

The Authorship of the Story *Chung-Ch'ing Li-Chi*

Chung-ch'ing li-chi 鍾情麗集 (*A Graceful Account of Profound Love*) is a mildly erotic, short love story written in literary Chinese. Tradition has attributed it to Ch'iu Chün 丘潛 (1421–1495), author of the classic work on statecraft *Ta-hsüeh yen-i pu* 大學衍義補 (*Supplement to the Extended Meaning of the Great Learning*) and the didactic plays *Wu-lun ch'üan-pei chi* 伍倫全備記 (*Record of the Five Cardinal Relations in Perfection*). It has not been thoroughly reviewed in modern studies of Ming literature. Patrick D. Hanan has stated merely that it was “evidently very popular in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.”¹ In fact, besides its numerous abridged versions, it was also elaborated into a play late in the sixteenth century.²

Ming critics' remarks on it reflect their changing attitudes toward eroticism. For example, while it was condemned as offensively obscene in the early and mid-sixteenth century,³ it was regarded as too mediocre and commonplace to deserve thoughtful criticism in the next century.⁴ Late

¹Patrick D. Hanan, “Sources of *Chin Ping Mei*,” *AMNS* 10.1 (1963), pp. 23–67 and p. 60.

²This is *Hua-ying* 畫鶯 by Chao Yü-li 趙於禮, cited in Ch'ü Piao-chia's 祁彪佳 (1602–1645) *Ch'ü-p'in* 曲品. See Huang Shang 黃裳, collator and ed., *Yüan-shan-t'ang Ming ch'ü-p'in chiao-lu* 遠山堂明曲品劇品校錄 (Shanghai: Shang-hai ch'u-pan kung-ssu 上海出版公司, 1955), p. 66. Note that Huang Shang is unable to give the exact dates of these works by Ch'ü; they probably were written in the 1630s.

³See Chang Chih-ch'un 張志淳 (fl. 1480s–1510s), *Nan-yüan man-lu* 南園漫錄 in *Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu chen-pen erh-chü* 四庫全書珍本二集 (Taipei: Shang-wu yin-shu-kuan 商務印書館, 1971) 3, p. 4a. This work contains a preface by its author dated 1515; it also includes passages written as late as 1526. Cf. the *Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu* editor's abstract (*i'i-yao* 提要) preceding the text. See also T'ao Fu 陶輔 (fl. late 15th to early 16th centuries), *Sang-yü man-chü* 桑榆漫志 (rpt. of *Chin-hsien hui-yen* 今獻彙言 edn.; Taipei: Shang-wu yin-shu-kuan, 1969), pp. 6b–7a. The date of this work is uncertain, although it was early enough to have been included in Kao Ju's 高儒 *Pai-ch'uan shu-chih* 百川書志, compiled in 1540 (Shanghai: Ku-tien wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan-she 古典文學出版社, 1957), p. 114. T'ao Fu's book in any case was written after 1512. Evidence for this comes from one of his entries: “Recently I read the *Hsieh-chou* [Shansi] *Kuan-wang i-yung lu* 解州關王義勇錄, which has a preface by Censor Chiang Hung 姜洪” (p. 12b). Chiang Hung (*chin-shih* 1478) died in 1512 in Shansi where he was appointed governor with the rank of vice censor-in-chief in the same year. For that, see Chiang's biographies in Chiao Hung 焦竑 (1541–1620), comp., *Kuo-ch'ao hsien-cheng lu* 國朝獻徵錄 (rpt. of late Ming edn.; Taipei: Hsüeh-sheng shu-chü 學生書局, 1965) ch. 61, p. 36a; Chang T'ing-yü 張廷玉 et al., comp., *Ming-shih* 明史 (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü 中華書局, 1974) 180, p. 4790.

⁴See Shen Te-fu 沈德符 (1578–1642), *Wan-li yeh-huo pien* 萬曆野獲編 (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1959) 25, p. 641. Note that according to Shen Te-fu's prefaces this work was first written in 1606 and then expanded in 1619.

Ming writers made ungrounded assertions about its authorship and speculated fantastically about its literary history. These canards were in fact so troubling that the early Ch'ing historian, Cha Chi-tso 查繼佐 (1601-1677), tried to dispel them in his history of the Ming, *Tsui-wei lu* 罪惟錄; unfortunately, he was unable to provide convincing evidence.⁵ The following study brings the necessary evidence to bear in order to show that such attributions and speculations are as fallacious as they are entertaining.⁶

THE BOOK AND THE STORY

Chung-ch'ing li-chi was probably written and first published in 1486-1487, although the earliest extant edition can be dated only from 1503. According to Sun K'ai-ti's 孫楷第 bibliographic descriptions of the only surviving copy of this edition,⁷ a four-chüan monograph bearing the title *Hsin-k'o* 新刻 (cut anew) *Chung-ch'ing li-chi*, the front matter contains two pseudonymous prefaces. The first of them was written by an "Associate of the Hut of Joy (Lo-an chung jen 樂庵中人) in Southern T'ung-chou" 通州 in 1486. Its text, however, is so corrupt as to be unintelligible. The text of the second one remains virtually intact. It ends with the following lines: "Two days before the Birthday of Flowers in the second spring moon of the year *ting-wei* of Ch'eng-hua [12th day, 2nd month, 1487]. Written by Lay Buddhist of the Hut of Simplicity (Chien-an chü-shih 簡庵居士) in his office in Chin-tai 金台 [Peking]."

