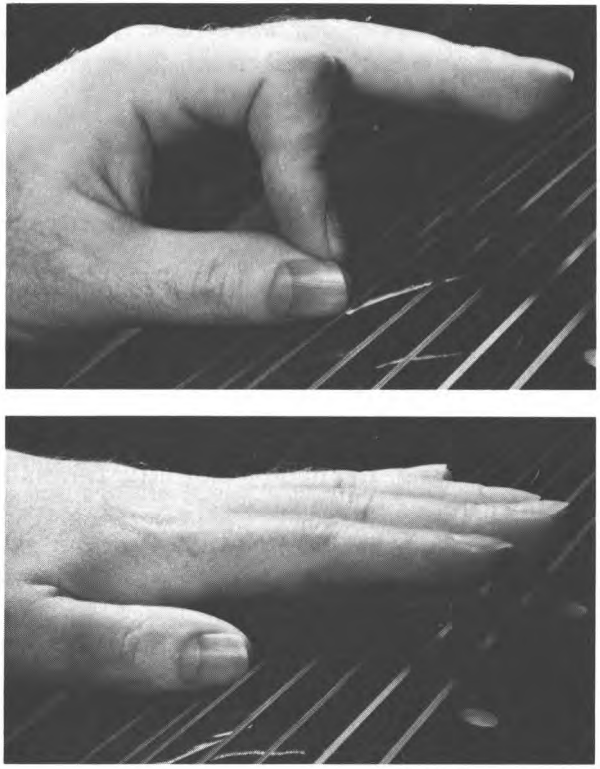


Fig. 21. Finger technique: *top*, incorrect; *bottom*, correct

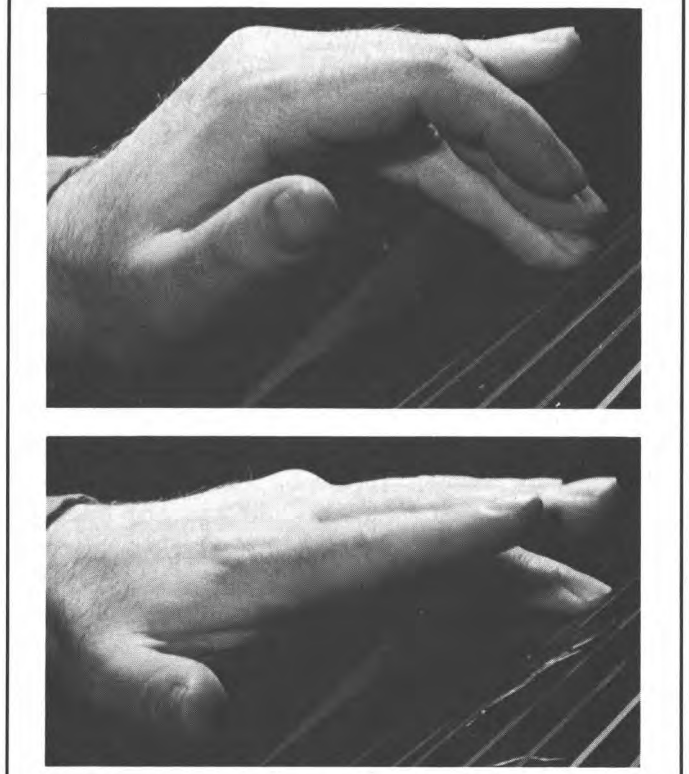


Fig. 22. Finger technique: *top*, incorrect; *bottom*, correct

*(Photographs in figs. 21-25 by Stanley Summer; technique demonstrated by Fredric Lieberman)

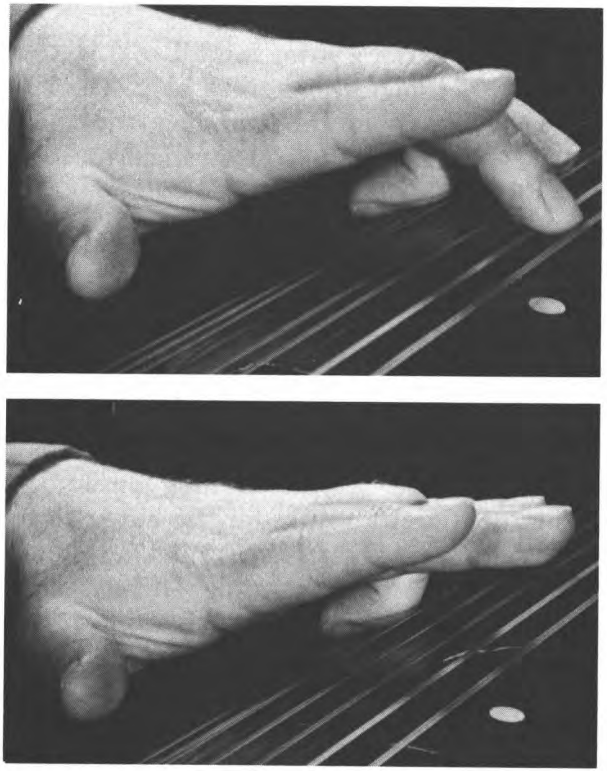


Fig. 23. Finger technique: *top*, incorrect; *bottom*, correct

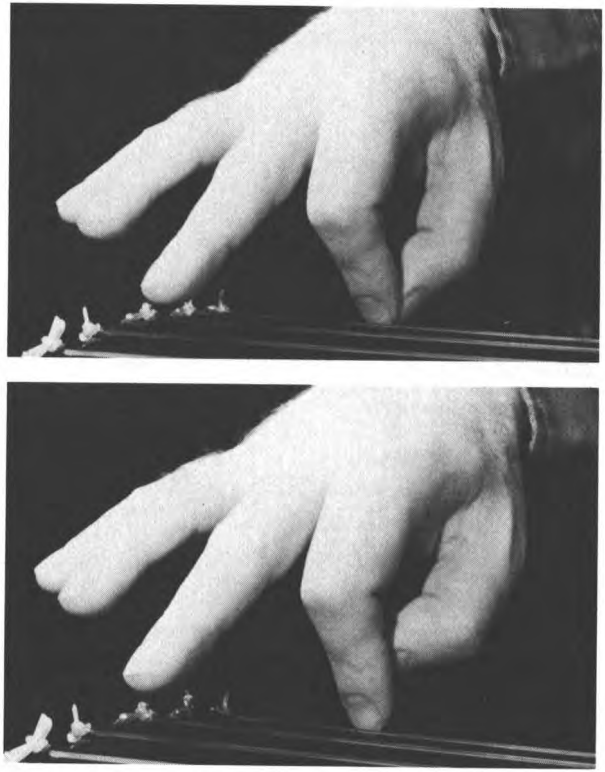


Fig. 24. Finger technique: *top*, incorrect; *bottom*, correct

Fig. 25. Finger technique: *top,* incorrect; *bottom,* correct

Right-hand Techniques

1. *po* 尸 〈擘〉
   The thumb plucks a string inward [that is, toward the player], using the fingernail only. The middle finger rests lightly on the preceding string. [VG 3, LTY 2; Lui's reading, "p'i," is a variant form.]
2. *t'o* 乇 〈托〉
   The thumb plucks a string outward. Again, the middle finger rests lightly on the previous string. [VG 2, LTY 1]
3. *mo* 木 〈抹〉
   The index finger plucks a string inward. [VG 4, LTY 3]
4. *t'iao* 乚 〈挑〉
   The index finger plucks a string outward. The middle finger rests lightly on the next string, the index finger is straight and level and moves just far enough to touch the next string. [If the *t'iao* is on string 6, then the "next string" is string 5, that is, the next one away from the player.] Using the tip of the fingernail freely is correct and convenient. [VG 5, LTY 4]
5. *kou* 勹 〈勾〉
   The middle finger plucks a string inward. [VG 6, LTY 5]

6. *t'i* 勹 〈剔〉
The middle finger plucks a string outward. [VG 6, LTY 6. Van Gulik's reading, "chai," is a variant form.]

7. *tse* 亏 〈摘〉
The ring finger plucks a string outward. [VG 9, LTY 8]

8. *ta* 丁 〈打〉
The ring finger plucks a string inward. [VG 8]

9. *kou-t'i* 勾 〈勾 剔〉
The same string is plucked twice, first *kou* [5], then *t'i* [6].[LTY 7]

10. *li* 厂 〈歷〉
Using the index finger, pluck with *t'iao* technique [4] continuously across two strings. Again, the middle finger rests lightly on the next string [VG 11, LTY 9]

11. *chi-li* 尸 〈急 歷〉
[When doing *li* (10)], take the notes lightly and quickly.

12. *chi-kou* 勹 〈急 勾〉
A quick *kou* [5]. [Take care to distinguish this from *t'i* (6).]

13. *ts'o* 早 〈撮〉
Either *t'iao* [4] and *kou* [5] or *kou* and *t'o* [2] played together as a chord. The two strings must sound simultaneously, not one after the other. [VG 12, LTY 10]

14. *fan-ts'o* 擉 〈反 撮〉
The reverse of *t'iao* and *kou* or *t'o* and *kou* [that is, the reverse of *ts'o*]. If *t'iao* and *kou* were previously played, then use *mo* [3] and *t'i* [6]. If *t'o* and *kou* were previously played, then use *t'i* and *po* [1]. [LTY 11]

15. *t'ao-ts'o san-sheng* 毫 〈搯 撮 三 聲〉
First there are two sounds, one *t'ao* [47], one *ts'o* [13]. Next quickly make three sounds *t'ao, ts'o, t'ao.* Finally *ts'o* one sound. [LTY 12; many ch'in players say "ch'ia" instead of "t'ao," substituting 掐 for 搯.]

16. *kun* 亥 〈滾〉
The ring finger does *tse* [7] continuously across several strings. Either from string 7 to string 2, or from whichever string is being stopped, not necessarily string 7. [VG 23, LTY 13. Van Gulik's reading, "k'un," seems to be an error; his definition, also, differs from most sources.]

17. *fu* 弗 〈拂〉
The index finger does *mo* [3] continuously across several strings, either from string 1 to string 7 or up to the pressing place, and then stops. Again, one need not end at string 7, nor start from string 1. [VG 24, LTY 14]

18. *p'o-tz'u* 擘 〈潑 剌〉
The index, middle, and ring fingers together stroking a string inward is called *p'o*. The ring, middle, and index fingers together stroking a string outward is called *tz'u*. The combined inward and outward motion is known as "swimming fish moving its tail." In the tablature *p'o* is frequently used by itself, mostly on strings 6 and 7, with one string stopped, the other open, the two sounds being played together. [See, for example, phrase one of "Kuan shan yüeh."] [VG 13, LTY 18. Lui's reading, "t'zu," is a typographical error.]

18a.[1] *p'o* 叉 〈潑〉
[Defined in 18.]

18b. *tz'u* 串 〈剌〉
[Defined in 18.]

19. *t'ao-p'o-tz'u san-sheng* 龕 〈搕 潑 剌 三 聲〉
Thus, *t'ao* [47], *p'o* [18a], *t'ao*, *tz'u* [18b], *t'ao*, *p'o*, *tz'u*—seven tones. [LTY 18, slightly different.]

20. *fu* 伏 〈伏〉
A damped *tz'u* [18b], without sound. Three fingers *tz'u* outward and then the palm presses down, thus naturally there is no resonance. Also called *p'ai-sha* ["a dead beat"]. [LTY 19]

21. *ta-yüan* 団 〈打 圓〉
The first two sounds are *t'iao* [4] and *kou* [5]; then quickly make three sounds *t'iao*, *kou*, *t'iao*; then *kou* one sound. The final sound is a slow *t'iao*, making seven sounds altogether. [VG 14, LTY 20]

22. *pei-so* 背 〈背 鎖〉
Use *t'i* [6], *mo* [3], and *t'iao* [4] to make three sounds on the same string. If done slowly, this is called *pei-so*, if quickly, *hsiao-so* [22a]. Furthermore, adding two sounds at the beginning, *mo*, *kou*, followed by *pei-so*, is called *tuan-so*, written [as 22b] in the tablature. Adding two sounds, *mo*, *t'iao*, followed by *tuan-so*, is called *ch'ang-so*, written [as 22c] in the tablature. Adding two sounds, *mo*, *t'iao*, followed by *ch'ang-so*, is called *ta-so*, written [as 22d] in the tablature. *Tuan-so*

has five sounds, *ch'ang-so* seven sounds, and *ta-so* nine sounds: none of these techniques is used frequently. [VG 15, LTY 22]

22a. *Hsiao-so* 小〈小 鎖〉
[Defined in 22.]

22b. *tuan-so* 短〈短 鎖〉
[Defined in 22. VG 16, LTY 23]

22c. *ch'ang-so* 長〈長 鎖〉
[Defined in 22. VG 17, LTY 24]

22d. *ta-so* 太〈大 鎖〉
[Defined in 22.]

23. *lun* 令 輪
Ring, middle, and index fingers pluck the string outward in order, quickly, making three sounds: *tse* [7], *t'i* [6], and *t'iao* [4]. Connected, uniform sounds are best. [VG 18, LTY 26. Lui's reading, "luan," seems to be an error.]

24. *pan-lun* 半〈半 輪〉
Using the ring and middle fingers, make two sounds, *tse* [7] and *t'i* [6]. [VG 19, LTY 27]

25. *shuang-t'an* 雙〈双 彈〉
In this technique the middle and index fingers rest against the thumb; first the middle finger and then the index finger flick out sharply to pluck the string. Sometimes two strings are played: one stopped, one open. [VG 21. Under this name van Gulik gives a more abbreviated symbol and explains the technique that Lui calls "tieh" (LTY 15).]

26. *ju-i* 女〈如 一〉
"As one." One stopped, one open, two strings sound simultaneously. [VG 20, LTY 31]

27. *so-ling* 索〈索 鈴〉
From string 7, one continuous *t'iao* [4], going quickly to string 2, like the sound of small hanging bells. No variation in speed will produce a wonderful uniformity. Harmonics are always used in this technique. [VG 22, LTY 33]

28. *ts'ung-t'ou* 從〈從 頭〉
"From the beginning." [The first character probably should be written 從.] [VG 26, LTY 32A]

29. *tsai-ts'o* 再〈再 作〉
To repeat from the beginning is called *ts'ung-t'ou* [28] *tsai-ts'o*. To repeat some phrase or technique a bracket is put alongside it in the tablature, and the instruction reads "repeat from the bracket." [VG 26, LTY 32]

30. *chih* 云〈至〉
"To." [For example, "from string 2 *to* string 7."] [VG 29, LTY 37; van Gulik's reading, "chin," is an error.]

31. *shao-hsi* 省〈少 息〉
"Short pause." If two sounds sliding up and down take three beats, that is called a short pause. [VG 27, LTY 34. Lui's reading, "sao-hsieh," is an error.]

Left-hand Techniques

32. *ch'o* 卜〈綽〉
From below to above is called *ch'o*. Place your finger below the indicated stopping position; when the sound begins, follow the tone, slide up to the correct position, and get the sound. Start your hand from about a quarter-tone below: the place is not precise, nor is the size fixed. Your hand must be flexible, the sound subtle. [VG 39, LTY 42]

33. *chu* 氵〈注〉
From above to below is called *chu*. This technique is opposite to *ch'o* [32], but otherwise is identical. Must also be played without fixed position. The hand starts from about a semitone above, then slides down to the correct position and gets the sound. In every tablature only 10 to 20 percent of the stopped notes do not use *ch'o* and *chu*. If these techniques are misused, the sound will not be accurate. [VG 40, LTY 43]

34. *yin* 氵〈吟〉
After getting sound, quickly vibrate the finger about three or four times, like an expressive vibrato in chanting. Do not exceed four or five *fen* above or below. Although oscillating, do not lose the indicated pitch. It should be uniform and accurate and cannot vibrate lightly or aimlessly. One must use relaxed movements; it is best to attain the essence of flexibility. [VG 41, LTY 44]

35. *jou* 犭〈猱〉
After getting the tone, bend the pitch downward slightly and slowly vibrate once or twice, like the mournful sobbing of a yellow-haired monkey. A little broader and slower than *yin* [34]. [VG 42, LTY 61]

36. *yu-yin* 辶〈猶 吟〉
If quick, this is called a double *chuang* [*shuang*-

chuang, 44]; if slow, it is called *yu-yin*. [VG 41, LTY 51]

37. *fei-yin* 飞〈飛 吟〉
First do an upward *hsü* [58], quickly slide back two pitches to the original position, all the while making the [vibrato] sound like the rustle of feathers. [LTY 60]

38. *lo-chih-yin* 夂〈落 指 吟〉
Begin the *yin* [34] vibrato as soon as the tone is obtained. [LTY 59; Lui's reading, "lu," is probably a typographical error.]

39. *ch'ang-yin* 镸〈長 吟〉
Longer than *yin* [34]. [VG 41, LTY 45]

40. *hsi-yin* 罗〈細 吟〉, alternatively abbreviated, 纟
In the tablature also written [as the alternate, above]. Do not, due to excessive delicateness, take insufficient tone. [VG 41, LTY 56. Lui's reading, "lio-yin," is based on a different basic character with a similar meaning and identical abbreviation.]

41. *tang-jou* 荡〈蕩 猱〉
The meaning is "wandering." This technique is like two small *t'ui-fu* ["down and back," 54]: first a small one, then a slightly bigger one. The small one barely leaves the original position; the bigger one does not reach the lower semitone. [LTY 64, defined differently.]

42. *hsiao-jou* 小〈小 猱〉
"Small *jou*" [35].

43. *chuang* 立〈撞〉
After getting the tone, slide up a little bit then quickly return to the original position. [Make it] continuous, fast like electricity, so that only one note is formed—otherwise there will be two notes. [That is, the gesture must not be interpreted as adding an upper neighbor but rather as a fast, integral ornament.] [VG 43, LTY 73]

44. *shuang-chuang* 登〈双 撞〉
Two connected *chuang* [43]. [LTY 76]

45. *tou* 豆〈逗〉
Though the same as *chuang* [43], *chuang* comes after plucking. *Tou* from the notated position and get the sound at the same time as the right hand plucks. [LTY 80]

46. *tz'u* 欠〈次〉
The second sound of two plucks.

47. *t'ao-ch'i* 皂〈搯 起〉
The left thumb stops a plucked note, then [be-

fore the thumb releases the string] the ring finger or middle finger presses at the next lower position; the thumb, at the upper *lü*, plucks while releasing the string to get the sound. [VG 49, LTY 81]

48. *chua-ch'i* 色〈抓 起〉
After the thumb stops a plucked note, it plucks while releasing the string to get an open sound. [LTY 82, Lui gives an alternative, less-common pronunciation, "chao-ch'i."]

49. *tai-ch'i* 芑〈帶 起〉
The ring finger stops a string, then plucks while releasing the string to get an open sound. Using the middle finger amounts to the same thing. [LTY 83]

50. *t'ui-ch'u* 扌山〈推 出〉
The middle finger stops string 1, then pushes outward [until the string is released] and gets an open sound. Used only on the first string. [VG 54, LTY 97]

51. *huan* 爰〈緩〉
"Slowly." [VG 33]

52. *chi* 刍〈急〉; also written ク
"Quickly." The shorter form is written in the tablature, the longer one in illustrations. [VG 34, LTY 38]

53. *chin-fu* 隹 复〈進 復〉
Go forward and return. [That is, add a sliding upper neighbor tone.] [VG 44, LTY 77]

54. *t'ui-fu* 艮 复〈退 復〉
Go backward and return. [That is, add a sliding lower neighbor tone.] [LTY 84]

55. *lien* 車〈連〉
"Connected." [Legato.] [VG 30, LTY 36]

56. *yen* 罒〈罨〉
After the ring or middle finger has stopped a string, use the thumb at a higher *lü* and tap down to get the sound. Neither *yen* nor *t'ao-ch'i* [47] should be too heavy; light and flexible is best. [VG 47, LTY 86]

57. *hsü* 虍〈虛〉
After having plucked a different string, to slide up once again is called an upward *hsü*. Using a finger to tap down on a silent open string [that is, without right-hand plucking] is written as *hsü-an* [57a] in the tablature.

57a. *hsü-an* 虍安〈虛 按〉
[Defined in 57.] [LTY 104]

58. *hu* 乎〈忽〉
If starting from *hui* 9, after getting a sound, slide straight up to *hui* 7 skipping over one intervening tone; do not stop, but take it straight and quick. [VG 50, LTY 98]

59. *ying* 更〈硬〉
Skipping over one intervening tone, slide straight down to the *hui* below. This is the reverse of an upward *hu* [58] but is otherwise the same. [LTY 99, defined differently.]

60. *kuei* 足〈跪〉
"Kneeling." The ring finger curves under and stops a string. If two strings are to be stopped [at the same time], one [is stopped with] the fingernail, one with the flesh. Used mostly in the vicinity of *hui* 5. [That is, instead of using the fleshy tip or pad of the finger to press the string, the finger is curled under so that its pad faces and nearly touches the palm, and the string is stopped with the first knuckle joint; a second string would be stopped with the back of the fingernail.] [VG 51, LTY 85. Lui's reading "k'uei," seems to be an error.]

61. *hsü* 玄〈畜〉
Move the finger backwards a little; functions as a relaxation. [LTY 102 is the same symbol but seems to abbreviate a different character with a different meaning.]

62. *fen-k'ai* 爻〈分 開〉
Between two attacks first get the sound and slide up one step; at the second attack follow the tone and slide back down to the original position. [VG 46, LTY 88]

63. *ta-fen-k'ai* 奔〈大 分 開〉
After the first attack, get the sound and then slide continuously up two steps. At the second attack slide back down to the original position.

64. *yin-fen-k'ai* 夆〈吟 分 開〉
This *yin* [34] is applied after the first slide up. [That is, a vibrato added to a *fen-k'ai* (62).]

65. *fang-ho* 拾〈放 合〉
"Release and unite." Coordinating with the note to follow, push your finger out, releasing the former string and getting an open sound. At the same time, after stopping the next string, the right hand plucks immediately so that the two sounds correspond to each other, making them

like one sound. Those attacks that use *fang* are like *t'ai-ch'i* [49]. [VG 53, LTY 89]

65a. *fang* 方 [Sometimes appears by itself.]

66. *t'ang* 〈淌〉
Slide downward slowly, like dripping water. [LTY 46 shows an abbreviated form.]

67. *fan-ch'i* 仓〈泛起〉
"Harmonics begin." When playing use the finger to press floatingly; touch at a *hui* point, then release. This is known as "dragonfly skimming water." When above a single character in the tablature it is written as [67a] or [67b]. Touching after plucking an open string is called "fan-yen." In the tablature it is written as [67c]. [VG 52, LTY 94]

67a. *fan* 丿
[Same as 67.]

67b. *fan* 人
[Same as 67.]

67c. *fan-yen* 勾〈泛 罨〉
[Defined in 67. Used only once, in "Sao shou wen t'ien," section 6, but there written 勾.]

68. *fan-chih* 仜〈泛 止〉
Stop playing harmonics; henceforth play stopped tones. [VG 52, LTY 95]

69. *chiu* 尤〈就〉
"At once." [LTY 101]

70. *pu-tung* 朷〈不 動〉
"Don't move."

71. *ch'ü-chung* 衷〈曲 終〉
"End of the composition."

Examples of
Right-Hand Techniques on Different Strings

1. *kou i* 勾〈勾 一〉
Kou [5] on string 1. String 1 is the one nearest to the *hui.*

2. *t'o ch'i* 乇〈托 七〉
T'o [2] on string 7. String 7 is the one nearest to the player, the thinnest string.

3. *li wu ssu* 厉〈歷 五 四〉
Li [10] on strings 4 and 5. First *t'iao* [4] string 5, then *t'iao* string 4.

4. *ts'o liu san* 最〈撮 六 三〉
Ts'o [13] on strings 6 and 3.

Examples of
Left-hand Hui-Position Stopping Techniques

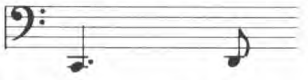
1. *san* 艹 〈散〉
   The left hand does not press; pluck the open string. [VG 1, LTY 25]
2. *chung wai* 忡 〈中 外〉
   The middle finger stops a string outside [that is, to the left of] *hui* 13. [LTY 107]
3. *Ming shih chiu* 殈 〈名 十 九〉
   The ring finger stops a string at *hui* 10, *fen* 9 [that is, 9/10 of the distance between *hui* 10 and *hui* 11].
4. *ta pa pan* 犿 〈大 八 半〉
   The thumb stops a string at *hui* 8, *fen* 5 [that is, halfway between *hui* 8 and *hui* 9].
5. *shih ch'i* 化 〈食 七〉
   "The index finger at *hui* 7." The index finger never plays stopped tones, always plays harmonics.

EXPLANATION OF THE RHYTHMIC NOTATION

In the tablature every dot stands for one beat. When you play, tap your feet, but do it silently.

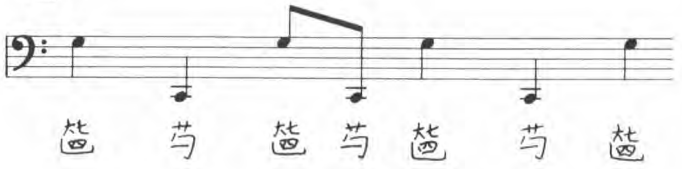
1. 勻· 勻 彐· The upper two characters together take one beat, so each gets half a beat. The third character gets one beat.

2. 勻· 彐· When the dot is placed to the upper right of a character, the first half of the beat belongs to the previous character. In other words, the first character gets one-and-a-half beats, the second character gets half a beat.

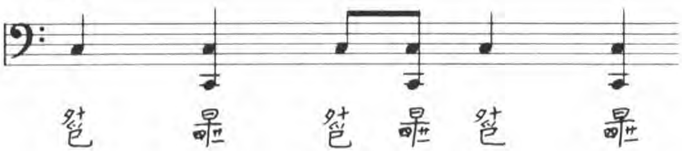


3. 茴· 廈· The dot for the second beat, next to the 5, indicates that the 6 still belongs to the previous beat.

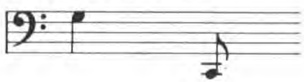
4. 齒· 勻· 回⋮ 齒· Six beats altogether, as follows:



5.  Five beats altogether, as follows:



6.  The triangle indicates half a beat. [Used only in "Sao-shou wen-t'ien."]



COMMENTARY. In his essay "The Style of the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u,*" Hsü Li-sun comments on the rhythmic notation and discusses specific points about Mei-an finger technique and its special qualities.

The ch'in-p'u has indications for rhythm; one can state that this originated with Mr. Wang Yen-ch'ing. Formerly ch'in players did not much emphasize the meter. They thought one should just suit oneself in playing the ch'in; precise rhythm need not be maintained, but rather [the ch'in was to be] performed freely, *ad lib.* Mr. Wang, however, strongly insisted that there must be a certain definite rhythm in order to delineate clearly the solid contents of each ch'in composition. Most important is that the instructions follow precise rules, then uniformity will be insured. In those days, therefore, only in Mr. Wang's school was it possible for several ch'in to play together.

. . . In dealing with finger techniques, one should primarily obey the content of the ch'in composition. Therefore identical finger techniques used in different compositions are not completely alike. First one must understand the contents of the ch'in compositions; then through lively performance one can achieve the proper technique. Following are some examples:

1. The technique of left-hand *yin* is to make up-and-down vibrations a short distance above and below a given *hui* position. Use force from the wrist, lively and controlled. The frequency of vibration is in accordance with the tempo, and the width of vibration depends on the context of the ch'in composition.
2. The technique of *jou* is to make a larger vibration, mostly below a given *hui* position. The extent of

vibration should not exceed the *hui* position in order to maintain precise pitch. The frequency of vibration depends upon the meter; at the most two or three vibrations, at the least just one—like *t'ui-fu* [54], but the quality of expression is *jou*, not *t'ui-fu*.

3. Left-hand ascending and descending slides continue the tone not exceeding three times at most, because after more than three slides the string vibration will be very slight, in fact actually lost. So it only increases unnecessary friction sounds and weakens the ch'in expression. This point alone is a revolutionary idea in ch'in playing, because in those days most ch'in players emphasized sounds "off the string," claiming thereby to be plain and natural. But this sort of thing confuses the listener: this is another main reason why the ch'in cannot become popular. Mr. Wang Yen-ch'ing, however, emphasized beginning with reality. One can listen a long time, therefore, to Mr. Wang's ch'in playing, and not tire.

In stopping the strings, the left hand frequently uses flesh sounds; the thumb in particular uses mostly flesh sounds and seldom uses fingernail sounds. Fingernail sounds are only used in those positions above the fifth *hui*. Therefore, one aims at wide and full tones. Above the fifth *hui*, because the pitches are higher, the sound will be better if clear and brittle; therefore, fingernail sounds must be used. Also, because the pitches are higher, the sounds of fingernail friction will vanish automatically. [See figure 26 for illustrations of the Mei-an thumb position versus the ordinary thumb position.]

Right-hand finger techniques should be hard and strong. The wrist should be level, the fingers vertical. *T'iao* and *t'i* strokes, in and out, use the strength of the entire arm, assisting the force of the finger. The principal plucking position is the midpoint between *hui* 1 and the bridge: then the tones will be very clear, and both stopped and open sounds will be appropriate.

As to *fu* [20], the technique of damping by slapping down [with the whole hand], there is no regular, prescribed way to do it. Because the intent is to divide the rhythm clearly, the right-hand ring, middle, and index fingers need not slap down simultaneously on the strings. Both right and left hands may be used freely. It is especially important to use the hands unselfconsciously, while feeling the rhythm very clearly,

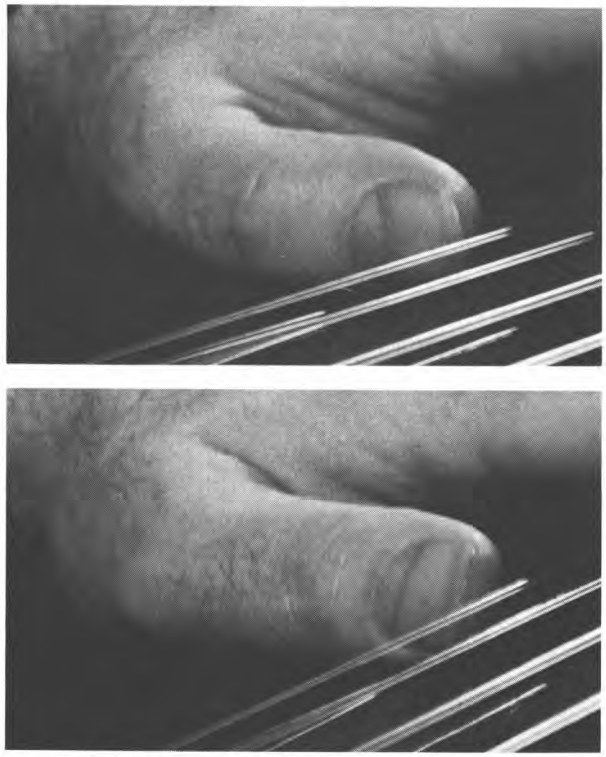


Fig. 26. Left thumb stopping the strings: *top,* ordinary style; *bottom,* Mei-an style

so that the *fu* does not call attention to itself. This one point is a special achievement of Mr. Wang.

SYMBOLS USED BUT NOT EXPLAINED

In addition to the notational symbols explained by Hsü Li-sun in the chapters translated above, several other symbols appear in the actual tablatures.

Some of the notational symbols appearing in the tablatures without explanations can easily be understood by analogy with known ones, others require explanation and were probably omitted from the *chih-fa* by mistake. Here is a supplementary list. The explanations are my own, derived either by analogy or by comparison with other *ch'in-p'u,* unless other credits are given.

Right Hand

S1. *shuang-t'an p'o-tz'u* 雙〈雙 彈 = 双 彈 潑 剌〉
A combination of techniques *shuang-t'an* (25) and *p'o-tz'u* (18), performed without a break; appears in "P'ing sha lo yen" and is defined there in a footnote.

Left Hand

S2. *t'ung-sheng* 同〈同 聲〉
". . . the left thumb lifts the string to make an open sound and a finger of the right hand plucks

on another open string. *The sounds should be an octave apart*" (Lui 1968:199, No. 92). Used only in "Sao shou wen t'ien," section 4.

S3. *shuang-ch'o* <双 綽>
Indicates *ch'o* (32) for both attacks of a *kou-t'i* group (9). Appears in "Ch'iu chiang yeh po," section 2.

S4. *shuang-yin* <双 吟>
Indicates *yin* (34) for both attacks of a *mo-t'iao* (3, 4) group, in "Yü lou ch'un hsiao," section 3. [LTY 58]

S5. *ta-yin* <大 吟>
Large *yin* (34). Appears in "Ch'iu yeh ch'ang," section 1, and elsewhere.

S6. *hsiao-yin* <小 吟>
Small *yin* (34). Appears in "Ch'iu yeh ch'ang," section 1.

S7. *lo-chih ch'ang-yin* <落 指 長 吟>
A long *yin* (39) that begins as soon as the string is plucked (compare *lo-chih-yin,* 38). This symbol appears only once, in "Sao shou wen t'ien," section 3.

S8. *chi-yin* <急 吟>
Quick *yin* (34). [LTY 53]

S9. *huan-yin* <緩 吟>
Slow *yin* (34). [LTY 54]

S10. *chi-jou* <急 猱>
Quick *jou* (35). [LTY 68]

S11. *hsi-jou* <細 猱>
By analogy with *hsi-yin* (40), this is a delicate *jou* (35). Used in "Sao shou wen t'ien," section 5. [LTY 65]

S12. *lo-chih-jou* <落 指 猱>
A *jou* (35) that begins as soon as the string is plucked. Compare *lo-chih-yin* (38). [LTY 66]

S13. *hsü-yen* <虍 罨>
By analogy with *hsü-an* (57a), this is an attack in which the left thumb taps down on an open, silent string; the right hand does not pluck. [LTY 87]

S14. *hsiao-chuang* <小 撞>
A small *chuang* (43), moving less than a full step above the basic pitch. [LTY 74]

S15. *ta-chuang* <大 撞>
A large *chuang* (43), moving more than one full step (usually two steps) above the basic pitch.

S16. *shang* <上>
"Above." Slide up to the indicated *hui,* usually one step. Though the sounds are legato, the portamento should not be overly prominent.

S17. *hsia* <下>
"Below." Slide down to the indicated *hui*, usually

one step. As with *shang,* the portamento should not be exaggerated.

General Terms

S18. *hsien* 〈先〉
"First." Usually refers to the first in a series of sounds.

S19. *sheng* 尸 〈聲〉
"Sound."

S20. *ju-man* 彙 〈入 慢〉
"Ritard." [VG 28, LTY 100]

S21. *k'uai-t'an* 〈快 彈〉
"Play quickly." Appears with the headings of sections 7, 8, and 9 of "Sao shou wen t'ien"; also with the heading of section 7 of "P'ing sha lo yen."

S22. *shou chü* 〈 首 句〉
"First phrase." Appears only in "P'ing sha lo yen" together with *k'uai-t'an* at the heading of section 7, meaning "play the first phrase quickly."

S23. double bracket 𠃌
Used for nested repeats in "Shih t'an chang."

S24. small circle o
Used to demarcate phrases, this symbol is placed at the lower right corner of the final pitch in a phrase. It is independent of the black dots used to mark the beats. This is important to note, because in some other kinds of Chinese notation the dark and light circles alternate to mark light and heavy beats. (See Rulan Pian's discussion of small circles, 1967:91-92.) In compositions with accompanying texts small circles mark both the musical phrases and the poetic lines (which normally correspond precisely).

SYMBOLS EXPLAINED BUT NOT USED

Several of the notational symbols explained by Hsü Li-sun in the *chih-fa* chapter are employed rarely in the tablature, and others do not appear at all. The explanations offered, therefore, would be required only to refer to tablatures in other books or manuscripts. Those supernumerary explanations would not be *sufficient* for such a purpose, however, since other books may use a considerably larger vocabulary of symbols. Exactly why the extra explanations were included is difficult to understand; perhaps Hsü was just following convention. The following symbols do not appear in the Mei-an tablatures.

8. *ta* 丁
22a. *hsiao-so* 小
22b. *tuan-so* 短
22c. *ch'ang-so* 長

22d. *ta-so* 夲

37. *fei-yin* 飛

64. *yin-fen-k'ai* 齊

While adding slightly to its value as a general reference, the end effect of these additions, nevertheless, is to increase the complexity of the *chih-fa* chapter, rendering it thereby slightly less economical as a pedagogical tool.

CHAPTER FIVE

變徵

Texted Compositions

Leaning alone in the close bamboos,
I am playing my lute and humming a song
Too softly for anyone to hear—
Except my comrade, the bright moon.
—Wang Wei (699-759), tr. Witter Bynner

Players of the Chinese long zither ch'in today do not sing while they play. Nevertheless, even in contemporary ch'in handbooks, some of the shorter compositions are printed with accompanying texts. At one time, singing to the ch'in may have been a common practice—in certain schools it was even cultivated as a specialty (Liang 1969:113-18.). According to Cha Fu-hsi: "The Chekiang school of lute-players in the Southern Sung dynasty and the Yushan school towards the end of the Ming dynasty both opposed using the *chin* as an accompaniment to singing, insisting that it was independent instrumental music. During the last three centuries the *chin* has been less and less used for an accompaniment to singing or for duets with the *hsiao*" (1960:132).

Laurence Picken disagrees with Cha: "The smaller tunes . . . are essentially *cheu* melodies; the words usually survive and are commonly sung by the performer as the tune is played" (1957:119). Picken himself has reconstructed the vocal version of a Sung dynasty ch'in composition ("Ku yüan"; Picken 1971). Nevertheless, no ch'in players have made commercial recordings of singing to the ch'in (with the unique exception of an old Japanese 78-rpm disk called to my attention by Robert Garfias), and most ch'in players today agree that the text is provided with the score mainly for the player to recite silently to himself as he plays the composition.

In this chapter I shall examine the three compositions with accompanying texts found in the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u,* with attention to their cultural background,

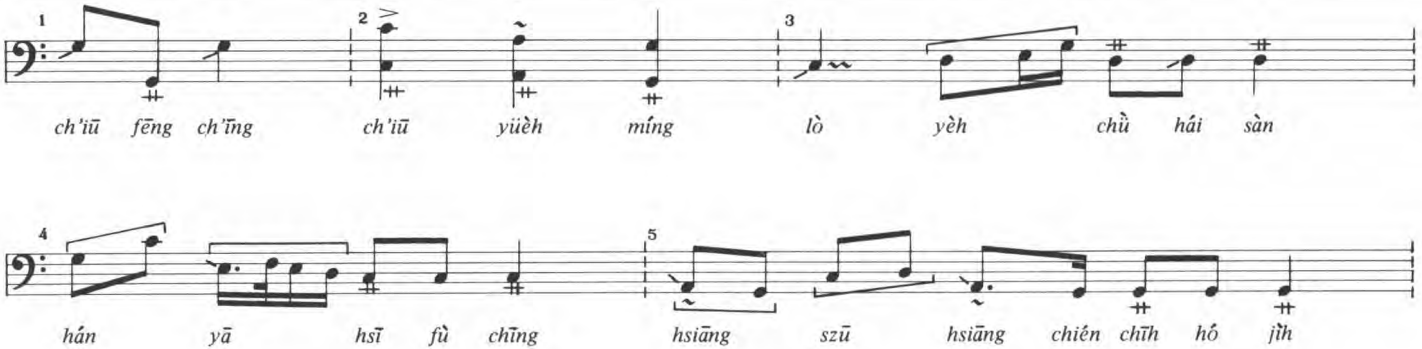
musical and poetic structure, and the relationships between text and melody. These three compositions are printed in score with texts paralleling the music, and all follow immediately after the traditional beginning composition, "Kuan shan yüeh."[1] They are: "Ch'iu feng tz'u," "Chi lo yin," and "Feng ch'iu huang." All are brief (a minute or less each) and easy—though not simple—to play.

