

Liu Ts'un-yan 柳存仁, "The Penetration of Taoism into the Ming Neo-Confucianist Elite," *T'oung Pao*, Second Series, Vol. 57, Livr. 1/4 (1971), pp. 31-102. Used by kind permission of the publisher, Brill, as conveyed by Albert Hoffstädt on September 1, 2014.

*Mingshi* 5/61/1500 (Music 1) – p. 41

his office of music. Thus, for the first year of King Wu 吳王 (1364), the *Ming Shih* reads:

Before this time he had already ordered that Taoist novices should be chosen as musicians and dancers for official functions. Now they were gathered together. T'ai-tsu attended at the Halberd-gate; he ordered Chu Shêng 朱升 and Fan Ch'üan 范權, the two Secretaries, to bring these [young] musicians and dancers to his presence. He struck the musical stone himself and instructed [Chu] Shêng to discern the different five notes of the ancient Chinese musical scales. Shêng could not do it, for he took the *kung* 宮 note for *chih* 徵. T'ai-tsu smiled at his mistakes. Then he ordered the musicians to sing a song, and dismissed them. In the same year there was set up the Court of Imperial Sacrifices, and in this office there were posts, such as the Composer of Music. The man Lêng Ch'ien 冷謙<sup>38</sup>) was a well-known musician at the end of the Yüan dynasty, and he was good at playing the zither. He led the life of a recluse at Wu-shan 吳山, and he became a Taoist priest. Lêng was summoned [to Nanking] and was appointed the Composer of Music. His works were used to train the young musicians. . . . The musicians continued to be recruited from the Taoist novices; as for the dancers, they employed children, who were found to be talented, from ordinary families and military service people<sup>39</sup>).

*Mingshi* 5/61/1507-8 --p. 42

The court music<sup>40</sup>) used in the palaces was composed by the actors of the Office of Music. It lacked elegant taste. The music composed for the different pitches of the twelve months and those used at dinners and feasts were all adaptations of popular songs or taken from the tunes of *tsa-chü* 雜劇 plays. They were noisy, vulgar and even burlesque, exactly the thing that Emperor T'ai-tsu wanted to expel. But they were used in halls and palaces, and no one thought that it was improper<sup>41</sup>).

*Mingshi* 5/61/1509 – p. 42

On another occasion Hu Jui 胡瑞, who was a Supervising Secretary of the Offices of Scrutiny, said:

The occasion on which an emperor is giving an audience to his ministers at the hall is a great one and yet, the court music, which should be harmonious and refined, is provided by the Office of Music. The sacrifices to the gods of mountains and hills, seas and rivers are offered once in three years and yet, the performances are directed by the musicians and dancers who are supplied by the Music and Dance Office. It is as profane as it is improper. I beg Your Majesty to send down my memorial for open discussion at the court: that the sacrifices to the gods of mountains and rivers should be conducted by scholar-officials (*chin-shên* 縉紳), and the court music should be learned by boys, who are chosen from the ordinary families, under the charge of an officer. When they have been trained for a long time, then they may be judged and appointed to suitable tasks <sup>43</sup>).

The Emperor did not accept his proposal on the ground that all these ceremonies had been established at the beginning of the dynasty.

採茶歌, a lyrical tune of the time <sup>45</sup>). In 1495, when Hsü P'u was one of the Grand Secretaries, Emperor Hsiao-tsung ordered the ministers to compose songs for the Three Pure Ones 三清. On this Hsü and others remonstrated, saying:

Heaven is the supreme and the most honoured, and therefore its position should be unique. When the Five Emperors were worshipped in the Han dynasties, scholars criticised it. How much worse will it be if we worship the Three Pure Ones which were falsely created by the Taoists. How could there be three gods in one heaven? And how could Lao-tzŭ, a grand historiographer of the Chou times, be made one of them? He was a living being, and after death, he became a ghost; how can he be treated as an equal to the heavenly god? Nothing is more blasphemous than this! Formerly, the music for the imperial sacrifices to heaven was composed by Emperor T'ai-tsu. How can we mingle it with the popular tunes of the current times? Your loyal ministers . . . do not dare to serve Your Majesty in a perverse way <sup>46</sup>).

