

ing the choice of a career and the resolution of some personal problems. Returning to China in 1920, he joined the faculty of Tsing Hua College in Peking, but was immediately asked to accompany Bertrand Russell on the latter's lecture tour of China and act as his interpreter. In Peking the author met Dr. Buwei Yang, the future Mrs. Chao. They were married in 1921 in a ceremony radically different from traditional practice, in that there was no ceremony at all. Their joint autobiography will constitute volume 3 of the *Life with Chaos* trilogy, volume 1 of the series being Mrs. Chao's *The Autobiography of a Chinese Woman* published some years ago.

Within the context of their era Y. R. Chao and many of his contemporaries did what they could to translate their ideas concerning China's needs into action, whether it be the promotion of science (tangibly expressed in the founding of the Science Society of China 中國科學社), the launching of the movement for the vernacular style of writing in education and literature, or the breaking of family-arranged engagements to marriage partners unseen. One comes to realize that, in spite of the onset of historical trends, the actual break with the old order still depended upon the resolve and effort of the individual. In the present book, because the recollections of life in the *fin de siècle* traditional household are told in a low-keyed, natural tone, the reader is able to get a useful sense of the way in which the value system of that world was internalized. To change, by conscious choice, from that set of traditional practices and attitudes that was taken for granted in one's formative years, to a different set that would in many ways contradict the earlier system, was the core of the story of Prof. Chao's generation in China: similar situations fill the biographies of many other persons active in the intellectual and professional fields in the period of this book.

One will not find in the present work analytical comments on the major events of the thirty years encompassed. The author's treatment of historical landmarks is cursory and detached: he was too young to take note of the Boxer War, and was in the United States during the Revolution of 1911 as well as the May 4th Movement of 1919. But if one were searching for the authentic colors and sounds, with their many nuances, of social and cultural change at the level of personal experiences that bridged different worlds, then this slender volume has much enlightening material to offer the searcher.

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The Life and Thought of Yeh Shih.

By Winston Wan Lo. (Gainesville and Hong Kong: University Presses of Florida and The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1974, 206 pp. Glossary, Bibliography, Index. US\$10.)

Professor Winston Lo's *The Life and Thought of Yeh Shih* concerns a period, the early Southern Sung, which is central to an understanding of the subsequent intellectual and perhaps even social and political history of the elite in traditional China. Yeh Shih, a younger contemporary and intellectual opponent of Chu Hsi, lived at a time when, amid often ferocious debate, the general form of what would become Ch'eng-Chu orthodoxy was hammered into shape. And while Professor Lo makes no very strong claims for Yeh's intellectual influence on his contemporaries, the positions that Yeh espoused remained lively enough to elicit a response from that modern re-molder of the Confucian tradition, Mou Tsung-san.

Professor Lo carefully chronicles Yeh's not very out-of-the-ordinary political and scholarly career. Yeh's family was honest but poor. His mother evidently was the great source of encouragement and support to him in Yeh's early years; a cliché of hagiography perhaps, but the theme of guidance by female relatives is so common and played in so many differing ways in the lives of eminent men of the time that there is surely a grain of truth in it. Yeh Shih was fortunate enough to make a connection with a circle of eminent scholars centered in Wen-chou in modern Chekiang. Here Professor Lo is admirably successful in placing Yeh in a real intellectual context, a context not merely of Sung or of Neo-Confucian thought, both of which are too complex and ill-defined to be useful, but of personal relationships with real people. Yeh became an ardent advocate of the policy of *hui-fu*, which sought the recovery of China north of the Huai River from the Jürched Chin dynasty, to whom it had been lost in 1127. Given the realities of the military situation and the political situation at court, serious argument for *hui-fu* was regarded as commendably idealistic but perhaps not so practical. Yeh Shih expressed his ideas in a series of forty essays, known collectively as his *Wai-kao*, which, as Professor Lo emphasizes, are full of general advice but fail to address the specific problems that the adoption of *hui-fu* policy might be expected to encounter. This idealistic Yeh surely fits in the Sung tradition of idealistic young scholars attempting to make a reputation by advocating extreme solutions to political problems.

Despite the excellent political connections which Yeh eventually made, and despite a certain willingness, more marked as Yeh grew older, to abandon political allies in a crisis, his career was not particularly notable, even in his own time. He did play a role in the deposing of the unfilial Emperor Kuang-tsung, and served as governor at Nanking in the aftermath of

the unsuccessful campaign against the Chin in 1207. But his career was marred, from the point of view of Confucian biographers at least, by those small compromises of principle to which almost all politicians — except perhaps Chu Hsi — are so unhappily prone.

Yeh Shih was known far more as a teacher and a writer than as a statesman. His *Postscript and Orderly Presentation of Words* established his reputation as an essayist and as a political thinker of some originality. Students flocked to receive his instruction. But as Professor Lo notes, he fell prey to disappointment in his later years, took up the study of Buddhism, and died unhappy. Because so many of Yeh's ideas centered on political action: the revival of the fiscal and military fortunes of the ruling house and the reconquest of the north, his failures in the political world were far more galling to him than similar rebuffs were for thinkers like Chou Tun-i or even Chu Hsi, whose ideas did not seem to require immediate political implementation to remain valid.