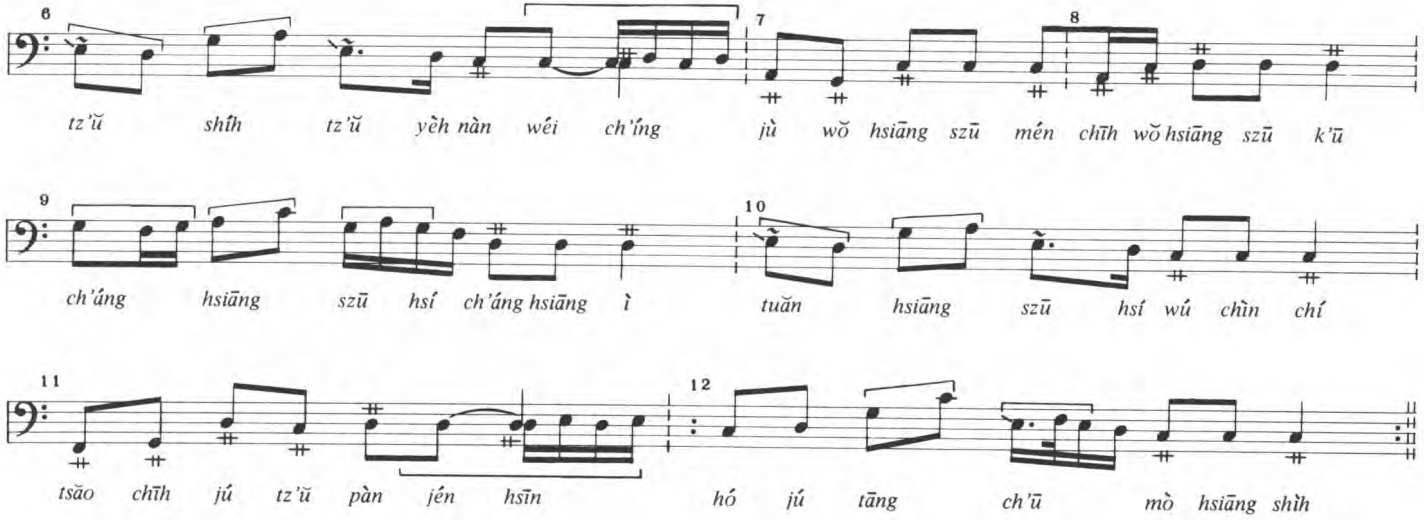
"CH'IU FENG TZ'U" [AUTUMN WIND SONG]

The tuning for "Ch'iu feng tz'u" is *lin-chung-tiao* (1 2 3 5 6 $\dot{1}$ $\dot{2}$); the more common traditional name for this tuning is *man-chiao-tiao.* The mode indicated for this composition is *kung-yin,* which means that important phrases and the final phrase will end on pitch 1 (C).

In the comment appended to this composition, Hsü Li-sun says: "Many opportunities for matching open and stopped strings, a technique easy for the novice to understand." Hsü hastens to add, however, that it is a composition that one will not neglect on account of its brevity: ". . . on a night of bright moon and fresh breeze, one can derive endless interest from playing this composition again and again."

The *Mei-an ch'in-p'u*'s attribution of "Ch'iu feng tz'u" to the great T'ang dynasty poet, Li Po (A.D. 699-762), is only partly defensible. Li Po certainly





Example 1. Transcription of "Ch'iu feng tz'u"

wrote the first six lines of text; they are in fact one of his better-known short poems entitled "San-wu-chi yen" [Three, five, seven words]. The second six lines, however, comprise a different poem, in a different style, by a lesser poet than Li Po. Li Po's poem is a haunting evocation of autumnal yearnings and is technically elegant:

Fresh autumn breeze
bright autumn moon
falling leaves collect and scatter
winter ravens roost then flutter
when, my love will we meet again?
now, tonight I feel only sorrow.

The poem is organized in three paired lines of

three, five, and seven characters. Lines 1, 2, 4, and 6 rhyme in "-ing." Each pair of lines is parallel in structure and balanced in content. The lines are composed in the metrical scheme appropriate to traditional poetry in the *shih* genre: 3 = 2+1, 5 = 2+3, 7 = 4+3, with a caesura marking the line-divisions. The close juxtaposition of three lines of different length, however, is consciously—even studiously—original, which perhaps explains the unusually formal choice of title.

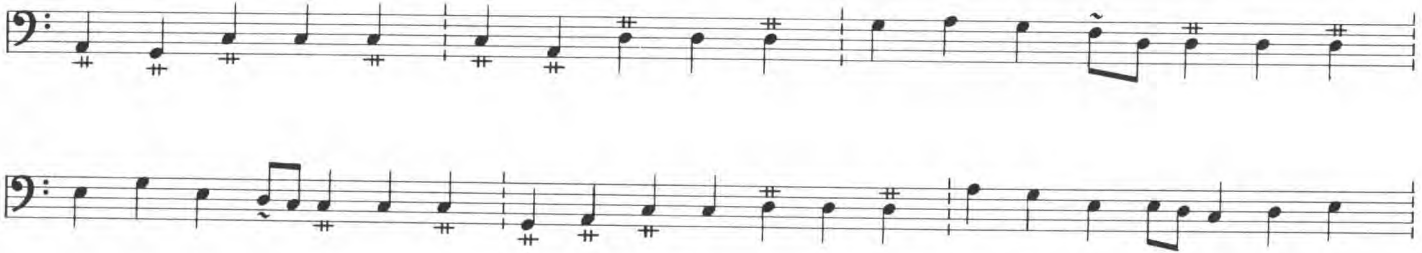
The first two lines set the autumn night scene. The second pair, while continuing to describe the autumnal surrounding, uses images from nature that can doubly serve as metaphors for meeting and parting in the world of human relationships. In the third pair of lines the poet expresses his sorrow and frustration. The three characters ending the poem are potentially ambiguous and could mean "sorrow is my feeling" or "difficult to express feelings."

Here is a translation of the second part of the text of "Chiu feng tz'u":

Just enter my love's gate
you'll know my lovesickness
long loves are long in memory
but brief loves go on forever
had I known hearts thus are fettered
perhaps we never would have met

This poem invites the reader to share the lovesick poet's lot, though perhaps with a bit more irony than tragedy. Again there are six lines, three parallel pairs of five (2+3), seven (4+3), and seven (4+3) characters each. The parallelism is more repetitive here than in Li Po's poem; lines 3, 4, and 6 rhyme according to the classic rhyme-paradigm based on T'ang pronunciation, though they do not rhyme in modern Mandarin.

This poem is a quotation from the text of a ch'in composition, "Hsiang chiang yüan" [Hsiang River lament], not found in the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u.* On checking the musical phrases in "Hsiang chiang yüan" corresponding to the text lines quoted in "Ch'iu feng tz'u," one sees that the music has also been quoted (I have transcribed the relevant phrases from "Hsiang chiang yüan," Example 2). All phrases except the last are closely parallel; modification of the final phrase was required since it functions in "Hsiang chiang yüan" as an internal cadence followed by four phrases of harmonics, while in "Ch'iu feng tz'u" it is the final cadence and hence requires stronger modal and thematic closure.



Example 2: Excerpt from "Hsiang chiang yüan" (Hsieh Lin 1511)

Whether Wang Yen-ch'ing himself composed "Ch'iu feng tz'u" or passed it on as received from his teachers cannot be definitely known, though since it does not seem to appear in any earlier ch'in handbooks, it likely is Wang's work.

Whether the composer used Hsieh Lin's score or some later version of "Hsiang chiang yüan" as a source for the second half of the composition is immaterial; the fact remains that "Ch'iu feng tz'u" is an example of the creation of a new composition from part of an earlier one.

Comparison of text and melody in "Ch'iu feng tz'u" reveals correspondences at some structural levels, divergences at others. The overall form of the music is more tightly unified than that of the text. Nothing in the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u* indicates that the text is compounded from two different poems. The poems are linked only by the theme of yearning and lovesickness; they otherwise lack unity of style, meter, and form. The two parts of the music, however, are much more tightly related in all of these elements.

Each musical phrase sets one line of text, and in this respect the setting is a model of clarity. Further, the couplet structure of the text is maintained in the melody. Phrase pairs display metric and motivic parallelism that counterpoints the longer-range thematic relationships. Except for phrases 7 and 8, pairs of musical phrases cadence with a stronger closure at

the end of the second phrase than at the end of the first, creating a question-answer or thesis-antithesis syntax that aids in establishing a musical analogue to the effect of the text's verbal parallelism.

The text-setting of individual words is mainly syllabic, with brief melismas of 2, 3, and 4 pitches. In nearly every case of melismatic setting the additional pitches are obtained through slides so that there is only one attack for each syllable.

Though the words are delineated so systematically, both individually and in phrase context, the tonal inflections of the words seem not to have been a significant factor in shaping the musical line and are reflected there, if at all, only randomly. This is surprising, considering both the importance of speech tone in Chinese poetry and the relative flexibility of the unfretted ch'in to mimic speech tone-movements through slides and graces.

"CHI LO YIN" [SONG OF UNLIMITED JOY]

The proper tuning for playing "Chi lo yin" is *chung-lü-tiao,* more traditionally called *jui-pin-tiao,* the open-string pattern 2 3 5 6 $\dot{1}$ $\dot{2}$ $\dot{3}$. The mode is *yü-yin,* implying that the final pitch of the last phrase, and of stressed mediate phrases, is pitch 6 (G).

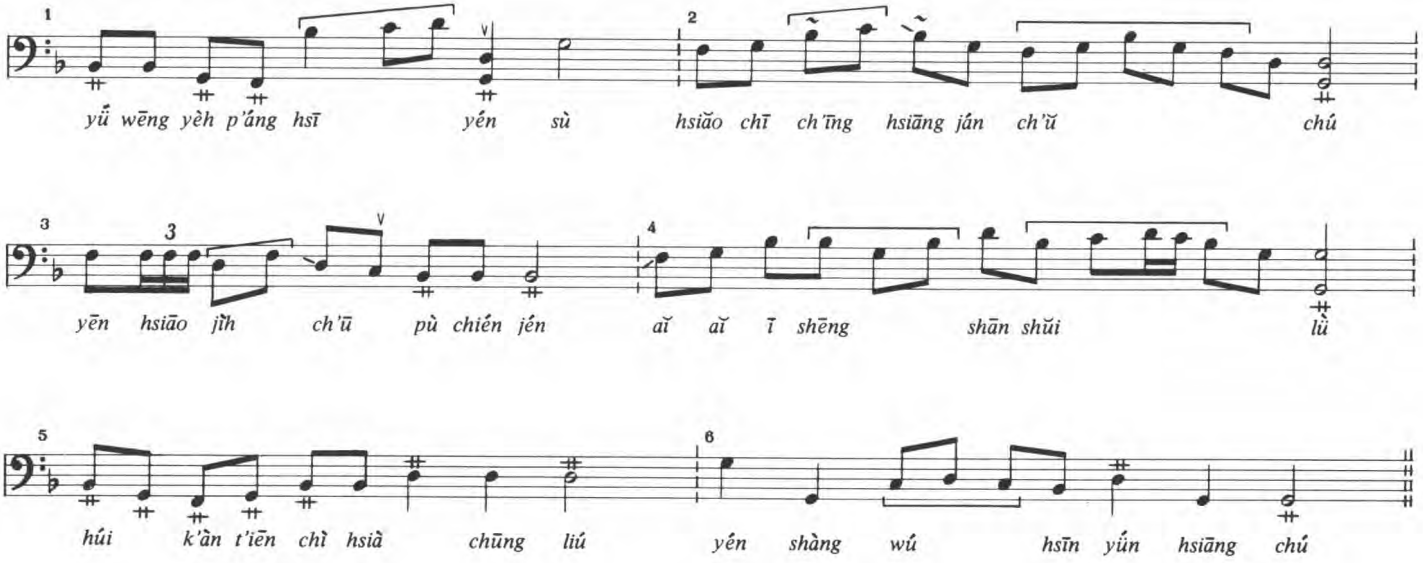
The text of "Chi lo yin" is a well-known poem, "Yü weng" [Old Fisherman], written about A.D. 809 by the T'ang dynasty poet, scholar, and official, Liu Tsung-yüan (773-819):

Old fisherman night: camped beside West Cliff
dawn: drew clear Hsiang water lit bamboo fire

sunup: mist dispersing no one there
just one sound: oars creaking green mountains, streams

turn and look: from heaven's edge a waterfall
above cliff carefree clouds chase each other

The poem has six lines of seven characters (syllables) each, and the lines are associated in parallel pairs. Lines 1 and 2 tell about the old fisherman's bivouac by the river Hsiang. One uncertain image in that couplet is "lit bamboo fire," since bamboo does not really burn usefully but only smoulders; perhaps the reference is to burning scented bamboo as incense. The second pair of lines describes the scene when an observer arrives, while the fisherman disappears, blending back into the landscape like a nature-spirit or the Cheshire cat. In the final lines the wanderer turns his attention from the fisherman's echo to the magnificent morning scenery. And I think one may



Example 3. Transcription of "Chi lo yin"

infer that the observer's vision has been refreshed and renewed by the encounter.

The motif of the old fisherman is frequently found in Chinese art, literature, and music. Linking the Old Fisherman with his sylvan counterpart, Fuel Gatherer, van Gulik explains that "they are the approved symbols of the simple life in complete harmony with *tao*, as opposed to the cares and sorrows of the world" (1969:91). The major ch'in composition on this theme is "Yü ko" [Fisherman's song], and it, too, is attributed to Liu Tsung-yüan.

It is, of course, impossible to confirm the attri-

bution of "Chi lo yin" to Liu Tsung-yüan. Hsü Li-sun seems to agree that the attribution refers to the poem rather than to the music when he comments that the music has a refined style like Liu Tsung-yüan's poetry: "This tune contains only a few phrases, but its tone and rhythm are vigorous and hardy. The style is refined and very elegant, just like the spirit of the writing of Tzu-hou [i.e., Liu Tsung-yüan]; it is definitely out of the ordinary. One can perceive this tune like a mountain path turning and opening onto a new world." Early versions of this composition appear in ch'in handbooks from the late sixteenth century.

"FENG CH'IU HUANG" [PHŌENIX SEEKS PHǪENIX]

The attribution of "Feng ch'iu huang" to Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju (B.C. 179-117) has considerable and interesting tradition behind it, though direct evidence is lacking. Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju, a poet and scholar, was appointed palace attendant at the court of Emperor Wu of the Han dynasty. He is best known today in scholarly circles as the leading figure in the development of the ornate, euphuistic, poetic genre called *fu* (further, see Watson 1961:II, 297-341, and Hervouet 1964). In popular legends, however, he is delineated as a romantic hero. I have chosen to investigate the background of this legend, and of the ch'in composition "Feng ch'iu huang," in greater detail than other works in the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u* because the availability of materials and the brevity of the composition make it convenient for comparative examination.

The Story and the Poem

In his commentary on "Feng ch'iu huang" in the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u* Hsü Li-sun says: "This song is rich in the emotion of true love, not at all like everyday popular love songs. It is exactly like the mutual bond of love between Hsiang-ju and Wen-chün, which broke the fetters of feudal tradition, as recounted in many beautiful old tales. . . ." The reference is to one of traditional China's favorite romantic scandals. The earliest source for the story is the biography of Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju in the *Shih chi* [Historical records] by the great Han historian Ssu-ma Ch'ien (B.C. ?145-?90). Here is the relevant passage in the translation of Burton Watson (1961:II, 298-99):

> There were a number of wealthy men living in Lin-ch'iung, among them was Cho Wang-sun, whose household included eight hundred servants and slaves, and Ch'eng Cheng, who also had several hundred servants. These two rich men confer-

red together and decided, "Since the magistrate seems to have a highly honored guest visiting him, it would be well if we were to give a party for him and invite the magistrate to come along." When the magistrate arrived at the Cho residence on the day of the party, he found it filled with hundreds of guests. As noon approached the host dispatched a messenger inviting Hsiang-ju to join the party, but he sent back word that he was ill and could not come. At this news the magistrate declined to join the feast, but instead went in person to fetch Hsiang-ju. Hsiang-ju, unable to find any further excuse, was forced to appear at the party, and soon all eyes were fixed on him.

When the drinking was at its height the magistrate came forward with a lute [ch'in] and, presenting it to Hsiang-ju, said, "I have heard that you are fond of this instrument. I wonder if you could be persuaded to amuse yourself with a selection?"

Hsiang-ju politely declined, but finally consented to strum a few selections for the company. It happened that Cho Wang-sun had a daughter named Wen-chün who was very fond of music and had only recently been widowed, and although Hsiang-ju pretended to be playing only out of deference to the magistrate, in reality he used the lute to pour out his heart in an effort to win the young girl's attentions. When Hsiang-ju arrived in Lin-ch'iung with his carriage riders, Wen-chün had heard, he had displayed a figure of most elegant poise and refinement, and now that he was in her own home drinking and playing the lute, the young girl secretly peered in through the door at him and her heart was filled with delight; she felt an instant love for him, and her only fear was that she could not have him for her husband.

After the party was over Hsiang-ju sent someone with lavish presents to Wen-chün's ladies in waiting and requested them to inform their mistress of his deep respect. That night Wen-chün ran away from home and joined Hsiang-ju, and the two of them took up residence in Hsiang-ju's house, four bare walls with nothing inside.

Thus the music of the ch'in is employed to seduce a young lady, and it literally carries her away. Cho Wen-chün's open break with social traditions, though in this case ending with eventual reconciliation with her family after some hardship, caught the imagination of Chinese writers, and the affair of Hsiang-ju and Wen-chün became an archetype of true love.

As the tradition surrounding Hsiang-ju developed, details from the sources were elaborated, new stories attached themselves to the biographical framework like barnacles on a ship's hull, and further literary works were attributed to Hsiang-ju himself. One repository of such anecdotal material is the collection *Hsi-ching tsa-chi* [Miscellaneous records from the western capital], about A.D. 300. In order to appreciate the context and references of the texts that I shall introduce next, the biography must be carried a bit further.

After living some time in poverty the lovers went

back to Lin-ch'iung, set up a wineshop, and served customers themselves. Cho Wang-sun, shamed by this display, gave them a lot of money. They returned to Ch'eng-tu and, until Hsiang-ju was summoned to court, lived several years at leisure.

Traditions about this period in Hsiang-ju's life aver that, despite diabetes, he lived profligately, indulging freely in wine and women and supplying a good deal of his own song through ch'in playing and composing poetry. "Mei jen fu" [*Fu* on a beautiful woman] is a rhyme-prose ascribed to this period though it first appears only in sources of the early T'ang dynasty;[2] its erotic context added fuel to the fire of Hsiang-ju's reputation as a Don Juan and set moralistic Confucian tongues wagging. In his extensive monograph on Chinese sexual life, van Gulik, accepting the "Mei jen fu" as authentic, discusses its significance as a sexual document and gives the following translation of a key passage (1961:68-69):

> A lovely girl alone in her room reclining on a couch, a strange flower of unsurpassed elegance, a gentle nature but of luscious appearance. When she saw me hesitating she said with a soft smile: "Of what country is the honourable guest, I suppose he comes from afar?" She prepared excellent wine and took out a lute. I struck the strings and played the tunes "Dark Orchid" (Yu-lan) and "White Snow" (Po-hsuëh). The girl then sang the song:
>
> All alone in the bedroom, it seems unbearably lonely,
> Thinking of a handsome man, my emotions hurt me.
> Why did this charming person tarry in coming?
> Time runs out fast, the flower will wither—
> I entrust my body to you, for eternal love.

This passage adds no new theme, but rather amplifies and reinforces the association of ch'in playing and lovemaking, an association most untypical in the later ch'in tradition.

Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju is said to have built at Ch'eng-tu a special terrace for playing the ch'in, called the *ch'in-t'ai.* Underneath the terrace more than twenty large jars were buried to resonate the sounds (van Gulik 1969:68), a technique that reminds one of its use in Japan over a thousand years later in the construction of the Noh drama stage. Though William Hung suggests that the *ch'in-t'ai* was "doubtless a local monument erected by later busybodies to interest sightseers" (1952:166), evidence as early as the third century A.D. attests to the presence of the resonating jars (Hervouet 1964:48n). Whatever the historicity of the site, the great T'ang dynasty poet Tu Fu (712-770) visited the *ch'in-t'ai* in 760 while

he was living in Ch'eng-tu. The following poem entitled "Ch'in Terrace" resulted from that visit. The Chinese text has eight lines of five syllables each with end-rhymes in lines 2, 4, 6, and 8; it is an example of *lü-shih* ("regulated verse"), a form which Tu Fu brought to a peak by combining formal virtuosity with effortless expressiveness.[3]

> After suffering through much illness,
> he still loved Cho Wen-chün.
>
> In the wine-shop: the world of men,
> over the Ch'in Terrace: the clouds of evening.
>
> These wild flowers echo her lovely cheeks,
> These spreading weeds mimic her silken skirt.
>
> I recall the spirit of "Feng Ch'iu Huang"
> but it is silent, and will be heard no more.

This is an elegant and moving poem of the *huai-ku-shih* type ("meditation on antiquity"), and obviously depends for its effect on the reader's familiarity with the persons, places, and events referred to; given such familiarity, the poem is neither difficult nor obscure. This poem is the earliest text I have found referring to the song entitled "Feng ch'iu huang."

A striking *chüeh-chu* ("short-stop, quatrain") by Yüan Hao-wen (1190-1257) abbreviates the title to "Ch'iu huang," but the context makes the reference perfectly clear.[4] (*Chüeh-chu* is a quatrain of five-syllable or seven-syllable lines following the metrics of *lü-shih,* regulated verse.)

> In the sky, autumn wind frost under the moon
> that "Ch'iu Hüang" song . . . long silken hair on his brow . . .
> Hsiang-ju's four walls are completely bare
> so you must, Wen-chün, pawn the feathered cape

When the drama developed in significance as a literary genre in the Yüan dynasty, it was perhaps inevitable that scholars would adapt the already highly theatrical legends and historical traditions of Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju for the stage. Many such plays were in fact written; some are known by Kuan Han-ching and others on different themes from Hsiang-ju's life (*tsa-chü* was the prominent Northern operatic genre under the Yüan and early Ming; further, see Crump 1958).

The earliest extant ch'in composition bearing the title "Feng ch'iu huang" appears in the *Hsi-lu-t'ang ch'in-t'ung* by Wang Chih, dated 1549 (Cha 1956:II, 49; III, 71). A brief note at the end of that composition makes the connection to Hsiang-ju and Wen-chün

(Wang 1549:ch. 24, pp. 7R-10V; 1963:1216-18). Both music and text are completely different in all later compositions called "Feng ch'iu huang," so that the connection is one of theme only.

Another Story, Another Poem

Perhaps the most famous fictional love story in Chinese literature is that of the *Hsi-hsiang chi* [Romance of the west chamber]. The original tale is a possibly autobiographical T'ang short story by the famous poet Yüan Chen (A.D. 799-831) called *Ying-ying chuan* [The story of Ying-ying]. It is a brief, effective story, at once romantic and cynical, of seduction and abandonment.

Chang Chün-jui, a young scholar, falls in love with Tsui Ying-ying and seduces her through an exchange of love poems. They carry on a secret affair until he breaks it off by going to the capital to sit for the civil examinations. The ch'in appears only when Tsui Ying-ying plays to express her anguish at parting. Toward the end of the story Ying-ying sends a letter to Chün-jui, vowing eternal devotion and recapitulating the events of their relationship. She describes the exchange of love poems metaphorically, obliquely referring to Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju: "You captivated me as the musician in the story captivated the maid with his songs, and I had not the strength of mind to resist you" (Edwards 1938:199). This passing allusion becomes an integral part of the story in the later treatments to which I now shall turn. ("The Story of Ying-ying" has often been translated; some of the best translations are Edwards 1938:190-201; Waley 1967; Hsiung 1968:271-81; and Hightower 1973: 93-103.)

In the late twelfth century a greatly expanded version of the *Ying-ying chuan* was written by Tung Chieh-yüan (Master Tung). His work is called *Hsi-hsiang-chi chu-kung-tiao* [*Chu-kung-tiao* on the romance of the west chamber], sometimes abbreviated *Tung hsi-hsiang* [Tung's "west chamber"]. *Chu-kung-tiao* was a genre of chantefable in which a single narrator-singer alternated spoken dialogue with suites of songs in various modes (further information on this genre and on the *Tung hsi-hsiang* can be found in Ch'en 1970, 1972, and 1973).

Based on Tung Chieh-yüan's *Hsi-hsiang-chi,* the late Yüan dynasty dramatist Wang Shih-fu created his enduring masterpiece, a cycle of five *tsa-chü* collectively known also as *Hsi-hsiang-chi.* In both the *tsa-chü* and the *chu-kung-tiao* retellings, the episode of the seduc-

Fig. 27. Chün-jui plays the ch'in while Ying-ying and Hung Niang listen (From a Ming dynasty edition of the *Hsi hsiang chi*)

tion of Ying-ying is considerably more protracted and theatrical than in the original short story. Ying-ying's metaphorical allusion to Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju is taken literally, and ch'in playing joins the composition of love poems in the wooing process.

Chang Chün-jui is seated in a garden at night. Ying-ying has been brought out purposely by her maid Hung Niang, who is acting as a matchmaker, and overhears Chün-jui playing the ch'in. Chün-jui has been playing elegant classical compositions but changes to a love song when the women draw near. Here is the entire passage in the translation of Hsiung Shih-i (1968:103-4):

Mr. Chang sighs and says:

Oh, my Lute! Formerly Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju, in wooing Cho Wen-chün, played a tune which was called the "Phoenix Seeking His Mate" [Feng ch'iu huang]. How could I presume to call myself a second Hsiang-ju? But you, my Young Lady, how could Wen-chün compare in any way with you? I will now play this tune, following the original score. The tune says:

"There once was a fair lady, whom to see was never to forget.
Not to see her for a single day was to drive one to distraction.
The phoenix flies up and down, seeking everywhere his mate.
Alas! the fair lady is not by the eastern wall!
I play my lute to express my love;
When will you consent to my suit and relieve me from my anxiety?
My wish is to be united to one so perfect and, joined hand in hand, be together forever.
If I cannot fly with you as my companion, may I perish!"

Ying-ying says:

How beautifully he plays! The song is so sad and the tune so sorrowful that my eyes are filled with tears without knowing it!

In this passage, then, the two love stories are directly intertwined through Chang Chün-jui's alleged borrowing of Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju's song, "Feng ch'iu huang." The poem Chün-jui sings is, with a few small differences, the same as that in the *chu-kung-tiao* and in the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u.*

Wang Shih-fu's *Hsi-hsiang-chi* caught public attention and became vastly popular, all but eclipsing Tung's chantefable. It was probably better known throughout the Ming and Ch'ing dynasties than any of the plays about Hsiang-ju and Wen-chün. Wang's play was, therefore, the most likely proximate source for those ch'in handbooks that include "Feng ch'iu huang" with this poem as text.

I have treated this background at some length, not in order to date or confirm the ascription, since the best the evidence can show is that Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju was credited with a poem, "Feng ch'iu huang," in the early T'ang dynasty and that a ch'in composition setting that text appears in a 1549 ch'in handbook; such attributions fit well with what history tells us about Hsiang-ju's romantic career.

The attribution to Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju in the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u* and elsewhere is neither arbitrary nor naive but makes good cultural sense, calling into play, as it does, a wealth of allusion that can only enliven the music in the perception of the educated Chinese, for whom all of these references are familiar through poetry, prose, and drama. The appropriate mood is thus conjured up, the proper spirits invoked, poetically and economically, and the modern scholar playing "Feng ch'iu huang" can merge his own emotions with those of Chang Chün-jui and Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju; the music then resonates not only in his heart but also across the ages. A similar argument can be made for other ascriptions in the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u* and for the practice in general.

The Phoenix Searches for Its Mate

So lovely she is
once seen not forgotten

one day without her
my mind goes wild

the phoenix, wheeling, soaring in flight
searches the wide world for its mate

only that beautiful girl
is not at the east wall

instead of talking, I take the ch'in
to unburden my soul

let us be united
walk together hand in hand

let us one day be betrothed
console my doubts

not being able to fly with you
will cause my ruin

The Music

The version of "Feng ch'iu huang" included in the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u,* first appears in 1609 in the handbook *T'ai-ku i-yin* by Yang Lun (ch. 2, pp. 97R-98R). The version printed in the *Tzu-yüan-t'ang ch'in-p'u*

(1802) by Wu Hung adheres closely to Yang Lun's earlier text in all respects (Wu 1802, ch. 12, p. 12R-V; 1971:553A-B). The *Mei-an ch'in-p'u* version differs in only one major respect from its predecessors: a three-phrase coda and the extra text that goes with it are omitted; other differences are insignificant pitch substitutions or variant ornamentations.

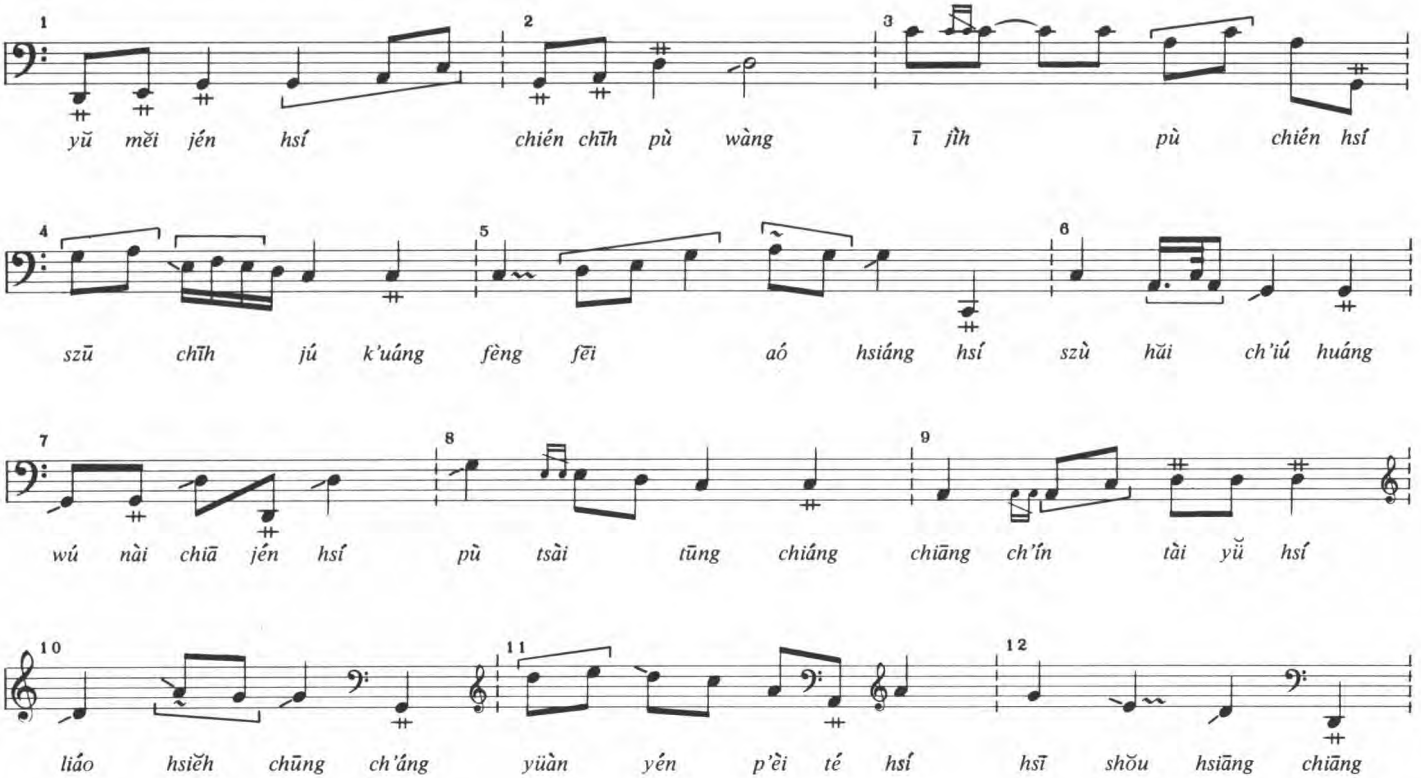
The tuning pattern for "Feng ch'iu huang" is *lin-chung-tiao* (1 2 3 5 6 $\dot{1}$ $\dot{2}$). This is the only composition in the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u* for which no mode *(yin)* is indicated; the reason for this anomaly is revealed by an examination of the musical form.

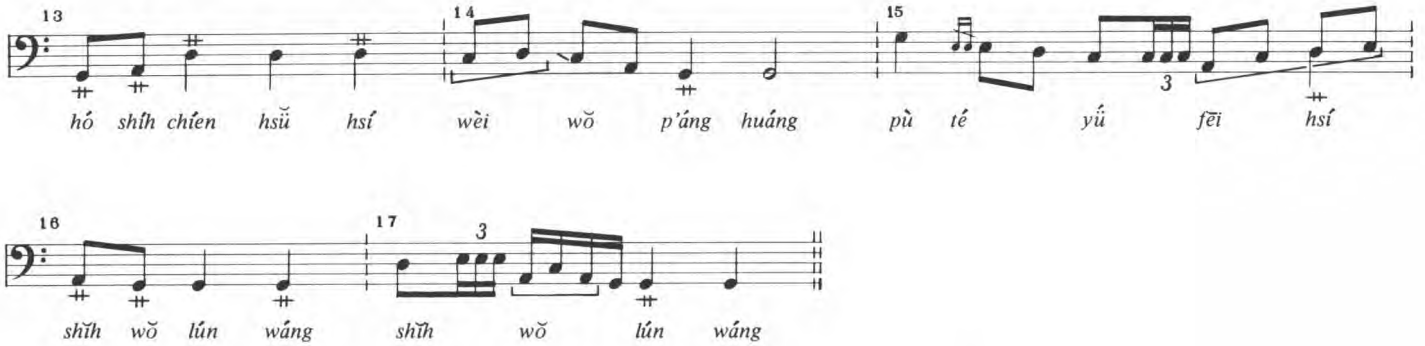
The first four phrases demonstrate the strong tendency to treat the couplets as single long lines. Phrases 1 and 2 form a unified rising gesture (2-$\dot{2}$) without a pause, the two subsections articulated by the melismatic slide on *hsi* and the transposed repetition of the rising motive ♫♩ 𝅗𝅥, the whole cadencing with a repeated pitch and a pause. Phrases 3 and 4 form an answering falling gesture ($\dot{1}$-1), broken by the wide skips to and from *hsi* and closing with a strong 5-1 figure. Variants of this cadence figure are used for some internal cadences and to close every four-phrase group (phrase 8:5-1; phrase 12:5-2; phrase 17:2-5).

Reasoning from this pattern of main cadences, then, the first half of the composition is definitely in *kung-yin,* with regular, strong cadences to pitch 1. The second half begins a bit ambiguously but by phrase 14 settles into *chih-yin,* stressing pitch 5. This shift of mode no doubt accounts for the missing indication of mode in the score.

SOME CONCLUSIONS ABOUT TEXTED MELODIES

The relationship between melody and text in these three compositions follows several rules. In all cases the musical phrases accord precisely with the poetic lines, which thus take on the character of fundamental structural units. There is also a clear tendency for the music to enunciate individual words in a fairly declamatory fashion. Certain rules in this regard are strict: a new word never begins during a slide, always with an articulation either by right-hand pluck or left-hand release. Other rules are more flexible: most of the time a syllable has only one attack, with occasional use of an additional left-hand release and rare occurrence of two right-hand plucks. Except for the quick three-finger roll, more than two independent articulations never occur on one syllable. Words are


1 2 3
yŭ měi jén hsí chién chīh pù wàng ī jìh pù chién hsí
4 5 6
szū chīh jú k'uáng fèng fēi aó hsiáng hsí szù hăi ch'iú huáng
7 8 9
wú nài chiā jén hsí pù tsài tūng chiáng chiāng ch'ín tài yŭ hsí
10 11 12
liáo hsiĕh chūng ch'áng yüàn yén p'èi té hsí hsī shŏu hsiāng chiāng



Example 4: Transcription of "Feng ch'iu huang"

rarely prolonged by holds or melismas more than two beats, and syllabic text setting is the general rule.

Relatively little use is made of vibrato and ornament, and double-stops or other complex finger techniques are rare. No instance of harmonics *(fan-yin)* is found in the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u* versions of the texted compositions. This relative simplicity of texture cannot entirely be ascribed to the propaedeutic nature of these compositions, because in themselves they are not considered elementary, and also because more complexity is found in the preceding composition "Kuan shan yüeh." The reason must also lie partly in the function of these compositions as accompaniments to sung or imagined poetry. The texture and techniques are restrained so as not to cover up or distort the text.

CHAPTER SIX

羽

Compositions without Texts

With nothing can one approach a work of art so little as with critical words: they always come down to more or less happy misunderstandings. Things are not all so comprehensible and expressible as one would mostly have us believe; most events are inexpressible, taking place in a realm which no word has ever entered, and more inexpressible than all else are works of art, mysterious existences, the life of which, while ours passes away, endures.

—Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet*

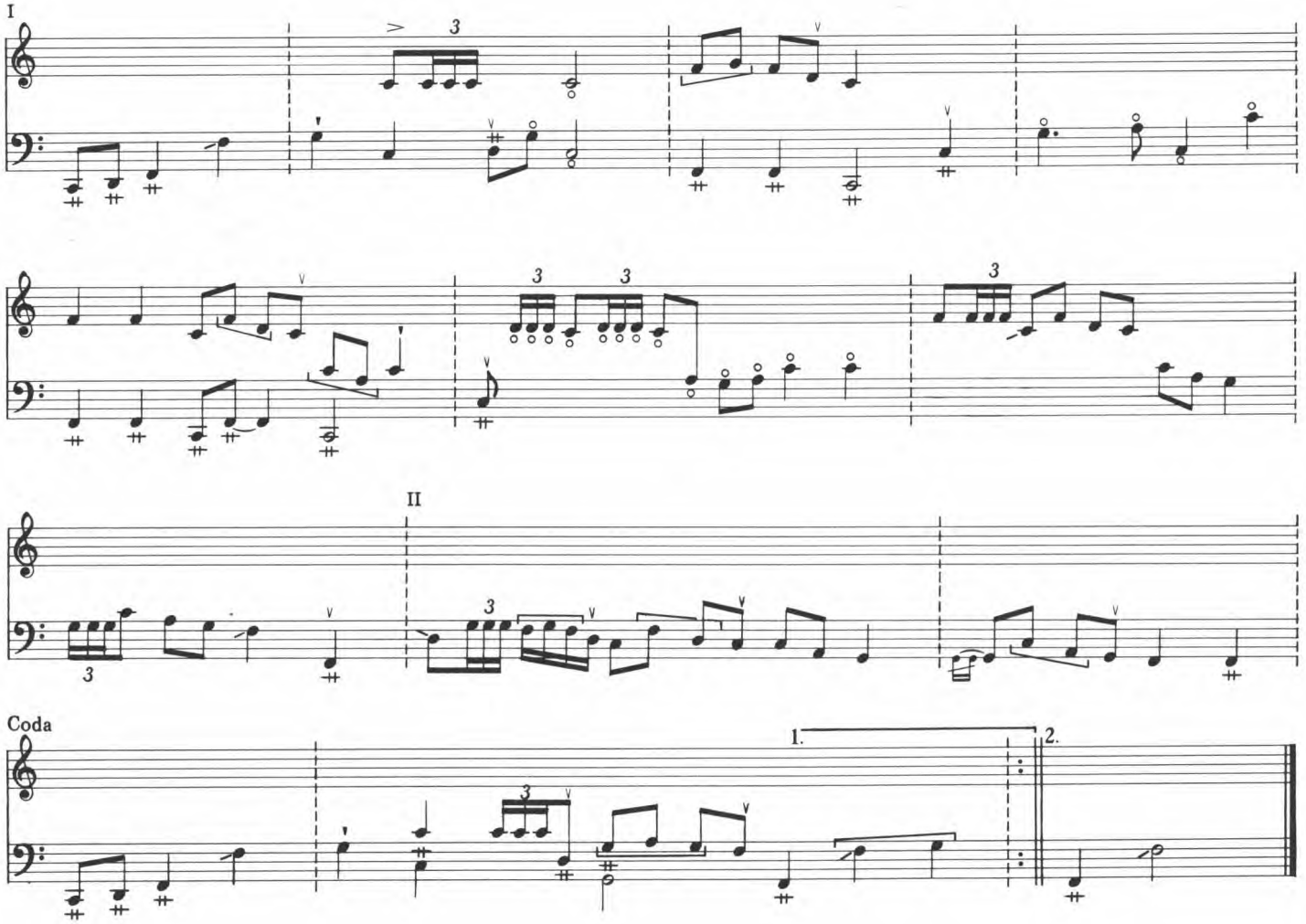
Each composition in this chapter is presented in the following sequence: (1) translation of the Chinese text annotation from the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u,* (2) my commentary, and (3) the transcription of the Chinese musical notation.

