

# MING DREAMS

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## INTRODUCTION

To a student of history who used to work in the Ch'ing period, the Ming people seem to have been over concerned with dreams. They recorded their own dreams and those of others and wrote stories about dreams. Dreams were told and retold. Even in recounting a dream which may sound like utter nonsense, there is little indication of embarrassment. They wrote many more poems in their dreams too. In numerous fictional writings, dreams were used as a literary device. For example, the Lin-ch'uan ssu-meng 臨川四夢 or the four dreams of T'ang Hsien-tsu 湯顯祖 are the best known. They believed in the prognostic significance of dreams, as of old. They prayed for dreams which would foretell the future of their personal lives, and occasionally they prayed for guidance in dealing with affairs of national importance. They fabricated dreams. Their dreams functioned politically, satirically, and as apologia. From their dreams they revealed their aspirations and beliefs, values and sense of justice, their emotions and anxieties, interests, hopes and fears. Some sinicized foreigners dreamed totally Chinese dreams. The power of Ming acculturation reached beyond the waking mind. The emperors dreamed, the officials dreamed, and the common people dreamed. Omens before birth, premonitions about death, predictions in personal careers, and revelations of past and future lives, all played prominent roles in their dreams. However, one must take note that the records of Ming dreams, as available to us now, were kept by scholars, so these are largely their experiences, impressions, and selections. Yet they are Ming dreams, profuse and colorful. From a collection of some 120 Ming dreams, gathered at random, the following are a few samples.

### T'AI-TSU'S DREAMS AND DREAM ACCOUNTS<sup>(1)</sup>

Chu Yüan-chang 朱元璋 (1328-98), the founder of the Ming dynasty or Emperor T'ai-tsu, left two records of his own dreams in his collected literary works. The first, *Chi-meng* 紀夢, or an account of a dream, has a long introduction which reads like an autobiography up to the time of his becoming emperor. In the autumn of 1367 the decision was made that he would ascend the throne. About that time, one night, he dreamed that he was a boy again, walking south from his old home. Looking toward the northwest, he saw a huge flock of small birds in the sky.

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As they were approaching, suddenly cranes came out from the flock and flew southeastward. Then the cranes disappeared, but amidst banners and flowing streamers, there appeared a red wooden platform bearing three deities looking like the Three Pure Ones (三清) of Taoism. When he turned his head, all this was gone, and he again found himself near his old humble home. He then ran home and asked his sister-in-law where the heavenly deities had gone. He was told that they had gone toward the Taoist temple, Ch'ao-t'ien kung 朝天宮. As he proceeded in the same direction, a Taoist priest in a purple gown met him and presented him with a garment of dark red with a brilliant multi-colored lining. While he was putting it on, he found himself suddenly in matching hat and shoes and also wearing a sword. As he continued walking southeastward, he met a man with an angry look, poorly dressed, wearing a cooking pot on his head, and going in the opposite direction. Walking farther toward the southeast, he crossed a stream and stopped at a building, where he saw his eldest son, the heir apparent, standing in front of him. Then he woke up.

The second essay is an account of a dream trip to Hua-shan 華山, the western sacred mountain. In this dream there were also cranes, strange fragrance, and divine music. It is an interesting point that, in spite of his Buddhist background, he dreamed of Taoist images.

In addition to his own recordings, there are over a dozen more dreams accredited to T'ai-tsu, written down by others. Among these the following are examples: 1) On the 15th of the 8th month in 1368 Chu Yüan-chang dreamed that both the sun and the moon were together side by side in the sky, and a snow storm cleared up suddenly. The next day he asked his great General Hsü Ta 徐達 (1332-85) to interpret it. The general said it was a dream of good omen, because the sun and moon side by side make up the character *ming* 明, the name of the dynasty, and the sudden clearing up of a snow storm meant that the various unvanquished groups would all be put down soon. 2) The founding emperor was planning to print paper money, but for some time failed to manufacture the paper of strong enough quality. As he was deeply concerned with this matter, he dreamed one night a deity told him that to make strong paper he should use the hearts and livers of the *hsiu-ts'ai* 秀才 students. When he woke up, he recounted the dream to Empress Ma 馬 (1332-82). She interpreted hearts and livers to be hard working minds and suggested that the literary compositions of the *hsiu-ts'ai* could mean their hearts and minds. Whereupon the emperor ordered the collection of all the exercise books stored in the National University and their use for the manufacture of paper bills. The plan succeeded. History shows that during her lifetime, Empress Ma often exercised her influence as a restraining force over the violent-tempered emperor. 3) In China in the old days, the night watchman made his rounds five times every night, and as he made them he struck his wooden rattles to denote the round. One source states that in Nanking the fifth watch

was never struck. This was because T'ai-tsu once dreamed that the Nanking people, whose lands were taken from them, demanded their return. In the dream the emperor, under pressure, promised them that their properties would be restored at the striking of the fifth watch. To evade the promise, he ordered the watchmen never to strike their rattles after the fourth watch.

### KAO CH'I'S DREAMS OF PORTENT<sup>(2)</sup>

The poet Kao Ch'i 高啓 (1336-74) in his essay *Chih-meng* 志夢 (Recording Dreams) reported three dreams, concerning the official careers of himself and his friend Hsieh Hui 謝徽. The first was his own, the second that of Hsieh Hui, and the third that of Hsieh's mother. As the beginning of the third year of Hung-wu (1370) Kao and Hsieh were both serving as instructors in the school for princes and sons of high officials. The first dream took place on the night of the 11th of the 1st month. Kao Ch'i dreamed that as he and his friend were going into the palace, they were informed of a change in their official posts, and then they saw that their students were all taken to the National University. He told his friend of his dream the following morning, and they made a note to remember it. Four days later, both were ordered to tutor the two sons of the late Prince K'ai-p'ing 開平王常遇春 (1330-69) and what followed was in complete agreement with the dream.