Hsü P'u's request was granted, and so the proposed new music for the worship of the Three Pure Ones was never composed. But the songs of the Three Pure Ones, from the reign of Emperor Shih-tsung, are still found in the *Ming Shih* <sup>47</sup>). The Taoist root was deep and tenacious indeed.

In the early days of Emperor Ch'êng-tsu (reigned 1403-1424), seven members were in the *nei-ko* 內閣 (Grand Secretariat), and only three or four of them were Hanlin Academicians. Even the Compilers at the Academy were appointed on varied qualifications. In 1458, the suggestion of Li Hsien 李賢 was adopted, and since then Compilers at the Academy must be a *chin-shih*, and as a corollary, no one could be made a Grand Secretary without first being a member of the Academy. One could never be appointed Minister or Vice-Minister of Rites or Vice-Minister of the Right for Personnel 吏部左侍郎 in either Peking or Nanking without first being a member of the Academy. Therefore, whenever one was made a Hanlin Bachelor, it occurred to the public that there was a possibility that he might later be a Grand Secretary. Statistics have shown that of the 170-odd Grand Secretaries in the dynasty, 90 percent came from the Academy <sup>89</sup>).

Ku Ting-ch'ên 顧鼎臣 (1473-1540) ... was made Vice-Minister of the Right of the Ministry of Rites. The Emperor was fond of the study of longevity. He had Taoist sacrifices in the inner palaces. Ting-ch'ên presented seven poems under the title of Walking into the Transcendental Void; <sup>95</sup>); on his manuscript he also set out items to be observed at the altar for the Emperor. The Emperor was very much pleased and replied to him with an edict of approval. The vogue for a *tz'ü-ch'ên* to compose blue-paper prayers to curry favour began with Ting-ch'ên <sup>96</sup>).

Yen Nuo 嚴訥 (1511-1584) . . . was promoted to *shih-tu* 侍讀<sup>97</sup>) from his Compilership. . . . Later, he was ordered to be on duty at the West Park 西苑, together with Li Ch'un-fang, composing blue-paper prayers for the throne. He was then speedily promoted to Chancellor of the Hanlin Academy. Then he served as a Vice-Minister of the Court of Imperial Sacrifices, Vice-Minister of the Left, of the Right, of the Ministry of Rites, and was transferred to the Ministry of Personnel. All the time he kept the chancellorship concurrently, and was on duty at the West Park as before. The blue-paper prayers he wrote pleased the Emperor . . . He was made a Grand Guardian.

In 1565 (when he was the Minister of Personnel) he was appointed concurrently Grand Secretary at the Wu-ying Hall 武英殿, to take over from

---

Yüan Wei, and thus was participating in the top-level administration. As his successor Kuo P'u 郭朴 had not yet arrived, he was still in charge of the Ministry of Personnel. The Emperor by that time lived in solitude in the West Park, his intimate courtiers on duty had to stay with him. Nuo went to attend to his business at his office in the morning, and got back to stay in the Park on duty at night, and he was [constantly] supplying [new pieces of] blue-paper prayers. He had been so cautious and timorous in attending to his work that he was at length taken ill.<sup>98</sup>).

*Mingshi* 17/193/5117-8 (Biography of Yuan Wei, attached to biography of Yan Nuo) -- p.

60-1

Attached to the Biography of Yen Nuo is a short account of Yüan Wei who, together with Yen, Li Ch'un-fang and Kuo P'u, was then known as 'Grand Secretaries of Blue-paper Prayers' of the times.

Yüan Wei 袁煒(1508-1565) . . . was placed third at the court examination and appointed as Compiler at the Hanlin Academy . . . He served as a *Shih-tu* for a long time before he was chosen to be on duty at the West Park. The blue-paper prayers he wrote were very much in the favour of the emperor. In 1556 Ch'üan Yüan-li 全元立 had been recommended by the Grand Secretaries to be promoted from Compiler to Chancellor of the Hanlin Academy at Nanking. The Emperor preferred to give Yüan this post. Yüan, however, declined this honour, saying that he would like to attend on the Emperor in his present post. The Emperor was so glad that he ordered Yüan promoted immediately to be an Expositor-in-Waiting 侍講學士<sup>100</sup>) at the Academy. Two months later, again he promoted Yüan with his handwritten note to be Vice-Minister of the Right of the Ministry of Rites. In the next year, he gave Yüan a concurrent office as Adviser to the Heir Apparent<sup>101</sup>), together with his other concurrent post as Chancellor of the Academy, and authorised Yüan to wear the robes for the 1st-rank officials. In 1560, because of the merits of his personal service, Yüan was given two increments in his salary, which