"KUAN SHAN YÜEH" [MOUNTAIN PASS MOON]

Huang-chung tuning, *kung* mode, two sections

This composition belongs solely to the Chu-ch'eng ch'in school. It describes scenery and atmosphere of northern China. It has a robust tone. Though short, it requires exact finger technique. It is the right way for the beginner to start, easy for the novice to play well. It can be played in the fashion called "Jade Bracelet" where the beginning [of the composition] follows the end immediately, like an endless ring. One can play [this composition] for a long time without tiring of it. It is well suited for beginners.

COMMENTARY. This composition is not known to have been included in any other ch'in handbooks prior to the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u,* and in the Mei-an score it carries no attribution. Most scholars assume, however, that Wang Yen-ch'ing either composed it or arranged it for ch'in from a northern folk melody. Nevertheless, the title is not new and conjures up a host of classical allusions. "Kuan shan yüeh" is the name of a song from the Han dynasty and was used


I
II
Coda
1.
2.

for several songs and poem-songs of the *yüeh-fu* genre by many later poets. The most famous poem bearing this name was written by Li Po.[1]

Mountain Pass Moon

bright moon over T'ien-Shan
vast expanse ocean of clouds

great wind from faroff lands
blows through Yü-men Pass

Han march down Pai-teng
Hu reconnoitre Ch'ing-hai bay

returning from places of battle
no-one yet has been seen

frontier guardians watch borders sadly
homeward thoughts many bitter faces

in boudoirs on this night
only sighing and no rest

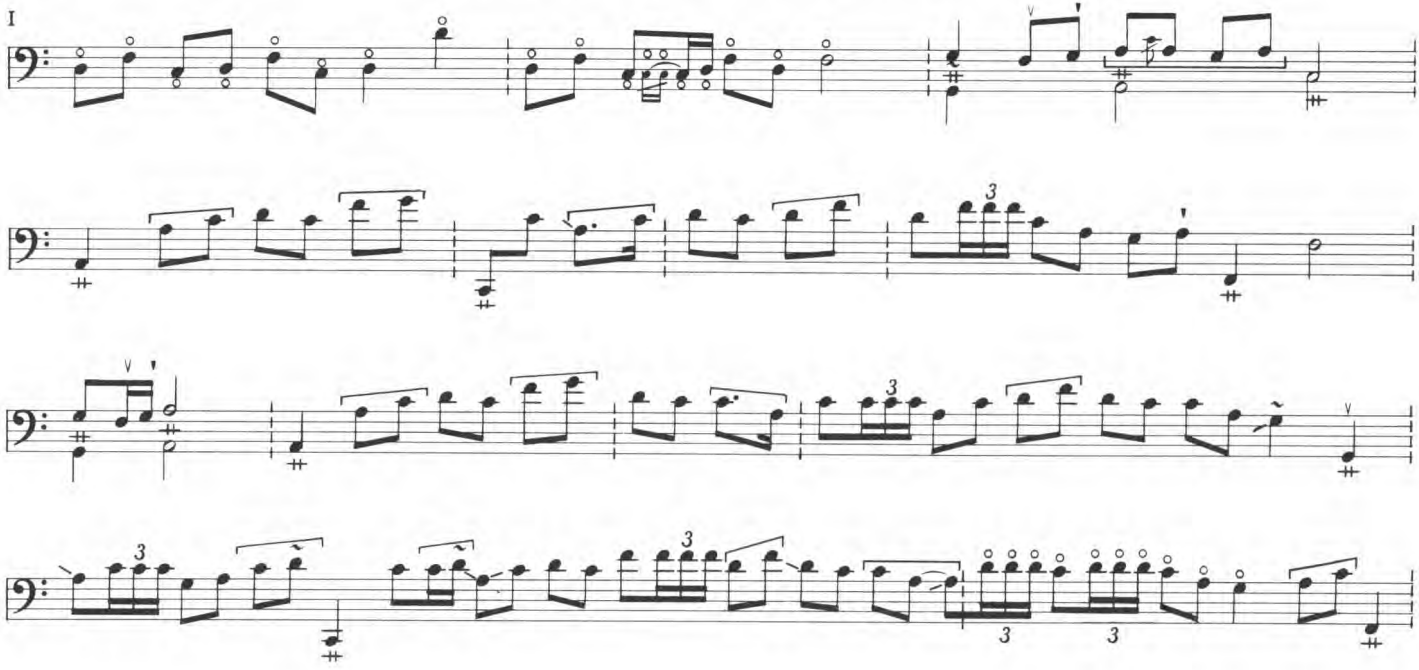
"CH'IU YEH CH'ANG" [LONG AUTUMN NIGHT]

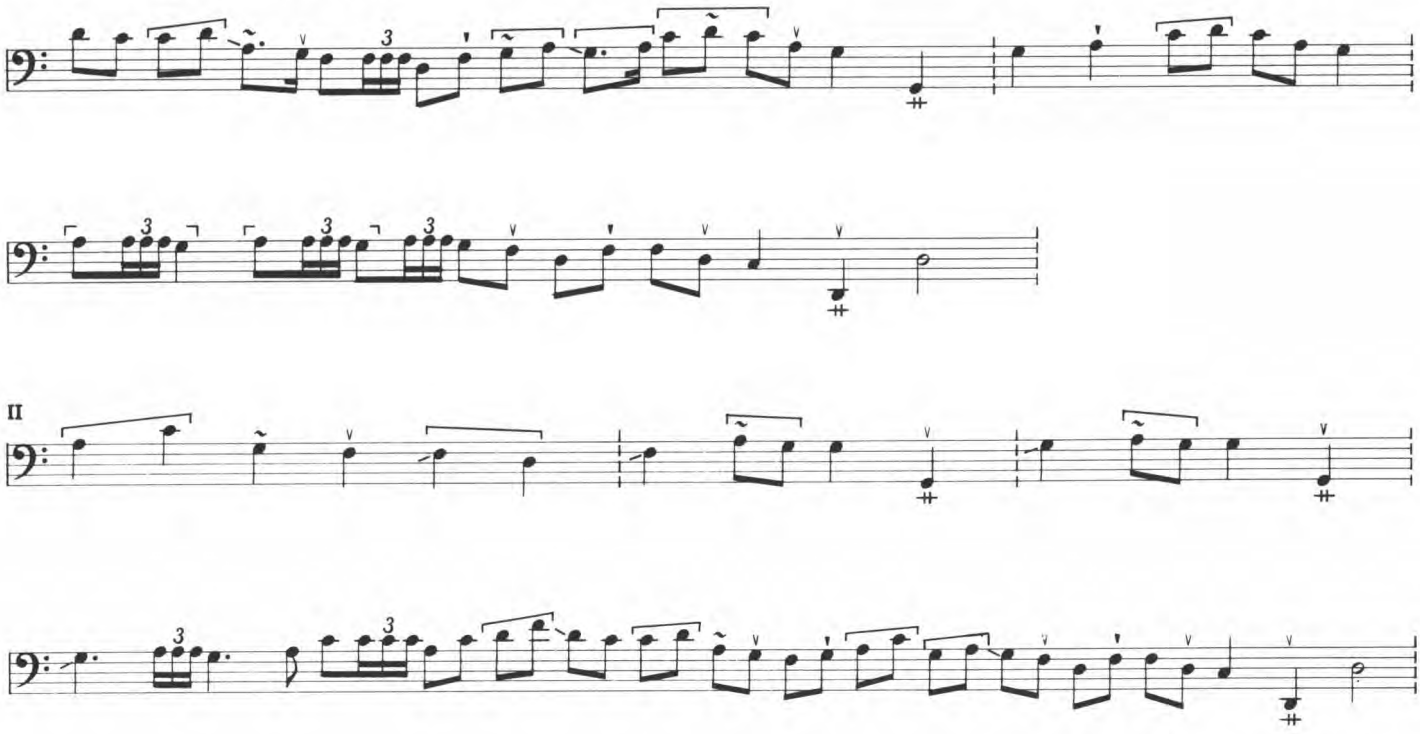
Huang-chung tuning, *yü* mode

This composition is also known as "Lament of the Autumn Chamber." According to Mr. Wang Yen-ch'ing, it was a composition arranged from the *p'i-p'a* repertory; some say it was transcribed by Mr. Wang himself. The melody is pretty, but intricate. There are comparatively many finger rolls. It is extremely attractive to hear. Mr. Wang used to advise that one must be skillful to learn it. If not learned skillfully, one may easily lose control; this is not the fault of the composition but of the student. Some say that with many finger rolls the tune sounds like the *p'i-p'a*. This idea is not necessarily true. Furthermore, in the T'ang dynasty it was perfectly legitimate to intermingle the melodies and rhythms of ch'in and *p'i-p'a*. This is not necessarily a defect, if handled properly.

COMMENTARY. According to the catalogue of extant ch'in handbooks compiled by Cha Fu-hsi (1956), "Ch'iu yeh ch'ang" appears for the first time in the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u*. This tends to support Hsü Li-sun's supposition that Wang personally transcribed the composition from the *p'i-p'a* repertory.

Hsü's defense of the perceptible influence of *p'i-p'a* technique should be understood to apply to the Mei-an style generally, not just to this particular composition, because precisely this criticism is frequently voiced by other ch'in players. One hears that the Mei-an style is too lightweight, too showy, too quick in tempi, and so on. Rather than objecting to such characterizations, Hsü counters with the proposition that the *p'i-p'a* style is no vice, but a virtue approved by scholars of the great T'ang dynasty. This is a natural line of reasoning for Hsü, since he was also a performer and devotee of the *p'i-p'a* and compiled a companion volume to the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u,* appropriately entitled the *Mei-an p'i-p'a-p'u* (1936).

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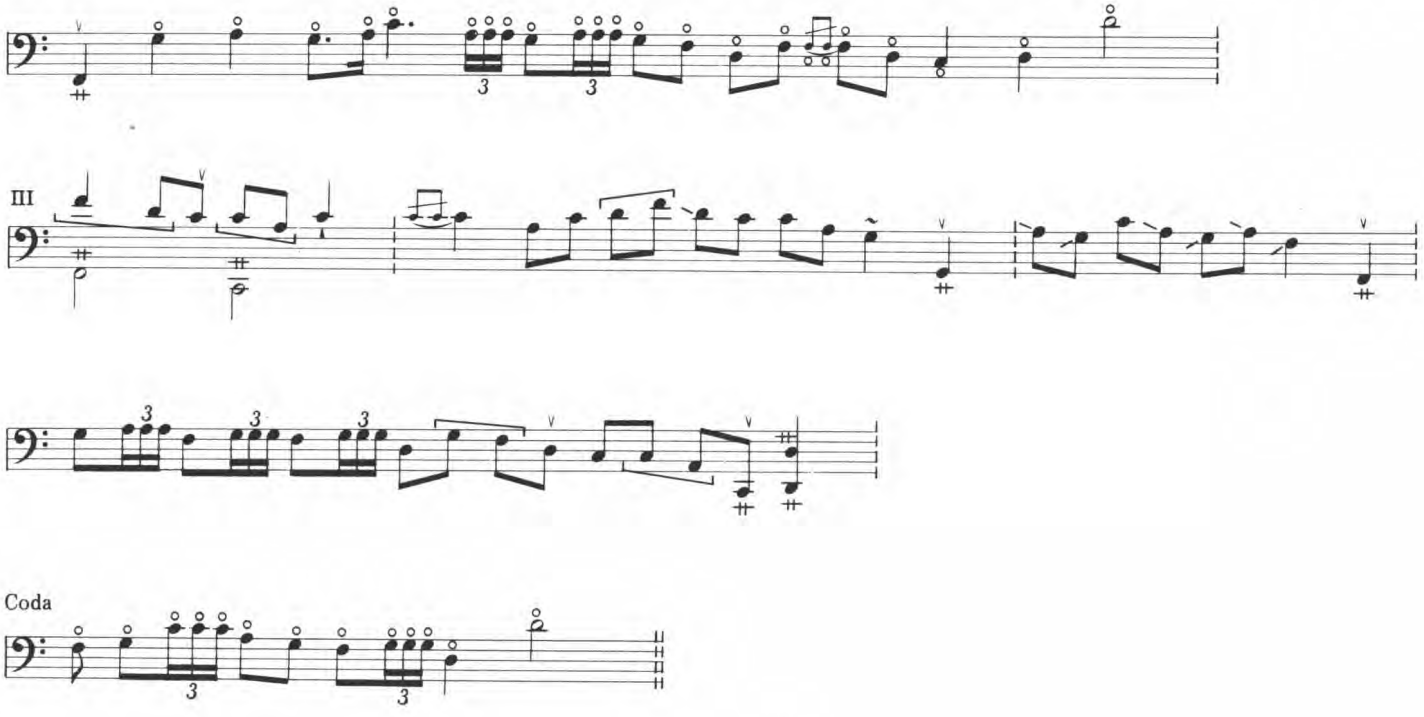
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Coda

"YÜ-LOU CH'UN-HSIAO"
[SPRING DAWN AT JADE TOWER]

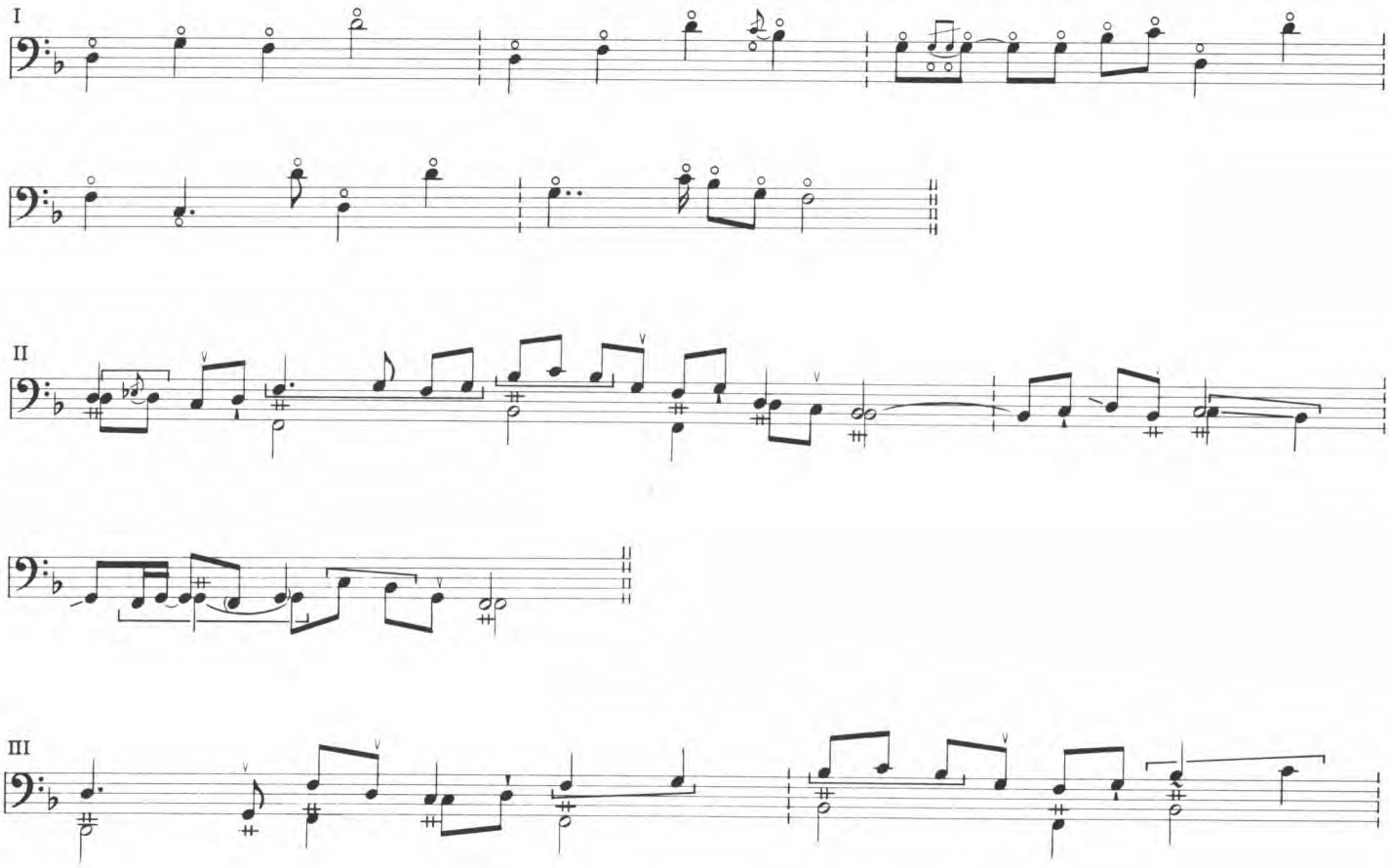
Chung-lü tuning, *chih* mode

This composition is also known as "Lament of the Spring Chamber." The melodic quality is light and flowing, really quite out of the ordinary. Its significance is the dream-like, intoxicated state of first awakening from spring sleep. The third phrase of the third section, after the *shuang-yin* (double-vibrato) technique, is just like stretching after awakening—a lifelike, masterful portrayal. The extraordinarily clear harmonics in the coda are most amazing.

COMMENTARY. "Yü-lou ch'un-hsiao" seems to be a recently composed work and does not appear in ch'in handbooks earlier than the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u.* Quite different in mood and style from the preceding composition, it bears little or no signs of influence from the *p'i-p'a* repertory as one might otherwise be tempted to infer from the parallelism of the alternate titles of the two compositions.

Hsü Li-sun's comments are notable in that they point specifically to two important compositional ideas rather than, as in most of the typical commentaries, dealing only with background and mood. First, he highlights the melodic climax of the work at phrase 11 and identifies the image intended by the tone-painting. Second, he singles out the final harmonic coda for special mention.

Though small in scale, "Yü-lou ch'un-hsiao" contains most of the elements found in a typical larger ch'in composition. Section I (phrases 1 through 5) is introductory, and entirely in harmonics. The bold rising motive of phrase 1 establishes the composition's identity immediately. Listeners can usually recognize a ch'in composition from its opening phrase. I have observed that opening phrases seem frequently to be more individualized or differentiated than other parts of the compositions, which may draw on stereotyped melodic motives, or proceed in similar directions when "filling in" intervals between main pitches of the melody.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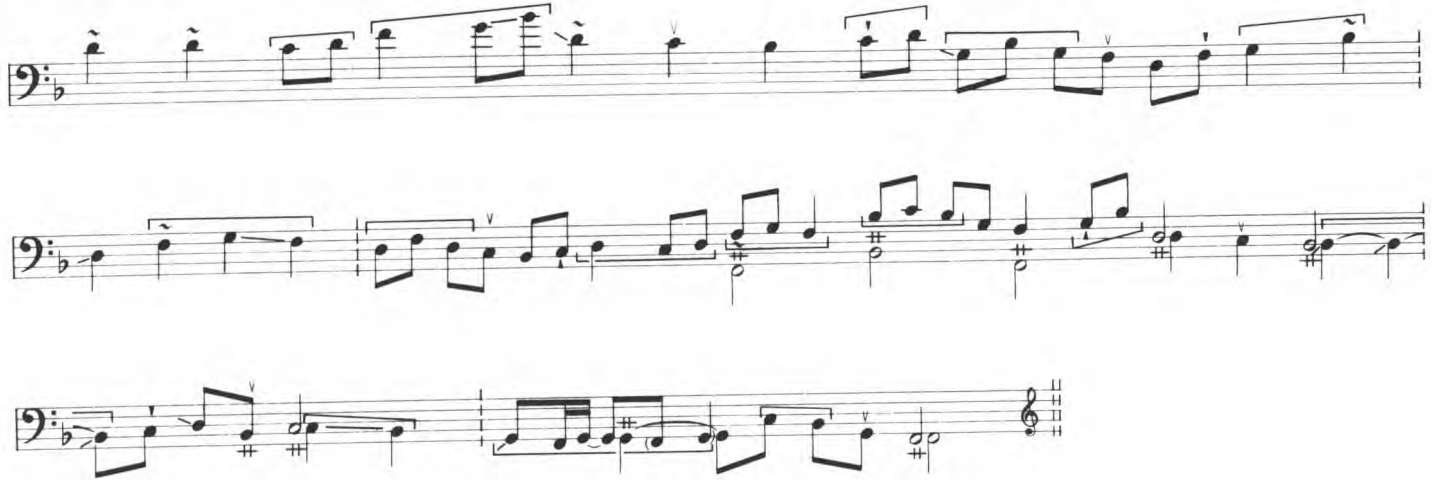


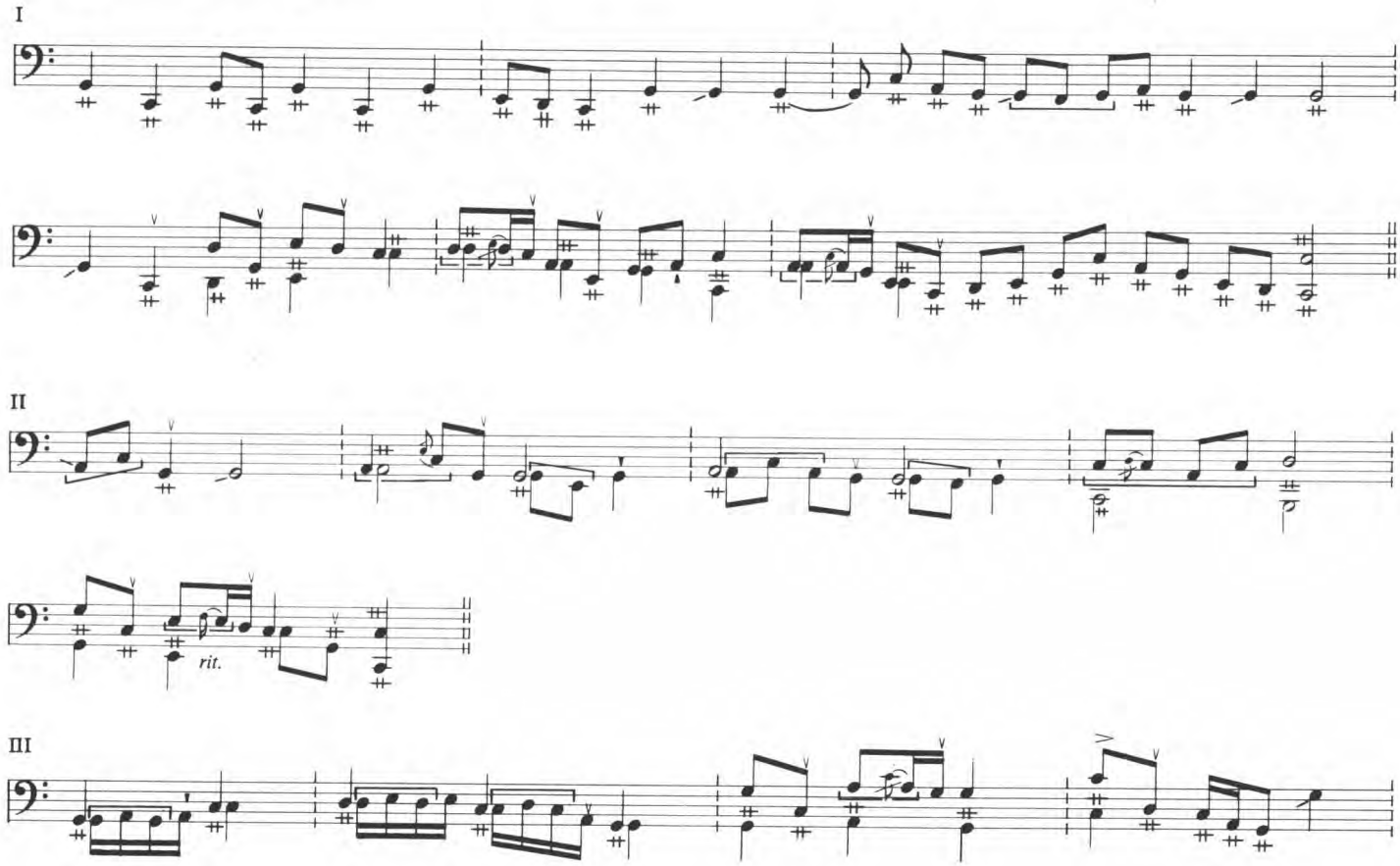
Coda

"FENG LEI YIN" [WIND THUNDER SONG]

Lin-chung tuning, *kung* mode

This composition is an excellent description of a summer thunderstorm. Much double-stop plucking strengthens the sounds. Arpeggios are used to portray harsh thunder. Repeated double-stops imitate rain showers. The *ta-yüan* technique [a group notation, see chapter three above] in the first section describes the brewing rain and wind. In the second section, after the ritard, the rain comes. After the third section, the sounds begin to gather strength as the wind and thunder respond and enter. In the fourth section, after the tapping technique [phrase 5 of section 4] the continuous double-stops indicate the heavy rain. In the fifth section, intense thunder and howling winds appear repeatedly. In the sixth section, the sounds soften, but thunder sounds are still discernible, as if the thunder wants to stop, but cannot. At the end, after the storm, the skies clear. The characteristic of this composition lies in its lively beat; it exhausts the wonders of contrast. Of Mei-an compositions, this is the most rhythmic; ideally, one should play it through without a break.

COMMENTARY. Several different ch'in compositions bear the title "Feng lei yin," but the one included in the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u* does not appear in earlier handbooks and seems therefore to be of recent origin. It is a skillfully wrought work—intense, driving, highly integrated. It exploits the low register of the ch'in and includes less registral contrast than do other compositions. Even the final harmonic coda is restrained and relatively low in pitch. The composer certainly intended the programmatic effects that Hsü Li-sun points out in his comments.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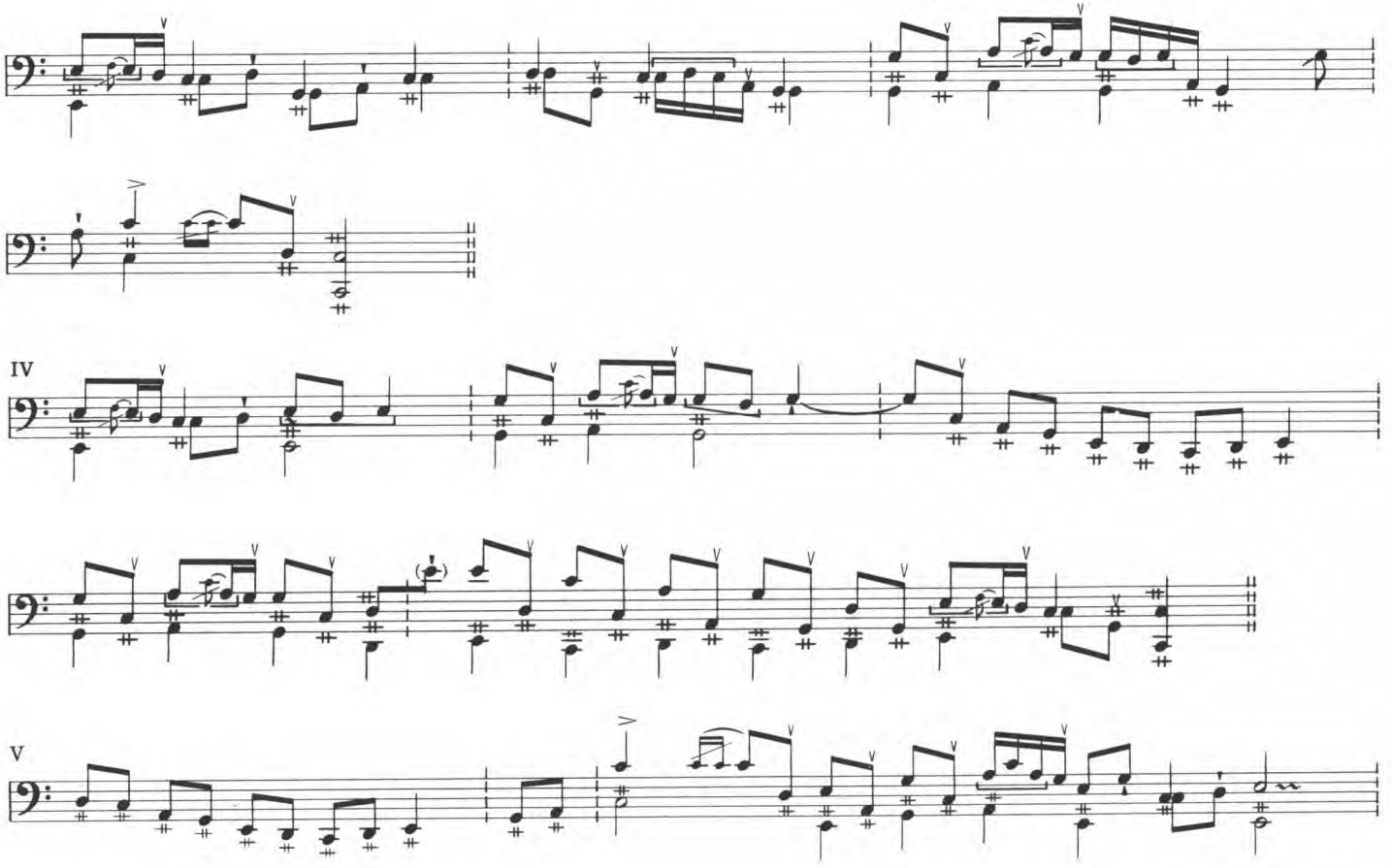
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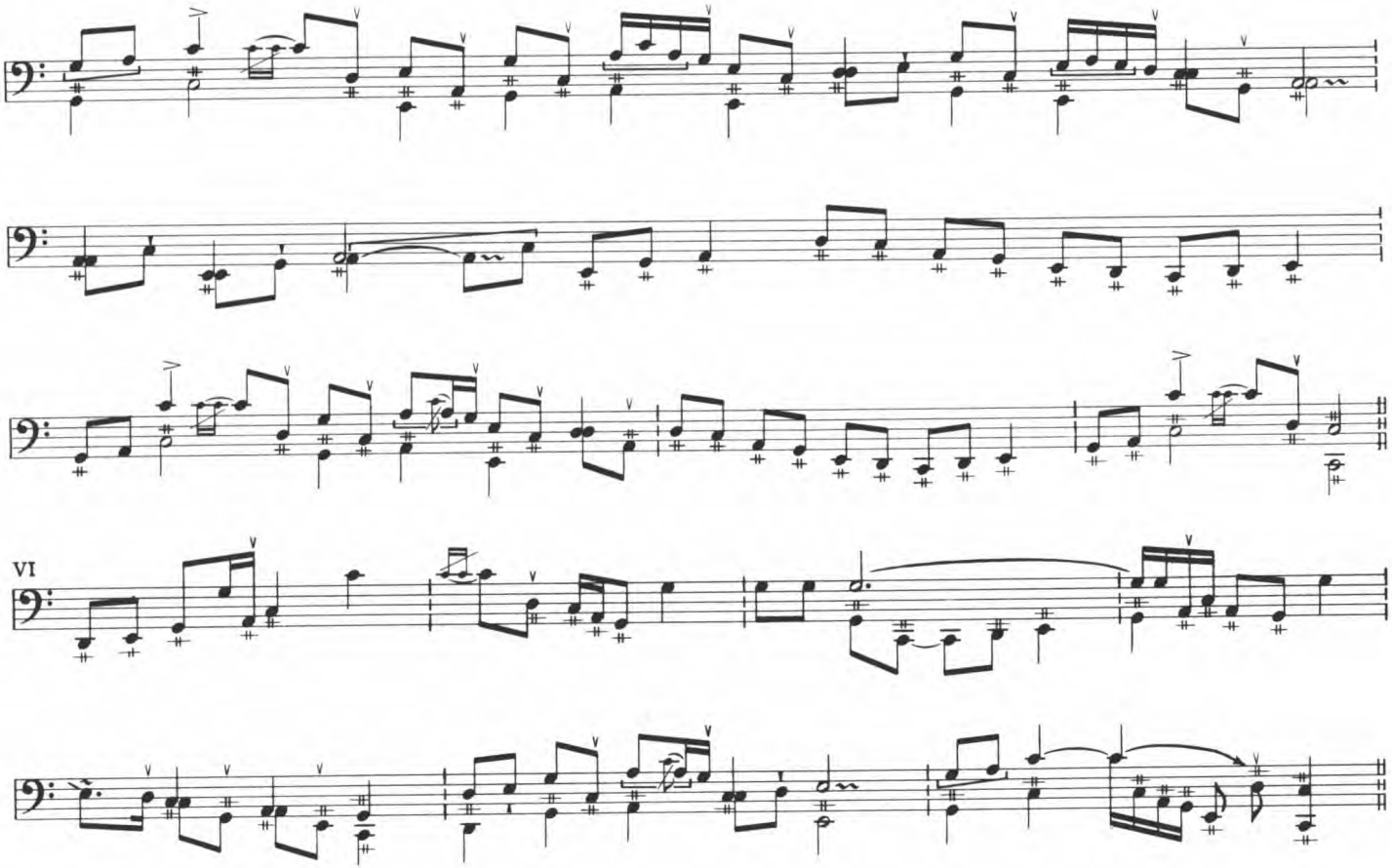
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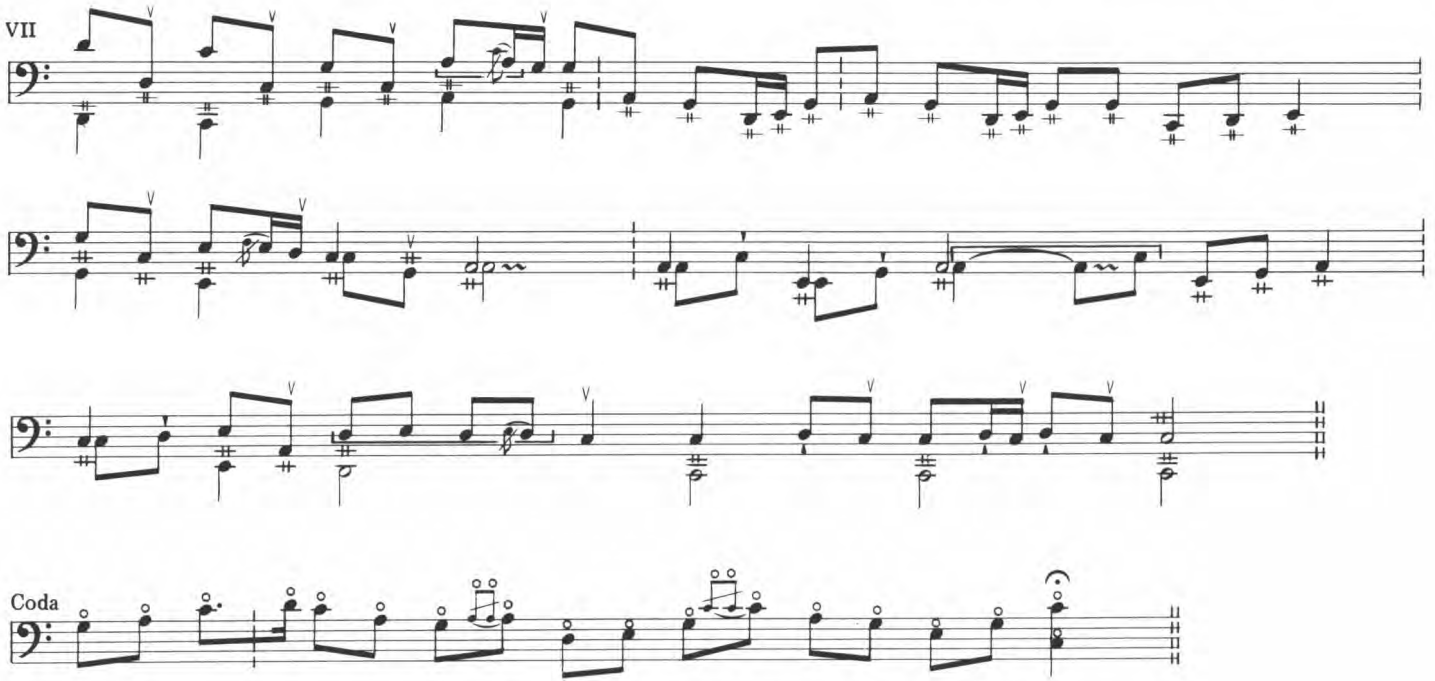
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"CH'IU CHIANG YEH P'O" [AUTUMN RIVER NIGHT ANCHORAGE]

Lin-chung tuning, *kung* mode

This composition describes the scene in the "Red Cliff Fu" in which everyone is sleeping in the boat, unaware of dawn in the east. The so-called "night anchorage" at the conclusion [refers to the boat] anchored and just floating [dead in the water], after dropping anchor in mid-stream. The entire composition describes a journey through the Red Cliffs, from the moment of boarding the boat to that of anchoring in mid-stream. The *ta-yüan* technique at the beginning describes the boat casting off. The matching sounds of strings 1 and 6 in the second phrase denote the boat leaving the bank. Then vibrato techniques are employed to describe the sounds of oars—this continues throughout the composition. The first section, after the sounds of open strings 6 and 7, describes the boat leaving the harbor, with a feeling of broad sea, clear sky. The second section begins with the sound of the punting pole, followed by loud singing. The third section begins with the sound of hoisting sails, and the gradual approach to mid-stream. In the fourth section, having reached mid-stream, the singing becomes more uninhibited, and there are the feelings of high mountains, small moon, receding tide, towering boulders. Finally the sails are lowered, the boat rocks gently. Then a ring-finger arpeggio describes the sound of the anchor being lowered, and the boat is anchored for the night.

COMMENTARY. According to Hsü Li-sun's annotation, this composition is a faithful programmatic musical description of the first of two prose-poems *(fu)* entitled "Ch'ih Pi fu" [Red Cliff fu] by the famous Sung-dynasty poet, Su Tung-p'o (1083-1101). Hsü matches specific passages in the music with their analogues in the poem, outlining a program that reflects the external action of Su's *fu* but does not touch on the essentially tragic-ironic modality suffusing the poem.

Here is the full text of the "Red Cliff Fu No. 1" in the translation of A. C. Graham (1965:381-82).

