

## Liu Shang

According to the account given by Wang Zhi 汪芝 in the *Xilutang Quintong* manuscript, *Flowing Goblet* is a piece that describes the famous spring elegant gathering of Year 9 of *Yonghe* in the Western Jin dynasty (晉永和九年 353CE) immortalized by the casual cursive calligraphy of master Wang Xizhi 王羲之.

The “Flowing Goblet” refers to a drinking game where a goblet filled with wine is set adrift downstream, where participants sat on the riverbank and created poems on the spot, should the goblet stop in front of them. Those who could not finish a poem would be penalized by drinking the wine.

The joyous theme in this description contrasts somewhat with other accounts of this piece in other manuscripts, under the name *Jiu Kuang* 酒狂 *Drunken Madness*, where the context refers to Ruan Ji 阮籍 (slightly earlier in the same period) using extreme drunkenness and drug usage to avoid suspicion and service in the newly-founded Jin regime, founded under a political coup against the Wei state of the Cao house by the Sima clan 司馬氏.

Players of this version can attempt some contrast in the theme by accentuating the ‘imperfect’ phrase endings, as well as the whole harmonic section at the end of the piece, absent in other manuscripts and versions.



Jue wine goblets circa Eastern Zhou Dynasty, on display at the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada.

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