was followed by an immediate promotion to Vice-Minister of the Left of the Ministry of Rites. In the 2nd month of the next year, he was transferred to the Ministry of Personnel, retaining his concurrent posts and duties at the same time. In less than two months' time he was made Minister of Rites, and Junior Guardian of the Heir Apparent. His duty at the West Park remained unchanged. Since he was on special duty at the Park up to the moment, in just six years' time he was able to climb to such high posts as a minister and a guardian. This had never happened before. . . . Yüan's mind was quick and acute in literary apprehension. Sometimes at mid-night, a slip of paper would be passed on to him which there was an order from the Emperor asking him to write a blue-paper prayer on a particular topic; he could compose it on the spot. At the time when an auspicious sign was reported, and wonderful things were presented to the court, he usually wrote the best panegyric. The Emperor's favourite cat was dead. Ministers were told to write something for Taoist sacrifices on behalf of its soul in purgatory. In Wei's writing there was a line reading, 'before long a lion will be transformed into a dragon' 化獅作龍, which won the admiration of the Emperor<sup>102</sup>).

On the Chinese new year day of 1541, Peking got a little snow. Hsia Yen, the Grand Secretary, and Yen Sung, the Minister [of Rites] and others all wrote eulogistic essays to praise the throne. Yang Chüeh 楊爵, who was a Censor, felt very uneasy about this. He sighed painfully and could not sleep well. In the next month, Yang memorialised the court. . .<sup>107</sup>).



In 1539, Hsia Yen, one of the [two] Grand Secretaries, was made Junior Preceptor, with the prestige title of Great Officer of *Kuang-lu* 光祿大夫, High Pillar of the State 上柱國, on account of his writing of a sacrificial memorial on behalf of the Emperor to the Sovereign on High. There had never been such a prestige title as High Pillar of the State bestowed on the ministers in the Ming dynasty before <sup>108</sup>), and now Hsia Yen got it, for he

drafted the rescript himself. Kuo Hsün 郭勛, (*d.* 1542) the Marquis of Wu-ting 武定侯, was in the Emperor's favour <sup>109</sup>). Both Hsün and Yen Sung, the Minister of Rites, were jealous of Hsia Yen's success. When the Emperor was visiting Ch'êng-t'ien 承天 in the south, both Hsia Yen and Yen Sung were in his *entourage* <sup>110</sup>). After the Emperor had paid homage to the Hsian Mausoleum (the tomb of his own father), Yen Sung proposed repeatedly that congratulatory memorials should be submitted to the throne. Hsia Yen declined on the ground that this could be carried out after the Emperor's return to the capital. Despite his own approval the Emperor was not happy. Yen Sung got wind of this and pressed hard. The Emperor then said, 'It is good that the ceremonies and music are to be decided by the Son of Heaven' <sup>111</sup>), and ordered that the congratulatory memorials were to be submitted. Since then he liked Hsia Yen no more. . . .

In the beginning, Hsia Yen was skilful in composing blue-paper prayers and other pieces, and for this he was greatly in the Emperor's favour. When he was ordered to retire, there was only Chai Luan 翟鸞 who remained in the Secretariat <sup>112</sup>), and the Emperor did not care for him. Before Hsia Yen left Peking, he went to the fasting chambers at the West Park to be given a last audience by the Emperor, and upon granting it, he prostrated himself before the throne and kowtowed apologetically. The Emperor had pity on him, ordered him to be given wine and a feast, and to return to his private residence, to wait there for further instructions. . . . His posts and titles were restored [after the imprisonment of Kuo Hsün]. . . .