The first page of the main text begins with the following (two?) lines: "Compiled and edited by the Master of Jade Peak (Yü-feng chu-jen 玉峯

⁵ See Cha Chi-tso, *Tsui-wei lu* (SPTK edn.) 13A, p. 63b.

⁶ Ch'iu Chün's authorship of *Chung-ch'ing li-chi* is still widely entertained by modern scholars. For example, Yeh Te-chün 葉德均 (1911-1956) has held that "it must have been in fact written by Ch'iu Chün since all [Ming and Ch'ing] writers said it was," and suggested that it was written between 1439 and 1454. See Yeh, *Hsi-ch'ü hsiao-shuo ts'ung-k'ao* 戲曲小說叢考 (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1979), pp. 537-38. Hanan, "Sources of *Chin Ping Mei*," also assumes that it was written by Ch'iu. Others who appear to have taken the attribution seriously include, for example, Aoki Masaru 青木正兒 and Lo Chin-t'ang 羅錦堂. See Wang Kulu 王古魯, *Chung-kuo chin-shih hsi-ch'ü shih* 中國近世戲曲史 (trans. of Masaru's *Shina kinsei gikyokushi*; Peking: Tso-chia ch'u-pan she 作家出版社, 1958), p. 118; Lo Chin-t'ang, *Ming-tai chü-tso-chia k'ao-t'ieh* 明代劇作家考略 (Hong Kong: Lung-men shu-tien 龍門書店, 1966), p. 71.

⁷ See Sun K'ai-ti, *Jih-pen Tung-ching so-chien Chung-kuo hsiao-shuo shu-mu* 日本東京所見中國小說書目 (rpt.; Hong Kong: Shih-yung shu-chü 實用書局, 1967), pp. 122-24. Yeh Te-chün, *Hsi-ch'ü*, p. 538, remarked that the 1503 edition was not the earliest edition of this story.

⁸ Chinese text of this line: 南通州樂庵中人. I am aware of the uncertain meaning of the expression *chung-jen* 中人 in this line. *Chung-jen* has been used as a reference to eunuchs. In this case, it appears not to be such a reference, especially when compared with the line in the following note, in which the expression also does not seem to refer to a eunuch. In both cases, I take *chung-jen* to mean one who was in whatever way a member of a certain organization — i.e., equivalent to *men-jen* 門人 or *men-k'o* 門客 — hence my word, "associate."

主人). Collated and corrected by associates in the military administration of Southern T'ung-chou."⁸ The end of the text contains a printer's colophon in the form of a seal with the following words: "[Printed by] the Hall of Loyalty and Forgiveness. Mid-autumn [Festival] day of the year *kuei-hai* of Hung-chih [1503]. Collated and corrected and cut anew by the Yen 晏 of Chin-t'ai." From these dates, it is clear that the 1503 monograph edition was printed in Peking. And although it does not help determine the place of the original issue, the preface by Lay Buddhist of the Hut of Simplicity indicates that the story was known in official circles in Peking as early as spring 1487.

For the purpose of our investigation, the spring of 1487 is critically important. It was exactly the time when Ch'iu Chün completed his *Ta-hsüeh yen-i pu*, at the end of almost a decade of hard work, for which he would soon be rewarded with a promotion to Minister of Rites from Libationer of the National Academy.¹⁰ When the new edition of *Chung-ch'ing li-chi* was issued in 1503, Ch'iu had already been dead for eight years.

Chung-ch'ing li-chi was recorded as a monograph in such early catalogues as Kao Ju's 高儒 *Pai-ch'uan shu-chih* 百川書志, compiled in 1540¹¹ and Ch'ao Li's 晁棗 (*chin-shih* 1541) *Pao-wen-t'ang shu-mu* 寶文堂書目, compiled in the 1550s.¹² Furthermore, since the end of the sixteenth century (mid-Wan-li period) it had been produced in abridged and sometimes revised forms in numerous collections of tales written in literary Chinese. Those that appeared in *Feng-liu shih-chuan* 風流十傳 and *Wan-chin ch'ing-lin* 萬錦情林 consisted of a single chüan; and those in *Kuo-se t'ien-hsiang* 國色天香, *Yen-chü pi-chi* 燕居筆記, *Hua-chen ch'i-yen* 花陣綺言, and *Hsiu-ku ch'un-jung* 繡谷春容 were two-chüan versions.¹³

⁹ Chinese text of this line: 南顧通州門中人. I suspect that there is a misplaced character in this line, because it does not make sense. It is better read as 南通州顧門中人; at least both the place name and the expression *chung-jen* 中人 are compatible with those discussed in the previous note. Following this reading, the term *yuan-men* 顧門 could be an old and figurative reference to a military office.

