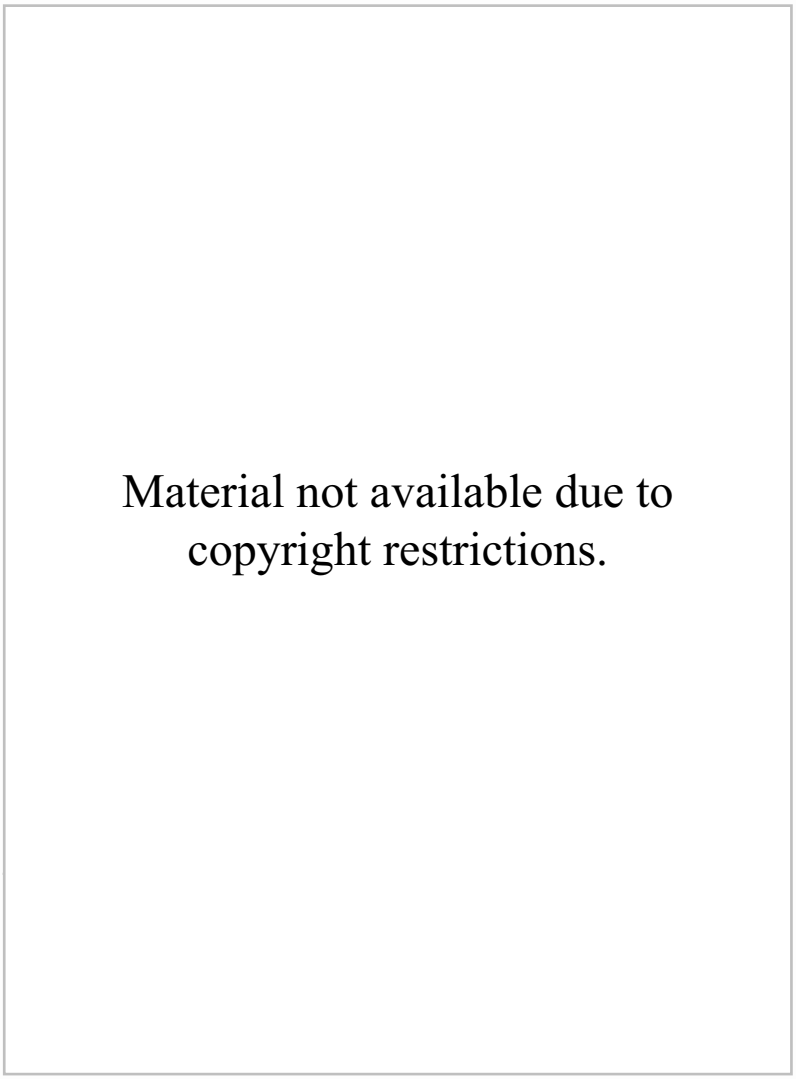
Two Ming Biographies



CHU YUAN-CHANG, *founder of the Ming dynasty. Hanging scroll, colour on silk. From* Masterpieces of Chinese Portrait Painting in the National Palace Museum, *Taipei, 1971.*

The Taoist immortals Crazy Chou and the Iron-cap Master, whose biographies are presented here in translation, were two of the semi-legendary religious personages who figured prominently in the official and private accounts of the founding of the Ming dynasty in 1368. The former was honoured with a commemorative epitaph composed personally by the Ming founder Chu Yuan-chang (朱元璋 1328-1398), and the latter with a similar semi-official biography written by the eminent Han-lin scholar Sung Lien (宋濂 1310-1381) and based on notes compiled by the Ming emperor himself. These biographies were subsequently incorporated into the reign chronicles of Ming T'ai-tsu. Their accounts were later embroidered with fanciful details by imaginative writers since the sixteenth century. The adaptation and dramatization by the popular writers inspired an ever-growing legendary cycle that transformed these two distinguished Taoists into mythological heroes in the Chinese folk tradition.

It is extraordinary that these two early Ming religious figures, who had left so little ascertainable data verifying their historical worth, should have received imperial patronage and figured in such bizarre fashion in the official records of the dynasty. What is significant

about these two Taoists seems to have been the stories about their magical feats in assisting Chu Yuan-chang in campaigns against his rival contenders, and their clairvoyant prognostications of his imperial destiny.

In the case of the Crazy Chou immortal, it seems that he impressed Chu Yuan-chang primarily because of his pronouncement of the imminence of the 'Great Peace', which echoes the popular agitation during the chaotic days of the late Yuan and which undoubtedly whetted the appetite of the ambitious rebel leader. Stories about Crazy Chou's extraordinary perception of the changing course of wind during the campaign against Ch'en Yu-liang in the battle of Poyang Lake and his prescient observation of Chu Yuan-chang's political ascendancy may have been inflated and exaggerated by Chu himself in order to impress the populace with belief in the supernatural assistance he received during his rise to power.

