

Shī 189 斯干 and Its Neighbors

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The last two stanzas of this poem, Shī 189H-I, contrast the luxurious treatment of a baby boy with the niggardly treatment of a baby girl. They have been much quoted, but the poem itself has not been fully investigated. I here argue that these stanzas are an 04c social protest interpolation, and that the rest of Shī 189 is composite, due to the pushing together of two originally separate poems. In following up this possibility, I further develop, by noticing the character of decade-final poems, a previous suggestion about the role of decades in the formation of the Shī.¹

The Interpolation. There are several indications that Shī 189H-I are not really part of what precedes. Stanza B depicts the building of a house. Stanzas C-E mention in their last lines “our lord” (君子). 189E, in Waley’s version, reads:

189E	Well leveled is the courtyard, Firm are the pillars, Cheerful are the rooms by day, Softly gloaming by night, A place where our lord can be at peace.
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The house is finished, and its clearly affluent owner is at ease in it. Stanzas B-C-D-E have a five-line form and a similar rhyme scheme (AAAAA, but AAABB in 189D). The next two stanzas (189F-G) depart from that form and rhyme scheme, but in ways that have parallels in the concluding prosodic gestures found in other Syāu Yǎ poems;² they are not intrinsically suspect as later additions. 189F introduces a dream, which is then interpreted in 189G as an omen of male and female progeny. This new dream setting is accompanied by another change in prosody; an intelligible situation if the dream is meant as a conclusion, and the blessing of future progeny *is* plausible as a final Shī felicitation: a general blessing of this sort occurs in Shī 172E6 (final line) and Shī 190 has a similar final stanza consisting of a dream and its interpretation as prosperous harvests and numerous progeny. Also similar is the prediction which occupies most of Shī 247: the final blessing in that poem (247H) is Heaven’s gift of a daughter. There is thus no reason in Shī practice to suspect the integrity of 189B-G. They are a plausible felicitation poem, addressed to the owner of a newly built house.

The final two stanzas, 189H (XAAAAAA) and 189I (XAABBBB), not only depart from earlier stanzas prosodically, they introduce a theme which cannot be construed as part of a felicitation. They are a complaint of unequal treatment of the baby girl as compared to the baby boy. They amount to a note of social protest.

¹For that suggestion, see Brooks **Shī 220**.

²Stanza length and/or line length often change in the last sections of long Yǎ poems.

189H-I have verbal parallels in Dzwǒ Jwàn 3/24:1, a description of gifts given to newly born children. Like several other DJ passages (2/3:6, 6/6:4, 9/15:2), this one lays down sex and status separation rules. Shī 189H-I seem to be directed against just such social differentiation. 189H-I, then, are not only extraneous within the otherwise conventional Shī 189, they deal with an issue known to be current in the 04th century. These stanzas themselves are probably of 04c date.³

I now take up three text-history implications of this conclusion.

Brothers

The above suggests that 189B-G was the base to which the social tract 189H-I was later added. Preceding 189B-G is 189A, which is on a different subject. Waley:

189A Ceaseless flows that beck.
 Far stretch the southern hills.
 May you be sturdy as the bamboo,
 May you flourish like the pine,
 May elder brother and younger brother
 Always love one another,
 Never do evil to one another.

This is in 7 lines, whereas B-G (save for the 7-line stanza F, where the dream occurs) are in 5-line stanzas. 189A celebrates brotherly love, and has nothing to do with the building of the house and the honoring of the ancestors, which occupy 189B-G.

Brotherhood is a topic which one might expect to figure in the Shī, but Waley recognizes no such thematic category. Brothers are mentioned by women married far from home, with no brothers to depend on,⁴ or “must call strangers brothers,”⁵ or in complaints by men who lack the support that brothers might provide.⁶ Brothers figure incidentally in the boisterous clan feast of Shī 165 (to which fathers and uncles, however, are also summoned). The nominal “brothers” of Shī 92 may not be actual birth-brothers. All this is indirect, though cumulatively interesting. By far the most promising candidate for a poem celebrating brothers is Shī 164, which begins:

164A The flowers of the cherry-tree,
 Are they not truly splendid?
 Of men that now are,
 None equals a brother

and continues by contrasting brothers favorably with friends in 164CD:

164D Brothers may quarrel within the walls,
 But outside, they defend one another from insult;
 Whereas even good friends
 Pay but short heed

and ends in 164F-H with brothers and their families feasting happily together.