On the night of the 20th of the 2nd month, Hsieh Hui had a dream, in which he and Kao Ch'i were summoned to the presence of the emperor, who gave them a paper on which, as Hsieh could see, were the characters Han-lin yüan 翰林院 (Hanlin Academy). When Hsieh told the dream to Kao the following day, they again made a note to remember it. Six days later as the emperor was holding court both were promoted to Hanlin posts. Later, on the night of the 15th of the 7th month in the same year, Hsieh Hui's mother dreamed that messengers from the emperor delivered two chests (*ch'u* 櫥) of silver one to each family, but as she and her family members took a closer look, the silver was transformed into charcoal (*t'an* 炭). Madame Hsieh told her dream to Kao's wife. When Kao and Hsieh got together and discussed it, they thought this dream was not as easy to interpret as the previous two, and they could not see the meaning in the transformation of silver into charcoal, but they made a note of it. On the evening of the 28th day of the same month, while Kao and Hsieh were going home from their office, they were summoned to see the emperor. After being complimented, Kao was promoted to vice-president of the Ministry of Revenue and Hsieh to a department director in the Ministry of Personnel. As both declined offices of such importance, the emperor gave them silver, and permitted them to retire to their homes in Soochow. The two families left the capital on a single boat. On the way Kao Ch'i learned from Hsieh Hui's younger brother that because of heavy financial burdens, the imperial gift of silver to his brother had already been

exhausted, and they did not know how they would manage when they reached home. So they sighed together. Then they realized that *ch'u* 櫥 for chest in the dream meant *ch'u* 除 for removal from office, and *t'an* 炭 for charcoal in the dream meant *t'an* 歎 for sigh. In closing the essay, Kao Ch'i concluded that as these dreams were so accurately fulfilled, every event in life must have been predestined.

Kao Ch'i left no account of a dream predicting his own tragic death but others recorded a dream of his of such a nature. The story goes that Kao once dreamed of someone writing the character *su* 蘇 in the palm of his hand and told him that would be the cause of his death. Thereupon, he always refused to receive anyone who bore Su as a surname. As it turned out his death was the result of being involved with the governor of Soochow (蘇州) rather than a man named Su.

### OMENS BEFORE BIRTH AND DREAMS FORESHADOWING DEATH<sup>(3)</sup>

Before the birth of many famous people dreams of good omen were often reported by their parents or grandparents. Thus it is said that the mother of Ming T'ai-tsu dreamed of receiving a pill from an immortal before she gave birth. At the birth of the great philosopher Wu Yü-pi 吳與弼 (1391-1469), his grandfather dreamed of a wisteria plant climbing up into the sky. Hsia Yüan-chi 夏原吉 (1366-1430), president of the Ministry of Revenue in 1403 and again from 1426 to 1430, was named Yüan-chi because, just before his birth, his mother dreamed of the ancient poet Ch'ü Yuan 屈原 (? 343-277 B.C.). And the grandmother of Wang Yang-ming dreamed of a deity descending from the clouds to deliver a child when he was born. Therefore, Wang's childhood name was yün 雲 (cloud), and it was only later that his name was changed to Shou-jen 守仁. Ni Ch'ien 倪謙 (d. 1479, cs 1439) was on a mission to worship Heng-shan 恆山, the Sacred Mountain of the North (北岳) in 1444, when his wife was ready to give birth at home. As she dreamed of a deity in a red gown coming into her room just before the delivery, the boy was given the name Yüeh 岳 meaning a sacred mountain. This son, Ni Yüeh (1444-1501), a *chin-shih* of 1464, later rose in official career to be president of the Ministry of Personnel.

The story of Ts'ao Pen 曹本, though with a happy ending, is a little gruesome. Before his birth, his father Ts'ao Ssu-ming 曹思明 dreamed of several men arriving with a wagon, on which a box was placed. They asked Ts'ao for his identification and found he was the right party. One man opened the box and took out various parts of a human body, gave them to Ts'ao and told him they belonged to a yamen runner. Another man who came late stopped them and said that Ts'ao should have received a son destined to be a vice-president of a ministry, not a yamen runner. The first man was terrified and acknowledged his mistake. After looking into the box for a long while, the second man took out a nose and exclaimed that fortunately there was still the nose of a vice-president left. Shortly afterwards Ts'ao Pen was born. Precocious and alert, he became a student in the National

University and went on to a successful official career. By 1425 indeed, he was appointed vice-president of the Ministry of War.

In fact the statistics of birth and death are equal in number and in frequency but somehow death is always a sad affair while birth is often a happy one. T'ang Yin 唐寅 (1470-1523), the much idolized artist and poet, once prayed for a dream. Then he dreamed he saw a scroll of calligraphy with *nan-lü* 南呂 as the opening characters. When waking up he could not recall the rest of the words, and he did not make much sense of them. After he had passed his fiftieth year in life, one day he noticed on the wall of a friend's home a piece of decorative calligraphy which began with the characters *nan-lü*. As he recalled his dream of some years ago, eagerly he read the rest. It was a lyric poem written by Su Tung-p'o 蘇軾, 東坡, with the following lines in the middle:

"Life at the half century mark,  
The journey ahead will end soon."

With a shudder, T'ang realized what his dream meant. He died in his fifty-third year.

Liu Yün-hao 劉允浩, a native of Shantung, was a participant in the metropolitan examination of 1643. In his examination cubicle, he dreamed of some deity handing him a book with the character *ch'ang* 昌 repeated three times. After he successfully obtained the *chin-shih* degree, he was appointed to an official post in Chien-ch'ang 建昌 (Kiangsi). Later at the rebellion of Chin Sheng-huan 金聲桓 (d. 1649) in 1648, Liu was killed in Nan-ch'ang 南昌 (Kiangsi), and his head was exhibited in Wu-ch'ang 武昌 (Hupeh). The dream of three *ch'ang* 昌 was unfortunately fulfilled.

#### DREAMS OF HEALING<sup>(4)</sup>

As one's health is a person's primary concern, many Ming dreams concerned healing or receiving guidance toward the restoration of health.

In the spring of 1417, the Taoist temple of Ling-chi kung 靈濟宮 was built in Peking by order of Emperor Ch'eng-tsu. It is said that the emperor was sick early that year. One night he dreamed that the two immortalized brothers, named Hsü 徐, had sent him some medicine which cured him instantly. These Hsü brothers, who were identified as having lived in the last decades of the tenth century, were at first worshipped only in the province of Fukien. The *Ming shih-lu* 明實錄, without mentioning any dream, records the building of this Taoist temple by imperial order, saying that the emperor prayed to these two Immortals and received efficacious responses, including medical advice.

The best example of healing, however, is perhaps the case of Chang Feng-i 張鳳翼 (1527-1613), calligrapher, poet, and playwright, who was a native of Soochow and a *chü-jen* of 1564. He reports his own story in his book of dreams, the *Meng-chan lei-k'ao* 夢占類考. The story begins with his failure to pass the metropolitan examination in the spring of 1565. On the return trip, his boat encountered a

storm. Arriving home, perhaps feeling despondent, he fell ill after drinking too much wine. In the following year while in mourning over the death of his legal mother (his father's wife, as he was born of a concubine), he often felt a pain in his chest. He could neither sleep, nor eat well, and lost weight gradually, but no physician could help him. His illness lingered on for another year.