¹⁰ For the life of Ch'iu Chün and the background of this work, see Hung-lam Chu, "Ch'iu Chün (1421-1495) and the *Ta-hsüeh yen-i pu*: Statecraft Thought in Fifteenth-century China," diss., Princeton U., 1984 (also Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1984).

¹¹ See Kao Ju, *Pai-ch'uan shu-chih*, p. 90. The author of the story and the number of chüan given there are identical to those given in the 1503 edition described by Sun K'ai-ti.

¹² See Ch'ao Li, *Ch'ao-shih pao-wen-t'ang shu-mu* 晁氏寶文堂書目 (Shanghai: Ku-tien wen-shüch ch'u-pan-she, 1957), pp. 100, 138. Without the author and the number of chüan specified, the name of the story appeared twice in this catalogue, in the *lei-shu* 類書 and *yueh-fu* 樂府 categories, respectively. Note that this work by Ch'ao Li was written with his son, Ch'ao Tung-wu 吳東吳 (1534-1556); see bibliographic notes on pp. 239-41.

¹³ See Sun K'ai-ti, *Hsiao-shuo shu-mu*, pp. 124, 129, 131, 133, 138; Yeh Te-chün, *Hsi-ch'ü*, pp. 535-36; and Ōtsuka Hidetaka 大塚秀高, "Mindai kōki ni okeru bungen shōsetsu no kenkō ni tsuite (明代後期における文言小説の刊行について)," *Tōyō bunka* 東洋文化 61 (1981.3), pp. 45-97. I am grateful to Dr. Ch'iu-kuei Wang for calling my attention to the last article.

From an examination of the last four collections,¹⁴ it appears that although the plot of the story was not distorted, nevertheless the editors in different ways modified individual scenes and substituted expressions. The version in *Hua-chen ch'i-yen* is the longest of the four, and its concluding passages, being fuller and having fewer unintelligible words, help provide a solution to our problem; accordingly, the following summary of the story is based on it.

The story in *Chung-ch'ing li-chi* is set on the tropical island of Hainan, where a mixed population of Han Chinese and the aboriginal Li 黎 are portrayed as living in peace and harmony. It begins with an introduction of the leading male character and the background for the beginning of his romance.

The student Ku 辜 has the name of Lu 絡. By household registration he is a native of Ch'ung-chou 瓊州, Kwangtung. With a face like the best of jade, a body tall and robust, well read in the classics and histories, his words and speech as beautiful as clouds and rainbows, he is one outstanding man. One day his parents called him and gave this order: "You have a great-aunt who is married to a Li family in Lin-kao 臨高. Her son, appointed native-official [of the aboriginal Li tribes] by the court, is [by relationship] your uncle. For several years we have not sent them our regards. . . . Now that spring breezes and harmonious air are here, and scenes of nature all bright, we have prepared some token gifts for you to bring to them in a visit on behalf of us, to extend our good wishes.

Ku Lu undertook the task.

Having been greatly impressed by Ku Lu's disposition and learning, his native-official uncle asked him to stay on at his home to tutor his son. Ku Lu accepted the offer and was well treated. More than that, he now had the chance to meet, and soon to court, the uncle's beautiful and well-versed daughter Yü-niang 諭娘, the leading female character of the story.

Their courtship proceeded in secrecy, facilitated only by the exchanging of poems, a traditional device in fiction. All along Ku Lu was eager for

a sexual relationship with Yü-niang. She did not yield to his repeated overtures; but neither did she ever bluntly reject or condemn him for making such proposals. Instead, while Ku Lu was firmly overcoming his disappointment, Yü-niang from time to time hinted that his wish might someday be fulfilled. Eventually the time arrived, and the only "obscene" (to use Chang Chih-ch'un's word) scenes in the story were depicted implicitly in refined, literary language.

Ku Lu proposed marriage to Yü-niang shortly after their first union, but was rejected by his uncle on the grounds that he had had success neither in accumulating wealth nor in obtaining a government office. Soon Ku had to return home to prepare for his civil service examination and the uncle was also ready to marry Yü-niang to someone else. The couple's parting created worry about the integrity of their love; each was afraid that the other might not remain true to the promise of an eventual marriage.

Time proved them both to be equal to their test of loyalty. They formally became spouses through the good offices of Ku Lu's great-aunt. Meanwhile, Yü-niang's father also became understanding. Because Yü-niang was skillful in handling household affairs, she was liked and respected by all members of Ku Lu's family. Such a perfect, enviable marriage brought a happy ending to a romance otherwise not considered socially acceptable.