In the autumn of the year *jen-hsü* (1082), on the sixteenth day of the seventh month, I took some guests on an excursion by boat under the Red Cliff. A cool wind blew gently, without starting a ripple. I raised my cup to pledge the guests; and we chanted the Full Moon ode, and sang out the verse about the modest lady. After a while the moon came up above the hills to the east, and wandered between the Dipper and the Herdboy Star; a dewy whiteness spanned the river, merging the light on

the water into the sky. We let the tiny reed drift on its course, over ten thousand acres of dissolving surface which streamed to the horizon, as though we were leaning on the void with the winds for chariot, on a journey none knew where, hovering above as though we had left the world of men behind us and risen as immortals on newly sprouted wings.

Soon, when the wines we drank had made us merry, we sang this verse tapping the gunwales:

> Cinnamon oars in front, magnolia oars behind
> Beat the transparent brightness, thrust upstream
> against flooding light.
> So far, the one I yearn for,
> The girl up there at the other end of the sky!

One of the guests accompanied the song on a flute. The notes were like sobs, as though he were complaining, longing, weeping, accusing; the wavering resonance lingered, a thread of sound which did not snap off, till the dragons underwater danced in the black depths, and a widow wept in the lonely boat.

I solemnly straighted my lapels, sat up stiffly, and asked the guest: "Why do you play like this?"

The guest answered:

> " 'Full moon, stars few
> Rooks and magpies fly south . . .

"Was it not Ts'ao Ts'ao who wrote this verse? Gazing toward Hsia-k'ou in the west, Wu-ch'ang in the east, mountains and rivers winding around him, stifling in the close green . . . was it not here that Ts'ao Ts'ao was hemmed in by young Chou? At the time when he smote Ching-chou and came eastwards with the current down from Chiang-ling, his vessels were prow by stern for a thousand miles, his banners hid the sky; looking down the river winecup in hand, composing his poem with lance slung crossways, truly he was the hero of his age, but where is he now? And what are you and I compared with him? Fishermen and woodcutters on the river's isles, with fish and shrimps and deer for mates, riding a boat as shallow as a leaf, pouring each other drinks from bottle-gourds; mayflies visiting between heaven and earth, infinitesimal grains in the vast sea, mourning the passing of our instant of life, envying the long river which never ends! Let me cling to a flying immortal and roam far off, and live for ever with the full moon in my arms! But knowing that this art is not easily learned, I commit the fading echoes to the sad wind."

"Have you really understood the water and the moon?" I said. "The one streams past so swiftly yet is never gone; the other for ever waxes and wanes yet finally has never grown nor diminished. For if you look at the aspect which changes, heaven and earth cannot last for one blink; but if you look at the aspect which is changless, the worlds within and outside you are both inexhaustible, and what reasons have you to envy anything?

"Moreover, each thing between heaven and earth has its owner, and even one hair which is not mine I can never make part of me. Only the cool wind on the river, or the full moon in the mountains, caught by the ear becomes a sound, or met by the eye changes to colour; no one forbids me to make it mine, no limit is set to the use of it; this is the inexhaustible treasury of the creator of things, and you and I can share in the joy of it."

The guest smiles, consoled. We washed the cups and poured more wine. After the nuts and savouries were finished, and the winecups and dishes lay scattered around, we leaned pillowed back to back in the middle of the boat, and did not notice when the sky turned white in the east.

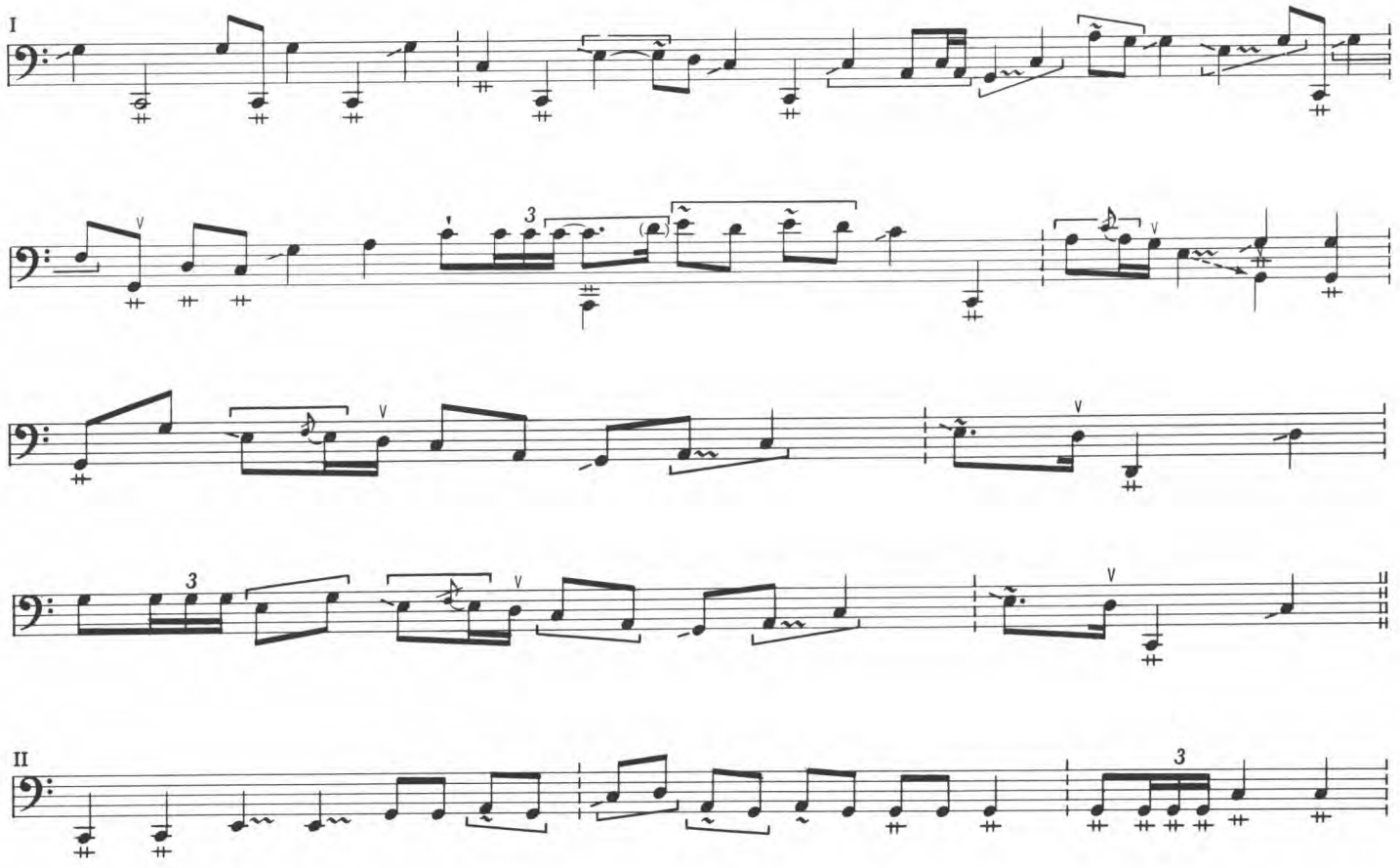
The poem's irony turns on the historical aura of its locale. For at the same place in A.D. 208, the crafty, villainous, literate General Ts'ao Ts'ao was defeated in a naval battle by the youthful Lord Chou. A slight shift of wind would have upset Chou's strategy and altered the course of history. This level of meaning, and the guest's mood of universal angst, is not hinted at in Hsü's comments, which are more appropriate to the controlled pastoral mood of the music. But neither the music nor the commentary matches the poem in essential respects, and the text-music relationship is therefore comparatively superficial. Accordingly, the ascription to Su Tung-p'o here is less felicitous and natural than are most in this collection.

There is, however, an alternative. The ascription and program presented in the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u* are apparently not traditionally associated with this music. The composition was first published in 1614, in the handbook *Sung-hsien-kuan ch'in-p'u;* it is found in other handbooks including the *Tzu-yüan-t'ang ch'in-p'u* of 1802 (CFI:457C-458A) and the *Ch'in-hsüeh ju-men* (Chang 1864:II, 20R-22V; CFI: 617C-18D). The music of these three scores is nearly identical to the Mei-an version, differing only in detail. Nothing in these earlier scores, however, refers to Su Tung-p'o or the "Red Cliff Fu." The editors of the *Ku-ch'in ch'ü-chi* (KCCC) (1962:8) suggest that the inspiration for this composition was a quatrain by Chang Chi (eighth century A.D.), entitled "Maple Bridge Night Anchorage," a well-known poem that appears in the anthology *T'ang-shih san-pai-shou* [Three hundred T'ang poems]. Here is my translation:

Moon sets crows caw frost fills sky
River maples angler's fire dispel fitful sleep
Outside Su-chou City Cold Mountain Temple
Midnight bell sound reaches traveler's boat

The editors of KCCC further suggest that the *ta-yüan* techniques heard at the beginnings of sections 1 and 4 represent the sound of the midnight temple bell. This is a stereotyped association for the *ta-yüan* technique, which appears perhaps most effectively in "Hsiao Hsiang shui yün," where it highlights a startling shift of tonal center (see Laurence Picken's transcription and comments, 1957:123, Ex. 205).

The reader may decide for himself which program best fits the music.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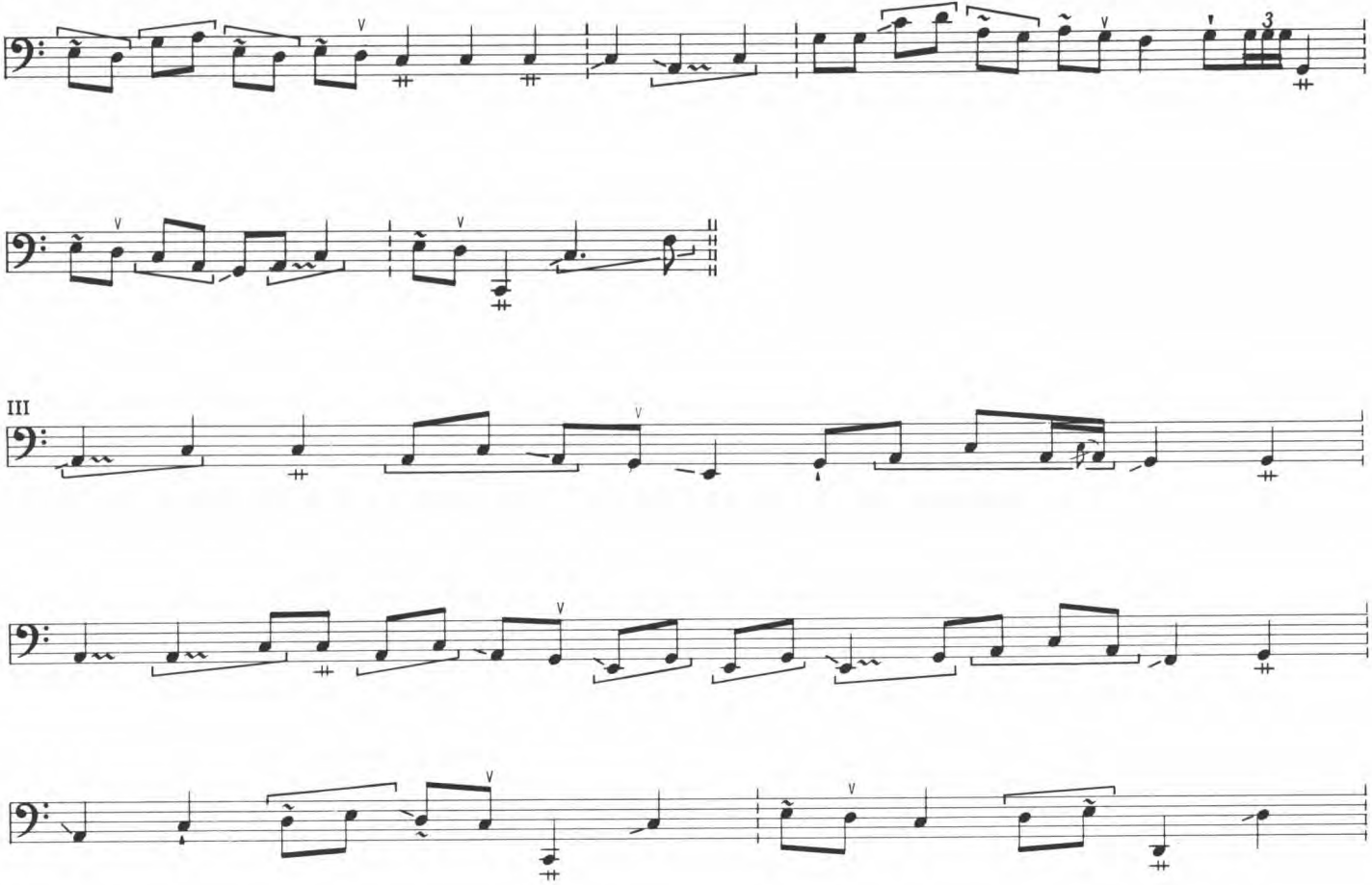
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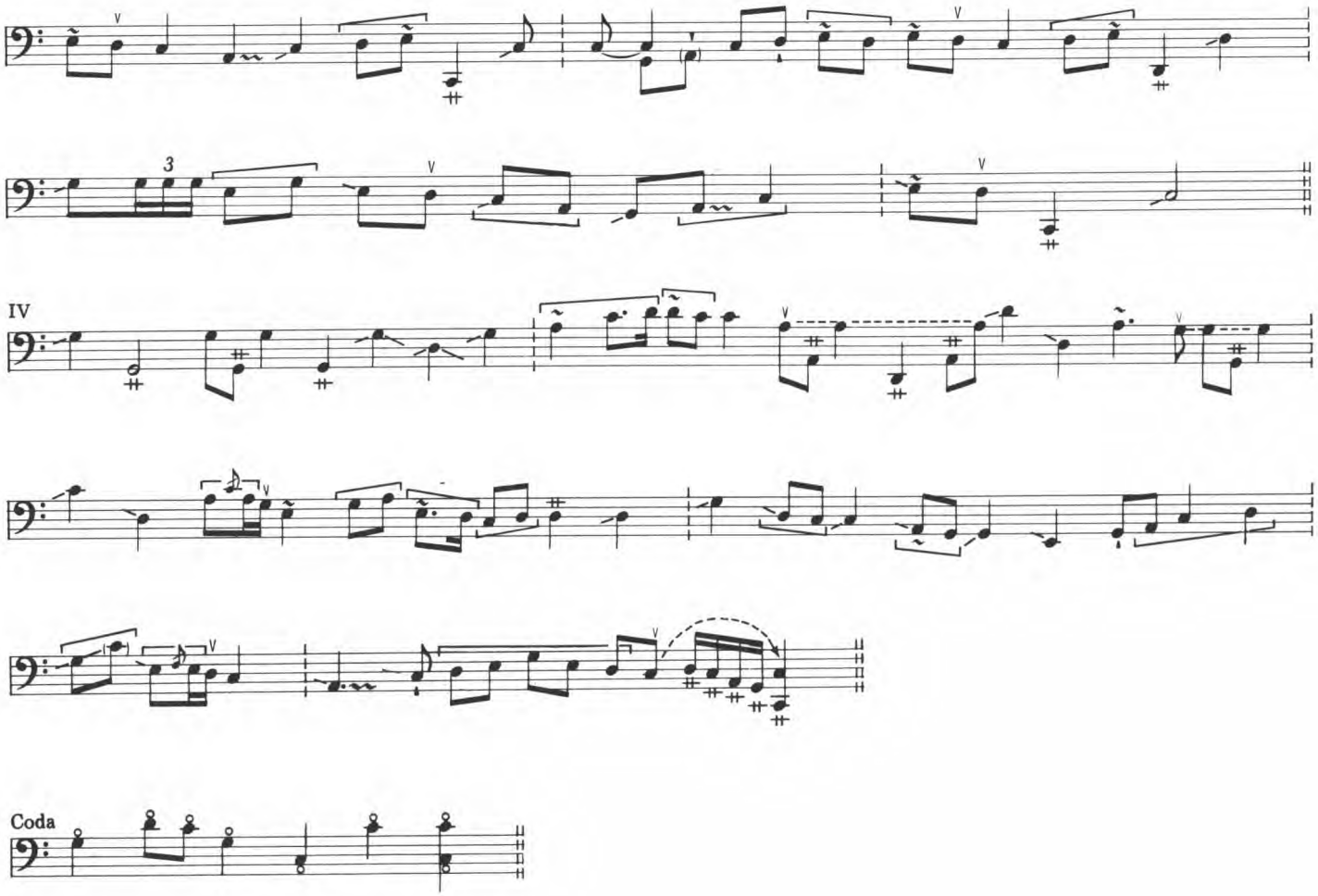

3
IV
Coda

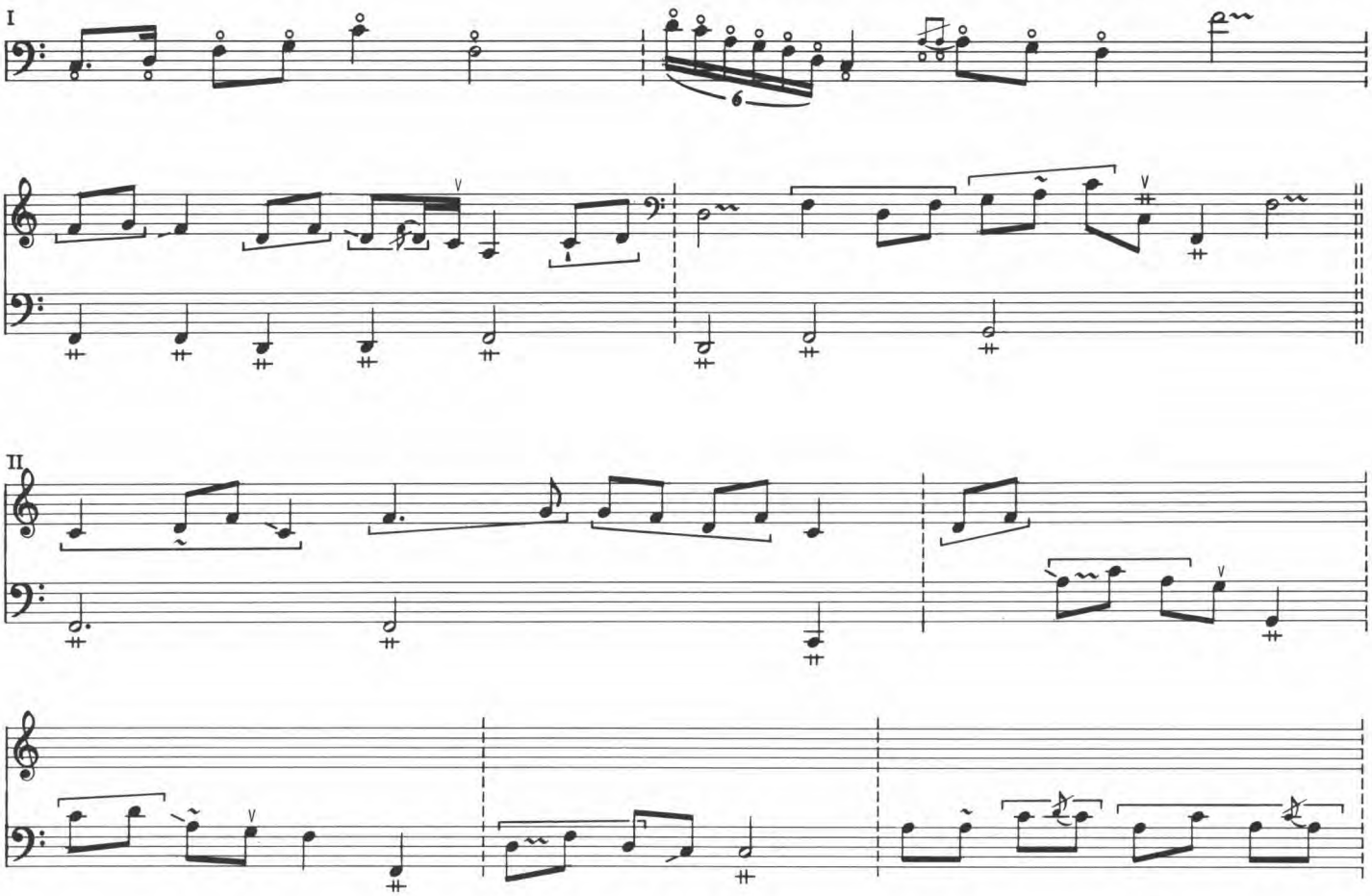
"CH'ANG MEN YÜAN"
[LAMENT AT THE CH'ANG-MEN PALACE]

Huang-chung tuning, *kung* mode

This composition belongs solely to the Chu-ch'eng ch'in school. During the reign of Han Wu-ti, Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju wrote this composition, describing Empress Ch'en confined in the Ch'ang-Men Palace. It is somber and depressing, and sounds just like crying. Not just gloomy and noble, but also sobbing and sighing—the cry of an oppressed woman. The beginning uses arpeggio harmonics to describe the sound of girdle pendants jingling, slow walking, and going out. The second section depicts walking and complaining. The entire composition mirrors the sound of a woman walking, particularly manifest in the third section; the brooding low melody reveals unspeakable torment. The fourth section changes into high-pitched sounds, loud crying, the extremity of sadness and lamenting. The fifth section also has sounds of pacing and sighing. The sixth section describes despair, helplessness, and ends with attempted consolation.

COMMENTARY. "Lament at the Ch'ang-Men Palace" was published for the first time in the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u*. As Hsü Li-sun notes, it is associated specifically with the Chu-ch'eng tradition and is perhaps the most significant Chu-ch'eng contribution to the contemporary ch'in repertory, having been adopted by many ch'in players of different schools.

The title appears among the songs of the Han yüeh-fu collections. The background story seems to be apocryphal but is not impossible. The Empress Ch'en was imprisoned in the Ch'ang-Men Palace due to court intrigues. Languishing there, she sent for Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju and asked him to write a poem about her sad fate. Through the poem, she hoped to move the Emperor to take pity on her and set her free. In response to her request, Hsiang-ju is said to have composed the "Ch'ang-Men fu," a prose-poem that survives today, though it is generally not considered authentic.[2]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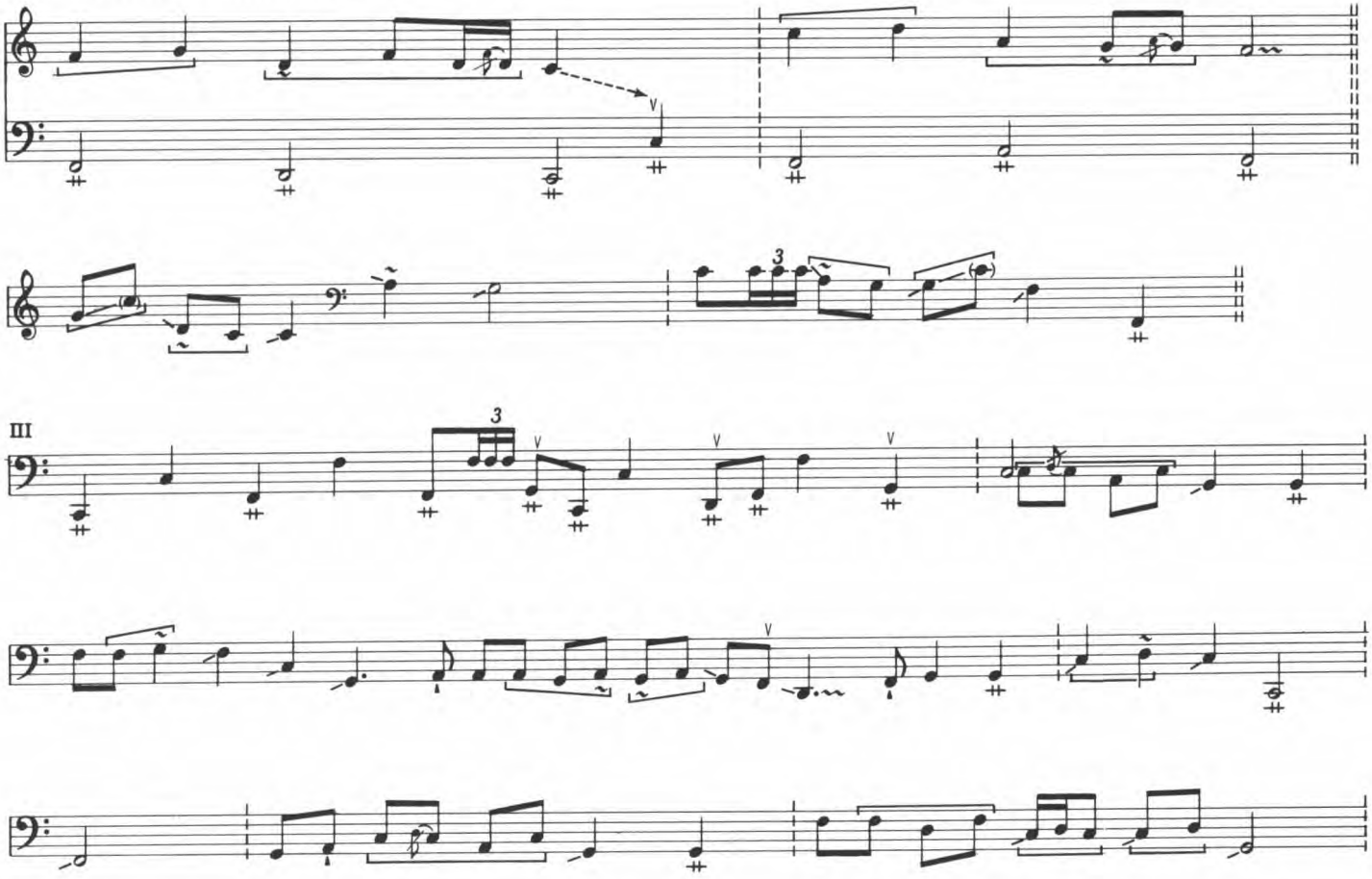
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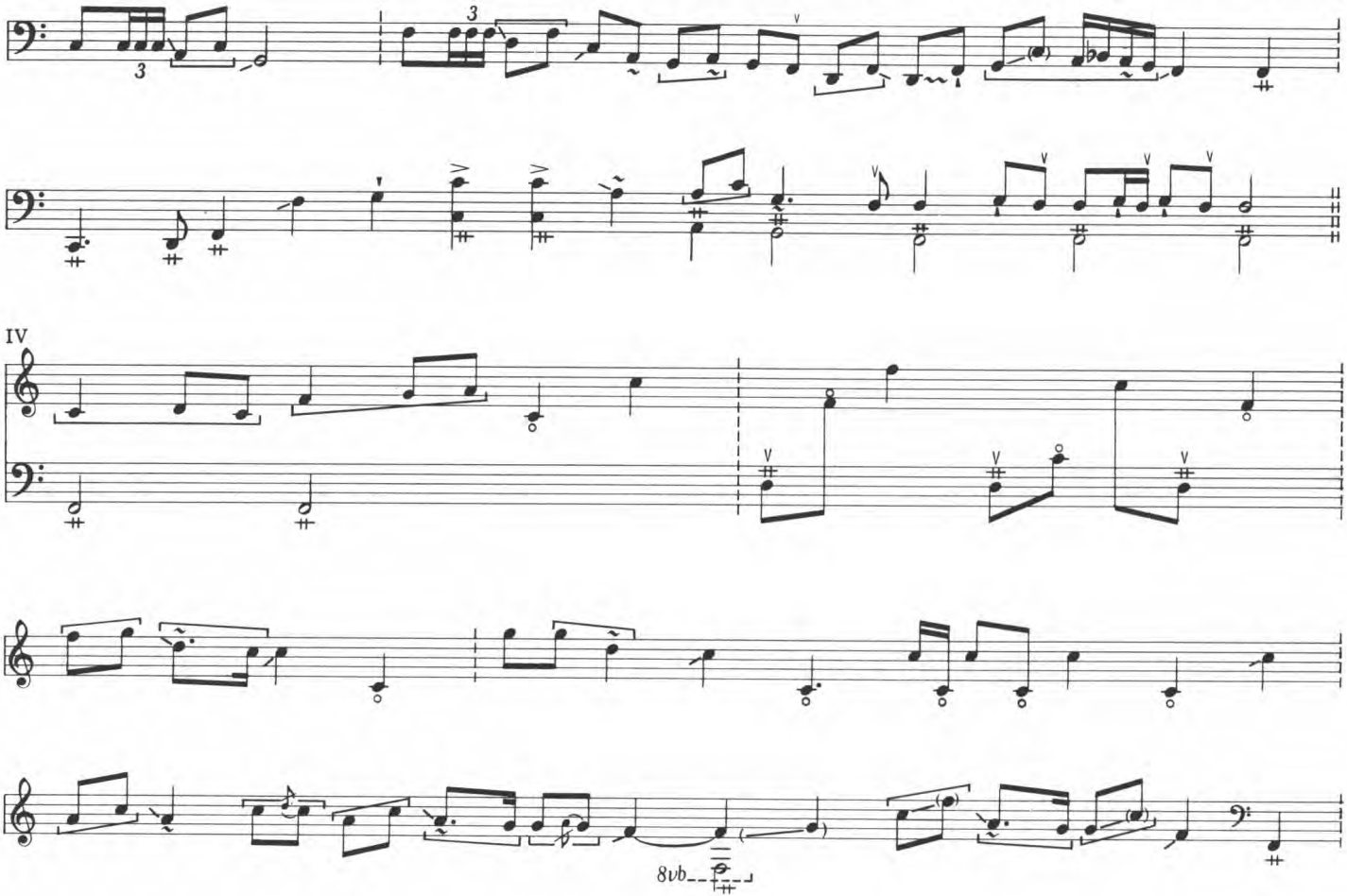
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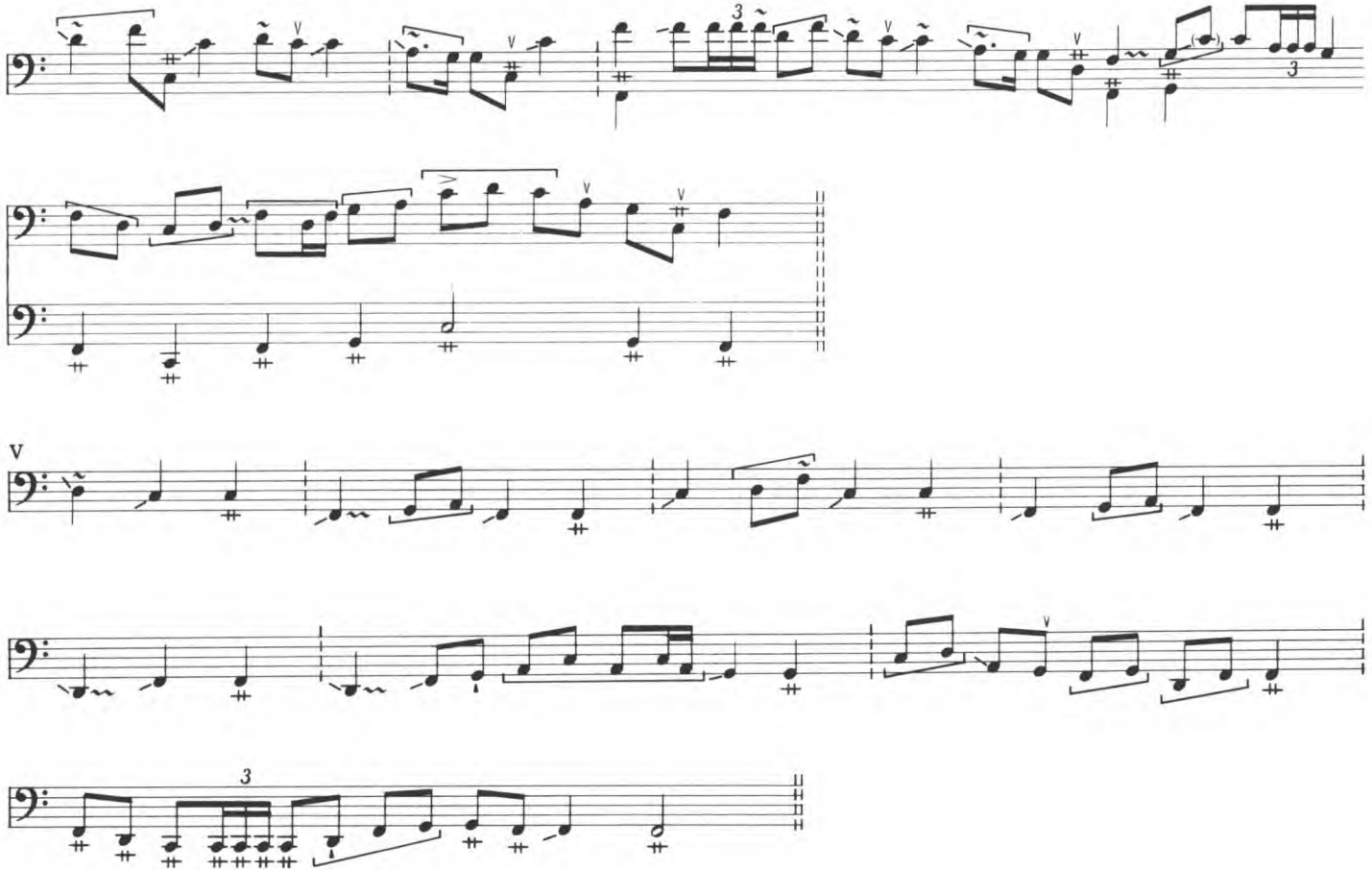
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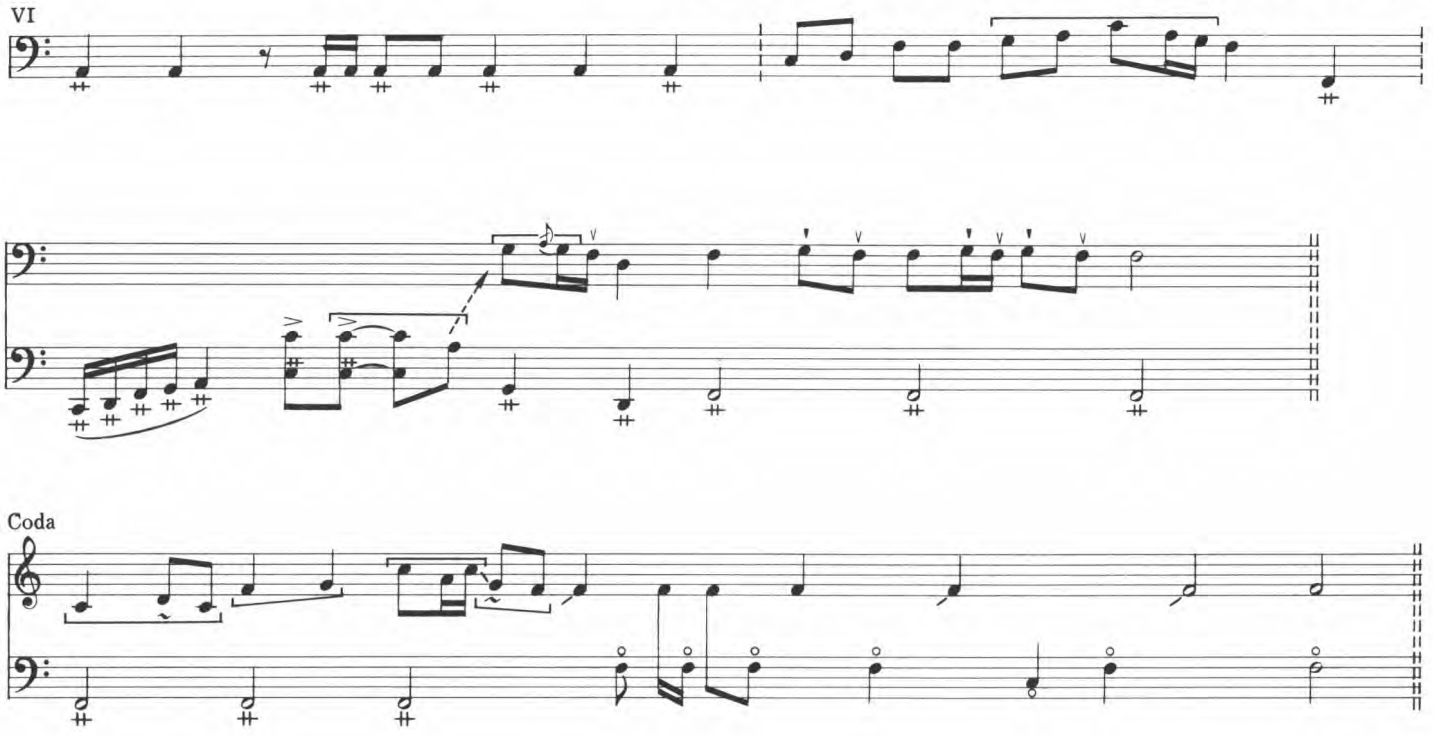

VI
Coda

"P'ING-SHA LO-YEN"
[ON THE BEACH, GEESE ALIGHTING]

Huang-chung tuning, *kung* mode

Only at the end of this composition do the geese alight. The whole work describes the flock taking off, flying, circling, soaring, diving, and squawking. The beginning describes the flock taking wing in small groups; gradually they begin circling. Toward the end of the first section there is a feeling of pausing momentarily. The second section describes the continuing flight. The *ta-fen-k'ai* technique is used to describe continual flying and circling, then flying in formation. The third section has a similar meaning but also has sounds of beating wings. The end of the fourth section indicates low flight, then the *fu* technique describes proceeding to the beach. The fifth section is still low flying. The sixth section describes sounds of mixed cries as the geese soar into the clouds, then gradually fly lower with quick cries. The seventh section portrays the flock beating its wings against the sand, then again circling the beach at a low altitude. The coda concludes the composition by describing the flock alighting in small groups on the beach.

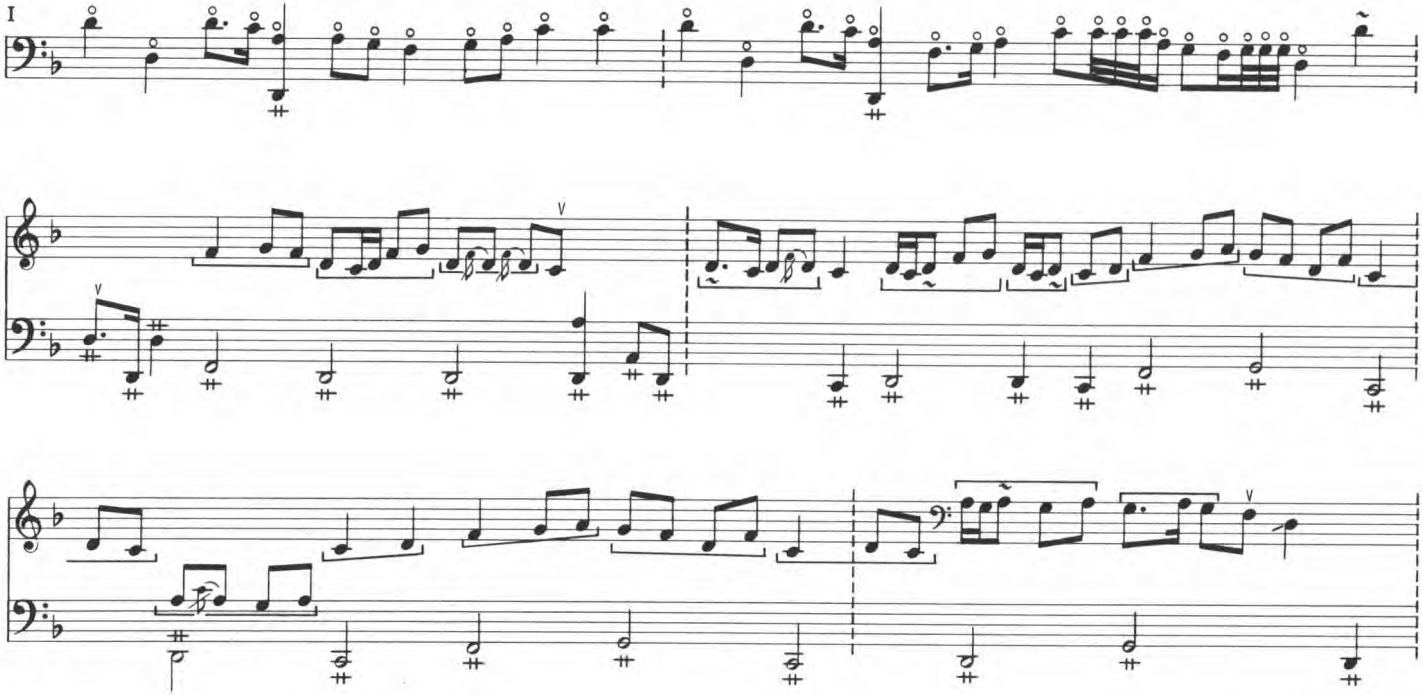
The sixth section of this composition is not found in other books and is unique to the Chu-ch'eng school of ch'in playing. Mr. Wang Yen-ch'ing made additional modifications to this work; it can be proved that he undertook further revisions when teaching at Mei-an.