A celebration was prepared for his own mother's birthday on the 2nd day of the 9th month of 1567. On this day, probably due to anxiety, he woke up before dawn. Realizing it was too early to get up, he went back to sleep again. At this interval he dreamed of going to the local Taoist temple, where he met a group of Taoists of the Ch'üan-chen 全真 sect, who turned out to be the Eight Immortals. As soon as he was aware of this, he knelt down and begged for help in his distress. A tall member of the group with a broad forehead consented to feel his pulse. This was not done in the ordinary way. Instead of holding the wrist, the Immortal held Chang's middle finger. Then he was given a white pill. But he knew he was in a dream, so he asked for some sign that he was cured and also where the Immortal was residing. He was told that a rumbling noise issuing from his abdomen would signal his cure and that the Immortal were residing in the Hall of Thunder, another local Taoist temple. As he woke up, there came a rumbling in his abdomen, and his middle finger, which had been held, still ached slightly. The following day he went with a friend to the Hall of Thunder, where he located a mural in the rear quarters which depicted the Eight Immortals. The tall Immortal with a broad forehead was none other than Lü Tung-pin 呂洞賓. Thereafter he gradually recovered. As a matter of fact this was the most important factor which prompted him to compile the book of dreams.

#### DREAMS AND THE EXAMINATIONS<sup>(5)</sup>

Throughout the Ming dynasty of nearly three hundred years 88 sessions of the metropolitan and palace examinations were held. Of the 88 men who captured the highest honor known as *chuang-yüan* 狀元, 49 were said to have had foretelling dreams. Some were involved in more than one dream. Besides their own dreams, their parents and grandparents had dreams or even people whom they did not know had dreams predicting their good fortune. Three emperors were reported to have had dreams about the outcome of examinations. In 1385 Emperor T'ai-tsu dreamed of nails and silk thread, so he chose Ting Hsien 丁顯 to be *chuang-yüan* because the surname Ting matches *ting* 釘 for nails, and a double silk 絲 forms part of the character *hsien*. In 1431 prior to the palace examination, Emperor Ch'eng-tsu dreamed of a crane, therefore he chose Tseng Ho-ling 曾鶴齡 to be the recipient of the highest honor rather than another man whom his ministers had recommended, because the character *ho* in Tseng's name means crane. Emperor Ying-tsung in 1448, on the night before the palace examination, dreamed of having an audience with three men, a Confucian scholar, a Taoist priest, and a Buddhist

monk. When the examination papers were graded, P'eng Shih 彭時 (1416-75) of Confucian registration, was made the *chuang-yüan*, Ch'en Chien 陳鑑 (1415-71), who was once a music student in the Taoist Temple of Divine Music (神樂觀), took the second honor of *pang-yen* 榜眼, and Yüeh Cheng 岳正 (1418-72) who achieved third honors as *t'an hua* 探花, in his youth served as a secretary in a Buddhist temple.

Wang Ao 王鏊 (1450-1524, cs 1475), grand secretary from 1506 to 1509, left a collection of notes entitled *Chen-tse ch'ang-yü* 震澤長語. The last section of this work is devoted to dreams, and most deal with examinations. About his own career, he cited the following story. In 1475, when he was a participant in the metropolitan and palace examinations, the chief examiners were grand secretaries, Hsü P'u 徐溥 (1428-99) and Ch'iu Chün 邱濟 (1420-95). Anxious to select the best man for the coming *chuang-yüan*, they agreed to pray for a divine dream for some manifestation. On the morning when they met again, Ch'iu reported having had no dream, but Hsü had one and told it to his colleague.

Hsü dreamed of an expanse of boundless water where suddenly a sea turtle climbed up in front of him. He then put three arrows on the turtle's back. They could not be sure of the meaning of the dream, but Hsü thought it might have been pointing toward Wang Ao, for Wang was a native of the region of the T'ai Lake 太湖, and had already captured the highest honor of the provincial examination in the preceding year. When the metropolitan examination was over, sure enough Wang Ao emerged as number one, or *hui-yüan* 會元, on the list. So Hsü thought perhaps the three arrows in his dream might have meant the capturing of the three highest honors successively and if so Wang would be the *chuang-yüan* after the palace examination. However, the result of the last examination did not place Wang Ao at the very top, but as the third. So the meaning of the three arrows remained unexplained. Later when Wang was promoted to junior supervisor of instruction, he went to thank Hsü P'u for his recommendation. He also suggested that the three arrows in Hsü's dream might now be fulfilled, because Hsü had already recommended him three times, as *chien* (箭) for arrow and *chien* (薦) for recommendation had the same reading. But Hsü expressed his doubts, and told Wang that in the dream as he recalled it, he put the three arrows in a triangular shape as in the character *p'in* 品 so that it might point to Wang's destination of reaching the highest grade (一品) in official career. Shortly after Hsü's passing, Wang Ao indeed achieved grade 1 *a* in official rank.

Wang Hua 王華 (1446-1522), father of Wang Shou-jen, better known as Wang Yang-ming, was *chuang-yüan* of 1481, and rose in official career to minister of Personnel in Nanking in 1507. His essay, the *Jui-meng-t'ang chi* 瑞夢堂記, is an account of his dream which forecast his success in the examinations. After he failed to pass the provincial examination in 1474, Wang Hua was invited by Ning Yüan-shan 寧元善 of Ch'i-yang 祁陽, Shansi, to tutor his son Ning Hung 寧玆.

Wang was housed in the family studio, the Mei-chuang shu-wu 梅莊書屋. In the following spring, after the names of the successful competitors of the highest examination in Peking were posted, Wang one night had a dream. He dreamed of himself in his boyhood days in his native place in Chekiang, following a crowd after the procession of the official ceremony of welcoming the spring. He saw a white ox made of clay, saw the banners and paraphernalia, and heard the music. Then the procession marched to his home and stopped. At breakfast the next morning he told his dream to his pupil. After counting on his fingers for a moment, the pupil said to him that it was a good omen pointing to the teacher's capturing of the highest honor of *chuang-yüan*. Wang asked for the reason. Ning Hung explained that spring was the time for the metropolitan and palace examinations, so that *chuang-yüan* was also known as *ch'un yüan* 春元. As the ox in the cycle corresponded to *ch'ou* 丑, and the color white denotes the cycle *hsin* 辛, Wang therefore would be the *chuang-yüan* of the next *hsin-ch'ou* year. The young man also made a note of this in the back of his textbook which happened to be the classic of Rites that he was studying. Then he begged his teacher not to forget it. At the following provincial examination in 1477 Wang failed again. As he travelled extensively and busied himself in making a living, he almost forgot the incident. By 1480 he passed the provincial examination and then the metropolitan and the palace examinations. Indeed he was the recipient of the highest honor: the *chuang-yüan* of 1481 which was the year of the white ox, *hsin-ch'ou*. On hearing the good news, his old pupil Ning Hung immediately changed the name of his family studio from Mei-chuang shu-wu to Jui-meng-t'ang, "the studio of the auspicious dream."

