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

Chung-ch'ing li-chi 鏡情麗集 (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 丘濬 (1421–1493), author of the classic work on statecraft Ta-hsiieh yen-i pu 大學衍儀補 (Supplement to the Extended Meaning of the Great Learning) and the didactic plays Wu-lun ch'üan-p'ai chi 伍倫全篇記 (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

²This is 謝和靖, in Ch’iu Chün’s 稱俊 (1602–1645) Chü-yüan lu 謝和靖, cit. Huang Shang 黃裳, “Preface and ed., Shun-chih siu-ch’ün ch’un-ch’ien su-shu shih-ch’i lu shih ch’üan-ch’i ch’ao-shih 謝和靖, cit. T’ao Fu, “Preface” preceding the text. See also T’ao Fu, “Preface” (ill. 15th to early 16th centuries), Sang-yü nan-chih 蘭雨南志 (rpt. of Chia-hsien hui-yan 今獻燕編, ‘Taipei: Shang-wu yin-shu-kuan, 1969), pp. 60–72. The date of this work is uncertain, although it was early enough to have been included in Kao Ju’s 高居 蘭雨南志 1540 (Shanghai: Tujian wen-hsiieh ch’u-p’u shih 論語 1540 (Shanghai: Tujian wen-hsiieh ch’u-p’u shih, 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 Hsiieh-chou [Shansi] 萬州 八極六 正義 (Kuan-nung i-yung tsu 元朝王文製, which has a preface by Censor Chiang Hung 陳洪) (p. 12b). Chiang Hung (Ch’ien-chih 1476) 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 萬州 八極六 正義 (rpt. of late Ming edn., ‘Taipei: Hsiieh-sheng shu-ch’i 中華書局, 1963) ch. 61, p. 368; Ching T’ung-yü 張廷玉 et al., comp., Ming-chih 明史 (Peking: Chung-hua shu-ch’i 中華書局, 1974) 86, p. 4790.
³See Shen Te-fu 沈德符 (1578–1642). Wua-li yeh-lua p’ien 雨華野譚 (Peking: Chung-hua shu-ch’i, 1955) 2, p. 541. Note that according to Shen Te-fu’s preface 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 (1610-1677), tried to dispel them in his history of the Ming, Tsin-wai lu 經世錄; unfortunately, he was unable to provide convincing evidence. The study brings the necessary evidence to bear in order to show that such attributions and speculations are as fallacious as they are entertaining.

THE BOOK AND THE STORY

Chung-ch'ing li-chie 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-i's bibliographic descriptions of the only surviving copy of this edition, a four-ch'ing monograph bearing the title Hsin-k'o 新刻 (cut anew) Chung-ch'ing li-chie, the front matter contains two pseudepigraphic prefaces. The first of them was written by an "Associate of the Hut of Joy (Lo-an chung jen 樂處中人) 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 t'ung-wei of Ch'eng-hua [12th day, 2nd month, 1487]. Written by Lay Buddhist of the Hut of Simplicity (Chien-an chu-shih 禪庵居士) in his office in Ch'ing-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 玉峰) 6."