The same is true of the Iron-cap Master Chang Chung who allegedly invoked his occult powers to revive the wind and assist Chu Yuan-chang in overwhelming Ch'en Yu-liang and miraculously predicted the ultimate triumph of the rebel leader over his principal adversary. Some of the fanciful episodes about Chang Chung, as in the case of Crazy Chou, may have been conjured up by Chu Yuan-chang himself, since he was the main source of information for Sung Lien in the composition of the biography of the Taoist immortal. Additional fantasies were attributed to Chang Chung in the course of transmission of his biographies. There is the story that he left a prognosticatory scripture called *Cheng-ping ko* (蒸餅歌 Steamed-cake Ballad) foretelling several major political crises of the Ming dynasty. This scripture enjoyed considerable popularity in Ming and Ch'ing times and was the genesis of *Shao-ping ko* (燒餅歌 Hot-cake Ballad), one of the most popular prophecy books handed down to modern times and attributed to the early Ming imperial adviser Liu Chi (劉基 1311-1375).

All in all, these biographies provide important evidence for the study of the political history of the Ming founding, for the study of early Ming Taoist thought, and for the study of the mythologization of historical personalities in Chinese folklore. They may also be read as entertaining items of Chinese popular literature of the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries under the impact of popular Taoism and vulgar religious beliefs.

The biography of Crazy Chou by Ming T'ai-tsu was originally composed in August 1393 for the erection of a memorial epitaph in Mt. Lu in honour of the Taoist immortal. Its language is anecdotal and semi-literate, interspersed with colloquial speech, but direct and forceful; the style is plain, straightforward and expressive. It was a literary feat for a person such as Chu Yuan-chang who taught himself in the Confucian classics late in his adulthood. The biographies of Chang Chung, by contrast, were composed by men of letters in the classical tradition. The language is ornate and the style is terse and refined, characteristic of the pseudo-historical, semi-fictional writings of the later Ming dynasty.

—TRANSLATOR

明太祖：周顛仙人傳

The Crazy Chou Immortal

By **Chu Yuan-chang** (1328-1398)
Translated by **Hok-lam Chan**

THE SURNAME OF this crazy man was Chou. He claimed to be a native of Chien-ch'ang, a sub-prefecture of Nan-ch'ang.[1] When he was fourteen he contracted a mental illness. Since his parents could not spare the time to care for him, he went to Nan-ch'ang and begged for a living in the city. The years passed by and he was as crazy as ever, not going anywhere else. During the Chih-cheng reign [1341-1368] of the Yuan—I forgot what year it was—he abruptly went to Fu-chou but soon returned to Nan-ch'ang, occasionally performing labour at the homes of the city-folk. In daytime he mixed with people of his sort, at night he slept under the gate of people's dwellings. When he was about thirty and some years old he suddenly conjured up an extraordinary message. Whenever new officials arrived to take up duties, he visited them and proclaimed: "I come to announce the Great Peace!" This was truly a prodigious statement. Why was it so? At that time the Yuan dynasty, having enjoyed a reign of peace, was about to plunge into chaos, and the crazy man purposely made such a proclamation, so I called it an extraordinary message.

Not many years later, disturbance rocked the Yuan empire. Bravos arose everywhere taking up strategic positions and indulged in killing without bringing a day of peace. Ch'en Yu-liang, having proclaimed the illegitimate title of Han, commanded a rabble force and marched into Nan-ch'ang. This crazy man had nothing to say to him. Before long, I personally led a naval squadron to recover Nan-ch'ang. After recapturing the city and pacifying the people, I departed for Chien-yeh.[2] While in Nan-ch'ang I met a man on the left of the Tung-hua Gate bowing before me by the roadside. I enquired of my companions who he was. "This is the crazy man," they declared. I returned to Chien-yeh in the third month, and the crazy man arrived in the sixth month. When I emerged to supervise construction work I ran into the crazy man who came to visit me. I asked him what he came for. "I come to announce

The text of this biography has been included in several literary collections such as the *Chi-lu hui-pien* 紀錄彙編, edited by Shen Chieh-fu in 1617 (Shanghai, 1938 ed.; hereafter *CLHP*), chuan 6, and others. The present translation is based on the collated edition of the text reproduced from the rubbings of the epitaph in *Lu-shan chin-shih hui-k'ao* 廬山金石滙考, 12a-14b, Vol. 1 of the *Lu-shan chih fu-k'an* 廬山志副刊, edited by Wu Tsung-tz'u 吳宗慈 and published in Shanghai in 1933. For a thorough discussion of the two Taoist immortals, see my article "The Rise of Ming T'ai-tsu (1368-98): Facts and Fiction in Early Ming Official Historiography", to appear in a forthcoming issue of the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, and my earlier study of the Iron-cap Master entitled: "Chang Chung and His Prophecy: The Transmission of the Legends of an Early Ming Taoist", in *Oriens Extremus* 20:1 (July 1973), 65-102.

[1] Modern Nanchang, Kiangsi.

[2] Later called Nanking.

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CRAZY CHOU, *by Shang-kuan Chou,* Illustrated Biographies from Wan Hsiao T'ang.

the Great Peace," he uttered. And so it was: when I went out in the morning, I always saw him, greeting me with the same speech; whether he was on my left or right, in the front or in the rear, he always started conversation with this proclamation. Sometimes seeing him in the distance, I spotted him reaching his hand under his breast lapel, as though searching for something, and then putting his hand in the mouth. I enquired what it was. "Lice!" he exclaimed. I asked how many there were. "Two or three pecks," he replied. These were some of his extraordinary remarks.