Many others also left records of their dreams on vicissitudes in their examinations. No doubt many, many more, also dreamed but left no records. After all, the examinations were the most critical steps in the careers of Ming scholars.

#### DREAMS AND RETRIBUTION<sup>(6)</sup>

In the belief of the Ming people retribution took many forms and dreams were often its instrument. It was largely motivated by a sense of justice, either requitals from the gods or from man. It was not necessarily the injustice done by people to people but also by people to animals. It might even not be an actual deed, for just an evil thought could be judged. Retribution could happen in the present life, after death, or in a future life after reincarnation.

A certain Li *hsiu-ts'ai* (李秀才) of Fukien was on his way to participate in the provincial examination. When he stopped at an inn, the proprietor treated him with special attention. He asked for the reason, and was told that the night before the local god of the land (土地) appeared in the proprietor's dream and made known that Li was going to be successful in the examination. Li was overjoyed on hearing this, and the happy thought lingered on into the night. Suddenly he remembered his wife, who had much to be desired for the wife of an official.



So he said to himself, he must take a new wife. About the same time the proprietor again dreamed of the local god of the land who informed him this time that, as Li harbored dishonest thoughts, his success had already been cancelled. When Li was told of the second dream, he disappointedly returned home without taking the examination.

Feng Meng-chen 馮夢禎 (1548-1605, ca 1577), poet and scholar, reported in his miscellaneous notes that the mother of Chao Ch'ing-shu 趙慶叔 was very fond of fowl. In her later years she suffered from stomach trouble. She once dreamed of being taken to the underworld and tied together with the geese and ducks. One by one they were led out to be killed. When it was near her turn, she cried out begging for her life and vowed to stop eating meat. As a vegetarian, in half a year her illness was slightly improved. However, a stupid physician persuaded her to eat duck again and in about ten days, she passed away. For this reason, the son refused to eat fowl ever after.

Wen Po-jen 文伯仁 (1502-75), painter and a relative of the great artist Wen Cheng-ming 文徵明 (1470-1559), was once involved in a law suit and thrown into prison. He was miserable and felt very sick. As he fell asleep he dreamed of a deity in shining golden armour announcing to him that in his former life, he was a disciple of the famous painter, Chiang Tzu-ch'eng 蔣子誠 (Yung-lo period), who excelled in the painting of the Kuan-yin. As the disciple had also painted the Kuan-yin many times, and always with piety, he was to be rewarded by making a name as a painter in the present life. Waking up he found his sickness gone and shortly after the law suit was also settled. Chou Hui 周暉, who recorded this in his *Chin-ling so-shih* 金陵瑣事, tells us that he heard this directly from Wen Po-jen himself.

In the 9th month of 1634 there was a special service in the Taoist temple in Soochow under the direction of the Taoist Priest Shih 施. The night before the service two men of a religious club had a similar dream, in which an ox was begging for its life. It confessed that in its former life, it had been a man but for his sins he had been reincarnated as an ox. As the occasion of the special service was about to be staged, the ox begged the dreamers to exercise their charitable feelings to redeem it from the slaughter on the following day. As the club members gathered this strange dream was told to them, they all made contributions and reported the matter to Priest Shih, who supplied the major share for the redeeming fund. The ox was located and a record of the good deed was made. That night another member of the club dreamed of a man dressed in brown kneeling below the service altar, who told him that his name was Yin Kuo-chen 殷國禎 in his former life, a clerk at a postal station. Just because he had framed too many documents for people in their law suits, he was condemned after death to be an ox in the three succeeding lives. Now he was saved by his benefactors. The next morning, the butcher delivered the ox in front of the altar;

it was extremely tame and listened to the priest's lecture attentively. When people jokingly called out the name Yin Kuo-chen, the ox came to them. Another member of the same club recorded this episode.

Lu Chi 陸楫 (d. before 1544), son of Lu Shen 陸深 (1477-1544, cs 1506), and the compiler of the *Ku-chin shuo-hai* 古今說海, left a story of grievance brought to justice in his miscellaneous notes, the *Chien-hsia-t'ang tsa-chu* 蒹葭堂雜著. Shen Yün 沈雲 of Shanghai, a *chü-jen* of 1513, once had a dream at the time when he was still an instructor in the National University. He dreamed of a woman in prisoner's garb who bowed to him and told him that she was wrongly condemned to die for a crime she had never committed. She said her name was Ying-ch'un 迎春 and begged him to clear her and secure her release. At that time Shen Yün had no idea what the dream might indicate. Several years later the dream was repeated. Then he was appointed assistant prefect of Ju-ning 汝寧 in Honan. On his arrival at the new post, at a dinner party with his colleagues, the case of a woman named Ying-ch'un entered the conversation, and immediately Shen was asked to take charge of the case by his superior. Shen was taken aback at the mention of the name. Later he proved her innocence and she was released. In the sequence of real happenings, when Shen had the first dream, the woman was not yet involved in any crime.

When Ch'en Ch'i 陳騏 (cs 1457, native of Nan-hai 南海, Kwangtung) first assumed the office of assistant surveillance commissioner in Kiangsi, he dreamed of a tiger with three arrows on its back climbing on to his boat. Soon after a criminal case broke out which involved the robbing and killing of a young man who was escorting his intended bride to his home in another locality for the performance of their wedding. Ch'en had doubts and made further investigation. It was discovered then that the girl was wrongly accused of having had an illicit affair, which led to the killing, and that Chou Piao 周彪, a friend of the deceased who was to have been the best man, was really the suspect. It also happened that this man's surname Chou matched the *chou* 舟, meaning boat, and his personal name *Piao*, spelled tiger 虎 plus three strokes 彡, looked like arrows. Actually Chou Piao had intended to marry the girl himself, so he paid men to stage the robbery. Ch'en Ch'i's dream of years before helped him to bring about justice at a later date.