³For the 04c date of the Dzwǒ Jwàn, see Brooks **Value**, Goldin **Hermeneutics**.

⁴Shī 26; also 39B4 = 51A4 遠父母兄弟, a common-line link, 58, 59, 187.

⁵Shī 49.

⁶Shī 119.

But the otherwise consistent theme of reliance on brothers is countered by this:

164E But when the times of mourning or violence are over,
 When all is calm and still,
 Even brothers
 Are not the equal of friends

With both ends of the poem agreed as to the positive value of brothers, we may take 164E as an adversative addition: the Shī proprietors' last word on brotherly solidarity. That word is negative.⁷ This makes it more likely that Shī 189A is the remnant of a poem about brothers, which was later occluded by something more up-to-date.

The Shī 189 homebuilding would be typical of the new economy of the Warring States.⁸ In the new social structure, based on social mobility, allies counted for more than kinship. The old Shī preserve reminiscences of the old society's kinship focus, but the late Shī additions reflect, or in 189H-I, even criticize, the new society.

Common Lines

Shī 189 has common-line connections⁹ to three other Shī poems.

Shī 31. The line 189B4 爰居爰處, describing the occupants of the new dwelling,

189B To give continuance to foremothers and forefathers
 We build a house, many hundred cubits of wall;
 To south and west its doors.
 爰居爰處 Here shall we live, here rest
 Here laugh, here talk

. . . recurs in Shī 31C1, a poem of Bèi (part of Wèi 衛). That stanza describes a soldier on campaign. Waley, who has varied his translation to suit the context, renders it:

31C 爰居爰處 Here we stop, here we stay,
 Here we lose horses,
 And here find them again
 Down among the woods

The soldiers are not about to dwell among the woods, but on the contrary, are hindered in their return home, so that the common line appears to be more natural in Shī 189. Both poems mention building, since 31A gives this as the purpose of the army:

31A They beat their drums with a loud noise,
 Leaping and prancing weapon in hand,
 Building earth-works at the capital or fortifying Tsáu.
 We alone march to the south.

. . . and this may have drawn the writer's attention to Shī 189, one of the more prominent of Shī building poems.¹⁰ This suggests that Shī 189 is the earlier poem, and that the writer of Shī 31 has made a not altogether happy use of one of its lines.

⁷For another poem adverse to brothers (Shī 223), see Brooks **Shī 220** 83.

⁸And unknown earlier; for the archaeological evidence, see von Falkenhausen **Waning** 455.

⁹For an introduction to Shī common lines, see Brooks **Some**.

¹⁰And the only civilian one; Waley's "Building" category contains only Shī 50 and 189.

As a digression, I note that another line in Shī 31 (31D4 與子偕老, “I shall grow old with you”) also appears in a second Shī context. In 82B4 (from a dawn-song in the Chí section), it is a promise of future fidelity, looking ahead to married life:

82B When you have shot [the ducks],
 you must bring them home.
 And I will dress them for you.
 And when I have dressed them we will drink wine
與子偕老 And I will be yours till we are old.
 I will set your zithers before you:
 All shall be peaceful and good.

The line is also a promise of fidelity as it appears in 31D4:

31D “For good or ill, in death as in life,
 This is the oath I swear with you.
 I take your hand,
與子偕老 As token that I will grow old along with you.”

But here, the quoted pledge turns out to be broken: the absent soldier’s bride has married another (noted in 31E, which does not actually describe the soldier’s return). If such an oath was common practice, both poems may be quoting it from that practice, but if either poem was the source for the other, since the quotation in 31D is explicit, the directionality would be Shī 82 > Shī 31. Here again, Shī 31 seems to be late.¹¹

Shī 190 has already been noted as a thematic twin of Shī 189. It renders its promise of future prosperity in a more general way, and in a distinctly rural context: that of large flocks which promise that “your sacrifices will not go short” (190B8). On top of this, in a somewhat curious ending, it is not the owner implied in 190A-B, but the herdsman 牧人 of 190C, who has a dream. As in 189G1, *and in the same words*, it is the ranking staff member of the household who interprets it (太人占之, 190D3). Such a personage would perhaps be more natural in the urban household of Shī 189. It would then appear that the conclusion of 190 has borrowed two phrases from 189, in order to make it a convincing thematic reinforcement for 189.