When he first met me, probably aware of my restlessness, he began chatting about the crooked womenfolk. In his native dialect he often sang a song, chanting: "Do you know what moves a person's heart? Only rouge and powder could delight the ladies!" When I asked him why it was so, he replied: "You do just that, just that. . . " He often talked like this and then exclaimed that he came to announce the "Great Peace." All the time I felt pestered by this crazy man so I gave liquor to intoxicate him. [He drank with gusto but did not get drunk.][3] He returned the next day, still complaining about having too much lice. So I ordered a new garment for him to replace the old. When the new dress was delivered, I looked at the crazy man's old skirt and found a stalk of calamus three-inches long concealed in his waist belt. I asked the crazy man what it was for. "Chewing it carefully with water would ease the pain in the belly," he said. I then chewed it carefully and swallowed it with water. Since then, the crazy man became crazier each day, so I gave orders to steam him alive. First we covered him with a huge jar, ordering him to remain inside. We then piled a bundle of firewood five-feet thick around the jar and burned it. After the fire had consumed the wood, we lifted the jar but found him unchanged. We then steamed him again. Using one and a half bundles of firewood five-feet thick, we covered the crazy

[3]This sentence, taken from *CLHP*, does not appear in the *Lu-shan chih* edition.

man inside the jar and started the fire around it. After the fire had extinguished we lifted the jar but again found him looking as usual. A little while later, we used two and a half bundles of firewood five-feet thick, covering the crazy man inside the jar and lit the fire. After the firewood had been consumed and the fire died out, we lifted the jar and found smoke congealing at the bottom of the vessel in the form of a cotton spread. The crazy man shook his head slightly, out came a small amount of moisture, and woke up without any sign of harm.

Following this I ordered him to take his meals in the Mt. Chiang Monastery under the care of the abbot. A month or so later, the head monk reported that the crazy man was behaving rather strangely and that after wrangling with a novice over a bowl of rice he became angry and had refused to eat for half a month. I was perplexed. The next day I paid him a visit. Arriving at the monastery, I saw the crazy man coming towards me in the distance. He scurried along without difficulty and showed no sign of hunger. This was fantastic. I ordered a sumptuous meal and dined with him at the Ts'ui-wei Pavilion. After dining, I secretly commanded the abbot: "Do make the crazy man fast for a month. I want to see if he can endure it." Following my order the head monk had him confined to a chamber. I made enquiry once every three days until the twenty-third day. He had never taken any food nor drink. This is really beyond human! I then went over to release him. When the military guards heard about this they raced with food and drink to fete him to his heart's content. He refused to swallow them, vomitting all the food and drink he had taken. A long while later, I summoned him to my presence and shared food with him. He ate as before and devoured everything without vomitting. Having drunk his fill, he went ahead of me waiting at the right bank of the route of my return journey. When I arrived, the crazy man drew a circle on the ground with his finger, pointed to me and exclaimed: "You destroy this bucket and make another bucket." What a weird remark![4] When the villagers of Chin-ling [Nanking] heard about him, they rushed forward with offer of food and lodging. One day, running into some youngsters, he suddenly uttered a strange exclamation: "Ye! I ask you to join the army, you just join the army!" When he saw me on a casual occasion, he often chanted a song, saying: "Shantung should only be made a province. . ."

BEFORE LONG, as I was about to launch an offensive in the west [against Ch'en Yu-liang] in Chiu-chiang,[5] I asked the crazy man pointedly: "Is my trip going to be all right?" He responded affirmatively. I then said to the crazy man: "He has already declared himself emperor. Now I wage war against him, is it not difficult?" The crazy man made a deliberate eccentric gesture. Looking up above the house for a while, he steadied his head, made a solemn countenance, wiping it with his hand,

[4]A later Ming author conjectures that Crazy Chou's remark, "Destroy a bucket, then make another bucket" may carry an allusion prophesying the imperial destiny of Chu Yuan-chang. He contends that the couplet may actually mean "Destroy a dynasty, then build another dynasty", since the word *t'ung* 桶 (bucket) is homonymous with *t'ung* 統 (unification); it is therefore a pun for the new dynasty. This is an example of the frenzied speculation of later Ming writers on the possible meanings of some of these bizarre episodes in the popular traditions about the Ming founding. See Lu Shen 陸深 (1477-1544), *Yü-chang man-ch'ao* 豫章漫鈔, in *CLHP* 135:7a.

[5]Kiukiang, Kiangsi.

and said: "There is no part of him up there!" I then enquired if he wished to accompany me on this trip and he consented. After this, I set foot on my return journey. The crazy man held high his usual walking-cane, scurrying before my horse and swinging it like a warrior waving his spear signalling the omen of victory.