#### PRAYING FOR DREAMS AND THE STORY OF THE NINE CARP LAKE<sup>(7)</sup>

The Ming people often prayed for dreams to induce signs of what the future had in store for them. The usual way was to stay in some temple over night to pray for dreams. This could take place in some local temples such as the temple of the city god (Ch'eng-huang miao 城隍廟), the temple of the god of the land (T'u-ti miao 土地廟), or that of the god of literature (Wen-ch'ang miao 文昌廟). Although these were mostly Taoist temples, some Buddhist temples provided

facilities for this purpose too. The shrines and graves of certain famous men who had been deified, such as Wei Ying-wu 韋應物, the eighth century poet-governor of Soochow, and Yü Chien 于謙, the Ming loyalist martyr, also served. Sometimes one could also send a friend or a servant in one's place instead of going in person.

Of all the places, however, the most famous in the whole empire was the Nine Carp Lake (Chiu-li hu 九鯉湖) in Fukien. This lake, situated high in the mountains in the district of Hsien-yu 僊遊, with waterfalls and queer shaped rocks, is a magnificent sight. Here was the Ling-hsien tz'u 靈顯祠, better known as the Temple of the Nine Immortals (Chiu-hsien tz'u 九仙祠). The story of the Nine Immortals and the nine carp is an interesting one. In the second century B.C., there were nine Ho 何 brothers, who practiced the Taoist cult on this lake. When the elixir was ready, some of it was fed to the carp in the lake. As a result these carp turned red in color, and their fins became wings, and they were endowed with the power to bring rain and wind. When the time came for the nine brothers to achieve immortality, each mounted a carp and ascended to the heavens.

The myth of the Nine Immortals might have originated in the Sung period, but it did not enjoy great popularity until the Ming. Many men of letters wrote about the temple and the lake, in prose and in verse, and many more visited this place, and slept in the special quarters prepared for the faithful dream seekers. For the best known of all, we must name the great General Ch'i Chi-kuang 戚繼光 (1528-87). After his success in fighting off the Japanese pirates in Chekiang, he was ordered to Fukien in 1562 as that province was troubled by the same ocean marauders. Then he was stationed in Fukien for four more years. Naturally he was deeply concerned with the turbulent situation as well as his own future so he prayed for dreams for some divine guidance once in 1563 and again in 1564. In his collected literary works, we find two prayers that he composed on these occasions.

Anecdotes about dreams received at the Nine Carp Lake and their fulfillment are many. Indications of birth, death, and various personal problems were revealed to the seekers, but the largest number concerned the fortune of the participants in the examinations. As miraculous as the dreams were, one commentator remarked that the meaning could hardly be correctly interpreted before, but often understood only after the events had taken place.

One late Ming scholar recorded in his miscellaneous notes, a humorous, yet pathetic, episode. Chang Feng-i 張鳳儀, a minor painter of the sixteenth century, and Ku Ta-tien 顧大典 (cs of 1568) were friends, and both natives of Wu-chiang 吳江. As Ku was leaving for an official post in Fukien, his friend begged him to pray for a dream for him at the Nine Carp Lake, so that he would have a hint of how long a life he would enjoy. Ku casually gave his promise. Later during his term of office, he made no visit to the Nine Carp Lake so he had no opportunity of fulfilling his promise to his friend at home. When he returned home, his

friend asked him about the dream; Ku did not tell the truth, but made up a story off hand. He said he dreamed of blooming plum trees on a mountain, and as he looked toward the foot of the mountain he saw two tigers fighting each other. And he added that he could not see what it might mean. However, it immediately struck a cord in his friend's mind. Chang was born in the year of the tiger, *Keng-yin* 庚寅 (1530), so he thought the dream must be a prediction that he was destined to live not more than a full cycle, or beyond 60 years. Sure enough, when another *keng-yin* rolled around, he became sick in the spring and died when the plum trees were in full bloom. Alas, how unfortunate a forged dream had also come to be true, sighed the recorder.

### DREAMS AND POLITICS<sup>(8)</sup>

For twenty years Yen Sung 嚴嵩 (1480-1569) was a favorite of Emperor Shih-tsung and Grand Secretary from 1542 to 1562. His son, Yen Shih-fan 嚴世蕃 (d. 1565), also rose to high official position, and perhaps enjoyed his power much less gracefully than his father. To speak out against the Yen caused death, banishment, and imprisonment, and the nation suffered the consequences.

In the capital many official were worried. In 1562, Censor Tsou Ying-lung 鄒應龍 (cs 1556) felt a strong urge to impeach the Yen, primarily because it was the duty of a censor to criticize in the best interest of the empire, and secondly, he had an intuition that the emperor's favor might be turning in a new direction. As it was a matter of life and death, he could not come to a decision. Probaby it was his anxiety that caused him to have a strange dream. He dreamed that he was on a hunt on horseback. At some distance away he shot an arrow in the direction of a high mountain. The arrow sped on its way and nothing happened. As his horse trotted along, he saw a low mountain with a two-story structure beside it and a pile of rice covered by straw lying in the field below. He wondered about the scene, as he realized that rice was not a common crop in north China. Then he shot another arrow at the low mountain which caused a terrific noise; something like an earthquake followed. The pile of rice dispersed, the two-story structure fell, the low mountain tottered and the high mountain also collapsed. In a sweat Tsou Ying-lung woke up. In the sputtering candle light, he tried to analyze his dream. On the table top he wrote and rewrote all the objects that appeared in this strange dreams: high mountain 高山, two-story structure 樓, field 田, rice 米, and straw 草. As he played with them like puzzle pieces, some meaning gradually emerged. The Sung character in Yen Sung's name is formed with 山 (mountain) and 高 (high). His son's *tzu* was 東樓 (Eastern two-story structure), and the character 蕃 in his name Shih-fan is formed with the parts of 艹, 米, and 田. It dawned on him then that the significance of the dream was in its revelation that if the high mountain (Yen Sung) was too strong to be attacked, the low mountain (the son) might not be, and by attacking the son, the father might be pulled down

too. Encouraged by his meaningful dream, Tsou drafted a scathing memorial impeaching Yen Shih-fan by enumerating all his illegal and infamous activities. By the 5th month of 1562, Yen Shih-fan was imprisoned, several of his followers banished, and his father forced to retire. Tsou Ying-lung's dream paid off and a major change took place in the Chia-ching court.