The story concludes with the author's explanation of its origin in real events, his praise for the leading characters' encounter, and his boast of having written the details into a strong story for posterity. For its relevance to our discussion, it is translated as follows:

Afterward student Ku passed the highest civil service examination; and the couple lived in company with blessings, perpetuating what Heaven had made as their destiny. I, the Master of Jade Peak, have a rather intimate friendship with student Ku. One day, he told me traces of [his encounter] and handed me the poems which he composed at the time, asking me to write them up as legend.

Encomium: Great is Ku the student. Peerless is he among the brilliant, having a personal quality like jade and words like gold. Virtuous is Yü-niang. Outstanding is she among the charming, having a celestial beauty. Good and beautiful, I say they are unrivaled by any age past and present. Enviably and praiseworthy, their encounter is the wonder of the millennium. Intimate their care, intense their passion, they have a perfect beginning and ending. Vast is their good reputation; it spread through villages and towns. All say they are great, this beauty

¹⁴ Ch'u-chiang Hsien-sou shih-kung 楚江僊叟石公, comp., *Hua-chen ch'i-yen* (microfilm of original late Ming copy from the Van Gulik collection); Shih-te-t'ang 世德堂 edn. of *Hsü-ku ch'un-jung* (microfilm of original late Ming copy from National Peking Library); Chin-ling Shu-lin Li Ch'eng-? 金陵書林李澄[?], comp., *Ch'ung-k'e tseng-pu* 重刻增補 *Yen-chü pi-chi*; Tzu-shih Lin Chin-yang 芝士林近陽, comp., *Hsin-k'e tseng-pu ch'üan-hsiang* 新刻增補全相 *Yen-chü pi-chi*; and Fu-chin Yang-ch'un tzu Wu Ching-so 撫金養純子吳敬所, comp., *Hsin-k'e Ching-t'ai kung-yü sheng-lan* 新刻京臺公餘勝覽 *Kuo-se P'ien-hsiang* (all rpts. of late Ming edns.; Taipei: T'ien-i ch'u-pan she 天一出版社, [1986]).

and this talent. Throughout our Ch'ung-t'ai [Ch'ung-chou] splendidly and joyously their story hence will be heard. The Master of Jade Peak, with his utmost penetrating brush, captures the truth in this legend which he has authored. It is to be retold without end.

In review, this is but a talent and beauty story typical of its kind; not much credit can be given for either the plot or the content. Even its erotic expressions are in no way comparable to those in such novels as *Chin-p'ing-mei* 金瓶梅, at least in terms of intensity and explicitness. Only the poems in it can claim a certain level of literary and artistic accomplishment. In short, as assessed by Yeh Te-chün 葉德均, "it obviously was an imitation of love stories like *Chiao-hung chi* 嬌紅記 by Sung Mei-tung 宋梅洞 of the Yüan and *Ch'iu-hsiang-t'ing chi* 秋香亭記 by Ch'ü Yu 瞿佑 [of the Ming]. It is a display of the author's literary talent and serves no other purposes."¹⁵ The point to be noted, however, is that the last statement by Yeh is in response to a long tradition of speculation on the background of the story.

A TRADITION OF ATTRIBUTIONS

Chung-ch'ing li-chi was first attributed to Ch'iu Chün some twenty to thirty years after his death by Chang Chih-ch'un 張志淳 (*chin-shih* 1484, d. after 1515), a severe critic of Ch'iu's works and a staunch admirer of his arch political enemy, Wang Shu 王恕 (1416–1508). In his *Nan-yüan man-lu* 南園漫錄, a collection of miscellaneous notes written between 1515 and 1526, Chang charged that *Chung-ch'ing li-chi* was Ch'iu's Chün's "personal story written in imitation of [the story *Ying-ying chuan* 鶯鶯傳 by] Yüan Chen 元稹 [of the T'ang], but its frivolities and obscenities nevertheless double those in Yüan's."¹⁶ Among identifiable late Ming writers who had an interest in *Chung-ch'ing li-chi*'s authorship, perhaps only Hsin-hsin tzu 欣欣子, the pseudonymous author of the preface to the *Chin-p'ing-mei t'z'u-hua* 金瓶梅詞話, completely agreed with Chang's attribution.¹⁷

Most other Ming writers seem to have favored the less certain position first taken by T'ao Fu 陶輔, who also wrote about the story in his miscellaneous notes, *Sang-yü man-chih* 桑榆漫志, compiled after 1512. Although commenting more or less like Chang Chih-ch'un that "excessive obscenities

are fully displayed" in the story, T'ao did not even hint that the story was a self-portrayal of Ch'iu's experience. He stated, "I am afraid that it is a fake by another person. . . . It is better to wait for a learned and informed gentleman to resolve this [problem]."¹⁸ In general, this noncommittal attitude prevailed throughout the rest of the Ming.