Later, I took him along on the campaign. When we arrived at Wan-ch'eng,[6] the wind dropped and the fleet was stranded. I sent someone to enquire of the crazy man. "Just move along, just pretend there's wind. If we lose our nerve and stop, there will be no wind," he declared. Thereupon, the soldiers landed ashore, dragging the ships with ropes toward the river banks and we sailed against the current. After advancing two or three *li*, a breeze arose gradually, and less than ten *li* later, it blew intensely. The sails were hoisted and the fleet advanced rapidly with the wind, arriving at Little Ku Island. Before this, I had instructed my companions: "The crazy man had not said anything properly. Be alert. If he made wild remarks, report to me." Upon arriving at the Ma-tang River, sighting tortoises sporting in the river, the crazy man exclaimed: "The sea-demon has appeared, there will be heavy casualties!" My companions informed me thus. I denounced his absurdity. The crazy man was really an idiot; he urinated in the river! When we arrived at Hu-k'ou, I lost count of about seventeen or eighteen men missing. [Angered by his prognostication], I ordered my men to take the crazy man down a little stream at Hu-k'ou to have him drowned. A long while later they returned with the crazy man. I asked my men why they did not kill him and how he survived. "It's hard to kill him," they declared. Before we concluded our conversation, the crazy man popped in abruptly, asking for food. I gave him food. After eating, the crazy man roused up his spirit and straightened his attire, as if he was departing for a long journey. He came before me, taking a bow and stretching his neck, pleading: "You may kill me now!" "I have already had too much trouble with you but wouldn't want to kill you. Just go away," I exclaimed. He then carried his dry food and vanished, I knew not where.

Having concluded the great battle at P'eng-li,[7] I returned to the [Yangtze] river to deploy my naval forces in defense of the riverbank. During my leisure I sent someone to the foot of Mt. K'uang-lu[8] in the direction of where the crazy man had gone to enquire of the local residents if they knew his whereabouts. The land was barren and there were no inhabitants. Only a peasant cottage was located in the scrub by the side of the T'ai-p'ing shrine. Being given a description of the crazy man and asked if such a person had been seen, the peasant said: "Not long ago a lanky fellow suddenly arrived. When he first came here, he said things would be well because he had come to announce the 'Great Peace.' He then exhorted me to pay attention to cultivating the fields. He later stayed in my house but did not eat for half a month." [The messenger] then penetrated deep into Mt. K'uang-lu [for the crazy man] but failed to find where he had gone.

Upon returning from my campaigns [against Ch'en Yu-liang], I laid siege to Wu-ch'ang in the *kuei-mou* year [1363], pacified the Ching and Ch'u[9] in the *chia-*

[6]In modern Anhwei.

[7]Poyang Lake.

[8]Mt. Lu in Kiangsi.

[9]Modern Hupei and Hunan.

ch'en year [1364], marched into the two Che provinces[10] in the *i-ssu* year [1365], subdued Wu and Yueh[11] in the *ping-wu* year [1366], and captured the Central Plain, the two Kuang provinces[12] and Fukien, uniting the entire country. In the eighth month of the *kuei-hai* year of Hung-wu [September 1383], a barefoot monk by the name of Chueh-hsien appeared before the court, claiming he had met an old man in a cave deep in Mt. K'uang-lu who had dispatched him with a message to see the Son of Heaven of the Great Ming. Asked what message it was, he said it concerned the destiny of the empire. The officials from the court of ceremonials communicated this to me. I bethought myself that it was a time when already too many people were making false and wild reports. Now that I have achieved rule over the country, supreme above all the subjects and mediating the affairs between the upper and lower classes, I should hear the right speeches and see the right people. I was worried lest I be made a laughing stock among my people, so I refused to see him or respond to his message. The monk stayed and waited for four years and then returned to Mt. K'uang-lu. He wished to see me but I did not receive him; instead, I sent him two poems. Two years later I sent someone to enquire [if the crazy man] was seen again. The barefoot monk reported in the negative.

FOUR YEARS LATER, I contracted a fever and was on the brink of dying. Suddenly the barefoot monk arrived, proclaiming that the Heavenly-eye Elder and the Crazy Chou Immortal sent him to present medicine. At first as before I did not want to see him, but on second thought, considering that I was sick and people had come to present me with medicine, I should at least see them whether it was genuine or not. I emerged to receive him, and he gave me the medicine. One was called 'temperate drug,' in two slices; the other was called 'temperate stone,' in one piece. The instruction read: "Place the medicine in a gold bowl. Grind the back and mix it with 'golden sweet liquor.' Drink one cup, the sickness will be cured." I then took the potion. At first I felt nothing unusual. This was the *wei* hour [1-3 p.m.], but when lamp-lighting time came I felt muscular cramps all over my body. The medicine was taking effect. I recovered overnight and my spirit was strengthened daily. Having taken two doses in one day,[13] I smelt the fragrance of calamus. I also spotted cinnabar sediment of an extremely brilliant red colour at the bottom of the wine cup. The barefoot monk then said: "When I was living at the Heavenly Pool Monastery, about five-odd *li* from the cave, a certain monk by the name of Hsu suddenly came with the message that the Bamboo Grove Monastery invited me for a visit. I went with him and found the Heavenly-eye Elder seated in the monastery. Minutes later, a man clad in a straw garment entered. I asked the Heavenly-eye Elder who it was. 'This is Crazy Chou—the man our emperor has kept enquiring about,' he declared. 'Our lord has contracted a fever, you should bring medicine to him.' The Heavenly-eye Elder then said he and Crazy Chou had each composed a poem to match the rhyme of the ones by Your Majesty. I asked if the poems can be seen. He said: 'They were already inscribed on a stone tablet.' I looked over the stele on the hanging cliff and saw the two poems."