Chao Nan-hsing 趙南星 (1550-1627, cs 1574), a member of the Tung-lin group, reported in his collected notes, the *Hsien-chü tse-yen* 閒居擇言, that after six years of officiating as a prefectural judge he was due for promotion in 1580, but at that time Chang Chü-cheng 張居正 (1525-82) was all powerful, and only people who had connections with Chang's associates could be given the opportunities for new appointment. One night Chao dreamed of entering Peking by the Shun-ch'eng 順城 gate, where a flock of dogs barked at him and kept him out. He told his dream to his mother who interpreted the barking dogs as the unprincipled officials in the central government speaking ill of her son. Indeed, Chao received no promotion that year. After Chang Chü-cheng's death in 1582, Chao was a secretary in the Ministry of Revenue. While on duty supervising the transportation of grain from Tientsin, he dreamed one night of a dog wagging its tail beside him. Again he told his mother of his dream and she predicted that a mean man would try to be friendly to him. When Chao reached the first stop southeast of Peking on the Grand Canal, a lower official there who used to be Chang's man treated him with wine, dinner, and all pleasantries, just as his mother had predicted. At the end of the anecdotes, Chao generalized that one must take care to be a good man, otherwise he would be no more than a dog.

### SATIRICAL DREAMS<sup>(9)</sup>

Hu Ying-lin 胡應麟 (1551-1602), scholar, bibliophile, and a prolific writer, was *chü-jen* of 1576, but failed to obtain a *chin-shih* after competing eight times in the metropolitan examinations. In his collection of notes, the *chia-i sheng-yen* 甲乙剩言, written in 1594-95 during his stay in Peking, he recorded one of his dreams under the heading, "T'ien-shang chu-ssu" 天上主司 (the examiners in heaven).

Just before the metropolitan examination was going to take place in the spring of 1595, Hu reported that one night he dreamed of a man in official garb sitting high in the examination hall beckoning him to go in to take the examination. When he went in, another man whom the examiner addressed as I-shui-sheng 易水生 was already in his seat. As the paper containing the examination questions was flying down toward them, both Hu and the other man struggled to catch it. The latter was successful. In anger Hu awoke and continued to feel unhappy. That year Hu failed again, and the man who emerged with top honors was T'ang Pin-yin 湯賓尹. Then Hu realized that 易 and 水 together formed a character similar to the character 湯. Nevertheless the correct way of writing 湯 is 𩺰 plus 湯 (*yang*), but not 易 (*i*). Hu concluded that he had had a stupid dream; if the

examiners in heaven did not know the correct way to write characters, how could one blame the examiners on earth.

In his repeated failures to pass the last stage of the examinations, Hu apparently felt bitter toward the examiners. In recording such a dream, Hu was perhaps accusing the examiners of lack of learning. Was the satire a dream or was the dream a satire?

A gentleman from Soochow, reported Chang Feng-i in his *Meng-chan lei-k'ao*, dreamed of the late great artist and writer, Wen Cheng-ming 文徵明 (1470-1559), with brush in hand busily occupied at his desk. The dreamer asked why he was so busy. Mr. Wen answered that in his lifetime he had written many epitaphs adorned with unwarranted and indiscriminate praise, and now he was ordered to correct all of them. Wen also complained of no rest, but he added that his eldest son would come soon to help him finish the task. The eldest son, Wen P'eng 文彭 (1498-1573), was then still officiating in Peking when report of the dream was making the rounds. Chang and many others at first showed displeasure as they thought the dream was disrespectful and might be untrue. Yet before long Wen P'eng returned home, and died from some minor ailment. Chang was then convinced, although the fulfillment was unfortunate. The criticism insinuated in this dream, however, could actually be applied to other writers of epitaphs as well.

#### DREAMS AS APOLOGIA<sup>(10)</sup>

Mao Chin 毛晉 (1599-1659), bibliophile, scholar, and the owner of the famous publishing house of Chi-ku ko 汲古閣, printed the Thirteen Classics and the Seventeen Official Histories not only once but twice. When the reprinting of the two huge sets was completed in 1556, Mao wrote a preface explaining the motivation which made him undertake this task. It was mainly attributed to his dreams. As early as 1627 he writes that he dreamed of a dragon and two red tablets with the characters *shih-san ching* 十三經 and *shih-ch'i shih* 十七史, written in gold. Shortly afterward he had the same dream again. On New Year's eve of that same year, he dreamed of the tablets bearing the same characters hanging in the hall in one of his family houses. With the beginning of the new reign of Ch'ung-chen 崇禎 in 1628, he vowed to edit and print one classic and one history every year. Thus by 1640 the Thirteen Classics were finished, and by 1644 the Seventeen Official Histories. However, he did not write about his dreams in 1628, nor in 1640, nor in 1644, but waited until 1656 after the reprinting. Was he apprehensive that under the new Manchu dynasty he might be criticized as being presumptuous? The way he begins the preface strongly suggests this trend of thought. Therefore, even if his dreams were genuine, the delay of the recording for three decades may be regarded as an apologia.

#### DREAMS OF QUESTIONABLE MOTIVE<sup>(11)</sup>

The construction of a Buddhist pagoda in Ch'ang-shu 常熟 was begun by Mr.

Hsiao 蕭, a local gentleman and a Buddhist devotee. At the time of his death only three stories were completed. One of his servants, named Wu 吳, continued the construction but it was stopped again after the fifth because of lack of funds. Wu prayed in front of the Buddha and asked when the building might be concluded. In a dream he was told that its completion had to wait on official Ch'ien 錢. So the unfinished pagoda stood there for a number of years.