However, by the early seventeenth century a connection was often being made between *Chung-ch'ing li-chi* and Ch'iu Chün's *Wu-lun ch'üan-pei chi*. For example, Shen Te-fu 沈德符 (1578–1642) mentions in his famous *Wan-li yeh-huo pien* 萬曆野獲編 that according to some attributions "Ch'iu wrote *Chung-ch'ing li-chi* in his young days to recount his licentious personal encounters. For that he was despised by his contemporaries, and consequently he wrote the [didactic] *Wu-lun [ch'üan-pei] chi* to conceal [his mistake]."¹⁹ Similar opinions may also be found in Lü T'ien-ch'eng's 呂天成 (1582?–1624?) *Ch'ü-p'in* 曲品, a commentary on Ming dramas written between 1610 and 1623,²⁰ and in Ch'i Piao-chia's 祁彪佳 (1602–1645) *Yüan-shan-l'ang ch'ü-p'in* 遠山堂曲品, which was probably written in the 1630s.²¹ When such an attribution first appeared is uncertain. Shen Te-fu's version was perhaps inspired by Chang Chih-ch'un, for Chang said the story was Ch'iu's "personal story." But it should be noted that not even Chang had established such a direct causal relationship between Ch'iu's two works.

In the meantime, entertaining speculations — inventions to be precise — were also made apropos a motivation for the author of *Chung-ch'ing li-chi*. *Huang Ming Shih-shuo hsün-yü* 皇明世說新語, a collection of Ming period anecdotes compiled and printed by Li Shao-wen 李紹文 in 1610, said that Ch'iu's love story served merely as revenge. According to the anecdote, Ch'iu Chün had once made a marriage proposal to a tribal head of the Li aborigines. After being contemptuously rejected, "Ch'iu later wrote *Chung-ch'ing li-chi* to accuse the daughter of the Li falsely of having an illicit affair with someone. The Li then rushed three hundred taels of silver to the printer to solicit the destruction of the blocks, but copies of the story had already circulated widely."²² The same anecdote, though with the omission of the Li

¹⁵ *Sang-yü man-chih*, pp. 6b–7a. For the date of this book, see n. 3 above.

¹⁶ *Wan-li yeh-huo pien* 25, p. 64r. For the date of this book, see n. 4 above.

¹⁷ *Ch'ü-p'in*, in *Chung-kuo hsi-ch'ü yen-chiu yüan* 中國戲曲研究院, ed., *Chung-kuo ku-tien hsi-ch'ü lun-chu chi-ch'eng* 中國古典戲曲論著集成 (Peking: Chung-kuo hsi-chü ch'ü-pan-she 中國戲劇出版社, 1959) 6, p. 228. For the date of this work by Lü, see p. 203; and Yeh Te-chün, *Hsi-ch'ü*, p. 131, where he also gives Lü's dates as 1577–1614.

¹⁸ *Yüan-shan-l'ang Ming ch'ü-p'in chü-p'in chiao-lu*, p. 54. Here Ch'i Piao-chia noted that "Ch'iu as a result asked his associates to write the story."

¹⁹ Li Shao-wen, *Huang Ming shih-shuo hsün-yü* 8, p. 34b (microfilm of original 1610 copy from National Library of Peking).

¹⁵ See Yeh Te-chün, *Hsi-ch'ü*, p. 537.

¹⁶ *Nan-yüan man-lu* 3, p. 4a. For the date of this book, see n. 3 above.

¹⁷ See the Hsin-hsin tzu pref. in *Chin-p'ing-mei t'z'u-hua* (photographic rpt. of the 1963 Daian offset edn. of the rare text held in the Jigendō Temple Library in Nikkō; Hong Kong: Wen-lo ch'ü-pan-she 文樂出版社, 1975).

girl's affair, was repeated in a postface to an abridged version of the story, which is included in the 1620 collection *Feng-liu shih-chuan*. The author of this postface was also the author of the abridgment.²³ A wilder late Ming elaboration is also quoted in Ch'u Jen-huo's 褚人獲 *Chien-hu ssu-chi* 堅瓠四集, an early Ch'ing collection of miscellaneous notes. In it, the person who proposed the marriage was Ch'iu Chün's father; and the person to whom the "Li girl lost herself was Ku Lu — 'Ku Lu' being the voice Kwangtung natives made when calling a dog to come to them."²⁴ This speculation has been dismissed by Yeh Te-chün as "an obviously suspect fabrication."²⁵