[10] Chekiang.
[11] Kiangsu and Chekiang.
[12] Kwangtung and Kwangsi.
[13] The other editions read "three doses".

I then asked the barefoot monk if he could still remember the poems. He replied in the affirmative, so I asked him to transcribe them. At first I found the poems coarse and conventional, without rhyme or parallel structure, not reading like poetry. I then sent someone to Mt. K'uang-lu to summon [the crazy man]. When the messenger arrived there, he found no trace of the man. I later took another look at the poems. The language and calligraphy were quite extraordinary; they were not well-carved, but merely stating the facts. Alas! They have predicted the destiny of the state, its prosperity and decline, survival and perishment. Hence I record them to show to future generations.[14]

[14]Here follow the two poems allegedly written by the Heavenly-eye Elder and Crazy Chou, the purport of which is to glorify the founding emperor of the Ming dynasty and forecast an era of peace and tranquility.

宋濂：張中傳

The Iron-cap Taoist

By **Sung Lien** (1310-1381), et al.
Translated by **Hok-lam Chan**

CHANG CHUNG, style-name Ching-hua, was a native of Lin-ch'uan.[1] He studied Confucianism in his early years, and specialised in the *Annals of the Spring and Autumn* for the *chin-shih* degree examination, but failed the test. Thereupon, he took delight in the mountains and rivers, and wandered all over the prefectures to the west [of the Yangtze River]. He met a mysterious man who taught him the T'ai-chi numerology, whereupon he was able to make predictions of fortune and misfortune, which often turned out to be accurate. At that time the country was in chaos, so he retired to Mt. Mu-fu. He advised people on the ways of escaping the scourge of war; those who heeded his opinion survived, those who did not encountered disaster.

In the first month of *jen-yin* [February 1362], when His Majesty [Chu Yuan-chang] captured Yü-chang,[2] the censor-in-chief Teng Yü who was in attendance

The main biography by Sung Lien, composed in 1370, is included in his collected works, *Sung hsueh-shih wen chi* 宋學士文集 (*Ssu-pu ts'ung-k'an* ed. 四部叢刊, 1929), 9:4a-5a. The other accounts with varying details of Chang Chung's life are derived from the following literary miscellanies of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: Yang P'u (1373-1446), *Ch'an-hsuan hsien-chiao pien* 禪玄顯教編, in *pei-ch'eng* 稗乘 (Wan-li ed.), edited by Huang Ch'ang-ling 黃昌齡, *ts'e* 9, 10b; Lu Ts'an (1494-1551), *Keng-ssu pien* 庚巳編 (ca. 1520), in *CLHP* 170:1a-2a; Cheng Hsiao (1499-1566), *Chin-yen* 今言 (pref. 1566), in *CLHP* 147:33b-34a; and Ku Ch'i-yuan (1565-1628), *K'o-tso chui-yü* 客座贅語 (pref. 1617), *Chin-ling ts'ung-k'o* ed. 金陵叢刻, 1904, 2:3a-b. Portions of these biographies have appeared earlier in my article on Chang Chung in *Oriens Extremus, op. cit*; acknowledgement is due to its editors for permission to reproduce them in a modified form in this article.

[1]In modern Kiangsi.

[2]Nanchang, Kiangsi.

recommended Chang Chung, so His Majesty sent a messenger to summon him. Having offered him a seat, His Majesty enquired: "When I captured Yü-chang, my army did not spill blood with their swords, nor did they disturb the peace of the market-place. Will people now enjoy peace?" "Not yet," said Chung, "very soon blood will stain this place, all the living quarters will be burnt, the T'ieh-chu (Iron-pillar) Shrine will also be reduced to ashes, only one hall will remain intact!" In the fourth month of that summer, commander K'ang T'ai rebelled and everything was as Chung predicted. Since then, Chung was increasingly favoured. He also foresaw the insurrections of certain high officials, and urged His Majesty to take precautionary measures. In the seventh month of that autumn, administrator Shao Jung and assistant administrator Chao Chi-tsu hid an army in the north gate [of Nanking], plotting for a coup. The scheme was discovered, and they were executed.

On the *kuei-wei* date of the fifth month of *kuei-mou* [July 26, 1367], His Majesty was to leave for the foot of Mt. Fu-chou to officiate in a sacrifice to the mountains and streams and the hundred deities. He enquired of Chung as to the prospects of his trip. Chung said: "It is auspicious. There you will meet two heavenly horses, moving as if bowing and dancing." At the conclusion of the ceremony, when His Majesty was about to leave, his horse suddenly stood erect like a human, making a gesture like dancing, and then lowered his head as if he was bowing. On that very day, a mission from the Central Plain presented a prodigious horse, thus fulfilling the prediction of "two horses." Chung also foresaw a tremor in the office of the Central Secretariat and some disturbances in the city, but said that these would not harm His Majesty. On the *ting-wei* date of the sixth month [July 20], a fire gutted the Chung-ch'in Pavilion, where the gunpowder storage caught fire and caused a thunderous explosion. As the secretariat office was adjacent to the pavilion, people inside and outside feared that it might become involved too.