6 Chinese text of this line: 南韓道州門中人。我怀疑有搞錯字符的可能。因为没有字典没有这字。这可能是一句无意的引用或转述。在多数情况下，我选择不使用这些字符来引用或转述。
HUNG-LAM CHU

From an examination of the last four collections, 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-ch'en 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 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 has the name of Lu. By household registration he is a native of Ch'ih-ch'ang-chou, 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. 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, 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'ung'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. Enviable 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
and this talent. Throughout our Chiung-t’ai [Chiung-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. 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, it "was an imitation of love stories like Chiao-hung chi and Sung Mei-tung. Song Yüan’s Yüan and Chi-hsiung-t’ing chi were the Ji Shou’s Ch’su Yu 竹書 [of the Ming]. It is a display of the author’s literary talent and serves no other purposes." 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-ch’i was first attributed to Ch’iu Chün some twenty to thirty years after his death by Chang Chih-ch’un 章志淳 (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 Nau-yuan man-lu 南園漫錄, a collection of miscellaneous notes written between 1515 and 1526, Chang charged that Chung-ch’ing Li-ch’i was Ch’iu’s Chün’s “personal story written in imitation of [the story] T’ing-yüeh chuan [臨鶴傳 by] Yuan Chen 元飄 [of the T’ang], but its frivolities and obscurities nevertheless double those in Yuan’s.” Among identifiable late Ming writers who had an interest in Chung-ch’ing Li-ch’i’s authorship, perhaps only Hsin-hsin tsu 欣欣子, the pseudonymous author of the preface to the Chin-p’ing-mei tz’u-hua 金瓶梅詞話, completely agreed with Chang’s attribution.

Most other Ming writers seem to have favored the less certain position first taken by T’ao Fu 陶蝮, who also wrote about the story in his miscellaneous notes, Sang-yü man-chih 桑維懋志, compiled after 1512. Although commenting more or less like Chang Chih-ch’un that "excessive obscurities 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]." 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-ch’i and Ch’iu Chün’s Wu-lun ch’üan-peh chi. For example, Shen Te-fu 沈德符 (1578–1642) mentions in his famous Wan-li yeh-huo pien 温陵野語 that according to some attributions "Ch’iu wrote Chung-ch’ing Li-ch’i 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-peh chi to conceal [his mistake]." Similar opinions may also be found in Lü T’ien-ch’eng’s 吕天成 (1582–1624?) Ch’iu-p’ing 曲品, a commentary on Ming dramas written between 1610 and 1623, and in Chi Piao-chia’s 祁彪佳 (1602–1645) Yuan-shan-t’ang ch’ü-p’ing 遠山堂曲品, which was probably written in the 1630s. 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-ch’i. Huang Ming Shih-shuo hsin-yü 玉明世說新語, a collection of Ming period anecdotes compiled and printed by Li Shao-wei 李紱文 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-ch’i 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. The same anecdote, though with the omission of the Li...
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.21 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

22 This is the version of the story included in the 1620 collection Fang-liu shih-chuan. The author of this postface is also the author of the abridgment.4 A wilder late Ming elaboration is also quoted in Chu Jen-huo’s 褔人譜 Chu Jen-huo ssu-chi 促園四集, 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-ch’un 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