What is the meaning of Yeh Shih's career? Clearly, it helps to sharpen our understanding of Southern Sung intellectual life. As in the Northern Sung, we find no consistent and officially-sanctioned orthodoxy. Thus the intellectual pattern of continuing criticism of orthodoxy from an evolving perspective, which is common in later times, is missing. In the Southern Sung ideas both political and philosophic had to compete for attention in a situation which was both fluid and closely linked to both politics and personality. We learn how intimately related the advancement of an idea was to the personal influence of its proponent: Yeh Shih's claim on his contemporaries' attention was based almost as much on his reputation for virtue and his dynamism as a teacher as on the ideas themselves, which were neither very original nor very practicable.

Yeh's life reveals the intellectual cliquishness and partisanship which, more even than in Northern Sung, were the salient feature of elite life. In the absence of a generally accepted, or even an imposed, orthodoxy, various thinkers and their followers, by attracting disciples in schools, by formal disputations, sometimes by scurrilous personal attacks, and often by use of political influence at court, sought to establish the authority of their teachings. Indeed, in Southern Sung elite politics was by no means limited to court and bureaucracy; a political history of Southern Sung must account for both "public" and "private" political action.

Professor Lo goes on to make further claims, to explore the question of whether, had Yeh's practical brand of Confucianism prevailed, imperial China could have avoided the intellectual binds which ultimately made modernization so difficult. The inertia and adherence to the status quo which, Lo argues, were characteristic of later imperial history resulted in large measure from the triumph of *tao-hsueh*, Neo-Confucianism, particularly as taught by Chu Hsi. Aside from the obviously tautological aspect of the argument: had Ch'ing statesmen subscribed to a more pragmatic ideology they would have responded to the challenge of the West in a more pragmatic way, the issues which are addressed are so anfractuous and so decisively influenced by the ideas and events of the remaining seven hundred years of imperial history after Yeh Shih that this reviewer found the argument abstract and unconvincing.

This inclination of Professor Lo's to range far afield from the actual life and times of Yeh Shih tends to get him into difficulties. This thin biography touches on an enormous range of topics: the history of Confucianism, the nature of conquest dynasties, the details of Northern Sung politics and intellectual life, Buddhist terminology, and inevitably fails to do them justice. Worse, in painting so broad a picture Lo leaves some smudges, falling

victim to clichés which are unworthy of the work as a whole. He suggests, for example, that the fall of north China in 1127 can be attributed, at least in part, to the faulty morals of the then dominant faction at court, accepting the well-worn historical view that statesmen who preside over the fall of their dynasty must be not only inept but also immoral. This was of course the view of their political opponents, but surely it can be accepted only with the greatest caution.

Elsewhere Professor Lo refers to the defeat and eventual replacement of the Khitan Liao dynasty by the Jürched Chin in terms of the Jürched people's "greater virility." While the image may delight the reader in its extension, it misrepresents the real event. Surely it is time to cease referring, even metaphorically, to the steppe peoples as some kind of fecund beasts of prey which periodically descended on China. We have known at least since the publication of Wittfogel and Feng's pioneering work that the Liao state was the expression of a highly sophisticated strategy for ruling settled peoples, and that its fall had little to do with the reproductive rate of the Khitan.

Professor Lo confuses this reviewer with his use of the term *tao-hsueh*, which is applied to everyone from Wang An-shih, to his conservative opponents, to Chu Hsi. While it is reasonable to suppose that this host of thinkers shared some ideas—although it is not easy to think of men more radically opposed in their ideas within the tradition than, for example, Ssu-ma Kuang and Chu Hsi—it is misleading and reductive to place them all in a single category. *Tao-hsueh*, moreover, had a considerably greater currency and a far more definite meaning in the Southern Sung period than earlier, and to apply the term before the Ch'eng brothers is to oversimplify Northern Sung thought. Surely the content of Ou-yang Hsiu's argument concerning the transmission of the way, *tao-t'ung*, can be

clearly distinguished from that of Ch'eng I's. To collapse Northern Sung intellectual history so radically into the single term *tao-hsüeh* is to do violence to its complexity and to misread the heritage it left for Yeh Shih and his contemporaries.

The editing of *The Life and Thought of Yeh Shih* is weak. Misprints, misdivisions of words, and misspellings are too common. Some parts of the work read like the sources, and at times it is hard to tell where Yeh Shih leaves off and Professor Lo begins. Furthermore, Lo is led into extravagant statements by the force of his own images, images which are some-

times ludicrous. These are difficulties with which every author must struggle and from which every author should be protected by his editor.

In sum, *The Life and Thought of Yeh Shih* succeeds in broadening our knowledge of an important and not much explored period and in illuminating an intellectual milieu which differed quite radically from what came before and after. Its serious weaknesses lie less in this central concern than in its forays into matters and times more or less removed from Yeh Shih himself.

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