Where does 190 itself come from? In addition to the common-line link with 189, there is also the more distant relationship 166F4 = 190C6 不騫不崩. The two contexts in which this common line appears are very different:

166F3-4 如南山之壽 Like the everlastingness of the southern hills,
 不騫不崩 Without failing or falling
190C4-6 爾羊來思 Your rams come,
 矜矜競競 Sturdy and sound,
 不騫不崩 None that limps, none that ails

The word 崩 (“landslip”) is suitable in 166 but less so as glossed for 190 (Legge “infected,” Waley “ails”), a sense which, Legge notes, “is not given in the dictionary.” Given this lexical incongruity, it would appear that 166 is an older poem on whose wording 190 has drawn, and as with the writer of Shī 31, somewhat clumsily.

¹¹It should be noted that the line between specific literary borrowing and the use of widely familiar material (such as marriage-poem refrains) will sometimes be difficult to draw.

Further, if we outline the thematic contents of this and the preceding decade, as it would have been if 189a (perhaps then longer) were a separate poem, we would have:

171 Lord's banquet	181 Hardships of soldiers
172 Blessing to the lord	182 Arrival of the lord
173 Blessing to the lord	183 Complaint of policy
174 Drinking; blessing on noble lords	184 Complaint of artisans
175 An honored guest	185 Complaint of soldiers
176 Appreciation of lord	186 Rare visit of nobleman
177 Preparation for battle	187 Complaint of wife
178 Fāng-shú the warrior	188 Complaint of wife
179 Hunting of gentleman	189a [Solidarity of brothers]
180 Hunting to precede banquet	189b [Festive building of house]

. . . in which the noble and warlike 171-180 ends with *two* hunting poems, implying a final banquet, whereas 181-189b, a set of miscellaneous complaints, is less well concluded by *one* festive and congratulatory poem. It might then have occurred to some music master to sacrifice the independence of the thematically obsolete 189A by combining it with the blessing poem 189B-G, and adding 190 as a second blessing poem, thus providing the expected thematically linked final pair of poems. If so, then all of 190, and not just certain features of it, is later than 189.

Shī 178B11 = 189H6 朱芾斯皇 “his red kneeguards resplendent.” In 178, they are the equipment of a great warrior, who is directly described; in 189H, they are a gift in prospect of a career of future military greatness. The phrasing in 178 is more natural in context, and 189H is probably the borrower. This is compatible with our earlier conclusion that 189H is a very late addition to 189.

The Ends of Decades

Every recitalist knows that it is good to end a heavy program with something of a lighter character. Shī 189 is a slightly effortful poem, during which a house is built, and a lengthy poem, since the completion of the house is followed by a dream and its interpretation. The felicitation is a welcome final note, but the decade would be none the worse for a second, and lighter, exit piece. This, I suggest, the congratulatory and bucolic 190 may have been meant to provide. If so, it was apparently adapted to that function by the dream stanza, which borrowed a line (not very successfully) from its neighbor, Shī 189. The prediction of blessing upholds the blessing tone of Shī 189, while the step down from urban to bucolic environment provides a social lightening.

This suggestion calls to mind one made elsewhere about Shī 220, which may originally have been a serious poem about a sacrificial banquet (220a), followed by a lighter poem (220b) which borrowed a first line (賓之初筵) from it, but emphasized the comical disarray produced by too much drinking. It was further suggested that the separate 220b was originally the end of its decade, and was meant as an exit piece, relieving the sober atmosphere of 220a with a little good-humored inebriation.

We might then wonder (1) if other decades end in an analogous way, and (2) if the ends of decades, at least in this vicinity, come in poems whose present Shī numbers differ by 10. Between Shī 190 and Shī 220, as a convenient test of this hypothesis, come the now decade-final poems Shī 200 and 210. Let us consider them.