At that time, the illegitimate ruler of the

CHANG CHUNG, *by Shang-kuan Chou.*

Han kingdom, Ch'en Yu-liang, was laying siege to Yü-chang which had already lasted three months. On the *kuei-yu* date of the seventh month [August 15], His Majesty launched an offensive against him and asked Chung about the outcome. Chung said: "My lord will win a decisive victory in fifty days, and capture the head [of Ch'en Yu-liang] on the *hai* or *tzu* date. The battle will be fought at Nan-k'ang." His Majesty consequently invited Chang Chung to accompany him. On approaching Mt. Ku, the wind dropped and the ships were stalled. Chung said: "Your servant has studied the art of *tung-hsüan*, and will conduct a sacrifice to revive the wind." Upon the conclusion of the ceremony the wind increased in intensity, [and the ships] reached Lake P'eng-li.[3] On the *chi-ch'ou* date [August 31], a battle was fought off Mt. K'ang-lang inside the Lake. Ch'ang Yü-ch'un, later Prince of Chung-wu, having penetrated with his forces deep into the enemy defense, was encircled by the opposing fleet and in imminent danger. Many people thought [Ch'ang] could not be saved. Chung said: "Don't worry, he will come out on the *hai* hour [9-11 p.m.]." [Ch'ang] managed to break out on time, and scored succession victories. Ch'en Yu-jen, the illegitimate *wu* prince,[4] and countless enemy soldiers were drowned. On the *jen-hsü* date of the eighth month [October 3], His Majesty unleashed another offensive, after which the drifting bodies of the defeated overflowed the river. Ch'en Yu-liang was killed by a stray arrow. On the *kuei-hai* date [October 4], His Majesty secured the surrender of fifty thousand enemy forces. The date was exactly fifty days from the *kuei-yu* date [August 15 predicted by Chang Chung.] Only in the location of the battle, Mt. K'ang-lang instead of Nan-k'ang, was there a slight difference.

Earlier, when Yü-chang was beleagured by the enemy, His Majesty enquired when the siege could be lifted. Chung replied: "It ought to take place on the *ping-hsü* date of the seventh month [August 28]." When the report arrived, it occurred on the *i-yu* date [August 27]. This was because the court astronomers' calculation of the calendar often resulted in one day's difference in that month, so the siege actually ended on the *ping-hsü* date. Chang Chung's many other predictions were all fulfilled in like fashion. Being a high-minded man, he rarely talked to people. He used to wear an iron-cap, hence people gave him the sobriquet T'ieh-kuan tzu (the Iron-cap Master).

The encomium: I have had several encounters with Chang Chung, and found him to be seemingly eccentric and unconventional. In conversation, when we touched upon matters of ethical principle, he would often interject irrelevant remarks for no discernible reason. On the fifth month of *chia-ch'en* [June 1364], two of my colleagues, 'erudite scholars', offended His Majesty and awaited punishment. Chung then enquired their years of birth, took up a brush and made dots on a piece of paper as if he were doing a calculation. Before long, he burst into laughter and remarked: "The time of their rehabilitation will be on the fifth day of the seventh month." I took note of this. Toward the end of the sixth month, an imperial edict ordered them to resume duty. At that time the two still wondered if the prediction of the Taoist would be fulfilled. When they received an audience to express gratitude

[3]Poyang Lake.

[4]Ch'en Yu-liang's brother.

to the emperor, the date fell just when Chung had predicted. Chung's magical power is really fantastic. His Majesty personally compiled ten accounts about him, and asked me to compose his biography to be deposited with the 'golden casket'.[5] Six years later [1370], I came across the draft in an old portfolio. I have therefore copied it, and supplemented the account with my personal reminiscences.

More about Chang Chung

Yang P'u 楊溥:

The Iron-cap Taoist is a gifted master. Once as he examined the physiognomy of His Majesty he predicted that he was destined to be an emperor. After his enthronement, His Majesty summoned the Taoist to his presence, and enquired of him the destiny of the empire. He simply remarked that it would surpass the T'ang but not the Han, and wrote a big character 'Shun' (順 agreeable, or prosperous) for the emperor. He then took his leave and retreated to the mountain; no one knew where he was. A piece of his writing entitled *T'ieh-kuan tao-jen ko* (Ballad of the Iron-cap Taoist) survives.