This tradition of attributions reveals a type of late Ming passion and skill—inventing stories or faking books for profit. Far-fetched speculations about the story's background probably would not have been made had writers, like the author of the abridged version, not been so keenly aware of "marketing." Ch'iu Chün still commanded tremendous respect and influence early in the seventeenth century. To have him appear as the antithesis of a serious and often moralistic Confucian court erudite was a sure way to draw attention and curiosity from a wide variety of readers. With Ch'iu cast as the vengeful author of a true and intriguing, "personal story," good sales could subsequently be expected. In fact, other books, including stories as well as serious works, had already been attributed to Ch'iu Chün for much the same reason.²⁶

THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE STORY

To examine Ch'iu Chün's life and career should be the first step in solving the curious mysteries surrounding *Chung-ch'ing li-chi*.²⁷ Ch'iu's early life in Hainan contradicts any speculation about there having been revenge against a matrimonially resistant Li tribe. When Ch'iu was six his father

²³ This rarely noticed postface is reproduced in Sun K'ai-ti, *Hsiao-shuo shu-mu*, pp. 124-25.

²⁴ *Chien-hu ssu-chi*, *Pi-chi hsiao-shuo ta-kuan* 筆記小說大觀 (Shanghai: Chin-pu shu-chü 進步書局, n.d.) ch. 2, p. 13a.

²⁵ Yeh Te-chün, *Hsi-ch'ü*, p. 537.

²⁶ For example, the plays *Tou-pi chi* 投筆記, *Chü-ting chi* 舉鼎記, and *Lo-nang chi* 羅囊記 had also been attributed to Ch'iu. See Lü, *Ch'ü-p'in*, p. 228; *Ch'ü-hai tsung-mu t'i-yao* 曲海總目提要 (Peking: Jen-min wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan-she 人民文學出版社, 1959), p. 1970; Wang Ku-lu, trans., *Chung-kuo chin-shih hsi-ch'ü shih*, p. 118. An expanded version of the popular history book *Hung Ming t'ung-chi* 皇明通紀 by Ch'en Chien 陳建 (1497-1567), published in the late 1630s or early 1640s with the title *Huang Ming erh-tsu shih-tsu tsung tseng-pu piao-t'i p'ing-tuan t'ung-chi* 皇明二祖十四宗增補標題評斷通紀, even has the line "Ch'iu Ch'ung-shan hsien-sheng chien-ting 丘瓊山先生鑒定" inscribed on its cover page and the line "Ch'iu Ch'ung-shan Ch'iu Chün chien-ting 瓊山丘潛鑒定" inscribed on the first page of each of its first fifteen *chüan*. A copy of this book is held by the Gest Oriental Library of Princeton University. Ch'en Chien was born two years after Ch'iu Chün died.

²⁷ Unless otherwise noted, the following facets of Ch'iu Chün's life are based on Hung-lam Chu, "Ch'iu Chün."

died, and he was raised with strictness by his mother and grandfather. At age twenty-five he married the daughter of a military household originally from Soochow. In his many writings for relatives in Hainan, not once does he mention any family member's marrying a Li aborigine. Nor do local gazetteers and legends about Ch'iu contain any record of the circulation of *Chung-ch'ing li-chi* in Hainan or in Kwangtung at large.

Furthermore, neither the literary name, Master of Jade Peak, nor any similar name had ever been Ch'iu Chün's. Even T'ao Fu must have had his doubts about the attribution when he referred to "Jade Peak" as Ch'iu's courtesy name (*hao* 號). Most likely, he went ahead with that reference because of his knowledge of the slightly different literary name, "Taoist Priest of the Red Jade Peak" (Ch'ih Yü-feng tao jen 赤玉峯道人), which had appeared as Ch'iu Chün's courtesy name in an early edition of *Wu-lun ch'üan-pei chi*, however inexplicable that may have been.²⁸ The similarity of these two names, together with the fact that the Master of Jade Peak in the story itself was also from Ch'iu-chou, probably led T'ao to assume that one name was a variant of the other.

Chang Chih-ch'un might have considered Ch'iu the author of the story for the same reason. The fact, however, remains that the name Jade Peak, or its like, does not appear as Ch'iu's courtesy name anywhere in his voluminous *belles lettres* — ten *chüan* of poems and seventy *chüan* of other writings in various genres. Nor was it ever mentioned in writings about him by his contemporary friends and enemies, of the same generation or younger. Ch'iu's alias was Chung-shen 仲深, his courtesy name Shen-an 深庵, or Shen-weng 深翁 when he was old; his students and young admirers usually addressed him by the name of his birthplace, often as Ch'iu-shan hsien-sheng 瓊山先生. This consistent lack of reference to him as Jade Peak perhaps was also the reason why few Ming writers were willing to state unequivocally that he was the story's author.

Moreover, the story's preface by the Lay Buddhist of the Hut of Simplicity in 1487 leaves no doubt that the author, the Master of Jade Peak with whom he was acquainted, was not Ch'iu Chün. In that preface, descriptions of the age and political status of the Master of Jade Peak are especially noteworthy.