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22 Chung-ch’ing li-chi, Ch’iu chung-ch’ing li-chi, Ch’iu chung ch’ing li-chi, and Lo-nang ch’i 龍巖記, had also been attributed to Ch’iu. See Lü, Chu-p’ien, pp. 926; Ch’i-hai tung-nu li-yo 題画總目錄 (Peking: Jen-min wen-hsiu chu-pan-she 人民文學出版社, 1955), p. 1970; Wang Ku-ku, trans., Chung-hao chih-chih hu-ch’u shih (1457–1597), published in the late 1590s or early 1580s with the title Hung Ming t’ung-chih shih-shu tung t’ung-ch’ing t’ing Ch’i-shih chang-chou Ch’ien Chien 朝鮮譜通語錄 (1457–1597), published in the late 1590s or early 1580s with the title Hung Ming t’ung-chih shih-shu tung t’ung-ch’ing t’ing Ch’i-shih chang-chou Ch’ien Chien 朝鮮譜通語錄 (1457–1597), published in the late 1590s or early 1580s with the title Hung Ming t’ung-chih shih-shu tung t’ung-ch’ing t’ing Ch’i-shih chang-chou Ch’ien Chien 朝鮮譜通語錄 (1457–1597), published in the late 1590s or early 1580s with the title Hung Ming t’ung-chih shih-shu tung t’ung-ch’ing t’ing Ch’i-shih chang-chou Ch’ien Chien 朝鮮譜通語錄 (1457–1597), published in the late 1590s or early 1580s with the title Hung Ming t’ung-chih shih-shu tung t’ung-ch’ing t’ing Ch’i-shih chang-chou Ch’ien Chien 朝鮮譜通語錄 (1457–1597), published in the late 1590s or early 1580s with the title Hung Ming t’ung-chih shih-shu tung t’ung-ch’ing t’ing Ch’i-shih chang-chou Ch’ien Chien 朝鮮譜通語錄 (1457–1597), published in the late 1590s or early 1580s with the title Hung Ming t’ung-chih shih-shu tung t’ung-ch’ing t’ing Ch’i-shih chang-chou Ch’ien Chien 朝鮮譜通語錄 (1457–1597), published in the late 1590s or early 1580s with the title Hung Ming t’ung-chih shih-shu tung t’ung-ch’ing t’ing Ch’i-shih chang-chou Ch’ien Chien 朝鮮譜通語錄 (1457–1597), published in the late 1590s or early 1580s with the title Hung Ming t’ung-chih shih-shu tung t’ung-ch’ing t’ing Ch’i-shih chang-chou Ch’ien Chien 朝鮮譜通語錄 (1457–1597), published in the late 1590s or early 1580s with the title Hung Ming t’ung-chih shih-shu tung t’ung-ch’ing t’ing Ch’i-shih chang-chou Ch’ien Chien 朝鮮譜通語錄 (1457–1597), published in the late 1590s or early 1580s with the title Hung Ming t’ung-chih shih-shu tung t’ung-ch’ing t’ing Ch’i-shih chang-chou Ch’ien Chien 朝鮮譜通語錄 (1457–1597), published in the late 1590s or early 1580s with the title Hung Ming t’ung-chih shih-shu tung t’ung-ch’ing t’ing Ch’i-shih chang-chou Ch’ien Chien 朝鮮譜通語錄 (1457–1597), published in the late 1590s or early 1580s with the title Hung Ming t’ung-chih shih-shu tung t’ung-ch’ing t’ing Ch’i-shih chang-chou Ch’ien Chien 朝鮮譜通語錄 (1457–1597), published in the late 1590s or early 1580s with the title Hung Ming t’ung-chih shih-shu tung t’ung-ch’ing t’ing Ch’i-shih chang-chou Ch’ien Chien 朝鮮譜通語錄 (1457–1597), published in the late 1590s or early 1580s with the title Hung Ming t’ung-chih shih-shu tung t’ung-ch’ing t’ing Ch’i-shih chang-chou Ch’ien Chien 朝鮮譜通語錄 (1457–1597), published in the late 1590s or early 1580s with the title Hung Ming t’ung-chih shih-shu tung t’ung-ch’ing t’ing Ch’i-shih chang-chou Ch’ien Chien 朝鮮譜通語錄 (1457–1597), published in the late 1590s or early 1580s with the title Hung Ming t’ung-chih shih-shu tung t’ung-ch’ing t’ing Ch’i-shih chang-chou Ch’ien Chien 朝鮮譜通語錄 (1457–1597), published in the late 1590s or early 1580s with the title Hung Ming t’ung-chih shih-shu tung t’ung-ch’ing t’ing Ch’i-shih chang-chou Ch’ien Chien 朝鮮譜通語錄 (1457–1597), published in the late 1590s or early 1580s with the title Hung Ming t’ung-chih shih-shu tung t’ung-ch’ing t’ing Ch’i-shih chang-chou Ch’ien Chien 朝鮮譜通語錄 (1457–1597), published in the late 1590s or early 1580s with the title Hung Ming t’ung-chih shih-shu tung t’ung-ch’ing t’ing Ch’i-shih chang-chou Ch’ien Chien 朝鮮譜通語錄 (1457–1597), published in the late 1590s or early 1580s with the title Hung Ming t’ung-chih shih-shu tung t’ung-ch’ing t’ing Ch’i-shih chang-chou Ch’ien Chien 朝鮮譜通語錄 (1457–1597), published in the late 1590s or early 1580s with the title Hung Ming t’ung-chih shih-shu tung t’ung-ch’ing t’ing Ch’i-shih chang-chou Ch’ien Chien 朝鮮譜通語錄 (1457–1597), published in the late 1590s or early 1580s with the title Hung Ming t’ung-chih shih-shu tung t’ung-ch’ing t’ing Ch’i-shih chang-chou Ch’ien Chien 朝鮮譜通語錄 (1457–1597), published in the late 1590s or early 1580s with the title Hung Ming t’ung-chih shih-shu tung t’ung-ch’ing t’ing Ch’i-shih chang-chou Ch’ien Chien 朝鮮譜通語錄 (1457–1597)
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 Su-ma Ch'ien. (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 1483, the historical Ch'iü Ch'un (chin-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'iü 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 vanity 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-fei chi.