Lu Ts'an 陸粲:

The Iron-cap Taoist Chang Ching-ho is a necromancer from the west of the [Yangtze] River. His art of prognostication is such that few people can fathom him. When Emperor T'ai-tsu first set up his garrison in Ch'u-yang [in 1354], the Taoist called at the military headquarters and made a prediction to His Majesty. He said: "In these turbulent times only a man who commands the mandate of Heaven can attain peace. As I see it now, it must be my lord." His Majesty then demanded an explanation. He replied: "My lord has the dragon's pupil, the eyes of phoenix; your features are extraordinary and noble beyond description. When you rise with a radiant countenance, like the wind sweeping away dark clouds, this will be the date you receive the mandate." Amazed by his prediction, His Majesty kept him in his headquarters, and later the Taoist accompanied His Majesty on several campaigns. During his engagements against Ch'en [Yu-liang], His Majesty often asked the Taoist to observe the ethers to predict the outcome. Every prediction he made came true. In the battle of Poyang Lake, Ch'en was killed by a stray arrow, but neither side was aware of it. The Taoist, however, perceived the happening after observing the ethers, and secretly reported to His Majesty: "Yu-liang is dead, but his men have not been informed, so they are still fighting hard. I beg my lord to compose an eulogy, and send a criminal awaiting the death sentence to take it along and wail for him. The morale of the enemy will be undermined and we shall attain our purpose." His Majesty followed his advice, whereupon the Han soldiers were dispersed.

After His Majesty designed Chin-ling [Nanking] as his capital and planned its construction, he often asked the Taoist to examine the geomancy of the site, and greatly favoured him. [Once His Majesty] made a trip to a monastery in Mt. Chi-ming (Crowing Cock). Upon observing that the towering stupa overlooked the inner palace, he intended to demolish it and relocate it elsewhere. Before he revealed this, the Taoist suddenly said to the monks: "His Majesty plans to demolish your stupa and will visit the monastery the next day. You should detain him on the way and plead with him so that it can be spared." Often amazed by the Taoist's prognostications, the monks, carrying burning-incense, went several *li* away from the mountain at dawn, waiting for the emperor. When His Majesty arrived, the monks begged him earnestly. His Majesty was astonished and enquired: "I don't have such intentions, why should you conjure up a false charge?" The monks replied: "The Iron-cap Taoist instructed us to do so." His Majesty was surprised and desisted from demolishing [the stupa].

Earlier, when Hsu Ta, the Prince of Wu-ning, was a high commander, the Taoist once remarked to him: "Your honour has red cheeks, your eyes

[5] History archives.

look like fire, and you have reached the topmost rank. Unfortunately, you will have only a medium life-expectancy!" Hsu later died at the age of fifty-four. Once the Taoist found a lodging at the foot of Mt. Chung, Lan Yü, the Duke of Liang-kuo, brought wine to visit him. The Taoist emerged in rustic garments to greet him. Lan Yü, feeling slighted, was displeased. As they were drinking together, Yü said in jest to the Taoist: "I have a line, let's see if you can match it." He then said: "Wearing a pair of straw sandals to greet a guest is impolite under foot." The Taoist, pointing to the coconut cup Yü was holding, responded: "Holding a coconut shell as a cup is disloyal before the goblet." Lan Yü, being a military man, did not catch the pun.[6] He laughed with the Taoist and departed. Later Yü was executed on the charge of treason, implicating his entire clan.

The Taoist lived in the capital for several years. Then one day, without anyone knowing why, he jumped from the Ta-chung bridge and drowned. His Majesty ordered a search for his body, but it was not recovered. Then the guards of the T'ung Pass [in Shensi] reported that on a certain day of a certain month the Iron-cap Taoist left the Pass leaning on his walking-cane. When a calculation is made, it turned out to be the date of his reported drowning. He was never seen again.

Cheng Hsiao 鄭曉:

The Iron-cap Taoist Chang Chung, style-name Ching-ho, was a native of Lin-ch'uan. Once Emperor T'ai-tsu ascended Mt. Chung with a retinue of ministers who excelled in letters. [While resting in] the Yung-ts'ui Pavilion, [the emperor] passed out brushes and paper inviting them to compose poems. Pao Shang-kang, Chu Sheng, Chang I-ning, Ch'in Yü-po, Shan Yu-chung, a Mr. Li and the Taoist all responded. Earlier, the Taoist made an attempt for the *chin-shih* examination but failed the test. Later he met a mysterious man teaching him the T'ai-chi numerology. When he made predictions of fortune and misfortune, most of them turned out to be accurate. He was a high-minded man and rarely talked to people. He used to wear an iron-cap and call himself the Iron-cap Master, hence people dubbed him the Iron-cap Taoist.

Once while travelling in disguise, His Majesty arrived at a monastery. The monks were kneeling on the sides of the gate to greet him. His Majesty enquired how they had learned about his visit. They replied that they had heard of it from the Iron-cap Taoist. His Majesty immediately summoned him. Upon his arrival, His Majesty was holding a piece of hot cake but had not yet eaten half. He offered it to the Taoist, saying that, since he had known about his visit beforehand, he wished he could speak about the events of the empire without reservation or inhibition. The Taoist delivered impromptu scores of prophecies, including the following: "In the intercalary fifth month of the *wu-yin* year [1398] the dragon returns to the sea;[7] in the *jen-wu* year [1402] a black snake escapes from fire."[8] These predictions were found to be fulfilled between the Hung-wu [1368-1398] and Chien-wen [1399-1402] periods. As to the rest [of the prophecies, people] dared not transmit them.