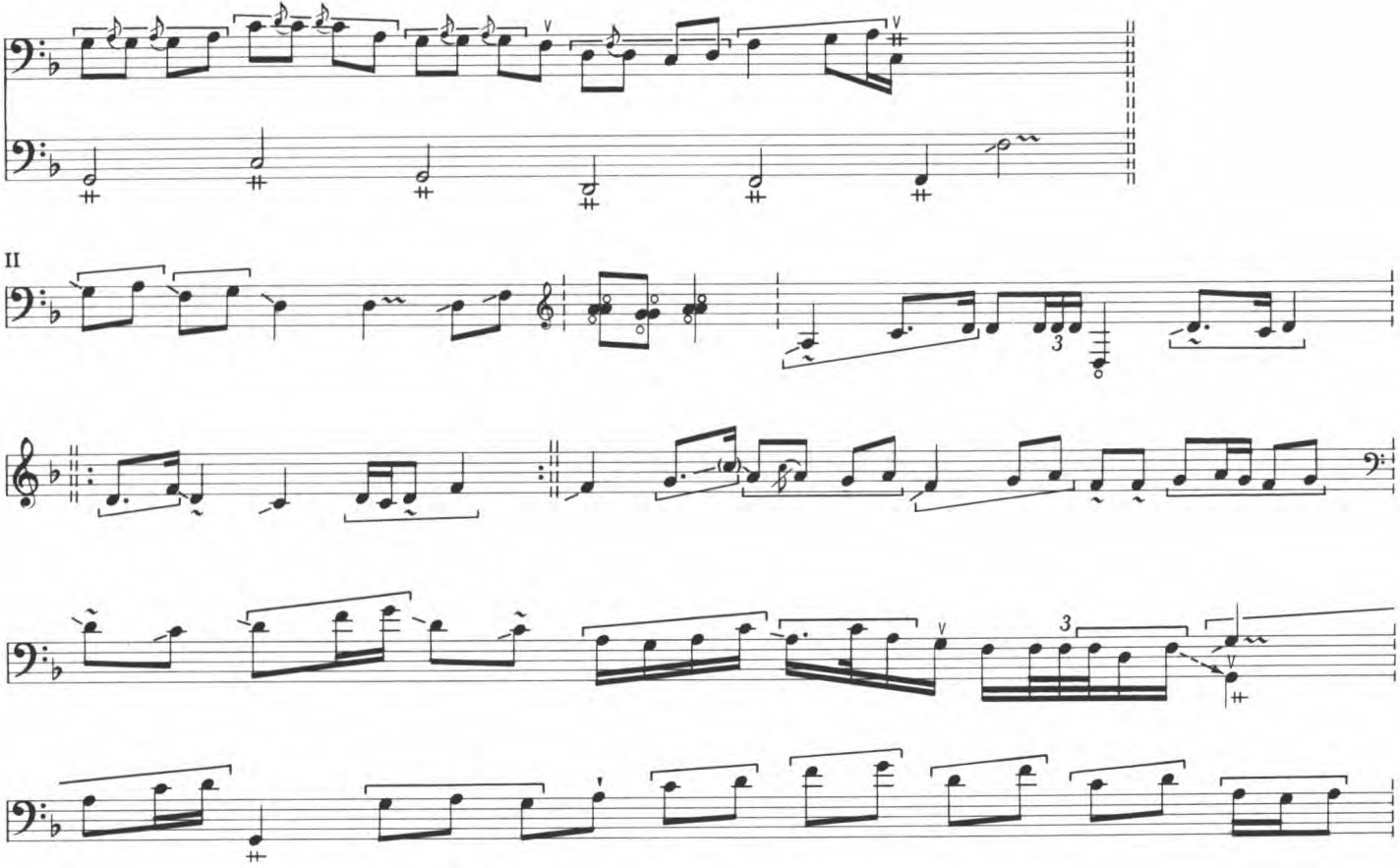
COMMENTARY. "P'ing-sha lo-yen" is one of the most widely known and performed compositions in the current ch'in repertory. It is considered a representative composition in the Fan-ch'uan, Chu-ch'eng, Kuang-ling, Chiu-i, Hsin-che, and P'u-ch'eng schools of ch'in playing (Cha 1958:6). Composition of this work has been attributed to Prince Ning (personal name Chu Ch'üan) sixteenth son of the first Ming Emperor, T'ai Tsu (Ts'ao 1959:48, #0966). Prince Ning's literary name was Ch'ü-hsien; he was a scholar of the ch'in and other elevated subjects and wrote numerous books including the valuable early collection of ch'in scores *Shen-ch'i i-mi-p'u*(1425).

According to Cha Fu-hsi (1956: I, 13V) the earliest source for "P'ing-sha" is the handbook *Ku-yin cheng-tsung* (Chu Ch'ang-fang 1634); in that source and in some others the wording of the title is rearranged: "Yen-lo p'ing-sha." The composition appears in numerous later *ch'in-p'u,* sometimes in several different modal versions—as, for example, in the *Ch'in-p'u hsieh-sheng* (Chou 1820), which includes, in

volume 4, scores for "P'ing-sha" in each of ten modes.

In his exhaustive catalogue of extant *ch'in-p'u* Cha Fu-hsi finds that "P'ing-sha" is represented in forty-six *ch'in-p'u* between 1634 and 1931 (Cha 1956:II, 57R). To this, one might add the more recent *Yen-i-hsi ch'in-tsai ch'in-p'u* edition (Chang Tzu-sun 1961), increasing the total to forty-seven. No other extant composition has appeared in as many ch'in handbooks, which is even more remarkable considering that "P'ing-sha" first appeared only at the end of the Ming dynasty.

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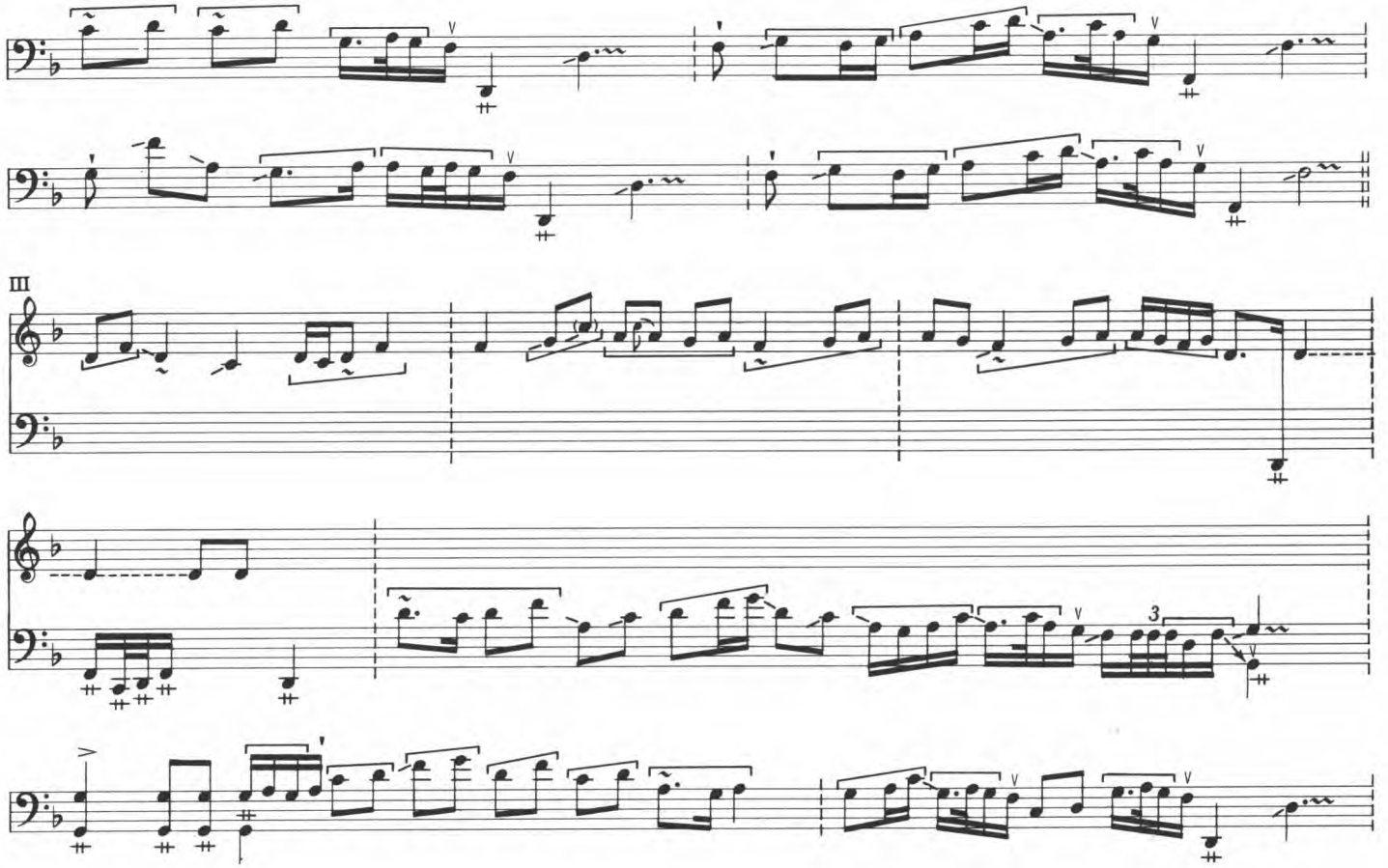
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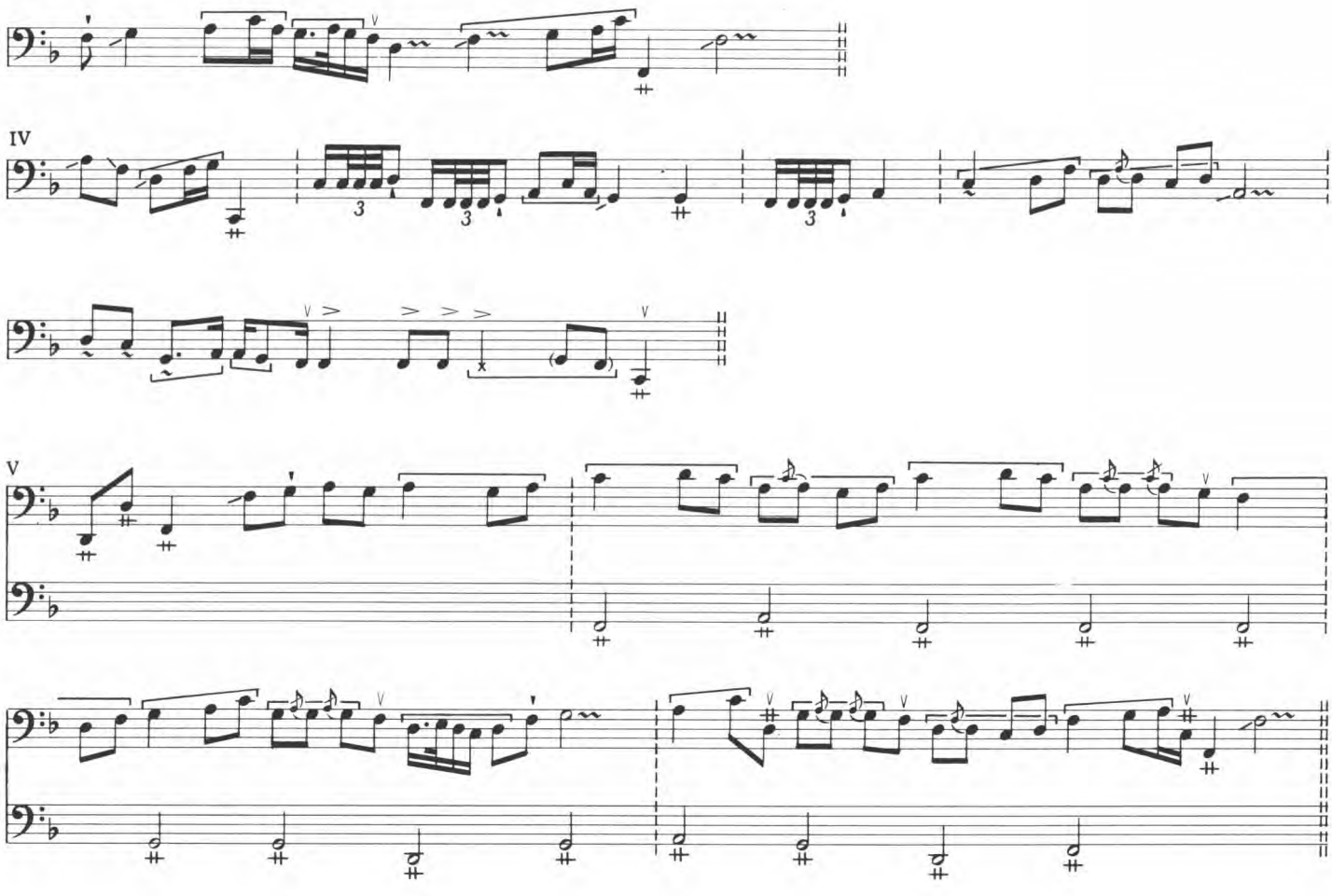
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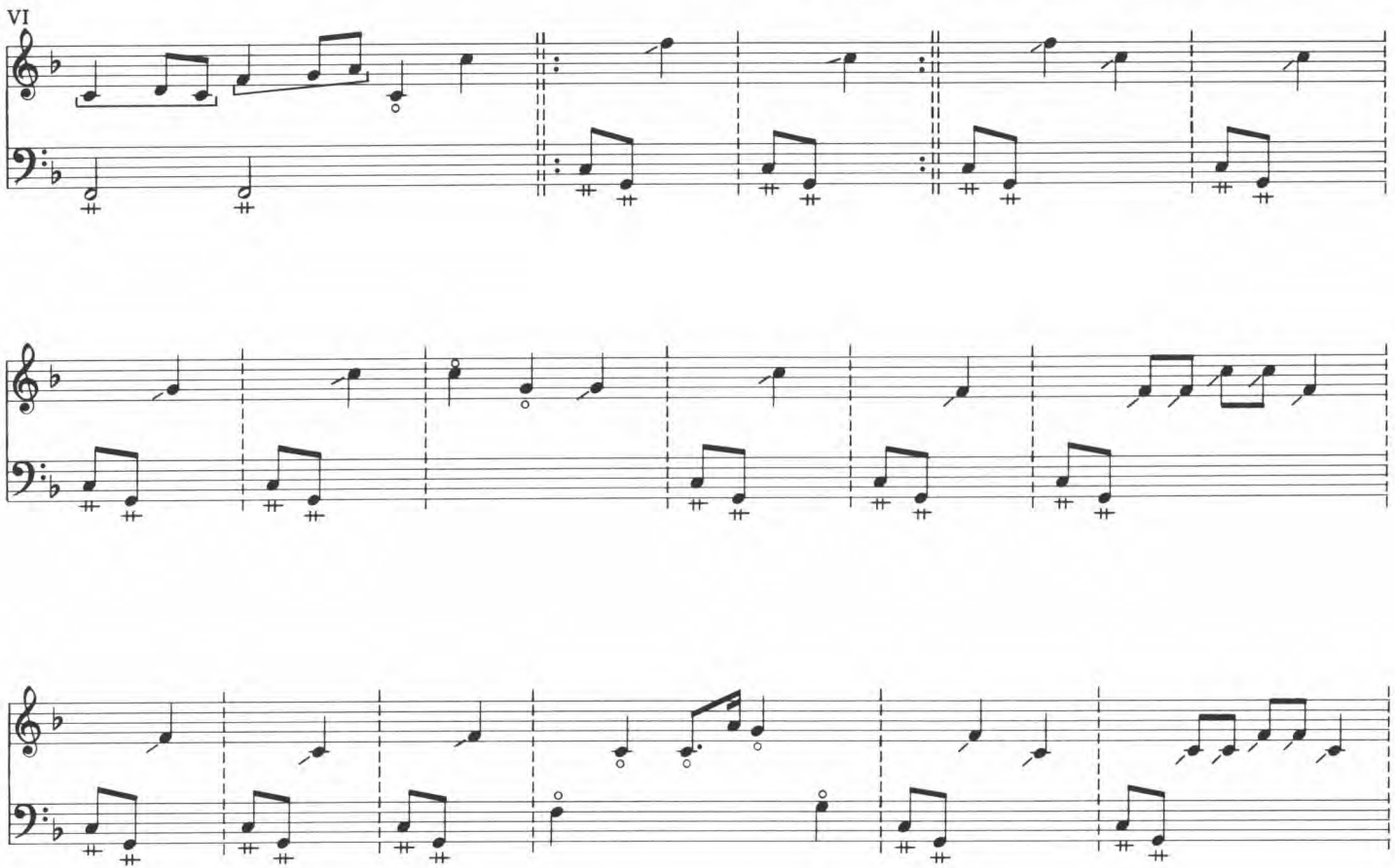
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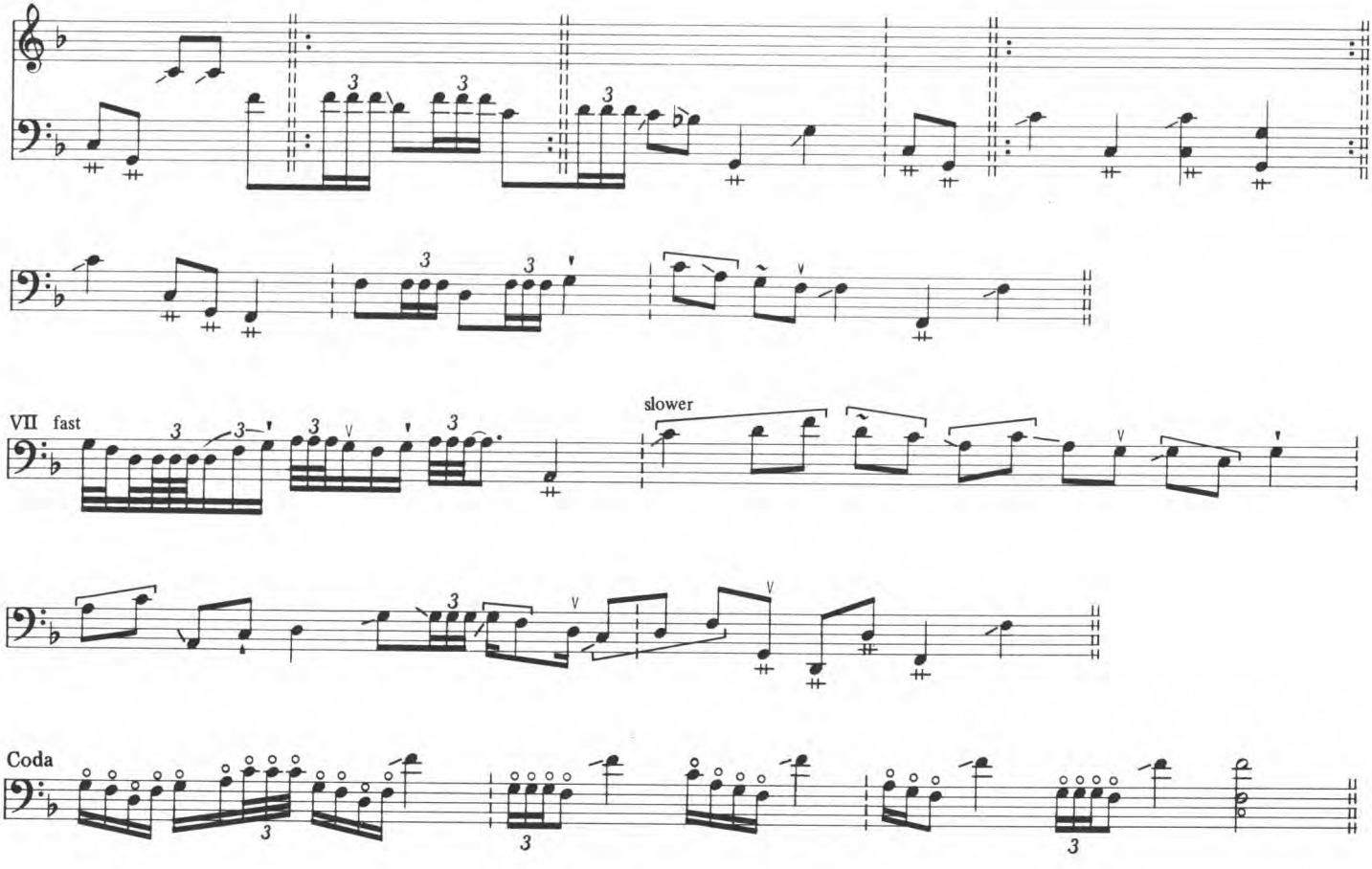

VII fast
slower
Coda

"SHIH-T'AN CHANG" [BUDDHIST WORDS]

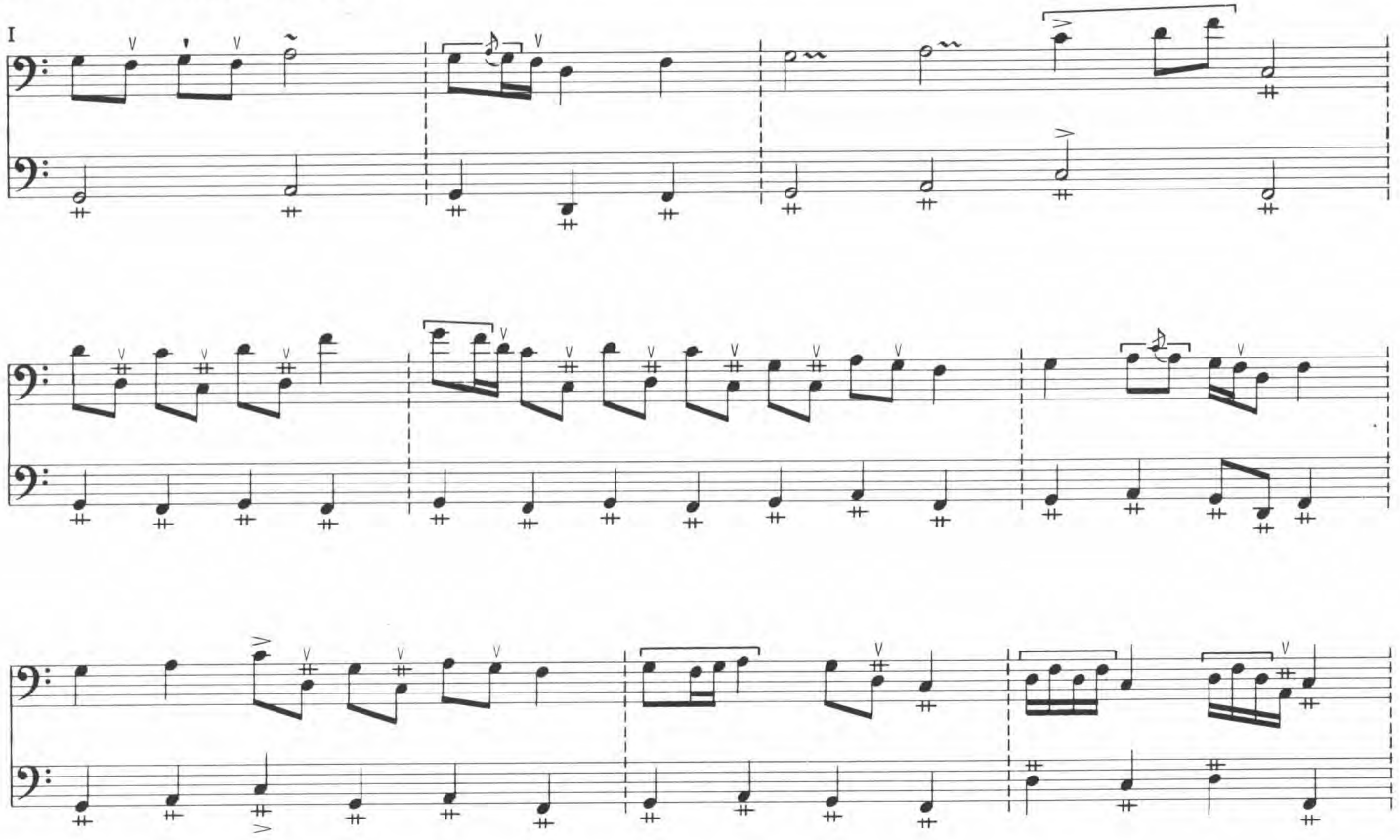
Huang-chung tuning, *kung* mode

This composition and "P'u An chou" are the same but known by different names. They describe a group of monks praying at a ceremony, pacing around the courtyard. Bells and drums sound together, all are reproduced. There are comparatively many repetitions. The entire work is uncommonly interesting, in a class by itself.

COMMENTARY. The statement (found in many *ch'in-p'u*) that "Shih-t'an chang" and "P'u An chou" are the same is erroneous if one takes it to refer to the music, which seems to be its natural sense. The music of these two compositions is actually very different. Both, however, are ch'in interpretations of Buddhist chanting, both are associated with the Ch'an monk P'u An (A.D. 1115-69), and both stress the same group of instrumental techniques. So they are perhaps better described as similar or related compositions.

Van Gulik (1969:51-54) describes the history and background of "Shih-t'an chang." He considers the work to be of Buddhist origin, possibly a chant heard by one Han Chiang, transcribed by ear, and arranged into a formal ch'in composition. In most printed versions of "Shih-t'an chang" a text is given, " which is nothing but a Mantrayanic magic formula . . ." (ibid.:51). Examples of the texted composition may be seen in the *Li-hsing yüan-ya* of 1618 (1969 reprint: 81-93), the *Tzu-yüan-t'ang ch'in-p'u* (1802; CF I: 567C-571D), and *Ch'in-hsüeh ju-men* (1864; CF I: 644A-647B). Contrary to the text-setting rules outlined in chapter five (but in keeping with the alleged origin in chant), there are comparatively many extended melismas.

The version included in the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u,* however, omits the text and also appears shorter than the earlier versions. The extensive use of double-stops and left-hand releases contributes to the stylistic uniqueness of this composition in the Mei-an repertory. Though the composition aptly conveys the repetitive, hypnotic effect of Buddhist chanting, it is nevertheless carefully structured as a series of variations on a basic melody that recurs (omitting *dal segno* repeats) eight times: three times in low register, three times in high register with infixed passages in harmonics, and twice returning to the lower level.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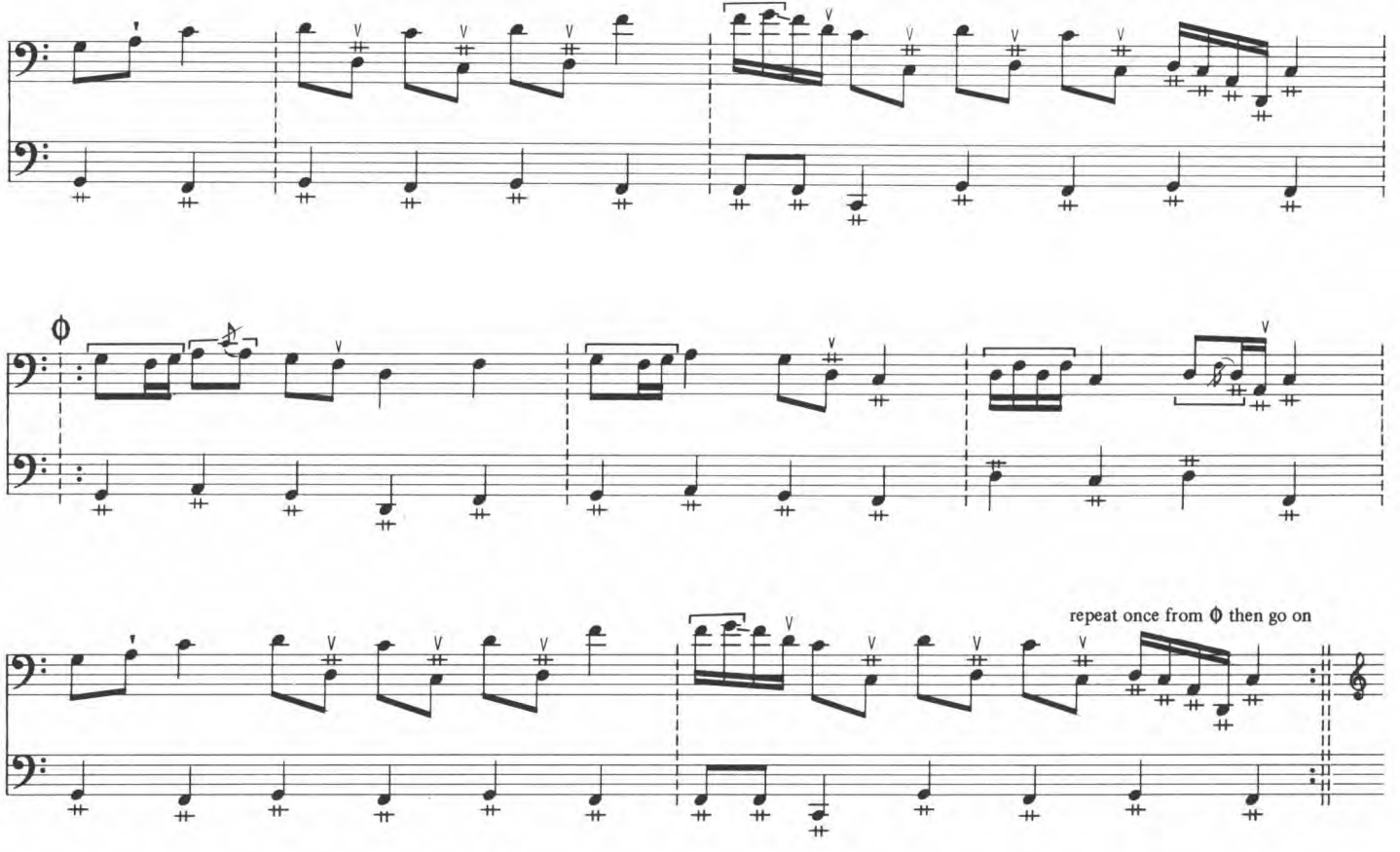
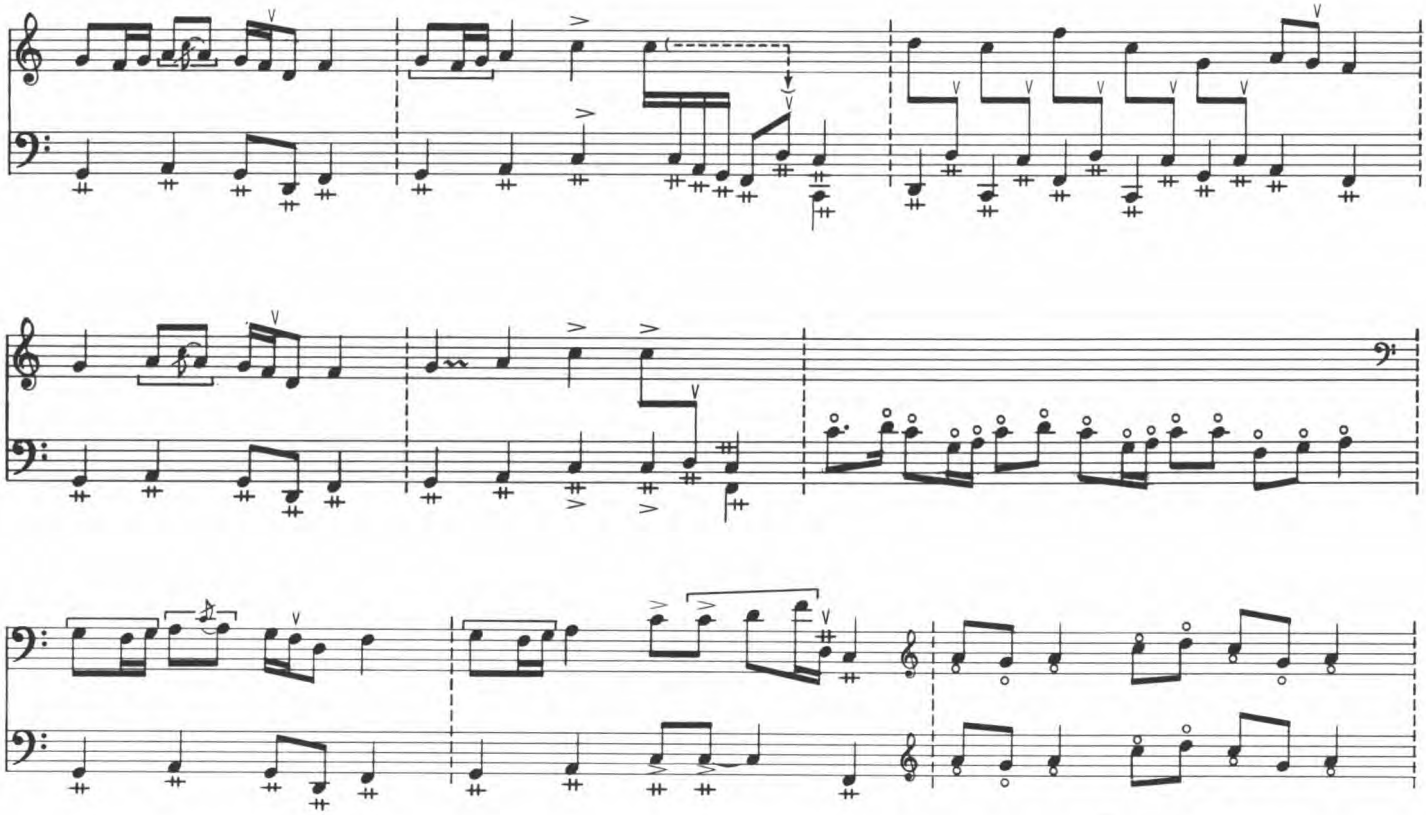
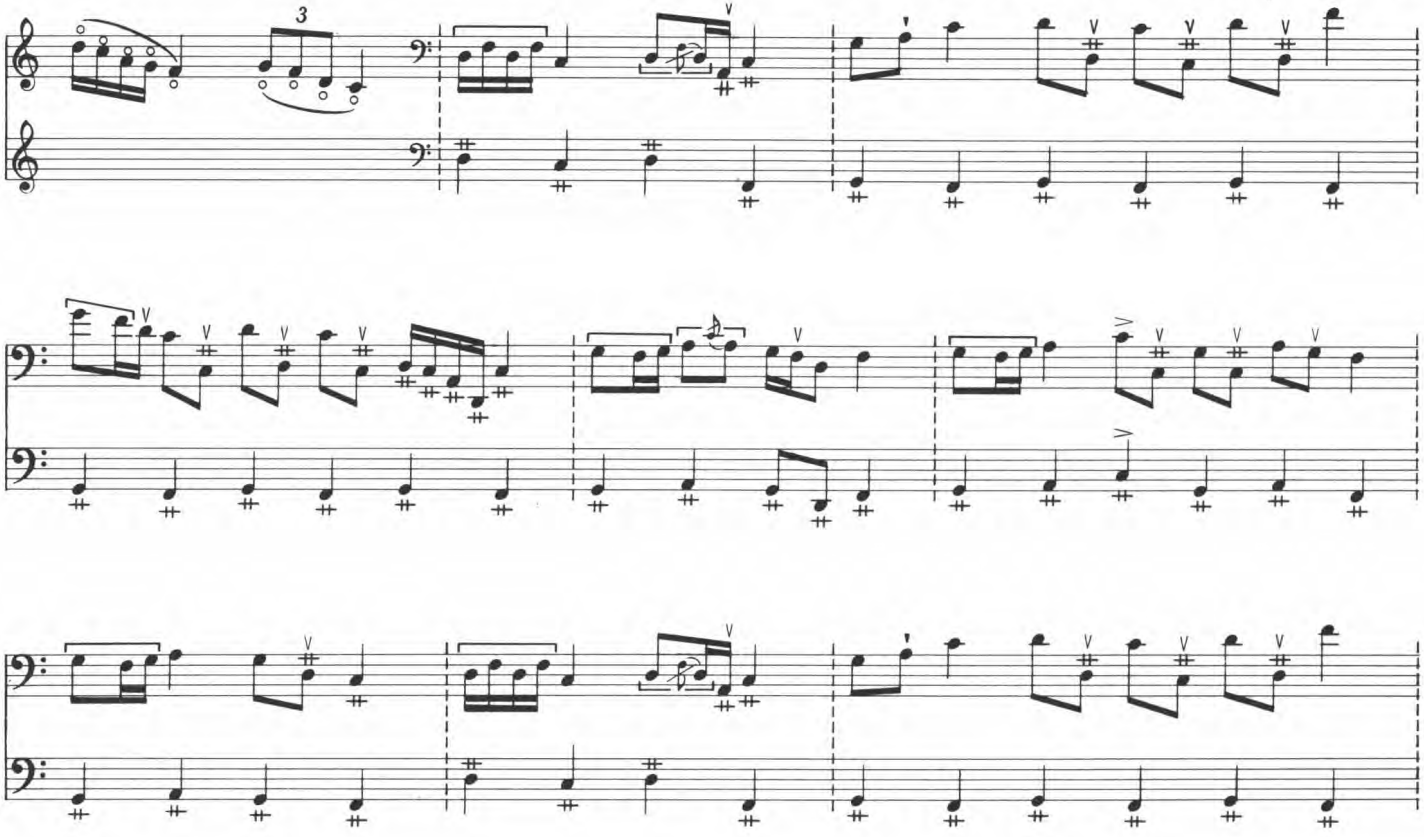

repeat once from 𝄋 then go on

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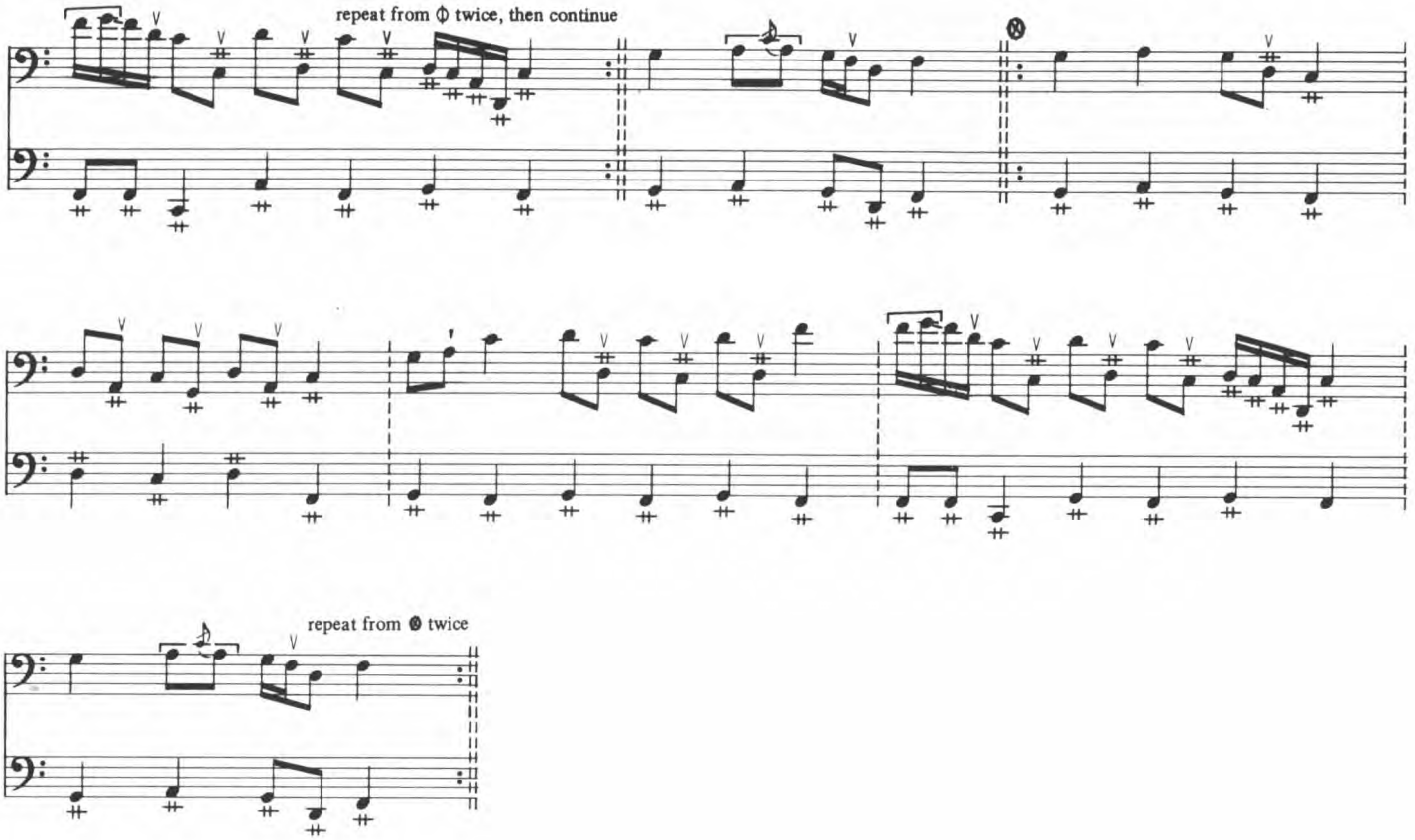

repeat from ⊕ twice, then continue
repeat from ⊗ twice

"HSIA HSIEN YU" [JOURNEY OF AN IMMORTAL]

T'ai-tsu tuning, *kung* mode

The finger technique of this composition has ancient simplicity, very few *yin* and *jou* vibrati. Some people hold that the contents are comparatively simple to play and that it can thus serve as an introductory composition, quite apart from its original purpose. With many years of experience one realizes that this composition is extremely difficult to play. Although there are few *yin* and *jou* vibrati, achieving the correct sounds is difficult, something that novices cannot appreciate.