In this same district there lived an old blind man of 79 *sui* by the name of Tai 戴, who cared for little else but the worship of Buddha, and kept himself on a strictly vegetarian diet. In the night of the 15th day of the 4th month of 1627, Tai dreamed of a Buddhist monk asking him to inform Ch'ien T'an-hua 錢探花 to resume construction of the pagoda immediately. T'an-hua refers to the one who captures the third highest honor in the palace examination, and Ch'ien Ch'ien-i 錢謙益 (1582-1664), a native of Ch'ang-shu, had received this honor in 1610. As a member of the Tung-lin 東林 political group which opposed the powerful eunuch, Wei Chung-hsien 魏忠賢 (1568-1627) in court, Ch'ien Ch'ien-i had retired from office and was at home at this time. A month later the old blind man dreamed of two Buddhist monks giving him the same message in a harsher tone. By the night of the 15th of the 6th month, three monks appeared in his dream and blamed Tai for failing to carry out their order, threatening him with chains if he failed to comply. The old man was frightened and finally went to Ch'ien with his dreams. Ch'ien thought the old man looked plain and honest so he promised to help. Before construction work could start, the old man dreamed three times more of the monks and was tortured in these dreams by a hot iron chain. On waking up he felt pain, for boils had broken out all around his neck. In the meantime people who lived near the unfinished pagoda on two consecutive nights saw a red light issuing from the pagoda, illuminating the sky. Finally construction work to complete the pagoda resumed on the 20th of the 8th month, 1627. Under Ch'ien's leadership, many others of the same district also made contributions. To corroborate this account, Ch'ien Ch'ien-i in a circular letter dated the 1st day of the 8th month of 1627, written to raise money for the purpose of completing the pagoda, mentioned the old man Tai and his dreams. Why did the Buddhist spirits not appear directly to Ch'ien, but instead to the old blind man who was not only blamed but tortured too? This seems to be a mystery. Ch'ien's membership in the Tung-lin or some other acts of indiscretion could have made him a target of blackmail. Perhaps herein lies the answer.

#### A FABRICATED DREAM PROVEN GROUNDLESS<sup>(12)</sup>

The *Ti-ching ching-wu lüeh* 帝京景物略 cites a moving dream about the loyal minister, Yü Ch'ien 于謙 (1398-1457), who saved the dangerous situation at Peking in 1449, when Emperor Ying-tsung was captured by the Mongols, but who suffered the death penalty in 1457 after the emperor's resumption of power. The account

narrates that after the execution of Yü Ch'ien, his wife was also banished to Shan-hai-kuan 山海關. One night Yü Ch'ien appeared to her in a dream asking her to lend him the luster of her eyes, so that his own eyes might look normal in his visit to the emperor to make his grievance known. The next morning his wife became blind. Meanwhile in Peking, there was a fire in the imperial palace. While viewing the disaster, the emperor thought he saw Yü Ch'ien's image in the flames which made him realize the injustice of Yü's sentence, so he pardoned his wife. In another dream Yü Ch'ien returned the luster, and his wife regained her eyesight. This story is not supported by the facts for Yü's wife nee Tung 董 had died eleven years before. Furthermore, because of his devotion to his deceased spouse, Yü Ch'ien neither remarried nor ever took a concubine. This proves the story of these dreams to be a pure fabrication.

### A KOREAN'S CHINESE DREAMS<sup>(13)</sup>

The Korean scholar-official, Hō Kyun 許筠 (1569-1618) in 1609 was an escort on the mission sent from China for the investiture of the new King of Korea, and then in 1615 he himself led a Korean mission to China. Like most Korean scholars of his day, his education was predominantly Chinese; he used the Chinese script as the written language and was familiar with Chinese literature and classics. In his collected literary works, the *Sōngso pubu ko* 惺所覆瓿集, we find several pieces, both in poetry and in prose, dealing with dreams. It is amazing that not only the language but also the ideas, the references, and even the people and characters who appeared in his dreams were Chinese.

In the poetry section, there is a group of forty stanzas of poems on several themes under the collective title *Sokmongsa* 續夢詩 (Poems after a dream). In the preface to this group, Hō Kyun stated that on the 5th of the 4th month he dreamed of a gathering for poetry writing with three Chinese poets, Ho Ching-ming 何景明 (1483-1521), Hsü Chen-ch'ing 徐禎卿 (1479-1511), and Wang Shih-chen 王世貞 (1526-90). In the history of Chinese literature, the first two are members of the "seven former poets" 前七子, and the last is one of the "seven later poets" 後七子. In the dream they were asked to write forty poems after the ancient *yüeh-fu* 樂府 style. After Hō Kyun awoke, he could remember only two stanzas in which Wang Shih-chen had made some changes for him. As he remembered clearly all the themes, he got up, lit a candle, noted down the two he still recalled, and filled in the thirty-eight other poems. Under two of the forty, there are notes saying "Yuan-mei made changes," Yüan-mei (元美) being Wang Shih-chen's *tzu*. In the prose section of the *Sōngso pubu ko* three essays deal with dreams, one of which, entitled *Monggi* 夢記, is an account of a dream he had while he was on his way to meet the Chinese mission in the 4th month of 1609. The dream as recorded is full of Chinese literary allusions, and Taoist images. He dreamed of being taken to heaven and given three volumes of heavenly scriptures. His escort also



revealed to him that he was originally a minor officer in waiting of the Goddess of the Purple and Azure Clouds (碧霞元君), but because once he made merriment with the devils of the northern compound, and had a love affair with the lady in waiting, Wei Ch'eng-chün 魏成君, both he and Wei were degraded to the mundane world. Then several devils were called as witnesses against him all bearing nick-names of characters in Ming novels, such as No-cha 哪吒, a supernatural figure in the *Hsi-yu chi* 西遊記 and *Feng-shen yen-i* 封神演義, and Ch'ih-fa-Kuei 赤髮鬼, and several others in *Shui-hu chuan* 水滸傳. When he was awakened he once more called for a candle and recorded this strictly Ming dream.

### CONCLUSION

Apparently dreams are fashioned by preconditions. The details of their content are molded by social traditions and the cultural environment. Thus they differ amongst people of different places and different times. A European of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries could not have dreamed a Ming dream, nor could a Chinese of today. Nevertheless, a Korean of the early seventeenth century, did dream Ming dreams. The dreams, therefore, cannot be explained unless the dreamer's cultural background is fully understood. Perhaps this is why Ming dreams are so interesting to a student of Ming history.