Shī 200, at the end of Waley's "Eclipse" decade, is a complaint poem like the rest. But it ends its whining about "slanderers of others" with a truly wacky finale:

- 200F Those slanderers of others,
 Who would consent to join their counsels?
 I will take those slanderers of others
 And hurl them as an offering to jackals and tigers.
- 200G If jackals and tigers will not eat them,
 I will hurl them as an offering to Him of the North.
 If He of the North will not have them,
 I will hurl them as an offering to Him on High.

And the piece concludes with this final injunction:

- 200H The way through the willow garden
 Leads to the aced hill 敵丘.
 The Palace Attendant M̀ngdǔ
 Made up the words of this song.
 May all you many gentlemen
 Attentively hearken unto it!

Here is the conjectured music master, signing his own name and stating his reasons.

Shī 210, like 190, is the second of two felicitations. The first, 209, is prosodically heavy (six stanzas of twelve lines), whereas 210 is lighter (six stanzas of six lines). The setting in both is rural, but as with 189 and 190, the latter focuses more closely on the animals. Both speak of an ancient heritage, but whereas that of 209 is vague ("From of old, what have we been doing? / We grow wine-millet and cooking-millet"), that of 210 opens out into an ancient legendary heritage:

- 210A1-4 Truly, those southern hills –
 It was Yǔ who fashioned them;
 Those level spaces, upland and lowland –
 The Descendant tills them

and a full seasonal panorama:

- 210B1-3 A great cloud covers the heavens above,
 Sends down snows thick-falling.
 To them are added the fine rains of spring.

(Later stanzas, appropriately to the theme, portray the fall and the harvest).

Both 190 and 220 have a line in common with the poems that precede them, helping to link them with those poems as finishing statements. **Shī 200** has a common line which links it to a poem earlier in the decade. **Shī 210** has many such lines, most of which link it to 209; in fact, 210 ends with two *couplets* taken intact from 209:

- 209B7-8 Very hallowed was this service of offering,
 Very mighty his forefathers. (= 210 F3-4)
- 209B11-12 They will reward him with great blessings,
 With span of years unending. (= 210 F5-6; end)

The sonority of the 210F lines is doubled by the return to the central moment of 209.¹²

¹²For an upbeat interpretation of the last Syāu Yǎ poem, see Brooks **Shī 220** 84.

Implications

If these suggestions hold, several things follow, both confirming and extending the conclusions of Brooks **Shī 220**. First, at some point this part of the Syāu Yǎ was arranged in decades, and decades ended in a way plausible for a performance set, with a lighter or more spacious tone at the end. Second, decade structure was maintained against new additions, including material meant to make the decade more effective in performance: Shī 220a/b and 189a/b were pushed together to accommodate new poems, Shī 219 and Shī 190. When it was written as a decade finale, 190 borrowed a linking line from 189 (and another from 166, with less happy results). All decade final poems show awareness of decade-final function. The protest stanzas 189H-I, coming along after the decade had been adjusted as a performance unit, could be fitted into it only as an insertion, not a separate poem. This is what I have called Stage D,¹³ the period when the decades were being formally preserved *as* decades.

These suggestions offer a glimpse of the Shī formation process. Shī 189A was older thematically than the main part of 189 (B-G), and that in turn was older than, and was literarily used by, 31. Shī 190C was more recent than 189B-G, and also drew upon the earlier 166. A rough chart of these relationships might look like this:

	189A		164		[socially obsolete]
82	189B-G	166	178		[recently current]
↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	
31	= 31	190C	= 190C	164E	[contemporary]
	189H-I	=	189H-I		[critical of contemporary values]

The common-line links that make up these literary relations sit easier in their original contexts than in their new ones, however effective the new *poems* may be in their way. That the late addition 189H-I disfigures the relationships previously built into 189/190 is something about which their interpolator will probably not have worried overmuch. People with a point to make are unlikely to be hindered by other people's formalism.¹⁴

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¹³For that suggestion, see Brooks **Shī 220** 84.

¹⁴For the maladroitness of later poets using earlier material, see Brooks **Some**, *passim*.