Among Mei-an songs the most intricate fingerings occur in "Sao-shou wen-t'ien." In achieving the air of simplicity and gentleness this composition is most difficult, as can be known after repeated playing. This composition is light and relaxed, with great feeling of floating like a heavenly spirit. According to tradition it was composed by Huang Ti; it is supposed to simulate his doctrine of nuturing life [*yang sheng*].

COMMENTARY. According to the *Ch'in-hsüeh ju-men* (1864:II, 1R; CF I:608A), where an almost identical score of this composition is printed, an alternate title is "Shen yu" [Spirit journey]. The attribution to the antediluvian Emperor Huang Ti (the "Yellow Emperor") was probably intended to invoke memories of the legend summarized best in the following passage from the *Lieh tzu* (Graham 1960:33-35):

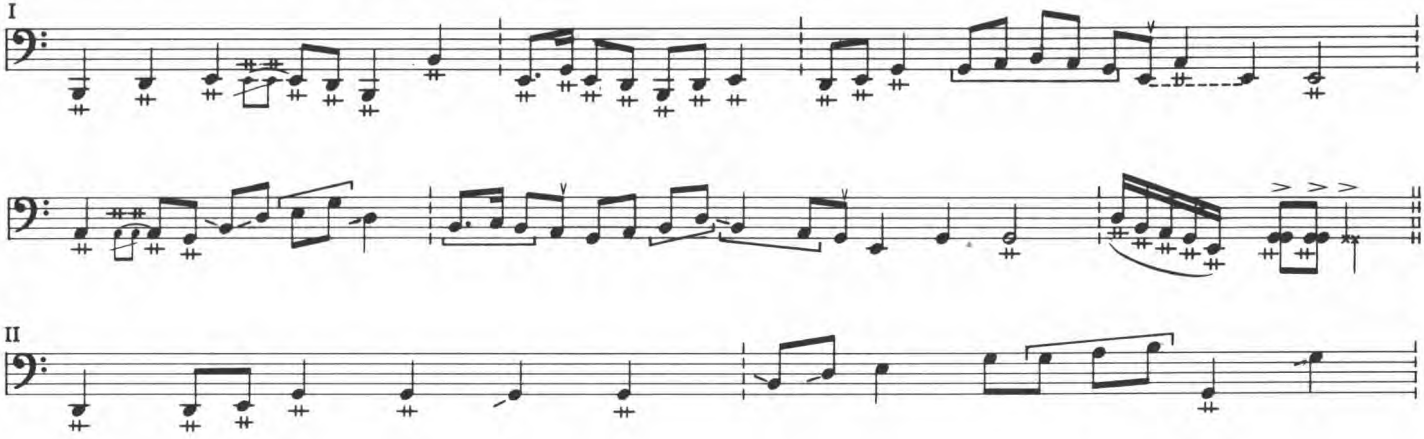
> For fifteen years after the Yellow Emperor came to the throne, it pleased him to be borne on the heads of the Empire. He "tended life," amused his eyes and ears, pampered his nostrils and mouth, till his ravaged flesh darkened and his dulled senses were stupefied. During the next fifteen years he worried about the misgovernment of the Empire, and devoted all his eyesight and hearing, knowledge and strength, to ruling the people. But still his ravaged flesh grew darker and his dulled senses more stupefied. Then the Yellow Emperor breathed a sign and said:
>
> "Deep is my error! It is an affliction to care for oneself alone, and as great an affliction to govern the myriad things!"
>
> After this he refused to concern himself with decisions of policy, left the Imperial chambers, dismissed his attendants, discarded his orchestra of bells and drums, reduced the delicacies of his kitchen. He retired to live undisturbed in a hut in his main courtyard, where he fasted to discipline mind and body, and for three months had nothing to do with affairs of state.
>
> Falling asleep in the daytime, he dreamed that he was wandering in the country of Hua-hsü [Mother of Fu-hsi, the first Emperor]. This country is to the West of Yen province in the far West, to the North of T'ai province in the far North West, who knows how many thousands and myriads of miles from the Middle Kingdom. It is a place which you cannot reach by

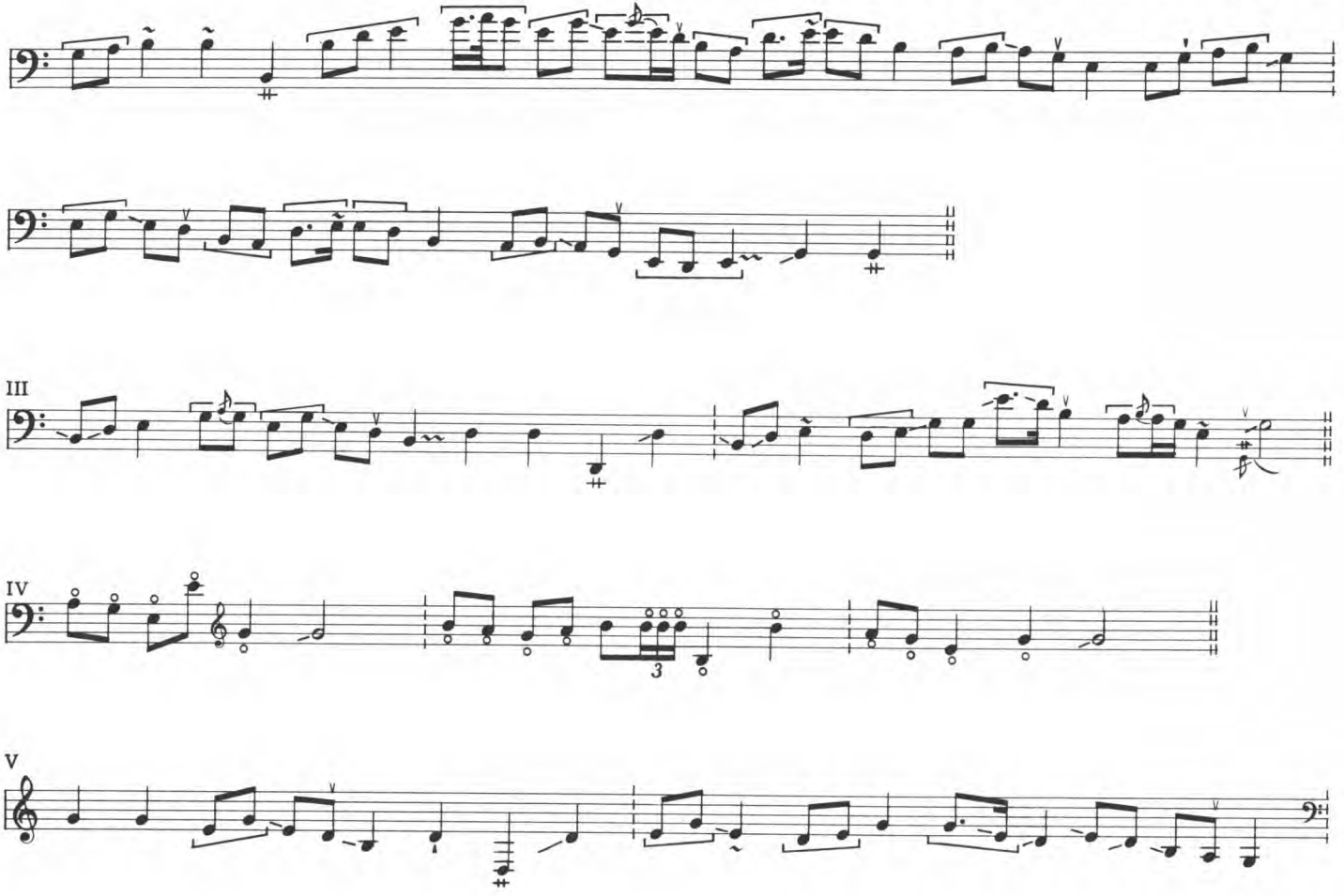
boat or carriage or on foot, only by a journey of the spirit. In this country there are no teachers and leaders; all things follow their natural course. The people have no cravings and lusts; all men follow their natural course. They are incapable of delighting in life or hating death, and therefore none of them dies before his time. They do not know how to prefer themselves to others, and so they neither love nor hate. They do not know how to turn their faces to things or turn their backs, go with the stream or push against it, so nothing benefits or harms them. There is nothing at all which they grudge or regret, nothing which they dread or envy. They go into water without drowning, into fire without burning; hack them, flog them, there is no wound or pain; poke them, scratch them, there is no ache or itch. They ride space as though walking the solid earth, sleep on the void as though on their beds; clouds and mist do not hinder their sight, thunder does not confuse their hearing, beauty and ugliness do not disturb their hearts, mountains and valleys do not trip their feet—for they only make journeys of the spirit.

When the Yellow Emperor woke, he was delighted to have found himself. He summoned his ministers T'ien-lao, Li-mu, and T'ai-shan Chi, and told them:

"I have lived undisturbed for three months, fasting to discipline mind and body, and meditating a way to care for myself and govern others, but I did not find a method. Worn out, I fell asleep, and this is what I dreamed. Now I know that the utmost Way cannot be sought through the passions. I know it, I have found it, but I cannot tell it to you."

After another twenty-eight years, when the Empire was almost as well governed as the country of Hua-hsü, the Emperor rose into the sky. The people did not stop wailing for him for more than two hundred years.

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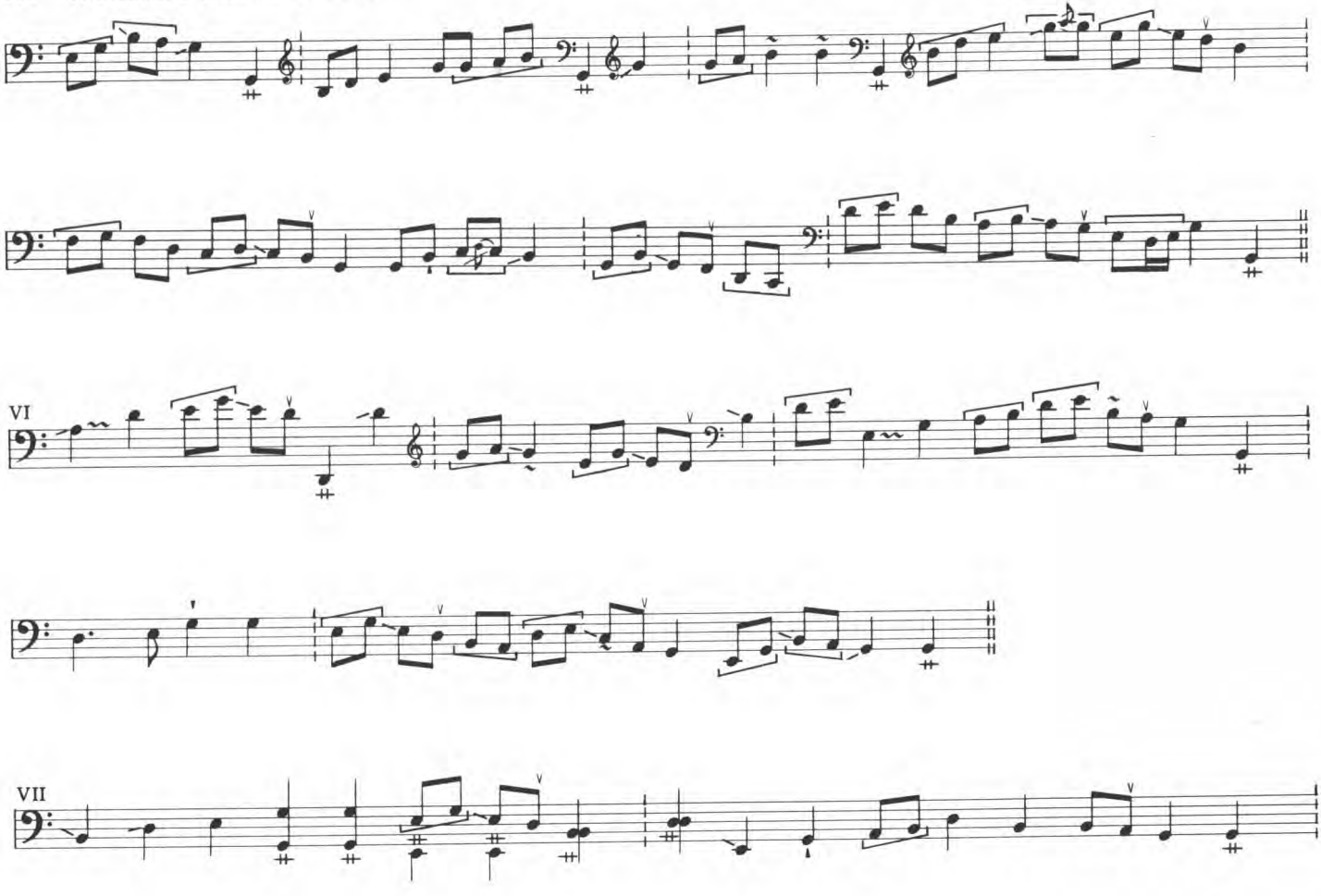
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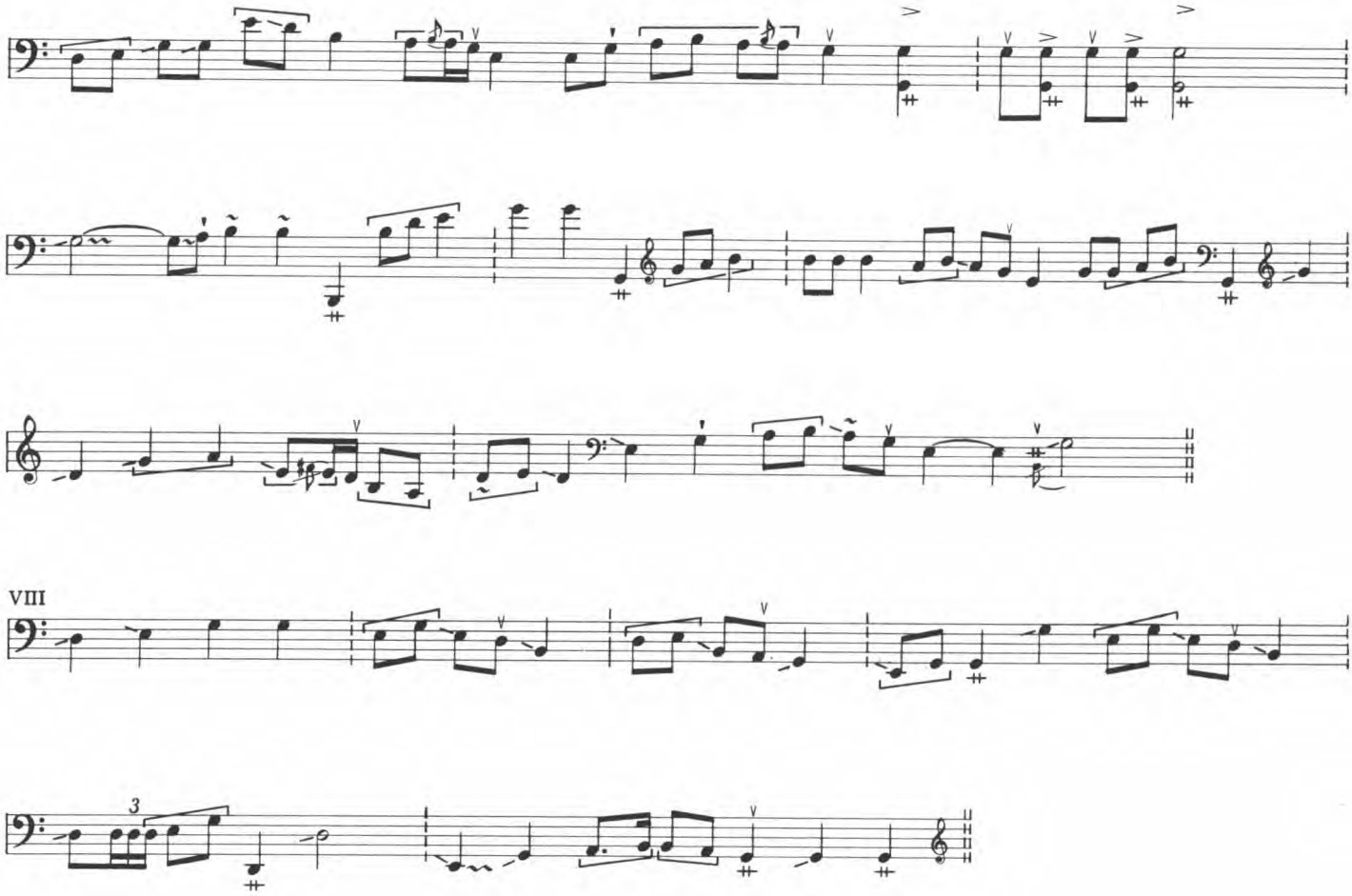
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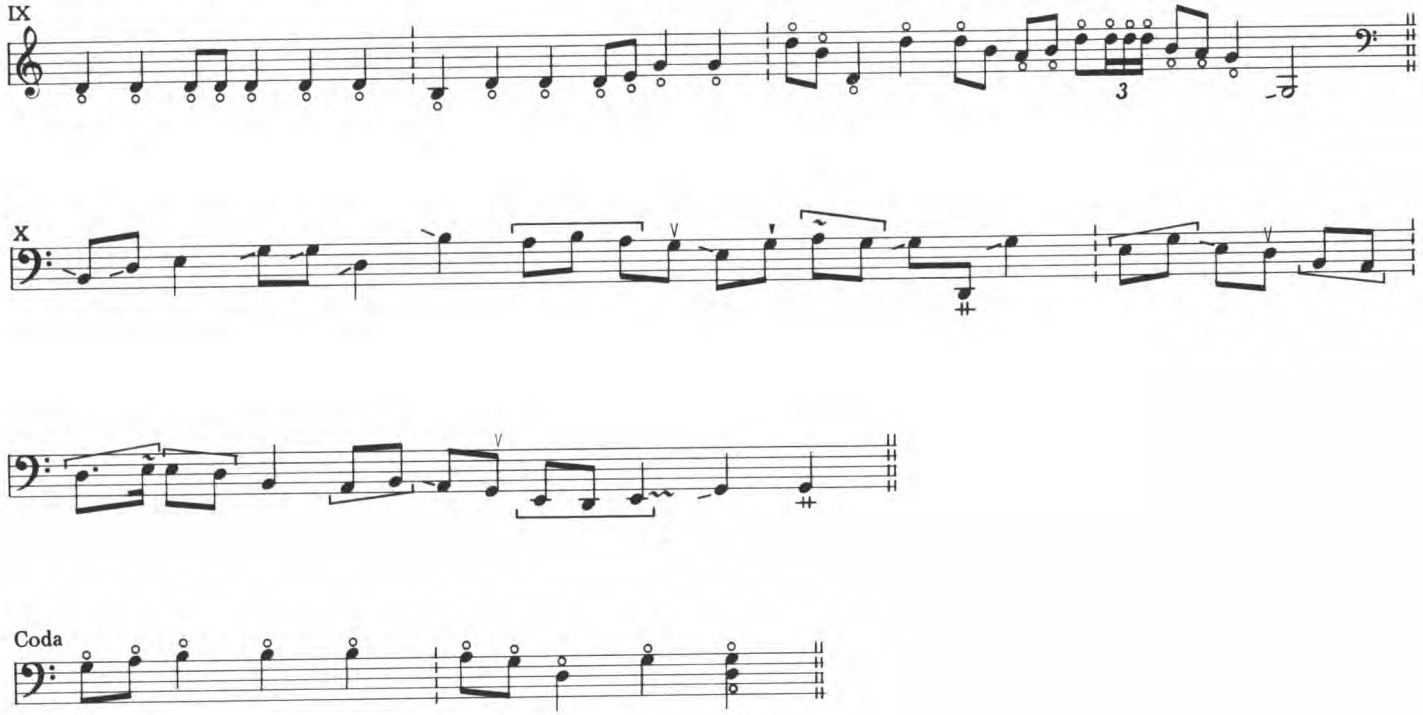
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X
Coda

"TAO I" [POUNDING CLOTHES]

Wu-i tuning, *kung* mode

The historical setting of this composition is the T'ang dynasty, when the Han people were invaded by barbarians and posted soldiers to stand guard at the Great Wall. A soldier's wife is pounding clothes at the river bank, thinking about her husband. The tone is noble and passionate, uniting feelings of love and heroism, while avoiding everything inappropriate. The music is rich in folk spirit. The main theme of the composition appears in the third section, after which it recurs, each time in varied form. One can play from beginning to end in one breath. There is much variety in the tone and rhythm of the eighth section to avoid too much repetition. In the ninth section there is repeated marshaling of flags and drums, and the climax is reached. The eleventh section contains a very appropriate description of the woman's feeling that too much time has been spent washing, straining the spirit. Finally, perking up, she redoubles her efforts, and the composition ends.

COMMENTARY. *Tao-i,* in its narrow meaning, denotes a process calling "fulling" cloth, in which the cloth is pounded on a stone to soften and spread the fibers of the material. The apparatus is something like a mortar and pestle; in early poetry the pounding carries sexual overtones. A famous painting of silk pounding by Chang Hsüan of the T'ang dynasty was copied by the Sung Emperor Hui-tsung; this copy now rests in the Boston Museum (detail in Sickman and Soper 1971: 179). In modern usage *tao-i* extends to cover the process of washing clothes by pounding with stones, usually at a riverbank.

A musical composition entitled "Tao i" is recorded as belonging to the repertory of the T'ang dynasty *ta-ch'ü* ("big songs," actually suites) (KCCC:9-10). The earliest known ch'in score with the name "Tao i" is that in the 1539 handbook *Feng-hsüan hsüan-p'in* (CCCC:841C-D). An entirely different composition than the Mei-an version, it consists of a single brief section with a poetic text; there is no attribution for either text or music.

Yang Lun, a Ming dynasty musician, published the ancestor of the Mei-an "Tao i" in his early seventeenth century handbook, *Po-ya hsin-fa* (Yang 1609/1971: ch. 16, pp. 11-27). This version has twelve sections and is texted throughout. The text seems to be a free fantasy on the poem in the *Feng-hsüan hsüan-p'in;* the entire earlier short poem (with one interpolated passage) appears as the text for sections 11 and 12 of Yang Lun's version. Despite this link there does not

seem to be any relation between the music of the two compositions.

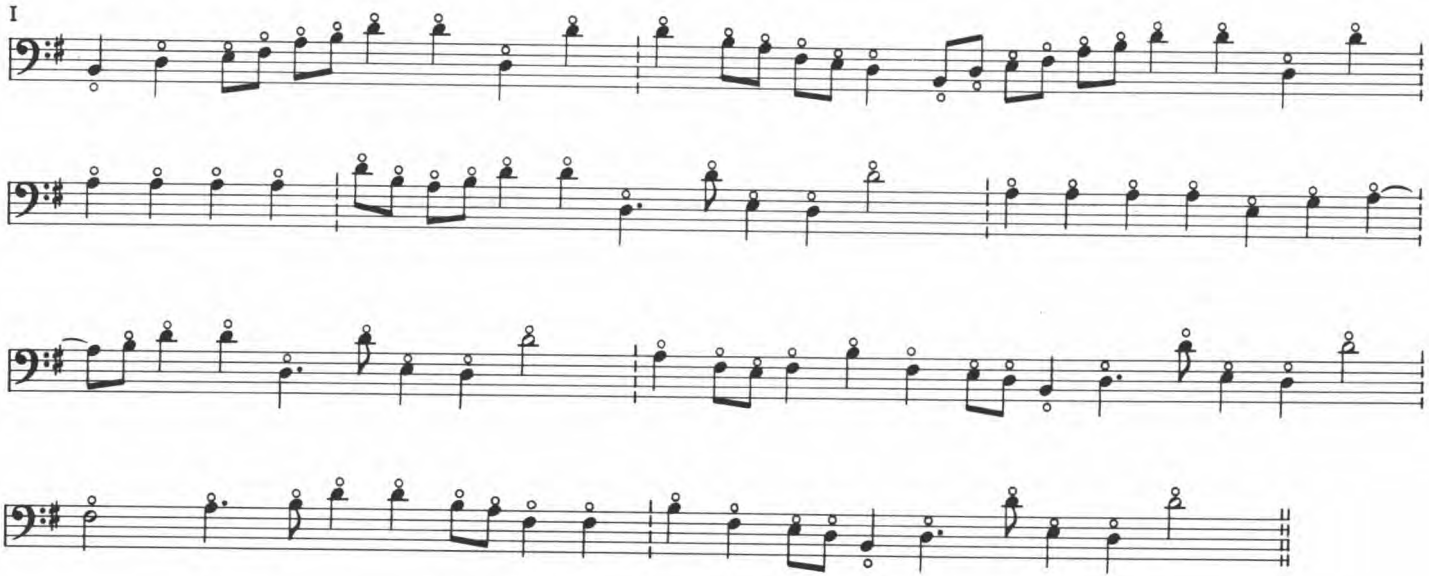
In his prefatory essay to the handbook, Yang Lun states that the composition was written by P'an T'ing-chien of the T'ang dynasty. After a reasonably thorough search, I have not been able to locate confirmation of this statement or in fact any evidence of a person by that name in the T'ang dynasty.

"Tao i" appears in twenty ch'in handbooks—in some cases under the alternate name "Ch'iu shui nung" [Autumn water song] (Cha 1956). I have been able to examine only a few versions. The version found in the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u* is very like those found in the *Ch'in-hsüeh ju-men* (CF I:642A-643D) and the *Tzu-yüan-t'ang ch'in-p'u* (CF I:542C-544B); this version was probably current in the ch'in tradition of Shantung in the Ch'ing dynasty. The "Tao i" score transcribed in the KCCC (p. 260-64), based on a late Ch'ing *ch'in-p'u,* is an entirely different work.

Numerous poems elaborate the theme of *tao-i.* One tradition has it that P'an T'ing-chien based the ch'in composition on a poem by Hsieh Hui-lien (A.D. 394-430), which is discussed and translated by Burton Watson in the following passage from his excellent study of Chinese lyric poetry (1971:65-66).

> . . . Because (fulling cloth) was customarily done in the fall, when the women were preparing cloth to make new clothes for winter, the poet begins with a rather extended evocation of an autumn evening. When we first catch sight of the women who are to do the pounding, we find them donning makeup and jewelry, hardly appropriate attire for an evening of strenuous labor. Apparently they are highborn ladies, or a lady and her maids, who live in a complex of adjoining rooms or mansions, and are perhaps hoping to dispel their ennui by trying their hand at physical toil. The poet seems to hint that their beauty is made peculiarly exciting by the unaccustomed sweat that breaks out on their flushed and powdered faces. The poem ends with one of the women describing the gift she had prepared to send to her loved one, again a theme drawn from the old Han *yüeh-fu.* The simple, uncrowded style of this closing section contrasts interestingly—some might say strangely—with the dense and polished elegance of the rest of the poem.
>
> The stars Heng and Chi never halt their courses,
> the sun runs swifty as though pursued.
> White dew wets the garden chrysanthemums,
> fall winds strip the ash tree in the court.
> Whirr whirr go the wings of the grasshopper;
> shrill shrill the cold crickets' cry:
> twilight dusk enfolds the empty curtains,
> the night moon enters white into chambers
> where lovely women put on their robes,
> jeweled and powdered, calling to each other.
> Hairpinned in jade; they come from northern rooms;
> with a clinking of gold, they walk the southern stairs.
> Where eaves are high comes the echo of fulling mallets.
> Where columns are tall, the sad sound of their pounding.

A light fragrance rises from their sleeves,
light sweat stains each side of the brow:
My cloth of glossy silk is done;
my lord is wandering and does not return.
I cut it with scissors drawn from this sheath,
sew it to make a robe he'll wear ten thousand miles.
With my own hands I lay it in the box,
fix the seal that waits for you to break.
Waist and belt I made to the old measure,
uncertain if they will fit you now or not.



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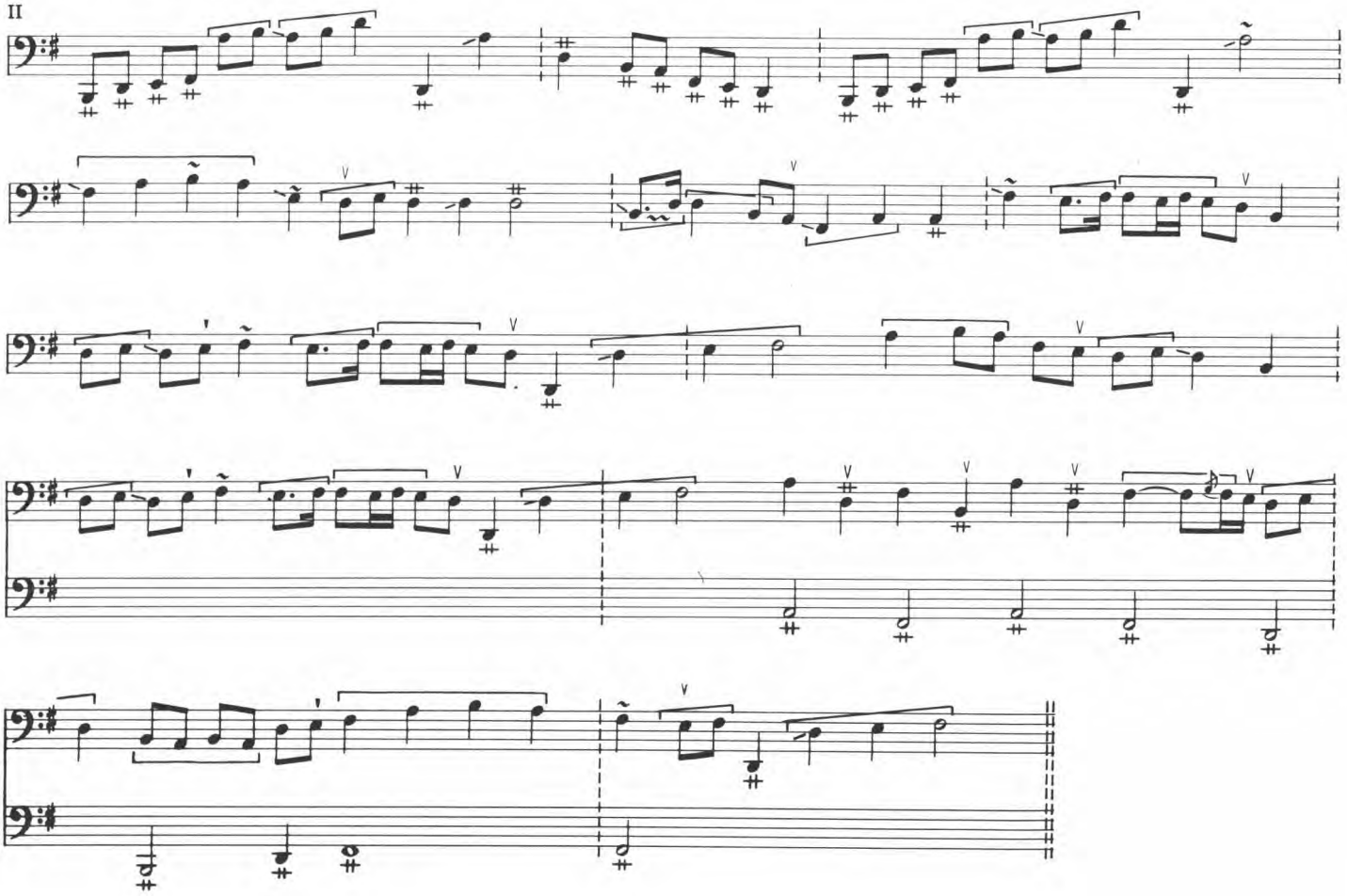

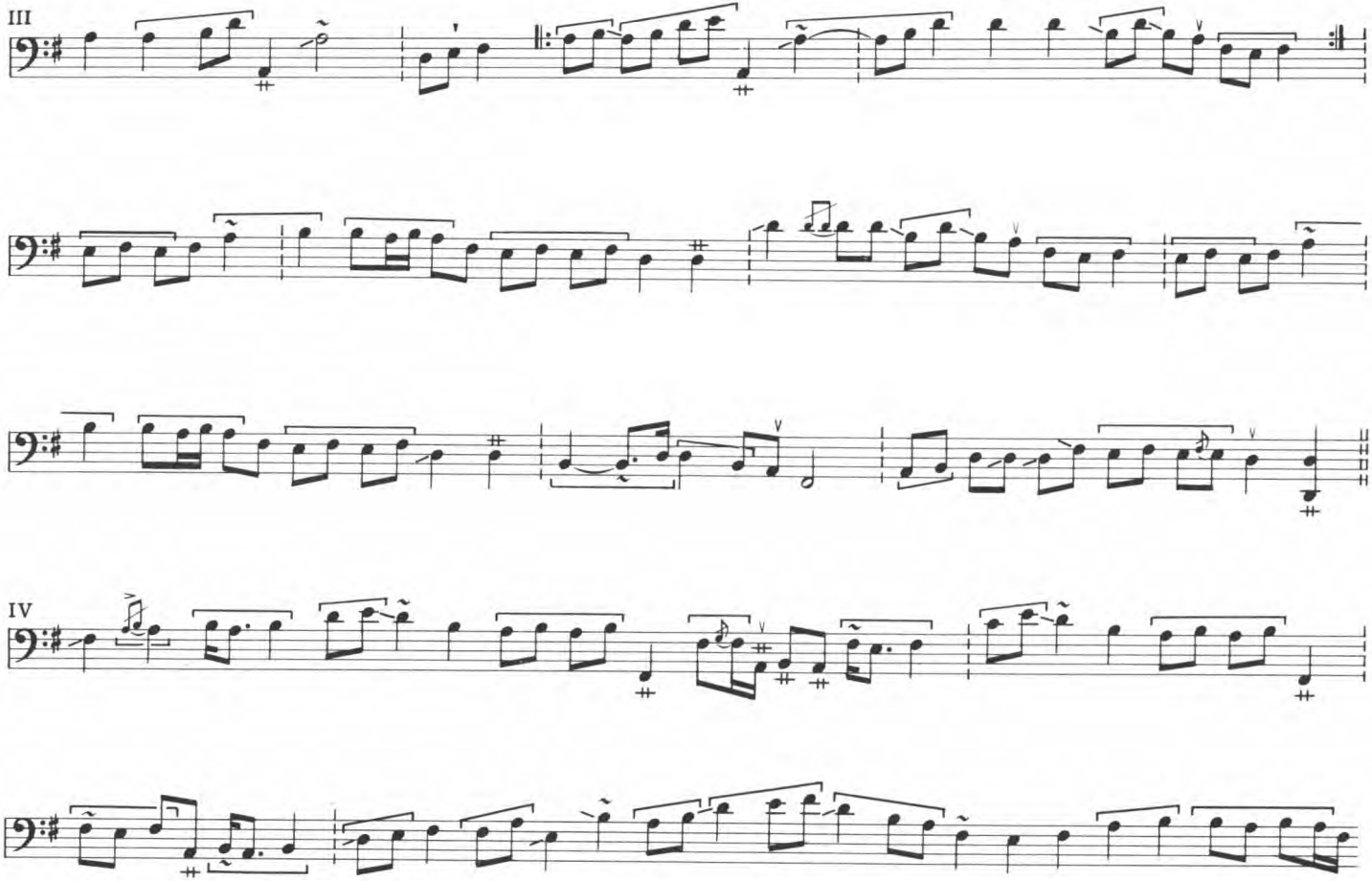
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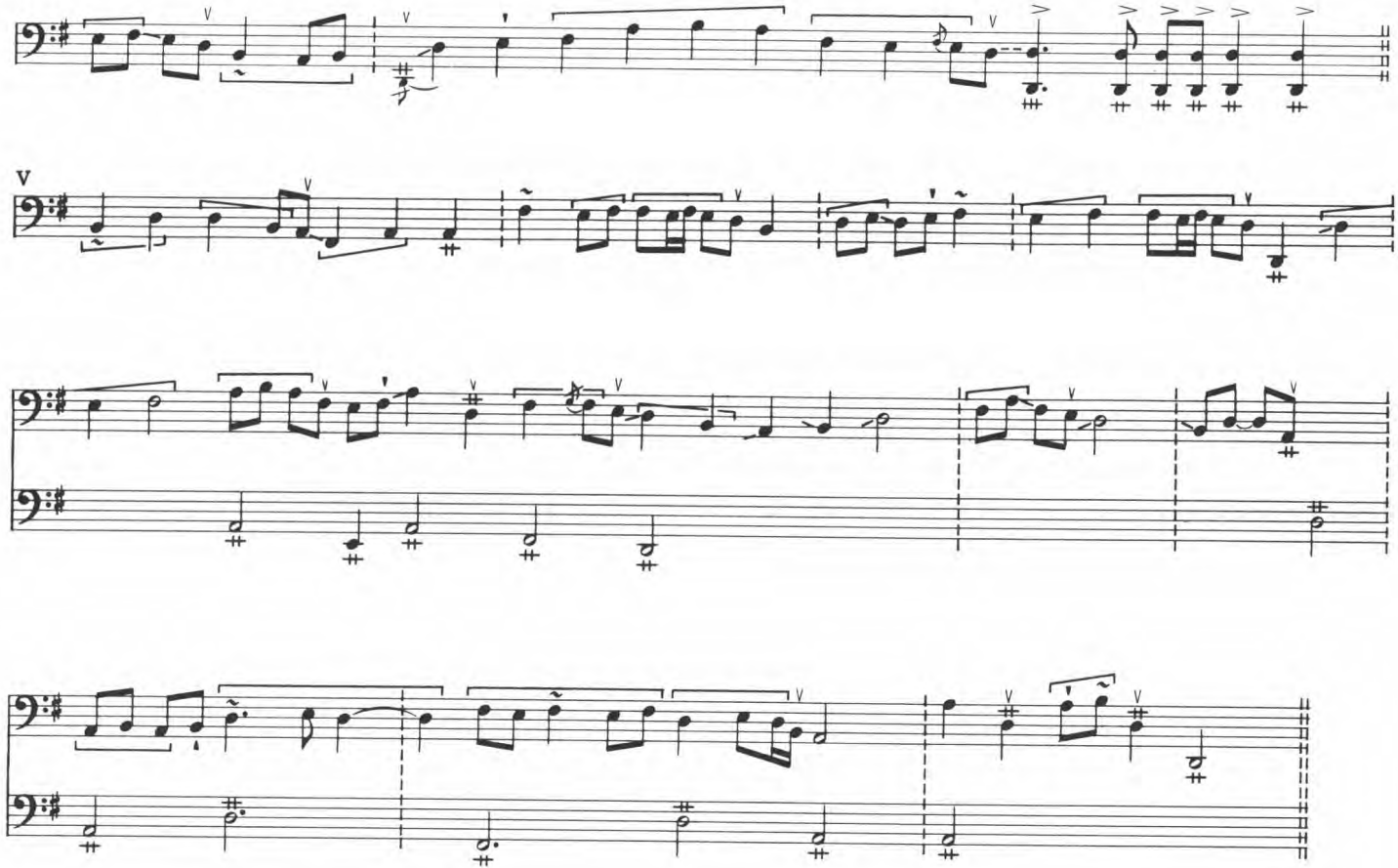