Earlier, the country was plunged into chaos of war, so he went to live in Mt. Mu-fu as a hermit. When he came to the city, he advised people on the ways of escaping the scourge of war; many of those who heeded his opinion survived. In the *jen-yin* year [1362] assistant administrator Teng Yü recommended him and he arrived [in Nan-ch'ang]. His Majesty enquired: "When I captured Nan-ch'ang, my army did not spill blood with their swords, nor did they disturb the market-place. Will people now enjoy peace?" "The country is going to be pacified from now on, but very soon blood will stain this place, all the living quarters will be burnt, only one hall of the T'ieh-chu Shrine will survive," the Taoist replied. Later commander K'ang T'ai rebelled, and it was as he had predicted. In later days his reply about [the auspicious omen of] the two dragon-like horses, his prognostication

[6]The original expression *tsu-hsia* 足下 (under foot) is an honorific addressed to one's vis-à-vis; it is matched here with *tsun-ch'ien* 樽前 (before the goblet), which alludes homophonically to "His Majesty", i.e., Chu Yuan-chang. Lan Yü, of course, failed to understand the implication. He was executed on the charge of treason in 1393, involving his entire clan and tens of thousands of his associates and friends. See *Ming T'ai-tsu shih-lu* 明太祖實錄 (Taipei, 1962 ed.), 3296, and *Ming-shih* 明史 (*Po-na* ed.), 132/5b.

[7]i.e., the death of His Majesty T'ai-tsu.

[8]i.e., the flight of Emperor Chien-wen upon the fall of the capital to the rebel soldiers of Chu Ti, the Prince of Yen, later Emperor Yung-lo (1403-1424).

of the disturbance in the office of the central secretariat, and his snuffing out the flower-bud like flame at the root of a burning lamp [as a warning sign against premature jubilance over the] pacification of Ch'en Yu-liang all miraculously came true.[9]

Ku Ch'i-yüan 顧起元：

Tradition has it that Emperor T'ai-tsu once visited the Chi-ming monastery. Upon observing the towering stupa overlooked the inner palace, he intended to demolish it and relocate it elsewhere. The Iron-cap Taoist then commanded the monks to greet the emperor and plead with him. His Majesty asked the monks how they learned of his intention. They replied that the Iron-cap Taoist informed them so. His Majesty was surprised and rescinded the plan.

He then summoned the Taoist and enquired: "What will happen to me today?" "The heir-apparent will present hot cakes at a certain hour," the Taoist replied. It was the mid-autumn festival day. His Majesty had the Taoist locked in a room to test the accuracy of his prediction. When the hour came, the heir-apparent presented hot cakes as predicted. While he was tasting the cake, His Majesty thought of the Taoist, and wanted to give him the piece he was eating. When the door was unlocked, there was no trace of the Taoist. He left a *Cheng-ping ko* (Steamed-cake Ballad) on the desk for the emperor. The lyrics in the ballad about the usurpation of the Prince of Yen and the defeat at T'u-mu were all to be fulfilled.[10]

This Taoist was Chang Chung, a native of Lin-ch'uan. The historical annals record that when His Majesty arose with arms [against the Mongols], the Taoist visited him and revealed to him the mysterious plan of heaven indicating that [he would accomplish his mission] in one thousand days but there is no mention of this episode. Moreover, the Chi-ming monastery was built on imperial orders in the twentieth year of His Majesty's enthronement [1387] by the Marquis of Ch'ung-shan and based on the ruins [of a shrine erected during] the Yung-k'ang reign [A.D. 300] of the Chin dynasty with a change of name to the present one. The third gate of the monastery was called Mi-mi kuan (Secret Pass) upon which the stupa was constructed. All the paths were named by His Majesty. Later, the remains of Pao-kung[11] were transferred from the Ling-ku (Efficacious Valley) Monastery to be buried on the hill-top. A five-story pagoda was erected and every year officials were sent to offer sacrifice. That being the case, the monastery was constructed under the auspices of His Majesty and I do not know why he wanted to demolish it and relocate it elsewhere.

[9] An account of this last episode first appeared in the narrative about Chang Chung's participation in the battle of Poyang Lake against Ch'en Yu-liang in *Ming T'ai-tsu shih-lu*, 169, under the *jen-hsü* date of the eighth month (October 3) in 1363.

[10] This episode later reappeared in Chang Chung's biography in Cha Chi-tso 查繼佐, *Tsui-wei lu* 罪惟錄 (ca. 1672), *Ssu-pu ts'ung-k'an* 3rd ser., ch. 26: *"Fang-wai"* 方外. There the stories about Chang Chung's prognostication essentially draw upon the accounts of Cheng Hsiao and Ku Ch'i-yuan; the title of the alleged prognosticatory scripture, however, is rendered as *Ch'ueh-ping ko* 缺餅歌 (Bitten-cake Ballad).

[11] The Liang monk Pao-chih, 寶誌 418-514.

(For Chinese text of the two main biographies see page 160)