My friend Jade Peak, *the student*, has a clever and apt disposition. . . . Great is he, an outstanding all-round talent. . . . One day, he showed me his *Chung-ch'ing li-chi*. Reading it over and again, I could not put it down. . . . Alas! How can one [possibly] measure such talent and

²⁸ See *Pai-ch'uan shu-chih*, p. 88.

mastery of the brush in an uncapped literatus from among the [many] outstanding youth? . . . Still, [my friend], you are but making fun of writing [in writing this story]. In the *future*, when you are responsible for official compositions, by taking the standard principles of writing you surely will [compose that] which adds splendor to grand plans that help govern the nation and the state, for which you will be cited along with great historians like Pan Ku and Ssu-ma Ch'ien.²⁹ (Italics added)

In this warm preface, the Master of Jade Peak was a young literatus yet to have success in launching an official career. He was at best a promising talent.

In 1487, the historical Ch'iu Chün (*chün-shih* 1454), at the age of sixty-six, was the best-known erudite in the empire and had been a court official for more than thirty years. Ch'iu was at this time on the verge of completing his *Ta-hsüeh yen-i pu* and receiving an important promotion. Neither his work nor his career prospects warrants an assumption that he would write a story of such vacuity and potential risk. The only possibility is that he wrote it when he was young. But if so, not a single hint about it can be found either in the stories about him circulating in places where he had sojourned or in writings of his contemporaries, including the one who identified him as the author of *Wu-lun ch'üan-pei chi*.³⁰

The strongest evidence against attributing authorship to Ch'iu Chün comes in an episode from the last part of his life. A detailed account follows.³¹

In 1493, six years after *Chung-ch'ing li-chi* first appeared, Ch'iu, then a grand secretary, was involved in a bitter political struggle with Wang Shu, the famous and headstrong minister of personnel. The Grand Secretariat was fighting with the Ministry of Personnel over which should receive the bulk of imperial power to decide appointments. The origin of this was an imperial order for the retention of 58 provincial officials out of the record high of 2,535 whom Wang Shu had recommended for dismissal or demotion.³² Wang suspected that Ch'iu had orchestrated this move to undermine his authority and prestige, because the wording of the imperial order was based on a passage in Ch'iu's *Ta-hsüeh yen-i pu*. In any event, their

²⁹This preface is reproduced in Sun K'ai-ti, *Hsiao-shuo shu-mu*, p. 123.

³⁰See Yin Chih 尹直 (1427-1511), *Chien-chai so-chui lu* 書齋瑣錄 (photographic rpt. of Ming period ms.; Taipei: Hsüeh-sheng shu-chü, 1969) 5, p. 14b.

³¹A fuller account of this episode can be found in Hung-lam Chu, "Ch'iu Chün," pp. 101-08, on which most of the following is based.

³²For other interpretations of this antagonism between Wang and Ch'iu, see Goodrich L. Carrington and Chaoying Fang, eds., *Dictionary of Ming Biography* (New York: Columbia U. P., 1976), p. 1419, biography of Wang Shu by Chaoying Fang; *Ming-shih* 182, p. 4833, biography of Wang Shu; *Ming-shih* 72, p. 1739, "chih-kuan chih" 職官志; Tu Nai-chi 杜乃濟, *Ming-tai nei-ko chih-tu* 明代內閣制度 (Taipei: Shang-wu yin-shu-kuan, 1967), pp. 144-45.

antagonism became public; they would not even exchange greetings before and after imperial audiences. Meanwhile, a deputy head of the Imperial Academy of Medicine, who as an imperial physician had on several occasions been denied promotion by Wang Shu, submitted a memorial impeaching Wang. He accused Wang of contravening the established rules for official evaluation and appointment. He also charged that Wang had someone write him a biography in which all his memorials to the late emperor which were "not acknowledged" were so noted. This, the physician stressed, was Wang's deliberate attempt to fault "unrighteously" the late emperor for refusing to accept his remonstrations.³³

Wang lost no time in presenting his defense, and in doing so he almost openly charged that Ch'iu Chün was behind the imperial physician. Because according to him such a well-framed memorial could in no way be written by the "little rascal" of a physician, it must have been composed by a person "experienced in literature and in conspiracy." This person the whole court understood to be Ch'iu Chün.

Wang Shu's anger and sense of danger were so intense that he broke an official tradition against openly charging one's critic in a case of self-defense. He asked that the physician be tried openly so that the person behind him could be brought to light. To this the emperor agreed.³⁴ The consequent investigative report established that the physician was one of Ch'iu's acquaintances and had indeed heard him saying that Wang Shu was liable to get into trouble for having had his biography written the way it was; it also identified a dismissed censor-in-chief as the editor of the physician's memorial.³⁵ Ch'iu also memorialized in support of his own innocence and asked to be allowed to retire.³⁶ Eventually the emperor demoted the physician and ordered that neither Ch'iu nor Wang was to be further investigated, and that the printing blocks for Wang's biography had to be destroyed.³⁷ As a result, Wang soon retired and went home disillusioned.