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

In 1493, six years after Chang-ch'ing li-chi first appeared, Ch'iü, 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 2,533 whom Wang Shu had recommended for dismissal or demotion. Wang suspected that Ch'iü had orchestrated this move to undermine his authority and prestige, because the wording of the imperial order was based on a passage in Ch'iü's Ta-hsüeh yen-i pu. In any event, their 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.

Wang lost no time in presenting his defense, and in doing so he almost openly charged that Ch'iü Ch'un was behind the imperial physician. Because according to him such a well-formed 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'iü Ch'un.

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. The consequent investigative report established that the physician was one of Ch'iü’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. Ch'iü also memorialized in support of his own innocence and asked to be allowed to retire. Eventually the emperor demoted the physician and ordered that neither Ch'iü nor Wang was to be further investigated, and that the printing blocks for Wang’s biography had to be destroyed. As a result, Wang soon retired and went home disillusioned.

Meanwhile, Ch'iü Ch'un also began to be attacked by Wang’s supporters at court. Some young censorial officials memorialized that Ch'iü’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.
contemporary also wrote that others had begun to "criticize his works." Most important to our investigation, he reported that they "criticized his Ch’ang-ssu lu 長思錄 (Record of Eternal Memory), his expression of bereavement for his wife), and his drama, Wu-lun [ch’ian-p’ei chi]." 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 sufficiently to bring disgrace to his name; it was in fact a standard political ploy. In 1482 grand secretary Liu Hsü 劉珝 (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-pien 院本 plays submitted to the emperor at court audience by the Office of Music.

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’ian-p’ei chi, which was at worst pedantic, 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 Chih 劉綰. 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 Ming-shih 186, p. 4586, biography of Liu Hsü.
40As mentioned by Shen To-i in Wen-yi-hua-pien, p. 541. For an outline and the date of this story, see Hung-lan Chu, "Ch’iu Chün," pp. 213-14. For a modern criticism of the story, see Feng Ch’i-yung 楊其庸, "Chien-p’ou-i pu feng-chien tso-te chiao-k’o-shu — Wu-lun ch’ian-p’ei chung-hsiao chi 解剖一部封建禮教的毒瘤——伍倫貽囀忠孝記" in Feng, Ch’ien-t’ao chi 春草集 (Shanghai: Shang-hai wen-wu-ch’uan-shu 上海文萃出版社, 1979), pp. 345-68.
41This point was emphatically made both by the compilers of the Ming Wu-chung shih-lu 明武宗實錄 and by T’an Ch’ien 戴遷 (1593-1659) in his Kuo-ch’i-lin 鎮中. See Ming Wu-chung shih-lu (rpt.; Taipei: Academia Sinica, 1965) 21, p. 597; Kuo-ch’i-lin (Peking: Ku-chi ch’u-pan-shu 古籍出版社, 1959) 46, p. 881 and 48, p. 2984; Ming-shih 306, p. 7859, where Chiu is listed as one of the sixty-four court officials cashiered for having collaborated with the fallen Liu Chih.