### NOTES

- (1) *Ming T'ai-tsu yü-chih wen-chi* 明太祖御製文集 (Ming ed.), 13/12a, 14/13b; TSCC 圖書集成 (1885-88) IV: 151/6b; T'an Ch'ien 談遷, *Tsao-lin tsa-tsu* 棗林雜俎和集 128b, (in *Shih-yüan ts'ung-shu* 適園叢書).
- (2) Kao Ch'i, *Fu-tsoo chi* 鳧藻集, 5/10b-13a, (in *Ssu-pu ts'ung-k'an* 四部叢刊); Lang Ying 郎瑛, *Ch'i-hsiu lei-kao* 七修類稿 (Shanghai 1961), p. 740; F. W. Mote, *The Poet Kao Ch'i* (Princeton Univ. Press, 1962), 166N, 179N.
- (3) *Ming-shih* 明史 (Han-fen-lou, 涵芬樓, 1916), 1/1a; TSCC (1885-88) IV, 151/6a, 9a, 11b; Chang Feng-i 張鳳翼, *Meng-chan lei-k'ao* 夢占類考 (1549), 8/34a; Chia Hung 焦竑 *Kuo-ch'ao hsien-cheng lu* 國朝獻徵錄, (Ming ed.), 28/6a, 36/12a, 24/81a; Cha Chi-tso 查繼佐, *Tsui-wei lu* 罪惟錄 (in SPTK, 3rd series), 志 32/13a.
- (4) *Ming shih-lu*, T'ai-tsung, (Taiwan reprint 1963), 186/3a; Liu T'ung 劉侗 and Yü I-cheng 于奕正, *Ti-ching ching-wu lüeh* 帝京景物略 (Shanghai 1957), 72-73; Chang Feng-i, *Meng-chan lei-k'ao*, preface, 6/40b.
- (5) *Ming chuang-yüan t'u-kao* 明狀元圖考 (1875); Lü Pi 呂毳, *Ming-ch'ao hsiao-shih* 明朝小史, 1/58b, 7/8b, (in *Hsuan-lan-t'ang ts'ung-shu* 玄覽堂叢書); Chang Feng-i, *Meng-chan lei-k'ao*, 6/15b; Wang Ao, *Chen-tse ch'ang-yü* (in *Ts'ung-shu chi-ch'eng* 叢書集成), 下/48-9; Huang Yü 黃瑜, *Shuang-huai sui-ch'ao* 雙槐歲鈔 (in *Ling-nan i-shu* 嶺南遺書), 3/13b, 9/10b; Cha Chi-tso 查繼佐, *Tsui-wei lu* 罪惟錄 (in *Ssu-pu tsung-k'an*), 32下/3a, 3b.
- (6) TSCC (1885-88) IV, 151/15b, 18a; Feng Meng-chen, *K'uai-hsüeh-t'ang chi* 快雪

- 堂集 (Ming ed.), 46/10a; Chou Hui, *Chin-ling so-shih* (Shanghai 1955), 127b; Cheng Fu-chiao 鄭敷教, *T'ung-an wen-kao* 桐菴文稿 (in *Ch'iao-fan-lou ts'ung-shu* 峭帆樓叢書), 5b; Lu Chi, *Chien-hsia-t'ang tsa-chu chai-ch'ao* 摘抄 in chüan 204 of *Chi-lu hui-pien* 紀錄彙編, 5a; *T'ung-chih Shang-hai hsien-chih* 同治上海縣志, 18/40, 41b, 44b; Chiao Hung, *Kuo-ch'ao hsien-cheng lu* (Ming ed.), 102/44b; *Kuang-tung-chih* 廣東通志 (1936 ed.), 4747 上.
- (7) Huang T'ien-ch'üan 黃天全, *Chiu-li hu chih* 九鯉湖志 (Ming ed.); *Ch'ien-lung Hsien-yu hsien chih* 乾隆僊遊縣志 (Taiwan reprint 1965), 4/4a, 45/1a; Ch'i Chi-kuang, *Heng-so kao* 橫槩稿 (in *Chih-chih-t'ang chi* 止止堂集), 下/12b, 13b; Shen Tsan 沈瓚, *Chin-shih ts'ung-ts'an* 近事叢殘, 3/18b, 1794.
- (8) Chu Kuo-chen 朱國禎, *Huang-Ming ta-shih chi* 皇明大事記 (Ming ed.) 36/5b; Chu Tung-jun 朱東潤, *Chang Chü-cheng ta-chuan* 張居正大傳 (K'ai-ming 1945), 52-54; Chao Nan-hsiang, *Hsien-chü tse-yen* (in *Chao chung-i kung i-shu* 趙忠毅公遺書).
- (9) Hu Ying-lin, *Chia-i sheng-yen* (in *Pao-yen-t'ang mi-chi* 寶顏堂秘笈), 1b; Chang Feng-i, *Meng-chan lei-k'ao*, 8/22b.
- (10) Mao Chin, ed., *Shih-ch'i-shih*, (Chi-ku-ko, ed.), preface.
- (11) Ku Ta-shao 顧大韶, *Ping-chu-chai chi hsü-k'o* 炳燭齋集續刻 (1909), 23a; Ch'ien Ch'ien-i, *Mu-chai ch'u-hsüeh chi* 牧齋初學集 (SPTK ed.), 81/16a.
- (12) Liu T'ung and Yü I-cheng, *Ti-ching ching-wu lüeh*, 15-17; Yü Ch'ien, *Yü Su-min-kung chi* 于肅愨公集 (in *Wu-lin wang-che i-chu* 武林往哲遺著), 8/4b; Ni Yüeh 倪岳, *Ch'ing-ch'i man-kao* 青谿漫稿 (also in *Wu-lin wang-che i-chu*), 21/14b.
- (13) Hó Kyun, *Söngso pubu ko* (Songgun Kwan University 成均館大學 1961), 44-6, 181-82.

# 明 夢

## 杜 聯 詰

明人好記夢，史裏載夢，集裏寫夢，筆記叢談裏錄夢，傳夢。從明太祖、高青邱而下，有不可勝數的記夢人與記夢文。記自己的夢，亦記別人的夢。為自己夢，為親友夢，亦為素不相識的人作夢。一記，再記，三記，有時一夢可見於四五處。夢的內容，若草草統計，最多當推科舉夢。明朝狀元圖考即是明證。其次則生徵死兆，夢中成詩，夢中醫病，夢遊名山，夢見古人，亦皆常見。至於因果報應，再世循環，因夢能斷奇案，冤頭債主，因夢能報復恩讐。朝廷議論，政見是非，亦和夢相關繫。鄒應龍因夢劾嚴氏而得成功。趙南星每夢狗皆應在張居正左右人的身上。胡應麟用夢居然罵主考不識字。明夢是何等的妙而饒趣。四庫全書總目著錄了三種夢書，三種都是明人作品。明夢或確是值得另眼看待的。

一九六六年六月由狄列瑞教授主持，在伊立諾州立大學開過一次以明代思想為主題的研究集會。當時觀摩和討論的長短文字共有十七篇。後來其中的十二篇經狄教授編訂修整，到一九七〇年由哥倫比亞大學出版處印成了明人身世觀一書。（*Self and Society in Ming Thought*. 原書並無中文題籤，如今率爾撰譯，有欠高明，自當引咎。）其他五篇在各不同情形之下未曾參與。本文便是該五篇之一，附此誌明原委。

一九七一年七月五日自識於安格屋小樓後窗下