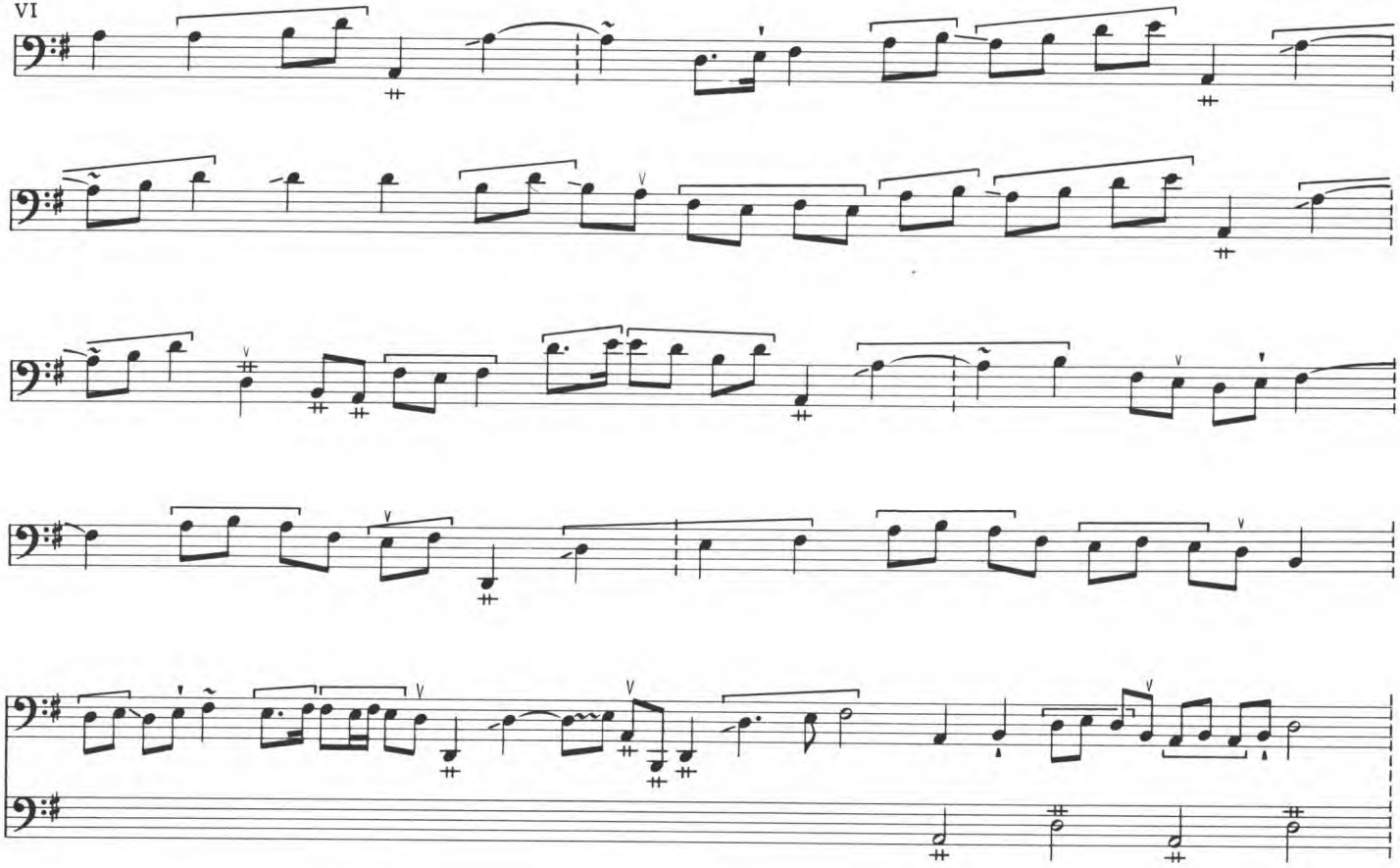
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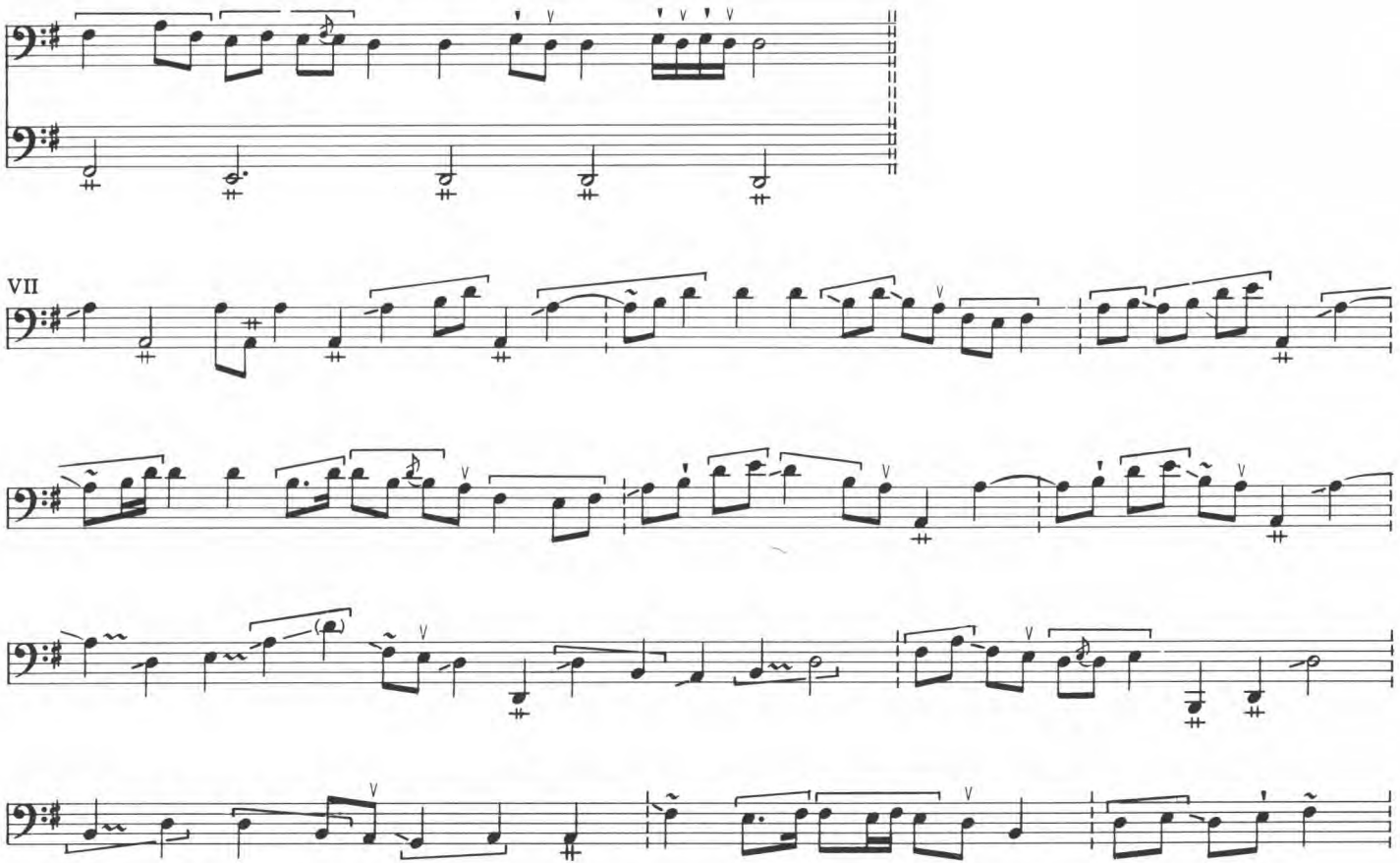
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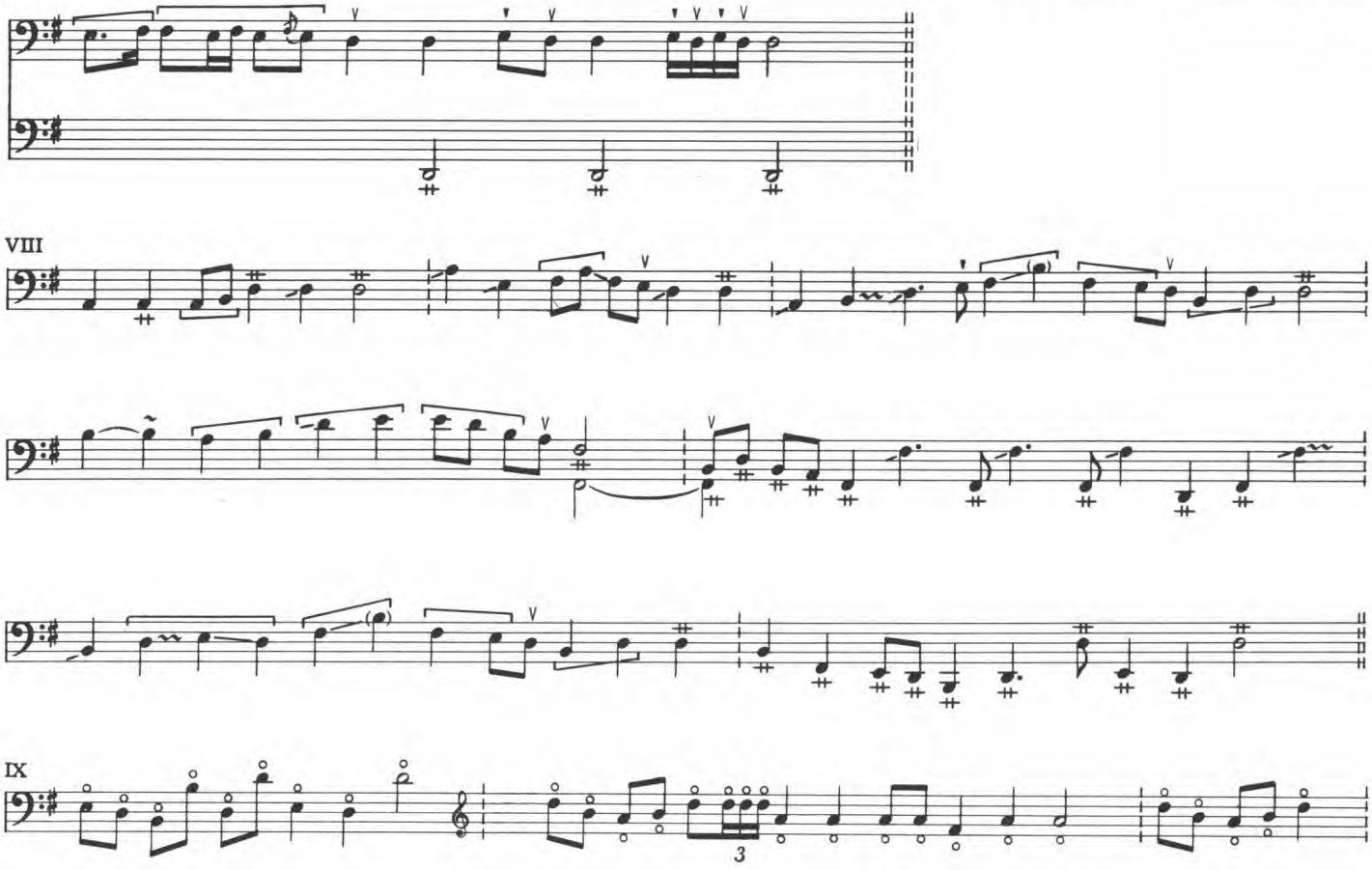
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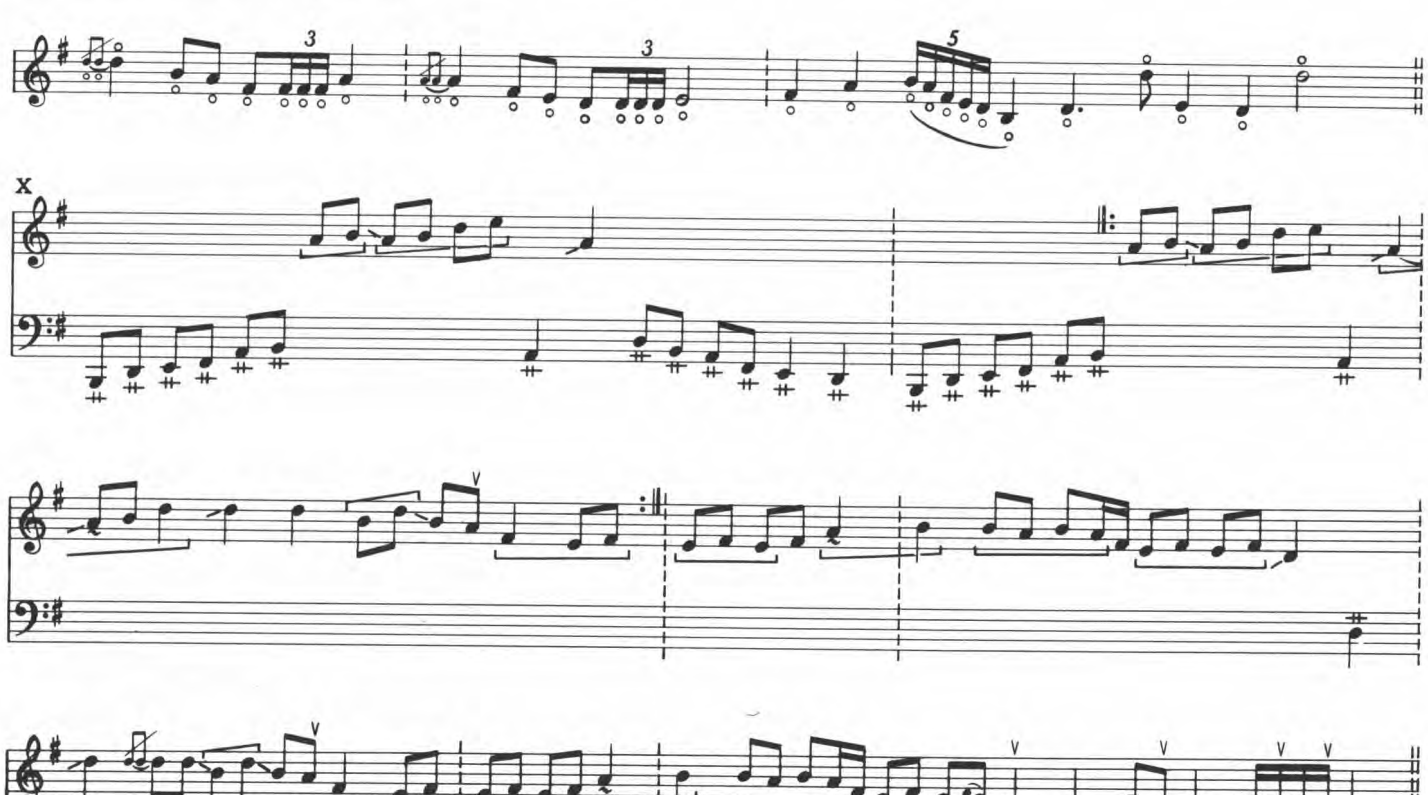
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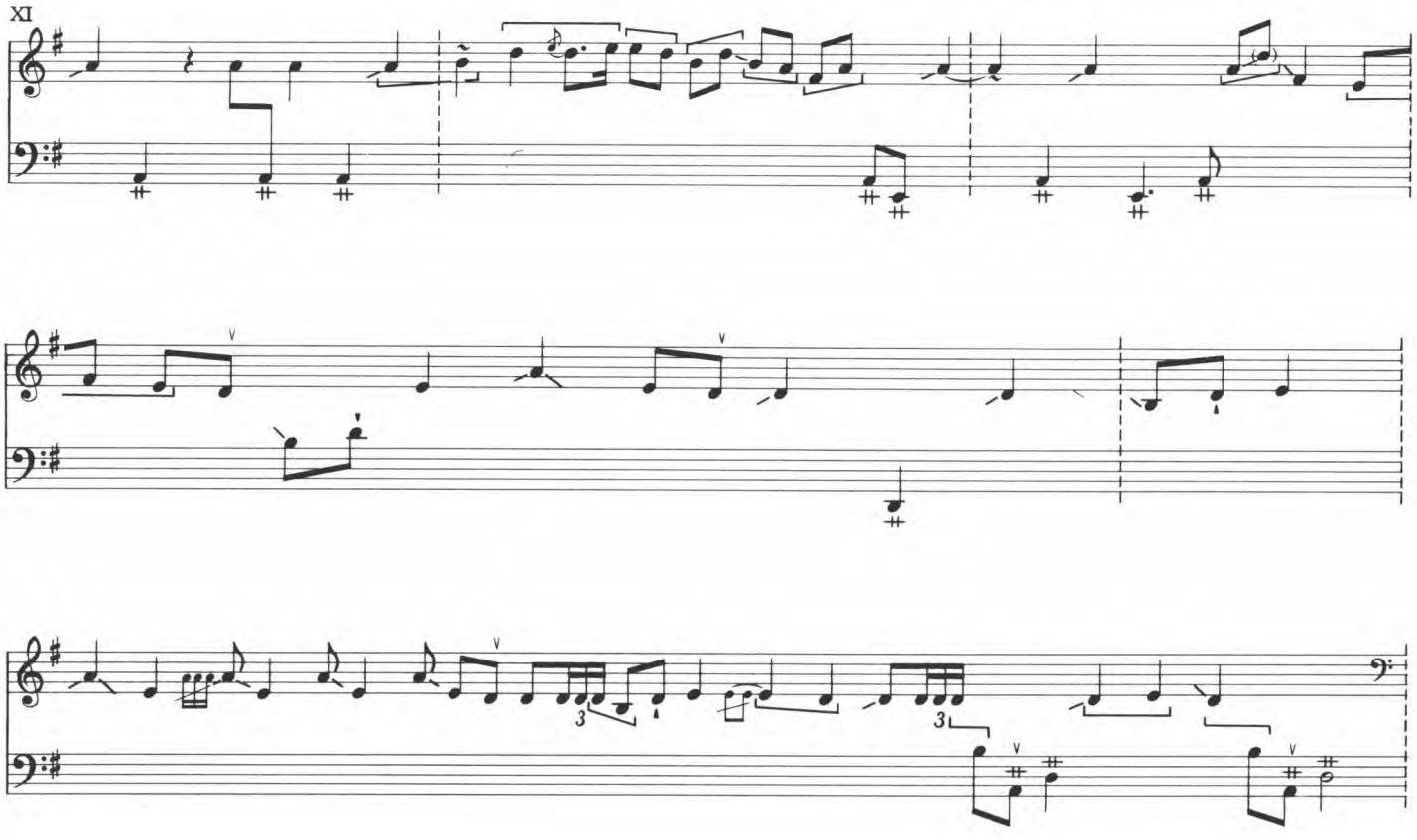
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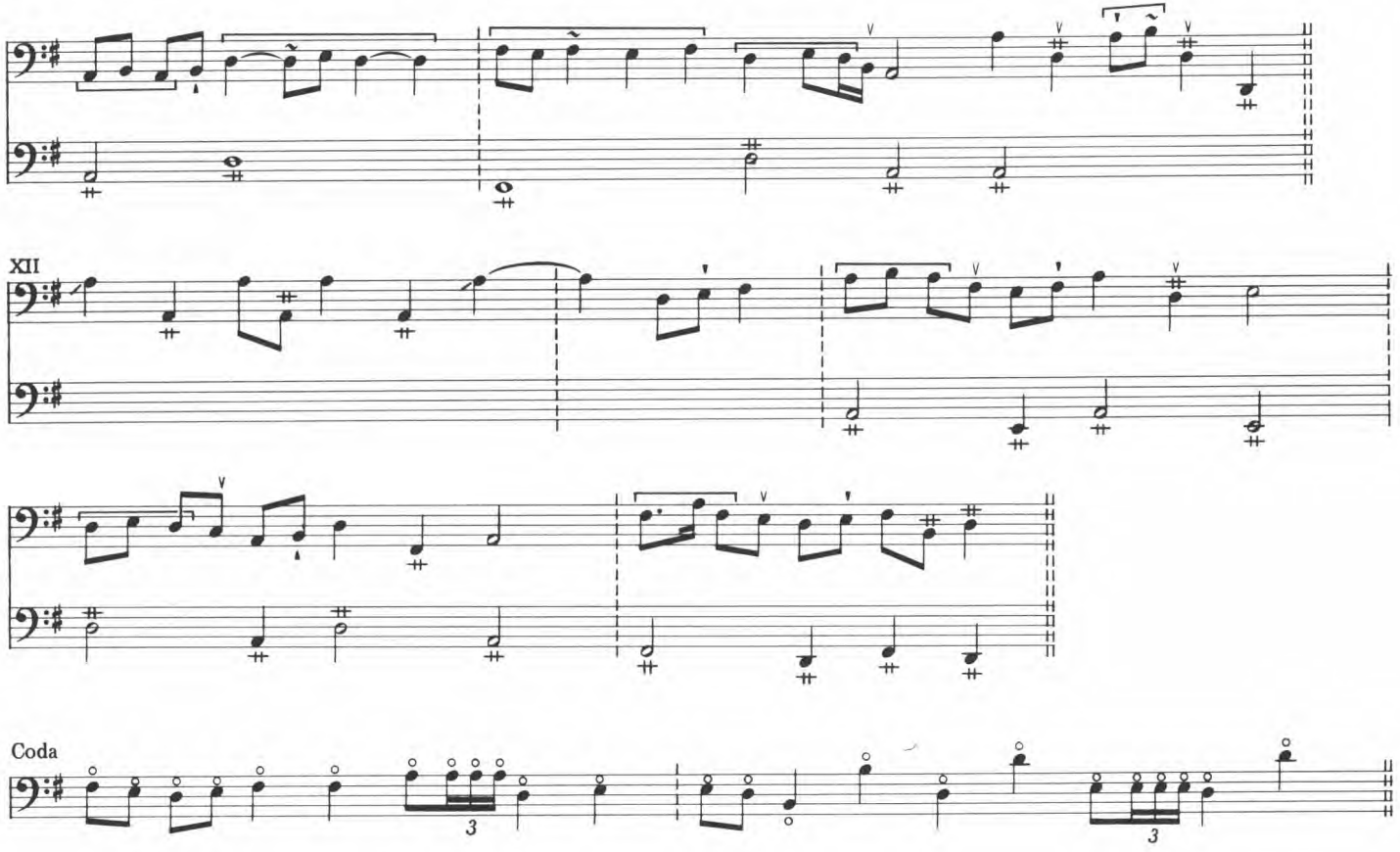
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Coda
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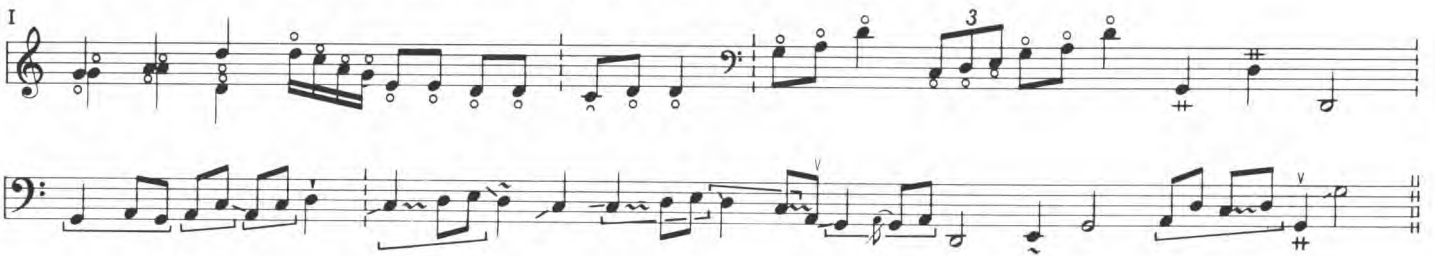
"SAO SHOU WEN T'IEN" [SCRATCH HEAD, APPEAL TO HEAVEN]

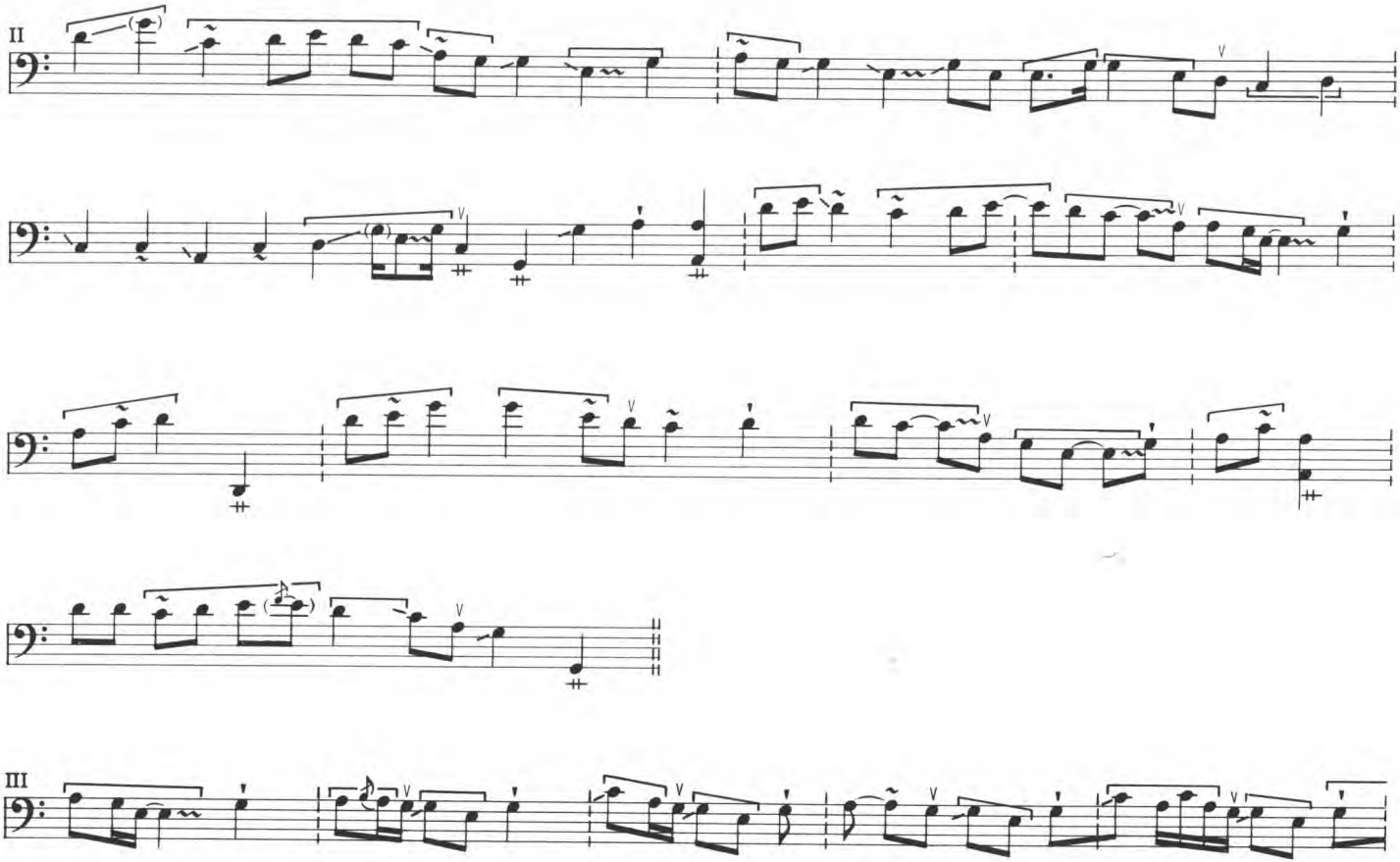
Lin-chung tuning, *chih* mode

This composition expresses the same ideas as the appealing to heaven in the "Li sao." It fully expresses extreme despair, frustration, resignation, and bitterness, and the inability to speak about it: staring aimlessly into the sky and sighing, or hanging the head immersed in deep thought. The increase in tempo in section 7 expresses extreme anguish, hate, and frustration. The harmonics in section 9 [coda] are scratching the head in despair. Finally the composition concludes with feelings of depression and resignation.

COMMENTARY. Ch'ü Yüan (B.C. 332-295), to whom the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u* attributes this work, was a minister under Prince Huai of the southern kingdom of Ch'u. Though a loyal and wise advisor, court intrigues led to his dismissal. After much anguish he committed suicide by drowning. Long considered an archetype of the loyal official by the Confucian establishment, Ch'ü has become a figure frequently employed in literature, painting, and legend. An early biography is found in the *Shih chi* of Ssu-ma Ch'ien (Watson 1961: I, 499-508). Ch'ü Yüan's lament "Li sao" [On encountering sorrow] is the most famous poem in the classic anthology *Ch'u tz'u* [Songs of Ch'u] and became the prototype in both theme and metrics for an entire genre of Chinese poetry. "Li sao" is too long to quote here. The reader may consult the excellent translation by David Hawkes (1959/1962).

The composition is known under a wide variety of names including (among others) "Ch'iu sai yin" [Autumn frontier song], "Shui hsien ts'ao" [Water spirit song], "Ch'ü tzu t'ien-wen" [Master Ch'ü questions heaven]; transcriptions of several different versions may be consulted in the *Ku-ch'in ch'ü-chi* (pp. 152-75).

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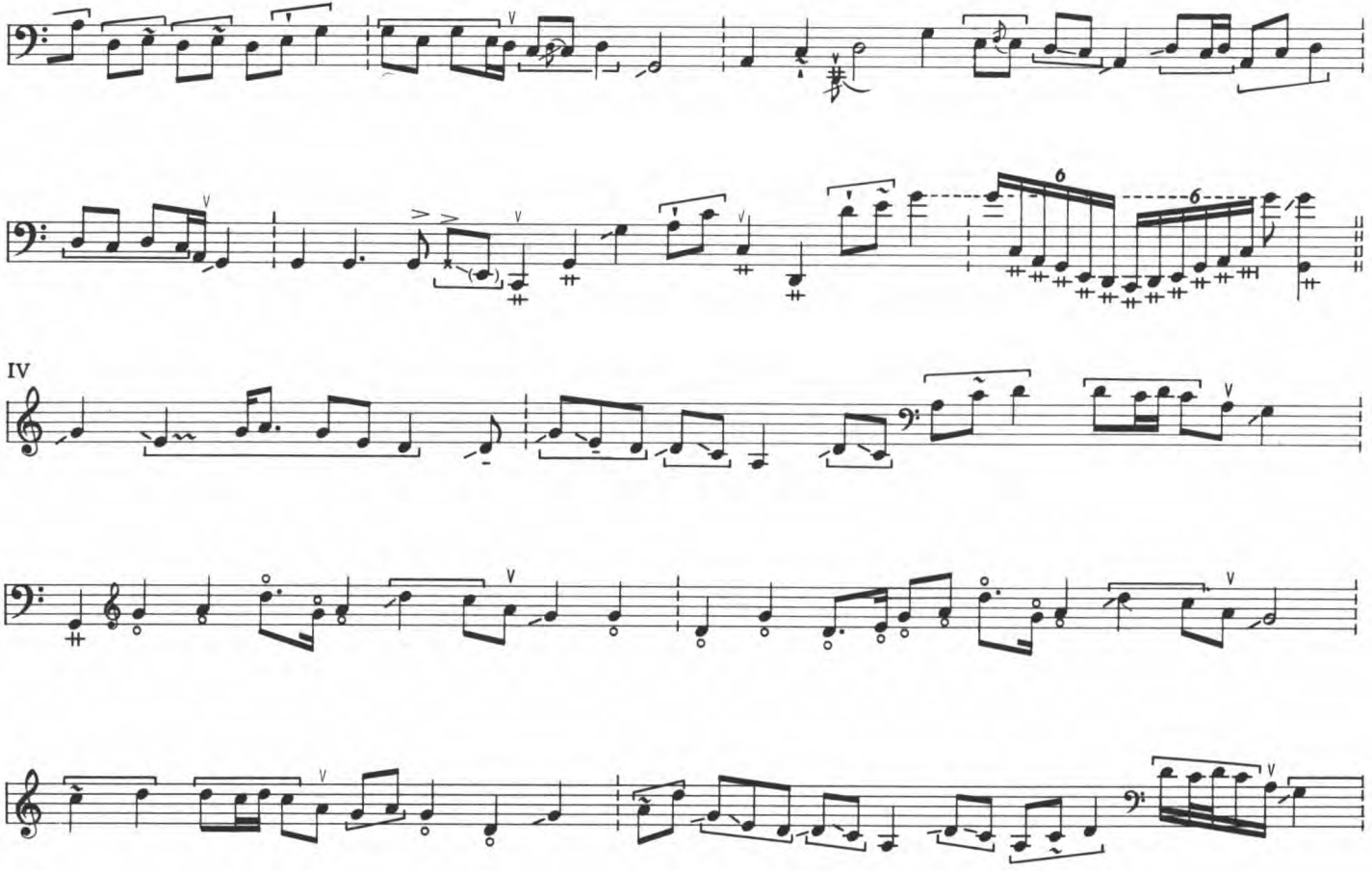
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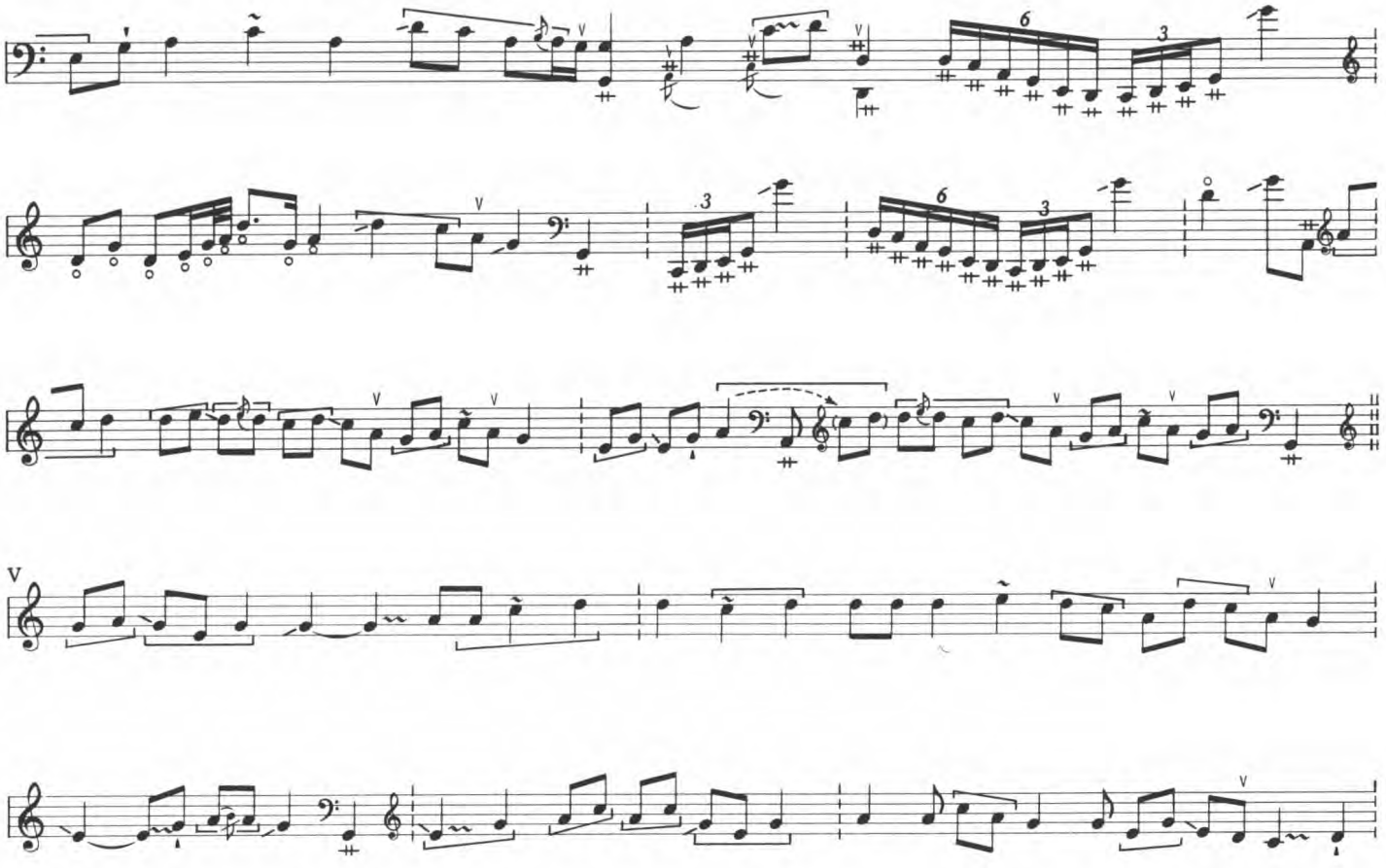