Meanwhile, Ch'iu Chün also began to be attacked by Wang's supporters at court. Some young censorial officials memorialized that Ch'iu's character and training only made him suitable for a high position in the Hanlin Academy, but not for a position in the Grand Secretariat.³⁸ A

³³For this memorial against Wang, see *Ming Hsiao-tzung shih-lu* 明孝宗實錄 (rpt.; Taipei: Academia Sinica, 1965) 74, p. 1395.

³⁴For Wang's memorial, see *ibid.* 75, p. 1406.

³⁵*Ibid.* 75, p. 1437.

³⁶*Ibid.* 75, p. 1444.

³⁷*Ibid.* 75, p. 1437.

³⁸See, for example, *Kuo-ch'ao hsien-cheng lu* 61, p. 65a, "record of conduct" of Mao Ch'eng 毛理 (1452-1533) by Wen Cheng-ming 文徵明 (1470-1559); 103, p. 3a, epitaph of Chou Chin 周津 (*chün-shih* 1486, d. 1516) by Yang Lien 楊廉 (1452-1525).

contemporary also wrote that others had begun to "criticize his works." Most important to our investigation, he reported that they "criticized his *Ch'ang-szu lu* 長思錄 (*Record of Eternal Memory*, his expression of bereavement for his wife), and his drama, *Wu-lun [ch'üan-pei] chi*."³⁹ Such seemingly irrelevant criticisms no doubt were intended to bring about Ch'iu's downfall. The very charge that an official had written love stories or vernacular literature of a romantic nature was at that time sufficient to bring disgrace to his name; it was in fact a standard political ploy. In 1482 grand secretary Liu Hsü 劉瑯 (1426-1490) had been brought down by a song written for his playboy son which, having been interlarded with "dirty words," was sneaked in among other *yüan-pen* 院本 plays submitted to the emperor at court audience by the Office of Music.⁴⁰

That Ch'iu's enemies did not bring up *Chung-ch'ing li-chi*, and the fact that Ch'iu did not fall because of their criticism of his literary works, both constitute further evidence that Ch'iu was not the author of *Chung-ch'ing li-chi*. At least he had not written it by 1493, when he was seventy-three. At that time the story had been in circulation for six years, and, as mentioned earlier, it was known in official circles in Peking. Since Ch'iu's enemies harped on *Wu-lun ch'üan-pei chi*, which was at worst pedantic,⁴¹ then it is extremely unlikely that they could have missed or mercifully spared *Chung-ch'ing li-chi*, which was at best "obscene."

I will not speculate on the background of Chang Chih-ch'un's statement that Ch'iu wrote the story. Neither will I suggest that Chang's words do not deserve our attention merely because he is known historically as a corrupt official who bought promotion from the notorious eunuch, Liu Chin 劉瑾.⁴² Given what did actually happen to Ch'iu Chün, there is little reason to prefer unascertainable attributions first made over two decades after Ch'iu's death, when his immediate society yields disinterested evidence.

³⁹ See Huang Yü 黃瑜 (1425-1497), *Shuang-huai sui-ch'ao* 雙槐歲鈔, in *Ling-nan i-shu* 嶺南遺書 (rpt.; Taipei: I-wen yin-shu-kuan 藝文印書館, 1968) 10, p. 25a.

⁴⁰ *Ming-shih* 168, p. 4526, biography of Liu Hsü.

⁴¹ As mentioned by Shen Te-fu in *Wan-li yeh-huo pien*, p. 641. For an outline and the date of this story, see Hung-lam Chu, "Ch'iu Chün," pp. 213-14. For a modern criticism of the story, see Feng Ch'i-yung 馮其庸, "Chieh-p'ou i-pu feng-chien tao-te chiao-k'o-shu — *Wu-lun ch'üan-pei chung-hsiao chi* 解剖一部封建道德教科書—伍倫全備忠孝記" in Feng, *Ch'un-ts'ao chi* 春草集 (Shanghai: Shang-hai wen-i ch'u-pan-she 上海文藝出版社, 1979), pp. 345-68.

⁴² This point was emphatically made both by the compilers of the *Ming Wu-tsung shih-lu* 明武宗實錄 and by T'an Ch'ien 談遷 (1594-1658) in his *Kuo-ch'üeh* 國權. See *Ming Wu-tsung shih-lu* (rpt.; Taipei: Academia Sinica, 1965) 21, p. 597; *Kuo-ch'üeh* (Peking: Ku-chi ch'u-pan-she 古籍出版社, 1958) 46, p. 881 and 48, p. 2984; *Ming-shih* 306, p. 7839, where Chang is listed as one of the sixty-four court officials cashiered for having collaborated with the fallen Liu Chin.