Those ministers who were on special duty at the West Park were permitted to ride on horse-back in the Park. They were also each given a hair-dress with fragrant-leaf design 香葉束髮巾 and a pair of leather shoes with silk layers to wear. Hsia Yen said that these were not the proper things for a man

who was the servant of the state to wear, and he declined them. . . .<sup>113</sup>). Both Yen Sung and Hsia Yen came from the same province [Kiangsi]. Hsia was senior and Yen Sung served him reverently. When Hsia Yen was made a Grand Secretary in 1536, his former post as Minister of Rites was succeeded by Yen Sung, upon Hsia's own recommendation <sup>114</sup>). Hsia treated

Yen merely as a protégé. Yen could not feel at ease about it and bore a grudge against Hsia in his heart. Now that Hsia Yen had lost the favour of the Emperor Yen Sung took the chance, and in order to ingratiate himself with the Emperor served him even more eagerly and obsequiously. At this moment Hsia Yen was afraid that the Emperor might abandon him and took Yen Sung into his counsel. Yen Sung went surreptitiously to the residence of T'ao Chung-wên (a Taoist priest then in great favour of the Emperor) and consulted him about the plan of expelling Hsia and taking his place . . . <sup>115</sup>).

*Mingshi* 26 /307/7898 (Biography of Tao Zhongwen 陶仲文) – p. 66

Kung K'o-p'ei 龔可佩 was a native of Chiating 嘉定. He abandoned his family and became a Taoist priest at Kunshan 崑山. He was expert in knowing all the names and titles of the deities of Taoist origin, and he was recommended to the court by T'ao Chung-wên. Those ministers who were to compose blue-paper prayers flocked to him for knowledge of Taoist anecdotes and allusions, and they all liked him very much. Because of these merits, he was made an Erudite at the Court of Imperial Sacrifices. Later, he was sent by the Emperor to teach Taoist rituals to the Chamber-maids in the West Palaces, and after several promotions, he became Vice-Minister of the Court . . . <sup>116</sup>).

*Mingshi* 17/202/5325 (Biography of Wang Shizhong 王時中) – p. 71

Wang [Shih-chung] was appointed Magistrate of the District of Yen-ling 鄢陵. When he went to the suburbs on horse-back, a gust of whirling wind came round the horse's head. Shih-chung said, 'this is the *ch'i* of the wronged one'. He investigated and found a corpse in a dry well, and later on he proved it to be the body of a man who had been killed by his wife and her lover . . . <sup>130</sup>).

In the first month of 1534, Chu Shang 朱裳 reported that . . . 'the two tributaries of the River, the Sun-chia-tu 孫家渡 and the Wo River 渦河 come from Huai-yüan 懷遠 and reach Fêng-yang 鳳陽, having combined their streams with the River Huai 淮. The combined stream passes by the Imperial Mausoleum, the Princely Tombs at Shou-ch'un 壽春, and as soon as it reaches Ssü-chou 泗州, it passes by the Royal Ancestral Tombs. The site of the Imperial Mausoleum is on a high bank, and is, therefore, out of danger. The Royal Ancestral Tombs are facing the River on three sides, and the Princely Tombs at Shou-ch'un are even nearer to the water. It would be appropriate to build an earth embankment to the Royal Ancestral Tombs, and to lay stone-banks to the Princely Tombs at Shou-ch'un. But this is a thing of tremendous effect that I do not dare to suggest with a light heart' <sup>132</sup>).

There was a flood in Ssü-chou in 1592, and the depth of the water within the city was three feet. The flooded area was quite close to the Royal Ancestral Tombs. Someone suggested to open up an outlet at the Fu-ning Lake 傅寧湖 so that the water would flow to the Yangtze at Liuho 六合. Another one wanted to dredge the river at Chou-chia Bridge 周家橋 and bring its water into the Kao-pao Lake and other lakes 高寶諸湖. Another one suggested to broaden the Wa-fou River 瓦埠河 at Shou-chou 壽州 as a measure for diverting the flow of the upper reaches of the Huai River. Still another thought to relax the control of the Chang-fu Dike 張福堤, so as to drain off the Huai River at its mouth. [P'an] Chi-hsün said that the *ch'i* of the Ruler was concentrated at the place where the Royal Ancestral Tombs lay, and the *ch'i* should not be allowed to be emitted loosely <sup>133</sup>).