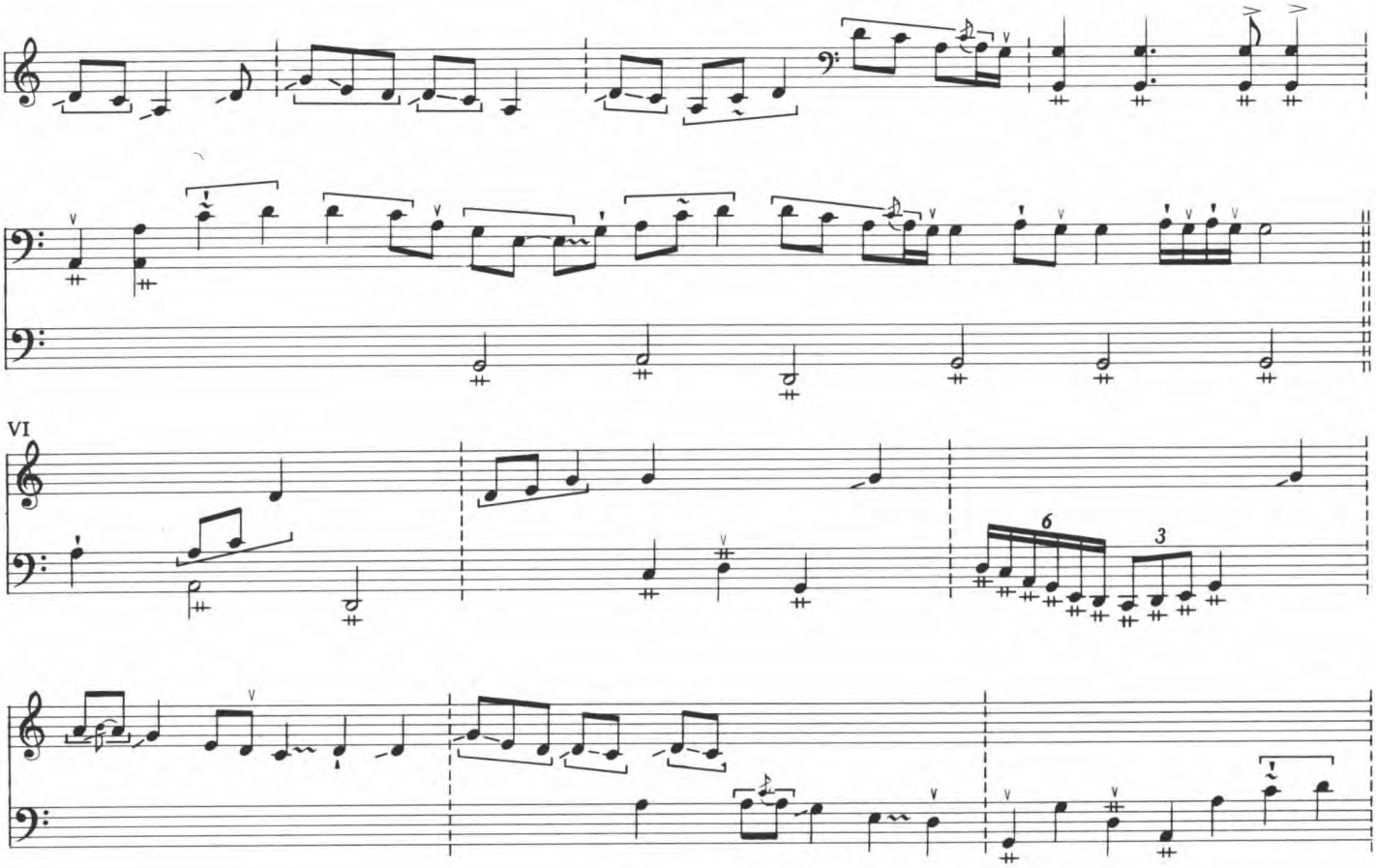
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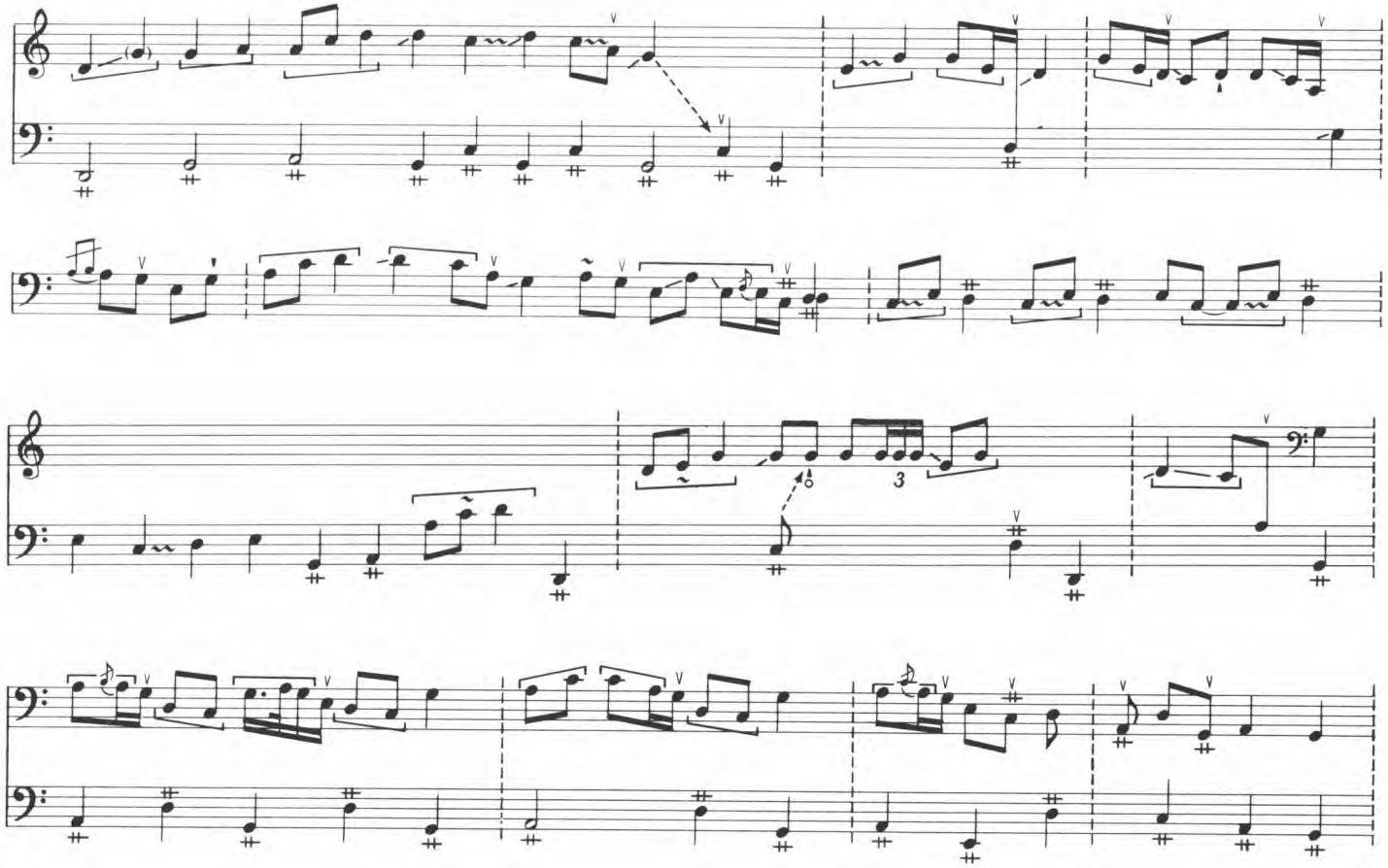

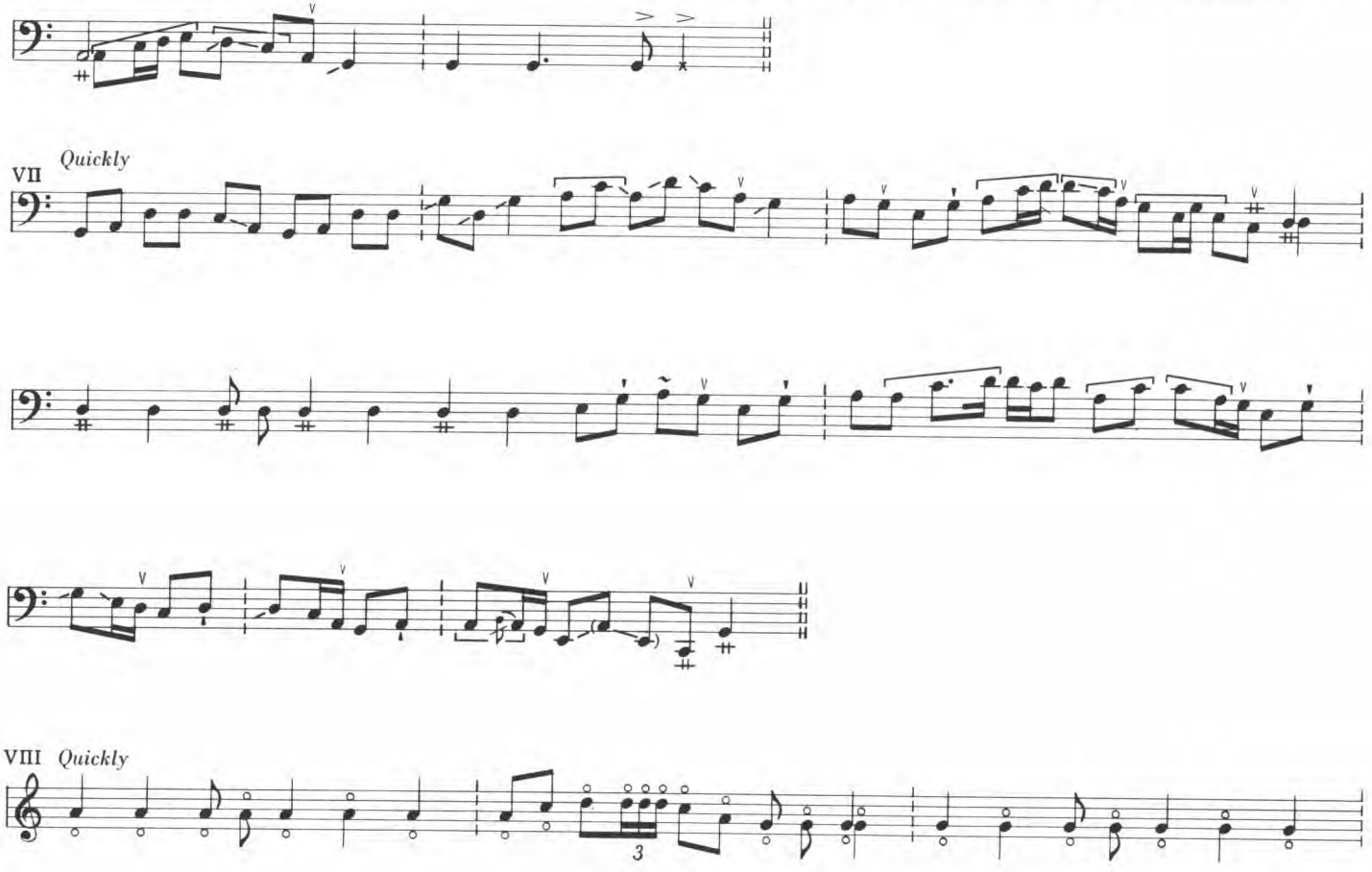
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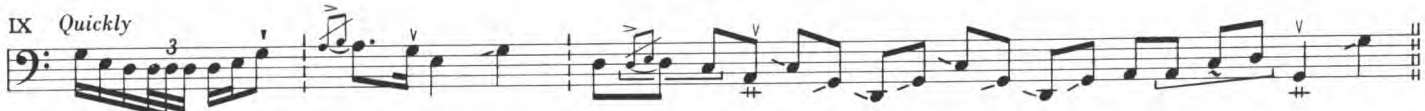
IX *Quickly*



Coda

"YÜEH SHANG WU-T'UNG" [MOON OVER THE WU-T'UNG TREE]

Chung-lü tuning, *yü* mode

Moon over the Wu-T'ung Tree

by Hsü Li-sun

Preface

In Spring 1938 to avoid the war [I stayed at] Mr. Wang's I-shuang garden in Hsing-jen village. Before my room camelias rose almost to the roof's edge, beautiful, resplendent like flowered brocade; cherry-apple, pine, bamboo, all stimulated the spirit. Through a carved square opening, like a window in the low tile-roofed garden wall, I could see distant scenery. Outside was a tall green *wu-t'ung* tree that intensified my deep interest. Strolling one night in the garden, the moonlight was brilliant, the wind blowing pleasantly; despite war's chaos, I could not help feeling at ease. Then I recited [this poem] aloud:[3]

Moon hovers over the Wu-t'ung tree
Wind arises flowers and flower-shadows quiver
Despite Spring's end still cold enough to shiver
I stroll around relaxed and free

Then, concentrating my thoughts for one month, I made this song according to the *lü;* thus I can leave traces of past events [memories for posterity]. I revised the manuscript five times, it was finished in a few months. Playing it over and over helps to diminish my sorrow a little.

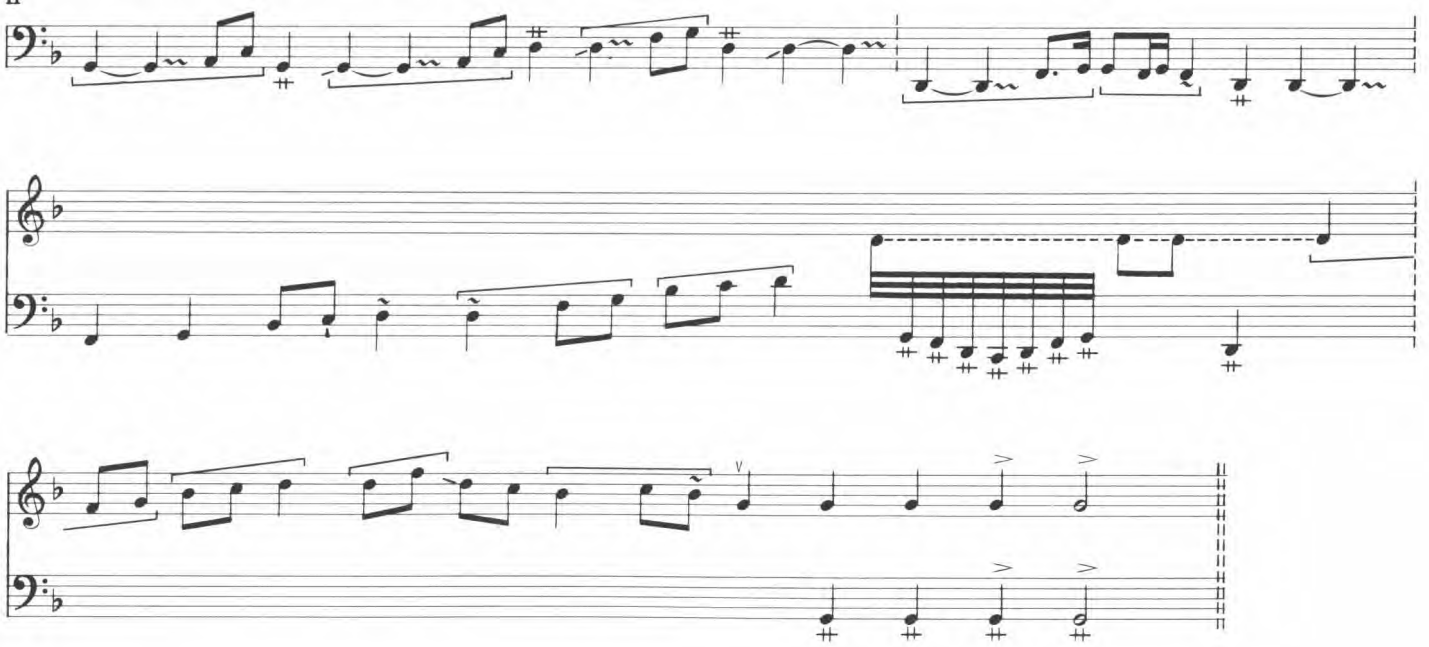
When I had already finished composing "Moon Over the Wu-t'ung Tree," I inquired about Mr. Shao Ta-su but received the bad news of his death; singing ceased, and [there were] many sighs. Mr. Shao and I lived in the same village, were old classmates, and studied ch'in together with Mr. Wang Yen-ch'ing; our friendship is very intimate. When T'ung-chen was lost to the enemy, Mr. Shao took all his family and moved from place to place; he died in the midsummer of his life. The moon descends behind the roof ridge; his ch'in remains, but the man is gone. The sound of music joins us still, [our friendship] not sundered by heaven and earth [fate, life and death]. Therefore I dedicate this composition to the memory of my good friend.

Moon hovers over the Wu-t'ung tree.

I

Wind arises, flowers and flower-shadows quiver.

II



Despite Spring's end still cold enough to shiver.

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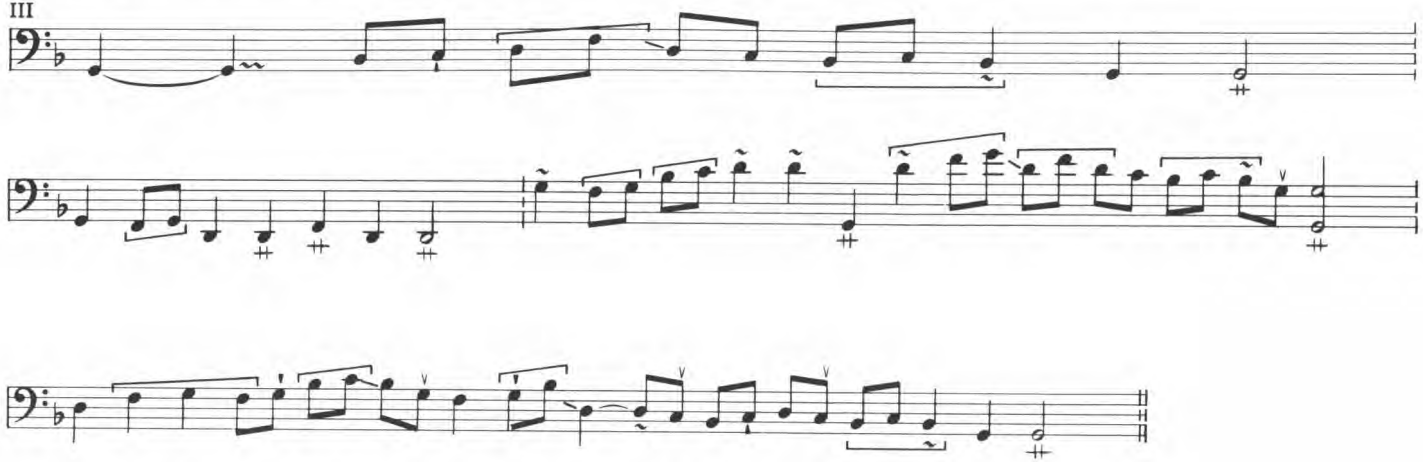

I stroll around relaxed and free.

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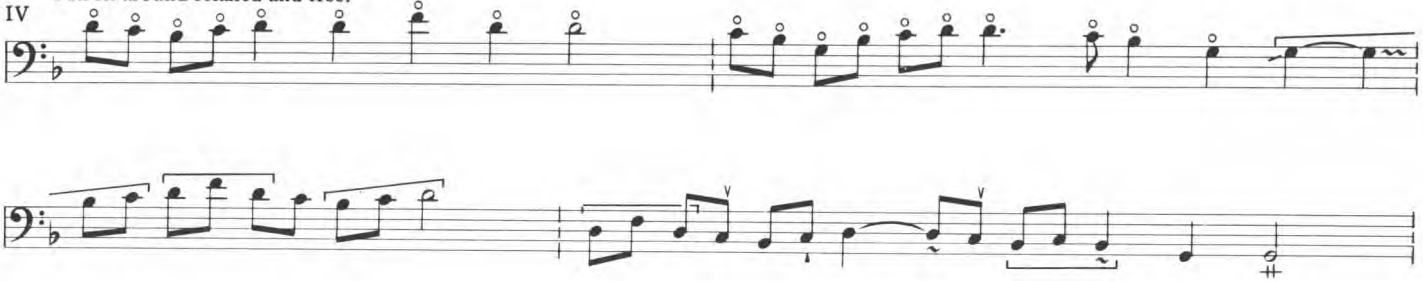

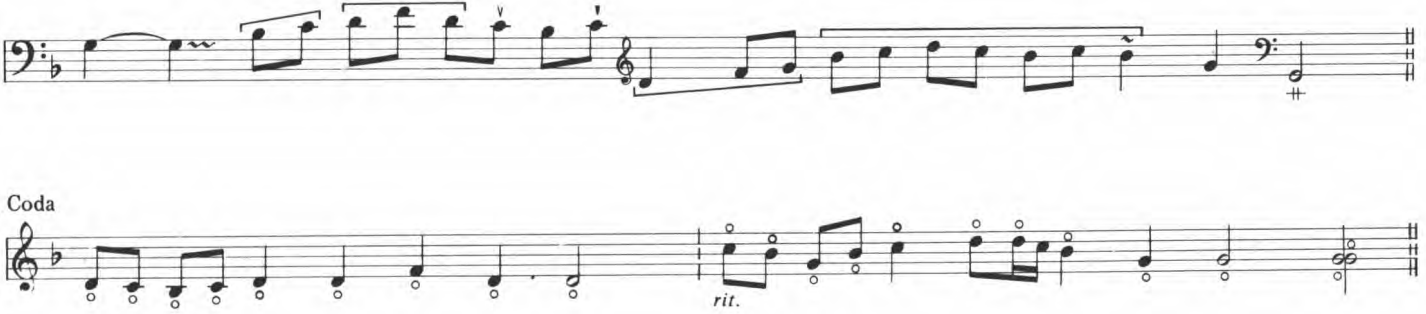
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CHAPTER SEVEN

變宮

Ch'in Repertory and Form

The compositions in the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u* constitute a small but representative sample of the current ch'in repertory. One way to demonstrate this is to consider the Mei-an music in the light of the categories that R. H. van Gulik proposed in his examination of the Ming dynasty ch'in repertory (1969:89):

> . . . it was remarked already that in *ch'in* ideology the Taoist element predominates. A cursory inspection of the subjects of the tunes shows that there also the tunes with a Taoist colour top the list. Most prominent among these Taoist tunes are those of a type which I would call that of *The Mystic Journey*. The ethereal tones of the lute loosen the soul of the player from its earthly bonds, and enable him to travel to the mystic heights where the Immortals dwell, and to be initiated into the secrets of the Elixir of Life.

The theme of the *Mystic Journey* not only characterizes Taoist mysticism but also relates to the older stratum of shamanism with its trance dances, astral travel, and magical curing rituals. Shamanism was an important feature of early Chinese religion, though denigrated by later Confucians and Taoists alike. It is still found in various forms among the tribal groups neighboring China. The composition "Hsia hsien yu" certainly epitomizes this category. Huang Ti induced his spirit journey by fasting and meditation. He learned the Taoist ideal of *wu-wei* (non-action) and through practicing it, achieved a magical cure for the ills of the nation.

A related Taoist theme is the recluse who escapes the world's daily cares while still living in it—the prototype of Zen enlightenment. Here belong the figures of the old fisherman, the woodcutter, the hermit monk. "Chi lo yin" is a composition of this type.

Van Gulik's second category includes compositions of a semi-historical character (1969:93): "under this

group I classify all tunes that are connected with some famous person, or with a well-known historical theme." Several Mei-an scores fit this category. "Feng ch'iu huang" and "Ch'ang-men yüan" are both associated with incidents in the life of Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju; "Sao-shou wen-t'ien" deals with the troubles of Ch'ü Yüan. All of these works are also related to literary products, van Gulik's third category. This is to be expected, since any historical theme of significance will undoubtedly have several famous literary works either written about it or integrated with the story itself.

The third category, musical versions of literary products, contains compositions that either set a well-known poem to music, or attempt to portray in sound the scenes and feelings associated with a literary work. Mei-an works appropriate to this category are: "Kuan shan yüeh," "Ch'iu feng tz'u," "Chi lo yin," "Feng ch'iu huang," "Ch'iu-chiang yeh-p'o," "Ch'ang-men yüan," "Tao i," and "Sao-shou wen-t'ien.

In the fourth category belong compositions descriptive of nature, works which van Gulik believes are among the most widespread in the ch'in repertory. "Feng lei yin" and "P'ing-sha lo-yen" are the Mei-an scores best fitting this category. "Ch'iu-yeh ch'ang," "Yü-lou ch'un-hsiao," and "Yüeh-shang wu-t'ung" seem slightly less apt but nevertheless sufficiently bucolic to qualify.

Van Gulik's fifth category is devoted to compositions descriptive of literary life. None of the compositions in the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u* seems to fit here.

A miscellaneous 5 percent of the repertory consists of Buddhist chants and "purely musical compositions," van Gulik finds. Only one Mei-an score falls under this heading: "Shih-t'an chang," which is, of course, a Buddhist chant. The only score that might be considered a "purely musical composition" is "Ch'iu-yeh ch'ang": it has neither attribution nor program notes connecting it with a specific theme or scene. The title and subtitle, however, would be sufficient to call to mind a broad range of appropriate contexts and feelings. To be devoid of program, a ch'in composition would probably have to be entitled with an effectively neutral label, such as "Ch'in Melody in Three Sections." This is, as van Gulik properly observes, rare. He concludes that " . . . nearly all the tunes of the Ming repertoire have some special meaning or portent: they are what nowadays would be called 'programme music.' The music is not used

independently, but chiefly as a means for expressing an idea, for conveying an impression" (1969:99-100).

The Mei-an repertory bears out this conclusion in a contemporary context, and the compositions fit generally well into van Gulik's five categories.

In the Foreword to the *Ku-ch'in ch'ü-chi,* Cha Fu-hsi suggests the following model for the form of typical ch'in compositions (1962:2, in condensed paraphrase, not translation):

1. *San-ch'i* (free introduction). Opening section; free rhythm; slow tempo; selects central pitch, secondary pitches, establishes the mode; includes fragments of the main theme; length dependent on extent of the entire work.

2. *Ju-tiao* (theme starts). Main theme appears; meter becomes regular; mode clearly established; leads to climax through repetition, contrast, transformation, and development; climax attained with faster tempo, wider range, emphasis on contrast, double-stops to increase volume; this is the main part of the composition, usually more than half its length.

3. *Ju-man* (ritard starts). Uses very strong contrasts of rhythm or mode to create new, more relaxed atmosphere.

4. *Fu-ch'i* (return to introduction). Optional; found in some longer compositions; reprise of themes or variations; hints at ending but gives impression of not wanting to stop.

5. *Wei-sheng* (coda). Many compositions use harmonics here; light and slow ending; reaffirms the tonal center; creates atmosphere of echoing.

This model is not intended to apply to compositions setting poetic texts nor to compositions derived from other musical genres (such as "Shih-t'an chang").

A contrasting and much more general model was proposed by Laurence Picken (1957:119). First distinguishing between short compositions *(hsiao-ch'ü),* which are essentially short songs, and long compositions *(ta-ch'ü),* Picken says of the latter:

> . . . [they] are purely instrumental, and their structure is that of a melody of higher order; they are for the most part rondos, in which the returns of the main tune are transposed up or down by one or more octaves—necessarily with change in timbre, or presented in different "registration"—in harmonics or in a different position, without change in pitch but with change in timbre. . . . The larger tunes almost invariably begin with a prelude in slow time, often on the open strings, but frequently in harmonics. . . .
>
> The climax of a zither tune is frequently marked by a passage in harmonics. If the work is of considerable extent there

may be more than one such. . . . These passages are felt to be of the greatest emotional tension: at these moments the music leaves the earth.

Most of the zither tunes, whether short or long, end with a coda in harmonics. This may be very short, or it may contain a reference to the main tune and summarize the whole work . . . .

Aspects of both models apply to the compositions in the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u.* "Kuan shan yueh," "Ch'iu feng tz'u," "Chi lo yin," and "Feng ch'iu huang" are all *hsiao-ch'u* and do not show much functional differentiation from phrase to phrase. With the exception of "Shih-t'an chang," the other compositions are constructed with clearly differentiated sections. Only in "Tao i" (section 9) is there a hint of *fu-ch'i,* or a returning to the beginning, which breaks the structure into two large parts. All the other compositions build a single, broad, arched progression from the introduction to the coda. Pinpointing where the divisions between *san-ch'i, ju-tiao,* and *ju-man* occur is not always easy, however, and may be a matter of conjecture. These theoretical divisions may not be entirely apt in all cases, and there is no evidence the composers followed them in constructing their works.

I believe that the central process in the unfolding of these compositions is the continually expanding contrast of range and timbre. In liner notes for a recording of "Mei-hua san-nung" [Three vairations on "plum blossom"], I commented that "the form is more clearly organized than most *ch'in* pieces, being developed from a few basic motives and contrasts between high (harmonics) and low registers" (1969:2B). In *Sonic Design,* Robert Cogan and Pozzi Escot carry the analysis much further, responding to my general observation:

This, however, gives only the slightest clue to the actual registral design.

. . . The basic color contrast created by these registral differences is between low tones rich in partials and high ones (stopped tones or "harmonics") limited in partials. Within these basic tone-color distinctions there exists a variety of subtle shades. . . .

As the principal motion moves toward its apex, the quality of contrast is sharpened and intensified: in sections 5, 6, and 7 the contrasts of register are immediate in terms of time, and far-reaching in terms of space and color. In these sections notes and cells are sounded in several registers, and the music jumps between several continuing levels. The contrasts, which were spread over several sections at the beginning, here bounce back and forth directly off of each other. Breathtaking!

After the apex section, the motion not only descends to the original region of the principal motion, but . . . produces a total effect of merger . . . that finally unifies the diverse elements. The tensions of the previous separations of register and color are, as a result, overcome in the final section.

> The large-scale progression of the piece is a progression of registers and colors. Through that progression, a form takes impressive shape. [1976:341-47]

Taking contrast as the essential element, then, one can reconcile the apparently conflicting ideas of Cha Fu-hsi, who points to range, tempo, volume, and contrast as characteristic of climax, and Picken, who singles out ethereal passages in harmonics as climactic. Though, of course, individual works present unique structures, I propose that in typical ch'in compositions there are two complementary climaxes: a *yang* climax, or a climax of activity (described by Cogan and Escot); and a *yin* climax, or climax of repose (described by Picken). The emotional peak, then, inheres in neither one nor the other but precisely in their juxtaposition. The two climaxes complement each other and merge in expressing the inner contrast between the active and the quiescent, the Confucian and the Taoist, the Yang and the Yin.

Notes

Chapter One

1. Information in this section is garnered from the prefaces and essays in the 2d, 3d, and 4th editions of the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u.*

2. His performances were recorded during the 1956 research program on ch'in carried out by Cha Fu-hsi and his colleagues (see Cha 1958 and KCCC); he performed on ch'in and *p'i-p'a* in public concerts in the early 1960s. I have recently (1976) heard that Hsü lived until the mid-1970s, but cannot confirm the report.

3. Text is in the 3d edition, 1971, pp. 19-21; also in the 4th edition, 1975, pp. 3-4.

4. "Hexagram" here is denoted by the Chinese word *kua,* which usually refers to the eight trigrams of Fu-hsi forming the basis of the divination system of sixty-four hexagrams of the *I ching* [Book of changes]. Twelve of the sixty-four hexagrams are traditionally associated with the twelve months of the year; this is the series invoked here.

5. In the context of traditional pitch-pipe *(lü)* theory, this statement does not appear, on the surface, to make sense. Here, however, Wang is referring specifically to the application of *lü* theory to ch'in tunings and is stating that the *kung* string (traditionally called the "Ruler") is originally tuned to *huang-chung,* needing to be retuned only to the *lü* a semitone above or below *huang-chung* in order to encompass all sixty tuning-

modes. This process is explained in detail in chapter three on tuning, scale, and mode.

6. The "system of mutual generation by 8" is a synonym for the cycle of fifths. Arranging the *lü* by semitones, starting at any *lü* and counting eight *lü* (including both the initial and final *lü*) one arrives at a pitch a fifth from the origin. I do not understand why Wang claimed that scholars misunderstood *jui-pin* as *pien-chih,* except perhaps that *pien-chih* was not a "regular" pitch in ch'in music, hence the proper function of *jui-pin* is only that of transposition, not as a member of the diatonic scale series.

7. I have been able to identify most saints in this canon; references will be found in the index-glossary. This passage is a paraphrase of one in the *Analects* of Confucius. In Waley's translation, the original reads:

> Master K'ung said, Highest are those who are born wise. Next are those who become wise by learning. After them come those who have to toil painfully in order to acquire learning. Finally, to the lowest class of the common people belong those who toil painfully without ever managing to learn. [*Analects,* XVI, 9; Waley n.d.:206]

Wang Yen-ch'ing's paraphrase omits the final element in the series and inserts a mediate one between the second and third. In an earlier passage in the *Analects* (VII, 20) Confucius specifically disclaims his own membership in the highest class, saying: "I was not born wise." I have no doubt that other such paraphrases of the Confucian classics are woven into Wang's Preface and into other essays in the book, since such allusion and quotation was considered an important characteristic of elegant writing.

8. Though a somewhat casual list, the works on Wang Yen-ch'ing's study shelf can be identified with some certainty. The *Li chi* [Record of rites] is one of the thirteen Confucian classics, available in innumerable editions. The *Han shu* [Book of the Han] is the official history of the former Han dynasty by Pan Ku (first century), the second in the series of dynastic histories. *Lai-tzu i-chu* [Master Lai's annotated "I"] is not itself a book title, but a reference to a particular annotated edition of the *I ching,* [Book of changes] , an important classic handbook of divination counted as one of the five Confucian classics. The edition referred to is almost certainly that compiled by Lai Chih-te (1525-1604); his *Chou-i chi-chu* (Collected Annotations of the *Chou i Chou i* is another name for the *I ching*) was included in the Imperial Library *(Ssu-ku ch'üan-shu);* reprints of that hand-copied edition are now available, and separate printed editions were published during the Ming dynasty.

The final title on Wang's list is the most difficult to pin down since it is also only a shorthand reference rather than an actual book title. (If, in fact, it were the proper title of an anthology, then it is one no longer extant in any Mainland Chinese library.) Many scholars with the family name "Chi" wrote books; many published collections (*ts'ung-shu,* which I translate here as "anthology," is a general term for a collection of writings). The most likely candidate I have found,

however, is the *Chi Shen-chai hsien-sheng ch'üan-chi* [Complete collection of (works by) Mr. Chi Shen-chai] by Chi Ta-k'uei (1746-1825). Chi Shen-chai was Chi Ta-k'uei's former pseudonym, Hsiang-i his courtesy name. An important scholar, whose biography was included in the Ch'ing dynastic history, his works include treatises on music and on the *I ching*. His interests thus seem to match those of Wang Yen-ch'ing more closely than those of any other Chi whose works were collected into an anthology.

9. Ch'ang-su is the "literary name" *(hao)* of K'ang Yu-wei (1858-1927), a reformer and scholar. Though K'ang had to flee China when the Empress Dowager took control in 1898, he returned when the Republic was established in 1912 and traveled about the country. Though I cannot otherwise confirm or enlarge on this intriguing connection between Wang Yen-ch'ing and a major philosopher-politician, there is no reason to suspect its veracity.

Chapter Two

1. The term *hui-ch'i* used here means lacquer mixed with ashes—a special kind of cement sealer. As used on a ch'in, the first coats build up a thick, hard layer of cement. Final coats of lacquer without ashes produce the black, shiny surface found on most modern ch'in. Some details of the process are discussed under "Differentiating Instruments," this chapter.

2. "Chung-ni" refers to the style of ch'in—its size and shape—illustrated in this handbook and by far the most commonly seen today. Many other styles of ch'in have been constructed at one time or other, however—some with wavy edges, others with round heads, and so forth. A good survey of variant ch'in types is found in the Ming dynasty ch'in handbook *T'ai-ku i-yin* (CF I:41-52).

3. Earlier handbooks usually call this part the "forehead of the phoenix" [*feng-e*]; cf. illustration in van Gulik 1969: 102.

4. More poetically known as *hsien-jen chien* [shoulders of the immortal] in earlier handbooks.

5. The name "peg guards" seems to represent a vestigial function, since the pegs normally project downwards below these feet. When one plays on a special ch'in table with a cut-out for the pegs (see section on ch'in tables), these feet serve to keep the bottom of the ch'in raised off the table; when one plays on an ordinary table, they have no function.

6. In his Master's thesis (1975, Appendix IV), José B. Aguèra-Arcas included a photo essay on the process of making the silk loops and mounting the ch'in strings, as demonstrated by Lui Pui-yuen.

Chapter Three

1. Potential confusion here arises from the two Chinese words (*lǚ* and *lǜ*) used to denote the two segments of the traditional tuning system. The two words have different tones, and are thus pronounced with differing inflections; the written characters are entirely distinct. To simplify printing I have not indicated word-tones or given the Chinese written characters unless they are necessary for understanding the text.

2. A good study of these classical systems is "Symbolism in Ancient Chinese Music Theory" by Kazu Nakaseko (1957).

3. For details of these systems and tables of their pitches, see McClain 1979.

4. "Hsien Weng" means "Ancient Immortal" or "The Old Fairy." I shall not hazard a guess as to how it came to be used in this context. The text does not explain. Treating it as a technical name for the procedure described seems best.

5. Remember that this refers to the process of putting on strings. The right hand is pulling the string tightly over the nut and around the foot. The left-hand fingers, therefore, both stop and pluck the strings being tested.

6. There is no need for a fifth at that point, in fact, and I think the text may well be in error.

Chapter Four

1. To clarify the text and make this list complete, I have created sub-entries for terms defined within the body of a main entry.

Chapter Five

1. "Kuan shan yüeh" is transcribed with Li Po's poem of the same title as text in KCCC (p. 271), according to the Mei-an score as played by Kuan P'ing-hu. No text appears, however, in the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u.* In fact, Li Po's poem does not match either the mood or the structure of the music very well.

2. Sometimes also translated "Fu on a Handsome Man," the Chinese phrase being happily innocent of gender. The Chinese text may be found in the *Ku-wen yüan* (SPTK), ch. 3, pp. 27-28.

3. My source is the SPPY edition, ch. 10, p. 9V.

4. My source is the edition of Yüan's poems in the SPPY (II, ch. 14, p. 12R); cf. Hervouet's French version (1964:402). I am not aware of any other English versions of this poem.

Chapter Six

1. The poem refers to places associated with the seemingly endless battles of the Chinese people (Han) against the Western Barbarians (Hu). The place-names used evoke distant sites in Kansu Province: T'ien Shan, a famous mountain; Yü-men, a mountain pass; Pai-teng, a mountain with a winding road; Ch'ing-hai, a large lake (also known as Koko Nor) in a province of the same name south of Kansu, bordering on Tibet.

2. David R. Knechtges has just published a translation and study of the "Ch'ang-Men fu" (1981). After summarizing the scholarly debate, Knechtges finds, on internal stylistic evidence, no credible grounds for doubting the poem's authenticity—though the preface to the poem is certainly a later addition.

3. The four lines of this poem appear as subtitles for the four sections of the composition. These are the only subtitles in the *Mei-an ch'in-p'u,* though poetic subtitles were routinely used in earlier ch'in handbooks.

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Abbreviations:
CCCC. *See* Chinese Music Institute, 1963
CF. *See* T'ang Chien-yüan, 1971a
KCCC. *See* Chinese Music Institute, 1962
SPPY. *See Ssu-pu pei-yao*
SPTK. *See Ssu-pu ts'ung-k'an*

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